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Chapter 6

Trust relationships between children, social welfare professionals and the organizations of welfare

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[A] INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores the dynamics of trust between children and social welfare professionals. I argue that this is an important aspect of child welfare as trust is closely related to participation and child protection and is therefore one of the most significant areas of child welfare. This important area of trust has been under theorised in relation to child welfare and protection. The chapter assesses some of the constraints in the process of development of trust by using examples of empirical data from social policy texts, interviews with welfare professionals and from consultation documents written up after participation events with groups of children who are Looked After[1] in residential or foster care in the UK. Extracts from interviews and policy texts are used to illustrate some of the complexities and issues involved in building trust relations between children, young people and welfare professionals.

The first part of this chapter examines these individual relationships between children and welfare professionals, such as social workers or children's rights workers and advocates. The conditions of labour within managerialised welfare contexts where resource constraints lead to staffing difficulties are considered in relation to the difficulties they can create for building trust between children and welfare

professionals. Listening to children is developed as one illustration of the potential complexities involved in participation practice and building trust between the child and welfare professional. The chapter then shifts to exploring aspects relating to institutional trust and mistrust before considering wider issues of trust within the broader context of societal attitudes towards children and young people. This third level of analysis takes us into the arena of children's rights and social justice. These three levels of analysis and the inter-relationship between them are explored to help us unravel some of the complexities involved in the dynamic relations of trust between children, young people, welfare professionals and the organizations of welfare.

[A] THEORISING TRUST IN RELATIONS BETWEEN CHILDREN AND WELFARE PROFESSIONALS

From the early 1950s Erikson (1963) discussed the idea of trust as one of a number of important developmental psychological stages in infancy and childhood. Erikson argued that resolving the crisis of developing basic trust in others takes place during infancy. The proposition was that the infant needed to establish faith in the environment and those who care for them and would show heightened vulnerability in infancy, potentially leading to mistrust if this developmental stage was unsuccessful. Erikson's approach became known as a lifespan developmental approach with trust as one of the basic stages of psychological development within childhood.

Erikson's work was influential and was broadly adopted and developed by others who used more sociological approaches, such as Giddens (1994), who argued that the child learns to trust itself, others and systems within early childhood. This developmental stage is viewed as important in developing resilience and the ability to adapt to change and threats which create insecurity. This early theorising can be viewed as representing a traditional and functionalist analysis of trust where the child passes through developmental stages successfully and learns to trust.

Goffman (1961) identified that trust is an unintended outcome of social interaction. In this perspective trust was regarded as an essential element in social interaction and created a sense of predictability and normality. While acknowledging that Goffman's work was important, I argue that it was most helpful in understanding how confidence is developed, which is slightly different than trust (more on this later).

I will use the approach developed by Warming (chapter 2) who argues that these earlier theories of trust run counter to the theorising within the sociology of childhood. The emphasis in the literatures within the sociology of childhood has been on the child as an active rather than passive recipient of relationships and trust is therefore viewed as relational.

For Misztal (2001), trust plays an important part in the socially learned and confirmed expectations individuals have of one another, as well as of the organizations and institutions in which they are involved. In this perspective, trust therefore becomes an essential part of citizen engagement and democratic participation. This is helpful in developing an analysis of trust at the societal level and one that includes participative

democracy and social justice. Following Misztal, I argue that trust in the organizations and institutions of welfare forms an essential part of the public's relationship to welfare agencies and organizations.

Bauman argued that scepticism and fear developed towards the idea of experts in child welfare and protection (Bauman, 1990). For Bauman the 'big society' involved community networks based on trust, reciprocity and social capital which is rooted in informal social networks We can see how the concept of trust has an important relationship within Bauman's theory of social capital. Putnam also argued that trust enables and promotes social capital and as such is empowering (see Warming, chapter 2).

For Luhmann (1988) trust is regarded as part of the way we manage risk and uncertainty. It is a component part of making choices and taking action; if we take no actions then we run no risks. This changing pattern of risk and uncertainty is part of the wider context within which social work with children and families operates. Luhmann makes an important distinction between trust and confidence with trust emerging as a more essential concept for active citizenship. For Luhmann, confidence can enhance participation but trust becomes a way of managing uncertainty, complexity and lack of confidence within modern globalised societies. Beck (1992) argued more widely that a number of features were associated with increased uncertainty including the production of a 'risk society' and that attention would inevitably turn towards damage limitation and ways to make safe, regulate, and identify 'dangerousness'.

Baraldi and Farini (chapter 8) argue that confidence is a prerequisite for the reproduction of social systems in society, such as the economy, politics and education, whereas trust assures the reproduction of the specific social relationships included in these systems. In this chapter it is the field of communication processes and the relational dynamic between the social worker, for example, and child or young person that is the main focus. I argue therefore that the public may have confidence (or mistrust) in the institutions of welfare but the child needs to be able to develop trust with the social worker.

Earlier in this book, Warming (chapter 2) helpfully suggested combining Bourdieu and Luhmann, to enable a critical analysis of trust dynamics that is attentive to power relations. In this chapter I also aim to capture the dynamics of power within relations of trust between welfare professionals and children.

[A] TRUST IN WELFARE PROFESSIONALS

In this part of the chapter the focus is on the process of trust building with individual welfare professionals within social welfare settings. Development of trust between a child and a social worker, for example, involves time, continued and ongoing relationships and a commitment to listen to and take seriously the child's views and opinions. This sounds simple enough but further examination reveals that it can be problematic in relation to children who are Looked After in residential or foster care or deemed at risk of child abuse.

Participation and children's rights literatures tell us that trust takes time to develop between a child and professional (Thomas & O'Kane, 1998). The importance of the development of trust is evident in all kinds of professional, family and other relationships but with children who are involved with welfare services it takes on an elevated level of significance. These children often have reasons to be particularly cautious about trusting adults because of their lived experiences of abuse and violations of trust. For children in public care building trust can be a long, time consuming and complex process, often involving counselling, therapeutic intervention and support. In this context where the child is likely to be fragile, feeling hurt, anger and pain the task for the social worker is a complex one demanding high levels of experience, creativity, skills and sensitivity. Child protection is complex territory for social work professionals who must attempt to build trust with both the parent(s) and child, while also being honest about their concerns. In this situation the child often has a different perspective on the problem and their situation and the social worker has to hear their views. Communication skills for professionals are of prime importance and require professional sensitivity when talking with children and young people, ascertaining their views, asking difficult questions and avoiding the child feeling pressurised. The Office of the Children's Commissioner report (Cossar et al., 2011) argues that continued professional development and training should focus on these important professional skills. 'You've got to trust [the social worker] and she's got to trust you. Otherwise there's no point' (Cossar et al.,, 2011).

The second aspect for the child in building trust with a social worker is the importance of continuity in the relationship. Children, like adults, do not wish to tell their story to several different professionals. Given the telling is likely to cause

anxiety and distress, it is important that when they disclose, the experiences are heard and listened to, and that the adult or professional does not go away. The child may experience the latter as hurtful or rejecting and may feel unworthy if the social worker is not able to continue working with them. If this happens several times it is likely that the child may withdraw and decide not to tell again. In terms of therapeutic support for a child who has experienced abuse this disruption in professional relationships is at the least unhelpful and at worst potentially damaging to their future wellbeing. This fragmentation and lack of continuity in the relationship between a child and a professional is a source of distress for children and also a contributor to poor outcomes. *Care Matters* (Department of Children, Schools and Families, 2008) reports that children in care wish to choose who they relate to and be able to build trust with that professional and rely on them communicating on their behalf. Importantly they do not wish to have to build strong relationships with a range of professionals within their care network.

The Office of the Children's Commissioner (Cossar et al., 2011) reports in relation to child protection that if a child trusts a social worker they are more likely to tell when tensions are increasing in the family. The report also argued that professionals should consider who is a trusted adult for the child and include them in protecting the child. The importance of this relationship between the child and their social worker was emphasised and the children who had a trusting relationship felt they were part of making positive changes in their lives. The children interviewed as part of this research again confirmed their wish that their social worker should not change so often.

One of the key tenets of child protection therefore is that of listening to and communicating with children and young people. This is an important aspect of building trust between the child and professional social worker. The legislation, guidance and Inquiry reports have all emphasised the importance of listening to children. The Children Act 1989 (Department of Health, 1989), The Utting Report (Department of Health, 1991), Every Child Matters (HMSO, 2003) and Working Together (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2010) all emphasise the importance of listening to and hearing what children say as well as that children may need time and more than one opportunity in order to develop sufficient trust to communicate any concerns they may have. In all these reports there was increasing recognition that principles, rules and guidance were not sufficient. Enhancing participation of children and young people in decision making processes has been one of the key outcomes of pressure from children's rights organizations as well as professional support for social justice claims by children and young people.

Ascertaining the child's wishes and feelings through his or her participation within welfare decision making processes was firmly embedded as a central part of any assessment of the child's welfare. Listening to children has been seen as a skill requiring sensitivity and skills. Alongside this was the need to balance the child's own expressions of distress or hurt with the perspectives of parents and other professionals. Schofield and Thoburn (1996) argued that a betrayal of trust within a family is likely to prejudice the children's capacity to make sense of their experiences. They were careful to point out that this is not an argument for not listening to children but more an argument for professionals developing skills and experience, as well as having the time, to listen and help children think through their situation. They argued

about the importance of a relationship with a trusted adult in maximising children's participation.

The psychosocial lens helps us view the ways that individual professionals and the organizations of welfare sometimes avoid listening to and hearing children. This is part of a complex process of minimising the emotional impact of participation work with children. Not hearing can also mean being absolved of having to do anything to change the situation (Pinkney, 2011a). The relationship between the emotional dimensions of participation work and building trust with children is important to understand. If children feel they are not listened to and heard it will impact on their future participation. If they do not participate in decision making the outcomes are likely to be less positive for them.

In my earlier research I argued that contested meanings do not seem to be adequately captured within the Guidance and Legislation where it is assumed that 'listening' to children is important but also that it is simple (Pinkney, 2005). McLeod in her study of Looked After children and their social workers found that professionals and children have very different understandings of what is involved in listening. Interestingly the young people in her research had an active view of listening involving action, practical support and self-determination. The children felt strongly that their personal feelings should remain private. The social workers by contrast generally saw listening as a more receptive and passive activity involving having a respectful attitude, offering emotional support and encouraging self-expression. Her research revealed a situation where social workers felt that they were listening to young people while those same young people said they wanted to be heard but the social workers were not listening (McLeod, 2000).

For McLeod the paradox that seemed to be built into the relationship between a social worker and a young person could only be explained by concluding that they have different understandings of the meaning of 'listening'. McLeod's findings concur with a growing body of evidence that suggests that young people are not convinced that their social workers listen to their views (Sinclair, 1998; O'Quigley, 2000; Morris & Wheatley, 1994). Jones and Myers (1997) showed how listening to children in care is easier to say than it is to do.

In another study of children experiencing their parents' separation, Smart and Neale (2000) considered that children's views were increasingly listened to and sought, although they noted that there was some filtering of information. As a result they warned against professionals being deaf to what they might consider unpalatable views. They favoured a principle of asymmetrical reciprocity where children's views are respected but where adults take responsibility for difficult decisions. An important arena of debate is that around the extent to which we can expect children to be autonomous, responsible and independent when age and development often presuppose dependence, inequality, trust, care and intimacy.

In my research one Authority asked children in its care why they should be listened to. The following were the reasons the children gave:

- '• Because we're our own people and should have some privacy and make our own decisions
- • Because without children Social Services would not exist

- Because what we say is important

- We think Social Services should listen to us because it's our lives and we know what we want

- By listening, Social Services will enable us to achieve what we want.

- Because they have to listen!

- Because we know what we want and how we feel

- Because Social Services is here for young people not the other way round

- There is no reason why not

- Because I want you to'

(Department F)

The children make a range of comments about the reasons they feel they should be listened to and similar comments were made across many different Authorities in various participation and consultation events. These comments range from assertive statements to more cautious ones about why their views and opinions should be valued. They are all clear that professionals should listen to children. This juxtaposition of the consistent messages from consultation events with children and the sense that welfare organizations are not always able or willing to listen to these comments creates a tension between the advocates of children's rights and the institutions of social welfare which was evidenced throughout my research.

For this constituency of children trust is multi-dimensional, dynamic and complex. For children either in care or who have been abused, the idea of having trust in adults, being cared for and intimate with caregivers become potentially problematic. The underlying assumption is the presence of a benevolent adult who can be trusted and

depended upon. It is worth considering here whether developing trust is always positive for a child. For some children who have experienced abuse, and particularly sexual abuse, part of the therapeutic process of work with the children may be to help them to reduce their level of disclosure about the abuse. Talking about abuse can cause problems for a child, in school for example or with their peers. An important element of the child protection and support work with the child may be to get him or her to be less trusting of adults or peers. It is salutary to reflect upon this less positive dimension within the relational dynamic of trust. If we reify trust we potentially overlook examples where it may have less positive and often unintended consequences and outcomes for children and young people. Including this more complex and sensitive aspect into any theorising, policy or practice on the dynamics of trust relationships between children and welfare professionals is essential.

Children of sufficient age and understanding often have a clear perception of what needs to be done to ensure their safety and well being. Listening to children and hearing their messages requires willingness, training and special skills, including the ability to win their trust and promote a sense of safety. Most children feel loyalty towards those who care for them, and have difficulty saying anything against them.

The social worker, on the other hand, is also likely to feel emotional attachment to a child who has talked openly to them and disclosed experiences of abuse or neglect. The professional is likely to have a high investment in future protection and safeguarding of the child. Part of their job satisfaction involves the development of relationships of trust with children and their families. Feeling that they are able to offer good quality support for children is important to the social worker's professional

identity and is often cited as one of the key motivations for entering the welfare profession.

One of the practical difficulties encountered by welfare professionals is that constraints on social work time and pressure of heavy caseloads often means the relationship with the child is fragmented or the time spent with the child is curtailed and squeezed with the demands of other competing priorities. The high numbers of children who do not have an allocated keyworker or social worker is testimony to this pressure on welfare services. The material conditions of labour where there are shortages of social workers, high reliance on agency and temporary contracted social work staff in field and residential care means that many distressed and hurt children will not have access to a professional who they can build a trusting relationship with.

By way of illustration, the following extract is taken from an interview with a Children's Rights Officer debating the difficulties around resourcing social welfare:

> 'CRO: … if your social workers are on their knees … a lot of the areas of Local Authorities I work in are 50 per cent down in social workers in each team. That means each team is 50 per cent short.
>
> SP: And are they using agency social workers to fill those gaps?
>
> CRO: No they can't. They are just 50 per cent down and can't recruit.
>
> SP: So in that environment "good practice" even if it's in your head is not achievable?

CRO: It can't be, it absolutely can't be. So you commission a children's

Rights Service and employ two part-time workers across a vast rural

Authority.'

(CRO 3, Department A8)

In the next extract another interviewee, who is employed as a Participation Officer,

discusses similar problems:

'PO: … And there are … sort of … problems unique to Social Services, like

the turnover of social workers, which is a big problem in London. So it takes a

while for the young people to build up a relationship and then they keep

changing,

… I don't think participation will deal with this but that is a key problem for

young people because they lose out.'

(PO, Department Y)

In this next extract from an interview in another Authority with a Child Care

Consultant (CCC) the consequences of constant staffing crises are explored further:

'CCC: … So with a lot of young people who are Looked After the case isn't

even allocated to a social worker. And that is a worry. Last year I think we had

about 20 per cent of Looked After cases not allocated and the Social Services

Inspectorate was threatening us with "special measures" if we didn't do

something about it. And we employed a whole lot of unqualified people just to

allocate these kids to … and then recently there's been a cash crisis, so we've

had to make them all redundant, so we've got the kids unallocated again. It's just a disaster.

… We've also had a shortage of Team Managers in parts of the County … so in (area) for example there's been nobody to supervise social workers if they've had the social workers. In (another area) there's been managers but no social workers. So it is really difficult. And it is quite difficult to carry on working and being positive in that environment.'

(CCC, Department D)

The limits of participation within scarce resource context are explored within these interview texts although this was not a research topic I was intending to gather data on. During the interviews it became clear that the material conditions of staffing and resourcing social welfare was having a direct impact on the quality of participation and social work with children and young people. The sense of vulnerability and exposure for the young people in this situation as well as for the staff was an unexpected feature of these research interviews. The idea of 'special measures' relates to the climate of failure within social welfare within the UK. One interpretation is to view this as an illustration of how placing an authority in special measures can result in short-term solutions but not longer-term improvement in continuity of support for vulnerable children.

These research participants were all deeply committed to working with children in a positive and dynamic way. The weariness and strain of the experience of continuously trying to work in this environment became evident during the interviews. All welfare and children's rights professionals I interviewed located participation work with

children in the wider contexts of resource shortfalls and low staff morale. The comments generally reflect the situation across most Local Authority Children's Services where 'good practice' is compromised by material shortfalls (Rapoport, 1960; Satyamurti, 1981; Pithouse, 1996). All the interviewees insisted that this resource and staffing crisis places incredible pressures on practitioners, professionals and Authorities. The comment was made that it is surprising that anything at all happens in this environment. Analysing these interview texts lead me to view participation as a socially constructed process accomplished by professionals and practitioners within the wider context and constraints of organizational and individual imperatives.

The evidence from my research interviews is that professionals feel they are too pressurised to be able to really involve, listen to and importantly in this context, build trust with children. These interviews were conducted with staff with a vested interest in and high level of commitment to participation and children's rights. The interview texts illustrate an alternative view of a particular sort of 'reality', which is, what happens in practice and what happens to social work and children's rights professionalism within the conditions of managerialism. Part of these narratives can therefore be viewed as the stories the profession tells itself about how difficult it is to deliver services in this environment and under these conditions. We can see here that the professional social workers sometimes lose confidence in their own organizations of welfare.

Another interpretation of these interview texts is to view this as the discourse of liberal professionalism under pressure. Professional discourse may be displaced,

subordinated and appropriated but material, ethical and emotional strain or discomforts are still voiced. The interviewees are talking about the emotional 'strains' of being professionals in public welfare services. Children's Rights Officers and similarly positioned staff are possibly uniquely situated as both radicalised and uncomfortably marginalised professionals within social and welfare work with children in the UK. The interview texts in my research demonstrate the tension between professionalism and managerialism within child welfare services.

Managerialism legitimises and extends the right to manage and involves competing discourses of how to manage (Clarke & Newman, 1997; Clarke et al., 2000). The rise of new public management within public sector and welfare organizations since the late 1980s has been well documented (Clarke et al., 2007; Newman, 1998; Pinkney, 1998; Froggett, 2002). Managerialism was developed under Conservative regimes during the 1980s and continued to develop with New Labour administrations since 1997 as well as within the current UK coalition government since 2010. It seems almost certain that there will be further continuity of the managerialist agenda because it is firmly embedded in Labour, Conservative and Liberal Democratic policies. In my research I was interested in the extent to which the discourse of managerialism had permeated social care contexts.

The reason this is relevant here is that the conditions of increased managerialism and administration in social welfare mean that time is a scarce commodity for welfare professionals charged with advocating, representing and assessing 'the best interests' of children and young people. Within my research, participation is being viewed as a socially constructed and performative process accomplished by professionals and

practitioners within the wider context and constraints within their organizations. As I argued earlier, professionals often feel they are too pressurised to be able to really involve, listen to, take seriously and importantly in this context, build trust with children. The process of participation and building trust takes time, which as we have seen is an increasingly scarce commodity in social welfare settings. The interviews illustrate what happens to children's participation and trust within the conditions of managerialism. As I argued earlier, these narratives can be viewed as the stories the profession tells about the difficulty of delivering services in this pressurised environment:

> 'Overall morale is very low, staffing is very short, everybody is under terrible pressure, workload is excessive and inevitably standards of practice drop because people just do the absolute minimum. And the important bits which are about the direct one to one relationship with the individual child are the bits that get lost when you've got too many cases.'
> (Interview with a Consultation Policy Officer, Children's Services, Department D)

Managerialism carries within it the promise that better management will improve services. This magic of management can be viewed in part as a response to the discourse of failure that developed after three decades of inquiries into child abuse where welfare services and professionals were viewed as failing to protect children. In the research interviews there was evidence of the discourses of displaced, subordinated and appropriated professionalism. Professionals are able to sometimes resist subject positions created by powerful discourses, such as managerialism. This

resistance usefully highlights attempts to disrupt power relations and the undermining of colonizing discourses (Marston, 2004). I argued elsewhere that the formal social policy texts in my research show an increased focus on management, efficiency, customers, best value, accountability and performance and how managerialism forces the procedural and customer version of rights. The question remains whether this particular version of rights within the customer discourse enhances children's rights and participation (Pinkney, 2011b).

Social workers often talk about the increased burden of administration and complex recording systems that prevent them from spending time with children. As I argue above, time is an essential component in the trust building process between child and welfare professional. While it is clear that good administration and recording is an essential element of child protection, spending time with a child has to be the most important aspect of the social worker's task. Freeing social worker time to develop continuity and relationships of trust with children must be given higher priority if these children are to be protected in future.

Up to now the focus of this chapter has been on the importance of relationships of trust between children, young people and individual welfare professionals. Within the next section the focus is shifted to trust in the institutions and organizations of child welfare.

[A] TRUST IN THE INSTITUTIONS OF WELFARE

Beck (1992) argues that the plausibility of experts was only superficially undermined by child deaths and 'accidents' between 1914-70 but that this period was characterised by institutional repression of 'troublesome information' which served to bolster public confidence and trust in child welfare services. After the 1970s the effect of inquiry reports into child deaths led to ambivalence about child welfare services (Pinkney, 1998). The problem of identifying and managing 'risk' led to the proliferation of risk assessment and risk management within social welfare contexts. The role of professionals within welfare organizations therefore became to identify and manage risk and dangerousness. Part of the difficulty with this is that welfare agencies and professionals are supposed to manage risk and dangerousness within an environment where hardly anyone has faith or trust in them being able to do this.

Howe (1992) argued that as audit and inspection became a routine feature of welfare organizations and new systems of regulation were continuously introduced and implemented, the focus became that of making 'defensible decisions' rather than the 'right decisions'. Douglas (1992) argued that refined blaming systems were part of the 'risk society' where nothing goes wrong without it being attributed to someone and him or her being held to account. The Inquiry Reports into child abuse during the 1970s and 1980s are testimony to the need to apportion blame to an individual, institution or organization. Tunstill argued that consequently the discourse of risk dominated the development of childcare policies during the 1980s and 1990s (Tunstill, 1999). From the 1990s UK welfare organizations saw a flourishing of complaints procedures, disciplinary mechanisms and litigation, which were all consequences of the attempt to minimise risk.

The Cleveland child sexual abuse crisis in the UK in 1987 is an example where there was a breach of trust in the institutions of welfare in relation to child sexual abuse (HMSO, 1988). Parents voiced fears at bringing their children to hospital or doctors for routine medical checks. Ferguson (2004) argues that this illustrates well how trust, or lack of it, in child welfare systems can be influenced and shaped by experiences at the access points to welfare services. For Ferguson one of the outcomes from Cleveland was a structural transformation in trust relations which overturned earlier accommodation and suppression of child sexual abuse to a situation where child sexual abuse could be acknowledged.

Giddens (1994) argued that the development of active trust in child welfare services is one of the biggest challenges for the institutions of welfare. He went on to argue that this building of active trust is essential if the public, neighbours and families are to disclose concerns about abused children.

We can see therefore that there is an essential problem of lack of confidence between children, families and the public with child welfare institutions. Child protection relies on public and community confidence in reporting cases of suspected child abuse or neglect. Negative imagery of the institutions of welfare and of the legal system, for example, can mitigate against the development of confidence. On the other hand, stories of victims finding support and acknowledgement of abuse can positively influence others to disclose and enhance confidence.

Social recognition and identity is closely related to the process of building trust. Not being regarded as trustworthy can generate insecurity in an individual's social

relationships but also in relationships with organizations and in this context with welfare professionals and the institutions of welfare. Being viewed with mistrust is a common complaint of young people in the UK when the media has often been accused of having an unbalanced focus on negative aspects of youth culture. Looked After young people in residential or foster care have experienced particular problems with being trusted:

> 'Some people go to foster care and they get bullied – like for having hearing aids. The thing I don't get is the independence – I asked my foster carer once if I could go for a walk but she shouted at me and was really nasty "No you can stay here where I can see you".'
>
> (Foster child, Department A8)

> 'I don't like to be classed as a special person. I want to go to "normal" playscheme activity.'
>
> (Foster child, Department G)

These comments were made during consultation events with children who position themselves as 'disabled'. They relate to general concerns about bullying but add another specific dimension in relation to the specific vulnerability and difficulties with trust for children with disabilities. The second comment relates both to the difficulty of constructing normalised narratives of self as well as to the dilemma about the difficulty in referring to children with specific needs whilst avoiding pathologising those children. Both extracts involve children's perceptions that they are not trusted. The examples provide illustrations of the ways that Looked After children have

difficulty maintaining a normalised narrative of self as they are constantly reminded of their subject position and identity as Looked After children.

> 'CRO: Yes I mean that came across from the young people I interviewed. One of them said something like … she was in a children's home in a rather posh residential area...and there was a lot of hostility to it … and she said "people round here look at us as if we've got televisions on our heads or something, what do they think we are, we're just a bunch of kids who haven't got anywhere else to live? And they think you must be a murderer or a rapist or something if you're in care. When you say you're in care people say 'well what did you get done for?'""
>
> (Children's Rights Officer 1, Department D)

In this extract the Children's Rights Officer is talking about young people challenging the dominant representations of Looked After children. The underlying assumption is that being in care means wrongdoing on the part of the child rather than that they are more likely to be in care as a result of having wrong done to them or through family breakdown. The strong sense of not being trusted in the neighbourhood where they reside comes through.

The following extract is about problems of trust in the process of participation and institutions of child welfare and protection. The CRO is talking about comments from children and young people about their formal and informal participation in decision-making processes:

'SP: … so where do those informal comments to you go?

CRO: well at the moment it goes from us to our management but it doesn't go into a strategic plan. There is no system in place that feeds those day-to-day comments into a strategic plan.

SP: that's really interesting in relation to the process of policy making and how the informal processes feed into the formal policy documents and plans. Do the comments you receive from young people feed into any formal processes and policy?

CRO: Not really no. My experience … I'm not trying to be really negative here … but my experience is that young people can be helped on an individual basis sometimes depending on the issues they raise. But there is nowhere that is gathering this information and correlating it and asking has this arisen before? Is it something we can integrate into our policy and practice? And that is not just comments to me I'm also thinking of the complaints procedure and reviews. Where does information from reviews go? It goes in a box and doesn't get looked at and evaluated. It's the same with complaints and recommendations, transitions reviews for disabled children … where do they go to?

SP: … so nobody is taking the strategic overview and evaluating the information which is there? It isn't making a difference to what happens?

CRO: No it's not. The only time it makes a difference is if there's an inspection where they pick up things and ask organizations like ourselves or ask young people directly.'

(Children's Rights Officer 3, Department A8)

This extract illustrates some of the difficulties and tensions about trust within the processes of participation and consultation from the perspective of children's rights professionals. We feel the Children's Rights Officer's sense of dismay and frustration of not being able to make any difference after hearing what young people say at participation and consultations events. This provides a comment about children's rights work being a difficult arena to work in because of the slow pace of change and limited evidence of the impact and outcomes of children's participation beyond individual children who may benefit from their participation. It has been argued that this may be a common experience of consultation and service user participation in different policy and service delivery contexts (Danso et al., 2003; Carr, 2004).

[A] SOCIETAL MISTRUST OF CHILDREN

Kelly (2005) argues that institutional mistrust of youth is a common feature of developed societies. He cites the example of CCTV cameras being installed in school toilets to deal with problems of drug abuse and bullying in Australian schools. Following the work of Foucault (1977, 1983) and in particular his work on surveillance, disciplinary power and governmentality, Kelly explores issues of institutionalised mistrust, surveillance and regulation of contemporary populations of young people. Adult and professional anxieties about young people and risk are not new but they have translated into policies and practices relating to young people. Youth has historically occupied the 'wild zones' and been viewed as 'ungovernable', 'dangerous' and lacking in self regulation. These views of youth have fundamentally been shaped by race, class and gender and situated in relation to normative ideas

about youth (Bessant & Watts, 1998). This means the consequences of this mistrust of youth is experienced differentially by different groups of young people. We can argue therefore that this more generalised sense of mistrust in young people is evident in a range of adult and professional interventions in their lives on the basis of professional and expert concerns about their welfare. Constructing young people as (un)governable subjects, Rose (1999) illustrates the tendency towards illiberal and authoritarian governmentalities that continue to dominate discourses of youth in Western societies.

Trust then informs many of the discourses associated with children and young people generally but in particular in the context here of those who live away from home with foster carers or in residential care. Being 'in care' brings with it certain expectations of being supported, cared for, nurtured and having positive relationships with those who do the caring. Sometimes this relationship is formalised within a contract or agreement between parents, children and young people and relevant professionals. The institutions of welfare take seriously this aspect of trust between families, children, professionals and their organizations. The trust that is placed within welfare professionals and institutions is subjected to great scrutiny and when things go wrong it results in critical inquiry reports and negative media attention being directed at the services and professionals that care for children and young people. Examining the rationales and normative justifications carried within institutional policies and practices is an important part of critical social policy projects.

Bessant et al. (2005) argue that the cultural, historical and socio-economic conditions that shape the day-to-day work with children needs to be understood and that it is at the point of routine institutional governance that the grim realities of the policies and

practices of trust and mistrust are played out. For Bessant et al., too much focus has been directed at the individuals and institutions themselves and not enough at the prevailing attitudes, discursive practices, modalities of power and government that underpin these institutions. This is a powerful argument about the way institutional harm and abuse of trust has to be understood within the wider context of societal attitudes towards children and young people.

[A] CONCLUSION

This chapter has considered the relations of trust between children and young people, welfare professionals and the institutions of welfare. In doing this it has considered the individual relationships as well as the resource context they operate within the UK. The organizations and institutions of welfare were examined in relation to structural aspects of the possibilities for trusting relations between children and welfare professionals. Lastly, consideration was given to wider societal attitudes towards children and youth and the way this frames and shapes these relations of trust. I introduced extracts from my earlier research as well as other research findings to illustrate the narrative of trust within welfare organizations and professionals. The example of listening to children seems a basic presumption of building trusting relations but was shown to be fraught with difficulties and complexity within both a practice and policy environment.

I argue that the dynamic interaction between the process of participation of individual children and young people in everyday governance as well as within institutions of

welfare and broader societal attitudes to children is critical. The focus on active 'voice' for children and young people and processes of participation and consultation within social welfare is welcome. Violations of trust when they occur often go beyond the failure of individual professionals to follow policy and practice guidance to the wider social, cultural and economic status of child and youth. The challenge is for individual professionals as well as the institutions of child welfare to recognise the significance of the process and relations of trust within this often fraught and contested arena of social welfare work with children. The wider implications of societal attitudes towards children and youth bring us into the broader arena of human rights and social justice.

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Notes

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[1] Within the UK the term Looked After has been used to describe children and young people who are

living either in foster or residential care.