7 Parent counselling-teacher consultation

Summary

In this chapter we describe the introduction of six specially trained social workers into ordinary schools. Their task was to work, over one academic year, with teachers and parents with the aim of helping 147 identified children with adjustment problems. More specifically, the school social workers had a dual role – consulting with teachers about the management of identified pupils and in this way expanding and enhancing the pastoral role of the schoolteacher; and establishing short-term casework programmes with the parents of these children. Complementing the above were attempts to improve links between parents and teachers. Twelve schools were involved, each school social worker being allocated to one junior and one senior school for a period of one academic year.

Attention was focused, therefore, on the important adults with whom the children had daily contact – and not on the children themselves. This indirect approach distinguished the parent counselling–teacher consultation regime from the others described in this book, all of which involved some element of direct or face-to-face contact with pupils.

From the teachers' responses to questionnaires, we believe that their awareness and understanding of child behaviour expanded as a result of the programme, and that their repertoire of management techniques had moderately increased, too. This appeared true, also, in the case of parents. In addition, from the parents' point of view at least a greater understanding, if not a link, was forged between them and the school. Drawing on the subjective impressions of the therapists it appeared that the behaviour of the maladjusted children had also improved.

However, the results of more objective assessments suggested that, with the exception of school functioning in the juniors, there was little impact on the children's maladjustment. In relation to this finding it was perhaps not surprising that where there was significant improvement it was confined to measures that very specifically reflected school behaviour.

We discuss all the above issues in this chapter but begin by reviewing the literature on the topic.

A review of the literature

The idea of introducing specially trained social workers into ordinary schools and giving them a wider range of duties than those customarily held by Education Welfare Officers has, within the last twenty years, attracted a fair amount of support from educational and social work sources alike (Younghusband Report 1959; Plowden Report 1967; Seebohm Committee 1968; Braide Report 1969; Lyons 1973; Rose and Marshall 1974; DHSS 1977). Notwithstanding this support, few school social work schemes have been implemented in the UK. A primary problem has been the position of school social work at the interface of education and social work (Rose and Marshall 1974). Certainly there are considerable interorganizational and interprofessional barriers to overcome before any such projects can reach fruition (Davies 1976; Robinson 1978). Questions about accountability and appropriate professional tasks have also been posed (BASW 1974). In addition, there have been conflicting views about the role of the Education Welfare Service – while some have advocated a much expanded role for the Education Welfare Officer (Ralphs Report 1973; Fitzherbert 1977), others have identified the difficulties in such a proposal (Rose and Marshall 1974). While an examination of these issues is beyond the scope of the present review, it is nevertheless important to point out that the difficulties encountered in resolving such issues have probably done much to inhibit the expansion of school social work programmes to date.

In the UK the major documented accounts of school social work are restricted to the work of the Central Lancashire Family and Community Project (Rose and Marshall 1974), which remains one of the few studies to have provided empirical data in this field, an Educational Priority Area project that examined the work of an education social worker (Lyons 1973), and a number of small-scale local experiments (Watkins and Derrick 1977). This paucity of effectiveness studies of school social work practice is not restricted to the UK, the position being only slightly different in the USA (Radin 1979)

despite the fact that school social work has been established there as a specialization for over fifty years (Costin 1969a). In contrast, descriptions of social work activities in schools (Costin 1969b; Anderson 1974; Watkins and Derrick 1977; Meares 1977), or accounts of potential tasks and functions for the school social worker, are relatively common (BASW 1974; Robinson 1978).

THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKER

Generally speaking, the work of the school social worker can be viewed as consisting of four broad areas of activity. The first area centres on consultative work with teachers. Second, there are those duties that fall into the category of direct services to pupils and/or parents. Third, there are activities directed to work in the community, for example, liaison with other agencies, and the fourth relates to the school social workers' contributions to the formulation of school policies, especially those affecting pupil welfare (Costin 1975).

The first two areas of activity have the most relevance to the Newcastle upon Tyne project. However, before we go on to discuss these in detail, it is worthwhile noting those recent studies that have looked at the part school factors play in the adjustment of pupils, since such findings have important implications for school social workers (Gath *et al.* 1977; Rutter *et al.* 1979). In the USA a view has emerged among some observers that school social workers have a shared responsibility with their colleagues in education in ensuring that the school provides an appropriate learning environment (Anderson 1974; Magill 1974; Gitterman 1977). Indeed, many have advocated that school social workers must play a major part in the formulation of those school policies that directly affect pupil welfare (Costin 1975; Meares 1977). Whether or not this type of duty is acceptable in British schools is another matter (Lyons 1973).

CONSULTATIVE WORK WITH TEACHERS

We mentioned earlier that a number of reports have outlined the need for a social work consultation service to schools, especially one that involves regular and direct contact with teachers (Robinson 1978). This was one of the main conclusions reached by Lyons in her work on three London primary schools (Lyons 1973). Support also comes from teachers themselves (Rose and Marshall 1974). What has not been nearly so clear, though, is which particular aspects of a collaborative service are of most value to teachers.

Consultation services to schools have differed according to the needs of the school (Morse 1967) and the skills, training background, and orientation of the consultant (Berlin 1967). Such services have

proved a popular way for social workers and teachers to work together, and this has especially been the case in the USA (Berlin 1965, 1967, 1969; Costin 1969a, 1969b; Anderson, 1974; Fox 1974; Carter 1975; Radin 1979; Schild, Scott and Zimmerman 1976). On the other hand, examples of the application of these techniques in the UK are rare, making it difficult to assess the relative advantages of different aspects of the services.

Historically, the consultation models favoured by school social workers have been heavily influenced by the theories underlying Mental Health Consultation, and it is interesting to note that these theories were first devised for use with teachers (Caplan 1964, 1970). Mental Health Consultation lays great emphasis on the interpersonal qualities and skills of the consultant such as attentive listening and the ability to empathize. As these skills can be linked with an appreciation of the dynamics of the problem behaviour of youngsters and their parents it is not difficult to see why the approach has proved so popular with school social workers (Berlin 1969; Kadushin 1977). If consultation methods with teachers prove as effective as direct services with pupils and parents then the interest shown in them will have been justified, since consultation is less expensive and more efficient in the use of scarce manpower resources than are direct services, and it has considerable training and preventative possibilities. As yet, though, the impact of such schemes on clients is by no means clear.

By means of a consultation approach school social workers have aimed to increase the effectiveness of teachers in helping those pupils with emotional or behavioural problems. The social work contribution has taken a number of forms. First, it has involved encouraging teachers to collect and pool information on pupils. In this respect school social workers have contributed directly by providing details on the possible effects on a child of adverse family functioning. Second, the interpretive and diagnostic skills of school social workers, derived from their knowledge of child development and child psychopathology, have been of use in tracing the aetiology and the course of development of problems. Third, school social workers have made a direct contribution to decisions about pupil management, and fourth, as the stressful aspects of teachers' job have been recognized, the school social workers have provided teachers with support.

OUTCOME OF SCHOOL CONSULTATION PROGRAMMES

It is possible to consider three major areas of outcome of school social workers' consultation programmes with teachers (Mannino and Shore 1975). These are: (a) changes in the behaviour, knowledge, and

skills of the consultee (teacher); (b) change in the client group (children) with which the consultee works; (c) change in the organization (school).

Traditionally social workers in schools have concentrated on the first area in attempting to increase both teacher awareness of the dynamics of pupil behaviour and also their repertoire of pupil management techniques. However, because the ultimate, though not the sole, test of effectiveness of a consultation programme is the impact it has on the client group, we are largely concerned with this (second) type of outcome.

In their review of the effects of a variety of consultation programmes, Mannino and Shore (1975) included a number of school-based studies that had objectives broadly similar to those of the present project. Eight of the school-based programmes used a consultation approach as the predominant method of intervention, and all of these were controlled studies. However, any direct comparison with the present study ends there because the theoretical models of the consultants varied as did the characteristics of the target groups, the duration of the schemes and, undoubtedly, the skills of the consultants. Six of the eight programmes revealed significant changes in some aspects of teacher attitudes, skills, or behaviour, but only three reported change in the pupil group.

In reviewing consultation programmes that used more traditional theoretical models, Mannino and Shore concluded that the impact of these programmes on clients was by no means clear, and the outcome for the selected group of school-based studies was consistent with this conclusion. They pointed to the problems inherent in conducting research on subjects who are not directly influenced by the experimental condition, and to the lack of understanding of the linkage between the consultant, consultee, and client, as possible factors leading to the uncertain state of affairs in this field.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Involving parents in the school system requires considerable adjustment on the part of the school staff and simultaneously exerts pressure on the relationships between teachers and school social workers (Davies 1976). However, there are three principal reasons for developing close links between parents and teachers: (a) to encourage parents to become involved in the educational process; (b) to involve the parents of pupils with behaviour problems in the co-operative management of the child; (c) to help school personnel to appreciate the social and parental influences in relation to particular children. In this section we comment on the first two issues only and consider the

potential contribution of the counselling techniques of the school social worker in relation to them.

PARENTS AND THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS

The influence of parental attitudes and behaviour on child cognitive performance has been well documented (Douglas 1964; Miller 1972; Marjoribanks 1979). Other reports have described how the school's interests can be taken up and supplemented by the parents (Newson and Newson 1977) (see also Chapter 5).

The importance of parental involvement is also borne out by reviews of compensatory education programmes in which home-based intervention appears to have led to impressive and enduring cognitive gains among pre-school children (see review by Bronfenbrenner 1974). It is not surprising, therefore, that major educational reports have emphasized the need for parental involvement in the educational process (Newsom Report 1963; Plowden Report 1967; Warnock Report 1978). The Plowden Report devoted a chapter to parental participation and recommended a 'minimum programme' that would involve increased opportunities for parents to see school staff, to learn more of what happens at school, and to find ways in which they could encourage their children to learn. Thus, as a first step towards this linking of home and school, the school social worker may serve a function in education similar to that of the social worker working with GPs, i.e. helping to secure the patients' co-operation (Cooper 1971). Likewise, the school social worker may help a pupil to derive greater benefit from the educational process 'by identifying and trying to help solve some of the *social* problems affecting him and his family' (Seebohm Committee 1968: 63). Thus, as far as educational issues are concerned, the school social worker's role can be seen as facilitating the links between the teachers and families – an apparently simple task, but one that does have difficulties (Harvey *et al.* 1977). In the next section we consider what may be required of the school social worker when problems stem from, or are related to, faulty family functioning.

PARENTS AND PUPIL MANAGEMENT

We have asked previously whether maternal involvement in a child's treatment is as necessary for the child's achievment of social and emotional adjustment as it is for his or her cognitive development (Wolstenholme, Hulbert, and Kolvin 1976). This may seem an unusual question in view of the tradition in child psychiatry for the treatment of the child to be allied to parental counselling. There have been surprisingly few studies examining this important question

(Bergin 1971), but the weight of clinical experience, and findings from studies based on a behavioural approach, have strongly suggested the importance of parental participation in the treatment of maladjustment (O'Leary and Drabman 1971; Johnson and Katz, 1973; Atkeson and Forehand 1978). Indeed, some clinical practices are based entirely on the involvement of all family members (Minuchin 1974; Haley 1977).

Contacting the parent(s) at an early stage may reduce the chances of problems escalating and the service becoming solely crisis-orientated (Anderson 1974). Invariably, such contact provides valuable information concerning the aetiology and the possible management of problems (Berlin 1967). Early involvement of parents is important not only for data-gathering and assessment purposes, but also in the promotion of mutual understanding between parents and teachers (Harvey *et al.* 1977), and the prevention of diametrically opposed views being developed between home and school. Such a polarization of views is often encountered in the case of non-attendance at school, and a meeting between teachers, parents, and pupil at an early stage is an effective way of re-establishing attendance (Johnson 1976).

A key aspect of parent counselling is that parents can, if necessary, be given help in dealing with a child's behaviour. For many pupils the achievement and maintenance of adequate functioning at school can be facilitated if their family is helped to recognize the problems involved, to realize the adjustments a child might have to make (Moore 1966). In many cases families may be able to do this only if they, too, receive external support. This is particularly the case with disorganized families and with those who are suspicious of the school with its different system of values to the home.

PROBLEMS OF ESTABLISHING LINKS BETWEEN TEACHERS AND PARENTS

The implementation of social work in schools depends heavily on the extent to which parents and teachers accept the need for such programmes. For example, one writer has observed that those parents with whom teachers could most profitably collaborate are those who are least likely to have contact with the school (Cave 1970) and it is in this area – with alienated or disadvantaged families – that the school social workers' potential contribution is greatest. This situation is in many respects reflected in the differences reported between the various occupational classes in the frequency of parent-school contact (Schools Council 1968). In the Schools Council's survey of school leavers, 38 per cent of parents in non-manual occupations, 46 per cent

in skilled manual occupations, and 54 per cent in unskilled occupations, had not discussed their children with school staff. Similarly, in the Newson study the difference in 'concordance' (i.e. in how school interests are taken up and expanded at home) mirrored social class differences: the authors stressed that the least concordance occurred among boys of working-class families who were most seriously disadvantaged in this respect (Newson and Newson 1977). Again, among the 'socially disadvantaged' group of children described by Wedge and Prosser (1973) 60 per cent of parents had not visited the school as compared with 33 per cent of parents of the 'ordinary' group in that study.

At present, the burden of encouraging parental involvement has been left almost entirely to the teaching profession, though there is much debate as to whether this is sensible and practical. The Seebohm Report recommended that 'social work in schools should be the responsibility of the Social Services Department' (Seebohm Report 1968: 66). This was met with criticism by a number of educationalists who argued that it was unwise to pass the responsibility for links with parents to yet another agency (Clegg and Megson 1968; Plowden 1968). This line of argument seems to depart from the central issue, i.e. the application of relevant professional skills. So far there have been few attempts to assess the effectiveness of different methods of increasing contact between home and school (Sharrock 1970) and the Plowden Report's 'minimal programme' (see page 177) has been the exception rather than the rule.

There appear to be two important reasons for this lack of exploration. First, the extent, range, and evaluation of schemes are limited because of the additional time and effort needed to organize them, and because their implementation constitutes extra responsibilities for the hard-pressed teacher. While there are those teachers who manage to involve parents and provide a useful, informal counselling and supportive service, it is unlikely that the teaching profession unilaterally has sufficient resources to meet the social needs of pupils and parents (even though these are closely related to academic functioning) and, at the same time, to continue their classroom activities. The families of children with severe behaviour problems not only require a disproportionate *amount* of skilled help in addition to that which is provided in the school by pastoral staff, but they probably also need a different *type* of help.

The second reason is an attitudinal one and therefore more difficult to resolve. Not all teachers are enthusiastic about parental involvement and different surveys of teacher opinions have produced different answers on this topic. Ten years ago a large-scale survey found

that a majority of teachers were in favour of encouraging home-school links, and over half of those who thought that someone should visit the home were of the opinion that such calls should be made by some kind of social worker (Schools Council 1968). However, a more recent survey, in relation to younger pupils, reported that few constructive statements were forthcoming on the subject of improving contacts with parents and that, on the whole, there existed 'little enthusiasm among urban schools for home visiting' (Chazan *et al.* 1976:284).

Again, this complex picture is difficult to decipher. Cave pointed out that while teachers may be too easily satisfied with their relationships with parents (based on information submitted to the Plowden Committee), there was 'little factual evidence of any real dissatisfaction about relationships between home and school on the part of many parents' (Cave 1970:21). It would seem that this statement is as applicable today as it was ten years ago.

To these views we must add those of social workers, who have tended to emphasize the importance of family, rather than school, influences on a child's development (Home Office Research Unit 1966). Whichever is the predominant view, it is clear that, in attempting to promote home-school links, social workers and other professionals should not under-estimate the resistance they may meet from those sections of the community they are most concerned to help.

The parent counselling–teacher consultation programme in action

INTRODUCTION OF THE SOCIAL WORKERS INTO THE SCHOOLS

The notion of seconding or placing social workers in schools was introduced into the schools in which we intended to work by officials of the local education authority who discussed the matter with the Headteachers at these schools. Following this, we felt that an essential step to undertake before the scheme started was for our social workers to visit the schools involved, to meet teachers, and generally to 'pave the way'. The involvement of teaching staff with positions of responsibility within the school was particularly important – lack of support from these key members of the school community could have had serious repercussions.

TRAINING OF THE SOCIAL WORKERS

The six professionally qualified social workers had not previously worked in schools. They were, therefore, given three months' preparatory training to introduce them to some of the issues they might

face. Weekly seminars were arranged in the Newcastle upon Tyne University's Child Psychiatry Unit on casework and other psychotherapeutic topics, with particular attention being paid to school-based psychodynamic interventive techniques; attempts were made to anticipate problems likely to confront the school social worker. Additional seminars geared to school-based work were provided by psychologists, a Headteacher of a school for the maladjusted, and a school social worker. Each school social worker carried a small caseload and attended weekly seminars and consultations with a senior caseworker and psychiatrists, and attended sensitivity groups (see Chapter 8).

The transfer of social work skills to the school setting was considered through the examination of consultation theory, relationship development skills (Anderson 1974), and 'threat reduction techniques' (Klein 1959). It was recognized at this stage that basic skills in the art of diplomacy would be extremely important in the programme.

During the initial training period we also explored jointly some aspects of the school as a social institution with its own philosophy, organization, and management.

A PARTNERSHIP WITH TEACHERS

The consultation programme

The aims of consultation in this scheme were as follows:

(i) to heighten teacher awareness of the psychodynamic aspects of pupil behaviour and to use this as the basis for managing the child;

(ii) to provide the teaching staff with relevant family and social information in order to assist them in formulating the management plan.

The programme, which lasted for one school year, consisted of two overlapping phases: a preliminary phase from May until September (apart from holidays) and an active phase from September to the end of the following April. Thereafter it was intended that the school social worker be called in by the teacher at times of crisis over the following three months but, in fact, this rarely occurred. As the school social workers were still visiting the schools while working on another part of the research programme their informal contact with teachers may have fulfilled this function sufficiently to obviate additional contact over this period.

The early stage was very much a settling-in period for the school social workers. During this time a maximum of two days per week

was split between the two schools (one senior and one junior) covered by each school social worker. Discussions had to be arranged around both the additional duties of the school social worker (family visits, contact with other child-care agencies, and administrative duties) and the teachers' timetables, which meant that they were largely restricted to break and free periods.

At first, the notion that social workers could be useful in a school setting was met with some scepticism but, as trust was established, the teachers became able to discuss child behaviour and teacher-child interactions more freely. Other issues were teachers' fears about intrusion on their professional domain, and, conversely, their feeling that psychotherapeutic skills were being demanded from staff whose roles and functions were essentially educational. These anxieties had to be allayed early in the course of discussions, and only when a relationship based on some degree of trust had been established could the school social workers progress from giving support to teachers to introducing discussions about pupils' difficulties.

One factor that limited the programme in the senior schools was the number of teachers (up to fifteen) that a single child might have contact with in any one week. Moreover, this high number was found to accentuate children's sense of anonymity in the large secondary school, the caring for each child being split between many different people who tended to react to him or her in different ways. Seen from the teacher's viewpoint the problem was equally severe: each teacher had between 200 and 300 children a week to teach in large classes, and this was likely to preclude them from getting to know individual children well. Our solution to the difficulty was to concentrate on teachers who taught a child for more than three lessons per week. Occasionally, however, it proved useful to talk to a particular subject teacher who took only one or two lessons – notably art, music, or games. In practice this meant that in senior schools any one school social worker collaborated with, on average, sixteen teachers in order to discuss all the identified children in that school. In contrast, in the junior schools each school social worker worked, on average, with only four teachers.

The official pastoral staff proved to be key figures because other teachers usually referred the child to his or her house or year tutor if the child was emotionally upset or in trouble. Where possible, therefore, we tailored the programme for an individual child around the work of the pastoral staff, or at least encouraged such staff to be involved. Some of them proved enthusiastic about developing their pastoral skills, and the school social workers devoted much time to this aspect of the programme. Some teachers had a 'knack' of hand-

ling a particular child: this often became evident from talking to a selection of teachers about the child or from hearing from the parents about the child's regard for a particular teacher. Such teachers were encouraged to take a more active pastoral role with the child.

Analysis of the records kept by the school social workers for the period September–December showed that the majority (80 per cent) of contacts between teachers and school social workers were initiated by the latter. This trend continued into the final term and, therefore, was a consistent feature of teacher-school social worker interaction. It is noteworthy that the majority of teachers indicated that there were insufficient opportunities for contacting school social workers, probably because of the school social workers' part-time status.

A discussion lasting a minimum of ten minutes, during which there was a 'mutual exchange of information' about a pupil, was regarded as a reasonably detailed contact in relation to that pupil. While this may have been an arbitrary definition, it was useful for classifying the type of exchanges between teachers and school social workers. Two-thirds of all discussions in both senior and junior schools were of this variety: in senior schools an average of four such consultations took place each week, and in junior schools the average was two per week. It must be emphasized that these figures under-estimate the total time shared by teachers and school social workers. Half as many discussions (35 per cent) were classified as briefer contacts. Clearly, important exchanges of information could and did take place in a shorter period than ten minutes.

We expected more use to have been made of group consultation (one school social worker and more than one teacher) because this seemed an economical way of obtaining multiple views of the child and arranging collaborative action. However, it was used in only 21 per cent of all teacher contacts. We suspect that this was because it was difficult to bring teachers together at the same time, and also because the school social workers preferred individual work.

In complex organizations such as schools, opportunities for contact has to be fitted into the teachers' working day. We found that more than half (56 per cent) of the meetings were planned in advance. Such planned meetings were more common in the junior schools than in the senior ones: of the 159 contacts made in the autumn term of 1973, 62 per cent were planned, whereas in senior schools 50 per cent of 330 contacts during this same period were planned. This implies that the school social workers in the senior schools relied more on 'catching' teachers whenever they were available than did their counterparts in the junior schools. Certainly, teachers in junior schools had the least free time and, therefore, the advance planning of meetings was

important. There were no other differences between senior and junior schools in the pattern of consultation: ratios of detailed to brief discussions, group to individual sessions, and teacher- to school social worker-initiated contacts were similar.

Although the average number of detailed contacts in senior schools was double that in junior schools, these were distributed between an average of sixteen, rather than four, teachers. Consequently, the teachers in junior schools were seen, overall, twice as often as their colleagues in the senior schools.

Frequency of consultations per child

Of the sixty-six pupils in junior schools exactly half were discussed in detail with at least one teacher, or more briefly with several teachers, on each weekly set of school visits. The corresponding figure in senior schools was 24 per cent of the total of eighty-one such pupils. In addition, 39 per cent of these junior and 52 per cent of these senior children were discussed in detail with one teacher, or more briefly with several teachers, approximately once every three weeks; 11 per cent of the junior and 24 per cent of the senior pupils were discussed less than once a month. Thus, the amount of detailed contact varied considerably.

The consultation method

To enable the teacher to use psychodynamic ideas and methods three consultation techniques were found useful. First, the school social worker could act as an emotional support. This arose naturally from the school social worker-teacher transaction and was well received. Second, the school social worker could act as a 'sounding board' to enable the teachers to formulate and crystallize their ideas about management of the children. Third, the school social worker could engage the teachers in discussion of child management. The aim of this was to help teachers to see beyond superficial explanations of seriously disturbed behaviour (Long, Morse, and Newman 1971) and thus to move towards a fuller appreciation of the inner feelings of the child. In this way, irrational, unpredictable, or irritable behaviour could be examined more carefully for what it might reveal about the child's mechanisms for coping with stress, his or her conflicts, and preoccupations. Guides to detailed techniques of helping children in class either individually (Redl 1959) or in groups (Kounin and Obradovic 1968) are available in literature. In practice, the introduction of a different view of classroom behaviour and discussion of methods of intervention proved to be one of the school social

workers' main tasks, and tended to generate sympathy and a positive attitude to helping the child on the part of the teacher.

In providing the teacher with relevant factual information, the school social workers supplied details on the treated pupils drawn from psychological, educational, and social reports of the research programme. They also offered factual advice on child development issues, welfare facilities, and cultural problems.

Detailed plans for individual children

As well as developing a general approach to consultation with teachers we examined our data and knowledge of the individual children and considered, with the teacher, a treatment plan for each one. These plans were aimed at providing the school social workers with guidelines as to where the main emphasis in the teacher consultation programme should be placed. The treatment plans were made under six main headings.

(i) *Individualization of the curriculum.* Discussion on this topic was to ensure that, as far as possible, each child's individual requirement (emotional, social, academic) could be fulfilled within the school system. For example, we discussed how checks might be made on whether certain aspects of the curriculum were giving rise to stress in a particular child. Discussions concerning pupils' known 'sensitive' areas heightened the teachers' awareness so that they could offer reassurance. Arrangements for extra help for under-achievers or co-operative activities for isolated children were also discussed. It was agreed that it was important to make it possible to allow the child to succeed in some activity, for example, in a limited academic area, in art, in stories, in hobbies, or in games, so that he or she might gain self-confidence and proceed to identify with a group in the school. This was seen as being particularly important for the dull child or for one lacking in self-confidence.

(ii) *Adjustment of classroom activities and structures.* Schools and teachers vary widely in the degree to which they structure classroom activities, and it was discussed that approaches may have to be adjusted if they are to meet the needs of certain children or situations. For example, free and exploratory classroom activities might sometimes be allowed, projects could be chosen, or other activities interspersed with academic work. The school social worker could here again act as a catalyst to the teachers' ingenuity. It was suggested that re-structuring could be physical as well as curricular: for instance, an aggressive child may have to be seated near the teacher or distant from peers who provoke aggression.

Other children could be placed near the teachers for support or because they need shielding from distraction.

(iii) *Consistency of classroom management and rules.* The experienced teacher realizes that rules must be minimal and consistently applied in relation to each child. Although such rules must be defined in concrete terms, so that children are not tempted to test their limits, rigidity must be avoided as rules may occasionally have to be 'bent' for the benefit of certain children (Catterall 1970). We discussed how consistency of rules is difficult to achieve in those schools where children are exposed to a large number of teachers with varying classroom management styles and views about discipline, and how this can be a source of confusion and frustration for children. Consultation, particularly with groups of teachers, can increase consistency of management.

(iv) *Linking of home and school.* The teachers were encouraged to develop their awareness of the need for links between the home and the school, and supported in achieving this contact. Meetings between parents and teachers were encouraged, or the school social worker took work set by the teacher home to an absent child. Joint meetings between teacher, parents, and school social worker did occur, but on the whole these were rare. Some of the issues involved in linking home and school are discussed more fully later in this chapter.

(v) *Discussion of child's home environment.* Those aspects of the child's background that had relevance to his or her behaviour or performance were discussed – for example, the disciplinary pattern at home which might play a part in understanding a child's reaction to authority at school. The nature of intra-family relationships and wider, cultural problems were also brought to the attention of the teacher. Particular behaviour problems were considered, for example, school refusal, or whether parents seemed to be exerting too much or too little pressure on a child. Current family crises, together with any details of the child's home life that might help the teacher to decide what to do, were also discussed.

(vi) *Discussion of extra-curricular activities.* In some cases the child's functioning and adjustment outside academic activities merited attention. It was suggested that the child may be helped to relate better to peers or adults through hobbies or sporting activities, especially if these occurred in informal settings, and his or her ability to participate in such activities was explored.

PARENT COUNSELLING

The work undertaken with the families became known as the 'parent counselling' programme although in many respects the activities of the school social workers *vis à vis* the parents of the treated children were influenced mainly by short-term casework models (Reid and Shyne 1969; Reid and Epstein 1972, 1977) and traditional casework methods. The basic aim of the work with parents was to promote in them an awareness of the way family factors influence the child's performance. To do this it was necessary to try to keep the focus of discussion on the child, especially on the child in school. The tactics used by the school social workers to achieve this end were as follows: (a) they provided parents with detailed information about relevant aspects of the child's school performance; (b) they promoted parental support for the changes that were being worked on at school, for example, they were encouraged to ask about and praise the child when they heard of appropriate behaviour of achievements; (c) they provided direct social work help for the attendant family problems (which proved in fact to be numerous). In this particular aspect of their work with the families the approach varied according to the nature of the problem. Task-centred approaches were applicable in cases involving interpersonal conflict, or problems with formal organization as in the case of relations with the school (Reid and Epstein 1977). On the other hand, when difficulties involved either physical health or financial problems these were, in the main, dealt with by more traditional methods.

THE INITIAL STAGE

This stage involved the assessment and planning of casework with parents. All families involved in the research were seen by one of the members of the project team prior to the start of the parent counselling-teacher consultation programme. This contact took the form of an assessment interview the aim of which was to provide a baseline measure of child behaviour (Garside *et al.* 1975; Kolvin *et al.* 1975b). In addition, many other child and family details were obtained (see Chapter 4 and Nicol *et al.* 1981).

The purpose of the school social workers' initial contacts with families was to add to this baseline information and also to:

(i) establish a rapport with the family;
(ii) explain the objectives of the school social work programme, and its limited duration;
(iii) gain some understanding of the interactive factors at work in the family;

(iv) begin discussing problems identified at school by the family and by the school social worker;
(v) begin discussing how family problems might impinge on the child and affect his or her school functioning.

After two introductory visits to the family the school social workers and their back-up teams of social work tutors and psychiatrists assessed the number of problem areas (illness reactions, social interaction, or other problems) and the severity of problems in each area. Treatment aims were also recorded and estimates were made of parental attitudes towards help being offered (motivation). There were commonly multiple problem areas in these families, the modal number being four to six problems per family, with a maximum of sixteen; these problems were also of great chronicity, nearly all of them having been of more than three years' duration. The various problem areas are listed in *Table 7(1)*.

The amount of disturbance in each problem area was assessed. Despite the fact that the difficulties in many families were multiple, they did seem to focus on certain areas, six of which contained over one-third of cases (*Table 7(1)*). These areas were physical illnesses, emotional problems, financial difficulties, marital problems, parent-child problems, and problems of schooling.

Having identified and described the main problems in each family,

Table 7(1) *Type and frequency of family problems (junior and senior children combined n = 146)*

most common problems (present in over two-thirds of families)	
personal:	emotional problems in member of family
interactional:	marital problems
	relationship problems between parent and child
other:	problems about schooling
moderately common problems (one-third to two-thirds of families)	
personal:	physical illness in family
social:	financial difficulties
less common problems (less than one-third but more than one-tenth – in order of frequency)	
personal:	parental dullness
	alcoholism and psychopathy
	mental illness in family
social:	unemployment
	housing difficulties
	material deprivation of child
	poor home management
	dependency on social services
interactional:	problems with relatives (apart from spouse or children)
	problems with neighbours
other:	communication with other agencies (medical, probation, housing, etc.)

the next step was to decide what to do about them. In a brief, focused approach to families with so many problems it would clearly not have been sensible to have tried to help with each difficulty: we had to be selective. Therefore, four areas of family life were chosen for further intervention in the majority of cases. These were emotional problems, marital problems, problems in the relationship between parent and child, and problems about schooling. In some cases help was also offered for many other types of problems but much less commonly so than in the case of these four areas.

At the end of the treatment programme the school social workers recorded the areas in which they had actually intervened. In practice, it was in these four areas that treatment had most often been given, particularly in the area of relationship problems between parent and child, where it appeared that aid had been administered more often than had been originally intended. Altogether, 147 families were seen, involving eighty-one senior school pupils and sixty-six junior school pupils.

THE MIDDLE STAGE

The middle stage of the parent counselling programme was the main treatment period. The programme in total consisted of up to ten visits per family (including the preliminary interviews) though the number of visits actually carried out varied, with most families receiving four to six calls in all (see *Table 7(2)*). In only a minority of visits were both parents seen together, although in 55 per cent of cases there was at least one joint interview.

A feature of the Newcastle upon Tyne approach that was particularly important to the school social workers during this stage was the 'back-up service', which offered regular supervision. Before each family meeting, the school social workers were expected to set out the particular objectives they were aiming for in that session. It was

Table 7(2) *Frequency distribution of the number of school social workers' visits to parents (includes joint interviews)*

number of visits per family	n = 147
	%
3 or less	11
4–6	44
7–9	36
10 or more	9
total	100

hoped that this would reduce the likelihood of opening up new areas of discussion to the detriment of the specific goals already set. Recording methods ensured easy identification of the school social worker's activity: the purpose of the visit, any important interaction during the call, and the amount of attention given to particular objectives. Thus attempts were made to ensure that the specificity that characterized the initial stages was continued into this stage.

We will describe the middle stage of the programme more fully in two ways: by a series of typical case histories and by a work analysis.

The middle stage: case descriptions

Physical illness

Bob S.

Initial severity: marked. Proposed help: maximal.
Help given: maximal. Goal: partly achieved.

Bob S. was an eleven-year-old who had been showing markedly disturbed behaviour at school. He was from a family where there was very little supervision, and where there were few restrictions on aggressive behaviour. His father had been unemployed for many years and an older brother had recently left home after a family argument. During the course of the first interview the school social worker realized that Mrs S. was nearly blind and that this was creating many problems. Mrs S. had lost her spectacles three years earlier and had not replaced them. Despite some initial resistance, the school social worker arranged an ophthalmic appointment for Mrs S., transported her to it, and generally supported her in getting her new glasses. She seemed pleased with the result but there was some doubt about whether she would regularly wear her glasses.

Parental loss

Billy K.

Initial severity: marked. Proposed help: maximal.
Help given: maximal. Goal: mostly achieved.

On her first visit the school social worker was received with hostility when she tried to explain the school's concern about this seven-year-old boy's reading problem. In the presence of a neighbour, whom it was felt had been 'brought in' for support, the story emerged of the death of Billy's father after a heart attack six months earlier. Over a series of visits Billy's mother became more open and confiding. Billy, the youngest of four brothers, had been very attached to his father and, since the death, an overdependent relationship had grown up between mother and son. The school social worker was able to help Mrs K. to work through some of her feelings about the loss, and

about her current relation with Billy. By receiving help herself, it was hoped that Mrs K. might in turn help Billy with his own grief.

Emotional problems
Alan W.
Initial severity: marked. Proposed help: moderate.
Help given: moderate. Goal: minimally achieved.

The school social worker was aware at the time she made her home visit that she was likely to meet with a hostile reception from Alan's mother. The aim was to see whether there was any way of making an alliance with the family of the anxious and overprotected obese seven-year-old who was frequently absent from school. The mother's previous contact with school had been disastrous because of her behaviour when she went to complain about the school's handling of her son. It rapidly became clear that there were vast problems in the marriage in addition to Mrs W.'s aggressiveness and drinking problem. The child was smothered at home and his mother sided with him in a paranoid way over any minor dispute at school.

In planning intervention it was realized that any radical programme would fail. The school social worker restricted her efforts to being accepting of Mrs. W., despite her abusive language and aggressiveness, and to tactfully finding ways that the boy could individuate, for example, by entering for a cycling proficiency course. These limited goals met with some success over eight visits.

Financial difficulties
Keith W.
Initial severity: moderate. Proposed help: great.
Help given: moderate. Goal: achieved.

An eleven-year-old was showing nervousness and getting into fights at school. He was being brought up by his mother, a European immigrant, alone. Difficulties were compounded because her qualifications were not recognized in the UK and she had to do poorly paid work for long hours. This reflected on Keith who saw little of his mother and seemed to lack love and attention. Shortly after the intervention commenced a crisis was precipitated by the boy's poor behaviour at school. This allowed the school social worker to discuss with Keith's mother, in some emotionally charged interviews, her feelings about the boy. Subsequently, the school social worker was able to mediate between Mrs W. and the school and channel off a quantity of projected hostility on both sides. Shortly after this Mrs W. obtained a full-time, better paid job, where the regular hours allowed her more time with Keith, whose behaviour improved markedly.

Marital problems
Leslie T.
Initial severity: severe. Proposed help: great
Help given: great. Goal: nil achievement.

Leslie was a seven-year-old boy who was showing a behaviour disturbance at school. When the school social worker called, the family seemed quite prepared to discuss the ways in which the home might be contributing to the difficulties. Leslie's father was unemployed, which led to some financial problems as there were five children in the family; however, his attempts to find work seemed half-hearted and he tended to apply for jobs that he had little hope of getting. Mrs T. seemed chronically depressed and ineffective and, indeed, her husband seemed to have moved comfortably into the role of housekeeper. The marital problems were clearly great. There were difficulties in contraception that neither partner seemed motivated to sort out in any way and the family seemed to be hit by one crisis after another, which they seemed to meet with general immobility and lack of motivation. Despite quite extensive involvement over a year there was no appreciable change in the family situation.

Parent-child problems
Anthony R.
Severity: moderate. Proposed help: great.
Help given: great. Goal: minimally achieved.

Anthony, a seven-year-old boy, had a reading problem and antisocial behaviour at school. In addition, he was isolated and rejected by his peers. On early visits to his large family (he was sixth of the seven children) his mother seemed poorly motivated but did complain of the boy's restlessness and of difficulties in handling him. The family had a number of problems, which remained ill-defined. Mrs R. was unforthcoming and, despite repeated requests, Anthony's father did not make himself available. However, the school social worker did make a number of visits and was able to have useful discussions with Mrs R. centred on the handling of the boy and on the family being able to recognize his individual needs. The weight of her other problems, including two enuretic older siblings, probably prevented Mrs R. from using the help fully.

Kathy C.
Initial severity: severe. Proposed help: great.
Help given: great. Goal: moderately achieved.

The school social worker had heard before her first visit that there were great problems between mother and child. The mother was bringing up Kathy by herself and in early interviews it became clear that

she was finding this a very lonely task and was unable to provide limits to the behaviour of her eleven-year-old daughter. It was felt that a simple directive counselling approach would be the most effective, and, indeed, over six interviews the mother's distress over her handling difficulties decreased markedly.

Problems with schooling
Donna T.

Initial severity: severe. Proposed help: great.
Help given: little. Goal: mostly achieved.

An eight-year-old girl showed the features of a moderate conduct disorder at school, including truancy as a leading symptom. The household turned out to be a large one where Mrs T. was bringing up five daughters alone. Donna was the youngest and in many ways one of the least disturbed, although by the same token, one of the most attention-needing. Much of the focus of treatment was to support Mrs T. in her anxieties about her adolescent daughters who had numerous problems; however, during the course of the programme, Donna's behaviour improved and she began to attend school regularly.

The middle stage: parent counselling: a work analysis

The intention throughout contacts with parents had been to retain a focus on the child. How far had this been possible? We were able to check by examining a sample of sixty case records relating to 350 interviews. The records included details about the purpose of the visit, the important interactions that took place, and the areas discussed. Certain features of the counselling approach became apparent. First, the stated intention of the visit had been adequately covered in only 40 per cent of the sample of interviews studied. We were aware that the families were experiencing many problems, and to a certain extent this was reflected in the work pattern of the school social workers in that attention was diverted to other problems that emerged during the course of the interviews. This served to make the approach, especially in the middle stage, more diffuse and represented a limitation of the scheme. Nevertheless, the analysis also revealed that the four most commonly discussed topics were the parent-child relationship, child management by parents, educational matters, and parent-school relations, and so some focusing had been possible.

Another feature which represented a departure from the stated intentions of the approach was the failure to involve fathers, shown by the low level of joint interviews. One factor contributing to this was that most of the visits were conducted during the day. Also,

fathers may be less responsive than mothers to reports coming from the school. Whatever the reasons, failure to involve fathers was a serious deficiency, as other studies have pointed to the importance of paternal involvement in a child's education in both disorganized families (Tonge, James, and Hillam 1975) and general populations (Chazan *et al.* 1976).

THE FINAL STAGE

During the final stage of contact the planned visits came to an end, and the achievement value of the contacts was assessed. It was decided that the school social workers should provide a crisis service to families in the final term, but in actual fact this service was rarely requested.

Linking home and school

A most difficult task for the school social worker was to find ways of linking home and school. Attempts were made to lessen mutual distrust and prejudice and ways sought to increase parental interest in the child's education and progress or, more generally, in school activities. Initially, the work consisted of carrying the teachers' ideas to the parents. Occasionally, it was necessary to reassure teachers that parents were concerned and interested, and sometimes to repeat the process with the latter.

There was also the far more difficult operation of helping certain teachers to appreciate their personal impact on parents. This was perhaps the most sensitive area the school social workers had to deal with; when it constituted an important issue, it had to be broached with great diplomacy and caution.

Sometimes, before meeting, parents or teachers proposed angry confrontations with each other but, once together, their reactions usually proved quite different. Teachers were often anxious about meeting parents of difficult children, and sometimes did not know what to say. In general, both making contact with parents and linking home and school proved to be more difficult in the senior than the junior schools. This was probably due to a number of factors, including the relative extent of the senior schools catchment areas, the size and organization of the comprehensive schools (which parents and children often found daunting), and the projection over a long period of time of parents' own unhappy school experiences.

Sometimes the teacher thought the school social worker was siding with the parents, while the parents thought the opposite. Problems occurred when teachers thought that a child's classroom behaviour

was unalterable in view of adverse features in his or her environment and, in such cases, it was important to focus attention on classroom activities once more.

In general, it is unusual for teachers not to have a rough idea of their pupils' home problems. An outline of these problems often acts as a catalyst to endeavours to help the child.

Interviews with parents provided some idea of the parents' child-rearing patterns, such as their disciplinary methods, the degree of stimulation, they offered, and the amount of attention and affection the child was given. The school social worker aimed to draw a picture of the total family and cultural milieu in which the child was being reared. As already mentioned, some of the families had multiple problems, but only a small proportion of them did not want to hear about the views of teachers and we found few occasions when a real lack of interest in the child's progress was evident, although ways of helping were often ill-understood.

The transfer of selected information from home to school was an important part of the school social worker's duties and this raised a potential problem concerning confidentiality. This subject has been regarded as a problem area within recent British school social work projects (Watkins and Derrick 1977) and has been discussed elsewhere in the context of school-home co-operation (Smethells 1977). If a parent revealed previously unknown information to the school social worker and it was relevant to the child's functioning, it was left to the school social worker to indicate that this sort of information might well help the teacher to understand the child's present predicament and to ask for permission to discuss this with the teacher. Our view is that teachers interested in expanding their pastoral roles and functions have high professional ethical standards similar to those of any other of the 'helping' or 'caring' disciplines and should not be denied relevant information. In our project there was no abuse of information. Nevertheless, we believe that such information should not be incorporated in permanent school records, but should be seen as related to transient or current 'here-and-now' problems that the school social worker or teacher is attempting to solve.

Perceptions of the programme by teachers, parents, and school social workers

The degree to which teachers and parents accept schemes that directly involve them will obviously affect the success of such schemes. In this section we consider teachers' and parents' per-

ceptions of the school social work programme. This is followed by a description of the school social workers' views about their effectiveness.

SOCIAL WORKERS IN SCHOOLS – THE TEACHERS' RESPONSES

In the early stages of the project we found that teachers did not appear to be very sure of the precise roles, functions, and skills of the school social workers. For instance, they were perceived as having more authority in relation to the families and a more directive role than they had in reality. On the other hand, in no instance did a teacher expect the school social worker to undertake the role of a school messenger, nor such non-social work tasks as checking for lateness, as described by Fitzherbert (1973). Teachers were concerned about becoming too involved with complex psychosocial and family problems, and undertaking home visits and other treatment procedures. Such views filtered back to the project team during the first days of the programme, but as mere impressions they were of limited value. We therefore decided to send out a questionnaire to all those teachers who had taken part in the scheme.

There is a lack of objective information in this particular area of interdisciplinary co-operation, largely because so few schemes have been implemented. Even when material has been available, however, its usefulness has been limited, first, by a failure to collect information systematically, and, second, by a lack of distinction between the views of teachers who had worked with a school social worker and those who had not. In our investigation it was possible to ask the opinion of teachers who had first-hand experience of working with a school social worker, and accordingly to study their attitudes to a specific social work service. Our questionnaire was based partly on one used in other studies (e.g. Freeman 1973), but was modified and extended to meet the needs of our project. The questionnaire was piloted in the early stage of the research at which time it became apparent that completion would only be possible if there were guarantees of anonymity and also that we would have to dispense with the checking of questionnaire reliability.

There were five broad areas in which we considered feedback from teaching staff would be valuable. Some of the areas were entirely concerned with aspects of the consultation offered in this programme, the others with wider themes associated with alternative approaches to helping pupils with special needs:

(i) teachers' views about consultation and its impact on practice;
(ii) teachers' views on alternative approaches to management of pupils with behavioural problems;

(iii) teachers' reactions to the feedback they received from school social workers, and to the availability and appropriateness of school social work consultation;
(iv) the extent to which teachers were able to understand social work concepts;
(v) teachers' views on the actual and potential duties of social workers in schools.

A full account of the survey of teachers' views is presented elsewhere (Wolstenholme and Kolvin 1980). A shortened version of the procedure and the main findings of the survey are outlined below.

Method

Three months after the programme ended a self-rating questionnaire was used to ascertain the views of teachers who had been involved in the project. All those teachers with whom the school social workers had at least one detailed pupil-orientated discussion (as defined on page 183) were contacted by senior members of the project team who had not been personally involved in providing a social work service to the school. In all, 117 teachers were contacted and seventy-three completed questionnaires were returned – a response rate of 62 per cent. There appeared to be four main reasons for this rather moderate response: (a) staff mobility; (b) insufficient contact between teachers and school social workers hindering the completion of the questionnaire with any degree of confidence (some teachers had only one discussion with the school social worker and an analysis of the amount of time teachers spent in consultation with school social workers revealed that non-respondents were usually those who had spent the least time in consultation); (c) resistance to the completion of yet another questionnaire and (d) more rarely, resistance of some teachers to aspects of social work or to the programme in general. It should be emphasized that there have been similar difficulties in maintaining contact with teachers in other studies (Rose and Marshall 1974).

Teacher sample

The teachers who replied represented a fairly typical cross-section in terms of training and experience, although there was a slight over-representation of teachers in senior posts.

Findings

Teachers' responses to individual items are shown in *Table 7(3)*. These responses constituted a crude index of the usefulness of a social work programme designed to assist teachers both in coping with and help-

ing pupils with psychological problems. Some of the items referred specifically to the impact on teacher practice of working with a school social worker – all the items in *Part A* of *Table 7(3)*, and items 14 and 15 in *Part B*, fell into this category. The remainder referred to overall aspects of the school social work scheme or were statements of a more general nature relating to the management of pupils.

(i) *Views about what was achieved.* A primary task for the school social workers was to help teachers maximize their practical management skills in dealing with pupils with difficulties. While the responses of the teachers did not suggest the social workers made a major impact in this area, there was evidence that over 50 per cent of the teachers did consider consultation to be of at least *some* use in improving handling ability (3), in increasing their knowledge about psychological methods of handling children (5), and in thinking out alternative ways of coping with disturbed behaviour (9). The school social workers appeared to have made a greater impression when it came to providing support for the class teacher, with over three-quarters of the teachers reporting that collaboration helped, at least slightly (8). More than half of the teachers endorsed the notion that consultation led, at least to a small extent, to a sharing of responsibility (15). A number of items covered the topics of increased teacher awareness of child and family problems and home-school relations. It appeared that the school social workers had their greatest success in increasing teachers' understanding of child behaviour (1) and the child's family background (2). This was not accompanied by a similar improvement in teachers' understanding of emotional development in general (6), nor by a substantial increase in their awareness of their own reactions to pupils (4). Furthermore, two-fifths of the teachers indicated that consultation had not been successful in the areas of fostering links between parents and school (14).

(ii) *Views on alternative methods of management.* The teachers had the opportunity to indicate their preferences for other helpful techniques. A clear majority were against the idea of moving disturbed children into special classes or schools (17). In addition, there were few teachers who would definitely have preferred to see the school social worker undertake direct treatment of children (19), and even fewer who would definitely have preferred to contact parents themselves (21), although more than half indicated that this was a possibility.

(iii) *Reactions to (a) feedback and (b) content of consultation.* Despite an agreement among the research team that information would not be lightly withheld, one-third of teachers were generally dis-

Table 7(3) *Teacher questionnaire: the teachers' responses to consultation*

Part A		*nil*	*slightly*	*moderately/ markedly*
		%	%	%
1.	enhanced my understanding of the children identified	14	38	48
2.	increased my understanding of the children's families	13	30	57
3.	improved my ability to handle the children's behaviour	46	36	18
4.	led to an increase of my understanding of my own reactions to children	45	39	16
5.	enhanced my knowledge about the psychological techniques of handling children	49	44	7
6.	enhanced my knowledge about emotional development in general	62	28	10
7.	provided me with useful information from psychological tests	64	22	14
8.	it helped me to have someone to talk to about the children's problems	16	39	45
9.	it helped me to think out alternative ways of coping with disturbed behaviour	35	33	32
Part B		*not really*	*possibly*	*definitely*
		%	%	%
10.	I would have liked more advice	36	39	25
11.	there were sufficient opportunities for discussing everything I wanted to discuss	40	24	36
12.	I would have liked to have been told more about how to handle children	57	32	11
13.	I could usually see what the school social worker was getting at	4	29	67
14.	it helped to foster links with the families of disturbed children	43	37	20
15.	it led to a sharing of responsibility for individual children	42	45	13
16.	I was told enough of what was found out in interviews with parents	36	33	31
17.	I would have preferred it if the very disturbed children had been removed to special classes or schools than to help them to be maintained in our school with the help of a school social worker	58	17	25
18.	I think the school social workers should have spent more time visiting the homes	48	49	3
19.	I would have preferred it if the school social worker had undertaken direct treatment of the children	53	34	13
20.	school social workers should encourage unco-operative parents to come into (contact with) the school	4	16	80
21.	I would have preferred to contact the parents myself	42	54	4
22.	school social workers should confine themselves to social problem families	61	26	13
23.	school social workers should concern themselves with staff tensions that might arise in the school	74	23	3
24.	school social workers should be more informative about the psychological information they elicit from families	29	49	22

satisfied with the actual feedback of information about families (16), and more than two-thirds considered there was poor transmission of information from the psychological testing of children (7) and of psychological information elicited from the families (24). As opportunities for discussion with teachers had to be fitted around existing timetable demands, which proved a difficult task in senior schools, it was not surprising to learn that two-fifths of teachers clearly indicated that the opportunities for consultation with school social workers were insufficient (11). Furthermore, three-quarters of the teachers would have liked more advice (10) but the nature of this advice is uncertain.

(iv) *Ability to understand social work concepts*. Technical jargon is often reported as being a hindrance to interprofessional co-operation, but the response to this item (13) suggested that it did not constitute a major problem. However, nearly a third of teachers had sufficient reservations to mark the 'possibly' column, thus emphasizing the need for greater clarity on the part of school social workers in communication with other professionals.

(v) *Views of the actual and potential duties of social workers*. First, it was clear that three-quarters of the teachers were unwilling to have school social workers concern themselves with staff tensions (23). Second, the notion that school social workers should confine themselves to social problem families obtained a strong negative endorsement from nearly two-thirds of the teachers, which suggested that other aspects of the school social workers' contributions were perceived as valuable (22). Finally, teachers felt strongly that the school social worker should be the person to contact unco-operative parents (20): indeed, the greatest agreement among teachers was reported in this area, with over three-quarters 'definitely' seeing this as an important role for the school social worker.

Two further aspects of the scheme were singled out for comment. First, more than three-quarters of teachers endorsed the notion of the school social worker having a base (i.e. an office) inside, rather than away from, the school. Second, teachers were asked how convenient they found the consultation pattern (which involved organizing discussions to fit the teachers' timetable). The majority (two-thirds) found it slightly inconvenient.

Re-analysis of data by school and teacher characteristics

Teachers' responses to each of the twenty-four items in *Table 7(3)* were re-analysed according to the type of school in which the teacher

worked (junior or senior) and four teacher characteristics: age, sex, training, and parental status. The results suggested that the responses were not influenced by the type of school nor by these personal characteristics. Alternative explanations are therefore necessary (Wolstenholme and Kolvin 1980).

The survey – implications for the future

The main conclusions drawn from this teacher survey were that, even with a limited amount of contact, school social workers can make a positive contribution in schools, and that this contribution is likely to be welcomed. Only a few teachers reported that they gained no help from consultation and, bearing in mind the limited school social worker-teacher contact, this was encouraging. Within this general pattern, school social workers were particularly appreciated for their emotional support and for the information about families that they could pass on to teaching staff. On the other hand, the teachers were less inclined to think that their pupil management skills had improved as a consequence of discussion with the school social workers and, at the same time, there was some dissatisfaction about the amount (and perhaps the nature) of some of the information teachers received.

In general, the findings also suggested that the teachers *did* want to play as full a part as possible in dealing with difficult and/or disturbed pupils. They also saw the need to involve parents, but did not wish to see school social workers become involved in staff tensions. All this could be considered to augur well for the future. Above all, the findings of this survey lend considerable support to the view that closer links between the educational and social services are attainable at a practical level.

SOCIAL WORKERS IN SCHOOLS – THE MOTHERS' RESPONSES

It seemed important to us that we should find out how a non-referred group of clients responded to the home visiting scheme. For example, did the scheme help mothers to cope with their children and, more specifically, the child in question? How were their attitudes towards school affected? What did they see as the advantages and disadvantages of the scheme?

Three to six months after the end of the project all the mothers who had been involved were asked to complete a questionnaire containing the items listed in *Table 7(4)*.

Method

The questionnaire was administered by research staff previously involved with the families. In all, 84 per cent (122) of the eligible mothers completed this questionnaire. The non-respondents comprised families who had moved away from the area, those we were unable to contact, and those who refused to continue in the research. The respondents and non-respondents were compared with regard to motivation levels (assessed by the school social workers nine months earlier) and to exposure (number of contacts). In neither of these characteristics did the non-respondents differ significantly from the respondents. The motivation measure was a composite score consisting of a series of five-point scales covering such items as family acceptance of problems, desire for help, willingness to work with (a) teachers and (b) school social workers, and previous attempts to seek help. These assessments were made by the school social workers involved, after two visits to the families.

Discussion of questionnaire findings (see Table 7(4))

About 70 per cent of mothers reported that following counselling they had an increased understanding of their children (Q). Success in self and family understanding, though, was less marked (D and I). For all items a majority of mothers reported some benefit, although the items concerned with the concept of understanding were characterized by a high percentage of responses in the mid-point of the scale. We suggest that this was the result of a difficulty in coping with as nebulous a concept as understanding.

With regard to home-school relations, it was clear that school social work involvement did not inconvenience mothers (O). Furthermore, maternal understanding of school and schooling improved (M).

Two-thirds of the mothers were unequivocal in their response that it had helped to have someone with whom to talk over their problems, while one-fifth did not find this to be the case (G).

It seemed that a model of brief intervention received support, in that almost two-thirds of mothers considered that there were sufficient visits in which to discuss their problems, and only a quarter felt that more visits were merited. Because the frequency of visits did not appear to be crucial, it was likely that other factors, such as the needs of the client and the nature of the casework, were more important in determining satisfaction than the number of visits.

There are allegations that casework consists of too much talk and too many questions. The responses of these mothers strongly contradicted this view (H). In a similar fashion, any suggestion that the sessions might have distressed or unsettled mothers was also rejected

Table 7(4) *Mothers' responses to counselling* (n = 122)

statement		*no*	*possibly*	*yes*
		%	%	%
A.	I would have liked more advice	64	19	17
B.	it was just talk and not really helpful	57	18	25
C.	it helped me think out problems	25	25	50
D.	it helped me understand myself more than before	40	34	26
E.	it made me think of different ways to cope	47	21	32
F.	there were not enough visits to discuss all the things I wanted to discuss	62	10	28
G.	it helped to have someone to talk to	20	12	68
H.	too many questions were asked	78	8	14
I.	it helped me to understand my child/ren more	31	30	39
J.	it was very easy to talk to the school social worker	3	5	92
K.	it was difficult to see the point of some of the things brought up	57	17	26
L.	it helped me to understand things about the whole family	36	28	36
M.	I understand what happens at school more clearly now	29	20	51
N.	discussions are just a waste of time	77	9	14
O.	I found it inconvenient to have someone to visit from school	83	9	8
P.	it would have been much better if other family members had joined the discussions more than they did	60	21	19
Q.	it helped me to understand . . . . (child)	30	23	47
R.	I sometimes felt upset after the discussions	92	3	5
S.	I would have liked to have been told more about handling my child/ren	73	15	12
T.	I worried over what was discussed	87	8	5

(R and T). This was particularly important in view of the fact that these were families who had not personally requested social work help.

Finally, most mothers appeared to be satisfied with an individual approach and with the level of advice they received (P and A).

The mothers' motivation levels (assessed during the initial stages of contact) appeared to affect their responses, with those considered by the school social worker to be the most motivated proving the most positive to social work intervention in their responses to the questionnaire. However, it is possible that the school social workers' own responses to a family were affected by their initial perceptions; some of the mothers may, consequently, have received a different service to the majority.

In conclusion, there was much in these findings to support the notion that school social workers can make a useful contribution both in helping parents to understand more about school and in providing more direct help with the management of children.

SOCIAL WORKERS' IMPRESSIONS OF THEIR EFFECTIVENESS

With teachers

Table 7(5) reveals the intention of the school social workers to concentrate mainly on the four topics of classroom management, individualizing the curriculum, linking home and school, and the child's home environment. With the exception of the first of these themes, all were viewed as particularly important in the case of two-thirds to three-quarters of the treated pupils, i.e. moderate or major objectives had been set. It may be that the two areas of linking home and school and discussing the child's home environment were more accessible to enquiry simply because these were areas in which the technical expertise of the school social worker was recognized by the teacher.

Table 7(5) *Themes of consultation, objectives, and achievement: the school social workers' views*

consultation theme	*objectives*			*achievement*
	no aims	*slight*	*moderate/ major*	*moderate/marked success*
	%	%	%	%
individualizing the curriculum	22	8	70	61
classroom structure	55	22	23	40
classroom management	33	12	55	46
linking home and school	12	20	68	49
discussion of child's home environment	8	26	66	87
discussion of extra-curricular activities	75	10	15	20

The right-hand column of *Table 7(5)* shows the extent to which the school social workers rated their success. Proportionately, they thought they achieved the greatest success in the areas where they had the greatest aims. It is interesting to note that the areas of linking home and school, child's home environment, and individualizing the curriculum, required a high level of information transfer from school social worker to teacher, as distinct from discussions of pupil management procedures. Therefore, the strengths of the consultation

component as viewed by the school social workers coincided on the whole with those identified by the teachers.

It was something of a surprise to see the extent to which discussions also centred on classroom practices. This helps to refute the idea that teachers would not tolerate 'intruders' in their classrooms.

With families

The school social workers were asked to rate whether or not they thought the families had been helped by their intervention, and *Table 7(6)* shows that, in a large majority of cases, they felt that they had been of assistance.

Table 7(6) *School social workers' rating of their helpfulness to families*

achievement	*juniors*	*seniors*	*total numbers*
considerable help	14	22	36
moderate help	31	29	60
little if any help	11	20	31
no positive effect	10	10	20
total numbers	66	81	147

A pilot study questionnaire on parental motivation, completed by social workers, discriminated between a sample of parents selected from our hospital clinic and a school-based parent sample. The parents in the clinic sample showed a greater desire for help, greater understanding that the child had an emotional problem, and greater willingness to increase teacher contact than did their school-based counterparts. They had also made more attempts in the past to seek help than had the school-based families. If we accept the premise that the clinic families were likely to have been better motivated towards intervention, as they had sought help rather than been approached by a school-based social worker, it would seem that increase in the motivation level of the parents in this treatment programme along these dimensions would demonstrate that the school social worker's intervention had been useful even if no tangible direct benefit had ensued.

In relation to the main study *Table 7(7)* demonstrates that the school social workers thought there were highly satisfactory changes in potential attitudes to the child's problem and to social work contact. No changes were noted in other attitudes and they are therefore not reported in detail.

Table 7(7) *School social workers' assessments of attitude changes in parents' motivation*

aspect of motivation	*frequencies*	
	rating before intervention	*rating after intervention*
desire for further help:		
sincere request for further sessions	20	34
agrees to suggestions of further sessions	81	76
agrees to further sessions with resignation	35	20
further sessions under protest or refused	11	12
total numbers =	147	142
Recognition of child's problem:		
clear understanding that child has an emotional problem	23	41
prepared to discuss possibility that child has an emotional problem	63	62
grudgingly accepts that problem may be emotional	41	23
refuses to accept that problem may be emotional	20	16
total numbers =	147	142

Note: five fewer parents were rated after intervention than before.

It will be realized, of course, that the results reported here were based on school social workers' assessments of their own work and hence may have been unduly optimistic. Nevertheless, we note that the school social workers were not indiscriminately optimistic in making their ratings and that they were highly specific in picking out those areas in which they felt that they had been of real help to the families.

Independent evaluation of the parent counselling-teacher consultation programme

We compared the two sets of pupils who were involved in the parent counselling-teacher consultation programme with their age-appropriate at-risk and maladjusted controls.

RESULTS OF PARENT COUNSELLING-TEACHER CONSULTATION IN JUNIOR SCHOOLS

Outcome (see Figs 7(1), 7(2), and 7(3))
Outcome was based on clinical assessment of psychiatric status. On the antisocial dimension outcome at the midline assessment revealed a

Figure 7(1) Antisocial behaviour: juniors: per cent outcome (good and poor categories only)

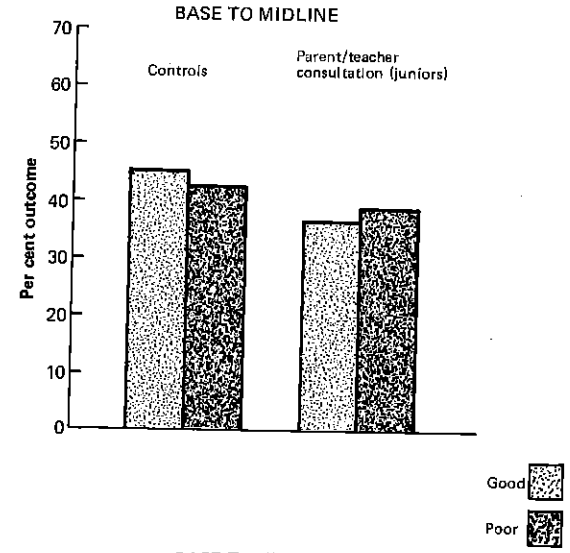


Figure 7(2) Neurotic behaviour: juniors: per cent outcome (good and poor categories only)

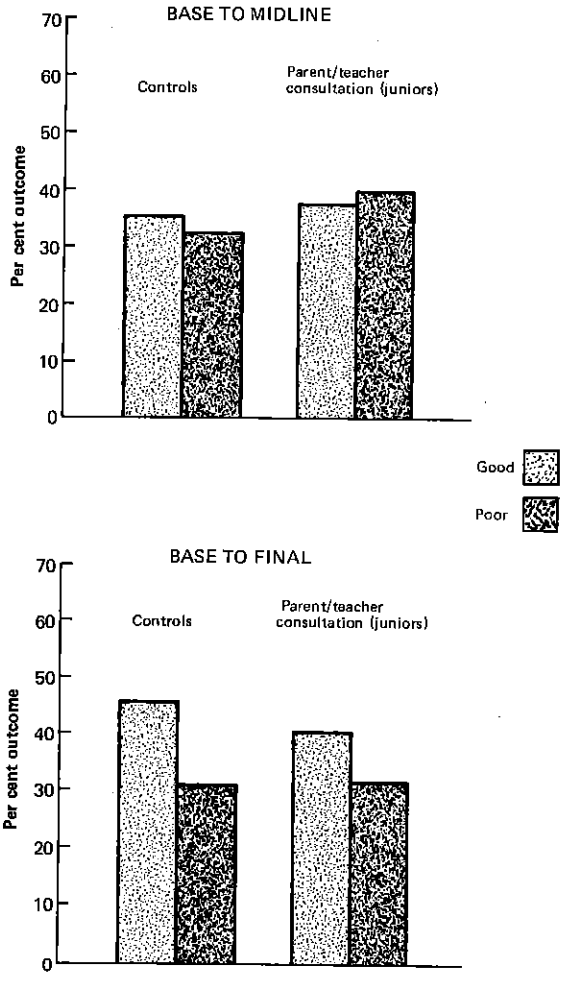
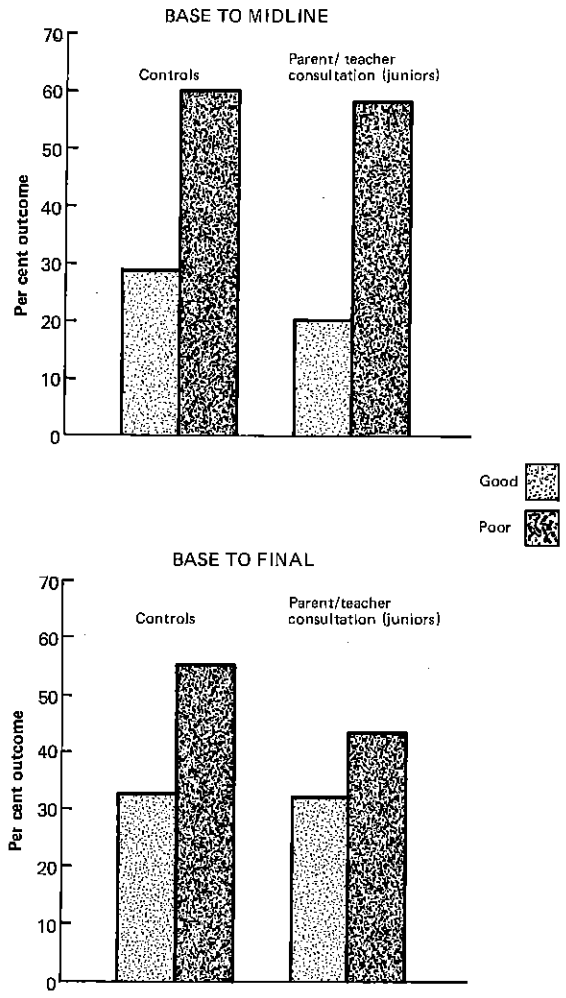


Figure 7(3) Overall severity: juniors: per cent outcome (good and poor categories only)



similar picture for both the parent counselling-teacher consultation and at-risk control children. This was repeated at the final follow-up where both regimes still had a substantial proportion of children with a poor outcome. On neurotic behaviour the outcome at both midline and final assessments was again similar for both regimes. This was true also for the dimension of overall severity.

Thus, it appeared that, taken overall, parent counselling-teacher consultation made little impression in relation to the psychiatric status of the children. However, other techniques and measures gave more positive results (see below).

Improvement

This section describes results of the various measures completed by children, parents, and teachers. Only significant differences are reported.

There were no differences between the treated and at-risk control children at either of the follow-up assessments on measures of academic performance and parental reports of behaviour. On the base-to-final analysis the treated pupils were significantly less isolated ($p < .05$).

Significant differences were more apparent when teacher reports of behaviour were considered. On the neurotic sub-score of the Rutter B2 scale, the treated group showed a significant gain over the at-risk controls at the final follow-up. The most numerous gains over the at-risk controls were on the Devereux scale. There was, at the eighteen-month follow-up, a reduction in impatience ($p < .05$); improved comprehension ($p < .05$); improved attention levels ($p < .05$); an increase in the need for closeness ($p < .01$); a reduction in the time taken to complete work ($p < .05$); and, finally, an increase in the sum of the Devereux items ($p < .05$). All but three of these short-term gains (improved comprehension, reduced impatience, and the sum of all the Devereux items) had disappeared by the final follow-up.

From this brief outline it would appear that parent counselling-teacher consultation made some impact on the classroom functioning of the junior treated pupils during the immediate period of the programme, although not all of these gains lasted. The home picture was quite different, and there were no significant findings.

RESULTS OF PARENT COUNSELLING–TEACHER CONSULTATION IN SENIOR SCHOOLS

Outcome (See Figs 7(4), 7(5), and 7(6))

The outcome in terms of neurotic behaviour proved similar for the treated children and maladjusted controls at both the midline and the

Figure 7(4) Antisocial behaviour: seniors: per cent outcome (good and poor categories)

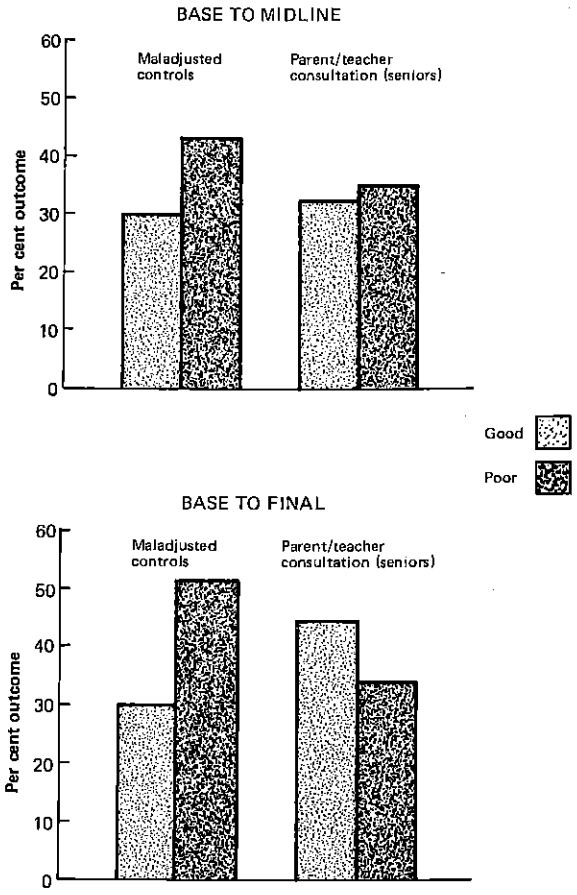


Figure 7(5) Neurotic behaviour: seniors: per cent outcome (good and poor categories)

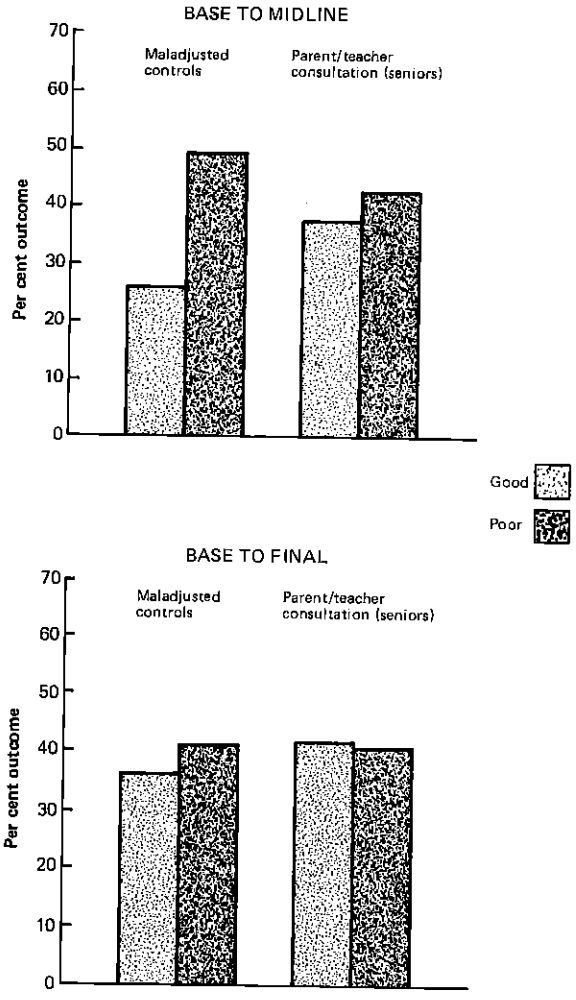
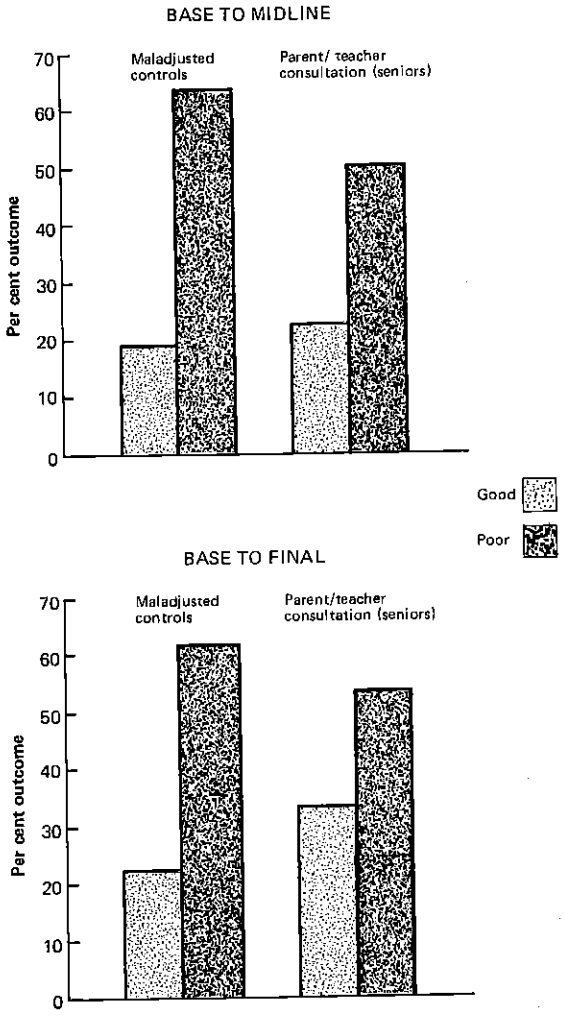


Figure 7(6) Overall severity: seniors: per cent outcome (good and poor categories)



final follow-ups. However, on the antisocial scale the treatment regime had a higher percentage of children with good outcome and a lower percentage with poor outcome than did the maladjusted control regime, but this difference did not prove to be statistically significant. The picture on the dimensions of overall severity was similar for both regimes.

Improvement

There were no differences between the treated children and maladjusted controls on academic performance and peer relationships, and only three differences from all other sources. First, on the base-to-final analysis parents reported that the children in the parent counselling-teacher consultation group were less withdrawn than previously. Second, on the base-to-midline analysis the maladjusted controls showed greater improvement ($p < .05$) in neuroticism (JEPI) than did the treated children. Third, the treated children showed an improved attitude to school work at the midline assessment (Barker Lunn scale).

DISCUSSION

Our exploration of parent counselling-teacher consultation in British schools enabled us to consider a number of points, the most obvious of which was that it proved possible to introduce the programme on a systematic basis in a largely representative sample of both junior and secondary schools. To recap, having set up the programme in a systematic fashion we looked at the sort of work pattern adopted by the school social workers. This was, of course, pre-planned to some extent, but it was also moulded by the constraints and pressures of the school situation and the sorts of problems that the school social workers were confronted with. As far as the work with parents was concerned, the school social workers found themselves confronted with many family problems, but worked mainly on those concerning the marriage, the child, and the school. In relation to the teachers, they mainly promoted links between home and school, discussed the home environment of the children, and assisted in plans to individualize the curriculum in the light of their knowledge of a child's circumstances. It seems safe to conclude that the main area that presented itself as ripe for school social worker intervention was in the borderland between the home and the school, although our original intention had been for a broader approach to the child's problems in these two important environments.

We carried out various forms of evaluation by collecting the views of the teachers, mothers, and the school social workers themselves.

As far as the teachers were concerned, a clear picture emerged of their view of the school social worker's potential. Again, this seemed to point to the school social worker being most useful in the borderland between home and school, and also in giving support to teachers. It was equally clear that their possible role as mediators in staff difficulties was less acceptable. A complementary picture emerged from the mothers' viewpoint: they also found the chance to talk to the school social worker helpful, but this was mostly in relation to helping them understand their child and the school, rather than being of assistance with any other problems they may have had.

From the social workers' impressions, it seemed as if they felt they had achieved some useful changes in parental attitude to children's problems and enhanced parents' and teachers' understanding of children's group functioning. It is particularly interesting to note that they felt they had achieved the greatest success in areas where they had the greatest aims and we believe this again underlines the importance of focusing on particular tasks in casework.

Such views have to be balanced by independent evaluation consisting of monitoring of symptomatology and various types of severity of disturbance over the period of the study. As indicated earlier, the parent counselling-teaching consultation programme seems to have made little differential impact in relation to this type of data. A number of possible explanations for the lack of statistically significant differences between these types of measures need to be considered. Elsewhere (Chapters 2 and 10) it is pointed out that a single assessment social interview, even though directed towards diagnosis rather than treatment, may be sufficient to bring about change. We have no way of knowing what impact our assessment interviews had – they may in fact have had a therapeutic effect and so reduced the differences between the at-risk and maladjusted controls and the treated children. As the regime relied entirely on indirect intervention, it seems possible that its results were more submerged by the effects of the assessment interviews than those of regimes that dealt directly with the child.

An important point, which we have frequently referred to, was that children in the parent counselling-teacher consultation regime did not come to the attention of the therapists because of concern on the part of their parents but rather because they were picked up by a screening programme. For this reason the parental motivation towards intervention may not necessarily have been high. A related matter was that families were approached about children's behaviour that was termed 'deviant' in school, though the parents did not necessarily see it as problematic.

Also of great consequence was the fact that the families nearly all

had a wide range of longstanding difficulties. It seems quite possible, therefore, that the impact of the intervention on the child was dissipated in the welter of other difficulties that the school social worker was confronted with in the family. It may have been that the short-term approach, shared as it was between home and school, was not intensive enough to counteract the severity of the family difficulties. It is interesting that the impact on the senior pupils, who manifested the most clear-cut maladjustment, was less impressive than in the case of the juniors, who had lesser degrees of disorder.

Another point of importance was the focusing of treatment. In casework with families one can either range widely, according to the needs of the family, or concentrate more specifically on the child's problem. While our programme, as illustrated above, paid particular attention to focusing, it may not have been sufficiently concentrated to allow changes in the children's behaviour to emerge. The greatest degree of focusing occurred in teacher consultation in the junior schools as the children in these schools were only exposed to a small number of teachers. It is interesting to note that the junior schools showed the most positive gains in relation to the more specific help accessible via this programme.