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EDITOR

Trish Harris

EDITORIAL ADVISORY PANEL

Marion Ellis, Youth Justice Supervisor,
Dunedin

John Rabarts, Practice Consultant,
Horowhenua

Alison Thom, Practice Consultant,
Otago

Louise Waaka, Practice Consultant,
Adoptions, Northern

Trish Ward, Supervisor, Invercargill

Deborah Yates, Social Work Trainer,
Northern

SPECIAL THANKS TO

Tanya Tremewan

Claire O'Brien

Richard Bradley

for assistance with issue two.

ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO:

The Editor

Social Work Now

Private Bag 21

Wellington

Phone 04 472 7666

Fax 04 473 8773

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THE COVER DESIGN: The four sections of the front cover represent the four cornerstones of the Māori concept of health: te taha tinana, te taha hinengaro, te taha wairua and te taha whānau. If these faculties are adhered to and kept in balance then life will be in balance. Also appearing in the design is a stylised face with eyes at the top, nostrils in the middle and mouth represented by four "teeth" at the bottom. The kanohi is representative of all who work in the varying fields of the Children and Young Persons Service.



Speaking of youth justice

Youth justice staff within CYPS face as many practice challenges as their care and protection and adoption colleagues. Their work with young people who have offended is underpinned by youth justice guiding principles in the CYP&F Act. Some of these state:

- ...criminal proceedings should not be instituted against a child or young person if there is an alternative means of dealing with the matter
- any measures for dealing with offending by children or young persons should be designed to strengthen their family, whānau, hapū, iwi and family group and foster the ability of their family, whānau, hapū, iwi and family group to deal with the offending
- the child or young person who commits an offence should be kept in the community as far as is practicable....
- any measure for dealing with offending by children or young persons should have due regard to the interests of any victim....

However the task of translating these principles into day-to-day practice, as with any principles, is not always straightforward.

One of the key elements in the youth justice process is family/whānau empowerment. For a youth justice coordinator who is faced by a family/whānau group which has already tried multiple solutions, this is not an easy task. Family/whānau empowerment is affected by

- the ability of a family/whānau to provide the guidance a young person needs;
- the resources of the family/whānau, the community or CYPS to enable that to happen;
- the commitment of the coordinator and social worker to work in a way which fosters such empowerment.

Interfaces are another area under which many sub-headings fit. For youth justice workers “interface” means working with youth aid officers, care and protection staff, victims,

judges, courts, community organisations, lawyers, lay advocates, families/whānau and of course the young person themself.

This complex array of groups bring their own characteristics and dynamics, some of which are peculiar to youth justice. Social workers estimate they can spend from 20-30 minutes on a phone call or visit inviting a victim to an FGC. Much of that time is spent dealing with the anger which the victim is feeling not only at being offended against, but on top of that being asked to participate in an FGC. When you have forty victims to contact (as is not uncommon) the task magnifies and with a seven to twenty-one day timeframe in which to organise the conference, the stress of youth justice work is easy to imagine.

Another complicating factor contributing to the youth justice task is that many young people who have offended also have care and protection needs. These don't suddenly disappear when the first referral to youth justice occurs.

The difficulties and issues are real, but how do we move forward to improve processes and practice? Interfaces work well in some offices, some of the time. When all the professionals involved in youth justice aim towards the same goal, the work proceeds more smoothly. Outcomes of FGCs can be innovative and strengthen families to look after their children, as well as proving a healing experience for the victim.

In raising the profile of youth justice such practice needs to be affirmed and shared with others, and challenges need to be aired with informed debate. Issue two of *Social Work Now* contains a beginning, both in the letters and articles column. With two new youth justice appointees to the editorial advisory panel (Marion Ellis, Youth Justice Supervisor, Dunedin and John Rabarts, Practice Consultant, Horowhenua) youth justice workers have strong advocates within this forum, to raise the profile of this important area of work. ■ Editor



Response to first issue

MANY THANKS TO readers of the first issue of *Social Work Now* who passed on their feedback. While some did so through a letter to the editor, others filled in the feedback form. Here's a sample of the comments:

"very professional"

"a good start"

"articles which can be related to social work practice of greater value"

"great to see we have our own journal - good resource material"

"you seem to have achieved a good balance".

There was strong support from staff for in-depth articles and wide interest from those outside the Service in the work carried out by CYPS – so much so that we have now run out of copies of issue one! We look forward to your response to issue two.

Who will protect the principles of the Act?

CARE AND PROTECTION and youth justice coordinators have a leading role in applying the principles of the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1989 and this makes them, in practice, the guardians of those principles. Neil Cleaver, in his paper in your July issue, worries that the Act has failed to realise its promise and the expectations of its sponsors because coordinators are employed by the same people as employ social workers and so the coordinators' role has not been sufficiently recognised as distinct and important and developed accordingly. He illustrates an underlying reason for this, inadvertently I think, when he refers to the requirement that care and protection resource panels be involved in the appointment of care and protection coordinators. He sources this requirement, accurately I am sure, to DSW circular memorandum 1989/62 4.2.1(d), but in doing so says:

....the Department **deemed** that one of the functions of the care and protection resource panels was to "advise the Director-General

on matters relating to the appointment of care and protection coordinators".

The quote from the circular memorandum, in fact, repeats the wording of section 429(d) of the Act so what is said is not only "deemed by the Department" but required by the law. Is it unusual for the Act to be quoted verbatim like this? Most of what is said in circular memoranda and the like is interpretation and elaboration of the law.

The point I wish to make is that those working for the Children and Young Persons Service are in the unusual position of having their work quite closely described in law (principally in the CYP&F Act) as well as by their employer (in various instructions, memos and manuals). Naturally it is their employer's instructions that are likely to take precedence in their minds and because what their employer says is often an interpretation of what the law says, they learn to ignore the law in order to avoid confusion.

This raises the issue of the place of the Act in practice. This issue is of interest in itself and, I believe, worthy of further discussion. It is also central to Neil Cleaver's concern. The Department as an organisation has other, often more pressing, objectives than adherence to the principles of the Act. This is not a matter for condemnation necessarily, but if these objectives are to take precedence in prescribing the work of care and protection and youth justice coordinators, who are to be the guardians of the principles of the Act?

Ian Hassall Children's Advocate

Critiquing youth justice

THANK YOU NEIL CLEAVER for your paper *Another arm of the bureaucracy?* where you ask where the best place is for coordinators. I should like to add my views to the issues raised.

At the inaugural training for northern regional coordinators in November 1989, the topic of coordinators being positioned within the Children and Young Persons Service and consequently designated as social workers, was heatedly discussed. The coordinators' view was almost unanimous that we were **not** social

workers, and that the legislation made the distinction clear. The response given was that since CYPS was paying us, we have to be defined as social workers.

The conflict and tensions this caused is still unresolved six years down the track. Since 1989 I have watched the autonomy of coordinators as envisaged by John Rangihau, (and John Grant) and written by the legislators, whittled away until Neil's closing comment rings only too true.

I wish to make some additional comments to those expressed in the paper, and then to offer some suggestions for debate and discussion.

When the initial coordinator appointments were made, budget for a car, and a .5 clerical position accompanied each position. How many of us still have undisputed access to those resources?

Approval for expenditure for convening an FGC, and authority to approve expenditure at the FGC for outcomes, initially rested with most coordinators. The approvals were never standardised nationally and variation still exists, although the trend has been **away** from coordinators exercising any approval. There is such pressure on coordinators to reduce expenditure (or at least to keep it to a minimum) that options for outcomes that may require resourcing by CYPS, may not be suggested or explored.

The delegation of coordinators' duties has also never been standardised nor the issue of assistance from social workers in the convening of tasks.

Advertisements for coordinator positions now state that a relevant tertiary **social work** qualification is required. My recent inquiry and suggestion that other tertiary qualifications, particularly for youth justice coordinators, may be more applicable (eg bicultural expertise, secondary teaching, law or criminology) brought the response that "there has been no change to policy. The Department continues to seek qualified applicants for all social work positions"! This view that a coordinator is some kind of glorified social worker, has it seems completely engulfed the original vision, intent and philosophy, and

effectively shuts out applicants who could offer life experience, skills, knowledge and networks totally relevant to the coordinator positions. My observation over six years has been that new appointments are almost always made from within the Service, so that increasingly a social work perspective has overtaken the "community" perspective of the original appointees.

The training of youth justice coordinators has been, frankly, shamefully neglected. There is no national "package" of training - in fact we are still waiting for the youth justice coordinators' handbook equivalent to what was published long ago for care and protection coordinators.

All these, and other factors, have combined to weaken the ability of the coordinator to empower families. The internal requirements of CYPS can also stifle the wish or ability of coordinators to work in culturally appropriate ways.

Is this situation able to be turned around? I believe that it is possible. Neil Cleaver, and others at his and higher levels of management, have the ability to address the issues. The question really is, do they have the will? I would like to propose some ideas for comment, and exploration:

- The Service acknowledge that coordinators are **not** social workers, and the requirement for relevant tertiary "social work" qualification be removed from coordinators positions (followed by the removal of the requirement for coordinators to complete social work competencies);
- The Service divide into a service for children (and families) and a service for young people (and families). This would enable social workers to develop expertise in the particular age group they worked with, and knowledge of the available resources pertinent to that group. The word "interface" could disappear from the jargon;
- Removal of coordinators from the Service be considered. Where care and protection coordinators could be based is a matter for them to be consulted on. I suggest that iwi and the Ministry of Youth Affairs would be

most appropriate for youth justice coordinators;

- A Commissioner for Young People position be created, with similar powers to the Commissioner for Children. This would enable a focus on the needs of youth, (which seems to be sadly lacking at the political decision-making level), and would acknowledge the different needs and issues for young people, as distinct from children. (Yes, this is a legislative change, but all things are possible if the need is demonstrated, and **supported**.)

Perhaps this is the wrong place to be proposing it, but I believe a national conference for youth justice coordinators is long overdue. Many of the above issues could be considered in such a forum and maybe then we could begin to recapture the spirit which moved John Rangihau and all those others, who with this legislation gave us a real opportunity to re-empower people. And maybe then I could come to love my job as I love my work.

Trish Stewart Youth Justice Coordinator,
Taranaki North

Harry Wilson, National Manager Family Resolution Services, replies:

It is heartening to see your concern, Trish, that the role of coordinator (particularly that of the youth justice coordinator) functions effectively under the CYP&F Act. I agree a national conference for youth coordinators is a worthwhile consideration, and the possibility of holding one is currently being explored. As you say, many of the above concerns could be discussed more fully there. I would however like to reply to some of your points in this forum:

- *When the youth justice coordinator positions were first established there may well have been an intention to provide a car and .5 clerical position with each position. However it must be acknowledged that over the last six years most staff have experienced changes to "undisputed resources", as the Service and Department have attempted to improve cost efficiencies and sought to come in line with state sector reforms.*

Social Work Now welcomes letters to the editor and discussions on issues raised in the journal.

Write to: The Editor, Social Work Now, Private Bag 21, Wellington. Shorter letters are preferred and we reserve the right to edit letters for sense and length. Please include your work address and a contact phone number.

- *Any practice of coordinators approving expenditure is a local office procedure and not one required or even implied by the Act. Ultimately the approval of special costs expenditure is a manager's responsibility.*
- *To my knowledge neither the Service nor local management expects coordinators to function as social workers under the Act. In some offices the opposite is the case with youth justice social workers performing tasks required of youth justice coordinators ie convening FGCs.*

The Act only approves the delegation of a youth justice coordinator's duties to suitable social workers, so it appears that perhaps John Rangihau, John Grant and the legislators saw a strong link between coordinators and social workers.

I realise coordinators require a broader range of skills than those required by a social worker, but I don't believe any requirements for a relevant tertiary social work qualification undermine this. I believe such requirements go a long way to support the need for coordinators to have qualifications that reflect an understanding of child and adolescent behaviour and needs, as well as an understanding of group processes. Bicultural understanding and commitment are prerequisites to joining the Service, and specific law and criminology training form a component of the training delivered by the training units.

- *I am aware of at least two significant training initiatives specifically for youth justice staff – the national youth justice coordinator and*

youth aid officer joint training, and regional youth justice conferences and training initiatives. To my knowledge these have been run in western and southern, I am not sure of the other regions. The joint youth justice and youth aid training is currently being redeveloped by the training unit.

- I am concerned that youth justice coordinators are able to perform their tasks in the best way possible and acknowledge there are some key areas which need to be addressed. We are undertaking a project to look at the care and protection/youth justice interface, and in the new year will be looking at "best practice" methods for youth justice.

I am not convinced however that the broader issue of the Service dividing into a service for children (and families) and one for young people (and families) would work. It could well work to divide families when they have a number of children or young people at various ages, creating a new interface - one between ages. One of the main thrusts of the Act is for social workers and coordinators to work in such a way as to strengthen families, whanau, and family groups, not for families to work with us in a way that strengthens us.

Advocating for children and young people

WE READ WITH GREAT interest the article *Getting it taped: children in court* in the first issue of *Social Work Now*. However, we were surprised to read the statement that apart from the Commissioner for Children's Office, New Zealand has "no national advocacy agencies to monitor the reforms and evaluate them". Youth Law Project is a community law centre providing free legal advice to children and young people up to the age of 25. We have been operating since 1987 and have recently produced a publication on the issue of children giving evidence in court under the provisions of the Evidence (Amendment) Act.

We have regular dealings with local CYPS offices on individual cases. We visit residents at the Northern Residential Centre (Weymouth) every fortnight and recently

participated in the CYPS review of the centre. We have also been involved with national office on a number of issues including residential placements, monitoring of residential placements and complaints procedures in residences. We also make submissions on legislation affecting children and young people, including the CYP&F Act.

In view of our work, especially in conjunction with the CYPS, we feel the comment in the article, referred to above, was not well researched. Clearly there is not the plethora of youth rights organisations here that exist in the United Kingdom but we would not like readers of the journal to be misled into thinking there is nothing at all for children and young people in New Zealand.

Carol Parker Youth Law Project

Ed note:

The author, Karen Wilson, accepts the Youth Law Project's criticisms and says her oversight was not intentional. She had meant to refer to New Zealand's lack of nationally funded agencies which are financially able to establish branches throughout the country. She had not meant to ignore the nationwide work done by the Project, the Child Advocacy Trust, Parentline and DSAC.

Cover spoilt

I WONDER AT the cover of this new journal and I see tuakiritanga - and I know the concept

...and I behold the kanohi of the social worker in tuakiritanga

... and see *Social Work Now* on the edge of tuakiritanga

... and visualise the colours of Rangī, Papa and Te Aro Marama - all part of our social work kanohi.

He taonga ātaahua.

But like many of our indigenous taonga this too has become scarrred by whakaaro Pākehā for I see an awful, (almost) word for word translation of an English phrase scratched into one corner: *Te Hautaka Āwhina Tangata A Te Uehā Mātātahi o Aotearoa*.

Like a whakairo with a plaque reading native carving, these are just words, not kupu

and they do not kīnaki this taonga. I know the panel were given kupu hei kīnaki mō te taonga nei – kupu like mataaho, pārekereke and others. So why did someone engrave “Kilroy was here” on our tōtara tree?

Rawiri Richmond Social Worker CYPS
Levin

The editorial advisory panel replies:

Our decision was made after much discussion and consultation. Māori members of the panel, with the support of other panel members, felt it would be superficial to have a Māori title when as yet we cannot claim Social Work Now is a bicultural journal in terms of its content. For this reason we opted for a literal translation of the sub-title into Māori.

We are working towards ensuring that as a publication the journal reflects the practice aspirations, concerns and issues facing Māori staff. We need contributions from people such as yourself in order for this to happen and would like to take this opportunity to encourage all Māori staff to see the journal as a forum in which they can debate and discuss practice issues. ■

Social Work Now 1996

Deadline for Contributions

April issue: 2 February

August issue: 1 June

December issue: 13 September

More than a gut feeling

Craig Smith looks at current thinking in risk assessment and explains why in child protection work, it has to be more than a gut feeling

The critical tasks in child protection are to decide:

- is the child in danger now?
- what is the risk of a dangerous outcome in the future?

As Cooper and Ball (1987) put it:

If one single word sums up child abuse, it is risk.

Each of us is exposed to risk every day of our lives - environmental risks, interpersonal risks, personal risks. Each of these risks occurs through the exposure to danger (an outcome that is expected to cause loss or injury). Whereas risk focuses on the probability or chance of loss (the extent to which an undesirable event or outcome may occur), danger focuses on the severity of that loss, the magnitude of current or future harm. Given the potential risk of dangerous outcomes, it is a tribute to the human spirit that any of us get out of bed in the morning - that is not to suggest that there aren't risks and dangers in the bedroom!

Risk assessment is the degree to which one may predict the probability that an event may occur or identify the uncertainty about whether it will occur or not. A risk assessment is a decision, which in its simplest form is a choice between two alternatives. That seems relatively straightforward on the surface. However, the choice is made on a judgment of the value of each option - good/bad, right/wrong, safety/danger.

Furthermore, the importance of that judgement alters dramatically with the nature of the possible consequences. If I were to produce a water pistol, the dangerous outcome

for you would be getting wet, and your risk assessment may include items such as proximity to the source of danger or your vulnerability and some assessment of me - am I being creative or am I having a bad day?

If this were a different setting and you were a member of the armed offenders squad, your assessment might be very different.

Risk assessment is a decision based on the probability of something occurring and the likely severity of the potential outcome if it does occur. To make this assessment I consider vulnerability, risk and danger.

Such assessments are central to both our personal and professional lives. Dale (1984) states:

All who work in the field of child abuse . . . recognise that decision-making involves taking risks. Risk-taking follows, or should follow, assessment of what is and what is not dangerous.

Prediction

The assessment of risk is a matter of judgment not fact. As Tony Morrison (1995) puts it:

Risk assessment is often an outcome of the collective anxiety of those making the decision.

The quality of our judgement as to risk or probability is dependent on our ability to predict future events. The purpose of accurate prediction is to improve the certainty associated with a particular decision. There are three main categories of prediction (Sigurdson and Reid 1990):

- natural law, eg the application of heat to water resulting in water boiling;

- randomness laws, as described in the theory of probability and games theory - the mathematical theory of processes involving uncertainty - eg tossing a coin or rolling a dice; and
- complex situations, which combine natural law and randomness. These occur where forces are inadequately identified or understood, with complex sets of variables, and where there is difficulty relating indicators to what they supposedly measure.

Child protection prediction falls within the latter category.

The problem with prediction in this field is that given the often vast number of variables in any situation involving human behaviour, it seems unlikely that we can predict the outcome of those variables and the interactions between them with any degree of certainty. Furthermore, there is a reluctance to regard human behaviour as predetermined. People feel that the decisions they make are part of "their most intimate selves" (Reid, Sigurdson, Christianson-Wood and Wright 1995).

Yet the paradox is that the origin of opinions, attitudes and beliefs can be found in our culture and families. Reid et al (1995) regard this as:

evidence for a perspective which understands our behaviour as being derived to a significant

extent from these social artefacts and the realities of our biological selves. It does not, however, entail a denial of the reality of unique personal identities.

Prediction is a natural part of everyday human life. For example, in child protection, aspects of our law are predicated on the principle of prediction. A child is being or is *likely to be abused* - the standard of proof is the balance of probabilities.

Reid et al (1995) believe it is possible to improve the accuracy of predictions by relating attitudes to particular well-defined potential behaviours and assessing the amount of latitude that is possible in the context where the behaviour occurs:

The more immediate the connection between attitude and the behaviour, the greater the predictive power.

They suggest that if behaviour and/or attitudes remain constant over a range of possible contexts, it is highly probable they will persist, and occur in other contexts too.

Table 1 (see below) shows the analytical framework for the prediction of a person's behaviour proposed by Reid et al (1995).

Risk assessment and child protection

Perhaps the most obvious point about prediction and risk assessment is that it is almost impossible to do accurately or beyond chance levels while maintaining an incident or

Table 1: *Framework for predicting a person's behaviour*

- What beliefs does the person hold that are relevant to the problematic behaviour and are these beliefs rational?
- What attitudes are maintained by the person that are significant to the issue?
- What stimuli initiate the behaviour?
- What are the relevant perceptual patterns?
- Does the individual feel that the behaviour is subject to their self control?
- If the appropriate stimuli are present, and are perceived by the person, then the person will act so as to secure or perpetuate highly valued beliefs or attitudes. These beliefs or attitudes comprise the *reasons* for the behaviour.
- If the person perpetuates behaviour that is not felt to be subject to their will, this behaviour is best understood as *caused* by unconscious or unarticulated motives.

Source: Reid et al (1995), p. 14

acute focus:

The more people are into quick fix and focus on the acute problems and pain, the more that very approach contributes to the underlying chronic condition. (Covey 1989)

Sadly, child protective services internationally have undergone a pervasive shift towards a crisis response to acute incidents as a result of increasing workloads and diminishing resources. Indeed, some of the interest in risk assessment instruments has been from administrations keen to use risk assessment as a method of triage to allocate scarce resources (Wald and Woolverton 1990).

Prioritisation of resources is not in itself an anathema. However, inevitably this triage focuses us away from predictions based on patterns of behaviour towards pseudo-prediction based on single incidents and inadequate data. The outcome can often reflect practitioner anxiety or helplessness more than reason, leading to dangerous and defensive practices where the (usually) unconscious goal is to avoid liability for practice failure. Such practice is illustrated by strict adherence to agency policy, procedures and guidelines. However, we know from experience that these will not necessarily keep children safe unless within these processes we have high quality professional judgment in an organisational safety culture (Pidgeon 1991).

In a context where there is an acute focus, as in figure 1 (see next page), an incident of abuse as the presenting problem may be treated as a singular event. A quick fix, reactive response is made that fails to address underlying causes and leads to further problems. When the further problems re-present, they too are treated as singular events and so on ad infinitum. Such an approach is the antithesis of effective risk assessment and indeed good practice. It is essential that child protective services place single events in wider contexts by looking at patterns and trends and assessing long term implications. It is also essential that child protection services move

beyond events and patterns that predict events, to look at underlying structures - attitudes, perceptions, values and beliefs that give rise to patterns that give rise to events.

Approaches to risk assessment

The three approaches to risk assessment identified in the literature (Strathern 1995) are:

- clinical judgement approaches, based on individual or collective practitioner judgement, sometimes supported by a decision making framework, and informed by professional knowledge, values and skills;

- consensus models, combining practice wisdom with information from the empirical literature to develop an

instrument or set of indicators that are tested retrospectively; and

- actuarial models, based on longitudinal studies and prospective empirical testing, often automated, in which risk is given a numerical score.

It is essential that child protective services place single events in wider contexts by looking at patterns and trends and assessing long term implications.

Early research indicates that actuarial models are likely to prove the most reliable predictor of risk whilst clinical judgement approaches appear to be the least reliable.

Regardless of which approach is preferred, it is patently obvious that good clinical judgment is a fundamental requirement. It informs what information is sought and gathered, it influences the quality of that information and it informs the decision-making. Instruments cannot make decisions – practitioners must. At best, instruments and models are wonderful tools in decision making and good casework practice. At worst, they can negate practitioner responsibility and be used mechanistically and defensively.

Risk assessment in CYPS

In 1994 social workers in CYPS, motivated by a commitment to safe practice and influenced by the outcomes of child mortality reviews,

embarked on a process of professional practice development - the child protection risk management project. The project goal is to develop a consistent and effective approach to risk assessment and risk management in child protection. To achieve this goal the project was scoped over three phases: research, design and implementation.

The research phase was designed to ensure we held accurate data about the current reality of risk assessment and management in our agency, and to explore international research and practice in this complex area of work.

Through the research, areas for improvement both at an organisational and at a professional level were identified. At an agency level the safety culture could be improved by addressing key areas of risk, namely social work supervision, recording practice, interagency networking and cooperation, health and safety of child protection practitioners, and child protection training.

At a professional level, some 30 different models and checklists in risk assessment and management were identified by practitioners. This inconsistency does not necessarily suggest poor practice but it certainly raises issues of equity for clients of our service and makes it impossible to analyse the quality of assessment and intervention across the Service.

From the research, it was concluded that methods of risk assessment and management

are inconsistent. In addition, improved professional (clinical) judgement is paramount as all approaches to risk management rely on the quality of data. With regard to determining an approach which is appropriate in risk assessment and management, the research showed that an actuarial approach while functional, has inherent dangers for children in the present agency environment. The first concern is that practitioners, particularly inexperienced staff, may become over-reliant on the instrument and use it mechanistically. Secondly, experienced practitioners may resist it as a time-consuming approach which, in their view, may only confirm what they already know through exercising their professional judgement.

The approach identified as both sound theoretically and pragmatic in practice was the Manitoba risk estimation system, a consensus model of risk management. This system is based on research which has included:

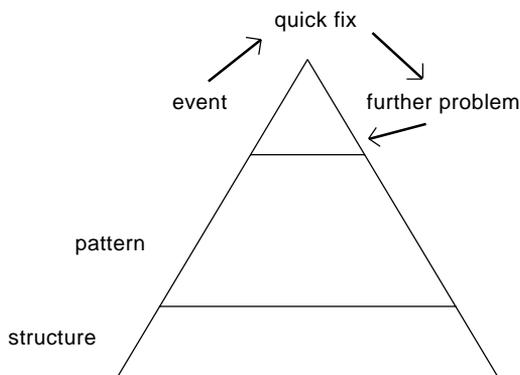
- a comprehensive analysis of *all* existing risk assessment systems;
- creation of the initial risk estimation system and three subsequent revisions after intensive field testing in three different provinces in Canada;
- training of 2000 persons from a range of disciplines in the use of the system; and
- collection of data from three child welfare agencies and a review of violent or unexplained child deaths over 10 years.

The Manitoba approach is at the core of a three-phase strategy adopted by CYPS to improve professional practice in child protection over the next five years.

A consistent approach to risk management brings with it a shared framework, concepts and language for coworking, supervision and decision-making, along with a consistent method for investigating abuse, determining child vulnerability and risk, and defining intervention needs.

From such an approach, a range of benefits can be expected, including transparency of casework practice and case management, reduced vulnerability of workers, supervisors

Figure 1: Risk assessment with an acute focus



Source: Senge (1990)

and managers, improved quality of information to courts and families, and identification of the best ways to use resources at intervention.

Not least of these benefits, consistency in approach is likely to improve child safety.

Conclusion

In this paper I discussed the concepts of risk and danger and the constant human practice of risk assessment. I presented issues relating to prediction and supported the view that it is possible to predict risk with a reasonably high degree of certainty. A number of approaches to risk assessment were examined. Finally a brief description of the approach to risk assessment adopted by CYPS was outlined.

The child protection risk management framework represents a significant development in child protection practice both nationally and internationally. It is an approach premised on the belief that human reason and rationality rather than intuition are the key; that practitioner accountability must be perceived as normal rather than traumatic; and that case management and casework are the unitary concepts - risk assessment is one component of this.

In concluding their research report, Reid et al (1995) state:

Our initial analysis of the data collected during this research project indicates that it is possible to predict the risk of re-occurrence and severity of child maltreatment with a considerable degree of certainty. However, it requires diligence in the collection of data . . .

Risk assessment must indeed be more than a gut feeling. ■

Craig Smith is based in Christchurch working as Project Leader of CYPS' child protection risk management project.

Previously he has worked as a social work trainer and senior social worker in the child protection area. His particular areas of interest are child protection, adult learning, organisational development, risk assessment, and social work training and development.



Note

An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Family Violence Conference, Wellington, June/July 1995.

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Youth advocates: seeing justice to be done?

If the rights of young people are to be upheld, all professionals in the youth justice system need to have a clear knowledge of the role of youth advocates, says **Margie Michael**

Prior to the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act 1989 (CYP&F Act), the interests of young people in the court system were not recognised by statute and were frequently overlooked. Morris and Young (1987) found that lawyers acting for young offenders:

did little to enhance the ability of defendants to assert their rights or to influence the eventual outcomes of the case. Rather, they primarily worked for the benefit of the court system.

By contrast, the present youth justice system provides for the court to appoint representation for young offenders. More than this, section 323 states that the court:

shall, as far as practicable, appoint a barrister or solicitor who is by reason of personality, cultural background, training and experience, suitably qualified to represent the child or young person.

Thus, rather than appointing someone who will work "for the benefit of the court system" it would seem that this legislation was intended to establish a role for youth advocates to advocate on behalf of the young person throughout the youth justice process, from their first appearance in the youth court, through the FGC and any subsequent court appearances.

The objectives of the CYP&F Act, however, do not seem to be borne out in practice. In the first (and to date only) major study into the way the youth justice system was operating, Maxwell and Morris (1993) found that:

the universal representation of young people by a youth advocate is a considerable advance on the situation before the Act. . . . but, at the same time, this representation was not always effective in ensuring the protection of young people's rights.

The reasons they put forward for this partial effectiveness were twofold: the varying quality of the advocacy and the pressure placed on the young person to plead guilty.

This pressure to plead guilty has developed from the general objects of the CYP&F Act which state that children or young people who commit offences are held accountable and encouraged to accept responsibility for their behaviour.

This in some instances has caused difficulty in balancing the need for accountability with the rights of the child or young person.

The practice

From four years as a supervising youth justice social worker in the greater Wellington area, my experience of youth advocates has been compatible with the findings of Maxwell and Morris (1993). For example, in a secure care application, a youth advocate, rather than stating the young person's case against granting the extension, stated that he felt the young person should remain in secure care. Another example of indifferent practice was demonstrated by the youth advocate of a young person who had been kept in police custody for eight days without the knowledge of the advocate or the Service. Instead of making an issue of this on behalf of his client

as a very serious breach of the young person's rights, the advocate shrugged and saw it as "just one of those things".

In examining why, in some areas, the representation of young people is not always effective, as well as ways to overcome the difficulties I see, I will focus on four areas: the appointment of the youth advocate, the effectiveness of the youth advocates themselves, what their role could (should?) be, and the balancing act.

Appointment of the youth advocate

According to the CYP&F Act as quoted above, the court shall appoint a barrister or solicitor with very special qualities. It would appear from this requirement that a careful, thorough process is used in appointing youth advocates. My experience has been somewhat different.

Each court has a list of youth advocates. When the CYP&F Act was introduced, this list was carefully developed consisting of youth advocates who had been trained thoroughly. Five years on I wonder what process can be developed to ensure lawyers with aptitude for this work are added to the list? When an agreed process is not in place it leaves the door open for practices whereby the "personality, cultural background, training and experience" of the particular youth advocate appointed are not appropriate for a particular young person.

Effectiveness of the youth advocate

How does one measure the effectiveness of a youth advocate? In whose terms are we measuring that effectiveness?

These are questions which have not yet been answered clearly within the court system. One possible criterion would be whether the youth advocate's presence made a difference to the court proceedings. If that were used, however, then some youth advocates would be deemed ineffective – for example, in cases where the presence of the youth advocate appears to be a mere formality, with little

communication between the youth advocate and young person. Or is an effective youth advocate one who ensures that an appropriate (to the professionals) outcome is negotiated with the police and CYPS with the rights and concerns of the young person being put to one side?

Who should measure the effectiveness of youth advocates? In my experience lack of clear standards or an obvious peer group to make assessments **does** constrain their effectiveness. I feel there is a need for recognised criteria which are consistent with the intended role of youth advocates under the original legislation, and which are assessed by an independent authority concerned with the maintenance of children's rights, for example the Office of the Commissioner for Children. Any assessment

...a youth advocate: to ensure that a young person's basic human rights are protected, rather than to ensure the smooth working of the youth justice system.

of youth advocates must promote the basic principle behind the appointment of a youth advocate: to ensure that a young person's basic human rights are protected, rather than to ensure the smooth working of the youth justice system.

In protecting the young person's rights, the youth advocate needs to provide a careful explanation of the process and the implications of each step in it. To do so involves holding those rights to the fore, listening to the young person and being prepared to state, or help the young person state, his/her position. The youth advocate needs to ensure, too, that the processes explained are followed.

Role of the youth advocate

Although the youth court judge usually asks the family if they understand the process or have any questions, the young person and family often fear they would look foolish if they ask. The youth advocate, therefore, has the role of explaining the youth court system and process to the family and ensuring that what is happening is understood.

Under section 215(f) of the CYP&F Act every child or young person is entitled to consult with a barrister or solicitor before being questioned. Anecdotal evidence from both the police and young people, as well as data collected by Maxwell and Morris, indicates that nearly all young people waive that right because they either do not have a youth advocate and do not know how to gain access to one, or if they do have an advocate they cannot remember his/her name and how to make contact. Most young people waive this right without understanding their entitlements under it.

The absence of a youth advocate to explain the process at this stage can be a further factor operating against the effectiveness of the role.

The effectiveness could also be improved through the youth advocate's attendance at the FGC to ensure the young person's interests are represented professionally. This is especially important as FGC outcomes can be more severe than those given by the judge at the youth court.

With regards to the relationship between the young person and youth advocate, the young person has the statutory right to decide on the youth advocate's degree of involvement in the FGC and the court in certain circumstances, as described in section 324(2) and (3) of the CYP&F Act. The youth advocate needs to ensure that the young person's rights in this respect are fully explained.

Balancing act

The role of the youth advocate must be weighed against the objects of the legislation, particularly section 4(f) which states:

that where children and young persons commit offences:

i) They are held accountable, and encouraged to accept responsibility for their behaviour

Thus an advocate needs to balance the traditional role of a lawyer using adversarial techniques to gain a "victory" for the client, with the role of a professional who is administering the legislation to encourage young offenders to accept responsibility for their behaviour.

Favouring one role over the other tends to

reduce the effectiveness of the youth advocate, and its effects are visible in the court system today. Weighing too heavily in favour of the adversarial role is entirely inappropriate for the youth justice system in New Zealand. Its consequences are demonstrated by a young person who always opted for a defended hearing because of the delays and difficulties it caused: the process amused him and often did not lead him to accept any responsibility for his offending.

This concern is not insurmountable. There are many who have developed the techniques required to perform this balancing act and who do provide good, appropriate and caring advocacy for young people.

Conclusion

The CYP&F Act's recognition of the right of children and young people to have suitable representation is only the beginning. For this right to be protected, all professionals in the youth justice system must develop a clear knowledge of the role of the youth advocate. This degree of understanding does not exist at the moment. To achieve it, there needs to be a commitment from all those involved - judges, registrars and the legal profession itself - to recognise the importance of the role of youth advocates and to develop clear parameters for it. When this commitment is given, the rights of the young person involved in the youth justice system will be truly protected. ■

Margie Michael is Senior Advisory Officer at CYP's national office. She is studying part-time for a law degree and is chairperson of the Weymouth Centre school board of trustees at Northern Residential Centre. She began her career as a teacher, set up the school at Epunu Residential Centre as an attached unit and moved into social work as a senior residential social worker. She then supervised the Wellington youth justice team, with a secondment to the training unit.



Ed note: This paper is not seen as a definitive review of the role of youth advocates, but as an opportunity to open up the topic for discussion and wider debate.

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Upcoming conferences

- International Forum for Child Welfare: 1996 Asia Pacific Regional Conference
Equity in Opportunity
25-28 March 1996, Darwin
- The Centre for Residential Child Care: International Conference on Residential Child Care
Realities and Dreams
3-6 September 1996, Glasgow
- International Society for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect: 11th National Congress Children and Families
Creating Stability in an Unstable World
18-24 August 1996, Dublin

Safe social work

Audrey Barber describes characteristics of stress and summarises key points around preventing and addressing stress and burnout in CYPS

The quality of social work service delivery is affected by the wellbeing of the staff providing that service. The task of social work requires clear judgements which are best made when staff feel well managed and supported. Children and Young Persons Service workers are dealing every day with trauma, conflict and the weighing-up of material that will result in those fine decisions affecting the lives of children and young people.

In 1994, the child protection risk management project was established to produce a framework to assist CYPS staff to make judgements about the level of risk and vulnerability of children and young people. Included as part of that project was consideration of the culture in which staff work. It looked at promoting an environment where staff know there are policies and practices in place around them to care for their wellbeing, protect them from harm and assist them when things go wrong.

A draft document was prepared to draw attention to some of the central issues which face workers in the area of risk assessment and management and to promote discussion among CYPS staff and supervisors. In this paper, some key points concerning stress and the safety culture are summarised from that document.

Understanding stress

Stress is an effort or a demand upon physical or mental energy as a result of events, pressures or strains that are not easy to cope with. It is not caused by negative events alone, nor are its effects always negative. Some stress

is a necessary part of our lives. Just as too much is unhealthy, no stress in our lives makes us feel depressed and lacking that push to go on and achieve.

When stress is experienced at high levels, however, its effects can be serious, particularly over a sustained period (see table 1 overleaf). It will also limit the worker's ability to give of their best. Picture the flushed and angry face of the stressed out worker. Are they likely to be in a space where new ideas will be tried out? No. They will fall back on the rigid rules and regulations that are in place in the organisation and will give a limited and uninspired service to families with whom they are working.

Burnout

Burnout is the result of accumulated stress. It is the tired out feeling in our minds and bodies when we have exhausted our ability to manage or adapt to our stresses. Symptoms often include sleepless nights and an inability to focus on tasks. The level of stress which is called burnout is to be expected if a person goes on experiencing stress without assistance being made available.

The three stages of reaching the burnout level are laid out in table 2 (overleaf) along with some suggestions for actions that can be taken to slow down or stop the process.

When suffering from burnout, a person needs to leave the situation, rest and regain their energy and learn how to act differently in the future. It takes three months to begin to feel normal and six months to three years to feel ready to go back to former levels of stimulation and challenge.

Table 1: Effects of stress

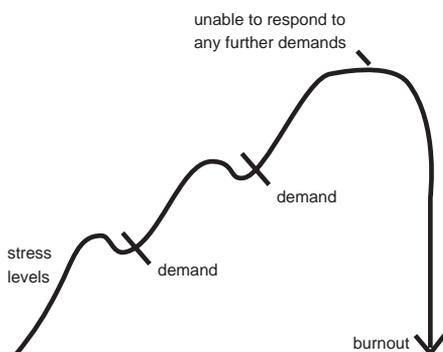
Short term	Long term
shallow, rapid breathing	mood swings
rapidly beating heart	poor concentration
shortness of breath	annoyance at physical surroundings
tight stomach	loss of sense of humour
urge to go to the toilet	poor health - headaches, backaches, skin disorders, digestive disorders
cold or sweaty hands	disruption to sleep
dry mouth	impact on family relationships
	sexual disorders

Professional vulnerability to stress

In many occupations, daily, routine work tasks produce low and manageable degrees of stress which become ever more manageable with experience and training. However this is *not* the case with risk assessment and management work. Because of the nature of the work, staff will be challenged and stressed by the unexpected. New referrals keep coming in and difficult decisions keep having to be made.

Figure 1 demonstrates the response of a person's energy level to new demands. As each demand comes in, energy levels drop temporarily, then rally to deal with new circumstances. As demands continue, energy levels cannot be restored to previous levels, eventually reaching the plateau where demands are responded to without energy being replenished. Levels then drop off dramatically and burnout is experienced.

Figure 1: Response of energy level to ongoing demands



Common stresses for social workers

Staff moving into the area of risk assessment and management are doing so, most often, because they wish to. It is important that social workers try to understand what it is that makes this work important to them. Questions to consider include:

- Are there unresolved experiences from your own life which are getting in the way of your task?
- Are you relating to your clients in a positive and professional manner or do your own life events, past and present, come into your mind?
- When you are with a particular family or individual do you feel so stressed as to be unable to think clearly?

A particular stress for staff working in the child protection field is the potential to get too close to the situation facing their client. They relate so strongly to the particular events of a case they start to live them with the client or family. Sometimes this will happen at the very beginning of a case when the referral details are coming in. A worker may feel strongly that, as the one closest to this set of circumstances, they are the only one in the team who should be allocated this case.

Sometimes the effects may be physical and distressing. It is possible to go into a disclosure interview, for example, and to conduct that interview really well, collecting all the required information while caring for the wellbeing of the child or young person who is

Table 2: Stages of burnout

Stage 1	
Feelings/symptoms	Actions
you feel pressured	learn stress and time management techniques
you are working hard	cut back on responsibilities
you either feel high with excitement or long for a break	work smarter, not harder
	renegotiate your performance objectives
Stage 2	
you feel frustrated	take on nothing new for 6 months
your performance has dropped	make no life changes or minimal changes
you feel trapped	take time off
you are "just working for the money"	go to counselling
Stage 3	
you feel hopeless and despairing	remove yourself from all sources of stress
your judgement is unbalanced	

disclosing. However, when the interview is over and the social worker comes into a debriefing situation they may feel overwhelmed by memories of being abused themselves as a child or of being aware of abuse of friends or family. At these times they may feel a choking, tense feeling, suffer breathing difficulties and hyperventilate.

Such effects can be produced by other circumstances, too. Lack of feedback on performance can cause anxiety about one's standard of the work. For many people, episodes of change in a climate where change has become the norm are difficult to cope with.

Demands outside the workplace will also cause feelings of stress, which should be recognised as having an effect on work. We all know how we feel, for example, when we have suffered a bereavement. The grief process must be allowed to take its course before we can be expected to perform well at work.

Stress management

The most common support system is the team. One reason for seeking peer support is that staff are often reluctant to share personal information with managers, fearing that it may

be considered as part of their performance assessment. As well as this, though, it is natural to want to give and receive support from others who have shared similar experiences.

The role of supervision

The supervisor is the linchpin of the team, playing an active role at all stages. When team stress moves to high levels, the supervisor needs to draw on more resources to assist both the team and themselves.

Social workers are not superhuman and cannot, indeed must not, work alone. Supervision is a means for CYPS to monitor work. It is also a right of workers to enter into a supervisory relationship which is more than administrative and more than a case management tool.

Clinical supervision is essential in order that thoughts, feelings and values of workers are taken into account and dealt with. It is not essential that social workers disclose all details of difficulties to their supervisors. It is not appropriate that supervisors become therapists for their staff. What is essential and appropriate is that supervisors consider the abilities of their staff to work in the risk area

generally and that they make good judgements about allocating workers to particular cases. So, for example, if a supervisor becomes aware that a social worker is suffering flashbacks every time they are involved in a particular type of case, the supervisor must face it with the social worker, must take it into account in the case management of that team and must discuss how the social worker can get appropriate assistance to deal with those raw and unresolved issues.

Similarly, when there are outside demands causing considerable stress, it is the worker's responsibility to share that information with their supervisor if they feel it is getting in the way of their ability to make good judgements, and to seek out assistance, or take advantage of any assistance offered, to deal with it.

Briefing and debriefing

In the effective management of stress, it is important that the supervisor and the organisation have a good knowledge of briefing and debriefing processes. Briefing at its best is an empowering experience from which staff can go to do a job with all the

information they need, a clear plan of action and a fallback position to cover each expected eventuality. Both the technical aspects and the potential emotional impact on staff need to be talked through. The time taken in planning and preparation is time well spent.

The whole process of assisting staff following exposure to trauma is commonly known as *debriefing*, but within it are three distinct phases which need to be gone through:

- *defusing*: giving staff the opportunity to tell their story about what has happened, with everyone who experienced the trauma present. It must include opportunities for listening to and validating the experiences related. Reassurances can be given that what is being experienced is a normal reaction to an abnormal event;

- *demobilising*: immediately after the defusing session, the debriefer, usually the team supervisor, gives positive feedback and brings the session to a structured end so that staff will leave with a sense of stability and normality;
- *debriefing*: between 24 and 48 hours after the incident, it is important that an actively facilitated and structured session is held. The debriefer needs to reassure staff that their reactions are entirely normal. They need to draw out the circumstances of the event and the feelings it has brought about. They must also have information to give out on the common signs and symptoms of stress as well as the management of stress.

Establishing staff safety and wellbeing

There are a number of factors in the workplace which contribute to staff safety and wellbeing, and therefore staff ability to give their best to their work. These include:

- an environment free from hazards;

- good physical health, which can be encouraged by a balanced diet, regular physical activity, relaxation and setting realistic goals;
- physical safety, including safety from physical, sexual and verbal violence;
- good emotional health, which may be encouraged with the assistance of team support, industrial chaplains and the Employee Assistance Programme.

Creating a safe culture for staff to work in also requires the whole organisation to share beliefs about the importance of safety and the motivation to act on those beliefs. Systemic responsibility must be taken at all levels for staff to feel safe. This includes caring and expressing care for employees, attending to the physical environment and identifying staff

training needs and staff development programmes.

What is important, too, is that all policies, guidelines and practices of the organisation must be accessible and meaningful to all staff, many of whom will have been involved in their development. In an organisation like CYPS, where staff work cross-culturally, the particular issues that are raised by cross-cultural work must be acknowledged.

Learning from our mistakes

Staff within organisations must ask themselves questions about their practices if they are to learn from them. CYPS provides opportunities for self-questioning through, for example, the case review system following the death of a child or young person. Other opportunities an organisation can promote include involving staff in peer supervision, and encouraging them to contribute to publications such as *Social Work Now* and journals of other agencies which have an impact on their job.

Conclusion

I hope this summary will engender discussion among staff and managers so that more note is taken of the effects of stress on staff and protocols can be developed within offices to deal with them. ■



Audrey Barber is a Project Manager at CYPS national office where she has most recently been working on the implementations of the amendments to the CYP&F Act and the documentation project. Audrey was part of the child protection risk management project team set up by the Service in 1994 and has previously worked as a regional competency coordinator, social worker and youth justice coordinator.

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The hidden costs of psychological mistreatment

Franz Kney explores definitions and examples of this pervasive form of abuse and suggests CYPS needs to address it in its policy and resourcing

There seems to be a prevailing lack of awareness, or perhaps neglect, of the psychological aspects of mistreatment (PsM) in both New Zealand and other countries. Of close to 16,000 child abuse notifications to the Children and Young Persons Service (CYPS) in 1991/1992, only 76 (0.48%) were categorised for psychological/emotional abuse (McDowell 1995). Yet it has been proposed that "as a rough guideline . . . there are at least as many cases (of child abuse) in which emotional maltreatment is the principal problem as there are of physical maltreatment" (Garbarino and Garbarino, in Ronnau and Poertner 1989). This view is supported by McDowell's (1995) theoretical model of child abuse, in which emotional abuse is at the core of all forms of maltreatment. Recent American estimates also indicate that 8 percent to 11 percent of abuse and neglect cases reported by community professionals involve serious levels of PsM which "may need to be dealt with through coercive societal intervention" (Hart and Brassard 1994).

That most PsM appears to be undetected, and therefore untreated, by professionals is of particular concern in view of the potential seriousness of its impact. In the research literature, it is the psychological effects of abuse which have been identified as often the most severe and lasting (Hart and Brassard 1987, 1994; McDowell 1995). PsM has been associated with, for example, attachment disorders, limitations in cognitive ability, post-traumatic stress disorder, anti-social behaviour,

mood disorders and psychotic symptomatology (Hart and Brassard 1994).

What is PsM?

The definition of PsM adopted for this paper takes account of previous critical reviews and definitions¹:

Psychological mistreatment is the personal, collective, institutional or structural commission, omission or permission of acts or processes which are judged on the basis of a combination of community standards and professional expertise to cause substantial damage to behavioural, cognitive, affective, or physical human functioning and development.

The term "mistreatment" itself has been adopted in this definition as a more neutral and therefore more inclusive term than the familiar term "abuse", often applied to the active or intentional forms of behaviour (McDowell 1995). Similarly, the choice of "psychological" allows not only emotional but also cognitive and behavioural effects to be taken into account (Hart and Brassard 1994).

This definition also implies that the link between PsM and abusive behaviour is complex. Not all mistreatment of children, including actions which are morally wrong and illegal, is psychologically destructive (O'Hagan 1995). Moreover, whether or not they are aware of it, most parents will inflict PsM at some point of their children's lives without causing serious psychological disablement. However, the opposite may also apply. For example, divorce can be "right" or even

necessary in the moral and legal sense, but still fraught with serious psychological risk for the child(ren)².

Despite these obvious limitations on defining the behaviour more precisely, researchers are largely agreed that the major categories of PsM are: terrorising, isolating, exploiting/corrupting, rejecting, ignoring, spurning, denying emotional responsiveness, and mental, medical and educational neglect (Garbarino et al 1986; Hart and Brassard 1994). As a person's needs change developmentally, so too can the forms of

mistreatment which are most prevalent at each phase (see table 1).

From cross-cultural studies, it has been concluded that parental rejection and lack of warmth are regarded almost universally as undesirable (Rohner and Rohner 1980). High-level caring, combined with noncoercive encouragement, is widely recognised as preferable to uncaring and harsh parenting (Parker, Tupling and Brown 1979). However, the specific delivery of "good parenting" can vary considerably. When assessing the appropriateness of a behaviour in its cultural

Table 1: Forms of psychological mistreatment across developmental stages

Stage of development				
Form of PsM	Infancy	Early childhood	School age	Adolescence
<i>Rejecting: Refusing to acknowledge the child's worth and legitimate needs</i>	Resisting the child's overtures for human contact; refusing primary attachment	Excluding the child from family activities	Communicating to the child a negative definition of self	Refusing to acknowledge the child's changing social roles, eg towards self determination
<i>Terrorising: Causing the child to experience fear and to see the world as capricious and hostile</i>	Violating the child's tolerance for change and intense stimulation	Using extreme gestures or statements to intimidate, threaten or punish	Placing the child in serious "double binds" or no-win situations	Threatening to expose the child to public humiliation
<i>Ignoring: Depriving the child of stimulation/ interaction necessary for normal development</i>	Failing to respond to spontaneous attempts to communicate/ interact	Failing to engage the child in normal social interaction or distancing the child from such interaction	Failing to protect the child from threats, or to respond to the child's needs for help/support	Abdicating the parental role; failing to give the child time or interest
<i>Isolating: Preventing normal social interaction and experiences; inducing a sense of being alone in the world</i>	Denying the child the experience of an enduring relationship with caregiver(s)	Teaching the child to avoid social contact beyond the parent-child relationship	Preventing the formation of normal peer relationships	Preventing the child from normal involvement/relationships outside the home
<i>Corrupting: Condoning anti-social and deviant behaviours; making the child unfit for normal social experience</i>	Exposing the child to risk of bizarre or addictive habits	Condoning exposure to modelling of coercive or sexually precocious behaviour	Allowing the child to be exposed to and learn delinquent, aggressive and sexually precocious behaviour	Involving the child in more serious forms of sexual, coercive and drug/alcohol deviance

Source: Adapted from Garbarino et al (1986)

and ethnic context, therefore, primary weight should be given to whether it is having a “decidedly harmful impact on the child” (Hart and Brassard 1994).

Why is PsM so often undetected?

The question explored in the following section is why, despite its pervasiveness and often severe effects, PsM is frequently overlooked, avoided or covered up.

Sociocultural context

The concept of PsM does not exist objectively. It is shaped by both “expert” professionals and community standards (Hart and Brassard 1987). Popular beliefs such as “spare the rod and spoil the child” can influence whether there is general acceptance of a practice which may cause substantial damage to a child. Thus, for the true effects of certain practices to be perceived and acknowledged, social attitudes may need to change. The common use of the above biblical saying is actually based on an out of context misinterpretation of the text’s original meaning which is “use the rod and spoil the child” (Carey

1994). Likewise, the distinction between maltreatment and “growth-inducing challenge” can be as difficult as it is important.

Challenge, when it occurs in the context of supportive relationships, can encourage growth of character and self esteem. However, as Garbarino et al (1986) point out, the goal is not to protect children from challenge but to establish a society:

. . . in which the institutional sources of psychological maltreatment are dismantled and replaced with justice and a humanly and environmentally sane and sustainable society.

Structural issues

Outside the home, for example in educational institutions and substitute care settings, PsM can occur through what Garbarino et al (1986) describe as acts of commission (eg threatening or hitting), omission (eg failing to comfort),

and particularly permission (eg condoning practices of affectionless control). They identify three main levels on which such maltreatment (“re-abuse”) can operate:

- Staff are still often insufficiently trained and supervised, overwhelmed and stressed by the demands of working with abused and maladapted young people, and can feel powerless in the organisation, due to insufficient supports or rewards. As a result, adjustment problems may be perpetuated or exacerbated, and staff may become disillusioned and abusive.
- Programmes can have abusive effects due to unclear or deficient standards of care, lack of planning, or adherence to policies which are more concerned with the children’s adjustment to the institution than their individual growth.

- Systems are a source of maltreatment when they place children in situations which work against their development, or transfer them continually among institutions or foster homes, thereby thwarting the

children’s attachment needs.

Schooling

There is a lack of empirical research on how PsM may be perpetuated through the institutionalised nature of the education system. Nor do schools readily recognise their potential role in this regard. In a study on truancy in junior high schools, for example, there were few administrators who believed the school contributed to truancy and school staff tended to respond punitively, combining anger with a desire to locate the blame outside the school, with the student and family (Nielsen and Gerber 1979). With such responses, schools can miss the opportunity to identify significant psychological problems that can be signalled by “escaping” behaviour³. The failure to recognise such indications of possible mistreatment is consistent with Wodarsky et al’s (1990) observation that:

In abuse-prone situations, adults tend to react to children in ways which reflect their own past and present experience of being abused and neglected.....

As abused children grow older, their status as victims increasingly may be overlooked, resulting in misdiagnosis, mislabelling, and inappropriate treatment.

Ideological abuse

The funding for CYPS and the delivery of its services during the last decade have been described as "dominated by a handful of practice ideologies" - normalisation, deinstitutionalisation, mainstreaming (especially in schools), minimum necessary intervention, diversion, and the use of the least restrictive environment (Fulcher and Ainsworth 1994). The implication for PsM is that such ideologies have "permitted" the dramatic reduction of child welfare services for at risk children and young people. Fulcher and Ainsworth (1994) argue that one in 10 New Zealand children is at risk of being abandoned in that, for example, their emotional or material neglect remains insufficiently addressed.

FGC mis-use?

Child mistreatment by way of denial, ambivalence, resistance and collusion between agency workers and families can occur partly because the family is hailed in statute now as the institution of choice for the safety and wellbeing of children. In abuse-prone situations, adults tend to react to children (and each other) in ways which reflect their own past and present experience of being threatened, invaded, persecuted and overwhelmed, ie abused and neglected, and they tend to react to the interfering workers whose role is to break the cycle. As a consequence, fiercely defensive denial and avoidance of re-abuse can at times arise, with which workers can collude, while experiencing intense ambivalence (McCartt Hess and Folaron 1991; Reder, Duncan and Gray 1993).

Workers need to be well immunised against the pitfalls of these parallel process hazards when dealing with adults who are responding to them from their own sense of being abused. If they lack an awareness of such processes, the cycle of mistreatment can be repeated, or even intensified and spread. Most important among the means of immunisation is perceptive and empathic supervision (Morrison 1990; 1994).

Mistreatment by fragmentation

Professionals often disagree among themselves in determining which cases are to be designated as mistreatment and requiring intervention (Ronnau and Poertner 1989).

This suggests that a service excellence design for CYPS would need to include the commitment to the resources and level of competency which research suggests are necessary for dealing effectively with psychological mistreatment, and reducing its largely "hidden costs" in human and socioeconomic factors (see below).

Protective factors and resilience

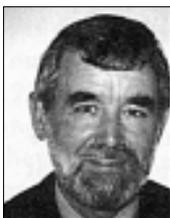
It has been hypothesised that protective factors operate in the context of the person's life space, especially the family, more than at the individual level. Thus it is *families* that are stress-resistant rather than children. This finding is important for the family group conference approach in which the *sole* purpose of the gathering is deemed to be "the welfare of the child". That overt emphasis can become a cloak for the omission and avoidance of other factors for which the adults may need to take more direct responsibility themselves.

The "hidden costs" of resilience are also a much omitted subject. Psychological resilience is "successful behavioural and internal adaptation despite challenging or threatening circumstances" (McDowell 1995). Research with survivors of emotional abuse showed that many are paying a stressful price for their brave and often "successful" *external* resilience. The invisible effects of the emotional abuse trauma can include, for example, difficulties in receiving affection and dealing with conflict, needing to be in control, finding it hard to trust or be close to others, and low self esteem (McDowell 1995). Though their impact may be substantial, the invisibility of these factors also expedites their denial, and makes their recognition very difficult.

Conclusion

There appears to be growing recognition in the theoretical and applied literature on child abuse and neglect that the psychological effects of all forms of mistreatment are the core issue in child protection work. Whilst the

debate about defining and classifying PsM seems to be far from over, conceptual and descriptive guidelines are increasingly available for front-line care and protection and youth justice workers. Given also the growing recognition of the structural and institutional dimensions of PsM, a strategy of "excellence" in CYPS may require that *psychological safety* issues are located closer to the core of its policy development, resourcing, management and public communication. ■



Franz Kney is a psychologist at CYPS' Psychological Services, Christchurch area. He has been employed in the Department since 1977 in various roles, including social worker and senior counsellor.

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Notes

- ¹ See Garbarino, Guttman and Seeley 1986; Hart and Brassard 1994; O'Hagan 1995; McDowell 1995.
- ² As regards the often presumed role of the child in abuse, ie whether children are responsible for what is done to them, there is generally little empirical support for this view (Ammerman 1991). Simons, Robertson and Downs (1989) found that in the relationship between parental harsh treatment and delinquent behaviour, it was three times more likely for parental treatment to be the cause of delinquency than vice versa.
- ³ For example the student's attempt to establish an identity in a context of conflict (Crespi and Sabatelli 1993).

Evidencing care and protection needs

A study of the specialist child video interview in South Auckland by **Mary Dawson**

As the joint responsibility of the Children and Young Persons Service (CYPS) and the police, the specialist child interview has assumed formidable significance in the investigation and assessment process. As such it warrants thorough auditing, evaluation and debate by both departments. Of special interest in the study summarised in this paper was the contribution that the specialist interviewing process and its outcomes (video, written report) make to the assessment of a child's care and protection needs.¹

Why conduct the study?

Over recent years, there has been a notable increase in the cases of child sexual abuse which proceed to trial, and more children are believed in the courts. This has resulted in a greater emphasis on the criminal and legal uses of videos, possibly overshadowing the other purposes for which they were intended.

Second, specialist video interviewing can be a particularly helpful tool in addressing care and protection needs when families do not believe or support a child disclosing sexual and/or physical abuse. These cases can still arise in the face of strong evidence, professional advocacy of the child, and assurances of support for the family.

One further issue is whether children who have been the recipients of physical abuse or who have witnessed violence or abuse to another should also have their evidence-in-chief videoed, through the specialist interviewing facilities.

Method

Each of the above concerns informed the

design of the study. Specifically, the evaluation was to elicit the views of video unit staff and social worker referrers as to the current effectiveness and impact of the South Auckland interviewing process, within the care and protection investigation framework. Following pilot interviews, a standardised structure was developed for focus group interviews (Patton, 1990, pp.335-336). Respondents were asked to reflect on the facilitator's questions and the answers of the other respondents, with no requirement to reach a consensus. Their responses were subsequently transcribed.

Altogether, 17 social workers and five specialist interviewing staff took part. All were from South Auckland CYPS, except for two interviewers who came from the Central Auckland video unit. Two specialist interviewers (one from each unit) were employed by the police, three by CYPS.

All social workers had a reasonable knowledge of all stages of involvement with the interviewing process, having taken children and families to the unit over at least the past year, and between them having taken approximately 102 children over the past two years. The specialist interviewing staff had all been employed as such for at least 18 months, during which time they had interviewed or monitored about 400 children.

Two focus groups each consisted of three specialist interviewers. The three social worker groups were separately comprised of Pacific Island (four), Pākehā (six) and Māori (seven) respondents, each facilitated by a senior practitioner of the respective cultural group.

Results

Shared views

One central theme to emerge is that there appears to be a common and accurate understanding of the intended purposes of the video unit, including its functioning within CYPS as a separately staffed unit with a distinct role. Respondents saw, and almost always regarded as positive, the distinction between the roles of the interviewer (getting more "evidence" or detail) and the social worker (overseeing care and safety).

This understanding, however, appears to be contradicted by the actual use of the videos in care and protection work. Social workers recognise the therapeutic value to families of watching their child's video (the strong consensus was that it assists understanding and acceptance for all types of abuse). Yet they rarely arrange for it, seeing it as either the responsibility of the specialist interviewers or police, or as not desired by the family and therefore not to be pursued.

The importance of the preparation and support by the social worker prior to the interview was another issue recognised repeatedly, especially by the specialist interviewers and by the Pacific Island workers. Tasks mentioned as critical were: establishing rapport, understanding the family dynamics, addressing fears, assessing safety issues, carrying out a full risk analysis, and explaining CYPS procedures and responsibilities.

There was also unanimous and well-reasoned support for the collaboration between the police and CYPS in investigation and specialist interviewing. Reservations about how the collaboration affected families were expressed mainly by the Pacific Island workers, who highlighted the intimidation and fear experienced through involvement with police and officialdom.

Almost all the respondents disagreed with the suggestion that the relationship between abuser and victim should cause differentiation of agency responsibility. A central reason given was that, no matter who the perpetrator, there were likely to be risks and concerns for the family and child. Another was that, should difficulties and needs be identified later, it is much more difficult for a social worker to

establish rapport and address the issues quickly without the prior involvement.

A final common view was that the impact of the interviewing process is positive for children, though most experience some anxiety. This anxiety is greatly heightened without adequate preparation for the interviewing process and thorough assessment support work with the family.

Differences among respondents

Differences in opinions between groups were most marked in responses to the questions about, first, how the interviewing process affected families. Its impact was generally regarded as significant, but views varied on how beneficial this was. Pacific Island workers expressed the most concern, generally based on cultural factors. Specialist interviewers believed such difficulties are reduced by professionalism and clarity; it may be exactly these features, plus the association with officialdom and police, that contributes to the intimidation of Pacific Island families.

Social workers and interviewers differed somewhat in their view of the evidential weight to be given to the information gathered and the written report. Social workers seemed to see these outcomes as sufficient validation of the child's claims, or regard further validation as the province of the police and specialist interviewer. The specialist interviewers were more cautious, possibly because their involvement in the *process* stimulates more questioning than does the social workers' focus on *content* alone. Interviewers expressed their uncertainty about whether information about the abuse and safety and emotional issues gathered prior to or during the interview was sufficiently communicated to family members by social workers.

Third, although there was strong support for evidential videoing of interviews with physically abused children, there were different views on its impact. One viewpoint was that a child's disclosure on video has more impact for sexual than physical abuse, because the latter is more visible and therefore social workers tend to act more quickly, without needing videoed verification. Another view was that such a video presses home to a family

the seriousness of the physical abuse and how their child feels about it.

Issues on this question raised by the Pacific Island workers tended to be more complex and cultural than those identified by the Māori and Pākehā workers. The Pacific Island workers also registered concerns about the lack of cultural match between interviewer and family, and the difficulties inherent in the interviewing process generally.

Finally, some workers believed that when no disclosure is obtained the interview process still provides some benefit. Others have found that families are left with problematical uncertainty or even justification for their denial.

Conclusions

This study showed that there is a solid understanding amongst these particular workers of the purposes of the video unit, of the various uses that are served by the video, the written report and the information gathered through the specialist interviewing process, and of the separate roles of social workers and specialist interviewers. Both sets of workers were adamant that it is usually extremely beneficial. It was seen to clarify issues for the social worker and contribute to the family's understanding of their child's experience and needs.

However, it would seem that often the full potential of the interview process cannot be realised. Reasons for this include workloads, and subsequent lack of time and ready transport for social workers to bring families to the unit; a misconception about whose responsibility it is; the view that once the video is done it should be forgotten about or be seen simply as "evidence" for prosecution; and reluctance by workers to engage families in viewing the video because of possible difficulties (eg family still refusing to believe; being diverted by other issues). In South Auckland, the result appears to be a distinct gap between the beliefs and knowledge of the social workers and their practice. This may be a gap about which there is insufficient

awareness, possibly indicating the absence of an effective feedback channel within the system of relevant workers. With constant developments in the field and changes of staff, regular interdiscipline communication is absolutely essential.

The second central concern is that sometimes the video interviewing process can result in new and heightened stresses for a child and family, as when an unclear disclosure or a disclosure of intrafamilial abuse splits the family and leaves the child vulnerable to further victimisation. Such situations raise further protection and support issues which social workers need to consider thoroughly in their assessment.

The task of child risk assessment continues to be the primary and critical competency required of social workers. With increasing

emphasis on the expertise of specialist interviewers and the police in evidential interviewing, the respondents, like Wattam (1992, p.107), believe that the social worker's

...it would seem that often the full potential of the interview process cannot be realised.

role with the child and family "must be highlighted, strengthened, and very clear, if practice is to be child-centred". CYPS, via the child protection risk management project, appears to be recognising the need for a sound theoretical and practice base in child risk assessment. Training is a top priority if CYPS is to retain credibility as the agency charged with responsibility for the safety and protection of children.

From this evaluation, the joint agency approach would appear to have firm support in South Auckland. Both sets of workers have no wish to see their role eroded by abuse being categorised according to fiscally driven criteria that have no basis in research, when the result would be to divide up responsibilities and prevent some families from receiving the kind of support they might need.² There has been no evaluation of how well the objectives of the joint approach are met.

Strongly evident is the Pacific Island workers' lesser comfort with the specialist interviewing facilities and processes, relative

to the Pākehā and Māori workers. This does not mean that the Māori social workers have no reservations about the cultural environment of the unit. As English is the sole language used in specialist interviewing, there are questions concerning how the needs of children from kōhanga reo and kura kaupapa can be respected, and how the objectives of the video unit can be met for these children. However, it may be that the Pacific Island families' sense of alienation and intimidation is greater in the specialist interviewing context.

This issue has many implications for training of both the current Pākehā and hopefully future Pacific Island and Māori specialist interviewers, as well as for the location of the South Auckland unit, and the communication among all the workers involved.

Further examination of perceptions of the role of specialist interviewing is clearly needed. A question not directly addressed in the evaluation but essential to it is what workers see as the main purpose of evidential interviewing: to find out what if anything has happened to the child, or to provide evidence and elaboration of detail. Although validation analysis is a controversial area in itself, there is agreement in the literature generally that the interview with the child is only one, albeit extremely important, part of the overall validation data. Moreover, clear though everyone may be on the dual purpose of the interview, some confusion exists as to how and where it fits into the overall investigation and assessment process for social workers.

Another issue is the extension of the video interviewing process in the Auckland units beyond cases of alleged sexual abuse, and especially to physical abuse. While supported by the Crown Law Office, this extension has not been supported by policy or judicial directive.

Finally, gathering the child's account is intended to be a highly skilled and significant part of the care and protection investigation. If the process is managed inadequately, it may subsequently prove impossible to protect the child through prosecution of the offender. It may also limit the effectiveness of other

protection strategies such as convincing other family members of the need to protect their child. These issues should be the subject of responsible debate within the South Auckland CYPS area and between the relevant legal and police agencies. ■

Mary Dawson is the Managing Psychologist of Specialist Services (South Auckland), in which capacity she has supervised and managed the South Auckland evidential video unit. Previously, she has worked at the Child and Family Clinic of the Wellington Hospital Board and was a founding trustee of Wellington HELP. In the United Kingdom, she worked as a research psychologist at the Child Development Research Unit and as a senior psychologist for Nottingham Social Services.



Acknowledgments

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Notes

- 1 This evaluation was undertaken for a paper towards the Executive Diploma of Social Services Administration at Massey University. A copy of the full report, including literature review, a full record of respondents' views, and recommendations, is available for \$4 (to cover photocopying costs) from the author at Specialist Services (South Auckland), CYPS, PO Box 22-447, Otahuhu, Auckland.
- 2 In accord with this position, Jones, Aldgate, Sharland, Seal and Croucher (1993) found that families whose child had been abused outside of the home had many unmet needs for support and follow-up.

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Moving beyond the ambulance

Pam Smith outlines child abuse prevention in the light of a Southland programme

Child abuse education has been occurring in Southland over the last five years as part of an initiative taken by the local sexual abuse team and public health nurses. The aim of our programme has been to educate adults, especially those who work with children, to recognise indicators, signs, and symptoms of abuse, facilitate a disclosing environment and establish an appropriate reporting system.

The role of such education is acknowledged by education theorists as part of primary intervention, that is, the need to be more than "the ambulance at the bottom of the cliff". In times of heavy workloads and tighter targeting of resources such preventative work has, in my experience, had a much lower priority within CYPS. This may change however with the Service's recently created output aimed at public education in the child abuse area, and it is hoped local initiatives, such as this one, will then be able to fit into a bigger more coordinated picture.

The programme

Since mid-1990 we have run 22 programmes, aimed mainly at teachers, principals and early childhood education workers with on average 20-30 attending. We take a multi-disciplinary approach, with our presenting team including staff from CYPS, police, public health nurses and a child abuse counsellor. Typically our presentation includes information on types and signs and symptoms of abuse, a panel discussion on the different roles of workers, a role play and scenario of a child disclosing abuse, and aspects of establishing a policy on child protection for the school or early childhood centre. The seminars run from two hours to a full day, depending on the level of

information requested by the group.

Initially the programme targeted specific audiences and we prepared a day seminar which was re-run for each different interest group. The first seminar was for secondary school guidance counsellors and teachers, the second for early childhood educators, next community workers, etc. After this the individual agency or school usually requested a seminar be presented to their staff or workers. These were more informal presentations of about one to two hours. Requests also came from outside the "education" arena and included community groups such as church youth groups, and women's groups such as the Women's Division of Federated Farmers. These contacts often created discussions around a new awareness of the existence of abuse and the myths that surround it.

We learned that it is important for the presenters to establish clear learning objectives with those requesting the presentation so that an informed evaluation can be completed at the end of each session. Over the years seminar attendees developed from being non-specific about what they required, to being more directive and specific. This has been assisted by the requirement for schools to develop child abuse policies.

From 1990 to 1994 there was a steady increase in the number of notifications to the local CYPS office. Unfortunately no statistics are available prior to 1992 but in that year there were 648 cases rising to 686 during 1993. A drop to 534 reported cases was recorded in 1994. The trend from 1990 onwards however, was for a dramatic increase in the number of reported cases. It is unclear as to what extent the education programme affected the reporting but it would have assisted greatly in

the increased public awareness evident at the time. The reporting by schools has been more precise and relevant since establishing the programme and those reporting show a greater understanding of the follow-up process. Liaison with other agencies has also improved to a certain extent due to working together in an educative role.

Our group's decision to target the seminars to those in the education area is well explained by Breezer (1985):

In any major preventive effort to reduce the risk of violence against children and youth, the role of high impact social environments such as the school cannot be minimised.

The writers then go on to cite a reporting statistic which is supported by the experience of seminar presenters:

Statistics indicate that two-thirds of the victims of child abuse and neglect are school-age children, yet educators account for only one third of the reports.

Development of child abuse practice

It is useful to look at "home-grown" initiatives such as our local child abuse education programme and the new output of the Service, in the light of child abuse practice. Child abuse practice has its origins in the 1960s and 1970s when the rate of abuse was exposed and examined by the developing social work profession. At that stage the focus was on the individual behaviour of the offender and the effect of his/her actions on the victim.

Intervention, with its accompanying theories and models, stayed at this individual-psycho level until recently when the focus broadened to include wider sociopolitical areas (Corby 1987). Marie Connolly (1992) reflects the current thought of workers within this field of practice:

It seems to be that as workers in child protection we have a responsibility to work with both the personal and political.

She refers to the socialisation of young people in New Zealand, the effects of violence and the resulting abuse. She says there is a need to look at social influences but also to have a child focus.

Three stages of intervention

This fits with the prevention/intervention continuum aptly described by Renouf in Gray (1985) as being three stages of intervention - primary, secondary and tertiary. Primary is the proactive social change stage, secondary the early intervention support stage and tertiary the individual rehabilitation relief stage. James (1994) identifies primary as community education, secondary as at risk support programmes and tertiary as preventing re-abuse of children.

The day-to-day work carried out by social workers within CYPS can be seen to fit in the tertiary stage or working in a reactive way, whereas education programmes, such as the one run in Southland, can be seen as the primary

...the crisis intervention model should not stand alone but should be supported with other models of intervention...

stage or working in a proactive way. The reactive nature of tertiary intervention makes it difficult for staff to have the time or offices to have the money to address the number of incidents or improve the quality of worker intervention.

Social control

Statutory organisations, such as CYPS, which have legislative authority to intervene in the area of child abuse, have used the model of social control to secure the safety of the child. This model, which empowers the statutory worker to take action, also isolates statutory workers from other workers and disempowers or diminishes the responsibility of other adults in the child's life to take responsibility for their care and protection. Derrick (1993) states that social control creates dependency. In relating this to child abuse it means people become dependent on the statutory services to make changes. These changes, however,

currently remain at the individual intervention level rather than at the social change level of looking at the belief systems and structures in society which assist abuse to occur.

Complex interactions

Research has shown that there is no definitive model which explains what causes parents to abuse their children. Stewart (1993) cites Browne (1988) as stating that:

the causes of maltreatment lie within complex interactions between the environment, the child and the family.

Therefore the crisis intervention model should not stand alone but should be supported with other models of intervention and in this case social action or social change which involves the sociopolitical approach.

The role of education

Public education is therefore a start in the right direction. By informing and educating people you are empowering them with information. With this new information and awareness they can either accept the status quo, in this case child abuse, or challenge and change the systems and structures in society whether formal or informal, which allow or support the abuse to continue. As Derrick (1993) puts it:

Private troubles are in the main not so private. They are always in the final analysis the result of systems and structures that oppress.

The child abuse education programme is therefore an attempt at addressing child abuse through the primary intervention stage. By educating the adults who have daily contact with children we are firstly challenging them in their own beliefs and attitudes to not perpetuate any thought or action which assists abuse to occur. Second, we are assisting them to recognise indicators of abuse, and third informing them of what to do if they suspect abuse is occurring. An increase in reporting to CYPS has occurred since the commencement of this education programme, along with more concise notifications. The sharing of information and an awareness of each others roles has resulted in a better working

relationship between the child educator and the statutory worker.

At this point in time however an analysis of Southland's child abuse programme at the micro-level does show the need for several improvements, such as:

- ownership of the programme by one organisation and an overall coordinator;
- structured needs assessment identifying relevant organisations in the community and appropriate presenting material;
- upskilling of presenters;
- evaluation and monitoring of the programme including feedback from participants, measurement of any increase in notifications, changes in types of notifications, or changes in referring organisations.

This programme also has to be analysed alongside the wider national and government initiatives presently occurring. Typically what is happening at the micro-level is affected by the happenings and influences at the macro-level. With amended legislation directing this educative role be actioned by the Director-General of Social Welfare, it is hoped the local programme will be built on and strengthened. ■

Pam Smith is currently employed as a Supervisor of the team responsible for children in care at CYPS Invercargill office. She has worked for CYPS for ten years, six of which were spent as supervisor of the serious abuse team. She was instrumental in setting up the Southland evidential video unit.



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Artwork breaks the ice

Using artwork at Kingslea secure unit brings positive results, say **Anna Ah Kuoi** and team members Heather Fraser, Tai Estall, Angus Fisk and Karen Meadows

Working in a secure unit at a residential centre can have pressures and stresses all of its own. These are sometimes foreseeable in which case it is possible to plan for them. Others can be unknown and must be dealt with as they arise.

A recurring unknown is the level of interpersonal skills of young people in residence at any one time. Given that the backgrounds, ethnicity and affiliations represented can have both similarities and differences crucial to the group's ability to integrate, a volatile mix can occur. Our team sees these situations as a challenge to both our management skills and to our skills of empowerment. Managing the young people is only part of the job; the other is to empower them to begin to manage themselves.

As we have, it has been said, a "captive audience", programming is very important. One programme we use, which always gives surprising results, is our art programme. It provides opportunities for:

- young people who have difficulties communicating verbally to communicate through another medium;
- the possibility of empathy between clients;
- creativity;
- young people to explore themselves;
- staff to gain insight into clients' self esteem;
- establishing grounds for good staff/client relations;
- a good time; and
- acknowledgement.

Running the programme

The equipment required to run the programme is straightforward: paints, brushes, mixing trays, pencils, paper, old toothbrushes (as an alternative to paintbrushes!), a communal table covered with newspaper, and chairs. It also needs one staff member willing to share.

The staff member begins by giving a general background to modern art, for example explaining that some modern paintings do not look like anything but the artist who paints it can tell a story about it. By using colour, brush strokes, shapes, stories can be told.

The staff member then makes a "memory painting", usually on paper taped to the wall where all young people can see it: "My first memory is . . . so I will paint it yellow . . ." etc. This creates conversation and laughter. Before long it is possible to ask the young people "What is your first memory? How does it look in colour and shape?" It is not necessary to know the memory but generally towards the end of the painting session a young person will explain their painting in their own words.

Some young people who declined to participate initially do so as the programme progresses, and others, while not fully participating, take the opportunity to do some artwork. The times put to the young people as subjects for painting are at a general level - for example, first memory, pre-school, starting school, 10 or 11 years old (as some young people start intermediate school), the first time I got in trouble, where I am now and how do I see the future. Anything more in-depth is unsuitable for this setting.

Usually these sessions become chatty, humorous and very relaxed; some young people

even end up finger painting. Barriers between young people begin to melt as some similarities in their background are seen and appreciated. Once the “memory trail” is finished the young people are offered more paper to create artwork for their rooms.

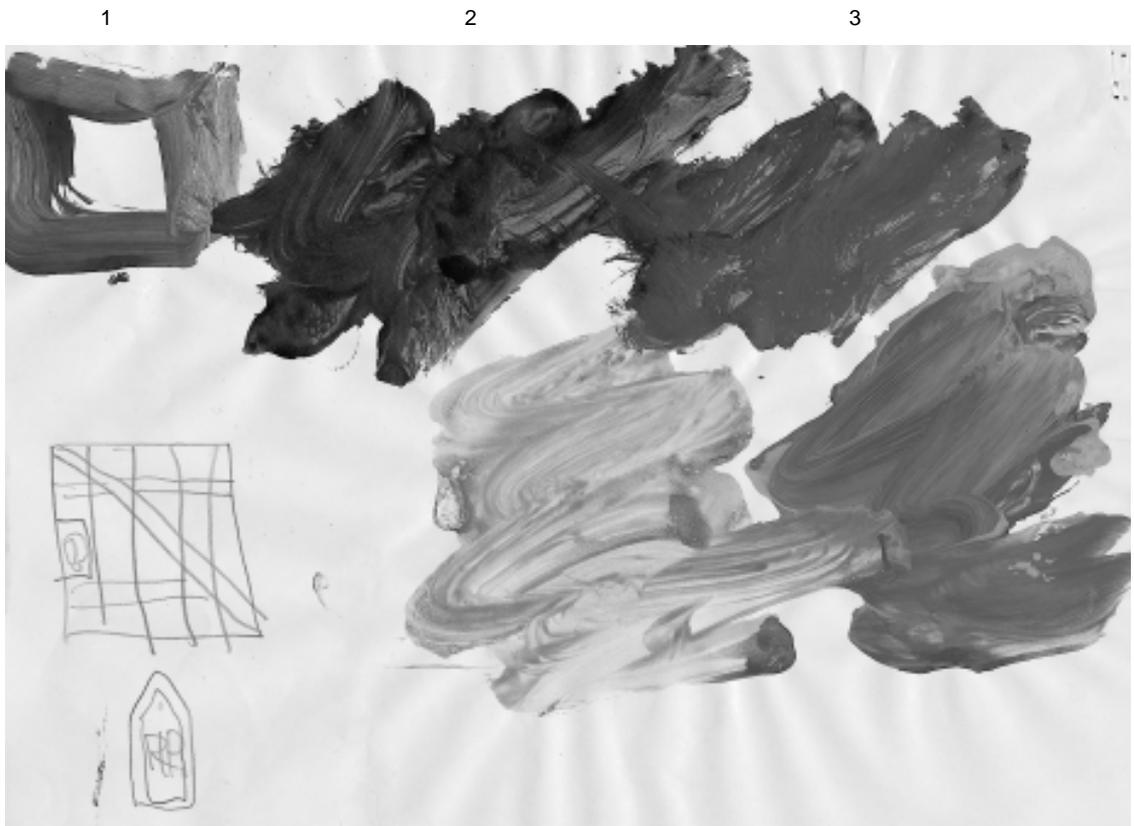
Quiet background music can create a soothing atmosphere as long as staff choose it. This is also an opportunity to introduce a new experience: Spanish guitar instead of rap.

Conclusion

Quite often in residence there can be 10 to 12 young people who do not know one another, are mistrustful and feel isolated. They are also frequently faced with compulsion or pressure to take part in specialist treatment. Without an excessively psychological approach, this programme can establish a basis for acceptable social interactions between young people, for talking about themselves without fear, and for

Figure 1: Example of artwork from the programme. This young person could/would not remember anything prior to ten years of age.

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| Top left: | 1 | First time in trouble - blue square - policeman
white centre - policeman's ethnicity |
| Top right: | 2/3 | Life at school and pre-teen - black and brown |
| Bottom right: | 4 | Life after school - bright pink |
| | 5 | The person whom the young person offended against, resulting in him
being where he is at the moment - yellow - Asian |
| Bottom left: | 6 | The future - a cell door and coffin - pencil |



1

2

3

4

6

5

group work more generally. Their feelings of isolation disappear when they receive empathy from peers and acknowledgment from staff, and when other young people tell their story of a less than perfect childhood. It is also common for two or more young people to find that they have lived in the same area, which then gives them an acceptable subject to discuss.

Thanks for the opportunity to share, on behalf of my team. ■



Anna Ah Kuoi is a Residential Social Worker with the national secure unit, Kingslea Resource Centre. She has a diploma in special education teaching, is finishing her BEd, and is enrolled to study psychology.

Contested adoptions: research, law, policy and practice

edited by **Murray Ryburn**

Ashgate Publishing Ltd (1994)

Reviewed by Fay Acker

This book is made up of contributions by 12 authors from the social work and legal professions, and is about situations where there are applications to dispense with the rights of birth parents or guardians to the adoption of their children. In the majority of the cases discussed, the children have been removed from their birthparents' care because of care and protection concerns. The book relates to English practice and law where there has been a 35 percent increase in such adoptions between 1988 and 1991. It reflects an era of permanency planning which was prevalent in New Zealand in the early-mid 1980s, but which is no longer a legally favoured option.

The first four chapters of the book focus on legal issues and changes brought about by the Children's Act 1989 and a current review of the adoption law in England. The authors look at the need to bring adoption laws in line with other laws pertaining to the care of children. Does this sound familiar? They suggest different approaches and methods of providing permanency for children which retain their links with birth families. They point out the need for practitioners and courts to stop seeing adoption as the only means of gaining permanency for children. I found these chapters difficult to follow at times because of my unfamiliarity with the English laws and terms.

Chapter five onwards concentrates on the effects these adoption proceedings have on those involved. The use of case studies to illustrate points added interest to the facts. The chapter which looks at the welfare of the child focuses on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child which was ratified by the United Kingdom in 1991. It discusses the principles in the convention which are essential to consider in relation to adoption law and practice.

From a New Zealand social work perspective, it is the chapter on 'Issues of attachment,

separation and identity in contested adoptions' that is the most valuable, not only for adoption social workers but for social workers working in the permanency area. This chapter discusses the concept of attachment and the relevant psychological literature. It then considers the possible effects of separation or disrupted attachment on children of various ages, before looking at the assessment of strength of attachment and the effects of separation anxiety. There is also a specific section on ethnic identity and the effects of transracial placements on children's acceptance and understanding of their own ethnicity.

Overall this book clearly points out that permanency practices in regard to children need to change, giving families and the child themselves more involvement in planning for the future. As it stands now, decisions are made by the "professionals" and courts, often without consulting birth families. More than once the comment is made that the courts accept that the "experts" know best - making decisions about a child's future based on what they perceive are the child's needs and completely ignoring the child's rights.

While not exactly the sort of book that one would read cover to cover, *Contested Adoptions* does lend itself to a skim through and a concentration on the sections that spark one's interest. Certain sections would also provide a valuable reference source for practitioners confronted by complex adoption situations.

Social Work in Action

edited by **Robyn Munford** and **Mary Nash**

Dunmore Press, New Zealand (1994)

Reviewed by Jill Kennard

It is refreshing and heartening to read a book that so comprehensively explores the New Zealand social work scene. This is an exciting and readable book which fills a gap in New Zealand social work literature. The editors have put together twenty four chapters, written by social workers and educators about their own practice, theoretical frameworks, and current issues. Many of the chapters relate directly to social work within CYPS, and a number are written by CYPS social workers.

The first section sets the scene by exploring the professionalisation of social work in New Zealand and the developments in education that have accompanied this. Social work in voluntary organisations is explored and there is a very good chapter on the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act. As well as looking at the historical and cultural framework, Garry Cockburn examines the various elements that have already impacted on the implementation of the Act, and takes a look into the future.

Six chapters of the book provide "cultural insights". John Bradley writes about 'Iwi and the Mātua Whāngai Programme' which explores the evolution of mātua whāngai and how it is interwoven with traditional and modern Māori society. Other chapters deal with Māori development and the concept of whānau. Two chapters take a very honest look at the issues that arise for Pacific Island social workers who are employed by CYPS. Lita Foliaki writes about being a Tongan social worker in the Pacific Island community, and Paula Masoe Tulele writes of the inherent conflicts she experiences as a Samoan and a statutory social worker.

Eleven chapters are devoted to a wide range of practice areas. These are excellent and provide a comprehensive look at different programmes and perspectives. Several chapters consider social work with people with disabilities, and Sue Townshend sets out a challenging framework for working with deaf people. Other writers look at abortion counselling, a feminist contribution to social work, foster care and Jim Depree describes how he has developed and used Michael White's ideas of family intervention. I was particularly interested in Pie Bowden's description of the Parentline Manawatu programme for working with abusing mothers.

The final four chapters consider some of the perspectives that impact on clients and social workers. Mike O'Brien explores the effects of poverty, policy and class on practice, while Richard Shaw revisits radical social work and looks at some of the New Zealand issues.

This is an excellent book, all about social work that is being done now, in New Zealand. It explores the professional environment we all work in, and the ideas and programmes that our colleagues are developing. This book should be on

every bookshelf and should be compulsory reading for every social worker.

Children living with domestic violence: Putting men's abuse of women on the child care agenda

edited by **Audrey Mullender and Rebecca Morley**

Whiting & Birch (1994)

Reviewed by Valerie Couper

Children Living with Domestic Violence is a collection of material from more than 20 authors, two of whom, Rebecca Morley and Audrey Mullender, have edited the book. The contributing authors all have extensive experience in working with domestic violence and child abuse.

The sub-title of this book more accurately reflects the content, than does its main title. The authors argue the case for a "new agenda" for those involved in the protection of children. The basis of this new agenda is that "Women (mother) protection is frequently the most effective form of child protection". This approach is new, they argue, because traditional approaches to child protection have tended to underrate or overlook the link between domestic violence and child abuse.

The first five chapters of the book review studies and other literature to establish the link between violence on women and the abuse of children. In so doing the authors challenge some of the basic assumptions, values and beliefs which underpin traditional approaches to child protection and domestic violence.

The concepts of the cycle of violence and intergenerational transmission of violence are challenged as being too simplistic and unproductive in that they allow the "minimisation of men's responsibility for their actions" and fail to address "the social context of gender and generational politics which underpin these actions".

According to the authors the tendency to blame mothers for the abuse, when they themselves are terrorised by abuse, is "deeply ingrained" in both male and female professionals. This blaming of

women is facilitated by social conditioning and the fact that the mother is generally much more accessible, less powerful, and less threatening to the worker than her violent partner. Children are often removed from the mother because of the abuse, implying further institutional abuse of the child. A more positive response, the book argues, is to protect both women and children from the abusive partner leaving the mother free to care for the children.

The notion that fathers are essential to healthy families comes under scrutiny as does the assumption that contact with the noncustodial parent is always beneficial to the child. The authors argue that access has been viewed as "father's right" rather than "child's right" with the feeling and wishes of mothers and the children themselves often being overlooked as a heresy against father's rights. "Women who fear for the safety of their children during access feel unable to express this for fear of being regarded as malicious or totally unreasonable".

I found these issues particularly relevant in my work as a writer of custody court reports. There is a section in chapter eight which explicitly addresses report writing. Again priority is focused on the importance of an awareness of domestic violence and its implications for children.

The authors also discuss cross-cultural issues as they relate to domestic violence. Sensitivity to these is relevant to New Zealand, however the discussion about new British legislation for child protection and the effect of local body housing policies, is less so.

The book goes on from chapter 10 to a discussion of work with children in the setting of womens' refuges, and with child victims and potential perpetrators. Education programmes for the prevention of women and child abuse are also discussed and to some extent evaluated.

While this latter half of the book was of less direct interest to me, it may well prove interesting and informative for those working in a refuge setting or working directly with victims of abuse.

Children Living With Domestic Violence tends to portray women as good, men as evil. This is possibly inevitable as the authors are attempting to redress what they regard as the gender imbalance of the previous "agenda" for child pro-

tection. The "new agenda" seems rather simplistic and the authors do not address the situation frequently encountered by social workers where, for whatever reason, a woman cannot be freed from the abusive situation, thereby leaving the child in a continuing "at risk" situation.

Despite these hesitations, I found the issues raised in this book challenging and thought-provoking. I would recommend it to anyone working in the area of child protection. It seems particularly relevant in the current New Zealand climate of increasing sensitivity to the issue of domestic violence.

New Families: Reviving and creating meaningful bonds

by **C Margaret Hall**

Haworth Press, New York (1994)

Reviewed by Kathy Masters

Sociologist Margaret Hall wrote this book based on 22 years of clinical work and research with American families. In seeking to understand how families work best, and under what conditions family members are most satisfied, she developed the identity empowerment theory. Based on ten basic sociological concepts, identity empowerment theory describes and explains significant links among different aspects of interdependency. Hall uses this theory to make sense of the individual's relationships within their families, and to assist people to become "healthily interdependent rather than unhealthily overdependent in family relationships".

This book provides both an analysis of families and a practical guide to improving family relationships. Hall begins with an overview of the broader social trends and shifts which impacted on families over the last few decades. She describes the move towards new family structures that have occurred since the end of the second world war. "New families", as distinct from both traditional and nuclear families, display more flexible gender roles, minimal authority structures and more fluid and open relationships. "New families" are able to perpetuate themselves and

thrive despite the stresses of highly industrialised society. Hall goes on to explore why families are so important to us and why we need to solve family dilemmas that would otherwise limit our freedom.

Hall suggests ways we can improve our contact with our own families thereby creating and strengthening new family characteristics. These include generating family trees and family histories, participating in family reunions and celebrations, and getting in touch with distant relatives. She outlines typical crises and issues which can arise in families and proposes strategies for addressing these in ways which improve and repair family relationships. Hall asserts throughout the book that it is only by knowing our family and interacting with them in healthy, constructive ways that we become fully functioning adults capable of reaching our potential.

While promoting healthy interaction within families, Hall does not explore how this is achieved in families where abuse has occurred or is occurring. A useful tool if you are specifically seeking to improve the quality of your own family relationships, I believe this book would have limited application to work undertaken at CYPS. It is an interesting and, at times, thought-provoking book, however overall I found it a disappointing read.

Strengthening high risk families: A handbook for practitioners

by **Lisa Kaplan** and **Judith L Girard**
Macmillan, New York (1994)

Reviewed by Jennifer O'Connor

I wanted to know if this easily read, reasonably short handbook written in the United States had relevance for New Zealand social work practitioners. I was surprised by the similarities of terrain, with many issues and obstacles in common for social workers in both countries.

Concerns of priority in children's mental health are cited and include some pertinent references to poverty and social structures that trap families in various modes of dysfunctionality. The

hazards of equating placement-prevention with success are not missed by these apparently sometimes contentious "family preservation" authors. While adhering to the family systems theory perspective, there is a familiarity in problems with government funding and adequate supply of appropriate community resources - though from the handbook's description, it seems the United States is somewhat ahead of New Zealand in resourcing family-based social work. These workers are considerably advantaged by small caseloads and spend much time and energy "collaborating" solutions in partnership with families. It is considered crucial that the same amount of money and effort be spent on reunification as on an out-of-home placement.

The handbook emphasises cultural competency and the challenge for practitioners to truly embrace a diversity of intervention. Included alongside many subculture groups are those with HIV/AIDS and differing sexual orientations.

"Authenticity, sincerity and informality" and a conviction that families deserve respect, have strengths, and can make changes in their lives, are offered as the hallmarks of family preservation work, and the role is for the worker to help "families gain access to their power, not giving them power" and "thus service delivery is highly individualised to these multiple need families". While noting that not all families are suitable for preservation work, some families that might be seen as irretrievable, are tackled by these preservation workers.

This book makes many important points such as "evaluations must be expanded to measure changes in 'family' dynamics" and the interaction between the family and the community are integral to reunification. This is a shift from focusing on child outcomes. In linking with the community it is valuable for workers from various agencies to ensure they are offering a recognisably coordinated service. Reference to special issues when working with domestic violence are pragmatic and informative as is the general tone of this conscientious book. Special mention is also made of workers keeping themselves safe as a practice priority.

Who could or should be reading this book? Those who may want to find a more personal philosophical framework for sound practice, will

find the handbook interesting and supportive. So too will those who are new to social work and want to understand more of the issues for families for social work practice. Many practitioners could find the assessment tools, treatment strategies and counselling ideas geared for high risk families not only well apportioned but practical, optimistic and well-presented. These have been based upon a range of extensive and effective experience, in what is a very difficult area of work. I would like to suggest all social workers glance through this book for relevant chapters of interest. ■

The reviewers

Fay Acker Adoptions Social Worker, CYPS Invercargill.

Jill Kennard Practice Consultant, CYPS Masterton (on secondment from Wellington Adoption Information Services Unit).

Valerie Couper Social Worker, CYPS Invercargill.

Kathy Masters Supervisor Youth Justice and Caregivers, CYPS Palmerston North.

Jennifer O'Connor Social Worker, CYPS Dargaville.

The above books are available from either the Competency Library, or general DSW Library, Private Bag 21, Wellington. If you are interested in reviewing books for *Social Work Now*, contact the editor with your area of expertise.

Social Work Now

Aims

- to promote discussion of social work practice in CYPS;
- to encourage reflective and innovative social work practice;
- to extend practice knowledge in any aspect of adoption, care and protection, residential care and youth justice practice;
- to extend knowledge in any child, family or related service, on any aspect of administration, supervision, casework, group work, community organisation, teaching, research, interpretation, inter-disciplinary work, or social policy theory, as it relates to professional practice relevant to CYPS.

Social Work Now

Information for contributors

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Contributions are welcomed from social workers, other CYPS staff and professionals working within the wider field. Articles can include accounts of innovatory workplace practice, case reports, research, education, review articles, conference and workshop reports or be written specifically for one of the regular columns ie innovations, legal note or book reviews. We are also interested in short and medium-length pieces as well as long articles.

The guidelines listed below are a detailed summary of our editorial requirements. If you would like to discuss any aspect of them please get in touch with the editor.

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