



National Centre for Excellence in Residential Child Care

A political economy of Residential Child Care

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“...justice versus welfare, ideology becomes more significant than empirical evidence”

“ ...personal or local experience made general, and assumptions that may have persisted without a critical analysis for decades becom(e) a cultural account that develops deep psychological resonance”.

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Introduction – the immediate and the reactive persist – history repeats - to break the cycle we have to ‘do different’

In the heated discussions regarding operational matters concerning residential child care options for looked after children the call for some space for wider reflection has not yet proven successful.

Rigorous analysis has been constrained by an immediacy and reactive perspective. Discussions have been underpinned by interpretations of the limited data and research base itself already limited by small funding over the years. Alongside have been personal or local experience made general, and assumptions that may have persisted without a critical analysis for decades becoming a cultural account that develops deep psychological resonance.

The persistence of these assumptions is remarkable. We might see these assumptions as examples of Isabel Menzies-Lyth’s ‘organisational defences against anxiety’ where we hold to what we think is a correct view or practice with uncompromising resistance to crumbling even in the face of unquestionable evidence to the contrary.

In such a climate it is unsurprising that little attention has been given to the lessons that might be learned from studying the historical development of the sector.

This document is a first step towards reclaiming some reflective capacity as it sketches a political economy of residential child care aiming to identify the actual historical development and the effects of their financing on provision and thereby to encourage further analysis and dialogue.

In the writing of this document it becomes clear that far from progressing we have remained caught in the same cycles such that the history of past failure can easily be our future. The repetition of the same thinking is notable as the decades have passed. Though addressing needs of vulnerable children in diverse ways, many described as radical or ground-breaking, there has not been a shift in the way we think, this is still circumscribed by our history. The early provision and even the subsequent attempts at enlightened new ways have been driven by expediency, by the wish to ameliorate the worst excesses of society.

Single remedial interventions, often the work of charities or philanthropically financed, have been many and the national scatter of the smaller of them is often the result of the founders' locations and financing. The history of the larger charities shows individual moves to a national response with services and sites across the country.

Equally there have been developments at national and local Government levels in education, care, justice and health services, often these have been separate from each other, and from the non-statutory sector.

In short until the regional planning of 1969 there was no comprehensive response and this proved to be a short-lived interruption to the repetition, brought down by the resurgent themes of cost, and outcomes.

The history of failure is not the future. It is not a case of more for less – the same but cheaper, or less for more – more specialism but less of it, the ambition and hope for early intervention having proved effective. The investment of hope in early intervention as a means to deflect from becoming cases of enduring need may be a repeated cycle. Previous turns of the wheel have shown that those children and families that are responsive for early intervention are not those that need higher level interventions.

Numerous studies have shown that through a thorough analysis of need a sophistication and diversity of responses are required. Where accepted and acted upon there is the development of the required specialism, safety and choice. This brings a consequential tension in the system, ever greater if these are required to be local. If achieved, and many attempts drop at initial financial scrutiny, the sustaining of this level of response is precarious at best for most of the time until it falls into decline.

With finite budgets understandably discussions turn to affordability, thresholds, effectiveness. Recalling the 'organisational defences against anxiety' we should at least be aware that these criteria rise from the lingering historical concepts of the 'deserving' and 'idle' poor. Equally they can be seen to be a defence through a disbelief in the truly gruesome experiences perpetrated on some young people. Financial realities and unconscious dynamics merge in a continual reaction that sabotages what has been patiently built as appropriate responses to unmet needs.

If we are to break the cycle we have to 'do different' and plan locally, regionally and nationally. In the history of residential child care we have had one period where such planning was observable, during the brief period of regional planning. More often, the different sectors of care, education, justice and health developed a network of resources at a lower level of needs but there was little connectedness across.

The aim is to show we need to revise the Sufficiency and Diversity duty to focus on Specificity and Sustainability. This will need to get an audit of need aggregated across LAs so we can map what is needed and where. We can get the right child in the right place at the right time. Then the data can be made public and LAs and providers can work together to produce a strategy that facilitates ensured occupancy, workforce development, social work and psychological support.

Lessons from history¹

The Poor Law of 1531 had no mention of children but soon came the start of an educative model designed to train and rescue children from a future of vagrancy but only after some decades was the distinctive provision for children beneath 14 years old.

The localism of the Poor Law met various misfortunes; workhouses, prisons, hospitals, asylums, barracks, boarding schools, industrial schools, refuges and homes for the poor. The discouraging level of 'relief' acted as deterrence. The 'deterrence' ethic was based on the idea that support was not assumed to be a municipal responsibility.

Local 'boards of guardians' began to remove children from the workhouse to 'workhouse schools', often with cottage homes. The education and training of skilled labour was seen as the means to break the cycle of pauperism.

By the 1850s, courts were able to commit offending children to reformatory or industrial schools set up by philanthropic bodies. What we would now call the Statement of Purpose and the thresholds for access started from what we now call being on the edge of 'care' at this time encompassed the grounds of sensibilities, moralities, being parentless, begging or gang membership.

¹ This section has been informed by many personal communications especially David Lane, Keith White, Roy Grimwood, Andrew Kendrick, Richard Rollison, and the work of Jim Hyland for www.childrenwebmag.org.uk (now archived as part of Therapeutic Care Journal)

Although nearly all were established by philanthropic bodies they were almost wholly financed by Home Office grants resulting weak gatekeeping which would not change until the 1969 Children Act was passed with Local Authorities assuming both parental responsibility and responsibility for provision. Financing of places was *per capita*, in today's terms 'spot purchased'. As we will see in the focus on Children's Homes with Education (CH(E)s later the system would change to 'block purchasing'. The Home Office, believed that the per capita system encouraged an over provision, that it retained children beyond what was necessary and that there was a reluctance to discharge them on licence. These are all themes that persist today. In some cases additional funds came from local education authorities and public assistance committees for certain individual children, but only in the case of the industrial schools which, as we will see later, become approved schools.

The latter half of the 19th century saw a number of voluntary children's organisations emerge and, with them, the residential home. Their financing was of four kinds:

- Donations from wealthy patrons
- Income from money raising endeavours amongst supporters, usually those of the same religious persuasion
- Sponsorship of individual children, often by concerned middle class ladies
- Payments from boards of guardians that, for one reason or another, could not or did not wish to use their own institutions.²

The first two of these sources might be regarded as supporting a collective provision, such as a home, whilst the other two were tied to individual children often tied to 'boarding-out' (later called fostering) of younger children whilst the homes took on the business of training. The large children's homes were sometimes in towns, when a large house became available, but new builds were often in the countryside, to get away from the debilitating effects of the cities.

These were *voluntary* societies. Local authorities did not provide homes in the way that was done by the voluntary societies; 'boarding out' was a preferred option. Voluntary societies were increasingly attracted to foster care. It was seen as was more efficacious than a residential resource in providing 'love'. In addition to it being a more economic use of funds fostering would be developed in response to the criticism that 'institutional' residential life resulted in poor outcomes – another notion that lingers today, despite the data of children's homes in England compliance with national minimum standards being 95% adequate or better, according to successive annual reports from the chief inspector. There were concerns over the educational outcomes in the schools too, yet another theme that persists though now there seems to be data that might provide challenge to this assumed knowledge.

The location of homes was influenced by five factors:

² Roy Parker personal communication

- land and building costs (property was cheaper outside cities and large towns) – a reversal of the current theme
- longstanding conviction that rural locations were better for the health of children, away from urban squalor and unsafe areas) – this theme is current today
- by patrons' gifts of property and/or land – today determined by investment usually now from the financial sector so not necessarily 'ideal' but 'advisable'
- the wish to place children as far away from abuse, trauma or neglect from families, friends or familiars – today the theme of distance as a protective factor has been turned around on itself not to be of specialism, safety and choice but to be 'a long way from home'
- The emphasis upon agricultural training – a theme that has ended with industrial mechanized approaches to farming

As information of available resources increased especially as to enlightened methods of intervention, the voluntary societies had no shortage of referrals made to them as compared with the workhouse or the industrial schools. In 1889, legislation allowed courts to place children whose parents were abusive with voluntary societies. Attracting funds required what would not be called marketing; 'saving' children needed larger buildings as a symbol of sustained success; greater numbers and more homes led to further funds coming in. Children did not return home. Numbers had to be finite, but turning children away could affect how the success of the home was evaluated by benefactors. Preventative work and fostering had no such attraction in this age.

Child care provision was a 'vocation'. Staff were paid little. Later, when religious commitment declined, and with other employment opportunities available, the provision of residential child care would increase in cost and the reduction in provision begin.

By the 1890s, the boards of guardians had changed their composition including more women, self-made men and the guilds of the labouring classes.

The Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and Relief of Distress 1905-09 investigated on behalf of Parliament how the Poor Law should be changed. Its Minority report saw the Poor Law as failing because they were 'destitution authorities'. There was consensus that the Poor Law should not continue in its current form and led to progressive aspects developing such as children not being within workhouses. . In yet another foreshadowing of today changes were implemented by administration rather than legislation.

The Local Government Board took a central responsibility for the Poor Law and thereafter the number of bodies providing voluntary homes declined and the large ones that remained depended increasingly upon payments from boards of guardians that, after 1929, became the public assistance committees. The 1933 Act further

distanced children from the Poor Law. Reformatory and Industrial schools became Approved Schools, remand homes and the beginnings of a procedure that can be seen as the origin of current inspection practice and organisation introduced.

The decline of voluntary organisations reflected changed economic circumstances. Lloyd George's introduction of personal income tax, the waning of religious zeal (particularly in the evangelical movement), the disappearance, in the first decade of the century, of almost all the charismatic leaders of the voluntary 'child saving' organisations and the inter-war years of economic depression that generally reduced 'giving', especially amongst the middle classes.

Numbers in public care fell during the 1920s, the result of a falling birth rate and mass unemployment, obliging the Government to assume more responsibility for the workless; as a consequence, fewer families met Poor Law terms. This should have led to the closure of children's homes, and though many did close, others took their place. As small boards of guardians were abolished their work was gradually taken on by local authorities homes with new expectations of child care beyond shelter, food, bed and training, and as direct counters to neglect and abuse. There was a new zest for quality, usually achieved by investment in smaller homes as a response to the criticisms of 'institutional' life.

The earlier years of the 20th century saw the rise of administration rather than evangelism as promoters of the provision of residential options for children. Central government began to inspect and register, and to lay regulations that would be built on in later decades.

The 1948 Act directed care to be in the child's best interests and to afford the opportunity for the proper development of character and abilities. The 3 key residential options were assessment centres, family group homes (the origin of the ordinary home in the ordinary street), and Approved Schools.

It is salutary to note that until 1948 and the start of the new children's departments being established in local authorities the residential sector was almost wholly voluntary and religious in character. It was a time of a new societal settlement, of the welfare state starting. It was only now that care could be separated from the need for cash to ensure the provision survived. Local authorities began to build their own homes, funding their running costs, though they still paid for places in voluntary homes. There began an increased focus on 'boarding-out' not just as overspill. The first national training programme for 'child care officers' was established, although there was no equivalent programme for residential care staff.

How things developed between 1948 and the mid-1980s can be seen in the case study of one of the settings of the 1948 Act, the Approved School/CH(E). There are numerous themes, echoes of our times can be observed.

A lesson that emerges from the next section is that if we are able to recognise that we are nearing the point of replicating the loss of provision. This time we stand to lose an entire sector of provision. If we want to carry on with the positives that residential options can bring to improved outcomes for children in care then we need to 'do different.'

A political economy - Approved Schools and CHEs ³

The Approved School system emerged from the Industrial and Reform Schools. They were to provide education in small groups but within a larger institution. There were disagreements as to the origin of the children's needs. Some held to the customary analysis that had motivated the Poor Law deterrence that their needs were the result of feckless families. Others sided with the revision of these views some four decades before with the Royal Commission on the Poor Law recognising structural failure as an element of the problem of involuntary poverty requiring a care and welfare response. There was agreement that Approved Schools were to provide education in small groups but within a larger institution, and guidance as to morals, and health and recreation. There was a clear training element to boost the ability to live with others and to cope with personal problems, self-respect and self-reliance.

The Home Office was the central government department which had overall responsibility for the Approved Schools.

Children could be admitted to an Approved School for the following reasons:

- If found guilty of an offence which, in the case of an adult, would be punishable with imprisonment.
- Children who were found to be in need of care, protection or control, including children against whom offences had been committed.
- A child in care who was unmanageable and the placement was not meeting needs
- A child or young person under the supervision of a Probation Officer, and brought back to the Court because of behaviour.
- Where the Local Authority, as a 'fit person', thought the child in care should be sent to a school and the Court agreed,
- A child who ran away from the care of a fit person.
- Those who had been brought before the Court for failure to attend school.

Half the costs were met by the local authority, the other by the Treasury. The Courts set an amount to be paid by the child's parents, but this relatively small amount was difficult and expensive to collect. The responsibility for collection rested with the local authorities who were allowed to retain 10% of the amount to offset expenses.

Foreshadows of today can be seen in the many concerns that whirled around the Approved Schools. The major concern of the Home Office was the need to keep the costs of the Schools to a minimum whilst ensuring consistent good child care. One can

³ This section draws its historical thread heavily from the excellent articles by Jim Hyland that were included in the Children Webmag now archived with the Therapeutic Care Journal. The notes and discussion are the authors'.

read this as a continuing theme throughout all alternative to family care for children and young people. Yet another the desire for higher professional and material standards despite this bringing the potential for improved staff salaries,

There was pressure for Payment By Results, a debate even at this time. There were differences of perspective over the significance and interpretation of success rate figures. Official figures showed a steady decline but the reality was more complex. A simply view seemed to suggest reconviction rates could be a measure. A sophisticated view asked if this was sufficiently robust if it took little account of the amount of after-care support a young person received, and if it excluded minor offences receiving conditional discharges and fines. Most attending were boys though girls were often there for care and control reasons with their success rate remaining fairly constant

The Curtis Report (1946), commented on the value of Approved School services for children who they reported as unmanageable in ordinary children’s homes.

In our times the current discussion is over residential placements being a ‘last resort’ resulting from the necessity of sequential use of fostering placements before residential child care is accessed, placement being determined by default of all other options rather than by design and assessment. Looking at the time of the Curtis Committee allows us to see that these are not new debates but ones that come to different stages of resolution, though never final, depending on the various actors involved and scenario they are playing.

These are seen in the debates between Bowlby and Winnicott surrounding the Curtis Committee and report can be summarised as follows and characterise the division we have been suffering from ever since.

Bowlby	Winnicott
Circumstance, character, disposition of parents	Internal disposition of infant
Quality of care central to infant experience of self and world is objective – immediate cause and explanation of later character, disposition and behaviour of child	Infant experience is objective and subjective – environment is proximate
Emphasis on extrapsychic as formative of internal	Emphasis on intrapsychic
<i>Effects</i> of absence and loss	Affects – the <i>experience</i> of loss
Emphasize preventive over remedial	Imaginative recreation was possible

– concentrate on home life	
‘Better a bad home than a substitute home’	Non-family settings (hostels) – residential care as therapy
Delinquency as pathology to be removed	Delinquency as sign of hope to be understood
Child to demonstrate concern	Society to demonstrate concern

The Ingleby report (1960) saw that children admitted to the schools often had a long history of difficult and anti-social behaviour and that many had been subject to other forms of treatment which had failed. Some children were also behind their peers in their educational attainments and had suffered from emotional disturbances. Many had been removed from what we might now call ‘troubled families’ to which they still remained loyal.

Ingleby concluded that “no such order shall be made unless the Court is satisfied that the need of protection or discipline evidenced before it cannot be met without removal from home”. However it also saw that, if the welfare of the child is the paramount intervention, it should not be limited by the need to wait until one or more factors had been established and that the system has strengths when it was seen as ‘wide enough to cover virtually all cases where there may be good cause for intervention’. Another echo, the concern about the rise in looked after children.

There are other echoes and tensions too. Distance from home, for example, was seen by some as a positive born out of a confidence in the value and efficacy of provision. For example Borghat stated ‘It is better by far to send a boy away to be brought up a good citizen than to leave him indelibly impressed with the mark of a sordid home environment, probably to add to such conditions himself when he reaches manhood. Other voices were upholding the duty to restore those received into care to their own natural home.

In the early 1960s Approved Schools despite tensions future appeared secure.

New ideas in child care would erode this security. ‘Structured living with training opportunities’ were compared to psychiatric and psychologically based interventions just as to today we make comparisons with multi-dimensional, systemic, cognitive behavioural approaches.

Cultural factors were changing. At this time an increased acknowledgement of the significance of individuality, and today a greater focus on the family.

The learning here is that an underpinning philosophy and the practice, developed over decades to meet the elemental needs of a small percentage of the young people’s population, can become at odds with those of society.

There was the return of perceived falling success rates led to the questioning of the need for children and young people to be removed from home. Again its twin concern appeared, the growing costs of maintaining Approved Schools. As in the debate between early and specialist intervention today critics of the system believed that the money spent on sending children to the Schools could be better spent on preventative and other child care services. There is one difference. This debate being in the 1960's period of affluence, there was little concern as there was to be later (and today), about the drain on the public purse and the need to reduce both central and local government spending. During that period, the money seemed to flow relatively easily, as the increased expenditure on buildings and staff salaries testify.

The Children and Young Persons Act 1963 was a significant moment where directions changed. It marked a new attitude, a final moving away from the paternalistic protective child-oriented attitude to positive and skilled family-centred casework. Removal of children from home could be countenanced only when they required the particular kind of care and help which the children's department could give only by placing him elsewhere.

A change of Government resulted in a more radical approach to social issues. This was reflected in the field of delinquency, in the White Paper, *The Child, The Family and The Young Offender* (Home Office, 1965). This paper was based on the emerging climate of opinion following the publication of the Ingleby (1960), Kilbrandon (1964), and Longford (1964) reports on juvenile delinquency.

There was general agreement by the three Committees about the nature of the problems that needed to be addressed. The differences came not in the solutions they suggested, but rather in the priority which each gave to them.

- Ingleby suggested the long-term solution might be the re-organisation of the various services concerned with the family into a unified family service.
- Longford argued that change was needed 'now' as the first step in the establishment of a new family service.
- Kilbrandon had similar thoughts, "The existing statutory social services concerned with children's problems should be reorganised into a new comprehensive local department - the social education department".

All stressed the parental role and the assistance needed to aid them in carrying this out. All pointed to the need for the integration of existing services and all emphasised prevention. Ingleby argued for the improvement of the existing structures to achieve these ends, Longford and Kilbrandon urged more radical measures.

The White Paper's major impact on Approved Schools would be that provision for the under 16 year-olds would be assimilated into a range of residential services available for children at the disposal of the local authority.

Observing the movement from one paradigm to another in children's services is to see that there are years of rational discussion and a single inciting factor that propels

matters forwards. For Approved Schools this was the Court Lees affair in 1968 which began with a letter to a newspaper expressing concern over care and welfare at the school. Just as today, the incident would be a girl reported as not being protected by a children's home. In another echo in one newspaper alone there were one hundred articles, news items, leading articles and letters during the fourteen months following the initial article on the subject. The Court Lees affair highlights, just as we can see today too, how in such a crisis the Government are reactive. The nearness of the Approved School system to Government was something which Government wished to see changed so that decisions and responsibility could be located at a much lower local level. Risk, and reputational risk, was exported to safe areas away from the state, at this time to the local authorities, today to the private and voluntary sectors.

In a second White Paper, 'Children In Trouble' (Home Office, 1968) local authorities were to become responsible for developing a comprehensive system of community homes for children, which would be planned by joint committees of authorities, in consultation with voluntary bodies wishing to participate.

The removal of the Approved School Order, the merging of the schools into a system of Community Homes, the setting up of Regional Planning Committees, the changing role of school managers, the idea of Intermediate Treatment, all would have a profound impact on the Approved Schools and would mark a major change in their status.

The local authority would be responsible for the professional oversight of a particular school, within the context of the new Regional Plan. Financial responsibility would rest wholly with the local authority, a development that would bring and would bring an uneven distribution of finance on the service and destabilise the service in general.

Managers would no longer have parental rights in respect of the children in the community homes. In future these powers would normally be exercised by the local authority which had placed the child in the school.

Other developments occurring during this period also contributed to the climate of change. The first of these was the comprehensive enquiry into residential care chaired by Lady Williams, Caring for People (Williams, 1967). This enquiry was primarily concerned with the training and qualifications of people in all forms of residential care. It provided documentary evidence of the low status accorded to most residential workers which was noted as being calibrated at low skilled workers levels.

The Williams Report concluded that the most effective way of addressing these issues, raising standards of practice and improving the status of residential staff, should be through the provision of greater training opportunities. It proposed that there be a single training course for all residential workers irrespective of the care setting in which they were employed. A small number of generic one year courses were developed. We again tumble into a recurring theme.

The 1969 Children Act introduced the term 'Community Home' for all children's homes and Approved Schools. Responsibility, directly or indirectly, for overseeing all Community Homes was transferred to the local authorities. All local authorities were required to participate, with neighbouring authorities in a given area, in specific planning of the provision of children's resources. This cooperation between authorities was to be undertaken through newly formed Regional Planning Committees.

Section 35, sub-section (3) of the Children and Young Persons Act 1969 laid down that, "It shall be the duty of the local authorities whose areas are wholly or partly included in a planning area...to establish for the area...a body to be called the children's regional planning committee". There were to be twelve such bodies across England and Wales, directly accountable to the Secretary of State, to whom Regional Plans had to be submitted for approval.

The Community Home system, introduced under the terms of the Children and Young Persons Act 1969, came into operation on 1 April 1973. The period between the passing of the Act and the introduction of Community Homes had been spent preparing for the radical changes to the system.

It was conceived as a means of planning comprehensively all types of community home. It was a move towards rational planning, a system rather than a network, based on local and regional needs across the whole spectrum of residential care for children. It was described as a more rational system than "the uncoordinated opportunist, adventurous developments, with serious geographic inequalities, which characterised the first half of this century" (Cooper).

The initial task of the Regional Planning Committees was to prepare and submit comprehensive development plans for a system of Community Homes in their areas. These were to be based on an analysis of the needs of children and young persons in care and would specify the proposed further functions of existing children's homes and Approved Schools, both local authority and voluntary. The Committees were also to prepare schemes of intermediate treatment, for those on the edge of care. Additionally, it was hoped that they would become forums for inter-disciplinary child care co-operation and communications on matters such as training and research.

The 1983 revised Regional Plan of the London Borough's Regional Planning Committee stated that the aim of the plan (rather than the overall aims of the Committee) was to offer a framework of information and policy within which the Regional Planning Committee and individual boroughs could plan their own ways of meeting child care needs. The steer towards individual LAs commissioning and procurement has hampered regional and national thinking.

The membership of the Regional Planning Committees was drawn from the constituent local authorities, with senior representatives from local authorities and voluntary child care societies, Magistrates and the Department of Education.

(These are very different to the proposed Regional Cooperatives of the Care Review)

Plans in respect of Community Homes with Education (CHEs), and the financial arrangements for them, tended to dominate the agendas of the main Committee. Most regions developed cost-pooling agreements in order to assist in the financial management of CHEs. These often took the form of projecting the cost per place per year on the basis of an 85% occupancy. This exercise was done for each CHE in the region. Where, at the end of a financial year, there had been a deficit in a particular CHE the user authorities were required to make up the shortfall, and where there was surplus this was refunded to the region for redistribution to the member authorities.

Occupancy rears its head today too in a Deloitte's report that observes surplus provision through basing figures on 'impossible to achieve' without doing away with needs differentiation that would allow 100% occupancy. The idea of 'surplus places' as much as costs, led to the momentum for closure. It should be apparent that there is a modicum of covering costs of the empty bed in all fees paid and this can be reduced given good planning and matching.

The rationale behind this practice of pooling was well described in the publication *Management of Community Homes with Education on the Premises* (Department of Health and Social Security, 1977). It observed that a distinctive characteristic of the CHE system would be that an authority wishing to place a child, need not allow consideration of relative costs to influence the choice of placement. Similarly, owning or controlling authorities could be confident that the service they provided to the region would not place an additional burden on their rate-payers.

One of the main weaknesses of this system was also noted in the DHSS study but not, at that time, given much attention. This was that the pooling system disguised the relationship between cost and occupancy levels. The transformation of the former Approved Schools into the Community Homes system had a number of immediate effects:

- They ceased to be the direct responsibility of a central Government Department.
- Children were no longer admitted from all parts of England and Wales but primarily and, as time went on, often exclusively from the Region in which they were located.

This weakness was not so apparent in the early years of the operation of the new Act, when occupancy levels were generally high. In later years, however, it became a highly significant factor in the withdrawal of many authorities and voluntary agencies from Regional Planning and the Community Home Schools system

The 1976 Social Services Report to Parliament observed that Local Authorities now not only 'think regionally' but recognised the need for inter-regional co-operation. This commitment to a regional approach was to crumble rapidly in the 1980s in a manner as a result of the fundamental weakness in the arrangement from the onset.

At this time there were changes to local government and these affected finances. Both caused considerable difficulties for the newly created Community Homes with changes of the responsible authority occurring in many instances which, in turn,

weakened the new Regional Planning Committees (RPCs) which had been operating for only four years (and three of these years had been spent preparing for the Committees to begin work).

Just as there is often an inciting event there is also often a protagonist. In this case it was voices stating the boundary changes made regional planning superfluous in some areas. Kent, for example, became almost self-sufficient in child care resources. Ford (1975) predicted that, with more local authorities being able to be self-sufficient, the time of the large community home would be over, although some would continue in use for an interim period. He urged that each local authority should try to have its treatment facilities within its own boundaries so that children would not be separated from their family, school and neighbourhood.

The Expenditure Committee (Short, 1975) called for more development of intermediate treatment schemes and urged that urgent attention should be given to non-residential forms of care.

Just as now, none of the recommendations for the reform of residential care assist in the permanently outstanding and always overdue ability to effectively differentiate between children who (a) need care, welfare, better education and more support from society and (b) the small minority who need higher degrees of intervention and support. Nonetheless, the Short Report strongly recommended that, within the framework of the Act, there should be a major shift of emphasis away from custodial and punitive techniques towards intermediate treatment, supervision and a much greater use of non-residential care, especially fostering.

The Government responded to the Report in a White Paper (Observations on the Eleventh Report from the Expenditure Committee, 1976) by trying to reconcile these conflicting recommendations. Though there was decisive opposition to the use of resources for a massive programme of residential provision and an acceptance of the Expenditure Committee's view that there should be a major shift of emphasis to non-residential care it also undertook to make money available for construction of secure facilities in Community Homes with Education so as to stop the remanding of juveniles to adult prisons.

Even at this time it was general expectation that Community Homes with Education would continue to form a major part of the child care system. It was seen as the staff attitudes that needed to change so as to offer a better service.

Doubts on costs were made explicit and CHEs were seen as in danger of pricing themselves out of the market in the face of a wide range of demand for services by people in the community. Just as now we have spurious costing comparisons between children's homes and fostering, so to then there were between intermediate treatment and CHEs. Initially these considerations were acted upon by a few local authorities, and eventually the vast majority.

The annual cost in 1981 to the Department of maintaining 83 offenders in residential institutions was £340,000 and Community Home with Education placements were, at the time, costing £11,513 per year per child. The cost per place at the proposed intermediate treatment day centre, based on eight children and allowing a staff/child

ratio of 2/1 would be £5,933. The centre would provide a specialist intensive method of social work, incorporating education over a period of 12-18 months for 14-16 year olds. The children would attend the centre four days a week and spend Fridays either in ordinary school or in work experience. These were persuasive arguments for most Social Service Committees

The loss of confidence in CHEs was fuelled by evidence that they were not effective in curbing delinquency for the majority of children. A view supported by arguments based on experiments in child care methods in the United States of America that suggested that institutions were now a largely outmoded approach.

Other factors included the significant increase in the range of alternative strategies available for the management and placement of children in care, for example, fostering of adolescents on remand, intermediate treatment, and cautioning of offenders. This resulted in residential care being but one of a range of options.

Such 'alternatives to Residential Child Care' emerged rapidly. Kent closed its CHE alongside Nancy Hazell developing specialist foster care in that county. Other local authorities and voluntary child care agencies soon began to develop similar schemes.

As Adams et al. had shrewdly observed, "Wherever professional conviction coincides with the direction dictated by financial constraints, it always proves a powerful combination" And indeed the then Association of Directors of Social Services (ADSS) began to doubt prevailing philosophy and practice, just as now in *What is Care for?*, Tutt (1982) summed up the situation well, when he suggested that "in the conflict of approach to juvenile delinquency, justice versus welfare, ideology becomes more significant than empirical evidence".

Indeed one might add and finances trump all. The substantial increase in spending on intermediate treatment did not match the savings from closures of CHEs

Arguments about the effectiveness and nature of intermediate treatment continued. Denne and Peel (1983) reported on a comparison of the offending careers of young people placed in CHEs and those placed on intermediate treatment concluding that "on the basis of this study, the transfer of resources from residential care to the intermediate treatment sector appear fully justified". This is similar to claims made for Multi-Dimensional Treatment Foster Care.

Notwithstanding that only 9% of reoffenders in CHEs went to detention centres, borstal or prison, whereas 23% on intermediate treatment were sent to penal establishments, central government saw intermediate treatment as a viable option to residential care.

The amount of 'savings' from one closure was an incentive to look at alternative forms of care of a non-custodial. Subsequent closures took place in such a piecemeal fashion there was no general awareness that the system was in the process of disintegrating. After 1978 closures were rapid those still within the

voluntary sector hardest hit. Though providing a service nationally at a regional level Government saw only local answers.

The change in the law, in respect of Regional Planning under the terms of the Health and Social Services Adjudication Act 1983, led the local authority Councillors to resolve to end the pooling arrangements on 31 March 1984 and, in the absence of any agreement on an alternative co-operative grouping, the local authorities' regional dialogue ceased. It would appear that once finance was removed from the agenda there was little incentive left for the self-sufficient local authorities to consult with their less well-endowed neighbours.

In effect, however, the idea of groups of local authorities working together to plan services for children had all but vanished in a hostile economic and anti-residential climate. With the collapse of regional planning came the demise of the regional planning secretariat, and its Regional Planning Officers. These officers had often done much useful work in highlighting need, chairing working groups and amassing regional data on a range of child care issues.

Community Homes with Education were now in the open market and unless their sponsors were either prepared to subsidise any losses or charge high weekly fees they were immediately vulnerable to closure once they became loss-making. What had once been seen as an essential resource in a range of caring and corrective facilities for children and young people was now a highly vulnerable and rapidly vanishing option for impoverished local authorities and sceptical social workers