



## EXCLUSION FROM SCHOOL: A STUDY OF PRACTICE IN ENGLAND

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### Resumen

Este artículo se basa en la información recolectada en un estudio que financió el gobierno de la Gran Bretaña durante dos años para dar seguimiento a niños de secundaria excluidos permanentemente de la escuela y que no regresaron a la enseñanza regular. Reflexiona sobre los recientes debates acerca de los distintos tipos de exclusión social y considera qué clase de provisión de servicio podría prevenir las numerosas y superpuestas desventajas que caracterizan la "exclusión profunda". Esta reflexión surge en un contexto de cambios políticos recientes en Inglaterra, que buscan fomentar prácticas de asociación o trabajo iterinstitucional. Se argumenta que debe prestarse más atención al ambiente organizacional en el cual operan los Servicios para la Infancia (Children's Services). Lo anterior puede generar relaciones significativas y patrones de comunicación que integren los servicios alrededor de los jóvenes en lugar de que estén limitados por las metas restringidas que hasta ahora han regulado la acción profesional en cada una de las agencias, supuestamente unificadas en los Servicios para la Infancia.

**Palabras clave:** exclusión, secundaria, Servicios para la Infancia.

### Abstract

This article draws on data gathered in a 2 year UK government funded follow-up study of secondary school children who were permanently excluded from school and who did not return to mainstream settings. It reflects on recent debates concerning different forms of social exclusion and considers what forms of service provision might prevent the multiple and overlapping forms of disadvantage that characterise 'deep exclusion'. This reflection is set in the context of recent policy moves in England which seek to promote practices of 'joined up' or interagency working. It is argued that more attention should be focused on the organisational climate in which professionals in Children's Services operate. This, it is argued may make it possible to form meaningful relations and patterns of communication that join the services around the young people rather than be constrained by narrow targets that up until now have regulated professional action in the separate agencies that are now, supposedly unified, in Children's Services.

**Keywords:** exclusion, secondary school, children's services.

**Recibido:** 1 de junio de 2011. Aceptado para su publicación: 15 de julio de 2011.

**Como citar este artículo:** Daniels, H. (julio-diciembre, 2011). Exclusion from school: A study of practice in England. Sinéctica, 37. Recuperado de [http://www.sinectica.iteso.mx/index.php?cur=37&art=37\\_05](http://www.sinectica.iteso.mx/index.php?cur=37&art=37_05)

## INTRODUCTION

**E**xclusion from school as a possible precursor to exclusion from society remains a matter of public concern in the UK. Scott *et al.* (2001) showed that children who are seen to exhibit significant antisocial behaviour have poor social functioning as adults and are at high risk of social exclusion and that the costs incurred in the transition to adulthood are 10 times higher than those whose behaviour is not a cause for concern. Prevention of social exclusion (Levitas *et al.*, 2007) and reduction of concomitant costs (Scott *et al.*, 2001) are major policy concerns in an era of economic uncertainty, speculation about the possible futures for social cohesion (Putnam, 2001), and alarming reports about the prevalence of children's mental health difficulties and eroded sense of well being (UNICEF, 2007; Maughan, 2004). Bradshaw *et al.* (2004) point to the need to distinguish between factors which affect overall levels of social exclusion and the risk factors and triggers that precipitate or enhance individual vulnerability. Levitas *et al.* (2007) draw on this understanding and develop a distinction between social exclusion and 'deep exclusion'. Where social exclusion is defined as:

a complex and multi-dimensional process. It involves the lack or denial of resources, rights, goods and services, and the inability to participate in the normal relationships and activities, available to the majority of people in a society, whether in economic, social, cultural or political arenas. It affects both the quality of life of individuals and the equity and cohesion of society as a whole.

Deep exclusion refers to exclusion "across more than one domain or dimension of disadvantage, resulting in severe negative consequences for quality of life, well-being and future life chances".

This distinction is recognised in the political domain. Miliband (2006) has written of a further distinction between wide, deep and concentrated exclusion where:

- Wide exclusion refers to the large number of people excluded on a single or small number of indicator(s).
- Concentrated exclusion refers to the geographic concentration of problems and to area exclusion.
- Deep exclusion refers to those excluded on multiple and overlapping dimensions.

Much has been made of the need to help pupils the notion of multiplicity of dimensions and risk factors unrelated to school that constitute deep exclusion (Advisory Centre for Education, 2000; Clarke & Clarke, 2000; Evans, 1995; Firth & Horrocks, 1996; Harris *et al.*, 2000; Hayden, 2002; Jackson & Martin, 1998; OECD, 1995). Protective factors, which are tentatively associated with reducing the risk of long term exclusion, include:

- Access to supportive social networks (Evans, 1995; Garmarnikow & Green, 1999; Hayton, 1999).
- Learning to read at an early age (Jackson & Martin, 1998).
- 'Resilience' nurtured by a network of affectionate relationships (Clarke

& Clarke, 2000; MHF, 1999).

- Having a pro-social peer group (Clarke et al., 2000).
- Developing an internal locus of control (Hayden, 2002; Jackson & Martin, 1998; Ratcliffe, 1999).

Less is known about deep exclusion than the other two forms. The purpose of this paper is to discuss the implications of permanent exclusion from school in terms of the extent to which it acted as a precursor to social exclusion and a possibly trigger to deep exclusion. Levitas *et al.* (2007) have undertaken such a task by looking at the interaction of factors in social exclusion, and specifically in deep exclusion or multiple disadvantages, using existing databases. Here we invoke a consideration of qualitative data from a study, funded by the then entitled Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) (study of children permanently excluded from school who do not return to mainstream education, DfEE reference 4/RP/185/2000), that tracked the careers for a two year period, of 193 young people after their permanent exclusion from school during Year 9, Year 10 or Year 11 (13 to 16 years of age) in a representative sample of 10 LEAs (Local Education Agencies) (Daniels *et al.*, 2003). It began in September 2000 and ended in September 2002. Our intention is to reconsider the data in order to discuss factors that stand between the experience of exclusion as a short term set back and those which seem to trigger a trajectory of difficulty and unhappiness.

#### **TRENDS IN PERMANENT EXCLUSION FROM SECONDARY SCHOOL IN ENGLAND**

In England exclusion is a disciplinary measure, which the Headteacher of a school can use to respond to challenging and inappropriate pupil behaviour. This paper is concerned with permanent exclusion in which the school's governing body is required to review the Headteacher's decision and parents' views on the exclusion are invited. Within one day of the exclusion parents are informed in a letter which states the precise period of the exclusion, the reason(s) for the exclusion, and outlines rights to appeal to the governors of the school. Exclusion may be for a fixed term or permanent. If the governing body confirms the exclusion, parents can appeal to an independent appeal panel. Permanent exclusion from English schools may involve subsequent placement in PRUs (Pupil Referral Units), special schools, home tuition, attendance at further education colleges for vocational training and a wide variety of alternative provision projects (Hayden, 2003).

While official school exclusion figures were declining in 1999 concern continued and exclusion figures for 2000/2001 were to show an increase. New government guidance was contained in Circular 10/99, Social Inclusion: Pupil Support (DfEE, 1999a) and Circular 11/99 (DfEE, 1999b). These laid out clear guidelines (e.g. on the operation of discipline committee hearings and independent appeal hearings) for schools and LEAs to follow. These requirements were coming into effect as the young people, who became the sample for this study, were being permanently excluded in the academic year 1999/2000. Table 1 shows the trends in permanent exclusion from secondary school (DCSF, 2008) drawn from most recent data to be released (28/6/2008).

Table 1. Primary, secondary, and special schools (1) (2) (3): Number of permanent exclusions by type of school, England, 1997/98-2006/07

LA main- tained second- ary schools	1997 / 98	1998 / 99	1999 / 00	2000 / 01 (4)	2001 / 02	2002 / 03	2003 / 04	2004 / 05	2005 / 06	2006 / 07
Number of permanent exclusions	10,190	8,640	6,710	7,310	7,740	7,690	8,320	8,070	7,990	7,280
Percentage of school population	0.33	0.28	0.21	0.23	0.24	0.23	0.25	0.24	0.24	0.22

In 2006-7, there were 7 280 permanent exclusions from state funded secondary schools compared with 6 710 in 1999-2000. A reduction in numbers was achieved between 1997 and 2000; however in the years following 1999/2000 there has yet to be a reported decrease in the percentage of pupils permanently excluded from secondary schools. Concerns about disparities in the data with regard to gender and Special Educational Needs persist:

- The permanent exclusion rate for boys was nearly 4 times higher than that for girls.
- Pupils with special educational needs are over 9 times more likely to be permanently excluded from school than the rest of the school population (DCSF, 2008).

As in 1999/2000, the most common reason for exclusion (both permanent and fixed period) was persistent disruptive behaviour. It would seem reasonable to suggest that, at the level of overall analysis, little has changed in the last 10 years and that whatever it is that drives permanent exclusion is a fairly durable feature of English schooling. It is important to note at this point that official figures do not reveal the extent to which 'grey' /unofficial exclusions and fixed term exclusions (which have continued to rise) are being used as alternative means of managing situations which might have invoked permanent exclusion in the past.

#### **A STUDY OF THE TWO YEARS FOLLOWING PERMANENT EXCLUSION**

The study to be considered in this article sought to highlight factors associated with positive outcomes for excluded pupils including both those who returned to mainstream education and those who did not (Daniels et al., 2003). The aims were:

- To track, over a two year period from the point of exclusion, the outcomes for a sample of young people permanently excluded from mainstream school.

- To identify whether the outcomes differed for different groups of children.
- To identify both institutional and individual factors and processes which had an impact upon those outcomes.

Government exclusion statistics showed LEAs with high, average or low rates of permanent exclusion (PEX) for the year 1997/1998 in comparison to national and regional means. A representative sample of English LEAs was selected and subsequently recruited. The sample of LEAs was also chosen with reference to region, type, size of secondary school population and ethnic representation, and finalised in discussion with the funders' steering committee. LEA officers were then interviewed about the range of provision offered and LEA data about exclusions examined. These data included information on where pupils were placed. Details of the sample are given in table 2.

Table 2. Details of the leas in the sample

LEA	Region	Type	Size of secondary school population	Ethnic minority numbers in PEX ('97/'98)	Secondary schools PEX ('97/'98) % of school populn.*	Number of young people in the sample
A	Midlands	Urban	>20,000	High	> 0.45	47
B	London	Suburban	<20,000	Average	>0.40	18
C	Midlands	Unitary urban	<20,000	High	>0.65	20
D	North	Urban	>25,000	High	>0.35	18
E	North	Urban	<18,000	Low	>0.45	21
F	North	Borough	<18,000	Average	>0.35	20
G	Midlands	Borough	<20,000	High	>0.55	19
H	S. East	Unitary urban	<10,000	High	>0.40	12
J	South	Unitary urban	<15,000	Low	>0.40	9
K	London	Inner City	<15,000	High	<0.30	9

\*Cf. means for secondary schools; 0.33% (national); 0.48 (inner London); 0.34% (N. West and Merseyside); 0.37% (West Midlands); 0.32% (South East –excluding London).

To describe the educational and vocational status of the young people in their first substantial placement after permanent exclusion (first placement) and approximately two years after their exclusions (months 23-24), three words were chosen to denote sectors of a continuum of engagement/disengagement:

- *Engaged*. Where the data indicated the young person attending educational/work experience or vocational provision; or after reaching school leaving age, further education, training or substantial employment, they were deemed to be 'engaged'.
- *Refusers*. Where the data indicated, prior to their reaching compulsory school leaving age, young people failing to take up the varied offers of their LEA and/or other local agencies, they were deemed to be 'refusers'.
- *Disengaged*. Where the data indicated poor (occasional and intermit-

tent) take-up of LEA and/or other local agency offers of provision prior to attaining compulsory school leaving age (e.g. unauthorised absences exceeding 50%), such young people were deemed to be 'disengaged'. If, after reaching school leaving age, they did not take up offers of training on a regular basis and/or did not seek employment or persevere with courses at further education (FE), they were also deemed to be 'disengaged'.

A fourth grouping of lost was necessary. This word is used to denote the young people who could not be followed by the research team at or from differing points in the twenty-four month period following their exclusion.

### THE PUPILS

The sample was identified from records on 480 young people held centrally by the LEAs for 1999/2000. This approach was unlike other studies of exclusions, where samples had consisted of young people who regularly attended particular provisions or who volunteered to participate. This study aimed and succeeded in reaching many young people who were either refusing, avoiding, or had very tenuous links with education, training or other services offered (although this was not a factor in deciding who to include in the sample).

The study was concerned with associations between processes and outcomes. The selection strategy therefore prioritised the young people's 'first placement' after exclusion (i.e. placement at new mainstream school, PRU, further education college, 'other' or home tuition/outreach teaching) but also included pupils not thought by the LEAs to be engaging in any form of provision. Within each cohort of 'first placement' the young people were selected to include an over-representation of particular 'at risk' groups, i.e. groups known to be over-represented in exclusion figures and at risk of wider marginalisation. These groups were black young people of Caribbean heritage; black young people of 'other black heritage', i.e. parents or grandparents from Africa or other non-Caribbean or non-African countries (see table 3); and 'looked after' children. DfEE statistics for 1997/98 showed 7.4% of excludes were of black Caribbean heritage; 1.95% of black African and 2.78% of other black heritage.

Table 3. Sample by ethnicity

Ethnicity	Sample size (% of total sample)
White	104 (53.9)
Black Caribbean	35 (18.1)
Other black heritage	13 (6.7)
Bangladeshi	11 (5.7)
Pakistani	11 (5.7)
Indian	2 (1.0)
Dual ethnicity*	17 (8.8)
Total	193

\* Dual ethnicity consisted in most cases of white and black Caribbean heritage; occasionally more than two ethnic heritages.

Twenty children reported by the LEAs to have been or at that time being 'looked after' were also included in the sample. In line with the approximately four to one national ratio for boy/girl exclusions, 156 males and 37 females were recruited. The final sample consisted of 193 young people: 86 pupils excluded in Y9; 84 in Y10 and 23 in Y11. Letters were sent to each young person offering the chance for the young person or his or her parents to refuse participation. Where refusals occurred, replacements were recruited to maintain the balance required in the sample.

### INTERVIEWS WITH STAFF AND DOCUMENTARY ANALYSIS

A member of LEA staff with knowledge of each child's school career and post-exclusion trajectory was interviewed in relation to 185 of the 193 young people (96%). The selection of the staff member reflected the provision that had been made available which in turn reflected the availability of provision in each LEA (see table 4)

Table 4. Summary of the local authorities' range of provision supporting excluded pupils

Service Type (offered By Summer 2002)		LEA A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	J	K
Pupil Referral Service	Link-workers	T	EWO 2 T	EWO	Vari ous1	EWO	T	EWO 1	EWO	YW 2	YW
	Outreach/ Central + home tuition	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Re-inte- gration to mainstream	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Assessment PRU(s)	-	Yes	-	-	-	-	Yes	-	-	-
	KS3 PRU(s)	Yes	-	KS3 +4	KS3 +4	KS1, 2,3,4	KS3 +4	KS3 +4	Yes	Yes	Yes
	KS4 PRU(s)	Yes	Yes						Yes	Yes	Yes
FE College	Special courses	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Mainstream 'infill'	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Alternative ed. initia- tives		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Own/other LEA or indep. Special schools		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Non- educa- tional or non -training services	LACs:Social work sup- port	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Careers	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Mentoring	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
	CAMHS	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Connexions	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	YOTs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

## Glossary

EWO Education Welfare Officer

YW Youth Worker

T Teacher

FE Further Education

LAC Looked After Children (Children in public care)

PRU Pupil Referral Unit

CAMHs Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service

YOT Young Offenders Team

KS3 Key Stage 3 pupils aged 11-14

KS4 Pupils aged 14-16

Eight young people were not well known to a member of LEA staff as in cases where they had never attended local alternative provision or had moved on to a different area. Some data could be established on these young people but a full interview, using the schedule, could not be conducted. When an interviewee's knowledge of the young person turned out to be limited, additional members of LEA or other agency staff (e.g. PRU teacher, educational welfare officer or FE programme co-ordinator) were interviewed to build a more detailed account of the young person's pre- and post-exclusion trajectory. Where possible, documentary evidence supplied by LEA officers or encountered on site at PRUs or education offices was studied to verify or add to the accounts of the trajectories. Before each member of LEA staff was interviewed about the young person, details about the professional's experience, work role, knowledge of the LEA's provision and his or her assessment of the effectiveness of approaches and services were elicited.

**INTERVIEWS WITH YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR PARENTS**

Interviews with young people and their parents were undertaken as follows:

- First interviews with the young people and their parents (spring/summer 2001).
- Tracking of their trajectories (spring, 2001-June, 2002).
- Final interviews with young people, parents and staff approximately two years after each young person's permanent exclusion (September, 2001 to June, 2002).

First interviews using the young person and parent schedule took place with 116 of the young people (60%). Using the same schedule, face-to-face or telephone interviews were conducted with 105 parents (54.4%). Conducting detailed interviews, using the schedule, proved impossible in relation to 77 young people, given their disengagement from sites of provision and/or lack of availability for interviews in their homes. Brief telephone or face-to-face conversations (not using the final interview schedule) with contacts in the LEAs with some but not detailed knowledge of the young people, allowed the research team to establish the whereabouts and degree of engagement two years after exclusion of 9 young people. These were in addition to the 132 young people who had been covered by use of the final interview schedule.

Updates on the young people's trajectories were obtained between first and final interviews through visits to sites of provision and periodic telephone con-

versations with either the young people, their families, PRU staff, re-integration teachers, link-workers, and other professionals with current knowledge of the young people's whereabouts and progress. The fact that the end of the two year post-exclusion for each of the young people occurred anytime between September 2001 and July 2002, required ongoing visits by the research team to some sites of provision (e.g. PRUs) and to family homes in the LEAs to conduct final interviews. While the primary purpose of a visit would be to conduct one or more final interviews, the opportunity was taken to gather information on events in the mid-period for other of the young people.

Final interviews took place with the young person, a parent (or close relative) or failing this, a professional with a close knowledge of the child. Final interviews took place in relation to 132 young people (68.4%) near the end of the two year post-exclusion period (see table 2.3). Details of the coverage of the final interviews are given in table 5.

Table 5. Coverage of the final interviews

Exclude sub-groups:	Number of Final Interviews (% of sub-group n)
Year 9 (n=86)	59 (68.6)
Year 10 (n=84)	55 (65.5)
Year 11 (n=23)	18 (78.3)
Males (n=156)	110 (70.5)
Females (n=37)	22 (59.5)
Looked after (n=20)	14 (70.0)

Some young people were seriously disengaged from or refusing local services. Home visits, sometimes following active investigative work, allowed the research team to make contact with and to track some of these young people who could be described as 'lost' to LEAs and sometimes to all statutory or voluntary services. Contact could be unexpectedly lost with others of the young people. These factors explain why the whereabouts or status of 52 young people could not be established in months 23-24 post-exclusion, and why 61 young people could not be covered by the final interview.

#### **RESULTS: FROM EXCLUSION TO OFFER OF FIRST PLACEMENT**

Examination of the data relating to the period from the exclusion through to the holding of the independent appeal hearings (where applicable) showed that 'actual or threatened assaults on pupils' (followed by 'on staff'), were the most commonly cited reasons for exclusion. However, the cited reason could be misleading and did not record the long history of difficult behaviour usually leading up to the exclusion. However the use of the term violent could carry with it implications for the young person's understanding of themselves and the understanding that others might develop in relation to them. The move from having been involved in some relatively minor scuffle to becoming a 'violent' person carries with it significant implications for subsequent engagement with the world. This may apply as much to social groups and communities as it does to individuals (see Waiton, 2008, for a sociological account of the politics of antisocial behaviour). This question of fairness of attribution is related to the question as to whether the young

people believed their exclusion to have been unfair or were ambivalent about its fairness. Seventy five per cent of black pupils of Caribbean heritage for whom data were available (n=20) and most of their parents thought that the exclusion was unfair, a higher proportion than for the white pupils and parents. Interestingly those who thought that their exclusion had been unfair were more likely to be engaged in education, training or employment two years post-exclusion and those excluded for threatened or actual assault were more likely to be engaged two years post-exclusion than those excluded for repeated verbal aggression or defiance.

#### **RESULTS: THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S EARLY AND MID-PERIOD EXPERIENCES AFTER EXCLUSION**

There was little evidence of enthusiasm shown for the offer of placements other than new mainstream schools but three out of four young people accepted the offer and sometimes settled well. Refusal to accept the offer sometimes related to fear of stigma or 'contamination' (parents worrying their child would mix with and copy young people involved in crime or drugs). Out of the young people for whom there were data, about two thirds were reported to be satisfied (n= 115) and engaged (n= 151) with the programmes provided. About a fifth were disengaged and 1 in 4 refusing to attend first placement. For those who wanted to be engaged, satisfaction was associated with longer hours offered.

Youth offending after exclusion was positively associated with disengagement at first placement. There was a significant improvement in relationships between young people and the teachers at first placement. A minority were going to new mainstream schools. Most went to alternative provision (usually 'off site' special units called PRUs) where the young people tended to respond to skilled, understanding teachers working with them in small groups and sometimes one-to-one, in ways that contrasted with their experience prior to exclusion.

#### *Results: approaching two years after exclusion*

Of the 141 young people who remained in contact with the project 24.1% were in FE; 12.1% in substantial employment; 10.6% in PRUs; 10.6% in mainstream schools, and 27.7% had no involvement with education, training or employment.

Half of this group reported as viewing their exclusion as damaging (lost educational opportunities, stigmatisation affecting job prospects, etc.), but 24 (19%) believed exclusion had a positive effect on their lives, sometimes increasing opportunities they wished for and were able to take advantage of as shown below in selected statements made by young people about their exclusion two years later.

J8 (these are the subject codes that were used throughout the study) (Pakistani female, engaged in new mainstream school): I don't think anyone should get excluded because it ruins your life. All the teachers say you need education, but they don't think about that when they exclude you.

K3 (white male, engaged at FE): It made a big impact on my life in general, but especially getting a job. I've missed out on things that friends have done, mainly General Certificates of Secondary Education (GCSEs).

B1 (white female, disengaged from PRU at end of her Y11, part-time child minder): I was relieved at first, to get out of school, say for a month, and

then I realised. There was nothing to do. I was cut off from my friends. I had no money to go out. I got very depressed. School friends stopped phoning me. It was a bad experience. For a time I was jealous of my friend (who was excluded for the same incident). She [B10, from neighbouring LEA] has not had to go to any school at all. But now I'm pleased I was pushed into going to the PRU.

C10 (white female, offender, at FE college): When I got expelled... I felt I'd ruined my life –but... now my life has taken this pattern and it's all worked out really good. I was out of school for a whole year. I was doing nothing. That's when I was going through a bad drugs stage. My Mum didn't want me in the house. I was stealing. I was eating all the time and nicking her fags, nicking her money. I feel dead guilty about how I was, but if I hadn't have been kicked out of school I wouldn't have got the job I have now, I wouldn't know the people I know... so I'm glad how things have turned out. I wouldn't... turn the clocks back.

J3 (white male, engaged in PRU at 2 years, after being excluded from his new mainstream school): I was concerned about getting a decent job, it changed how other adults related to me, and other children called me stupid.

E4 (white male, disengaged offender at 2 years): Glad about it... Hated school, right from the start.

F3 (white male, has ceased offending, is working and doing a modern apprenticeship in joinery; his father says his son 'designed his exclusion'): They [the mainstream school] did me a favour getting me expelled. Otherwise I would have ended up in a dead-end job.

There were no associations between special sub-groups (minority ethnic groups, looked-after children, young offenders and girls) and perceived effects of exclusion.

A little over half of the young people for whom there were data were judged to be engaged (but this might include young people in low status jobs or studying basic courses not matching their potential). It was more common for white boys to be disengaged or refusing provision than black Caribbean, 'dual ethnicity', Pakistani or Bangladeshi males. Of 7 black Caribbean girls, 6 became 'lost' and the seventh was disengaged two years post-exclusion. Young people who had received a greater number of fixed-term exclusions prior to their exclusion were more likely to be disengaged.

By months 23-24 post-exclusion, 55% of the young people on whom data were available, had definitely or were believed to have offended since their exclusion compared to 38.5% of the sample reported as offenders prior to their exclusion. Most of those who offended prior to exclusion continued offending after exclusion (persisters). Of those who had not offended before their exclusion, nearly one third were thought to have started after their exclusion (starters). A higher proportion of white than black young people were offenders. Post-exclusion offending is associated with disengagement two years after exclusion. Despite this, many of the young people who were reported to have offended post-exclusion were enga-

ged in education, training or employment in months 23-24.

Very few of the young people sat a wide range of GCSEs. It was more common for English and Mathematics to be taken. One or more A-C grades were obtained by 17 out of the 91 young people (18.7%) for whom data were available. White young people appeared to under-achieve rather than members of minority ethnic groups (but numbers in the minority ethnic groups were small and the over-representation of black young people amongst the 'lost' students should be noted).

Exclusion was sometimes seen as an obstacle to achieving employment. Of 74 young people on whom data were available, 46 (62%) young people excluded in Y10 or Y11 had experienced paid employment (full or part-time) after exclusion, although this experience could be limited. A minority achieved substantial part-time or full-time work and 'held down' their jobs, sometimes linking them to appropriate vocational training at FE college. Success in vocational training/work encouraged some young people to have wider ambitions.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Many of the young people in the study had few ideas about the future. Of those who spoke on this subject, some looked ahead to well-paid jobs (particularly young people in PRUs or FE) or educational achievements (generally those in mainstream schools). Ongoing assistance from staff in new mainstream schools, PRUs, FE and alternative education programmes and input from pupil referral services' specialist staff (in particular link-workers) helped to widen some of the young people's self-belief and ambitions as the examples of social networks aiding achievement of employment shown below suggest.

C13 (white male, 'looked after', offender): friend of family, whom he called uncle gave him part-time work in uncle's' furniture business.

A9 (white male): I was turned down by some employers initially, when they knew that I had been excluded from school. My first job -mum helped me out by getting a friend to employ me. Once I got the good reference from there I was able to get my own jobs.

Mother of H4 (black Caribbean male, ex-offender): He's started working for his Dad at £30 a day. I'm quite happy with him working a lot with his Dad doing skirting boards/labouring and painting and decorating. He hopes to have his own building business one day.

A11 ('dual ethnicity' male, offender) had been doing manual labour: roofing, fencing for a family-run firm. I asked my sister's boyfriend myself. I [worked] there since I left college till February... I worked 8-5 every day. I got on fine with employer and workers... I was shown how to do things and helped. It was very good work experience... Now I'm looking for a permanent job... I earned £125 [cash in hand] per week. Some is saved but I've no bank account opened. Working has made me feel more independent. The family have been good to me... [Also] I was taught mechanics... by a relative.

Where this keyed into supportive family networks, the prospects for the young per-

son improved further. However, many of the young people retained limited horizons, lacked self-belief and their marginalisation tended to increase, sometimes associated with increasing offending. Some had engrained low self-esteem and limited horizons, believing the direction of their lives was outside their control. Some of the latter were also locked into cycles of anti-social behaviour patterns both at school and in their home community and had difficulty envisioning a life beyond their present very localised circumstances. In contrast, were those apparently confident young people, who had 'bought back into' education, training and employment and who were articulate in describing their future ambitions. Parents and young people would sometimes report progress from their acceptance of a marginalised life-style towards seeing an alternative and brighter, pro-social future.

This progress would in many instances be linked to the contributions made by staff from different professional backgrounds and operating in different sites. Whether these staff worked in mainstream schools or various forms of alternative and special provision seemed relatively unimportant. What mattered more were the degrees of skill and commitment shown by staff in any site of provision. Where these degrees were high, then there was a chance that the young people's views of self, their levels of self-esteem, their willingness to engage in activities leading to accreditation, their courage in trying new tasks that might result in failure, could be altered for the better. The young people's imagination and self-belief could be extended. 'Small-step' learning gave them experience of success and tended to promote the desire for further slightly more advanced studying or vocational training. Where the young person received active support from family members with contacts who had a 'stake' in society, then their chances of altered life-styles and achievement improved considerably. It was common for the young people to have received help from careers officers, education welfare officers and re-integration teachers, often acting as link-workers. It was rare for young people to have received help from mental health workers, social workers or new government services such as Connexions or Youth Offender Team workers.

Policy and practice therefore need to promote a variety of ways of working by staff, matching provision to an ongoing review of the young person's needs but building upon his or her strengths. This can help young people to break into their sometimes engrained negative patterns of behaviour or undue expectancy of failure. This tends to be achieved by the strength of the relationship and a growing respect between young person and pastoral teacher in mainstream school, link-worker, re-integration teacher, personal advisor or whoever becomes a 'significant other' to the young person. The point is reached where when this key adult says to the young person: 'It will be in your interest to try to reach this target, even though this will be a challenge and might bore you' the young person accepts the adult's advice'. There were instances where the young person suggested the target ahead of the link-worker, a sign that progress had been made and that the young person had achieved a positive attitude.

Offending was associated with disengagement from services two years after exclusion. Some young people, despite their offending (probably of a casual and relatively minor nature) were judged to be engaged with education, training and employment two years post-exclusion. Figures were given on the most common group, the 'persisters' (offending before and after exclusion; see Berridge et al., 2001); 'starters' (offending starting post-exclusion and sometimes linked by parents and staff inter-

viewees to the life-style often involving much aimless 'hanging out' following exclusion). However, firm links between starting offending and being excluded could not be made from the data: exact facts were difficult to establish and other important variables were in play. Nor could the post-exclusion interventions be firmly linked to explaining the 'desisters' who stopped offending after exclusion.

Through detective work, including 'cold calling' at the last-known addresses of some of the young people and their families, many detailed interviews took place with young people, who to other studies, would probably have been described as lost. These interviews rarely revealed a positive picture of engagement with education, training or work. More usually, they showed young people with limited horizons, lack of self-belief, involvement with offending and a lack of social capital. Often, these young people had been hard to track because they had refused or had become seriously disengaged or excluded from post-exclusion services. It is difficult to make recommendations that might lead to improvements other than the more widespread use of active link-workers or personal advisers, able to make regular home visits and a continuing commitment. Operational level workers such as these help to tie the knots and make meaningful relations and patterns of communication that join the services around the young people. Such work inevitably involves an amount of risk taking in that these young people present challenges to services which rarely fall neatly into pre-existing categories. Thus active link-workers or personal advisers or other forms of social pedagogy require the professional freedom to go beyond standard formulations of provision in order to make meaningful engagement with those who run the greatest risk of deep exclusion.

Glisson and Hemmelgarn's (1998) work exemplifies the complexities of relationships between service providers, users and the provision itself. Glisson and Hemmelgarn (1998) followed the progress of an initiative to improve outcomes of services for young people at risk of sexual and physical abuse through interorganisational service coordination teams. The focus of the initiative was tackling the perceived duplication of effort with a view to enhancing the quality and outcomes of services. Conversely however, the research concluded that the opposite occurred and that the approach of the initiative (referred to as a process oriented approach) actually impeded successful outcomes for children; the more visible the role of the teams, the less responsibility caseworkers took for individual children and therefore, rather than improving the quality of services the initiative limited responsiveness to problems and reduced discrepancy. Effective outcomes for children in this case at least argue Glisson and Hemmelgarn, rested upon non-routinised, individualised service decisions tailored to each young person, an approach they refer to as results-oriented which allows caseworkers to respond to a child's particular needs and to be allowed to navigate bureaucratic hurdles according to the needs of the individual young person. We witnessed this kind of work in our study. It was invariably carried out by workers who were not strongly bound into a particular professional culture and who by dint of high levels of personal commitment challenged formulaic responses and attempted to provide genuinely needs-led provision. They strove to prevent the young people that they worked with from falling into the depths of exclusion.

In addition to the engaged forms of casework, we observed our data show that some family networks did appear to aid resilience and lessen the likelihood of deep exclusion. It would seem that the supports that help to prevent young peo-

ple who have been excluded from school from slipping into a trajectory of life time deep exclusion are those where meaningful cross agency sense can be made of the young persons life circumstances and a sustained pattern of responsive, rather than rule bounded formulaic intervention can be offered. Establishing relationships of trust and respect in such situations is difficult to achieve with clients as it is across services. This is an area in which much more work could profitably be undertaken if short term dangers of social exclusion are to be prevented from turning into a lifetime of difficulty.

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