

Not present and not correct:

Understanding and preventing school exclusions

Believe in children



Barnardo's

By Jane Evans





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Foreword



It is a shocking fact that poor children on free school meals are up to five times more likely to be excluded from school

than their better-off counterparts. Those with special educational needs are ten times more likely to have their education disrupted because of exclusion. But for many, bad behaviour in school is a result of real difficulties outside school.

The chances are that, once excluded, young people get involved with antisocial behaviour and crime. Sending them home to chaotic families or risky neighbourhoods does nothing to improve their behaviour. Children at risk of exclusion need more adult supervision, not less.

So it is welcome that permanent exclusions have declined in recent years. Meanwhile temporary, fixed-term exclusions have been on the rise,

with one in 20 secondary pupils being excluded and some missing as much as nine weeks of school each year. The numbers of repeat exclusions show that this is an ineffective way to improve behaviour. This, together with the prevalence of unofficial exclusions which slip under the legal radar, is a scandal.

Instead of this damaging approach, early intervention can help young people resolve their underlying problems. Offering alternatives when a crisis point is reached can reintegrate young people back into learning, while keeping them constructively occupied.

This report looks at four effective methods of working with troubled and troubling young people to improve their behaviour for the long term and demonstrates that doing so saves money in the long run, and costs less than exclusion.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Martin Narey". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long vertical stroke at the end.

Martin Narey
Chief Executive, Barnardo's

Executive summary

Barnardo's has been involved in education and training since 1867 and today education is an integral part of more than two-thirds of our services. Barnardo's recognises the unique potential for education to break the cycle of poverty, and many of our services record successful outcomes in preventing school exclusion as part of their work. This experience means Barnardo's understands the range of difficulties that disadvantaged young people encounter at school, including school exclusion.

Policy context

This research was prompted in part by policy commitments made by the Conservatives in opposition¹ which Barnardo's was concerned could drive up permanent exclusions. Specific commitments included giving teachers more powers to discipline children, removing the right of appeal and removing the financial penalty on schools for excluding (whereby the money follows the child).

Political debate about exclusions has not always been enlightening. While the Labour government showed some complacency about fixed-term exclusions – with a children's minister describing their increased use as a sign that heads 'were nipping problems in the bud',² the Conservatives considered their rise to be a sign that 'poor behaviour is... an increasing problem'.³

Poverty and social disadvantage increase the risks of being excluded from school, exacerbating the

achievement gap which the coalition government is committed to tackling. This research shows how intervening early and providing alternatives can help to encourage young people back to education or training and improve their prospects.

The impact of exclusion

One in 20 secondary students will experience at least one fixed-term exclusion each year. Two-thirds of fixed period exclusions in secondary schools were given to pupils who had already received at least one earlier in the year. Barnardo's research found that this frequently repeated measure does little to improve behaviour. The risks associated with permanent exclusion, which affects about one in 500 secondary school pupils (0.17 per cent) are even greater. This is because those young people most likely to undergo extended or repeated periods of exclusion are the ones who need more adult supervision, not less. Excluding them from the stable routines of school and leaving them in a chaotic home background or risky neighbourhood only worsens their behaviour.

Barnardo's accepts that most schools are hugely committed to avoiding the use of exclusions but that, in some instances, exclusion may be the only appropriate response to severe discipline problems.

However, recent success in reducing the numbers of permanent exclusions demonstrates that it is possible. In particular, fixed-term exclusions

1 Conservative Party (April 2008)

2 Brennan (July 2008), *BBC News*, accessed 24 September 2010

3 Gibb, *ibid*

are an over-used and ineffective disciplinary measure.

More serious still are the statistically hidden, ‘unofficial’ exclusions where young people are simply sent home without educational provision or any legal right to appeal.

Exclusion gives young people the message that problems can be solved by giving up or walking away when, in Barnardo’s experience, the opposite is true. Challenging young people need more, not less, guidance from supportive adults. Of course this is easier in small groups or one-to-one than it is in a large mainstream classroom, but with the right intervention young people can learn how to manage their behaviour and get the best from their education. Others benefit from an alternative curriculum where they can gain qualifications and improve their social skills in the longer term.

Research aims

This research focuses on alternative provision and positive, timely interventions to prevent exclusions. It highlights four models of intervention that address difficult behaviour before it results in exclusion. The research objectives were to:

1. raise awareness of underlying reasons for young people being excluded
2. examine successful models of intervention that prevent difficulties escalating to the point of exclusion
3. raise the profile of successful

alternatives to exclusion for young people who have reached crisis point – these might include separate units and alternative curriculums

4. demonstrate the social and economic costs of exclusion – building the case for investment in preventive services and alternative provision.

Early intervention and alternatives

At the heart of this report is an in-depth study of four different models of intervention. All of them help young people improve their behaviour, so that they can return to the classroom better focused on learning and less likely to disrupt lessons.

Three of the four services involved in the research were run by Barnardo’s and the fourth was a small grass roots charity working in partnership with Barnardo’s.

Twenty young people at risk of exclusion were interviewed, as well as the people who knew them best: parents, teachers, local authority officers, youth offending workers, the police, mental health specialists and the managers and workers at each of the four participating services.

The key features of effective practice were:

- intervening before problems become entrenched
- working with parents and families
- small group work
- vocational options
- a youth work approach
- persistence and belief.

The young people

To place this study in context, the research highlights some disquieting statistics, like the fact that secondary school pupils on free school meals are three times more likely to be excluded than their better-off classmates and a third of permanent exclusions are for persistent disruptive behaviour.

Underlying the statistics are the stories of young people like those who took part in this research. They show that bad behaviour at school is frequently caused by problems outside school. For some, school provided routine, boundaries and stability that they do not have at home. Excluding them from their one source of stability and boundary-setting into a chaotic home life made their problems worse, not better.

The costs

The quantifiable costs of exclusion to the public purse and to the individual are great; one estimate of the lifetime cost of permanent exclusion is £65,000.⁴ A place in a pupil referral unit for excluded young people (PRU) is calculated by the Government to cost £15,000 per year.⁵ We learnt from young people who had been frequently excluded that the personal costs are significant and long-term.

We investigated the costs and outcomes of running a service in the voluntary sector to reduce exclusions. Compared with the costs of exclusion, even the most intensive model of intervention saves money in the long term, as well as helping young people to resolve the issues that distract them from learning. For the three case study services for

which we had robust cost information, we found that the cost of supporting a young person to stay in school for a year averaged at £1,696 and that doing so recorded creditable success rates in restoring young people to education. The annual cost of a secondary school place is approximately £4,000. This suggests that local education authorities spent £5,696 for each of these young people to access support and retain a place at school, as opposed to the £15,000 that it would have cost for a place at a pupil referral unit, if they had been excluded.

Fixing discipline problems before they become entrenched is in everyone's interest:

- the young person themselves
- their peers who share a classroom with them
- the local community that suffers when young people are outside the supervision and boundaries of school
- the criminal justice system that bears the cost when unsupervised, disaffected young people go on to commit offences
- the public purse that pays out for years to come because of the adverse effects of an interrupted education.

Conclusions and recommendations

This report demonstrates the damaging long-term impact that exclusions can have and makes the case for investment in early intervention and alternative provision for young people at risk of

⁴ Brookes et al (2007)

⁵ DCSF (2008)

exclusion. These recommendations will be all the more important if government policy does indeed result in the wider use of exclusions.

Permanent exclusions have shown a welcome decline in recent years, thanks to measures such as managed moves between schools. Barnardo's hopes this decline continues. Meanwhile, fixed-term exclusions are used repeatedly and unofficial exclusions, although illegal, are too commonly reported and are leaving children at risk in the community. There is evidence that zero exclusions and managed moves will not work properly unless they are backed with adequate alternative provision and strong partnership working between schools and other agencies.

Recommendation one:

Alternatives and preventive

interventions: A range of alternative provision should be available in every area to meet the diverse needs of young people at risk of exclusion. Preventive intervention needs to be offered sooner and more widely to young people at risk of exclusion. Both options save public money in the long term.

Recommendation two:

Repeat fixed-term exclusions:

Barnardo's recommends that three fixed-term exclusions, or more than six days of exclusion, should trigger a detailed review of the child's situation, ideally through a holistic assessment of a child's needs using the Common Assessment Framework (CAF). This would enable any underlying family or community problems to be addressed,

as well as ensuring that the child's learning needs were being met.

Recommendation three:

Unofficial exclusions: Unofficial exclusions are dangerous and unacceptable. Exclusion must either go through the proper legal processes or it should not occur. The reasons why a child is not attending school should be promptly and accurately recorded, reported to the local authority and the relevant safeguarding board should be informed.

Recommendation four:

Zero exclusions and managed moves:

Zero exclusion policies and managed moves should not be considered unless adequate, properly resourced alternative provision is already in place. Where managed moves are possible, authorities and schools must regularly review each case and the excluding school should continue to monitor the child in their destination school, so that they do not go missing from education – a situation which puts children at risk. The use of a CAF would be beneficial to ensure underlying needs are addressed.

Further research

Statistics show that exclusions appear to unfairly target children from certain groups. Further research is planned on the link between being poor or living in a deprived area and a greater risk of being excluded from school. Barnardo's believes that this is one factor contributing to the achievement gap in education. A briefing paper is planned for early 2011.



Introduction

Policy context

This research was prompted in part by policy commitments made by the Conservatives in opposition⁶ and more recently by Nick Gibb, the Schools Minister.⁷ Specific commitments included curtailing the right of appeal and ending the financial penalty on schools for excluding (whereby the money follows the child), as well as ending behaviour partnerships between schools and the requirement to arrange alternative provision from the sixth day of exclusion.⁸ Barnardo's was concerned that these measures could lead to a rise in permanent exclusions.

Barnardo's accepts that in some rare instances, removal from school may be the only option for severe discipline problems. Barnardo's runs three specialist residential schools for children and young people with very complex behavioural and emotional needs. Many of these children have already experienced exclusion from mainstream school, sometimes numerous times, and need intensive support to re-engage with education and learn how to manage their behaviour to make learning enjoyable and productive. However, when the safety of students, teachers and pupils is at risk, exclusion has to remain an option.

Recent success in reducing the numbers of permanent exclusions demonstrates that exclusions could and should become a last resort. Fixed-term exclusions are an over-used and

ineffective disciplinary measure. More serious still are the statistically hidden 'unofficial' exclusions, where young people are simply sent home without any educational provision or legal right to appeal.

This report demonstrates the damaging long-term impact that exclusions can have and makes the case for investment in early intervention and alternative provision for young people at risk of exclusion. These recommendations will be all the more important if government policy does indeed result in the wider use of exclusions.

Poverty and social disadvantage increase the risk of being excluded from school, exacerbating the achievement gap which the Coalition Government is committed to tackling. This research shows how intervening early and providing alternatives can help to encourage young people back to education or training and so improve their prospects.

Research background

Statistically, school exclusion is strongly linked to poverty and disadvantage. Black Caribbean boys are three times more likely to be excluded than their white peers; children with special educational needs are 10 times more likely to be excluded; while primary school children receiving free school meals are five times more likely. This report includes information based on interviews with young people at greater risk of exclusion than their peers, such as Michael, whose ADHD had placed him and his mother at

6 In a Conservative Party press release (30 July 2009)

7 Hansard (12 July 2010), Column 639 'Head teacher authority must be absolute in the classroom and we will remove deterrents that may prevent schools from properly exercising their powers to exclude pupils.'

8 Conservative Party (April 2008)

odds with various schools since infant school; black Caribbean pupils who have benefited from a chance to learn from positive, supportive men from their own community; and young people from economically depressed former mining villages who had little motivation to learn or get a job.

One in 20 secondary students will experience at least one fixed-term exclusion each year. Two-thirds of fixed period exclusions in secondary schools were given to pupils who had already received at least one earlier in the year. Barnardo's research found that this frequently repeated measure, which does little to improve behaviour, aggravates alienation from school and places some young people at risk of getting involved in antisocial behaviour or crime. The risks associated with permanent exclusion, which affects about one in 500 secondary school pupils (0.17 per cent), are even greater. This is because those young people most likely to undergo extended or repeated periods of exclusion are the ones that need more adult supervision, not less. Excluding them from the stable routines of school and sending them back to a chaotic home or risky neighbourhood only worsens their behaviour.

Our interviews with young people and their parents demonstrate the long-term harm that can result from being rejected by school – the place where every child expects to be, every day. This is made worse if proper alternatives for learning and

interventions to address underlying needs are not provided. Young people benefit from being constructively occupied throughout the day and from consistent support and guidance from adults.

Fixing discipline problems before they become entrenched is in everyone's interest:

- the young person themselves
- their peers who share a classroom with them
- the local community that suffers when young people are outside the supervision and boundaries of school
- the criminal justice system that bears the cost when unsupervised, disaffected young people go on to commit offences
- the public purse that pays out for years to come because of the adverse effects of an interrupted education.

Research aims

The research focused on alternative provision and positive, timely interventions to prevent exclusions. It demonstrates models of intervention that can address difficult behaviour before it results in exclusions. The research objectives were to:

1. raise awareness of underlying reasons for young people being excluded
2. examine successful models of intervention to prevent difficulties escalating to the point of exclusion

3. raise the profile of successful alternatives to exclusion for young people who have reached crisis point – these might include separate units and alternative curriculums
4. demonstrate the social and economic costs of exclusion – building the case for investment in preventive services and alternative provision.

Research methods

As the main purpose of this research was to illustrate effective models of intervention, a case study method⁹ was used to obtain an in-depth picture of four differing services supporting young people at risk of exclusion.

The research deals with England only: education policy is devolved. Permanent exclusion rates in the other three nations are less than half of those in England. There are indications that school discipline may become stricter in England. This report aims to show that improving behaviour in schools is not best supported by increasing the rates of school exclusions.

Of the four services involved in the research, three were Barnardo's services. One, Leeds Reach, was a small grass roots charity working in partnership with Barnardo's. One of the Barnardo's services was newly opened at the time of the research and only working with a few young people. The service was working in a zero-excluding borough which had yet to develop its practice in this respect. Some of the young people we met there appeared to have

slipped through several safety nets and were extremely vulnerable.

For these reasons, this service has been anonymised as the Late Intervention Service (LIS) in a former industrial region.

Four models of intervention

1. **The Shropshire Project** works with the local authority across this large, mainly rural county to support young people aged 5-19 who have family and other difficulties that distract them from learning and affect their behaviour. This service aims to support young people together with their families, so that they can benefit from their education.
2. **Leeds Reach** works in partnership with urban secondary schools, Barnardo's and others to deliver an alternative, inclusive learning programme for young people who for varying reasons have found it difficult to remain in school. The service aims to support the young people in returning to school the following term.
3. **Palmersville Training** offers between one and three days per week (according to need) of a vocational learning option for young people in North Tyneside. The service aims to help those alienated by the academic nature of schoolwork to gain qualifications, see the relevance of learning and become more motivated in their studies.
4. **The Late Intervention Service (LIS)** works with the most troubled and troubling group of young people in

⁹ Researchers employed a range of methods to focus in on the processes in each service to build up a detailed picture of how they work and the young people they work with.

deprived parts of a former industrial region. Many were unable to cope with mainstream school and had experiences which made it hard for them to trust other people. The service aims to help them take part in positive activities and develop good relationships, breaking the cycle of harmful experiences.

At each location researchers interviewed young people (individually and in groups) and, where possible, their parents; school teachers, local authority officers and commissioners; partners such as youth offending workers, the police, and mental health specialists as well as the managers and workers at each of the services.

Interviews

Who	Numbers
Young people	20
Workers	10
Managers	5
Local authority officers	5
Teachers/school support	5
Parents	2
Mental health/youth offending workers	2
Police officers	1

Listening to the experiences of young people at risk of exclusion was central to this research; they were interviewed in depth or observed taking part in work and activities. This enabled a description of the working methods of each service to be built up. We were also

able to observe one multi-agency case review.

Services allowed us to examine their detailed records about costs and outcomes and provided valuable information about the nuts and bolts of running a voluntary sector service to reduce exclusions.

To provide background to the four case studies, a detailed analysis of the Government's annual statistics on permanent and fixed-term exclusions over several years was carried out. This enabled patterns and trends to be uncovered, such as the close links between poverty, deprivation and being excluded from school. These statistics were updated in July 2010 when a welcome drop in permanent exclusions was noted.¹⁰ Despite reductions in the rates and numbers of exclusions, the relative risks of being excluded for different groups remain the same, contributing to the well-documented gap in educational achievement between poor children and their better-off peers.

Not present and not correct

The report opens with a discussion of law and practice surrounding school exclusions (Chapter one). The different types of exclusions are explained and contrasted with unofficial exclusions which, although illegal, were regularly reported by interviewees. The need to ensure that any exclusions or moves are fair, legal and backed up by adequate alternatives is emphasised.

¹⁰ From 0.11 per cent of the school population to 0.09 per cent.

Chapter two looks briefly at the experiences of some of the young people behind the statistics, especially those from groups which are disproportionately excluded.

Chapter three explores the statistically recorded reasons for exclusions and compares these with the experiences of young people, their teachers, and others who work to maintain their education. Following this analysis the section asks whether exclusion is an effective punishment, especially given recent increases in the repeat use of fixed-term exclusions.¹¹

At the heart of this report, in Chapter four, is an in-depth investigation of four different ways of working to help young people improve their behaviour so that they can return to the classroom better focused on learning and less likely to disrupt lessons.

In Chapter five, the report looks at the potential costs and impacts of school exclusions on the individual,

the community and the public purse. These are then compared with the costs and potential outcomes of earlier intervention to prevent exclusions.

Conclusions and recommendations

In the final chapter Barnardo's makes a set of recommendations to reduce the number of school exclusions, improve the educational prospects of young people susceptible to school exclusion and avoid the long-term costs and negative impacts of exclusion. In brief these are:

1. to increase the supply, range and quality of early intervention and alternative provision
2. to introduce a trigger to prompt a needs assessment where fixed-term exclusions are used repeatedly
3. to clamp down on illegal, unofficial exclusions
4. to ensure that adequate alternative provision is in place before implementing managed moves and zero-exclusion policies.



¹¹ In secondary schools in 2008-09, 46 per cent of fixed-term exclusions were given to pupils who had already been given at least one fixed-term exclusion earlier in the year. A total of 75,280 excluded secondary pupils had experienced two or more fixed-term exclusions and 810 excluded pupils had been excluded more than 10 times.

Chapter one: Exclusions – law and practice

There are two types of exclusion from school:

1. permanent exclusion (or ‘expulsion’) is removal from a school roll
2. fixed-term exclusion (or ‘suspension’) is exclusion for a set number of days, not totalling more than 45 days in a school year.

In both cases the school must set and mark work for the first five days,¹² and the parents must keep the child indoors during school hours. In the case of permanent exclusions the local authority must arrange full-time, supervised education from the sixth day onwards. Schools are responsible for arranging education for fixed-term exclusions longer than five days. Full-time education means offering English and maths as part of 21 to 25 hours of guided learning per week. Barnardo’s research found that excluded young people were often receiving much less than this.

Both fixed-term and permanent exclusions can be carried out quickly as initially only a phone call home is required. This must be followed by a letter home the next day.

Permanent exclusions

Permanent exclusion affects a small proportion of young people each year: most recently about 0.09 per cent of the total school population. Although this is a fraction, in 2008-09, 6,550 young people had their education interrupted and their future potential harmed by

being permanently removed from a school roll.

Pupils who are permanently removed from the roll of a school need support to continue with their education without delay. Ofsted found that nearly half of local authorities included in their research (Ofsted, 2009) were not complying with the requirements to ‘provide full-time and suitable education from day six of a permanent exclusion’, usually because of under capacity at pupil referral units (PRUs). Similarly, Barnardo’s research heard from young people who had to wait several months for a place at another school – meanwhile their education suffered.

A project worker said: ‘If it’s a permanent exclusion, my heart sinks because of the length of time before another school is found’. In Berridge’s research (2001) offending behaviour was linked to long periods without alternative provision (in some cases as long as a year) which made young people susceptible to contact with offenders and to offending themselves.

Zero exclusions and ‘managed moves’

Efforts to reduce permanent exclusions have resulted in a decline of 41 per cent since 1994 and several¹³ authorities now record ‘zero’ permanent exclusions. Maintaining a zero permanent exclusion rate often involves employing ‘managed moves’¹⁴ to another school or transfers to pupil

¹² DCSF (2008)

¹³ Eight local authorities have reduced exclusions to zero, with a further nine reporting fewer than five permanent exclusions per annum. Three of the services involved in this research were in zero or low excluding boroughs.

¹⁴ Vincent et al (2007)

referral units or other alternative providers, depending on the needs of the young person. This can be seen to work well in some areas but in others there is more work to be done to ensure that zero exclusions are backed up with adequate provision, both for learning and social development. Our research found that there were still young people who were not welcome at school, but who had not had suitable provision made for them. For those young people this amounted to a de facto exclusion, without the rights afforded in other areas which continued to permanently exclude. A local authority inclusions officer explained why her borough did not have a zero exclusions policy: 'If you say zero you must have something else in place and we have not. Otherwise we would have more grey exclusions and children dropping through the net. Whatever you put in has got to

be set up first.' Research by Ofsted on children missing from education noted the risks of managed moves if they were not properly conducted. They observe that some authorities were discontinuing managed moves because 'initial trials led them to believe that the moves... could lead to pupils becoming lost to the system'.¹⁵

In rural Shropshire we were told of the difficulties in organising a managed move when the next nearest school was 25 miles away. In another borough, workers explained that if the young person is subsequently excluded from the second school, then no other school is likely to welcome them.

Local authorities that record zero permanent exclusions continue to exclude on a fixed-term basis, sometimes more frequently than before.



15 Ofsted (August 2010)

Steve, a managed move

Steve experienced a 'managed move' after a couple of violent incidents at his old school, one involving a knife. He told us how much he enjoyed his new school and appreciated a fresh start away from a reputation for violence at the old school. The new head teacher was well-known for being focused on his pupils' needs and Steve described the teachers as 'a laugh'.

While he was waiting for a new school he was moved to a tuition centre. While there, he became concerned that he was falling behind with his work and so put in a lot of effort to make sure he was keeping up with his peers, especially with spelling.

The new school sent him to the Palmersville Training vocational training centre for one day a week. Steve was now working hard to manage his anger and had great

insight into activities which helped him to remain calm. At the time we spoke to him he was doing horticultural training. Horticulture was a steadying factor in his life. He said: 'At Palmersville Training I enjoy gardening. I like things where I feel calm. I don't like kicking off.'

Steve's managed move and vocational training at Palmersville Training had turned out really well for him – the only worry was that it had taken seven months to organise. He said this was the fault of the old school, which he believed had neglected to find him another suitable school. He and his parents had no idea who should be responsible for finding the new school.

Steve's employment prospects were now good – he already had a part-time job and was proud to be buying his mother a Christmas present with his own money.



Fixed-term exclusions

While permanent exclusions have been in decline, fixed-term exclusions have been creeping up and have increased in use by 5.4 per cent since 2003-04.

Across all schools in England there were 363,280 fixed-term exclusions in 2008-09, 307,840 of them in secondary schools, affecting one in 20¹⁶ of the secondary school population.

As we have seen, the law¹⁷ requires that alternative provision is made for the young person by the school on the sixth day of exclusion. However, the majority of exclusions (131,620) were for just one day at a time, while 14 per cent were for five days, which resulted in 247,200 lost days of education. The ‘six day rule’ introduced in 2007 has resulted in a decline in the proportion of exclusions of six days or more, while the proportion of those lasting fewer than six days has increased by seven per cent.¹⁸

Exclusions of up to five days

If an exclusion order is for five days or fewer in one term, the school does not need to advise the local authority or the school governors. This means that hundreds of thousands of fixed-term exclusions are not subject to scrutiny by the local authority, school governors or the school’s pupil discipline committee, which has the power to overturn exclusion.¹⁹

Schools are required to set, send home and mark work for exclusions of five days or fewer, but we know

from interviews with young people, teachers and workers, and from others’ research (Hayden and Dunne, 2001; Cooper, 2001), that the arrangements made by schools to send work home during these shorter periods of exclusion are often ad hoc. Some teachers are even unclear as to what the correct procedure should be. One behaviour support teacher interviewed was annoyed that often, neither the excluded young person nor their parents came into school to collect the work that was set for them. She found it very inconvenient to go around all the teachers and obtain the work from them, especially as many did not have it ready.

Repeated use of fixed-term exclusions

Government guidance on exclusions recommends that ‘individual fixed-term exclusions should be for the shortest time possible, bearing in mind that exclusions for more than a day or two make it difficult for the pupil to reintegrate into the school afterwards.’²⁰ The same guidance alerts head teachers to the fact that a pattern of repeated fixed-term exclusions shows the tactic is not effective and that the head should consider ‘alternative strategies for addressing that behaviour’. Our research and the statistical evidence show that 39 per cent of young people who are temporarily excluded are being excluded repeatedly within one year, probably ineffectively, and to the detriment of their education and social

16 5.2 per cent of pupils aged 11 and above – 172,900 pupils altogether

17 DCSF (2008)

18 The overall number of fixed-term exclusions has fallen for both those over and under six days. However, the number of exclusions under six days has increased as a fraction of the total number of fixed-term exclusions, showing that shorter fixed-term exclusions account for more of the fixed-term exclusions that are happening.

19 In 2008-09 secondary head teachers potentially made the sole decision in 298,040 cases of fixed-term exclusion, representing more than 700,000 days out of school.

20 DCSF (2008)

development. Two out of three fixed period exclusions were given to pupils who had received at least one exclusion earlier in the year.

Legal guidance²¹ advises that fixed-term exclusions can result in a pupil losing up to 45 days of schooling each year or 15 days a term. At two schools where this research was conducted, there was a misunderstanding that a young person had to reach 45 days of fixed-term exclusion before they could be permanently excluded.

Some teachers recognised the problems that could arise from repeated exclusions and worked creatively to find the right solution for their difficult pupils. 'I've never agreed with the idea of allowing 45 days a year, it is ridiculous that you would allow it to go that far. Obviously exclusion isn't working for them; it's not getting the message home. The six day rule, I think I understand the idea, but schools will see round it and just do five days. It doesn't help. It is about recognising early on. Children are not naughty for the sake of being naughty; there's a problem somewhere. I think it's about finding something for kids who cannot hack mainstream and the pressure on mainstream school to up their grades means they see those children as a problem which does not help.' This patient teacher ran sessions in school for children who needed one-to-one attention. The sessions had different start and end times to the main school to avoid friction. She spoke of the success she had recently had by reading aloud from *Of Mice and Men* to one boy with

severe behavioural difficulties. Her persistence and relationship building skills had good results.

Appeals

Parents, but not pupils, currently have the right to appeal against both types of exclusion, although few do so in practice. Six hundred and forty appeals were lodged in 2008-09, accounting for just under 10 per cent of all permanent exclusions. Eight per cent (50) of these appeals were not even heard. The appeals process is complex and this research found that some of the excluded young people had strong, caring parents who were prepared to fight on their behalf, sometimes with the help of support workers. Other young people had parents who were concerned, but who expressed their worries inappropriately, further alienating the school and the local authority. A few young people had parents who simply did not care whether their children went to school. These findings have implications for the provision of support and advocacy services for those young people who are most at risk of being excluded from school. What mattered most to young people and their progress in dealing with behavioural and educational problems was that a supportive adult guided them through the issues they faced. Difficult teenagers may seem to reject the support of adults but Barnardo's and other workers, including many working in the local authority, schools and other agencies, were all prepared to persist and get the best outcome for the young person.

21 DCSF (2008)

Unofficial exclusions

Legally there is no such thing as ‘unofficial exclusion’ and in fact it is forbidden by law. However this and previous research for Barnardo’s on teenage mothers²² found numerous examples of pupils remaining absent from school under the school’s instruction. Families tend not to challenge these exclusions. In the first place they may not understand how to question the school’s authority and secondly these exclusions are unofficial – there is no appeals process, no requirement to send work home and the absent students do not appear on official records. These unofficial exclusions are conducted under many different euphemisms – ‘extended study leave’ (while others are attending school for revision classes), ‘cooling-off time’, ‘being sent home to calm down’, ‘reduced timetable’, or in the case of pregnant teenagers ‘health and safety reasons’ – but essentially these pupils are being dealt the same experience as those on fixed-term exclusion.

One view shared by several teachers in this research was that for some, a ‘reduced timetable’ is better than being excluded altogether. Some examples of this approach looked at ‘hotspots’ in the pupils’ timetables, such as not getting on with a certain teacher, and made efforts to find alternatives or to give teacher and pupil a break from each other temporarily. In some cases this meant pupils may have had reduced timetables, disregarding the legal requirement for at least 21 hours of education per week. Personalised timetabling amendments are hard to accommodate in a large school,

so this process holds risks for the young person’s education. For example, researchers came across a young man who did no PE – his best subject – because his timetabling amendment meant he was never in school on the afternoons when the lessons were held.

The casual nature of these absences appears to condone the idea of taking time off or giving up when things get tough; an inappropriate message for a young person growing up in a deprived area, perhaps with a strong culture of worklessness and intergenerational unemployment to overcome. In addition, given that these young people are likely to be poor attenders anyway, schools using unofficial exclusions are effectively colluding with a tendency to truant. The same detrimental effects of exclusion apply here as they do with permanent or fixed-term exclusions, but without any attention being made to supporting the young person to improve their behaviour or continue their learning. Ofsted highlights the risks of unofficial exclusions: ‘This disregard for procedures and legal requirements puts the child at risk’.²³

Researchers met several young people who were apparently ‘choosing’ to exclude themselves from school, either by behaving in a way calculated to end in exclusion or by frequent truanting. This was a ‘choice’ that adults at the services worked to turn around in order to develop more positive attitudes in the young people.

²² Evans, J with Slowley (2010)

²³ Ofsted (August 2010)

Jason, making choices

Jason is an example of a young person who had blurred the definitions between being officially excluded, 'wagging' [truanting], and being unofficially excluded. When interviewed, aged almost 17, he claimed that he had not really attended school since he was about 12 or 13. He gave a confused account of whether he had been excluded, or whether he was actually truanting.

In common with other young people, he attempted to paint a picture of his 'choice' to be out of school, making it appear he was in control of the situation – so truanting is voluntary, exclusion is imposed. When the exclusions seemed to be mounting up, he simply stopped attending school. Disillusioned with his relationships with teachers and other pupils, he started hanging out with some boys who were 'fucking awkward' and described himself as 'turning ruthless'.

Like many excluded young people, Jason was in need of more adult supervision, not less. Parental guidance for Jason had been minimal

and ineffective. When conflicts arose early in his secondary school career he explained that: 'Dad always said stick up for yourself, so I did, then I was the one who got excluded'. His relationship with his mother deteriorated as he became 'out of control' on the streets. Before he was 16 his mother kicked him out because of his drunkenness. In conversation with the service manager and researchers, Jason expressed his longing for 'quality time' with his parents which he felt he had never had.

Eventually, due to some appalling behaviour on the streets near his home, Jason ended up with a custodial sentence. Working with Barnardo's Late Intervention Service and another alternative curriculum provider, he reached a point where he regretted his earlier behaviour, and had succeeded in staying out of trouble and living independently for a year. Another achievement for Jason was to fill out his own benefit forms without adult help – his levels of literacy had improved enough to enable him to do that. He was also planning to help his stepfather with block paving work.

Chapter two: Exclusions – the young people behind the statistics

The fact that certain groups of children are more likely to be excluded from school is well documented and is clear to see in the annual statistics produced by the Government. Even though permanent exclusions are in decline, the relative proportions of children being excluded from these high risk groups remain broadly the same.

Boys are most likely to be excluded, with black Caribbean boys and those with mixed black Caribbean and white heritage three times more likely to be permanently excluded than white boys. Gypsies and traveller children are three to four times more likely to be excluded. Several authors have established that the stereotypical and unfounded representation of black youth as threatening or confrontational can lead to circumstances where this becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy and leads to exclusion.²⁴

Children with special educational needs (SEN) are nearly 10 times more likely than others to be permanently excluded and nearly seven times more likely than others to receive a fixed-term exclusion. Several authors link this to the pressure on schools to perform and compete,²⁵ suggesting that the focus on league tables and examination results may have reinforced academic aims at the

expense of pastoral care.²⁶ Schools that are under greater pressure to demonstrate performance, such as academies, permanently exclude at almost twice the rate of local authority maintained secondary schools. A local government officer regretted that: ‘the barrier to a school meeting a child’s needs is that they have to declare outcomes and these children don’t necessarily provide those outcomes, so that disadvantages a child right from the very beginning. We could meet needs far better in mainstream if they didn’t have something over their head that straight away says “you’re not worth anything to us”’.

There is a strong association between poverty and deprivation, with pupils eligible for free school meals being nearly four times more likely to be permanently excluded from secondary school and three times more likely to receive a fixed-term exclusion than their better-off peers. It is particularly troubling that the excess proportions are worse at primary school level, where close to half of the 720 pupils permanently excluded in 2008-09 were on free school meals, making them five times more likely to be permanently excluded than their better-off peers. Barnardo’s is planning a follow-up briefing paper on the link between poverty and school exclusion as part of our series on the achievement gap in education.

²⁴ Gillborn (1995), Howarth (2004)

²⁵ More than 65 per cent of all school exclusions involve students with special educational needs. Those without a statement are most at risk of permanent exclusion.

²⁶ Vulliamy and Webb (2000), Castle and Parsons (1997), Cooper (2002)

Michael, ADHD

Michael had been unwelcome at school from the earliest stage because of his inability to control his behaviour. His mother, Rose, explained that after an absence through illness he returned to primary school and was told by a teacher: 'We wish you'd stayed away because it was a lot better without you'. Rose battled to get him into another school, where he was diagnosed with ADHD when aged 10. Although the diagnosis of a special educational need explained his behaviour problems, Michael's schooling was still 'a long hard struggle'. He has a very low boredom threshold and would just walk out of the classroom if he got bored or irritated. He said he tried to calm down, but couldn't. The Shropshire Project worked with him on emotional management. Rose said that with the backing of the secondary school, especially the behaviour support teacher and the Shropshire Project family support worker, Michael got on much better than expected. He couldn't manage a full week of academic work, so he was doing work experience two days a week at a charity furniture warehouse and attending school on the other three days. For the first time he was constructively occupied for a full five days a week. He enjoyed the change of scene, gained some skills and found the work worthwhile. He got on well with the organisers and was invited to their Christmas party.



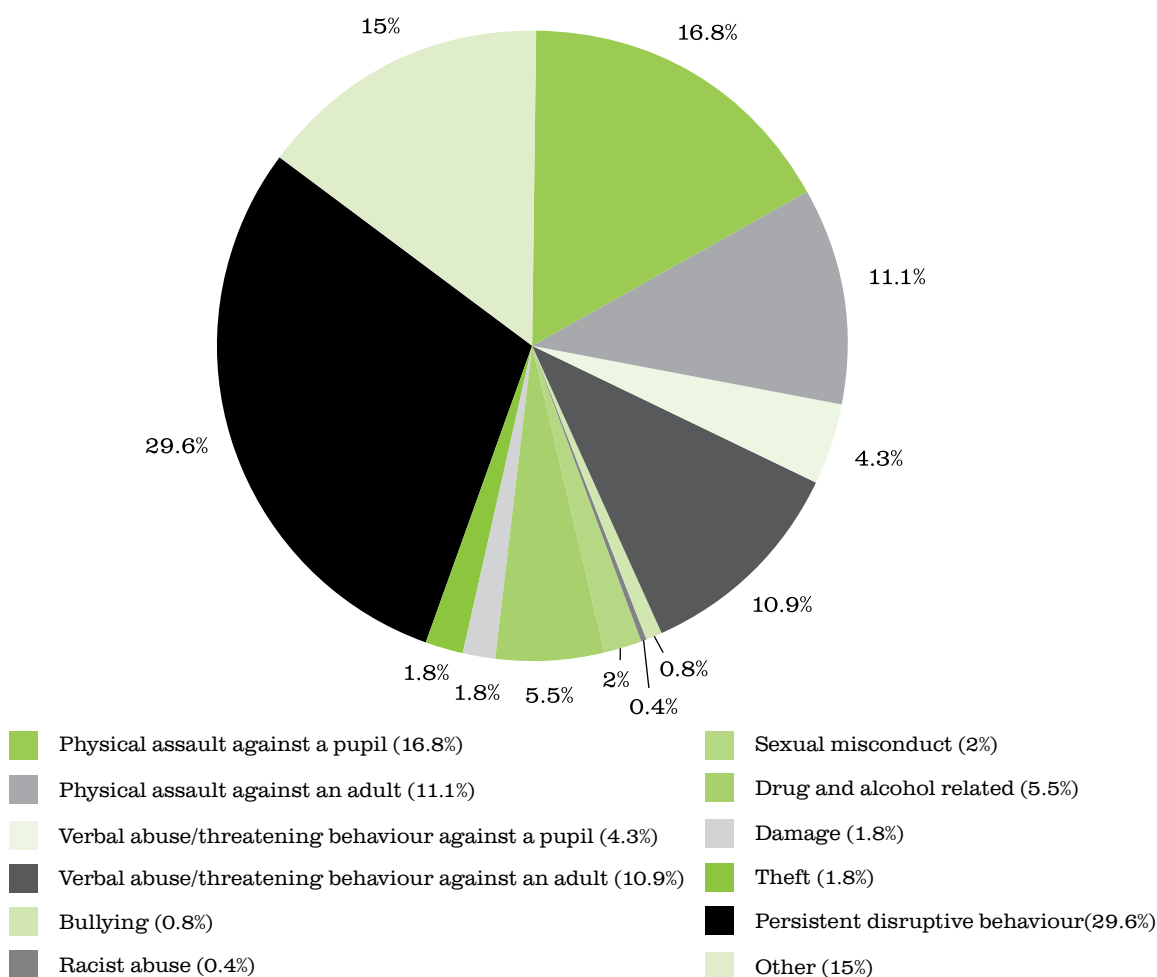
Chapter three: Exclusions – reasons and consequences

The first part of this chapter looks at the official reasons why young people get excluded and the second part finds out what teachers, workers and young people think are the consequences of bad behaviour and the reasons for getting excluded. The final section asks how effective exclusion is as a way of helping young people to understand the consequences of their behaviour and make progress in their education.

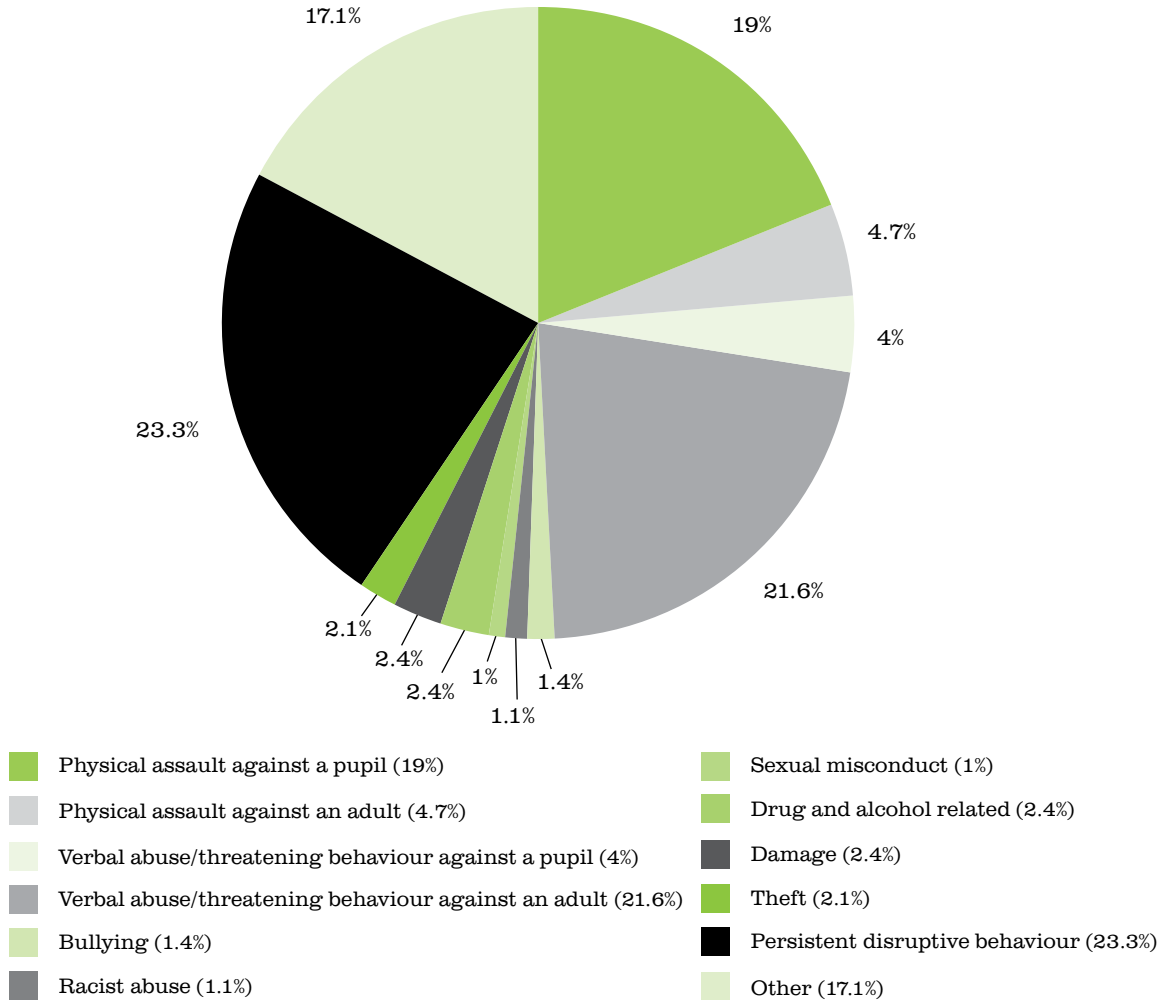
Official reasons for exclusions

The Department of Education, (formerly the DCSF) sets out categories for schools to provide as their reason for issuing exclusions. These are listed in the two charts below which show the proportion of young people excluded for any of those reasons in 2008/09, on either a fixed-term or permanent basis.

Reasons for permanent exclusions 2008-09



Reasons for fixed-term exclusions 2008-09



Abuse and assault

In 2008-09, 22 per cent of fixed-term exclusions were for verbal abuse against an adult (for instance swearing at a teacher) and 19 per cent of fixed-term exclusions were for a physical assault against a pupil; a figure which probably includes a lot of fights. In total, physical assault or verbal abuse was a factor in 50 per cent of fixed-term exclusions and 43 per cent

of permanent exclusions. It can be assumed that these two categories cover sudden outbursts that require an immediate reaction from the school.

Persistent disruptive behaviour

In 2008-09, 30 per cent of permanent exclusions and 23 per cent of fixed-term exclusions were for persistent disruptive behaviour. This implies that between one-quarter and a third of

exclusions are because of behaviour that has noticeably been a problem for some time. Since 2003 this category has accounted for around 30 per cent of permanent exclusions each year and over 20 per cent of fixed-term exclusions each year. Although the numbers vary consistently with the size of each year's cohort, the proportions of young people excluded for this reason remained steady across the period. This indicates that interventions to address regular poor behaviour before it becomes entrenched are not used often enough, or are not effective enough.

Real-life reasons and consequences

Based on research interviews, this section focuses on workers', teachers' and young people's experiences of the three most prevalent reasons for exclusion:

- physical assault
- verbal abuse
- persistent disruptive behaviour.

Physical assault

Young people and teachers gave examples of exclusions issued for events characterised by uncontrolled anger.

Teachers talked about excluding young people who were so angry that they threw furniture or deliberately broke equipment into sharp pieces which could be used as weapons. It is understandable that this sort of behaviour needed to be dealt with

directly and immediately. Some teachers said that giving fixed-term exclusions for this sort of outrageous impulse could 'send a message'. However, it was not always clear whether that message was received. The fact that fixed-term exclusions are used repeatedly, and that we heard of young people who were 'on their 43rd day' out of the possible 45 per year, indicates that these exclusions do little to improve behaviour.

At Leeds Reach, workers had serious concerns about instantly excluding young people who were in such an angry state. A senior practitioner told us: 'In the work I do I'm of the view that I want to keep the young person, so I resolve the situation there and then. If you exclude and just send them away you are letting them go without discussing why they are angry, and then they could go home and do something stupid. I sometimes have to remove a young person from a session, but if they walk off then that is a safeguarding issue: they go off mad and get into further trouble – it's better to try and keep the person.' The manager at the Late Intervention Service (LIS) recognised the issues for teachers when he said: 'Teaching staff don't have the time to repair the bridge when they challenge unacceptable behaviour. They don't get the supervision to think about it.'

Angry outbursts appeared to be common among the young people interviewed. All the services helped young people to manage their anger and understand the probable

consequences of their actions; an important skill not just for school, but for life in general.

Fights and learning to cooperate

The size and environment of most secondary schools leads to some tension between pupils. Fights between pupils are a common discipline problem. As Jason pointed out: 'You always have an enemy at school'. Others told us of fights they had witnessed or been involved in. Sean found it difficult to control his temper if members of his family were insulted and often suspected that others were talking about him behind his back.

Some young people had little impulse control and decidedly poor judgement about their conduct. Bradley, for example, had taken a knife from the Food Technology department and pulled it on his friend; he interpreted this as a joke; however most people, including his teachers, viewed it as a serious incident.

For those who found large classes unsettling, the best approach was for them to work and learn together in small groups. At Leeds Reach staff used small groups to get pupils to interact with respect. At first, certain pupils would need one-to-one supervision and were then gradually introduced to the group as they gained in trust and confidence. Emotional management was one of the topics studied at Leeds Reach. The concentration on skills needed for the workplace at

Palmersville Training encouraged respect, while planning and evaluating activities together in small groups at LIS helped young people who had never achieved this before to cooperate. The Shropshire Project also worked with groups of up to eight young people to learn about anger management, conflict in relationships and other topics as required by the young people. They found that small groups worked best, with the young people transferring their new skills into the larger classroom setting.

Isolation rooms

At most of the schools in this research, one approach to young people who did not get on with their peers was to separate them. For this purpose an 'isolation' room or seclusion unit was often used. Pupils spent a day or longer in this room doing work set by their teachers; no conversation was allowed and lunch was sent in. The objective was to avoid these pupils coming into contact with the rest of the school. Isolation in this way temporarily solved the problem of fights and other discipline issues without excluding the young person. They definitely experienced it as a punishment and most claimed to dislike the room. However, it usually neither addressed the issues leading to discipline problems, nor provided any guidance that would help the young person learn to control themselves or resolve conflict in the long term. As Barker et al observe: 'Interventions are not sufficient to enable behavioural changes amongst

many secluded students, or to address or resolve the complex behavioural issues or specific learning needs that many of them possess.²⁷

Verbal abuse

Pupils who had been excluded from school gave a variety of reasons for being excluded. When probed further a picture frequently emerged of young people who had poor relationships with teachers. Billy recognised that he had been excluded for ‘...answering back at teachers, mouthing off, and bad language. There’s a teacher – Mr X – I don’t get on with. Him and me always come to blows over stupid stuff. If I do something stupid, then he’ll have a go at me, then I have a go at him back and it turns into him ringing up and sending me out and me having a day off the next day.’ When we met Billy he was on his second school and walked three miles to get there for morning lessons. He did not attend afternoon sessions, was frequently sent home as described, and at the time of the research was on ‘extended study leave’. The family support worker aimed to keep him in school as much as possible, through work with Billy, his father and the school.

At Leeds Reach we heard about the concept of ‘respect’ as it is understood by young people. The senior practitioner explained: ‘When they feel they are being disrespected, whether by a peer or a teacher and it happens in front of their peer group, they feel compelled to react to show that they can put up a stance to whatever the person says. It may not be the case

that the teacher is disrespecting them; it’s the way they have received the communication. So it’s up to them to listen better.’

As well as instances of verbal abuse by pupils, we heard from lots of young people about teachers ‘losing it’ or ‘getting in my face’, so it is likely that the stresses of school life affected teachers as well.

Persistent disruptive behaviour

It is easy to imagine a situation where an angry child has an outburst so severe that the only option seems to be to exclude him or her temporarily. The school has to consider the safety of others and the maintenance of a good disciplinary ethos. However, the most prevalent official reason for school exclusion is persistent disruptive behaviour. This raises questions about how behaviour is allowed to become ‘persistently disruptive’ without effective intervention at an earlier stage to guide the young person’s behaviour and help them to resolve problems that distract them from learning.

A family support worker was emphatic about the need for and value of early intervention. She said: ‘There is not enough provision for young people who risk being excluded from school. There should be more work and more provision put in at the preventative level, identifying these young people at a lower level of need so the issues that are raised can be dealt with and they can be supported. Yes schools have to exclude, for safety of pupils and staff, but that is a total crisis point and we’ve

²⁷ Barker et al (2010)

got to get in well before that point. It is possible to identify young people who are working towards that point quite early on; some young people can be identified when they're in the primary schools and worked with on that basis. It is possible to see that there are issues and get the support in early.'

Greater use of early intervention and alternatives like those illustrated in Chapter four should lead to young people's behaviour improving and not being allowed to build to a level where it could be described as persistently disruptive.

Pupils' views of exclusions

It is informative, up to a point, to study the official reasons for young people being excluded from school, but a fuller picture is obtained from some of the young people's personal accounts of their exclusion.

There was evidence in interviews of an inconsistent approach to exclusions which the official statistics cannot show; there were also numerous accounts of exclusions for what sounded like minor misdemeanours. A group of girls in Newcastle agreed that: 'Most of the naughty children get away with their behaviour because the teachers are scared of them'. One was aggrieved because she had had cleaning fluid sprayed into her eyes, but the perpetrator had not been excluded. On the other hand a worker in Leeds thought young people were being excluded for 'leaving their coats on' and elsewhere a teacher said a student had recently been excluded

for three days, then sent to 'isolation' for a further week, for 'stripping off on the public bus'. The rationale for this punishment was that 'the public think that this is how school children behave'. A local authority officer in Newcastle confirmed that even within one borough 'Schools appear to have different thresholds for excluding young people'.

Research shows that best practice in discipline combines a whole school approach with a clear hierarchy of sanctions that are applied consistently when rules are broken.²⁸ The Steer Report (2009) recommends that 'agreed policies are followed consistently by all staff'.²⁹

The consequences of exclusion

There is an argument that occasionally exclusion is a necessary disciplinary measure which, used sparingly, could shock a child into behaving better and temporarily resolve problems in the classroom. However research conducted by Barnardo's and that of others³⁰ illustrates the negative effects of exclusion.

Schools sometimes saw fixed-term exclusion as 'nipping problems in the bud'. Young people sometimes childishly appreciated what they saw as a few days off school, but they quickly became bored at home and their families were often described as devastated. Bradley, who had been very worried about falling behind when he was excluded, said: 'Some of them do

²⁸ Cooper et al (2002)

²⁹ Steer (2009)

³⁰ Daniels et al (2003), DCSF (2003), Hayden and Dunne (2001), Berridge et al (2001), McAra and McVie (2010), Parsons (1999) (2009) etc

it on purpose, they don't care and they want to get kicked out of school – it's a game to them'.

Young people who have been excluded, even for only a few days, are often left to their own devices with token educational provision. Our research concurs with Cooper (2002) who found that work sent home was ad hoc and often minimal.³¹ Pupils fall behind and find the return to school socially awkward after a few days of exclusion. Old relationship problems are still there on their return.

While excluded, the inclination of the young person to do the work unsupervised was negligible, given that they were already disaffected with school and usually among the least motivated students. Many workers and some young people told us of the unfocused and risky activities that people engaged in when they were off school. This sometimes involved encouraging others to stay off school, college or work to keep them company.

Is exclusion an effective punishment?

While the need to protect other pupils' learning from the disruption of poor behaviour is understandable, using exclusion routinely to 'nip bad behaviour in the bud' does not take into account the damage resulting from being rejected from school – the place where every child expects to be, every day. For a few, exclusion may have been the short sharp shock that they needed, to reflect on and improve their behaviour in the future, but exclusion

is especially detrimental to young people whose families are chaotic. As one local authority inclusions officer explained: 'For some of our children, school is the only stability they get'.

James had had so many fixed-term exclusions he could not remember what they were all for – an indication that the punishment had done little to help him to recognise the consequences of certain behaviours.

The message given by exclusion appears to be that it is OK to give up or walk away from tough situations. This is not a helpful message to give young people who may already be demotivated by living in poverty, by racism, or by struggling to meet the demands of academic work. Young people who were repeatedly excluded were already alienated from school and had correspondingly poor attendance patterns. These patterns were not improved by being sent home for disruptive behaviour.

Although there may be a place for exclusions as part of a school's range of responses to severely disruptive behaviour, the large numbers point to a need to intervene much sooner and more effectively. Stepping in earlier to address underlying needs means that difficulties do not escalate until a crisis point is reached and the child is excluded, with others being disrupted in the meantime. This report argues that it is important to use effective alternatives to exclusion or intervene before the risk of exclusion escalates to crisis level.

³¹ Cooper et al (2002)

Jasmine, trouble on the streets

Researchers interviewed 15-year-old Jasmine and met several of the adults responsible for her welfare and education at a review.

Jasmine's mother and teacher spoke about how well Jasmine had been doing, but mentioned a recent and sudden deterioration in her behaviour. She attended an alternative provision just two days a week, but she had not been going to school full-time the rest of the time because of serious relationship problems with one of her teachers.

This meant that at times she was unattended in her neighbourhood. She had been arrested for assaulting a neighbour. However when the police and other workers questioned her further about this event, Jasmine claimed to have been defending herself and her friends against the neighbour's attempt to engage them in behaviour which she knew was unsafe.

Discussions at the review resulted in police dropping charges against Jasmine and safeguarding protocols were set up to protect her and her friends.



In cases where children are simply excluded without alternative provision or other support, they can become involved in a variety of petty crimes and risky behaviours, often through connections with older people who they meet while off school. For example, many spoke about spending

their days smoking cannabis. Further research planned by Barnardo's will investigate the range of negative outcomes for excluded children. Others' research shows connections between being excluded from school and involvement with offending behaviour.³²



32 McAra, L (2004), Berridge et al (2001)

Chapter four: Intervention and alternatives – learning from local practice in four areas

Researchers visited four different services in England working with young people at risk of being excluded. Three were Barnardo's services and one, Leeds Reach, involved a small grass roots charity working in partnership with Barnardo's. Working in partnership with schools, colleges and local authorities, each of the four models of early intervention or alternative provision works to help young people behave better, resolve their personal problems and become motivated to learn.

This section builds a comprehensive picture of how each service works with at-risk young people, using interviews with: young people, their parents, project workers and managers, local education authority professionals, school teachers responsible for behaviour and partners in specialist services (CAMHS and YOTs for example).³³ Researchers were able to observe workers' methods and practice with young people, or to see the work that young people were doing themselves. The projects shared detailed information about their outcomes measures, funding and costs which are discussed in Chapter five.

Some of the young people at each of the services were among the most challenging in the school system. At the same time they revealed to researchers how vulnerable they were to personal and institutional neglect,

and the adverse effects of a chaotic upbringing and limited opportunities, often in deprived and poorly resourced areas. At times, the ideal of getting them back into mainstream school and successfully working towards qualifications seemed impossible to achieve, particularly for those who had already spent long periods out of school and who were nearly 16.

What mattered most in each setting was a shared belief in each young person's potential to turn things around, even if this meant taking small steps and making slow progress. One manager's summary of his service's work with young people applied at all four services: 'The constant theme is choices and consequences'.



³³ Child and adolescent mental health services and youth offending teams

Four models of intervention

1. **The Shropshire Project** works with the local authority across this large, mainly rural county to support young people aged five to 18 who have family and other difficulties that distract them from learning and affect their behaviour. This service aims to support young people together with their families, so that they can benefit from their education.
2. **Leeds Reach** works in partnership with secondary schools, Barnardo's and other agencies to deliver an alternative, inclusive learning programme for one term for young people who, for varying reasons, have found it difficult to remain in mainstream school. The service aims to support these young people during their return to school the following term.
3. **Palmersville Training** offers between one and three days a week of a vocational learning option for young people in North Tyneside. The service aims to help those alienated by the academic nature of schoolwork to: gain qualifications, see the relevance of learning and become more motivated to focus on their studies.
4. **The Late Intervention Service (LIS)** works with the most troubled and troubling group of young people in deprived parts of a former industrial region. Many were unable to cope with mainstream school and had experiences which made it hard for them to trust other people. The service aims to help them take part in positive activities and to develop good relationships, breaking the cycle of harmful experiences.



The Shropshire Project – unpicking the issues

The Shropshire Project works in partnership with Shropshire Council to deliver early intervention and preventive services for five to 18-year-olds, centred on family support work. A primary objective is to prevent school exclusions, yet all the workers and managers we met at this service were convinced that the problems that placed the young person at risk of exclusion were usually far more complex than just bad behaviour. Each of them spoke of ‘unpicking the issues’ to minimise the risk of exclusion. This was done by working with young people and their families, alongside other services and liaising with schools, using a wide variety of skills and methods to resolve whatever was truly distracting a young person from their education. On average this could be for six months, but sometimes long-term engagement was needed; some young people were known to workers throughout their school careers. There was flexibility to reopen cases.

The service manager told us that family support workers need to build up ‘an incredible toolkit’ of skills and methods given the wide range of problems they are working with. One of the family support workers confirmed that her work is ‘really broad ranging’ but found that young people were frequently referred with low self-esteem which they expressed through poor behaviour. She explained: ‘When you start to unpick the problem, then there are

lots of issues going on underneath’. She listed drug misuse, parental separation, bereavement and the stress of living in a deprived community as some of the issues she has uncovered when working with young people at risk of exclusion. She explained that some are on the brink of offending, so are referred to the youth offending service. The two services could then jointly address the young person’s behaviour and its consequences. She summed it up like this: ‘It’s essential to work closely with other agencies and services, because it’s a very powerful tool if we’re all working together and working as a team’.

Working with young people

All the family support workers (FSWs) work in schools. Some are based at a school while others work in multi-agency teams (MATs). Workers described the main difference between what they do as being about where they get their referrals from, but both models have their advantages. In both cases referrers used CAF and also Pupil Attitude to School and Self (PASS) scales.³⁴

One of the school-based workers had a room in the school with an ‘open door’ policy. Young people could easily refer themselves; alternatively, a concerned teacher or school nurse might refer a child. The family support worker also ran some small groups at school on issues like anger management, bullying, sex and relationships. She got to know those pupils at risk of exclusion or with discipline issues and in turn they knew they could approach

³⁴ See glossary for more details

her directly, even if they thought their problems were minor. This helped resolve issues at an early stage.

Other workers were based in MATs alongside other professionals such as social workers, youth offending workers and mental health workers. Other specialists dropped into the office, including traveller liaison workers and health visitors. The opportunities this proximity afforded for informal discussions and consultations, short of a full referral, meant that problems were often picked up and dealt with before they could escalate. Formal referrals were received by the MAT manager and passed on to the family support workers as appropriate.

Working with parents

Of the four models of intervention researched, The Shropshire Project was most involved with parents and carers – this was central to their method.

Workers spoke about how parents feel anxious and guilty when their son or daughter is at risk of exclusion from school, often blaming themselves and being unsure how to help. There were often communication breakdowns because many were reluctant to go near a school because of their own bad experiences and those of their children. It was very important to keep the lines of communication open between the school and the family in these cases, while always respecting the young person's confidentiality. One of the ways workers built parents' confidence and self-esteem was to help them to

arrange clubs and community groups during the summer holidays.

Researchers met young people with their parents and were told how much they valued the support of the FSWs. Max's dad Peter had done a Triple P parenting course arranged by the family support worker. He had learnt more effective ways of approaching Max – he still challenged unacceptable behaviour, but without 'going at him like a bull at a gate' which he used to do. It was important that their relationship had improved as Max could no longer live with his mother. Peter said what he wanted for Max was '...all the normal things in the future. For him to try and get as much out of school as he can, come out and get a half decent job.'

Working with schools and the local authority

As well as working to resolve family stress and risky behaviour, FSWs also have excellent links with schools and teachers and a close working relationship with the local authority's inclusion officers. These strong professional connections mean that they are able to advocate and intervene on behalf of young people to achieve the best educational outcomes for them. In turn schools, teachers and local authority workers respected the insights that FSWs were able to offer on the best way to support a young person through difficulties at school. Gaining the young person's consent helped to engage them in the work, so the relationship was quite different to that with teachers or social workers.

Teachers and inclusion officers also recognised that young people and their parents sometimes found it easier to discuss problems with a Barnardo's Family Support Worker than in statutory settings. A teacher told an FSW this was because 'I am still part of the school. Your link with the mother has been important. I have a good relationship, but not as good as yours'. Part of this good relationship meant respecting the family's confidence and only passing on to the school what the young person agreed to. An inclusion officer explained that 'very often it will be better if it's the family support worker or someone outside of school' helping to solve school-related problems. Inclusion officers would call family support workers to find out why they thought a young person was not attending school, recognising that exclusion, truancy and persistent absence could often be explained by reference to wider stresses in the child's life; it is rarely just about a dislike of school.

The statutory services provided by local authorities and the schools are fundamental to the child's wellbeing, safety and progress, but the voluntary nature of relationships with Barnardo's workers proved to be a benefit for young people at all the services we researched.

Leeds Reach – respite and reintegration

While not a Barnardo's service like the other three research sites, Leeds Reach

works in partnership with Barnardo's, five schools, and other partners to offer disaffected and disruptive Year 9 students a term of alternative provision at premises in Chapeltown, Leeds. This is then followed by a term of mentoring and weekly visiting to reintegrate the young person back into school. The service works with a high proportion of black Caribbean or mixed heritage students. As the statistics show, black Caribbean children are at least three times more likely to be excluded from school than white British children. All the staff at the project are from a black Caribbean heritage. This small project is staffed by a service manager, two male project workers, a female administrator (who also worked one-to-one with young people and has recently completed a counselling qualification) and a chef. The manager was recruiting volunteers, and also trained social work, youth work or psychology students on placements.

How the programme works

Leeds Reach offers each partner school between three and six places a year at a cost of £40 per pupil per day, working with between seven to 12 students each term. The small group benefits young people who have had problems in a large secondary school. Tutors work on a one-to-one basis or can give individual attention during group sessions. The young people who attend the project are selected by each school in consultation with Leeds Reach. Together they work towards a successful outcome, so group dynamics are carefully considered and the potential for positive engagement

with the young person is realistically evaluated before the placement. This does not mean ‘cherry picking’ the easier students. In fact, the manager told us that some young people had previously been to several other services and been ‘thrown out’. Others had already experienced over 40 days of exclusions in the school year and were ‘on their very last legs’.³⁵ Researchers observed a classroom lesson and sat down to lunch with students. It was clear that a few must have presented serious difficulties in a mainstream classroom, but gradually Leeds Reach had helped them to relate respectfully to adults and other students and to deal with stress without getting angry. Emotional management was part of the course studied each week.

The process over the term was to work with each young person for four days a week at the centre. Students were fully occupied between 9.15am (starting with a breakfast club) and 3.05pm. On Fridays, pupils were strongly encouraged to go back to school for at least part of the day to maintain their contacts there. Progress through the programme was carefully structured and outcomes were monitored continually, allowing the young person to reflect upon behaviour, feelings and achievements daily. A six-week review meeting was held between the school, the young person, their parents, Leeds Reach and any other interested parties, for example the police or social services. From the tenth week they started to go back to school for two days a week, increasing to three at the

end. At this point they could put into practice what they had learnt at Leeds Reach while having the opportunity to reflect back with the workers. From the following term, young people went back to school full-time with their mentor visiting once a week or more to support their progress back into mainstream education.

The reintegration part of the work could take up to six months and workers mentioned young people who continued to contact the service, for example attending summer projects, and some who returned when older to work as volunteers and peer mentors. One of the workers was developing a peer mentoring group for ex-Reach users aged 17 or 18. Some of them were at college or about to move onto university, but still wanted to be part of the project. He will train them to lead sessions at schools on mediation, weapons awareness and so on.

Working with young people

The manager at Leeds Reach explained: *‘It is a youth work approach we have here. The underlying message is about positive behaviour, getting back into school, focusing, attendance, conflict resolution – the constant theme is choices and consequences.’*

Staff used a range of methods and strategies to engage young people. They were aware that ‘one approach with one person is not suitable for another’. First they assessed learning style and any difficulties, for example with literacy. This helped to tailor the lessons to best

³⁵ A school can exclude a young person on a fixed-term basis for up to 45 days per year.

engage the young person. The assessments also provided useful information for schools as sometimes a learning difficulty like dyslexia had been missed. A teacher said of one child that there had been a real improvement and that a special timetable was being planned for the following term as 'the child was below level [sic], which Leeds Reach has found out'.

A lesson on young people and the law was observed by researchers. This incorporated a number of different activities – viewing a short film, discussion and note taking – with each activity lasting a short time in order to keep their attention. Behaviour management focused on preventing opportunities for bad behaviour, for example through the immediate re-engagement of distracted pupils. This was helped by having three members of staff present in the classroom.

All the young people at Leeds Reach were vulnerable and some were still challenging. While most seemed ready to move on,³⁶ others had formed close attachments to the adults around them. One boy had built up a strong relationship with the chef who came in to provide a cooked lunch. The manager explained that mealtimes were an integral part of the programme: 'We try to create a homely atmosphere. We take sitting around a table for granted, but many of them don't get that at home. And it's useful. We hear a lot!'

Working with parents

Parents could initially feel unsure about their child attending provision away from school for a whole term, fearing they would miss out. However they came to see Leeds Reach as a 'life saver', because Leeds Reach was able to address previous issues of poor behaviour, attendance and attainment effectively. As with The Shropshire Project, there were advantages in being a non-statutory provider in terms of gaining families' trust and confidence. The manager at Leeds Reach said the service promoted multi-agency working and helped to bridge cultural misunderstandings between the school and parents. This seamless approach helped to embed multi-agency and joint working, creating an all-important 'team around the child' (TAC).

Qualifications

While at Leeds Reach, young people were able to work towards a National Open College Network (NOCN) Qualification,³⁷ carefully tailored to their needs and interests. Among the topics studied were: young people, law and order; application of numbers/using calculation; sex and relationship education; foundation for learning and life; writing for meaning and business communication skills. There was also a DJ workshop and sports sessions. They could gain a qualification which was equivalent to GCSE grade D while still only in Year 9. Workers were clear with students that gaining this qualification would be related to the amount of work they put in. At the same time they worked to overcome

³⁶ We visited in week 11 of the programme

³⁷ NOCN Skills towards enabling progression (Step up) post 14

learning difficulties and to improve the young people's concentration in order to help them achieve their goals. The work young people put into gaining this qualification in one term was a boost not only to their education but also to their self-esteem, especially for the majority who had been poor attenders, frequently excluded, or otherwise disengaged.

Working with schools

Keeping the link with schools and working with them as partners was a key part of the work at Leeds Reach. The ultimate aim was to restore young people back to the mainstream school they had come out of and success rates were close to 100 per cent. Teachers, parents and students saw a placement at Leeds Reach as a 'positive solution to the problem rather than a sanction'. What stood out about Leeds Reach was the tuition towards the NOCN qualification and the fact that teaching was managed independently by the service so schools did not have to become involved in sending out work for the young person to do. Leeds Reach could also help with coursework that the young person was working on for their GCSEs. Although at first there may have been concerns about taking a young person away from the regular National Curriculum, it was recognised by schools that for some this was the best option, in the short term at least. The young people were learning valuable lessons, achieving, and gaining the confidence to continue learning when they returned to school. The daily monitoring of progress by Leeds Reach helped young people

manage their behaviour in a way that would be sustainable in school and beyond. They gained the habit of reflecting on their actions and consequences and of coping with impulses that had previously led them into trouble.

Teachers appreciated the follow-up term when Leeds Reach mentors went into the school to support the young person and teachers. One said: 'There is a lot of respect for them. As an outside person they are neutral and that helps to solve some issues.'

Palmersville Training – choosing vocational alternatives

Palmersville Training is a Barnardo's vocational training centre working in partnership with North Tyneside Council – a zero-excluding borough. This means that although North Tyneside schools occasionally exclude pupils on a fixed-term basis, or try to arrange managed moves where suitable, there are no permanent exclusions. This is achieved by carefully monitoring at risk young people from Year 7 when they enter secondary school and supporting them as they progress through school. In Year 9 young people who are struggling with the mainstream curriculum, presenting discipline problems, or being alienated by school because of personal problems or behaviour difficulties, are offered the option of taking some vocational courses in Year 10 and 11 and

working towards a qualification in employability skills.

Vocational options

The work-based learning manager who co-ordinated this service at the council explained that the vocational option was offered to young people 'who probably would not get five A*- C GCSEs'. All the young people interviewed were clear that they were attending Palmersville Training and other vocational providers through their own choice. They were motivated by this sense of autonomy, in contrast with other young people we met elsewhere who sometimes seemed to be behaving badly in order to get excluded; exercising a negative choice about their lives and education which they later went on to regret. The success of North Tyneside's zero-exclusions policy appeared to be founded on the combination of offering choices with early intervention achieved through monitoring young people from Year 7 or earlier.

The programme

At Palmersville Training most young people attend for one day a week. In Year 10 they study a 'round robin' of courses for two years including horticulture, hair and beauty, painting and decorating, catering, retail, and green construction methods such as solar heating and insulation. They could also attend other centres and opt for construction skills including bricklaying, plastering, and motor vehicle mechanics – Palmersville Training arranged these options

for those who wanted them. As the manager explained: 'It is important to find the right course for the young people rather than writing them off'. In Year 11 they could choose to focus on one of the vocational options for the year. Palmersville Training was flexible about working with young people so that those who were having more trouble fitting in at school could spend two, or even three days at the centre.

Pupils were all expected to attend school on the days they were not at the centre. However the local authority was honest in saying that this did not always happen with the most difficult young people, so more challenging young people could spend more time at Palmersville Training. Even when they weren't at school young people continued to attend their vocational options as a matter of choice. A training worker explained that 'young people who are excluded still want to come to Palmersville Training – which shows they can engage'.

Qualifications

One barrier to more young people spending more time at Palmersville Training was that schools are under pressure to report good GCSE results. Although the vocational qualification option offered at Palmersville Training was for many a major achievement, a Level 1 qualification³⁸ could not be counted towards school league table results. Previous research for Barnardo's³⁹ recommended that alternative, vocational and work-based learning needs to be extended as a positive alternative for the many⁴⁰

38 Equivalent to a grade D-G GCSE

39 Evans et al (2009), Evans (2010)

40 In 2008-09 44 per cent of young people received less than five academic GCSEs and many more are alienated by the process

young people whose potential is not unlocked by the mainstream academic curriculum.

Late Intervention Service – tracking down the hardest to reach

The Late Intervention Service (LIS) was a newly opened pilot project being run in partnership with a local authority in an economically depressed former industrial region. The aim of the pilot was to work with local schools and pupil referral units to make provision for the most vulnerable Key Stage 3 and 4 pupils⁴¹ (aged 11 to 16).

This service worked with the most troubled and troubling young people who, because of their serious behavioural problems, had not thrived in any other educational settings and alternative providers including the local PRUs⁴². Many had ASBOs, mental health problems and/or were involved with the youth offending team. All those interviewed gave distressing accounts of routine violence in their relationships with parents, ranging from instances of smacking to cases of assault. Most had been ‘missing from education’ for a range of reasons. In some cases the parents were liable for prosecution. LIS considered it progress when a young person, who had previously made no contact at all, texted to say they could not come to an activity. Such extremes of disengagement from education or any other constructive activities, made it hard to track them down and the

service was contacting the local Youth Offending, Family Intervention and CAMHS teams and ‘knocking on the doors of schools’ to obtain referrals.

The local authority aimed to maintain a zero-exclusions policy, so officially these pupils remained on the roll of a school, but there were indications that they were not able to cope in mainstream education. Because of funding restrictions and limited availability of premises, LIS was not set up to provide the full-time entitlement of 25 hours of education for the young people they worked with. Other provision was equally constrained for working with this hard to reach group. For example, Sarah was getting one day per week, from 10am to 2pm at the local PRU: just four lessons per week towards her imminent GCSEs. Workers at LIS made strenuous efforts to place these young people elsewhere – for example at a Barnardo’s vocational training placement in another city nearby for part of the week. Unfortunately, none of the young people attending LIS were occupied in a constructive educational activity for more than three days per week and several received even less input. Despite the best efforts of workers to engage these difficult young people, because attendance at LIS was voluntary and other provision was not always available, ‘they may be at home or out rabbiting with dogs (which is illegal, albeit traditional). They prefer to hang out with slightly older people. They have a better time with them.’ Workers were of the opinion that such ‘older people’ did not always behave

41 LIS (March 2010)

42 Pupil referral units – see glossary

responsibly towards the young people, leading them into cannabis smoking, gambling or other crime.

Work and practice with young people

The service is currently working with about 28 young people, mostly from Key Stage 4, whereas another partner in the local pilot focuses on Key Stage 3. By the time they get to Key Stage 4 these young people have missed out on a considerable portion of their education so need intensive work. Each worker saw two young people each day. Project workers saw their role as providing support, especially with low self-esteem and lack of confidence. Young people needed 'hand holding' when it came to attending appointments, tests or interviews. Attendance at college on the first few days could be daunting for the older ones, particularly when their previous experience of education had been negative. As one worker explained: 'Sometimes it feels like you're being used as a taxi service, but it's more than that. It's just that initial moment; sometimes if you just wait on the other side of the door it builds them up.' Workers at LIS appeared to have strong relationships with support workers at local colleges and would collaborate to ensure that young people got onto the right courses and stayed on them.

With vulnerable and disaffected young people, a youth work approach to learning can be more effective than classroom methods. One of the ways in which LIS worked with young people was in helping them to plan activities, either individually

or as part of a group. One girl had been enabled to plan a trip to the zoo for herself, her parents and her eight brothers and sisters. This was the first time they had ever been out together as a family and, in view of the girl's behaviour at home and in the community, helped the others see her as a more constructive member of the family. Some young people could only cope with one-to-one work but others had progressed to managing in a group – something which had been difficult for them at school. Researchers joined a steering group of young people evaluating their activities earlier in the summer and making group decisions on where and what they would like to do next. They went out on a half-term go-karting trip, where they all behaved well, sticking to the rules about safety and dress and helping each other out with the vehicles. For these young people, associating with others without conflict was a major achievement.

Qualifications

Because the service was newly established, these young people were not achieving any qualifications at the time of the research. But the service expects to be able to deliver accredited courses in the new academic year.

Working with families

Where possible LIS works with the young person's family because 'the problems don't occur in isolation; they often involve the whole family'. Workers talked to parents, helping young people to communicate without conflict and improve the relationships in the family. They also supported families

when communicating with schools and the authorities because 'parents usually haven't got the know-how or the skills to go to the relevant people. They might scream and shout, but it's not constructive.' In the long term the service manager planned to include parenting groups in the service.

Conclusions

All four of the services showed that it was necessary and worthwhile to work with the most challenging and difficult young people to prevent them from missing out on education and suffering all the associated negative consequences. At the very least, the improvements achieved enabled young people to engage with others in constructive social activities which for some had previously seemed impossible. Others were enabled to remain at or return to school, continuing with their education while managing their behaviour. Traditional classroom methods with their focus on the academic had not worked for some of these young people, so a youth work or vocational approach proved helpful in engaging them with learning.

Although, as shown, each of the services had a different focus and way of working with young people, they all had a similar set of values underpinning their work. All recognised that for most of the young service users there were serious issues underlying difficult behaviour. As far as possible within their remit, services provided support for stressful family issues (to the greatest extent in Shropshire, but also through onsite social work support at Palmersville Training).

Countering feelings of failure and building confidence in learning was central to all the services in this research. They all worked flexibly, seeing each young person as an individual and tailoring courses and interventions to suit their needs. This of course is much easier when working one-to-one or in small groups, as all these services were. Workers empathised with teachers working with up to 30 young people, some highly disruptive. The size and nature of the average secondary school was widely recognised as being part of the problem for vulnerable pupils. Chapter five discusses why it is worth investing in intensive intervention for young people at risk of exclusion.

Despite some of the challenging attitudes displayed, it was clear that vulnerable young people become disheartened and demotivated without the presence of concerned adults in their lives. As one manager pointed out: 'very few young people come across adults where it's an unforced relationship'. At all the services young people chose to participate. This element of consent contributed to a good relationship and promoted their sense of autonomy. As well as this, all the services encouraged young people to think about the choices they made and the consequences. Although it might seem that life circumstances had severely constrained their life choices, being able to understand how their actions affected outcomes contributed hugely towards improved confidence and behaviour.

Chapter five: Costs and outcomes – making the case for alternative provision and early intervention

This chapter demonstrates why it is worthwhile to address the problems underlying exclusions before they result in long-term damage to a child's education and future. The costs and impacts of exclusion are discussed and then compared with the costs and outcomes of the interventions described in the preceding chapter.

Some policy solutions would cost little, such as ending the damaging and illegal practice of unofficial exclusions which give an unhelpful message to young people who are already struggling at school. Similarly, a less complacent approach to the repeated use of fixed-term exclusions would avoid the cumulative damage done when this punishment is used routinely on the same individuals. Permanent exclusion is an expensive option as it is estimated that the cost of a place in a pupil referral unit is £15,000 per year⁴³, compared with supporting young people to stay at school costing between £5,050 and £6,400 per year, depending on the model of support.⁴⁴ The alternatives discussed in this report all cost less than a PRU place and help to resolve the problems in a sustainable way that enables the young person to continue their education with renewed confidence.

Part one of this chapter uncovers the costs of exclusion to:

- the individual

- the public purse
- the community.

Part two explores the costs and outcomes of intervening early or offering alternative provision. The section aims to:

- estimate the unit costs of providing each of the services researched
- examine the outcomes measured
- discuss the balance to be struck between intervening early and targeting intervention.

Exclusion: the costs

Costs to the individual

This report has shown, through several personal accounts, the potentially high costs to the individual of an education disrupted by exclusion. The costs of exclusion to the individual child combine reduced confidence and increased disaffection with school, with poor qualifications and job prospects in the longer term. Parents and young people were shocked and confused by this often sudden and serious outcome of misbehaviour. They were often at a loss to improve their situation until they started to access advice and alternative provision that enabled them to understand how to behave better, cope with school and resolve underlying difficulties. Most young people were worried about falling behind and missing out on qualifications. Their parents

⁴³ DCSF (2008)

⁴⁴ £4,000 per year for a place at school, and the remainder for the cost of a round of pupil support as delivered by the case study projects

had little understanding of how to appeal, challenge school decisions or even get work sent home as required by law. Young people's confidence is shaken by the realisation that their prospects could be badly affected by exclusion. Those who are already alienated from school and struggling with self-discipline risk further disengagement from education and are more likely to be drawn into risk-taking behaviour and crime.

Looking back, aged 17, Jason already deeply regretted the long-term harm that had been done by his behaviour and erratic school career. He had started to outgrow the bad behaviour and attitudes which had resulted in numerous exclusions and, eventually, a custodial sentence. In the future he hoped to obtain occasional work doing unskilled labouring. Living in a depressed area, Jason was ill-equipped to compete for jobs.

Brookes⁴⁵ et al calculated that 'permanently excluded children are three times more likely than their peers to leave school with no qualifications... and 37 per cent more likely to be unemployed'.⁴⁶ As we have seen, secondary pupils who are already poor or socially disadvantaged are three times more likely to be excluded, which compounds their risks of unemployment and contributes to intergenerational poverty.

For excluded children the lifetime shortfall in earnings is conservatively predicted by Brookes et al to be £21,175 (2005 figures). Given the impact of the current recession on youth employment, unqualified young people are in any case finding it much harder to get a foot on the job ladder in an increasingly competitive labour market.

Costs to the public purse

In the late 1990s Castle and Parsons⁴⁷ estimated the various costs associated with permanently excluding a young person from school. They took into account the expense incurred by the local education authority in finding and providing alternative provision and they added the costs to other services in the community, given the poor outcomes for young people who have been excluded from school. They found that the cost to the local education authority of providing for a permanently excluded young person was nearly double that of keeping them in school. Recent estimates show that a place at a PRU is now 3.75 times more expensive than a school place, not including the associated administrative costs.⁴⁸ Castle and Parsons conclude that 'the cost to the public purse is substantial' (p89). In addition to this they cite the 'non-financial costs' associated with distress, loss of confidence and the lesser quality of education received by the excluded pupil (p280). These are costs to the individual as demonstrated above.

45 Brookes, Goodall and Heady (June 2007)

46 Brookes, Goodall and Heady (June 2007)

47 Castle and Parsons (1999)

48 Updated estimates of the cost of a place in a PRU put this at 3.75 times greater. See *Back on Track* strategy paper, DCSF (2008), confirmed in Hansard (7/12/09)

Updating some of Parsons's calculations to 2005, New Philanthropy Capital⁴⁹ calculated the lifetime cost of permanent exclusions to society as £63,851 per pupil, with an aggregate cost of all exclusions of £650 million. In arriving at this figure they took into account the costs on 'the school, social services, the criminal justice system and the NHS, as well as the future earnings of the child' (p8). They calculate that work to prevent permanent exclusions could result in a net saving per child of £35,297, a return of 124 per cent.

One effect noted by Castle and Parsons is 'cost shunting' (1998, p280). This is when excess expense associated with the excluded child is passed from the school to other services, such as the police and social care services. For example, they estimated that there would be costs to the criminal justice system in approximately one-quarter of cases but note that this is a low estimate given that 'in some police areas ... up to two-thirds of excludees are known to the police with one-third going to court' (p99). McAra and McVie (2010) make clear from their detailed analysis of factors contributing to criminal behaviour that 'school exclusion is a key moment impacting adversely on subsequent conviction trajectories'. They point to 'an urgent need to develop more imaginative ways of retaining challenging children within mainstream educational provision'.⁵⁰

Costs to the community

Interviews and observations from

Barnardo's research show how costs and stress were passed from the school to the local community, where young people much in need of adult supervision and guidance were too frequently left to their own devices. Hodgson and Webb found that a factor linking exclusion with criminal activity was poor parental supervision. They argue that 'more emphasis should be placed upon supporting parents during the child's exclusion period'.⁵¹ Jasmine's unsupervised activities in her neighbourhood had placed her in trouble with the police and social services became involved when it emerged she was at risk. Emily (see opposite) exemplifies how much can go wrong if excluded young people are not constructively occupied during the day. Not only were several services involved, but her behaviour on the streets during the day was upsetting for her neighbours.



49 Brookes, Goodall and Head (2007)

50 McAra and McVie (2010)

51 Hodgson and Webb (2005)

Emily, costing the community

Emily lived in a zero exclusion authority, but no suitable full-time, alternative provision could be found for her. She attended a Barnardo's service a couple of days per week. Although officially on roll at a school, she never went, and the school did not expect her.

She had recently been placed on an antisocial behaviour order due to the problems she caused in her neighbourhood day and night. Her behaviour was placing her family at risk of eviction, but when confined to the overcrowded family home she vented her frustration by breaking things. This meant that a family intervention project, the Safer Neighbourhood Team and Barnardo's were intensively involved, all

incurring costs for the community. Emily's parents had tried to discipline her, but as she explained 'you get used to being slapped; the first time it hurts, but then you just get used to it, so it doesn't work'.⁵²

Emily was a troubled and difficult child and her prospects for gaining employment had been badly affected. She should have been shown a consistent approach to discipline and education much sooner. She responded well to the youth work activities at Barnardo's but earlier intervention might have reduced some of the costs in the community. Authorities which monitored pupils from age 11 or younger achieved a zero exclusion rate by intervening early and addressing problems before they became as entrenched as Emily's.



⁵² Emily explained this in an interview with two researchers and the service manager present. The service manager would take the lead on safeguarding issues.

Intervention and alternatives: the costs and outcomes⁵³

As shown above, school exclusion can have a lasting impact on the confidence and prospects of individual children, not to mention considerable costs to the child, the public purse, and the community. Some of these costs can be expressed in monetary terms (and are high) but others cannot. For example, what does it cost the neighbours of a troublesome teenager to live with their bad behaviour on the streets when they should be at school? On the other hand, our research did not find any evidence that behaviour or academic performance were improved by exclusion. This gives weight to the argument that it is better to work to prevent exclusions, either by intervening to support young people with their problems or by providing alternatives. Findings from Barnardo's research underline Brookes' et al's conclusion: 'Preventing exclusions in a sustainable way requires society to tackle the underlying behaviour that causes problems and leads to exclusions' (p12). Similarly, in their research looking at the factors which predispose young people to crime, McAra and McVie's findings 'highlight the continued need for informal, voluntary sector, open door, outreach services for vulnerable youngsters'.⁵⁴

The following section estimates the unit costs of each of the intervention methods and alternative services involved in this research. These can

then be compared with the monetary costs of exclusion discussed above. This is followed by an examination of the outcomes measured and achieved by each of the services. The unit costs of working with each young person have been estimated from the services' records and accounts where available.

Unit costs of interventions to prevent school exclusions

The most useful comparison for the costs of interventions to prevent school exclusions is the DCSF estimate that it costs £15,000 a year to keep a young person in a PRU.⁵⁵ This would be for full-time attendance although it is hoped that young people do not spend a full year in a PRU as they are generally intended to be a short term intervention.

Robust cost data is available for three of the four services visited for this research and is presented along with the relevant outcomes data. The costs for LIS were less well-defined as it is a new service which is not yet working with the planned complement of service users. Therefore the data presented for the LIS service cannot be taken to accurately represent the cost of provision.

The Shropshire Project

The Shropshire Project's family support workers worked with 330 children and young people in and out of school in 2008-09.

The outcomes measures for this project show that the large majority of young people leave the service with

⁵³ All the costs quoted in this section are for 2009. Prices are subject to change.

⁵⁴ McAra and McVie (2010)

⁵⁵ In answer to a parliamentary question on 7 Dec 2009: the minister said '...around £15,000 a year for a full-time placement in a pupil referral unit. Pupil numbers in pupil referral units can be volatile and the calculation was based on pupil numbers at a fixed point in time. This may not be fully representative of the average number of pupils over a year. The figure is likely to vary considerably between different local authority areas.' Column 147W
Hansard

considerably less serious problems than when they arrived. Under the 'Every Child Matters' heading 'enjoy and achieve' (which is most relevant to educational outcomes) 81 per cent of the young people the project worked with showed an improvement. The changes are consistent between more objective measures (such as improved behaviour and school attendance) and softer measures (such as improved self-esteem and mental health). The scores for problems in the family (such as reduced exposure to domestic violence and positive or improved family relationships) show even greater improvements, reflecting the fact that family work is a core part of the way The Shropshire Project works with young people. Nearly 90 per cent of young people the project worked with had improved outcomes in their relationships and emotional resilience.

The total budget allocated to this work was £562,500 which, expressed at its simplest, means that the cost per young person was £1,705 per year. Some

young people needed more intense support than others; with many the input was open-ended, while others required just a brief intervention. The budget for this work was largely funded by the local authority, with some voluntary funding. Schools contributed little to the budget. At one school, two workers ran a three-term 'Living with Teenagers' parenting group with seven sessions a term (meeting about once a fortnight) which cost a total of £3,640.

On average, the cost of supporting each of these young people to stay in school was £5,705,⁵⁶ compared with the £15,000 that would have been spent if they had been excluded.

Leeds Reach

Leeds Reach works on a partnership basis with a number of schools which spot purchase the places in agreed numbers. By working with small groups and paying attention to the group dynamics the service has a high success rate for reintegrating young people



⁵⁶ £4,000 per year for a place at school, and £1,705 per year on average for support through The Shropshire Project

into mainstream school. Several teachers at partnership schools used the term 'a changed person' to describe pupils they had sent to Leeds Reach.

Leeds Reach aligned its outcomes measures against the five Every Child Matters outcomes and focused on behaviour and educational achievement.

Healthy	Knowledge of sexual health strategies
	Knowledge of alcohol/ drug misuse risks
Staying safe	Understands the impact of their own behaviour
	Reduce severity of antisocial behaviour
Enjoying and achieving	Improved behaviour in school
	Satisfactory progress in learning/ development goals
Making a positive contribution	Reduced exclusions
	Achieve accredited qualifications
Achieving economic wellbeing	Positive attitude towards employment, education or training

In terms of the modular qualification awarded, young people at Leeds Reach achieved as follows:

Young people on roll academic year 2008-09: 30

Certificates/ accreditation achieved	How many young people achieved
Art Awards Bronze (6.3 GCSE points)	10
NOCN STEP UP Award (12.5 GCSE points)	6
NOCN STEP UP Certificate (50 GCSE points)⁵⁷	12
Individual Units Health & Wellbeing, Drugs Education (6 GCSE points)	19

In that year 75 per cent of service users went back to mainstream school and 25 per cent moved on to another appropriate form of alternative education. In some cases this included a further term at Leeds Reach. Only two young people left the service without a positive destination; this was due to offending behaviour which hindered their reintegration.

Leeds Reach works with selected young people for a limited period

⁵⁷ 50 GCSE progression points equivalent to a grade D GCSE if studying at level 1

of about two terms, so a yearly calculation is not appropriate. Leeds Reach was successful in reintegrating nearly all young people back into school well before the end of the second term. Their charge to each school that spot purchases a place at Leeds Reach was £40 per young person, per day. Each year the schools buy 24 places and the education authority purchases some places for harder to reach young people. The rates charged reflected the market rate for alternative provision in the Leeds area. Leeds Reach worked with the young people for four days a week for the first 12 weeks and then for one day per week for the next 12 weeks. This included visits, involvement with CAF and out of school contact. However it was noted that workers seemed to make themselves available beyond that time for parents, young people or teachers to call on them after the initial input. Young people are encouraged to continue to access the service for up to a year or more as needed. Simply put, the work that Leeds Reach does works out at a total cost of £2,400 for each young person having a two-term intervention. In 2008-09 they worked with 30 young people. In addition to this they ran summer projects using volunteers and funds from a variety of other grants and partnerships and engaged with over 100 young people through various other programmes including NEET and holiday provision.

In the future, if more capacity and funding were available, Leeds Reach would like to offer longer-term placements and develop its work to include group work and extended reintegration support.

On average, the cost of supporting these young people to stay in school was £6,400,⁵⁸ compared with the £15,000 that would have been spent if they had been excluded.

Palmersville Training

The model of intervention used at Palmersville Training combined part-time access to applied vocational learning with social support. Much of its success rested on the way that young people perceived the vocational option as being a positive choice rather than a punishment or rejection, together with the opportunity to learn occupational skills (from skilled trainers) in a realistic setting.

The outcomes measured were accordingly very straightforward and covered:

- satisfactory progress in learning/developmental goals
- achieving accredited qualifications⁵⁹
- acquiring vocational skills.

Palmersville Training charged the local authority £350 per term for each Year 10 pupil placed on the vocational intervention and £305 per term for each young person in Year 11.

⁵⁸ £4,000 per year for a place at school, and £2,400 for two terms of support through Leeds Reach

⁵⁹ Fifty-one out of 58 trainees gained the NCFE general employability skills award at entry level. Year 11 students had the opportunity to gain Level 1 qualifications such as NVQs and diplomas in their chosen vocational area.

Young people attended Palmersville Training for two years, so the total cost of the course per pupil is £1,965, at the end of which they have a vocational qualification, employability skills and better motivation at school. Those that needed additional days, perhaps while otherwise excluded from school, were charged at £50 per day.

On average, the cost of supporting each of these young people to stay in school was £4,983⁶⁰ per year, compared with the £15,000 that would have been spent if they had been excluded.

Late Intervention Service

LIS was a new service and worked with some of the hardest to reach young people at a later stage of need. To an extent these young people had already fallen through safety nets and one of the aims of the service was to stop them falling further. In its early stages the service worked with fewer young people than planned. This meant that the figures available do not reflect the eventual cost of working with each young person. The early cost calculations for working intensively with a limited number of young people were approximately £9,000 per annum.

As in other services, young people and workers assess the improvements in outcomes together on a regular basis. This formed part of the remedial process as well as recording the impact of the service.

The outcomes measured at this service reflected the higher level of need the young people have and included:

- increased confidence
- knowledge of alcohol and substances
- ability to understand the impact of their own behaviour
- contributing to planning and decision-making
- gaining and improving social skills
- voicing and acting upon views and opinions.

Targeted or early intervention?

The benefits of early intervention are well-documented but there will always be some hard to reach young people whose problems are not dealt with until late in the day. Three models of service in this research worked exclusively with older secondary pupils and one model worked with pupils aged five to 19. Although Brookes et al cite the potential value of identifying and working with children from the age of six to prevent exclusions, others such as McAra and McVie are wary of labelling and stigmatising families too soon. They argue instead for 'a form of universal targeting providing support mechanisms for all children and families in areas in which there are concentrations of poverty' (p201). In practice this might look like the Shropshire model, which embedded access to support for families in selected schools.

Evidence from LIS, which worked with service users with the most complex needs, showed that it costs much more to work intensively with young people at a later stage. There will always be a minority of young

⁶⁰ £4,000 per year for a place at school, and £1,965 over two years i.e. £983 per year, for support through Palmersville Training

people with severe levels of unmet needs who still fall through the net. However, careful planning – evident in North Tyneside’s partnership approach (Palmer’sville Training case study) – should ensure that as many young people as possible receive timely intervention before difficulties become entrenched and complex.

The Shropshire Project worked with a range of young people and the costs averaged out at a much lower level. Because of their flexible, school-based approach they were still able to engage with young people whose problems were quite entrenched, although much of their intervention was geared at addressing issues from an earlier stage. Shropshire County Council used a model of intervention ranging from universal to acute. They were also piloting a local child index to ensure, with the child’s consent, that all those working with the child were fully informed about their situation. If the child was vulnerable or had complex levels of need they would be assessed with a CAF and a team around the child (TAC) set up. The Shropshire Project worked with young people up to the acute stage where statutory services became involved.

Leeds Reach focused on a specific group of young people who were selected by the schools they attended as being most likely to benefit from the intervention offered. Tailoring and personalising the work ensured that Leeds Reach achieved a high level of successful reintegration into education and helped most service users to re-engage.

In North Tyneside permanent exclusions were specifically avoided by monitoring at-risk young people from their entry into secondary school. This meant that opportunities to manage behaviour and divert young people towards more positive options could be introduced early in their secondary education. At all stages the young people we met in North Tyneside were clear that they had made their own choices about their future and this appeared to empower them to take control of their lives in a positive way. As with The Shropshire Project it is not possible to know how many of the young people attending Palmer’sville Training would have been excluded otherwise, although several were clearly at risk. However, the fact that they gained qualifications and employability skills also prevented them from becoming NEET.

For all the services, preventing exclusions and improving school attendance was just a part of a package of work that helped young people to resolve and cope with problems in their lives more broadly. This holistic approach is worthwhile because it is clear from this research that behaviour difficulties do not occur in isolation and cannot be remedied by simply removing the young person from school. Sustainable solutions involve ‘unpicking the issues’ – looking deeper than the presenting behaviour – and where necessary providing alternative learning options to ensure that young people do not miss out on education.

Chapter six: Conclusions and recommendations

Barnardo's accepts that in some rare instances removal from school may be the only remaining option for severe discipline problems, although recent success in reducing the numbers of permanent exclusions in some areas demonstrates that exclusions can and should be kept as a last resort.

This research indicates that school exclusion is an ineffective way to improve behaviour, leaving young people more disaffected with education than before. Young people most at risk of school exclusion need more adult supervision, not less. The implications of sending young people away to a chaotic home or risky neighbourhood include a greater likelihood of being involved in crime, as well as poor qualifications and reduced prospects of gaining employment. As well as having a negative impact on the individual, the costs of exclusion to the community and the public purse are considerable over time.

Models of intervention

This report describes four models of intervention to help improve behaviour and educational outcomes for challenging young people. Each of these methods costs less to provide than sending a young person to a PRU. With the right intervention young people came to understand the consequences of their choices, which had a positive impact on their behaviour, motivation and prospects.

The key features of effective practice were:

- intervening before problems become entrenched
- working with parents and families
- small group work
- applied vocational options
- a youth work approach
- persistence and belief.

Permanent exclusions

Permanent exclusions have shown a welcome decline in recent years, thanks to measures such as managed moves, as well as close working between local partners including schools, colleges, alternative and vocational learning providers and local authorities.⁶¹ Barnardo's hopes this decline continues, building on best practice in local areas.

It is a cause for concern that 'persistent disruptive behaviour' is cited as the reason for permanent exclusion in 30 per cent of cases. This indicates that poor behaviour has been allowed to drift on when timely intervention could have avoided further disruption and helped to address the underlying causes, rather than letting difficulties become entrenched. This research demonstrated several ways of intervening to improve behaviour and educational outcomes.

The research recognises that some young people are very challenging to manage in a mainstream classroom. For most, a breathing space in an alternative setting

⁶¹ Implementation for this requirement for schools to work together, and with other agencies, to improve behaviour from September 2010 has been delayed. Barnardo's hopes this will not have a negative impact on the ability of schools to manage behaviour and continue to reduce the numbers of permanent exclusions.

with one-to-one learning and social support was all that was needed to enable them to take their place back at mainstream school.

Recommendation one: A range of alternative provision should be available in every area to meet the diverse needs of young people at risk of exclusion. Preventive interventions and carefully adapted alternatives to school need to be offered sooner and more widely to young people at risk of exclusion. This can help them cope better with mainstream education or, for those who would benefit from an alternative setting for a longer period, increase their chances of achieving good qualifications. It will also save the costs associated with exclusion, including the costs of late stage, crisis interventions and the long-term costs associated with a disrupted education.

Fixed-term exclusions

Government statistics and our interviews revealed complacency around the repeated use of fixed-term exclusions. They are not short-term fixes. Their repeated use indicates they do nothing to improve behaviour in the long term and they give young people the unhelpful message that they can miss school. Too many young people were blurring the boundaries between repeated exclusions, unofficial exclusions and truanting. Barnardo's believes that the upper limit of 45 days of temporary exclusions in a year constitutes

an unacceptable disruption to the education of vulnerable young people.

Recommendation two: Recognising the cumulative impact that repeated fixed-term exclusions have on a child's education, Barnardo's recommends that three fixed-term exclusions or more than six days of exclusion should trigger a detailed review of the child's situation, ideally through a CAF. This would enable any underlying family or community problems to be addressed as well as ensuring that the child's learning needs were being met.

Unofficial exclusions

This research revealed a worrying incidence of unofficial exclusions among the young people Barnardo's works with, who are mainly from disadvantaged or vulnerable backgrounds. Unofficial exclusions are illegal and none of the euphemisms used for sending a child home from school without regard to their rights justify this action. Barnardo's agrees with both Ofsted⁶² and Sir Roger Singleton⁶³ that children who are unaccounted for and missing education without an official record are at risk.

Recommendation three: There is no justification for sending a child home from school without a right to appeal, work sent home, or a clearly defined time limit on the exclusion. An exclusion must either go through the proper legal processes or it should not occur. The reasons why a child is not attending school should be

62 Ofsted (2010)

63 Singleton (2009)

promptly and accurately recorded and reported to the local authority. The relevant safeguarding board should also be informed. There should be no exceptions to this rule and the requirement should apply to all educational establishments including special schools, PRUs, academies, voluntary-aided schools, free schools and independent schools.⁶⁴

Any parent whose child is out of school (whether on permanent, fixed-term or unofficial exclusion) should have access to advice and, if necessary, advocacy support from local authority parent partnership officers or equivalent advisers. Local authorities should make it clear to parents and pupils who they can go to for confidential advice about attendance issues.

Zero exclusions and managed moves

Zero exclusions and managed moves have contributed to the welcome decline in permanent exclusions in some areas. However they rely on a good supply of well-resourced alternative provision, otherwise they risk becoming another form of unofficial exclusion. In some areas the researchers found evidence of lengthy delays and inadequate provision for young people put forward for a managed move. It was not clear to families who was responsible for setting up the move and what should happen if a second placement were to break down.

Recommendation four: Zero exclusion policies and managed moves should

not be considered unless adequate, properly resourced alternative provision is already in place. Where managed moves are possible, authorities and schools must regularly review each case and the excluding school should continue to monitor the child's destination so that they do not go missing from education – a situation which puts children at risk. The use of a CAF would be beneficial to ensure underlying needs are addressed.

Further research

Statistics show that exclusions appear to unfairly target children from certain groups. Further research is planned on the link between being poor or living in a deprived area and a greater risk of being excluded from school. Barnardo's believes that this is one factor contributing to the achievement gap in education and a briefing paper is planned for early 2011.



64 Singleton (2009)

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Glossary

Abbreviation	Full expression	Explanation/definition
ADHD	Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder	A developmental disorder which can cause behaviour problems and affects about five per cent of the population
ASBO	Antisocial behaviour order	A civil order restraining activity following an incident of antisocial behaviour
CAF	Common assessment framework	Holistic assessment which helps to co-ordinate input by different agencies; facilitated by a lead professional from one of the agencies
CAMHS	Child and adolescent mental health services	Services promoting and supporting the mental health and emotional wellbeing of children and young people
FIP	Family intervention project	Assertive and persistent support and challenge to families in their own homes aimed at reducing antisocial behaviour
GCSE	General certificate of secondary education	Examinations taken aged 16 with five passes at grade A-C including maths and English considered the benchmark level for success – more than 40 per cent of students do not achieve this level
	Inclusion Officer	A local authority officer whose job is to ensure that young people stay in school or receive alternative education
NOCN	National Open College Network	Awarding body providing accessible, flexible, credit-based qualifications
PASS	Pupil attitude to school and self	Commercially available online resource to identify the needs of a child who may be experiencing difficulties in school – may enable early intervention
SEN	Special educational needs	Children have special educational needs if they have a learning difficulty that calls for special educational provision to be made for them – about 20 per cent of pupils have SEN, including three per cent with a statement providing for more specialist support

SSP	Safer Schools Partnerships	A formal agreement between the police and schools to work together to reduce crime and antisocial behaviour as part of which a police officer is attached to the school
TAC	Team around the child	Multi-agency working to provide integrated support for a child in need, often in conjunction with a CAF
TaMHS	Targeted mental health in schools	A government pilot to provide early intervention to support mental health and emotional wellbeing in schools
Triple P	Positive Parenting Programme	Parenting programme
YOT	Youth offending team	Multi-agency teams to address the needs of young offenders and prevent reoffending



Effleurage

Stroking massage movement used to spread shampoo & conditioner through the hair

Rotary

Fast circular movement used to clean the hair and scalp during shampooing

Petrissage

Slow firm massage movement used to relax the scalp and relieve tension

*Not present and not correct:
Understanding and preventing
school exclusions*

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This report was written by
Jane Evans.



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Barnardo's

www.barnardos.org.uk

Head Office
Tanners Lane
Barkingside, Ilford
Essex IG6 1QG
Tel: 020 8550 8822

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