

EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT
COMMITTEE

Fifth Report

DISAFFECTED CHILDREN

Volume I

Report and Proceedings of the Committee

*Ordered by The House of Commons to be printed
1 April 1998*

LONDON: THE STATIONERY OFFICE

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The Education and Employment Committee is appointed under Standing Order No 152 to examine the expenditure, administration and policy of the Department for Education and Employment and associated public bodies.

The Committee consists of 17 Members. It has a quorum of five. Unless the House otherwise orders, all members nominated to the Committee continue to be members of it for the remainder of the Parliament.

The Committee has power:

- (a) to send for persons, papers and records, to sit notwithstanding any adjournment of the House, to adjourn from place to place, and to report from time to time;
- (b) to appoint specialist advisers either to supply information which is not readily available or to elucidate matters of complexity within the Committee's order of reference;
- (c) to communicate to any other committee appointed under the same Standing Order, to the Committee of Public Accounts and to the Deregulation Committee its evidence and any other documents relating to matters of common interest;
- (d) to meet concurrently with any other committee appointed under the same Standing Order for the purposes of deliberating, taking evidence, or considering draft reports.

The Committee has power to appoint two sub-committees and to report from time to time the minutes of evidence taken before them and their minutes of proceedings. The sub-committees have power to send for persons, papers and records, to sit notwithstanding any adjournment of the House, to adjourn from place to place, to report from time to time their minutes of proceedings and to meet concurrently with any committee appointed under the same Standing Order or any sub-committee thereof for the purposes of deliberating or taking evidence. Each sub-committee has a quorum of three.

The membership of the Committee since its nomination on 14 July 1997 has been as follows:

Ms Candy Atherton
Charlotte Atkins
Mr Joe Benton
Mr Graham Brady
Yvette Cooper
Mr Cynog Dafis
(*discharged 8.12.97*)
Valerie Davey
Caroline Flint
Rt Hon Derek Foster

Mr Don Foster
Mr John Healey
Ms Margaret Hodge
Mr Paul Keetch
(*added 8.12.97*)
Mrs Eleanor Laing
Judy Mallaber
Mrs Theresa May
Mr Nick St. Aubyn
Mr Gerry Steinberg

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FIFTH REPORT

The Education and Employment Committee has agreed to the following Report:—

DISAFFECTED CHILDREN

A. INTRODUCTION

1. Disaffection with education among teenagers is a major public policy challenge. Young people need personal resilience, family support and professional backing in order to maintain a momentum through the later stages of schooling and subsequent post-16 academic and vocational routes. Although most young people have a positive experience of school and college, a small but significant proportion become disengaged from education and training, for a variety of reasons. The consequences of disaffection include poor school attendance or non-attendance, educational under-achievement, non-participation in and drop-out from training, long-term unemployment, and an increased chance of becoming involved with crime and drug misuse, and of teenage parenthood.

2. Not only does disengagement from education, training and work affect those young people as individuals, there is a strong impact on society as a whole. Disaffection diminishes the contribution individuals make to the well-being of the community. As the Secretary of State for Education and Employment told us, “there is a clear cost that is attached to the behavioural patterns of young people as adults who have been disaffected with education”.¹ Disaffection leads to increased public spending by many government departments—the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE), the Department of Social Security (DSS) and the Home Office.² There are also the costs of seeking to re-engage, and to make provision for, these young people, which are higher than those for mainstream education and training.

3. While it is impossible to calculate a precise figure for the indirect costs of disaffection to the public purse, some estimates may give an idea of their scale:

- There are strong links between low attainment, non-attendance and exclusion from school and the onset of offending; truancy from school is strongly linked with crime. 30 per cent of daytime burglaries are committed by 10–16 year olds.³ Offences by disaffected young people contribute to the £1 billion spent each year on dealing with offending by young people.⁴
- Costs to the police arise with 25 per cent of pupils who have been excluded from school.
- 20 per cent of permanently excluded pupils (the great majority of secondary school age) are also on social services registers, with the additional cost to the public purse that this entails.⁵

Comparatively large sums are also spent on provision for such young people. For instance:

- The cost of provision for pupils excluded from school is roughly double the cost of a mainstream school place.⁶
- A voluntary organisation working with disaffected children may spend £7,500 per placement each year.⁷

¹Q. 207.

²See Appendix 9, paragraph 2.5.

³Q. 217 (Secretary of State).

⁴*Young people and crime*, Graham and Bowling, 1995, p. 39; Appendix 20, paragraphs 8–11; Appendix 13 (“a hard core of truants...are juvenile offenders committing a disproportionate amount of crime”); Audit Commission, *Misspent Youth*, paragraph 5.

⁵Dr Carl Parsons, Appendix 29.

⁶Appendix 29.

⁷Cities in Schools (re-named “Include” on 20.3.98, although we use the original name throughout our Report), Q. 64.

- The Department of Health estimates that the average gross social services expenditure on each child looked after in a local authority care home is about £1,000 per week,⁸ in addition to education costs, yet such children's educational achievement is dramatically lower than the average.

4. Disaffection has a substantial price tag and questions are often asked about the value of money spent in this area. It is for these reasons we felt it appropriate to undertake a short inquiry on the issue.

Scope of the inquiry

5. We decided to focus our inquiry on the 14 to 19 age group, as this is the age at which many of the serious problems manifest themselves (e.g. in terms of attendance at school, exclusions from school and non-participation in post-16 education, training or employment). Fourteen is also the age at which young people choose their options for GCSE and begin Key Stage 4 of the National Curriculum. We recognise that in most cases the seeds of disaffection are planted earlier and we do not, by concentrating on teenagers, want to downgrade the importance of early influences on behaviour and attitudes to school.⁹ We have taken a conscious decision not to try and examine in depth all the causes of disaffection, but instead to look at policies for tackling the disaffection which is already present.

6. We took evidence from several voluntary agencies which work with this group of young people; from representatives of educational psychologists and education welfare officers (two local authority services whose work is highly relevant); from Dr Michael Young and Mr Ken Spours, of the London University Institute of Education; and from Mr Peter Mitchell, formerly Chief Education Officer at the London Borough of Camden. We also held a very useful joint meeting with colleagues on the Health Committee, at which we questioned the Secretary of State for Education and Employment on the education of children looked after by local authorities. In addition, we held an informal meeting with participants in projects run by a voluntary organisation, The Weston Spirit. A large number of organisations and individuals also submitted written evidence to the inquiry. All the oral evidence, and the majority of the written evidence, is published in the companion volume to this report.¹⁰ We are grateful to all those who helped us during our inquiry, and particularly to our Specialist Adviser, Dr Howard Williamson.

Structure of the Report

7. We first attempt to define the nature of, and map the extent of, disaffection among young people and briefly describe some of its causes. The main body of the report considers various approaches to tackling disaffection by the various agencies involved, and ways in which they could be made more effective.

B. WHO ARE THE DISAFFECTED?

8. The young people who form the subject of this report were usefully described by one witness as "children and young people who are either impeded in gaining access to, or are unable to maintain themselves within, mainstream education and training".¹¹ They include children who attend school on an irregular basis or not at all, or who have been excluded (for a fixed term or permanently). The group also includes those who attend school but have "switched off" from their educational experience—"in school but outside learning".¹² Among the older age group they include young people who have left school but are not in education, training or employment.

⁸Department of Health Annual Report, 1997, table 5.19. The exact figure for 1994–95 is £1,059; for 1995–96, £1,100. It is calculated by the Department of Health from local authorities' personal social services returns. These give a figure for the gross current expenditure on each maintained residential home in the authority: the Department adds together these figures to produce a total for England, then divides this by the number of children in residential homes to produce the average figure per child per week. (Gross expenditure is defined as employee costs, running expenses and costs of joint arrangements; less income from joint arrangements and other income.)

⁹See e.g. evidence from the Children's Society, Appendix 17, paragraph 2.5.

¹⁰HC(97–98)498-II.

¹¹Cities in Schools, Appendix 22, paragraph 3.1.

¹²The Children's Society, Appendix 17, paragraph 2.2.

9. In considering the numbers of young people involved, there are problems with definitions and with data. Clearly, any assessment of the size of the problem depends on how it is defined. There are also arguments over the quality of the data available about various categories of children and young people (e.g. as regards non-attendance at school).

Terminology

10. First, we must recognise the difficulties over terminology.¹³ We have deliberately chosen to discuss ‘disaffected’ young people, not because we wish to imply that their attitude towards the education system is ‘their fault’, but because it is a valid description of their current state. For whatever reason (and a variety of factors are involved, as we shall see later) they have become switched off from, or disaffected with, the education and training opportunities available to them.

The nature of disaffection

11. In many ways, disaffected young people are no different from others of the same age: they want to establish themselves, obtain a job, income, status and recognition. It is also clear from all the evidence we received that disaffected young people are not an homogenous group displaying the same characteristics—with the obvious corollary that a range of approaches is needed in tackling their problems. It may be useful, however, to distinguish a range of characteristics, some of which can be quantified objectively, while others are more subjective. Characteristics of the group include:

- a. they are predominantly male (although this is not the case with truancy; see paragraph 14 below);
- b. they are drawn disproportionately from African-Caribbean backgrounds;¹⁴
- c. children looked after by local authorities are disproportionately represented;¹⁵
- d. they include a high proportion of young offenders;¹⁶
- e. many are likely to come from difficult and disrupted family backgrounds;
- f. they frequently lack self-confidence and self-esteem;
- g. they tend to have few ‘basic skills’;
- h. many have emotional and behavioural difficulties;
- i. there is a high prevalence of risk-taking behaviour, for instance in relation to smoking, substance abuse and early sexual activity (often leading to unplanned pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases).¹⁷

The extent of disaffection

12. Our inquiry established that it is almost impossible to paint an exact picture of the scale of disaffection, not just because of the complex definitional problem discussed above but also because of poor (and incompatible) records systems. Official data about this group fall into two areas: 14 to 16 year olds (i.e. school age) and 16–19 year olds. Data for the first group tend to be more accurate, as the young people concerned are still in the compulsory education age group and it is thus easier to track them. But even the ‘hard’ evidence is open to different interpretations—for instance, in the case of figures for school attendance and exclusions which we discuss below. In the following paragraphs, we have, where necessary, extrapolated from

¹³See e.g. evidence from the Children’s Society, Appendix 17, paragraph 2.1; NIACE, Appendix 10, paragraph 2.1.

¹⁴See e.g. Appendix 18.

¹⁵See e.g. Appendix 28, Section 9.

¹⁶Audit Commission, *Misspent Youth*, p. 67; NACRO written evidence, Appendix 20, paragraphs 7–12.

¹⁷Evidence from Dr Ann Howard, Faculty of Community Health, Royal Institute of Public Health and Hygiene [not printed].

the findings of specific surveys and research projects in order to present estimates of the national picture.

14 TO 16 YEAR OLDS

13. We have noted that the disaffected in this age group include children who are out of school physically (non-attending or excluded) and those who are there, but failing to make the expected educational progress.¹⁸ It is obviously not possible to define what percentage of the 14–16 age group falls into the latter category, but it seems reasonable to suppose they make up a significant proportion of the 45,000 16 year olds who leave school each year with no qualifications at all.¹⁹ Table 1 below gives a summary picture of disaffection in this age group.

Table 1: Estimates of disaffection in Years 10 and 11 (DfEE figures, England only)²⁰

Category	Estimated numbers	% of cohort
Persistent non-attendance in Year 10 (1994–95) ²¹	15,000	2.6
Persistent non-attendance in Year 11 (1994–95)	22,500	4
Permanently excluded (1995–96):		
14 year olds	3,499	0.64
15 year olds	2,553	0.47
16 year olds	201	0.12
No GCSEs obtained at 16 (1995–96)	45,000	8

14. Statistics on attendance and exclusions are maintained by the DfEE. Absence can either be authorised or unauthorised; in this context we are only concerned with unauthorised absence. The overall rate of unauthorised absence in secondary schools has been constant in recent years at about one per cent of pupils. Among the older pupils, the figure is higher: in 1994–95, about two per cent of Year 11 pupils engaged in truancy for weeks at a time and a further two per cent for several days at a time. The 1994–95 statistics showed that girls truanted slightly more than boys; however, another survey in 1992 showed the opposite, so any strong gender link with truancy should probably be discounted. What is very clear, however, are the correlations between family background and truancy, and between truancy and low educational achievement. Young people who live at home with both parents, and whose parents are in employment, are less likely to be persistent truants than those living with only one or neither parent, or whose parents are not in employment. As far as outcomes are concerned, the DfEE states that persistent truants “obtained significantly poorer exam results at Year 11”, and form 19 per cent of the 16 year olds who do not participate in education or training.

15. It should be noted that the official figures for absence are questioned by some.²² Education welfare officers (EWOs), who are responsible for ensuring attendance at school, told us that the

¹⁸See NIACE, Appendix 10, paragraph 2.2.

¹⁹Sir Ron Dearing, in his report on 16–19 qualifications, concluded that 14% of 16 year olds in 1994 either were not entered for GCSE or gained no passes at A–G. (Review of qualifications for 16–19 year olds, March 1996, paragraph 12.4.) Rathbone CI told us that 50,000 pupils were entered for no examinations at 16 in 1996 (Appendix 9, paragraph 2.3).

²⁰DfEE evidence, Appendix 30; DfEE statistical press notice, 30.10.97, *Permanent exclusions from school in England 1995–96; Excellence in Schools*, Cm 3681, p. 79.

²¹The DfEE estimates levels of *persistent* non-attendance from the findings of the Youth Cohort Survey, which provides information on young people's experience of non-attendance in Year 11 only. However, results from an earlier survey which, because it used a different definition of persistent truancy and different methods, cannot be compared directly with the YCS, shows that the rate for Year 10 may be of the order of two-thirds of that of Year 11. The figures in the table for Year 10 are extrapolated on this basis.

²²E.g. Hampshire County Council stated that the accuracy of data on absence was “very doubtful” (Appendix 21).

statistical data relating to attendance was “fundamentally suspect”, not least because the figures took no account of parentally-condoned absence. In some cases, a school will decide to authorise a child’s absence, and is thus “colluding with the parents condoning the absence”. “Much condoned and colluded unjustified absence is being legitimised by schools ... [which] disguises the real extent of the problem”.²³ EWOs also referred to the practice of children being taken off roll “unofficially”, without actually being formally excluded—a headteacher may recommend to a parent that they withdraw their child from the school to be enrolled at another school, but the parent then finds that no other school wants to take the child.²⁴ Such practices mean, of course, that the actual totals of children who do not attend school will be higher than the official statistics suggest.

16. Exclusions from school are either for a fixed term, or permanent.²⁵ Permanent exclusions have been increasing for some years. According to the latest DfEE figures available, in 1995–96 there were 12,500 permanent exclusions, an increase of 13 per cent on the previous year’s total of 11,100. (The overall permanent exclusion rate in England in 1995–96 was 0.19 per cent). There were 10,300 permanent exclusions from secondary schools in 1995–96, a rise of 12 per cent from the previous year (9,200).²⁶ Dr Carl Parsons, whose research on this subject is widely known, puts the figure slightly higher, estimating that in 1995–96 11,159 secondary pupils were permanently excluded—about one in 240 secondary pupils. Like the DfEE, he draws attention to the continuing increase in permanent exclusions: he calculates that, between 1990–91 and 1995–96, the total number rose nearly fivefold.²⁷ Boys are four times more likely than girls to be permanently excluded; African-Caribbean boys are disproportionately subject to exclusion; exclusion rates are higher among less able pupils; and particularly high among children looked after by local authorities. Children with statements of special educational needs are seven times more likely to be permanently excluded than those without.²⁸

16 TO 19 YEAR OLDS

17. One core measurement of disaffection in the 16–19 age group can be found in estimates of non-participation in education, training and employment. The DfEE has compiled figures based on various sources, such as the Labour Force Survey and information from the further education sector and TECs.²⁹ However, the official figures are not universally accepted. For instance, it is argued that many 16 and 17 year olds were rendered invisible in the official statistics by changes to the benefits regime in 1988.³⁰ In 1993, researchers attempted to establish a valid estimate of the numbers of 16- and 17- year olds in the South Glamorgan TEC/LEA area who were not in education, training or employment (in ‘Status Zero’, to use the shorthand adopted by the researchers). This concluded that between 16 and 23 per cent of this age cohort were at any one time in ‘Status Zero’.³¹ The precise numerical estimates have been queried, but subsequent studies have not rebutted the general thrust of the conclusion that a significant proportion of school leavers are outside education, training and employment. The Labour Force Survey shows that in the last quarter of 1997, there were an average of 170,000 unemployed 16 and 17 year olds in Great Britain:³² the charity Younited estimates that only about 11 per cent

²³ Appendix 32, Section (i); Q. 131.

²⁴ Q. 143.

²⁵ Schools are not legally required to report exclusions of less than five days to their LEA. As a result, there is less information available about fixed-terms exclusions than about permanent exclusions. However, a recent report by the Children’s Society estimates that the total number of fixed-term exclusions in England and Wales in 1995–96 was 135,000. (*No lessons learnt: a survey of school exclusions*, Roger Smith, The Children’s Society, March 1998.)

²⁶ DfEE Statistical Press Notice, 30.10.97, *Permanent exclusions from school in England 1995/96*.

²⁷ Canterbury Christ Church College, *Final Report on follow-up survey of permanent exclusions from schools in England—1995–96*.

²⁸ OFSTED, *Exclusions from secondary schools 1995/96*, November 1996, paragraph 25; DfEE Statistical Press Notice, 30.10.97, *Permanent exclusions from schools in England 1995/96*.

²⁹ Full details of sources are in DfEE evidence, Appendix 30, Chart 3.

³⁰ The Prince’s Trust (Appendix 13).

³¹ ‘Status Zero: a study of jobless school-leavers in South Wales’. Gareth Rees, Howard Williamson and David Istance, *Research Papers in Education* 11(2) 1996, pp. 219–235. Later research in Mid-Glamorgan concluded that 16–20 per cent of 16 and 17 year olds in that area were outside education, training and employment (Appendix 26).

³² Labour Market Trends, February 1998, Table 7.3 (not seasonally adjusted).

of these received any form of state benefit.³³ Some figures from these different sources are given in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Estimates of non-participation among 16-18 year olds

Category	Estimated numbers	Total cohort (mid-1996)	% of cohort
Not in education, employment or training all 16–18 year olds, England only, end-1996; DfEE figures ³⁴	162,000	1.76 million	9
Of which:			
ILO unemployed ³⁵	91,000		5
Economically inactive	71,000		4
Labour Force Survey unemployed 16 and 17 year olds (last quarter 1997, Great Britain)	170,000	1.4 million	12
Status Zero estimate of 16 and 17 year olds not in education, training or employment (1993) (extrapolated for all England)	190,000	1.2 million	16

We do not intend to imply that these figures are precisely accurate; we set them out here in order to give an idea of the range of estimates made and the overall magnitude of the problem. The figures also show how much estimates vary. Youthaid notes that there is “a sizable group of young people who do not appear in statistics and about whom little is generally known”.³⁶ The Prince’s Trust argues that “there is not currently any central data collection point that captures fully the disaffected in this age group”. Witnesses also made the important point that young people move in and out of disaffection, which also makes it difficult to produce an accurate estimate.³⁷

18. However it is defined, non-participation post-16 is clearly associated with certain characteristics. The DfEE notes that:

- those not in education, training or work are on average the least qualified group;
- about a third of 16 year olds not in education, training or work were previously persistent truants from school;
- non-participation in education, training or work can be persistent: estimates from the Youth Cohort Survey suggest that around half of the 1990-91 school leavers who were not in education, training or employment at 16 were in the same position at the age of 17 and over a third were still not participating at the age of 18.³⁸

19. We have noted the wide range of estimates of this group of young people. If the estimates of persistent non-attendance at Key Stage 4 are taken together with the estimates for non-participation between 16 and 19 years old, we can conclude that at any one time

³³ Appendix 26. See also DfEE, Appendix 30, Annex C, for further information about the youth unemployment figures.

³⁴ Appendix 30, Annex B, Table 2 and paragraph 9.

³⁵ Defined as “available to start work in the next two weeks and has either looked for work in the last four weeks or is waiting to start a job already obtained”.

³⁶ Appendix 26.

³⁷ See The Prince’s Trust, Appendix 13, Youthaid, Appendix 26, NIACE, Appendix 10 and the Education Network, Appendix 18. It is also the case, of course, that some of those not in education, training or employment will be involved in the informal economy.

³⁸ Appendix 30, Annex B, paragraph 14, Table 8, paragraphs 25–26.

there are at least 100,000 14–19 year olds not in education, training or employment or, taking a higher estimate, as many as 220,000 non-participants. Whatever estimate is adopted, it is obvious that disaffected young people form a significant cohort within the 14–19 age group, and re-integrating them into the mainstream of education, training and work must form an integral part of the Government's educational and social policy. The problem is that no figures are kept that can be quoted with rigour. More accurate information is vital if we are to grasp the true nature and extent of the problem. We recommend that the Government carries out an audit of the scale, nature and causes of disaffection amongst young people in order to inform policy in this area.

C. CAUSES OF DISAFFECTION

General background

20. We have not attempted a full-scale examination of the many and varied roots of disaffection among teenagers. However, it is appropriate briefly to summarise some of the relevant points made in evidence. An understanding of the causes of disaffection is needed to identify effective solutions. The point was repeatedly made in evidence to the inquiry that “there will not be one answer for all disaffected young people”,³⁹ because of the complexity of the factors underlying disaffection. These can be broadly divided into *underlying* causes and *precipitating* causes.

Underlying causes

21. Various submissions noted the impact of cultures of unemployment leading to the absence of any work ethic. Social circumstances can mean that educational achievement is regarded as an irrelevance.⁴⁰ Young people's family backgrounds were cited as being closely associated with disaffection. Obviously family poverty and inter-generational unemployment play a part. Instability in relationships at home, and inconsistent home discipline are also factors. In some cases families may condone the children's disaffection.⁴¹ Some evidence also noted the impact of physical and emotional abuse on children's later attitude to learning.⁴² Children and young people are also profoundly influenced by their peer group.⁴³ The National Union of Teachers (NUT) noted that “older, unemployed or excluded siblings or friends from other schools often encourage younger children to adopt a hostile attitude to school”.⁴⁴

22. An important underlying factor is earlier learning difficulties. This can cover both unrecognised and unassessed learning disabilities, such as dyslexia and defects in vision or speech,⁴⁵ but also an overall failure to reach an adequate level of achievement in the primary phase. One LEA told us that “there is no doubt that the key is to be found ... in the early attainment of basic skills of literacy and numeracy, without which any secondary curriculum is unlikely to be truly available”.⁴⁶ Some evidence also noted that chronic medical conditions and psychiatric problems were also underlying factors in disaffection—for instance, the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health states that children and young people may become disaffected as a result of chronic debility.⁴⁷

³⁹Youthaid, Appendix 26.

⁴⁰British Psychological Society (not printed).

⁴¹Association of Educational Psychologists, Appendix 31, paragraph 2; NUT, Appendix 36, paragraph 13.

⁴²Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, Appendix 11.

⁴³See e.g. evidence from the National Youth Agency, Q. 117 and Appendix 4, paragraph 14.

⁴⁴NUT, Appendix 36, paragraph 13.

⁴⁵See e.g. evidence from the Institute of Careers Guidance, Appendix 24, Section 1. This point was underscored in our meeting with young people from the Weston Spirit. The British Dyslexia Association, in its response to the Green Paper *Excellence for all children*, also argued that “many children presenting with behaviour problems in school are undiagnosed dyslexics”, and that this can lead to various forms of disaffection with school (paragraphs 21.1–21.4).

⁴⁶Hampshire County Council, Appendix 21.

⁴⁷Appendix 11. The College argues that ME or chronic fatigue syndrome is the commonest reason for long-term failure to attend school.

Precipitating causes

23. Much of the evidence we received highlighted the role of the school in precipitating disaffection. The culture of the school is a key influence: children can develop the perception that teachers take no interest in them, and they can come into conflict with teachers.⁴⁸ Racism is a problem in some schools, exemplified by the disproportionate number of African-Caribbean pupils who are excluded. Bullying by other pupils is also an obvious cause of disaffection with the school environment. The school curriculum was seen by many witnesses as neither achievable nor relevant for this group. Finally, the existing qualifications system was regarded by some as confusing for pupils and their families⁴⁹, and concerns were expressed about the impact on disaffected pupils of the inevitable concentration by schools on success in grades A*-C at GCSE. We discuss these issues in more detail below.

24. Outside the school, various other factors were cited as precipitating causes. Young people may have a perception of poor prospects in the labour market. This is perhaps particularly the case with boys and young men. The National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling (NICEC) referred to the “widespread disappearance of traditional male work, especially marked in older industrial areas where mainstream industries have closed down”, which has deprived young men of jobs which fit their previously accepted roles within their communities.⁵⁰ Children may fail to attend school because they are caring for family members⁵¹, or because they are required to earn money to help support the family. Teenage pregnancy and parenthood are also obvious causes for non-attendance. The effects of engagement with the drugs culture, and with crime more generally, were also cited in evidence.⁵²

D. TACKLING DISAFFECTION

Successful intervention: inclusion not exclusion

25. We have already made it clear that there is no single approach to solving the problems of disaffection, and equally we should not expect a single agency to be able to tackle the issue alone. In this section of our report we examine the contribution that can be made by the existing agencies, and ways in which their contributions might be made more effective. Before discussing these in detail, however, we feel it is appropriate to set out what we believe to be the basic principle that should inform the work of all agencies. **The key task in tackling disaffection should be to provide challenge, restore motivation and engender key skills. Maximising formal educational achievement for these young people must be at the heart of intervention, whatever the nature of the project concerned. The main principle should be to include not exclude disaffected young people.**⁵³ All interventions should have the aim of reintegrating disaffected young people into mainstream education and training opportunities. However good the project/experience is in the short term, it cannot be regarded as wholly successful if, at the end of it, young people are not able to re-access education, training or employment. We recognise that, because disaffection manifests itself in a variety of ways, different strategies will need to be put in place for young people displaying different symptoms of disaffection. These may include, initially, interventions which aim at harm reduction, to prevent young people from slipping even further to the margins. There will have to be an earlier starting point for the most entrenched of the disaffected, and it may take two or three further steps before this group even get to the point from which other disaffected young people are starting. But it will be important to develop this in ways which assist young people in moving closer to the mainstream and ultimately rejoining it.

26. **A clear message from our inquiry was that many different agencies are already working to help tackle disaffection among children and young people, and there are many**

⁴⁸ Evidence from the National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling (NICEC) gives examples of students' negative perceptions of teachers. (Appendix 3, paragraph 11.) We heard of similar experiences when we met young people from the Weston Spirit.

⁴⁹ Q. 3 (Mr Peter Mitchell).

⁵⁰ NICEC, Appendix 3, paragraph 33.

⁵¹ This was also cited as a significant factor in non-participation post-16. DfEE, Appendix 30, paragraph 10.

⁵² National Youth Agency, Appendix 4, paragraphs 14–15; Warwickshire Careers Service, Appendix 7, paragraphs 1.1, 3.12; National Council for Voluntary Youth Service, Appendix 19, paragraph 2.1.

⁵³ Although our Report does not specifically cover special educational needs issues, there is an obvious connection here with the message of the recent Green Paper on SEN, *Excellence for all Children*, which emphasises the need to include children with SEN in the mainstream wherever possible.

examples of good practice in the work done by statutory and voluntary agencies at the local and national level. However, an equally clear message is that much of this work is carried out on a piecemeal and project-by-project basis. Although some agencies work in collaboration, many do not: there is often an absence of coordination of effort at the local level, and those involved may not even be fully aware of what is being done by others in the field. In order to ensure effective, well-targeted provision for disaffected young people, we believe that better local coordination is needed. For this reason, we propose the creation of local forums, in which all the agencies involved can work together, exchange best practice and help ensure that disaffected young people do not fall through gaps in the system. These forums would involve all the appropriate statutory and voluntary agencies in each area. They should not be concerned with detailed intervention in local projects, nor should they merely add a layer of bureaucracy to existing relationships. Their role should be to enable and ensure effective intervention. They should identify ways in which mainstream education providers can learn from the work of other agencies. They should promote high quality programmes and ensure that full information on services for young people is available. The forums must listen to the views and concerns of young people and aim to engage them in their work. If they are to be more than talking shops, it is vital that these forums have sufficient authority to enlist the necessary human and financial resources to tackle disaffection. Forums should be responsible for establishing a strategy and an action plan—either as part of the local authority’s education development plan or separately—which should form the basis for the allocation of resources.⁵⁴ A clear strategy for intervention with individual disaffected young people is essential; its absence is a recipe for confusion both within funding structures and for young people themselves.

27. In the rest of our report we examine ways in which disaffection can be addressed and consider how the general principles set out in the previous paragraphs apply in relation to specific agencies and interventions. We cover six main topics:

- the role of statutory institutions;
- the role of voluntary agencies;
- mentoring and guidance;
- better coordination of the activities of different agencies working with disaffected young people, and of their funding;
- the post-14 curriculum;
- qualifications and the qualifications framework.

The role of public institutions

SCHOOLS

28. We have already noted the negative effect schools can have on pupils who are in danger of becoming disaffected, but schools can also play an important role in *reducing* the incidence of disaffection. Whether children and young people are alienated from the school depends very largely on the approach taken by the school as a whole. In the words of one witness,

“If the head of a comprehensive school was a manager of a firm, he would be asking why so many of his customers were not buying his product. If you looked at it in that way you could say, what was the school not offering or what was wrong with the school's product that so many pupils were not taking it up. A good school has a lot of youngsters taking up the product.”⁵⁵

29. Good schools will, of course, have in place policies and practices that help all their pupils, not just those who may become disaffected. Evidence underlined the importance of schools

⁵⁴See also paragraphs 76 and 81 below.

⁵⁵Q. 86 (Association of Educational Psychologists).

having a consistent and positive “whole-school” policy in helping prevent disaffection and re-integrating those who had become disaffected. One teachers’ association summed it up as “an ethos that encourages and supports good behaviour and encourages all pupils to value learning”.⁵⁶ Several concrete examples of good practice were highlighted which we outline below. We also devote a separate section to the important issue of exclusions from school.

Pastoral support and discipline

30. A key element in any whole school approach is effective pastoral care and support.⁵⁷ However, there was also a feeling that, in many cases, “schools, where they have the opportunity, will turn away from disaffection towards the successful child”.⁵⁸ This was seen by many as being a result of the continuing pressure on schools to ensure that they maximised the numbers of pupils obtaining at least five A*–C grades at GCSE.⁵⁹ There was a view that concentration on A*–C grades contributed to the numbers leaving school with no qualifications at all.⁶⁰

31. A common theme in evidence was the need for schools to involve pupils and their families.⁶¹ Home-school links are common at the primary phase, but the involvement of parents in secondary schools is much less widespread. Home-school links, including home-school agreements, were widely cited as valuable: they could, for example, involve pupils and families in helping draw up school behaviour policies.⁶² At our meeting with the Weston Spirit, we were told that pastoral support from the school was particularly important where home support was absent.

32. We have mentioned the need for *consistent* policies. This is perhaps particularly important in the field of school discipline. OFSTED notes that good behaviour policies

“embody values of respect and responsibility and set out their implications in clear language, accessible to all ... The most important feature of policies is that they be clear and implemented”.⁶³

The White Paper, *Excellence in schools*, drew attention to the successful use of ‘assertive discipline’ techniques in schools in Liverpool. Assertive discipline involves: clear, unambiguous rules; continuous positive feedback when pupils are successful in keeping to those rules; and a recognised hierarchy of sanctions which are consistently applied when rules are broken.⁶⁴

33. Schools can involve pupils in the running of the school and developing its policies, for instance by the use of school councils (also called pupils’ councils). In these councils, which can include a framework of individual classroom councils as well, pupils work with staff as active partners to help create an organised learning community, where pupils are actively involved in creating the ethos of the school and its code of behaviour, including appropriate rewards and sanctions. Councils were seen as valuable in helping ensure pupils were involved in their own discipline, and more generally in developing constructive peer group pressure throughout the school.⁶⁵ (The experience of school councils can also help pupils to acquire citizenship skills.) We have noted the impact of bullying on pupils’ attitudes to school. Effective anti-bullying strategies were commended by many witnesses, as part of good pastoral support generally.⁶⁶ Good schools will have such strategies in place.

⁵⁶ Professional Association of Teachers, Appendix 23, paragraph 8.

⁵⁷ See paragraph 48 below for comments on the care and support provided in FE colleges.

⁵⁸ Q. 9, Mr Peter Mitchell.

⁵⁹ See e.g. Q. 197. (We consider ways in which the performance tables might be changed in paragraphs 108–113.)

⁶⁰ See e.g. Q. 39.

⁶¹ See e.g. *Cities in Schools*, Appendix 22, paragraph 6.10.

⁶² See e.g. NACRO, Appendix 20, paragraph 26. The School Standards and Framework Bill, currently before Parliament, sets out the Government’s plans for home-school agreements.

⁶³ OFSTED, *Exclusions from Secondary Schools 1995–96*, 1996, paragraph 45.

⁶⁴ Cm 3681, July 1997.

⁶⁵ See evidence from the Children’s Society, Appendix 17 paragraph 5.2; NACRO, Appendix 20, paragraph 26; NASWE, Appendix 34; School Councils UK (not printed).

⁶⁶ E.g. NACRO, Appendix 20 paragraph 26; NASWE, Appendix 34.

34. Improving attendance is a key part of any strategy to prevent disaffection. Evidence noted that rapid response strategies to deal with non-attendance were highly effective. The DfEE states: "Independent research has shown that, in the short term, the single most effective initiative designed to improve rates of attendance is the implementation of a same-day response to pupil absence".⁶⁷ Schools can achieve many of these aims in partnership with other services such as the Education Welfare Service and the Youth Service, which we discuss further below. **Pastoral support and discipline are key components of a good school. Clear and consistent whole-school policies on discipline, pastoral support, partnership with parents, attendance and bullying are vital in preventing and tackling disaffection. Partnership with other agencies is also vital, and schools should ensure that these are involved in tackling disaffection. We recommend that all schools adopt policies which incorporate these features.**

Teachers and teaching styles

35. "Teachers are at the heart of any attempt to reduce disaffection".⁶⁸ A good teacher can make all the difference between a pupil becoming disengaged with the school and staying within the mainstream. However, certain teachers' perceptions of some pupils and groups of pupils, and vice versa, can compound disaffection. One witness noted that some pupils drop out of school not because they dislike school in itself, but "because of one or two teachers".⁶⁹ Evidence emphasized the importance of teachers using differentiated teaching methods. For instance, the National Institute for Careers Education and Guidance told us that many young people labelled as 'disaffected' appear to react favourably to project-based approaches which provide opportunities for active student involvement and have comparatively short time-scales and clear objectives.⁷⁰

36. We discuss the curriculum in more detail below (paragraphs 91–101), but it is worth noting at this stage the alleged impact of the National Curriculum on teachers' attitudes, approaches and priorities. Witnesses suggested that the National Curriculum inhibited effective teaching for disaffected young people: "the blanket application of the National Curriculum provides insufficient scope for schools to vary their teaching approaches, in order to allow for differences in individual learning styles".⁷¹ On the other hand, one LEA cautioned against assuming that "national structures" such as the Curriculum were everything: "schools vary considerably in their ability to motivate young people", at least partly because of "varying degrees of commitment to all young people, rather than those whom market forces designate as the most 'valuable'".⁷² More could be done by teachers, through adapting their approach, to "modify, adjust and make accessible the curriculum as it stands".⁷³ (We discuss the dichotomy between providing equal entitlement for all and tailoring provision for particular pupils in paragraphs 93–94 below.) Cities in Schools also raised the effectiveness of behaviour management by teachers, suggesting that this was not always effectively taught on teacher training courses: "newly qualified teachers ... may have learned how to master a subject rather than to control the classroom".⁷⁴ The Government is to introduce a mandatory induction year for newly-qualified teachers, during which teachers will be required to continue to develop their skills.⁷⁵ **We believe that the induction year will provide the right opportunity for teachers to develop their skills in behaviour management.** As with teaching more generally, there is a need for teachers to have high expectations of what pupils can achieve, and communicate these to the pupils concerned. One submission noted that the low expectations held by some teachers of certain groups of young people could form a barrier to their engagement in learning.⁷⁶

⁶⁷DfEE Draft Guidance on School Attendance, December 1997.

⁶⁸Mr Peter Mitchell, Appendix 27, paragraph 11.

⁶⁹Q. 37 (Mr Garland, Community Service Volunteers). A similar point was made by Cities in Schools: "relationships with particular teachers are always highlighted" (Q. 69).

⁷⁰NICEC, Appendix 3, paragraph 5. See also NIACE, Appendix 10, paragraph 5.1–5.3.

⁷¹NICEC, Appendix 3, paragraph 5.

⁷²Hampshire County Council, Appendix 21.

⁷³Hammersmith and Fulham, Appendix 16, paragraph 2.

⁷⁴Appendix 22, paragraphs 6.8–9.

⁷⁵*Excellence in schools*, paragraph 14.

⁷⁶The Children's Society, Appendix 17, paragraph 4.1 (iii).

Exclusions from school

37. We have noted above the increasing numbers of children who are permanently excluded from school. Exclusion was seen by many witnesses as a significant factor in exacerbating disaffection, and it can have serious consequences for students' subsequent educational achievement. OFSTED has stated that

"For the pupil concerned, it [exclusion] may well constitute a critical turn in a downward spiral leading to unemployment, anomie and hopelessness".⁷⁷

Excluded pupils are more likely than others not to return to mainstream education: Dr Carl Parsons estimates that less than 40 per cent of excluded pupils return to mainstream school. He regards permanent exclusion as "counter productive, unjust, costly and damaging to both the individual and the fabric of society".⁷⁸ Many excluded pupils are likely to receive only a few hours of education each week.⁷⁹ However, some witnesses felt that exclusions were a necessary sanction. For instance, the NUT told us that, in cases where the range of strategies available to schools failed to improve children's behaviour, "exclusion remains the only option if the rights of teachers and other pupils to work in a safe and supportive environment are to be protected".⁸⁰ This view is shared by the Government's White Paper *Excellence in Schools*.⁸¹ Most schools do not take the decision to exclude pupils lightly and indeed see exclusion as a last resort. The OFSTED report on exclusions notes that the headteachers surveyed were "acutely aware" of the gravity of permanent exclusion.⁸² We recognise that exceptional circumstances do arise when exclusions may be necessary and indeed appropriate.

38. There is no evidence to suggest a direct causal link between high exclusion rates and improved examination results.⁸³ However, the characteristics of 'low excluding' schools are, unsurprisingly, what one would expect to find in a generally 'good' school. OFSTED notes, for instance, that schools with good behaviour plans tend to be low-excluding schools.⁸⁴ The Prince's Trust told us about the findings of work they had done with the Commission for Racial Equality in Birmingham:

"There were some very clear things which came out in terms of the schools which did not exclude which were about links with the community, strong links with parents, very clear mechanisms for children's own views to be heard and put forward as part of the decision making process and in a sense a recognition that this was also about negotiating the behaviour of pupil on pupil and not just teacher on pupil".⁸⁵

39. Schools, often in conjunction with the LEA and other agencies, prevent the need for exclusions by varying the kind of provision they make. For instance, the Prince's Trust told us about their work with learning outside school hours:

"[This is] the most powerful way we see to avoid exclusions and other similar problems for young people ... It is called out of school hours learning but actually it should relate directly to what is happening in the classroom, it becomes part of the school development plan".⁸⁶

40. A number of witnesses suggested methods of 'punishing' schools as a way of curtailing exclusions. Education Welfare Officers suggested that, where a child is permanently excluded from one school, that place could be kept open for another permanently excluded pupil from

⁷⁷ *Exclusions from Secondary Schools 1995-96*, OFSTED, 1996, paragraph 26.

⁷⁸ Appendix 29.

⁷⁹ Appendix 29.

⁸⁰ Appendix 36, paragraph 35.

⁸¹ Cm 3681, p. 57: "Schools need the ultimate sanction of excluding pupils".

⁸² *Op cit*, paragraph 26.

⁸³ This can be seen in, for instance, a comparison of LEA statistics in the school performance tables and the DfEE's figures on rates of exclusion.

⁸⁴ *Op cit*, paragraph 45.

⁸⁵ Q. 42.

⁸⁶ Q. 41.

another school. This would help 'balance out' the numbers of excluded pupils across schools.⁸⁷ Another procedure, which is used, for instance, in Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council, is to 'claw back' the appropriate proportion of funding allocated to a school in respect of a pupil if that pupil is permanently excluded. This is used as one element in a wider exclusions strategy. The Council reports that the level of permanent exclusion from schools in the Borough is relatively low compared to many other areas.⁸⁸ The Secretary of State also raised the general question of whether a financial incentive could be created for "schools to play their part in supporting and helping children to be retained within the system".⁸⁹ Many witnesses also referred to the potential of pupil referral units (PRUs) for excluded pupils, which we discuss in the next section of our report.

41. It is clear that the process of school exclusions subjects young people to what is, in effect, a double jeopardy. First, they are removed from the main institutional location for learning (the school); secondly, they will almost certainly suffer a further decline in educational opportunities.⁹⁰ **A feature of a good school is a low exclusion rate. Permanent exclusion should be a last resort. Schools should endeavour to create additional support units at the school for pupils who might otherwise face exclusion. We are concerned that permanent exclusions rose almost five-fold between 1991 and 1996. We are even more concerned, however, that those permanently excluded subsequently receive only a basic educational entitlement—which inevitably reduces the possibility of their re-joining mainstream educational pathways alongside their peers. The effect of this on their motivation to re-engage with education can only be profoundly negative. Schools should be encouraged to develop whole school policies which limit disaffection and exclusions. OFSTED should have a duty to carry out a special inspection of schools which show a marked increase in exclusions. LEAs should monitor schools and intervene to ensure that appropriate whole school policies are introduced. These schools should be closely monitored over a four-year period following the inspection.**

42. **Wherever possible, schools should retain responsibility for excluded pupils. For as long as they continue to receive funding for an excluded pupil, they have an obligation to allocate a proportion of those resources to that pupil for whatever alternative provision is made for them, wherever it takes place. Where schools do not retain responsibility, a similar proportion of the funding should be withdrawn from the school and made available to those taking on responsibility for the education of these young people.**

43. **We also believe that schools which achieve success with previously excluded pupils should be rewarded. They could, for instance, receive a financial bonus for each of these pupils who gains a Level 2 qualification.**

PUPIL REFERRAL UNITS

44. Pupil referral units (PRUs) are an alternative setting for provision for those pupils who have been excluded from school. The NUT stated that PRUs had "very real potential for providing flexible provision", although this would be most effective when they worked in a co-ordinated way with mainstream schools and schools for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties.⁹¹ NASWE witnesses thought that "the pupil referral unit should be seen as a revolving door, a time out but a time linked to going back into school, to reintegrate into a school".⁹² But in fact, as we have noted, fewer than 40 per cent of permanently excluded pupils return to mainstream school.⁹³ There are also very serious concerns about the quality of current provision in PRUs. OFSTED has reported that the standards of attainment in PRUs were "generally too low" and, overall, the quality of teaching fell below that found in mainstream

⁸⁷Q. 143.

⁸⁸See note from Rhondda Cynon Taff Education Department, Appendix 42. Other local authorities, such as Kirklees Metropolitan Council, also operate a 'claw back' policy.

⁸⁹Q. 218.

⁹⁰Dr Parsons estimates that an excluded pupil, in the year in which the exclusion occurs, will receive under 10 per cent of a full-time education. *Exclusions from school: the public cost*, Report to CRE, November 1996.

⁹¹Appendix 36, paragraphs 46–47.

⁹²Q. 143.

⁹³Dr Carl Parsons, Appendix 29.

schools.⁹⁴ One LEA commented that the limited curriculum, and lack of curricular continuity, caused problems for PRUs, and there was also a danger that placing disaffected children together in a PRU could strengthen their sense of identity as members of an “anti-school” group.⁹⁵

45. The role of the PRU must be to assist those who have been excluded from school to be re-integrated into the mainstream education system. We are concerned by some evidence that pupils are placed in PRUs on a long-term basis. **If PRUs are to work effectively, they should not be seen as a permanent solution, but as one stage in the process of tackling exclusion. They should work closely with schools, colleges and other bodies, within the framework of the local forums proposed earlier in our Report, so that children do not become further disconnected from the mainstream system as a result of exclusion. As part of this process, it is important that decisions are made at the earliest opportunity about the next step for each child, whether back at school or elsewhere. Children must not be allowed to get stuck, or stagnate, in PRUs.**

46. Many PRUs also fail to provide the quality of teaching needed to make sure that children do not become further disconnected from the mainstream system. Teaching standards in PRUs must be improved. The Government must take the necessary steps to attract high quality staff and put a high quality curriculum in place. Teachers need specific skills for teaching pupils in settings such as PRUs which are additional to those required to teach in mainstream environments. If necessary, the Government should consider offering inducements to attract appropriately skilled staff, including Advanced Skills Teachers, to work in PRUs.

FURTHER EDUCATION COLLEGES

47. We were very interested of the work being done by further education colleges with 14–16 year olds, as well as with the 16-plus group for which this sector has always catered. Further education colleges have an honourable history of promoting access to learning and it is thus not surprising that they can have a positive impact for this group of young people.⁹⁶ Rathbone CI told us that the FE sector formed a good route to re-integration into mainstream education: “There is a lot of indication that taking younger people than 16-plus into FE is actually very successful.”⁹⁷ Newham College, which has run a programme for Year 11 pupils since 1994, explained the benefits:

“Further education programmes, whether mainly basic skills or vocational in orientation, can be successful in promoting participation, achievement and progression of pupils who are either disaffected or otherwise not participating/achieving at school”.

Evidence from the college shows a high rate of satisfactory progression from the programme, which involves basic skills (such as English, maths and IT) and both full- and part-time vocational programmes. The college noted, however, that not all young people will be suited to provision in college, so there is a need for good quality guidance and access to ‘taster’ experiences.⁹⁸ Generally, evidence suggests that such provision could be made successfully in cooperation with the school.⁹⁹ A common theme in evidence was that any alternative curricular packages for 14–16 year olds—in FE colleges or elsewhere—needed to be philosophically and physically close to the school.¹⁰⁰ We heard examples of provision in which the school agreed that some of the funding it received in respect of a pupil would follow the pupil to the FE college.¹⁰¹

⁹⁴ *Pupil referral units: the first twelve inspections*, OFSTED, 1995, p. 5.

⁹⁵ Hampshire Education Psychology Service, Appendix 12, p. 4.

⁹⁶ The School Standards and Framework Bill, currently before Parliament, is intended to make cooperation between colleges and schools easier at Key Stage 4.

⁹⁷ Q. 37 (Rathbone CI).

⁹⁸ Appendix 5, paragraphs 5.1, 5.2, 6.1 and 6.4.

⁹⁹ See e.g. Q. 143 (AEWM).

¹⁰⁰ Appendix 24; Appendix 32, Section (ii) (AEWM).

¹⁰¹ Q. 143.

48. Many disaffected young people become so because they find themselves alienated by the school as an *institution*, and so the value of colleges is that they are a different kind of place in which to learn. The National Youth Agency, referring to FE colleges, told us: "Some young people will always resist school, as they have come to experience it; they may be more comfortable with slightly different kinds of institution."¹⁰² Students value the fact that they can work alongside older people. They are also removed from their previous peer group, whose influence can reinforce disaffection and the "anti-school" culture.¹⁰³ The only slightly cautious note was sounded by education welfare officers, who had some concerns over attendance monitoring and the quality of pastoral care in FE colleges. They also stated that there was evidence of some schools enrolling young people at an FE college and then taking them off the school roll. They did not, however, give any indication of how widespread such problems were.¹⁰⁴

49. Another witness noted some problems with the way the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) allocated funding to colleges, which could make things difficult if a college wanted to work with lower-achieving students.¹⁰⁵ The Secretary of State, however, was a little sceptical of this type of complaint.¹⁰⁶ **Where appropriate, the FEFC, colleges, LEAs and schools should work within the framework of the local forums recommended in paragraph 26 above to provide college education to disaffected young people. Funding should be made available from both the college and school sectors to facilitate this. The key principle is that funding should follow the students, wherever their learning is taking place.**

TECs, WORKPLACE LEARNING AND THE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE

50. Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) clearly have an important role in delivering employment-related training for young people, although their failure to meet the youth training guarantee for substantial numbers of 16 and 17 year olds has been argued to be one cause of disaffection.¹⁰⁷ However, TECs are now centrally involved in the partnerships established to pilot the Government's New Start programme for disaffected young people.¹⁰⁸

51. Evidence noted the value of vocational elements in the curriculum for those disaffected with the conventional school curriculum (a point we discuss in more detail in a later section). Such vocational provision can usefully be delivered in the workplace. The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), in a recent report, notes that 98 per cent of pupils in their last year of compulsory school participate in work experience. The QCA states that work experience can

"motivate young people who may have lost interest in learning by giving them opportunities to feel nearer to the world of work, where they can see the relevance of what they learn".¹⁰⁹

In evidence to our inquiry, the QCA referred to the fact that, in many schools, work-related learning activities "encourage teachers and employers to work as partners ... this good practice needs to be encouraged and supported in all schools".¹¹⁰ We were told of several interesting schemes which brought together schools, colleges and employers. For instance, in the Construction Industry Training Board's Construction Curriculum Initiative, 14–16 year olds have access to work experience, including site visits. The CITB states that the initiative, which was established in 1990 and through which 14,000 young people have now gained credits, has been highly successful.¹¹¹

¹⁰² Q. 97.

¹⁰³ See e.g. evidence from East Down Institute of Further and Higher Education, Appendix 33.

¹⁰⁴ Appendix 32.

¹⁰⁵ Q. 38.

¹⁰⁶ Q. 238.

¹⁰⁷ See e.g. evidence from Rathbone CI, Q. 23.

¹⁰⁸ See evidence from New Start Merseyside, Appendix 1.

¹⁰⁹ *Learning from Work Experience: a guide to successful practice*, QCA, 1998, pp. 1, 7. The School Standards and Framework Bill, currently before Parliament, makes provision for extended work experience at Key Stage 4.

¹¹⁰ Appendix 40, Annex B, paragraph 3.

¹¹¹ Appendix 35.

52. For those at the upper end of the age range with which we are concerned, the Employment Service—through a variety of partnerships—will be responsible for the Government's New Deal programme, which will provide routes to employability for unemployed 18–24 year olds. However, there is a vacuum for 16 and 17 year olds who are not in full-time education or training and who are likely to be disaffected. We were concerned to receive evidence that the New Deal may further constrain work opportunities for the younger group, as employers might be encouraged by the £60 per week subsidy to employ 18–24 year olds rather than 16 and 17 year olds. Rathbone CI told us:

“We will run the potential and very grave risk, come April and the further we get into the year, of reducing unemployment for 18–24 year olds but seeing a massive rise in unemployment and lack of ability to get that access to training for the 16–17 year olds.”¹¹²

As a result, some 16 and 17 year olds could remain completely outside work, training or education until they become eligible under the New Deal. That is a long period for young people who are probably already disaffected. Attitudes to work will become entrenched and difficult to reform. **We are very concerned that the New Deal does not cover 16 and 17 year olds. Given the failure of TECs to meet the youth training guarantee there is urgent need for a lead from Government to tackle non-participation amongst this age group. We welcome the fact that the DfEE recognises this potential problem, and has undertaken to monitor the potential negative impact of the New Deal on 16 and 17 year olds.**¹¹³ However, if our fears prove to be well-founded, we believe that the Government should in due course consider extending the New Deal to 16 and 17 year olds. In the first instance, this extension of the New Deal should give priority to the most vulnerable categories, such as young people who have been looked after by local authorities.¹¹⁴

The role of voluntary agencies

53. Disaffection has become an important focus for the work of a range of voluntary organisations. Some have firm connections with traditional voluntary youth services; others have been established to develop innovative practice in this area. They draw their funding from a number of sources, including private sector sponsorship, local authorities and specific European, national and local initiatives. A typical feature of their work is that it involves a much higher ratio of staff to young people than is common in the school or college setting.¹¹⁵

54. While each of these voluntary agencies claims unique selling points and market niches, they invariably combine (in different ways) a package of interventions with disaffected young people, including the provision of personal mentoring support, instruction in basic skills, the development of personal and interpersonal skills to promote self-esteem and confidence, and the building of bridges to support processes of re-integration into education, training and employment. The methods they use to achieve these ends include residential experiences, individual counselling and support and developmental group work. Young people who participate in these programmes may become involved through self-referral but are often also referred to them by local authorities.¹¹⁶

55. Our evidence indicated that the great strength of such interventions lies in the personal attention received by disaffected young people and the strong professional commitment to their needs. For example, Cities in Schools told us that

¹¹²Q. 39.

¹¹³Minutes of Evidence taken before the Employment Sub-committee, 10.3.98, Q. 419 (HC 263–ix).

¹¹⁴At present, the New Deal gives a ‘fast track’ to certain vulnerable groups, including those who have left local authority care in the previous three years: they are able to enter the New Deal even if they have not been claiming Jobseeker’s Allowance for six months or more.

¹¹⁵See e.g. evidence from Cities in Schools, whose project leaders work with groups of 10 young people each (Q. 48).

¹¹⁶See written evidence from Cities in Schools, Appendix 22, Rathbone CI, Appendix 9, The Prince’s Trust, Appendix 13, Able to Learn, Appendix 8 and others, for more detailed information about the work of voluntary agencies.

“our project managers are characterised by relentless charisma. They are there knocking on the door every morning, they ally with the parents or carers. They are there all the time.”¹¹⁷

Likewise, Rathbone CI noted that

“the ability of the Vocational Advisers to ‘take an interest’ in young people, in an individual sense, appears to be a very real strength of such approaches... [they] are not considered to be ‘professionals’ by the young people... instead they fulfil a distinctive and individually negotiated function”.¹¹⁸

In both quantitative and qualitative terms, voluntary agencies such as these claim to achieve considerable success in re-connecting disaffected young people to mainstream courses of study, training or formal employment. The Chief Executive of Cities in Schools told us that he would expect 80 per cent of 14–16 year olds who took part in their projects to be re-integrated into school, further education, training or employment, although he had no definite idea of the sustainability in the longer term of this outcome.¹¹⁹

56. Concern was expressed, however, that many of the programmes operated by voluntary agencies had not yet been subjected to any rigorous evaluation.¹²⁰ Their work, moreover, remains relatively small-scale and, while it may be highly effective at this level, there are questions as to whether or not it can be extended to a more general level or can be applied with the same efficacy in all localities. As Mr Tom Wylie of the National Youth Agency observed,

“I would not want to knock any kinds of intervention; the difficulty is getting them geared up to scale. Voluntary bodies can be very good with bright, whizzy ideas, but not so good at scaling up that quality across the country, not so very good at making it really stick in the most difficult environments”.¹²¹

(This is not to criticise success on a small scale *per se*. Indeed, intervention at this level may be highly effective and is the summit of many agencies’ ambition.) The fact that a large number of voluntary agencies are now competing in the ‘disaffected’ market leads us to have some concern about the possibility of wasteful competition. Rathbone CI acknowledged that there was “significant time wasting” in bidding against similar organisations for the same pot of money.¹²²

57. The disparate nature of disaffection suggests to us a need for considerable flexibility in response and methods of intervention in the lives of disaffected young people. Voluntary agencies are *prima facie* well placed to provide such a flexible and tailored response. During our inquiry, we learned of much good and innovative work undertaken by such agencies and of ways in which, often acting in partnership with other bodies, they successfully tackled disaffection and helped re-integrate children and young people into education and training. We believe that their work can have valuable lessons for others working in education.

58. Yet issues remain about how the success of such interventions can and should be measured. It is telling that the evaluation reports on the work of Rathbone CI were focussed on young people's individual needs “with minimal reference to established criteria of success”.¹²³ Most voluntary agencies working in this field do, indeed, invoke a range of success criteria. The Prince's Trust, for example, assesses not only the numbers of previously unemployed young people who are now in jobs, education or training, but also those who continue their voluntary

¹¹⁷Q. 71.

¹¹⁸Rathbone CI, *Choices for Life*.

¹¹⁹QQ. 49–52 and Appendix 22.

¹²⁰Appendix 36, paragraph 44.

¹²¹Q. 123.

¹²²Q. 17.

¹²³*Choices for Life*.

activity after completing a programme, and improvements in skills and attitudes.¹²⁴ Reaching thresholds of competence is a commonly used measure of success, but voluntary agencies also claim success on the basis of factors such as attendance levels and the completion of a programme.¹²⁵

59. While we can see some logic in all these measures of success, such elasticity in the success criteria applied (and the ways in which success is measured) does not assist a clearer understanding of realistic targets and the time-scales which may be required to achieve them. **What matters most is longer-term effectiveness, however, measured: where are the young people a year, or two years, after the intervention? An important characteristic of successful intervention will therefore be that effective tracking measures are in place. We expect projects supported by public funds to adopt such measures.**

Mentoring and guidance

60. Whatever the nature of the intervention, evidence made it clear that there is an important role for some kind of mentor to engage with the young people concerned. Their value lies in the fact that they can relate to the young people, in a way which often teachers and other authority figures cannot. The Prince's Trust told us:

“the independent mentor ... can make all the difference between success and failure about whatever progress the young person is able to achieve”.¹²⁶

Such mentors do not have to be drawn from any particular professional background. However mentors do need training and support, and full awareness of what services are available for disaffected young people. The vocational advisers used in Rathbone CI's 'Choices' programme, which provides vocational education for disaffected 15 and 16 year olds, have a mentoring role for groups of young people on the course. A recent evaluation of the programme stressed the value of this mentoring role.¹²⁷ In addition to the involvement of mentors, there is also a need for clear, impartial and well-informed advice for young people about their education, training and employment options. The Institute of Careers Guidance (ICG) recommends that a “key careers adviser” be provided for each individual, supporting their transitions between education, training and employment, and acting as a reference point for other services for the client.¹²⁸ There are obvious links with the role of the mentor discussed above. The Mentoring Action Project (MAP), run by the ICG, aims to:

- finance, support and develop careers advisers in 20 careers services in providing one-to-one and group mentoring facilities directly to several hundred disaffected young people;
- organise national training programmes for these mentors;
- develop good practice nationwide across careers services in this kind of work.¹²⁹

61. We believe that a good mentor can make all the difference to outcomes for disaffected young people. We commend the use of mentoring in work with these young people. Programmes designed to re-integrate young people into the mainstream should involve the use of mentors. Disaffected young people in particular need access to high quality independent advice and guidance on education, training, employability and employment opportunities. This can be provided by those working as mentors with young people.

¹²⁴Appendix 37.

¹²⁵Appendix 38, Appendix 41.

¹²⁶QQ. 34–35.

¹²⁷Appendix 9, paragraph 3.5.

¹²⁸Appendix 24.

¹²⁹NICEC, Appendix 3, paragraph 18.

Coordination of different agencies

62. Earlier in our Report, we highlighted in general terms the need for more effective coordination between the various agencies working with disaffected young people, and put forward a proposal for local forums to secure such coordination.¹³⁰ In this section of our Report, we look in more detail at some of the bodies involved and ways in which they can work better together. Beyond the targeted voluntary agencies, there is a variety of agencies working to tackle disaffection. Local authorities are heavily involved in dealing with disaffected young people. Local education authorities (LEAs) and social services departments are obviously key players in respect of these young people. This is particularly the case for children looked after by local authorities, whose educational provision, and educational achievement, was a matter of great concern to those who gave evidence to us. (We cover this issue in paragraphs 82–90 below.)

63. The *Youth Service* encompasses both local authority provision and voluntary organisations. About three in every five young people have some contact with the youth service during their adolescence.¹³¹ The Youth Service is characterised principally by the voluntary nature of young people's involvement with the activities it offers. The statutory basis of the Youth Service has always been somewhat precarious. However, in its recent Green Paper on lifelong learning, **the Government has announced that it intends to "put the Youth Service on a stronger statutory footing". The Government is also keen to explore ways in which voluntary youth networks and local authorities can work more closely together "to provide for young people in an imaginative way".**¹³² **We welcome this commitment by the Government, which we hope will include encouraging schools to make greater use of wider youth services, particularly in providing appropriate support to disaffected young people.**

64. The *Careers Service*, which we have mentioned already, advises young people about their future education, training and employment opportunities, as do careers teachers in schools. We have already noted that careers advisers are often the only source of continuity among the professionals with whom children and young people aged 14–19 are in contact.

65. The *criminal justice system*, and the *probation service*, are also involved—partly, of course, as the agencies who have to deal with one of the consequences of disaffection, youth crime. However, the police can also develop useful links with other agencies in preventative work, and have been involved in the New Start pilots.¹³³

66. At a national level, the government departments involved include the DfEE, the Department of Health, the Home Office and the Social Exclusion Unit, based in the Cabinet Office.

67. We have not attempted to analyse the work of all these agencies, but we have paid particular attention to the issue of how their work can best be coordinated so that it achieves maximum impact.

PROBLEMS OF COORDINATION

68. There was general agreement during our inquiry that effective coordination of the work of all the relevant agencies led to more appropriate and coherent support and intervention. This was exemplified in descriptions of many partnerships and networks being developed between a variety of different bodies.¹³⁴ Despite the examples of excellent partnerships that were cited, however, we received a depressing amount of evidence that coordination, particularly among statutory bodies, was frequently patchy or non-existent. As one witness put it, "there is no strategic framework nationally or locally to deal with disaffected young people".¹³⁵

¹³⁰ See paragraph 26 above.

¹³¹ National Youth Agency, Appendix 4, paragraphs 1–3.

¹³² Cm 3790, paragraph 4.9.

¹³³ Appendix 1; also see evidence from Mr Peter Mitchell, Q. 8.

¹³⁴ See e.g. Appendix 5; Appendix 6, paragraph 6; Appendix 8; Appendix 19, etc.

¹³⁵ Rathbone CI, Q. 15.

69. We received a good deal of evidence of poor coordination and cooperation within local authorities. In particular, there were clear signs of division between education and social services departments, but other relationships also seem to be ineffective. Mr Peter Mitchell gave us a graphic account of one South London borough, which can stand for much of the other evidence we received on this topic:

“Fragmentation rather than partnership was the characteristic feature of work in the borough. Services with a clear responsibility for supporting disaffected young people were at odds with each other. ... Youth and adult services ... had taken the majority of cuts since the break-up of ILEA; this had made the services defensive and inward looking. Social services had little contact with education ...”¹³⁶

70. Various reasons were advanced for this kind of fragmentation in local authority services: problems of funding, leading to cuts in services; long-standing professional suspicion; a failure to identify common ground. There was also a feeling among some that the separation of departmental budgets led to a jealous guarding of each department’s resources, making constructive collaboration more difficult.¹³⁷ In addition to lack of coordination between local authority services we also learned of poor cooperation, and indeed sometimes mutual suspicion, between these services and other services such as the youth justice system.

71. We have already discussed the work of the voluntary agencies. As with the statutory agencies, there may be problems in coordinating their work and also with how well they are able to coordinate their work with other agencies. Mr Mitchell noted that, where statutory local services could not work effectively together, “it was not surprising to find that agencies outside the local authority found it difficult to establish positive working relationships within the borough”.¹³⁸ This is not necessarily just a problem at the authority level—some schools may be concerned about letting voluntary agencies onto their ‘territory’. The NUT, for instance, expressed concern about the schemes run by Cities in Schools, partly because of the lack of “a requirement for those running the schemes to involve trained teachers”.¹³⁹

72. Witnesses also touched on the relationship between TECs and further education colleges. Both institutions have a role to play in securing training for these young people, but according to one witness, “there is tremendous competition between further education colleges and TEC work-based provision”.¹⁴⁰

IMPROVING COORDINATION

73. Much evidence proposed some kind of *local strategy or framework* for tackling disaffection. For instance, the National Youth Agency suggested that each LEA should have a Youth Services Development Plan—with specific sections on dealing with the ‘disaffected’ (however defined).¹⁴¹ Mr Mitchell argued that chief executives should have responsibility for creating structures across local authority services to tackle disaffection.¹⁴² But there is a need for strategic planning *beyond* the LEA. For instance, Mr Mitchell also suggested “standing partnerships” as opposed to “project-based” partnerships, involving local authorities, TECs, the Careers Service, voluntary agencies, etc.¹⁴³ The question presents itself: who should take the lead in such strategic coordination? The education welfare service, the Careers Service, the Youth Service, chief executives of local authorities and voluntary agencies were all referred to in evidence as potential lead players in co-ordinating services and intervention for the disaffected.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁶ Appendix 27, paragraph 19.

¹³⁷ Appendix 27, paragraph 23.

¹³⁸ Appendix 27, paragraph 20.

¹³⁹ Appendix 36, paragraph 44.

¹⁴⁰ Rathbone CI, Q. 31. See also paragraph 77 below.

¹⁴¹ NYA, Q. 115.

¹⁴² Appendix 27, paragraph 22.

¹⁴³ Appendix 27, paragraph 27.

¹⁴⁴ See: AEW/NASWE; Institute of Careers Guidance; Mr Peter Mitchell and The Education Network; Cities in Schools.

74. One recent Government initiative, 'New Start', was launched in November 1997 and is designed to bring together local agencies in partnership. It is aimed at driving up levels of motivation and participation among 14 to 17 year olds. According to the DfEE, "a key part of New Start is the funding of local partnership projects to build on and draw together existing initiatives". The 17 pilot projects include the Careers Service, schools and colleges, TECs, local authorities, the Youth Service and voluntary organisations. The Government has set aside £10 million over three years for these projects and for other activities within the overall New Start strategy. The strategy will, in the first instance, help identify the nature of the challenge, the effectiveness of what is currently being done and the scope to strengthen it or to introduce new provision.¹⁴⁵ One witness felt that the New Start initiative could be "the germ of something very useful ... that sort of model could be used in a much broader way to achieve the sort of strategic framework that we have been talking about".¹⁴⁶ **The New Start strategy has only been in place for a few months. However, once the pilot projects have bedded down, we would like to see the principles underlying the New Start pilots implemented nationwide. This is vital both to establish the true extent of disaffection and to encourage the bringing together of many existing initiatives, and creating the impetus for new ones to be formed.**

75. Evidence has also suggested the need for greater coordination at the national level, not only for its own sake but also to encourage cooperation at the local level. For instance, there could be a national framework to sanction 'best practice' which has been developed locally. The Secretary of State told us that the DfEE and the Department of Health should try to develop joint statutory guidelines, given the way in which their responsibilities overlapped (for instance, in relation to looked-after children and early years provision).¹⁴⁷ Some witnesses suggested there could be a role for the Social Exclusion Unit in directing overall policy on disaffection.¹⁴⁸

76. We were not convinced by Mr Mitchell's case that the local authority chief executive should take charge of the overall disaffection strategy, not least because much of the work that has to be done will best be carried out by agencies which are not part of the local authority itself. However, **we recognise that the local authority has a responsibility, through a variety of mechanisms, to secure appropriate support and educational provision for disaffected young people. We also agree that there must be better coordination of effort at the local level. We have therefore recommended (in paragraph 26 above) the establishment of local forums which would build on the kinds of partnership model currently being piloted under the New Start initiative. Effective co-ordination of services for the young people in the greatest need should not be left to chance.**

FUNDING AND COORDINATION

77. We have touched on various aspects of funding in the course of our report. It is particularly relevant in the context of coordination of effort between agencies: funding will tend to drive behaviour, so it could be used to encourage cooperation rather than fragmentation. For instance, one witness suggested that there should be a single funding route for work-based and college-based provision in order to create better partnerships. A young person might benefit from a mixture of provision—college, voluntary organisation, the workplace—but the fact that there were separate funding streams militated against this.¹⁴⁹ We are also concerned that funding 'blockages' prevent young people from moving smoothly up the qualifications ladder and may lead to them 'dropping out'.¹⁵⁰

78. Concerns were also expressed during the inquiry about the value for money obtained from expenditure on some of these young people; variations in the way different activity is funded; and the relative funding priority given to different areas of activity. The most striking example of poor value for money is the education of children looked after by local authorities. As we have noted, the Department of Health estimates that social services provision for these children

¹⁴⁵ Appendix 30, Annex D; also Appendix 1 for information from one of the pilot projects.

¹⁴⁶ The Prince's Trust, Q. 27.

¹⁴⁷ Q. 211.

¹⁴⁸ See e.g. The Prince's Trust, Appendix 13; and the Secretary of State, Q. 219.

¹⁴⁹ Q. 31 (Rathbone CI).

¹⁵⁰ See e.g. The Children's Society, Appendix 17, paragraph 4.1 (ii).

may cost £1,000 per week, in addition to the cost of their education.¹⁵¹ Obviously it is inevitable, given the circumstances of such children and their needs, that provision for them will be a significant burden on the public purse. However, expenditure at such levels is difficult to justify in terms of educational outcomes: despite the money spent on looked-after children, three-quarters of them leave full-time education with no qualifications.

79. Public funding for training, which may help tackle disaffection, comes from a variety of sources and is funded according to varying criteria. For instance, colleges and TECs are funded in different ways. While the funding systems for both sectors include an element which rewards final achievement, this is much more significant for TECs. 75 per cent of TEC funding is contingent on successful completion of the training. Research by the Institute for Employment Studies (IES) cited by Rathbone CI argued that output-related funding had “negative effects” on the less able and those who were disaffected, and gave an incentive to training providers to ‘cream’ among trainees. One major provider surveyed by the IES stated that there had been a decrease in the numbers of disaffected young people on its programme, because “no scheme can afford to have this sort of young person now, because they ... won’t attract outcome points”. (Similar points were made in evidence to the Committee in the last Parliament.)¹⁵² Witnesses also noted that a great many different agencies—especially in the voluntary sector—had to devote much of their time to chasing funding, often in competition with each other (see paragraph 56 above).

80. Questions were also raised about the contrast between spending on different aspects of work with young people. Mr Tom Wylie, of the National Youth Agency, gave us one example:

“The Department for Education and Employment currently spends £3 million per year on support to national voluntary youth organisations, the Scouts, the Guides, the Woodcraft Folk, all of those, the Ministry of Defence spends £68 million per year on support for the Cadet Forces. Now I am sure the Cadet Forces are a jolly good thing, etc., but I just have to wonder if that is a sensible way of spending money on young people; and if you had £71 million per annum to spend, might you not distribute it ever so slightly differently than that?”¹⁵³

In drawing attention to this comment, we do not intend to criticise the work of either the Cadet Forces nor those bodies in receipt of DfEE grants for national voluntary youth organisations. (The National Council for Voluntary Youth Service, in its evidence to the inquiry, cited work done by the Cadet Forces to “reach vulnerable young people” via the Youth and Community Programme”).¹⁵⁴ We cite it simply as one illustration of the widely varying levels of funding allocated by the Government to different services for young people.

81. The current funding available for tackling disaffection is fragmented and poorly targeted—in short it is a mess. The Government needs to identify as soon as possible how much central government money is currently being spent on services for disaffected young people, which budget it comes from, whether it is being used effectively and efficiently and whether it is being directed towards areas of greatest need. Government departments should set the lead by improving the co-ordination of their resources, possibly through the Social Exclusion Unit. We have emphasised the need for effective coordination of activity. There is equally a need for effective coordination and targeting of funding. We believe that the local forums we have recommended would have a role to play in ensuring that money is effectively allocated.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵¹ See also paragraphs 82–90 below.

¹⁵² *Winners and Losers: funding issues for the training of people with special training needs*, IES, 1995, pp. 3, 29. See also evidence from Rathbone CI, Q. 46; and the Fourth Report from the Education and Employment Committee, Session 1996–97, HC(96–97)130, *Social Costs and Employment*, paragraph 67.

¹⁵³ Q. 109.

¹⁵⁴ Appendix 19, paragraph 3.2.

¹⁵⁵ We recognise, of course, that local authorities have statutory duties in respect of the public funding they receive, but there are already models in existence which allow for sharing of funds between authorities and other bodies.

THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES

82. Children looked after by local authorities exemplify most starkly the problems of poor coordination of services and its consequence—educational failure. 75 per cent of those looked after leave school with no qualifications whatsoever.¹⁵⁶ It was because of the importance we attached to this issue that we held a joint meeting with the Health Committee to question the Secretary of State.¹⁵⁷

83. Responsibility for looked-after children lies with the local authority as a whole, although social services departments have the lead in all practical arrangements. The authority's responsibility for their care has always been taken to include attending to their educational requirements. About 51,000 children and young people are looked after by local authorities in England. They include about 6,000 children living in council-run homes and some 33,000 living with foster parents.¹⁵⁸ Although this is clearly a very small proportion of the total number of children, a good deal of public money is spent on each child. The Department of Health estimates that the average gross expenditure on services for children in local authority maintained homes is £1,059 per place, per week—over £50,000 per annum—and on children looked after by foster parents about £150 per week—£7,500 per annum.¹⁵⁹ The cost of their education—in or out of school—is in addition to this.

84. There has been longstanding concern about the quality of the education received by looked-after children. It was the subject of a joint OFSTED/Social Services Inspectorate survey and report in 1995 and was also commented on by Sir William Utting in his report, *People like us: the report of the review of the safeguards for children living away from home*. The joint OFSTED/SSI report commented that “the educational standards achieved by the children were too low” and “planning to encourage greater educational progress was unsatisfactory in schools and in social services departments ... liaison between social workers, carers and teachers was fragmented and patchy”.¹⁶⁰

85. Looked-after children are more likely than average to truant from school, or be excluded. The OFSTED/SSI report found that 25 per cent of looked-after children aged between 14 and 16 had a history of poor attendance or exclusion from school. There is no hard data on the proportion of excluded pupils who are looked after by their local authority, but one survey cited by the DfEE found that a third of excluded secondary school children were “known” to social services departments, although not all of these children were being looked after at the time of the exclusion.¹⁶¹

86. Evidence we received underlined the message from the OFSTED/SSI report and also echoed the wider concerns we have already recorded about the effectiveness of inter-agency cooperation. The Association of Directors of Social Services (ADSS) stated that “social workers and teachers are unfamiliar with each others’ policies and procedures and services are fragmented ... Teachers, social workers and foster carers do not give education sufficient priority. Nobody within the child’s life fulfils the role of the parent”.¹⁶²

87. On the other hand, the ADSS also drew attention to some good practice: for instance, Hampshire County Council and Manchester City Council have specialist teams acting as “supporters, advocates and brokers”, working to help looked-after children stay in school. The Hampshire scheme reports similar levels of attendance and educational achievement as among the rest of the school population. Voluntary organisations have also provided leadership in this

¹⁵⁶ DfEE written evidence to the Health Committee (to be published as HC 319-II).

¹⁵⁷ The Health Committee will report in due course on their major inquiry in children looked after by local authorities.

¹⁵⁸ Department of Health evidence to the Health Committee, HC (97–98) 319-vi, p. 145. (Figures are for 1996.)

¹⁵⁹ Cm 3612 (figures are for 1994–95). The figure given by the Department of Health for 1995–96 is £1,100 per week. (See paragraph 3, footnote 7, above for information on how the figure is calculated.) Given the method by which the Department of Health arrives at this figure, we have some concern about the extent to which it *accurately* reflects the *actual cost* of provision in a typical residential home. However, we accept that it is the only figure available and gives a reasonable indication of the sums of money involved.

¹⁶⁰ *The education of children who are looked after by local authorities*. OFSTED/SSI, April 1995, p. 3.

¹⁶¹ DfEE evidence to the Health Committee, Annex C paragraph 4 (to be published as HC 319-II).

¹⁶² Appendix 28, section 9.

field: the ADSS cited a project run by a voluntary agency in the North of England which was working to improve educational attainment of looked-after children.¹⁶³ The Health Committee, during its inquiry into looked after children, also heard about the Pupil Support Team in Wigan, which comprises four qualified teachers, jointly funded by the Social Services and Education Departments, who work with older pupils who have experienced problems with poor attendance or exclusion. A teacher from the team will spend half a day per week in each children's home, and the same teacher will attend each review of a looked-after child and draw up an education plan as part of that review.¹⁶⁴ The Secretary of State supported this kind of scheme, but "*as a bridge, not as a solution*, as a way of re-integrating the children into the school".¹⁶⁵

88. We and our colleagues on the Health Committee discussed these issues with the Secretary of State. He stressed that the fact that a child was looked after was not necessarily the case of disaffection in itself; there was a danger of stigmatising looked-after children in this way. He explained:

"a lot of the disaffection, a lot of the exclusion comes not from the fact that the child is in care, but the fact that they are in care is a result of other aspects of their life which have contributed to their disaffection generally and to their under-achievement".¹⁶⁶

He stressed that part of the approach should be not to have a *separate* policy for looked-after children, but to ensure that they gained full access to what was available to all children. All the initiatives such as mentoring and after-school homework clubs needed "to draw in the youngsters who are either in residential or foster care, so they are part of the process rather than alienating them from it".¹⁶⁷

89. As far as practical approaches to improving the quality of education for looked-after children was concerned, the Secretary of State emphasised the importance of joint planning, and where appropriate joint budgets, at the national and the local level:

"It is not merely developing joint budget arrangements, it would be developing joint plans of action and joint monitoring between OFSTED and the Health Inspectorate to make it possible to make a sensible outcome measure of what has happened. It seems to me that ... we actually have not been doing that adequately."¹⁶⁸

He drew attention to the need for national coordination in tackling disaffection generally, particularly in the light of the recent creation of the Social Exclusion Unit:

"What we then need to do is ensure that that thrust from the Prime Minister's Office is reflected in the joint actions we take. The Department of Health, the Home Office and ourselves are very keen indeed to share together the challenge of overcoming that problem".

But perhaps most importantly he talked about the need to change attitudes among those who work with looked-after children, and with disaffected children more widely:

"We have to change perceptions and attitudes in those who are delivering the service at the very level we have been describing, in the neighbourhood, so they understand what the real cost is to society as a whole".¹⁶⁹

¹⁶³ Appendix 28, section 9.

¹⁶⁴ Minutes of Evidence taken before the Health Committee, 11.12.97, Q. 596. (HC 319-iii)

¹⁶⁵ Q. 217 (italics added).

¹⁶⁶ Q. 224.

¹⁶⁷ Q. 213.

¹⁶⁸ Q. 211.

¹⁶⁹ Q. 219.

90. There has been an abject failure to provide effective educational opportunities for the most vulnerable children who are looked after. The fact that a disproportionate number of looked-after children are disaffected and are likely to truant or be excluded, and that 75 per cent of them leave school without any qualifications, is unacceptable. There is considerable educational under-achievement, despite significant investment of public money; a widespread lack of collaboration between different branches of the local authority; but also some encouraging signs of effective partnership between agencies, which need to be encouraged. We therefore agree with the Secretary of State that the educational needs of these young people should not be treated in isolation from their peers, with dedicated schemes or programmes that might serve only to stigmatise them further. Instead, we look to all the agencies concerned (including national government) to work towards ensuring that they have access to the same entitlement as all other young people of their age. We urge all those responsible—including those working in the Social Exclusion Unit—urgently to review the effectiveness of current services and spending and to prepare new, better integrated and coordinated action which is focussed on the needs of the child and which will give a better start in life to these vulnerable young people.

The post-14 curriculum

91. An important aspect of our inquiry was the appropriateness of the present curriculum for the 14–19 age group, and the extent to which changing it might reduce disaffection. We received much evidence on this issue, the main thrust of which was that an alternative curricular offer is needed for some of the 14–16 age group and that schools should be given greater flexibility in the kind of education offer they make at Key Stage 4. There was strong support for delivering post-14 education in settings other than school, such as further education colleges, or in a combination of different settings.

92. However, those who argued for a more flexible approach stressed that rigour was still essential. For instance, Cities in Schools stated that, although many people expressed concerns about the appropriateness of the national curriculum, particularly at Key Stage 4, for the disaffected group, it was “vital to keep the rigour of an appropriate curriculum framework”.¹⁷⁰ Other witnesses noted the importance of keeping alternative provision close to the school (though not necessarily physically), and/or for schools keeping responsibility for young people learning elsewhere.¹⁷¹

THE CONTENT OF THE CURRICULUM

93. A common theme was that the present Key Stage 4 curriculum was “inflexible and inappropriate” for many disaffected pupils.¹⁷² “Because of the constraints of the curriculum, schools cannot provide the flexibility of course work and credit that perhaps those young people are capable of attaining”.¹⁷³ A tension was perceived between the idea of the National Curriculum, designed to ensure a national entitlement for all children (“a matter of social justice”, in the words of one witness¹⁷⁴), and the need for schools to tailor content to particular pupils. Two main changes that were supported were the need for more vocational elements within the 14–16 curriculum and a larger place for personal and social education (PSE) or “citizenship” education. There was also general concern to find ways of recognising achievement apart from success at GCSE—a point we discuss in the section on qualifications below. It should be noted, however, that one LEA made the point that “for the majority of children the current 14–19 curriculum is adequate and accessible ... it would not be practicable to consider disapplying whole cohorts of pupils from the National Curriculum”.¹⁷⁵

94. The Prince’s Trust admirably summed up three key aspects of any “alternative” curriculum elements for this group, which were echoed by many other witnesses:

¹⁷⁰ Appendix 22, paragraph 6.1.

¹⁷¹ See paragraph 47 above.

¹⁷² PAT, Appendix 23, paragraph 3.

¹⁷³ Q. 140 (AEWM).

¹⁷⁴ Q. 99 (National Youth Agency).

¹⁷⁵ Hammersmith and Fulham, Appendix 16, section 2.

- First, given that many disaffected young people have low levels of literacy and numeracy, education must provide “opportunities to develop those key skills that they have missed out on previously”. Where such provision is made for those identified as likely to fail, achievement levels are raised and motivation for learning is increased.
- Secondly, the largely academic nature of the 14–16 curriculum “serves to compound the underachievement of those who are likely to be more successful in the vocational arena”. Hence many of these young people “would be better served by a more vocational curriculum with more structured work experience at Key Stage 4.”
- Finally, personal and social education in the curriculum should be strengthened: “concentration on roles and relationships, on rights and responsibilities and on issues such as health can re-engage interest”. This kind of work can also “provide useful skills and knowledge that can be taken outside the school into adult life”.¹⁷⁶

The vocational element in the curriculum

95. The DfEE has recently announced a consultation, to be carried out by the QCA, on new opportunities for schools to widen the scope for 14 to 16 year olds to “undertake work-related learning to increase their attendance, and to improve their motivation and achievement in school”. The Schools Minister states that proposed regulations would give those schools which can benefit from such initiatives “the freedom to follow work-related programmes which will re-motivate and engage pupils in the important business of learning.”¹⁷⁷

96. Although witnesses were generally in favour of developing more vocational elements in the 14-plus curriculum, some also noted that the vocational curriculum should not come to be seen as merely for the “less able”. Some witnesses felt that there might be problems with developing the vocational route “because it does have lower status. Unless we can take that hand in hand with a way of actually raising the status of those skills areas we have a problem, it is a divisive system”.¹⁷⁸ The Schools Minister has said that “work-related learning benefits children of all abilities ... [it is not] a soft option to appease the disaffected or truant pupil.”¹⁷⁹ The Association of Educational Psychologists drew attention to what they regarded as the problem of delivering an increasingly academic National Curriculum in the comprehensive school: “the curriculum does need looking at with a view to maintaining a wider variety of activities in the school for the comprehensive to be comprehensive ... [at present] a lot of the practical skills seem to have been dropped off”.¹⁸⁰

97. The National Curriculum at Key Stage 4 is not appropriate to the needs of many disaffected young people. It is counterproductive to push them into studying physics or French to GCSE level. Time needs to be made available for those who have not yet learned key skills to be taught them. High-quality vocational education, including workplace experience, can be of enormous benefit to those who are disaffected with the more “traditional” school curriculum. Some 14 year olds may re-engage more easily in a non-school environment, such as an FE college or the workplace.

98. We were heartened to learn of the range of imaginative projects, often collaborative, that are being carried out in this field. We recommend that the Government continue to enable schools, and other institutions, to provide tailored programmes, which must be monitored over the long-term. Targeted funding should be made available via the Standards Fund and other sources. This flexible provision should, where possible, be combined with existing elements of the 14–16 curriculum.

¹⁷⁶Appendix 13.

¹⁷⁷DfEE press notice 27.1.98.

¹⁷⁸The Prince's Trust, Q. 44.

¹⁷⁹DfEE press notice 27.1.98.

¹⁸⁰Q. 84.

Personal and social education

99. The need for better personal and social education (PSE) was raised by many witnesses. Mr Bryan Merton of the National Institute for Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) argued that “these young people need this, particularly when they come from communities and families where some of that is lacking”.¹⁸¹ NIACE argued that the impact of the National Curriculum had been to “squeeze out personal and social education”.¹⁸²

100. Mr Tom Wylie of the NYA drew a distinction between much current PSE and what was needed. At present, the goals of PSE were too often expressed in “soft focus”, and teaching of personal and social skills often involved teachers merely sitting in front of the class “talking about life”. Instead, he argued, “we need a very much more elaborate curriculum for citizenship”.¹⁸³ The White Paper, *Excellence in schools*, states that schools’ provision for PSE should include teaching children the nature of democracy and the duties, responsibilities and rights of citizens.¹⁸⁴ Mr Merton also emphasised the need to bring rigour and specified learning outcomes to this aspect of the curriculum¹⁸⁵ and told us of the work being carried out by the Young Adult Learners Project, run jointly by NIACE and the National Youth Agency. This project is developing a curriculum designed to help disaffected young people to become “more skilled at interpersonal relations, self-starters, team workers, problem solvers and independent lifelong learners”.¹⁸⁶

101. We recognise the value of effective personal and social education and agree with those witnesses who argued for a more focussed PSE curriculum, the effectiveness of which can be measured against clearly defined outcomes. Too much of current PSE lacks structure and direction. If PSE is to be a success, it must amount to more than high-handed waffle. We believe that a clear and strengthened PSE curriculum has an important role to play in re-engaging disaffected young people and developing citizenship. PSE should not be an “add-on” to the curriculum, but integral to the life of the school. The PSE curriculum should focus on life management skills such as family planning, personal finances, employability, using information and avoiding drug and alcohol misuse.

The qualifications framework and school performance tables¹⁸⁷

QUALIFICATIONS

102. Two differing points of view emerged during our inquiry about the qualifications structure. One was that a greater diversity of achievement should be recognised through greater use and accreditation of existing qualifications, including vocational qualifications. Such developments would, it was argued, be of specific benefit to the disaffected. The other view was that the needs of under-achievers and the disaffected could only be met through an overall reform of the national qualification *framework* to create a more flexible “single ladder” up which all pupils could progress.

103. There was a feeling that the range of “mainstream” qualifications was too limited. Mr Wylie of the NYA told us: “We are taking the notion of mainstream qualification too narrowly. If we just mean GCSE and A level then that is too narrow a mainstream for me, we would want to see the range of GNVQs and NVQs also in the system.”¹⁸⁸ However, it should be noted that other qualifications are also used in schools for the 14–16 year old age group. The QCA outlined a range of initiatives currently being piloted in schools, and proposals for future development. We have already noted the proposals for work-related learning announced in January. Existing initiatives include the Part One GNVQ, which has been piloted in 611 schools

¹⁸¹ Q. 89.

¹⁸² Appendix 10, paragraph 5.3. The same point was also made by the NUT, among others (Appendix 36, paragraph 23).

¹⁸³ Q. 121 and written evidence from NYA, Appendix 4, paragraph 10.

¹⁸⁴ Cm 3681, p. 63. The Government’s advisory group on citizenship and democracy in schools, chaired by Professor Bernard Crick, has just published its initial report, which recommends that a statutory requirement be placed on schools to ensure that citizenship is part of the entitlement of all pupils. *Education for citizenship and the teaching of democracy in schools*, QCA, March 1998, paragraph 1.1

¹⁸⁵ Q. 121.

¹⁸⁶ Appendix 10, paragraph 5.5.

¹⁸⁷ We will also consider the qualifications framework in our forthcoming report on Further Education.

¹⁸⁸ Q. 121.

and is regarded by OFSTED as “a high quality and demanding new vocational qualification”. Inspectors noted that students who had previously been disruptive learners and had made poor progress in other subjects had done very well on this course.¹⁸⁹ Schools are also increasingly using NVQ units at Key Stage 4: QCA notes that this can improve motivation, attendance, behaviour and attainment through the use of a different method of learning from ‘traditional’ qualifications. Finally, the QCA points to the planned introduction, in September 1998, of the Entry Level qualifications. These are flexible qualifications intended to “provide opportunities for all learners working below Foundation level” (ie GCSE), including disaffected young people.¹⁹⁰

104. Other types of qualification discussed in evidence were not so specifically work-related. One singled out by witnesses was the award scheme run by the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN), based at the University of the West of England.¹⁹¹ This scheme offers an activity-based curriculum for young people of all abilities between 14 and 25, together with a framework of assessment. The awards have been designed by teachers as a means by which all the accepted key skills—such as improving own learning and performance, communication, working with others, application of number, problem solving and information technology—can be developed, assessed and accredited within the framework of the National Record of Achievement. ASDAN was granted Awarding Body status by the National Council for Vocational Qualifications in 1996. The scheme is highly flexible and is used in schools and FE colleges. (It is also interesting to note that Huddersfield College has agreed to recognise Silver and Gold ASDAN qualifications for admissions purposes, alongside GCSEs.)¹⁹² Dr Michael Young, of the University of London Institute of Education, stressed the value of the scheme:

“It has got a series of levels that includes special needs young people and university entrants. That is one of the great things about it, it is actually inclusive. It seems to manage to combine criteria with a degree of discretion for teachers in a local context to be able to develop learning that is relevant.”

Dr Young noted that funding was crucial to ASDAN’s success: not only have some resources been made available in schools to use the award, but the FEFC funding mechanism has also allowed colleges to fund programmes using it.¹⁹³

105. The Government has recently stated what it sees as the value of qualifications: “qualifications should allow people to take small steps and choose combinations that suit them, while being recognised by employers and society as a whole”.¹⁹⁴ Similar views were expressed in evidence—that qualifications need to recognise “small steps” of achievement and “distance travelled”.¹⁹⁵ It was argued that, in order to help them re-integrate into learning, disaffected young people need greater motivation than may be produced by longer courses such as GCSE, which students either ‘pass’ or ‘fail’. One argument for such “stepping stone” qualifications is that they would, as one witness put it, provide intermediate qualifications, allowing disaffected young people to re-enter and re-bridge with GCSEs, A levels, and vocational qualifications.¹⁹⁶ However, while witnesses wished to motivate disaffected young people through imaginative use of the qualification system, they were aware of potential dangers in giving young people qualifications which would not help them in further education and the labour market. As Mr Tom Wylie told us: “I certainly do not want to see a whole range of Mickey Mouse qualifications available to young people, which get them nowhere.”¹⁹⁷

¹⁸⁹QCA, Appendix 40.

¹⁹⁰Appendix 40.

¹⁹¹See e.g. *Cities in Schools*, Q. 71.

¹⁹²Huddersfield College prospectus (not printed).

¹⁹³Q. 174. Some evidence noted that ASDAN awards were “especially valued in special schools and PRUs”. (Appendix 1, paragraph 3.3.)

¹⁹⁴*The Learning Age: a renaissance for a new Britain*, Cm 3790, paragraph 6.2.

¹⁹⁵See e.g. NIACE, Appendix 10, paragraph 5.7.

¹⁹⁶Q. 90 (National Youth Agency).

¹⁹⁷Q. 90.

106. Mr Ken Spours and Dr Michael Young, of the University of London Institute of Education, were the principal exponents of a reformed, unified 14–19 qualifications structure. The 14-plus curriculum and qualifications framework should, in their view, provide “new opportunities for low achievers and the disaffected rather than retaining separate provision and accreditation”. Their proposals included a single certification framework, which would encourage students to mix general and vocational studies and allow for work experience and vocational education to earn ‘equal credit’ alongside academic subjects. ASDAN and similar qualifications could also be integrated into such a framework.¹⁹⁸

107. They argued that what was needed was a system in which individuals could progress at their own pace, and move between different “pathways”—between vocational and general education, for example. Mr Spours singled out the GCSE at 16 as a major cause of demotivation and disaffection: “there is a real problem in motivating young people to get over that barrier because if you do not reach it at 16 you are considered simply to have failed.”¹⁹⁹ His colleague, Dr Young, explained their thinking further. Currently, grades below grade C at GCSE were regarded as a failure: “What we are arguing for is if you can create a series of levels at 14 to 19 then D, E or F at 15 or 16 is not a failure, it is a step towards a higher level at 16, 17 or 18. It is a progression rather than a failure.”²⁰⁰

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE TABLES

108. Currently, the school performance tables include information on GCSEs and GNVQ awards, with information on GNVQs merged with that on GCSEs. The tables also give information on some pre-16 vocational awards obtained by pupils. However, a point made repeatedly in evidence was the effect of schools’ preoccupation with achievement in GCSE at grades A*–C. Mr Spours told us that schools were “obsessed” with A*–C GCSEs “because of the relationship to institutional accountability”²⁰¹—i.e., accountability via the school performance tables, which measure schools’ success according to the percentage of pupils gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A*–C. Dr Young argued that “institutions have a very limited set of incentives linked to the high achieving students”.²⁰² The AEWG stated that this preoccupation had led to “a rigidity of emphasis on the academic side”.²⁰³ The DfEE has also noted concerns about the media attention paid to the A*–C indicator and the encouragement this may give to schools to focus on pupils potentially at the grade D/C boundary at the expense of other pupils.²⁰⁴

109. Two suggestions were made to us about how this emphasis could be changed. AEWG witnesses thought that vocational qualifications should be included in the performance tables, arguing that

“if schools were able to see that they could gain credit in league table terms for vocational courses, that actually may encourage schools to be more flexible in the curriculum, because at the moment they would not get any media credit whatsoever... if we widened the scope of the league tables that actually may produce some kind of leverage to encourage schools to be more flexible to the needs of these young people”.²⁰⁵

Dr Young thought that the performance tables could be drawn up on the basis of each school’s average GCSE and GNVQ scores.²⁰⁶ This idea also appears in recent DfEE consultation paper on changes to the National Targets for Education and Training (NTETs), which may include the introduction of a national target at 16. The DfEE suggests that this target could be expressed in

¹⁹⁸ Appendix 39.

¹⁹⁹ Q. 161.

²⁰⁰ Q. 167.

²⁰¹ Q. 161.

²⁰² Q. 197.

²⁰³ Q. 140.

²⁰⁴ *Secondary School and College Performance Tables: Consultation Document*, DfEE, March 1998.

²⁰⁵ Q. 140 and Appendix 32, Section (ii).

²⁰⁶ Q. 198.

terms of raising the *average* GCSE points score per pupil.²⁰⁷ The same idea is proposed in the recent consultation paper on changes to the school and college performance tables which we discuss in paragraph 112 below.

110. We asked the Secretary of State about the current design of the performance tables. He accepted that there was

“a problem in terms of the perception which exists that schools, in seeking to maximise their impact through league tables, may not necessarily give the same emphasis to either embracing or retaining children who have a particular difficulty and may be under-attaining”.

He argued that forthcoming changes to the tables would show “the added value a school has been able to provide from the time a child enters school to the time when they leave it”. These value-added tables would give a fairer idea of what the school had achieved, in addition to the “raw” GCSE results.²⁰⁸

111. **We are attracted to the idea of encouraging greater pluralism of qualifications in schools at Key Stage 4, linked with our support for a more flexible curricular offer for this age group. We welcome the Government’s plans to give schools more opportunities to offer vocational qualifications such as NVQs, but the Government could do more. We would like to see more widespread use of Part One GNVQs and basic skills qualifications in schools. They provide an extra rung on the qualifications ladder and can help prevent disaffection amongst low achieving pupils. However, these qualifications must rigorously assessed, and gaining them must represent real achievement. We welcome the increasing use of modular courses in schools, including GCSEs, and believe there would be advantage in developing a system for recognising achievement at modular level. (This could perhaps be recorded in each pupil’s National Record of Achievement.) Such a change would allow young people to take small steps towards qualifications and would help remove the fear of failure at 16 currently associated with GCSE.**

112. The Government has recently issued a consultation paper proposing changes to the information provided about schools’ performance in the performance tables.²⁰⁹ The paper proposes that, in addition to the current information on the percentage of 15 year olds at the school obtaining five or more GCSE grades A*–C, five or more grades A*–G and one or more Grades A*–G, the average point score per pupil would also be recorded. This would be calculated by dividing the total number of GCSE/GNVQ points achieved by all 15 year old pupils by the number of 15 year old pupils on roll. The paper also proposes introducing a measurement of progress made by pupils between Key Stage 3 and GCSE/GNVQ. **Like the Government, we believe that the school performance tables should be revised to reflect more accurately what schools and their pupils achieve. We therefore support the Government’s proposals to include an average points score and a progress measure in the performance tables.** The performance tables include information about some vocational qualifications, but at present these tend to be given much less prominence than the A*–C indicators. We believe that attention should also be given to crediting other nationally recognised achievement as well—through, for instance, the number of pupils who had completed ASDAN awards or the Duke of Edinburgh’s Award Scheme.

113. Earlier in our report we noted how important it is for teachers to have high expectations of their pupils.²¹⁰ There is some evidence that schools do not enter pupils for GCSE examinations if they consider they are unlikely to achieve good grades and thereby lower the school’s ‘score’ in the performance tables. Such pupils are therefore denied the opportunity of obtaining qualifications and the record of the school’s success in the performance tables is distorted. At present, the tables do not explicitly take this into account and the DfEE

²⁰⁷ *Targets for our future: a consultation document*, DfEE/DENI, 1997, paragraph 21.

²⁰⁸ Q. 208.

²⁰⁹ *Secondary School and College Performance Tables: Consultation Document*, March 1998.

²¹⁰ See paragraph 36 above.

consultation paper does not propose any change. We recommend that the school performance tables be amended to show the number and proportion of pupils who leave without sitting examinations and the number and proportion who gain no qualifications.

E. SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

114. Throughout our Report, we have drawn conclusions and made recommendations to Government and others. For the convenience of readers, they are brought together here.

- (a) We have noted the wide range of estimates of this group of young people. If the estimates of persistent non-attendance at Key Stage 4 are taken together with the estimates for non-participation between 16 and 19 years old, we can conclude that at any one time there are at least 100,000 14–19 year olds not in education, training or employment or, taking a higher estimate, as many as 220,000 non-participants. Whatever estimate is adopted, it is obvious that disaffected young people form a significant cohort within the 14–19 age group, and re-integrating them into the mainstream of education, training and work must form an integral part of the Government's educational and social policy. The problem is that no figures are kept that can be quoted with rigour. More accurate information is vital if we are to grasp the true nature and extent of the problem. We recommend that the Government carries out an audit of the scale, nature and causes of disaffection amongst young people in order to inform policy in this area (paragraph 19).
- (b) The key task in tackling disaffection should be to provide challenge, restore motivation and engender key skills. Maximising formal educational achievement for these young people must be at the heart of intervention, whatever the nature of the project concerned. The main principle should be to include not exclude disaffected young people. All interventions should have the aim of reintegrating disaffected young people into mainstream education and training opportunities. However good the project/experience is in the short term, it cannot be regarded as wholly successful if, at the end of it, young people are not able to re-access education, training or employment (paragraph 25).
- (c) A clear message from our inquiry was that many different agencies are already working to help tackle disaffection among children and young people, and there are many examples of good practice in the work done by statutory and voluntary agencies at the local and national level. However, an equally clear message is that much of this work is carried out on a piecemeal and project-by-project basis. Although some agencies work in collaboration, many do not: there is often an absence of coordination of effort at the local level, and those involved may not even be fully aware of what is being done by others in the field. In order to ensure effective, well-targeted provision for disaffected young people, we believe that better local coordination is needed. For this reason, we propose the creation of local forums, in which all the agencies involved can work together, exchange best practice and help ensure that disaffected young people do not fall through gaps in the system. These forums would involve all the appropriate statutory and voluntary agencies in each area. They should not be concerned with detailed intervention in local projects, nor should they merely add a layer of bureaucracy to existing relationships. Their role should be to enable and ensure effective intervention. They should identify ways in which mainstream education providers can learn from the work of other agencies. They should promote high quality programmes and ensure that full information on services for young people is available. The forums must listen to the views and concerns of young people and aim to engage them in their work. If they are to be more than talking shops, it is vital that these forums have sufficient authority to enlist the necessary human and financial resources to tackle disaffection. Forums should be responsible for establishing a strategy and an action plan—either as part of the local authority's education development plan or separately—which should form the basis for the allocation of resources. A clear strategy for intervention with individual

disaffected young people is essential; its absence is a recipe for confusion both within funding structures and for young people themselves (paragraph 26).

- (d) Pastoral support and discipline are key components of a good school. Clear and consistent whole-school policies on discipline, pastoral support, partnership with parents, attendance and bullying are vital in preventing and tackling disaffection. Partnership with other agencies is also vital, and schools should ensure that these are involved in tackling disaffection. We recommend that all schools adopt policies which incorporate these features (paragraph 34).
- (e) We believe that the induction year will provide the right opportunity for teachers to develop their skills in behaviour management (paragraph 36).
- (f) A feature of a good school is a low exclusion rate. Permanent exclusion should be a last resort. Schools should endeavour to create additional support units at the school for pupils who might otherwise face exclusion. We are concerned that permanent exclusions rose almost five-fold between 1991 and 1996. We are even more concerned, however, that those permanently excluded subsequently receive only a basic educational entitlement—which inevitably reduces the possibility of their re-joining mainstream educational pathways alongside their peers. The effect of this on their motivation to re-engage with education can only be profoundly negative. Schools should be encouraged to develop whole school policies which limit disaffection and exclusions. OFSTED should have a duty to carry out a special inspection of schools which show a marked increase in exclusions. LEAs should monitor schools and intervene to ensure that appropriate whole school policies are introduced. These schools should be closely monitored over a four-year period following the inspection (paragraph 41).
- (g) Wherever possible, schools should retain responsibility for excluded pupils. For as long as they continue to receive funding for an excluded pupil, they have an obligation to allocate a proportion of those resources to that pupil for whatever alternative provision is made for them, wherever it takes place. Where schools do not retain responsibility, a similar proportion of the funding should be withdrawn from the school and made available to those taking on responsibility for the education of these young people (paragraph 42).
- (h) We also believe that schools which achieve success with previously excluded pupils should be rewarded. They could, for instance, receive a financial bonus for each of these pupils who gains a Level 2 qualification (paragraph 43).
- (i) If PRUs are to work effectively, they should not be seen as a permanent solution, but as one stage in the process of tackling exclusion. They should work closely with schools, colleges and other bodies, within the framework of the local forums proposed earlier in our Report, so that children do not become further disconnected from the mainstream system as a result of exclusion. As part of this process, it is important that decisions are made at the earliest opportunity about the next step for each child, whether back at school or elsewhere. Children must not be allowed to get stuck, or stagnate, in PRUs (paragraph 45).
- (j) Many PRUs also fail to provide the quality of teaching needed to make sure that children do not become further disconnected from the mainstream system. Teaching standards in PRUs must be improved. The Government must take the necessary steps to attract high quality staff and put a high quality curriculum in place. Teachers need specific skills for teaching pupils in settings such as PRUs which are additional to those required to teach in mainstream environments. If necessary, the Government should consider offering inducements to attract appropriately skilled staff, including Advanced Skills Teachers, to work in PRUs (paragraph 46).

- (k) Where appropriate, the FEFC, colleges, LEAs and schools should work within the framework of the local forums recommended in paragraph 26 above (recommendation (c)) to provide college education to disaffected young people. Funding should be made available from both the college and school sectors to facilitate this. The key principle is that funding should follow the students, wherever their learning is taking place (paragraph 49).
- (l) We are very concerned that the New Deal does not cover 16 and 17 year olds. Given the failure of TECs to meet the youth training guarantee there is urgent need for a lead from Government to tackle non-participation amongst this age group. We welcome the fact that the DfEE recognises this potential problem, and has undertaken to monitor the potential negative impact of the New Deal on 16 and 17 year olds. However, if our fears prove to be well-founded, we believe that the Government should in due course consider extending the New Deal to 16 and 17 year olds. In the first instance, this extension of the New Deal should give priority to the most vulnerable categories, such as young people who have been looked after by local authorities (paragraph 52).
- (m) The disparate nature of disaffection suggests to us a need for considerable flexibility in response and methods of intervention in the lives of disaffected young people. Voluntary agencies are *prima facie* well placed to provide such a flexible and tailored response. During our inquiry, we learned of much good and innovative work undertaken by such agencies and of ways in which, often acting in partnership with other bodies, they successfully tackled disaffection and helped re-integrate children and young people into education and training. We believe that their work can have valuable lessons for others working in education (paragraph 57).
- (n) What matters most is longer-term effectiveness, however, measured: where are the young people a year, or two years, after the intervention? An important characteristic of successful intervention will therefore be that effective tracking measures are in place. We expect projects supported by public funds to adopt such measures (paragraph 59).
- (o) We believe that a good mentor can make all the difference to outcomes for disaffected young people. We commend the use of mentoring in work with these young people. Programmes designed to re-integrate young people into the mainstream should involve the use of mentors. Disaffected young people in particular need access to high quality independent advice and guidance on education, training, employability and employment opportunities. This can be provided by those working as mentors with young people (paragraph 61).
- (p) The Government has announced that it intends to “put the Youth Service on a stronger statutory footing”. The Government is also keen to explore ways in which voluntary youth networks and local authorities can work more closely together “to provide for young people in an imaginative way”. We welcome this commitment by the Government, which we hope will include encouraging schools to make greater use of wider youth services, particularly in providing appropriate support to disaffected young people (paragraph 63).
- (q) The New Start strategy has only been in place for a few months. However, once the pilot projects have bedded down, we would like to see the principles underlying the New Start pilots implemented nationwide. This is vital both to establish the true extent of disaffection and to encourage the bringing together of many existing initiatives, and creating the impetus for new ones to be formed (paragraph 74).
- (r) We recognise that the local authority has a responsibility, through a variety of mechanisms, to secure appropriate support and educational provision for disaffected young people. We also agree that there must be better coordination of effort at the local level. We have therefore recommended (in paragraph 26,

recommendation (c), above) the establishment of local forums which would build on the kinds of partnership model currently being piloted under the New Start initiative. Effective co-ordination of services for the young people in the greatest need should not be left to chance (paragraph 76).

- (s) The current funding available for tackling disaffection is fragmented and poorly targeted—in short it is a mess. The Government needs to identify as soon as possible how much central government money is currently being spent on services for disaffected young people, which budget it comes from, whether it is being used effectively and efficiently and whether it is being directed towards areas of greatest need. Government departments should set the lead by improving the co-ordination of their resources, possibly through the Social Exclusion Unit. We have emphasised the need for effective coordination of activity. There is equally a need for effective coordination and targeting of funding. We believe that the local forums we have recommended would have a role to play in ensuring that money is effectively allocated (paragraph 81).
- (t) There has been an abject failure to provide effective educational opportunities for the most vulnerable children who are looked after. The fact that a disproportionate number of looked-after children are disaffected and are likely to truant or be excluded, and that 75 per cent of them leave school without any qualifications, is unacceptable. There is considerable educational under-achievement, despite significant investment of public money; a widespread lack of collaboration between different branches of the local authority; but also some encouraging signs of effective partnership between agencies, which need to be encouraged (paragraph 90).
- (u) We urge all those responsible—including those working in the Social Exclusion Unit—urgently to review the effectiveness of current services and spending and to prepare new, better integrated and coordinated action which is focussed on the needs of the child and which will give a better start in life to these vulnerable young people (paragraph 90).
- (v) The National Curriculum at Key Stage 4 is not appropriate to the needs of many disaffected young people. It is counterproductive to push them into studying physics or French to GCSE level. Time needs to be made available for those who have not yet learned key skills to be taught them. High-quality vocational education, including workplace experience, can be of enormous benefit to those who are disaffected with the more “traditional” school curriculum. Some 14 year olds may re-engage more easily in a non-school environment, such as an FE college or the workplace (paragraph 97).
- (w) We were heartened to learn of the range of imaginative projects, often collaborative, that are being carried out in this field. We recommend that the Government continue to enable schools, and other institutions, to provide tailored programmes, which must be monitored over the long-term. Targeted funding should be made available via the Standards Fund and other sources. This flexible provision should, where possible, be combined with existing elements of the 14–16 curriculum (paragraph 98).
- (x) We recognise the value of effective personal and social education and agree with those witnesses who argued for a more focussed PSE curriculum, the effectiveness of which can be measured against clearly defined outcomes. Too much of current PSE lacks structure and direction. If PSE is to be a success, it must amount to more than high-handed waffle. We believe that a clear and strengthened PSE curriculum has an important role to play in re-engaging disaffected young people and developing citizenship. PSE should not be an “add-on” to the curriculum, but integral to the life of the school. The PSE curriculum should focus on life management skills such as family planning, personal finances, employability, using information and avoiding drug and alcohol misuse (paragraph 101).

- (y) **We are attracted to the idea of encouraging greater pluralism of qualifications in schools at Key Stage 4, linked with our support for a more flexible curricular offer for this age group. We welcome the Government's plans to give schools more opportunities to offer vocational qualifications such as NVQs, but the Government could do more. We would like to see more widespread use of Part One GNVQs and basic skills qualifications in schools. They provide an extra rung on the qualifications ladder and can help prevent disaffection amongst low achieving pupils. However, these qualifications must rigorously assessed, and gaining them must represent real achievement. We welcome the increasing use of modular courses in schools, including GCSEs, and believe there would be advantage in developing a system for recognising achievement at modular level. (This could perhaps be recorded in each pupil's National Record of Achievement.) Such a change would allow young people to take small steps towards qualifications and would help remove the fear of failure at 16 currently associated with GCSE (paragraph 111).**
- (z) **Like the Government, we believe that the school performance tables should be revised to reflect more accurately what schools and their pupils achieve. We therefore support the Government's proposals to include an average points score and a progress measure in the performance tables (paragraph 112).**
- (aa) **We recommend that the school performance tables be amended to show the number and proportion of pupils who leave without sitting examinations and the number and proportion who gain no qualifications (paragraph 113).**

ANNEX

Proceedings of the Education Sub-committee relating to the Report

Wednesday 18 March 1998

Members present:

Ms Margaret Hodge, in the Chair

Valerie Davey
Caroline Flint
Mr Don FosterMrs Theresa May
Mr Nick St Aubyn

The Sub-committee deliberated.

Draft Report [Disaffected Children], proposed by the Chairman, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the Chairman's draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 114 read and agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Second Report of the Sub-committee to the Committee.*Ordered*, That the Chairman do make the Report to the Committee.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE COMMITTEE RELATING TO THE REPORT

Wednesday 25 March 1998

Members present:

Ms Candy Atherton
Charlotte Atkins
Mr Joe Benton
Mr Graham Brady
Yvette Cooper
Caroline Flint
Rt Hon Derek Foster
Mr Don Foster

Mr John Healey
Ms Margaret Hodge
Mrs Eleanor Laing
Judy Mallaber
Mrs Theresa May
Mr Nick St Aubyn
Mr Gerry Steinberg

Ms Margaret Hodge was called to the Chair.

The Committee deliberated.

Report from the Education Sub-committee [Disaffected Children] brought up and read.

Ordered, That the Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 15 read and agreed to.

Paragraph 16 read, amended and agreed to.

Paragraphs 17 and 18 read and agreed to.

Paragraph 19 read, amended and agreed to.

Paragraphs 20 to 25 read and agreed to.

Paragraph 26 read, amended and agreed to.

Paragraphs 27 to 40 read and agreed to.

Paragraphs 41 and 42 read, amended and agreed to.

Paragraphs 43 and 44 read and agreed to.

Paragraph 45 read, amended and agreed to.

Paragraphs 46 to 60 read and agreed to.

Paragraph 61 read, amended and agreed to.

Paragraphs 62 to 75 read and agreed to.

Paragraph 76 read, amended and agreed to.

Paragraphs 77 to 97 read and agreed to.

Paragraph 98 read, amended and agreed to.

Paragraphs 99 to 110 read and agreed to.

Paragraph 111 read, as follows:

“We are attracted to the idea of encouraging greater pluralism of qualifications in schools at Key Stage 4, linked with our support for a more flexible curricular offer for this age group. We welcome the Government’s plans to give schools more opportunities to offer vocational qualifications such as NVQs, but the Government could do more. We would like to see more widespread use of Part One GNVQs and basic skills qualifications in schools. They provide an extra rung on the qualifications ladder and can help prevent disaffection amongst low achieving pupils. However, these qualifications must rigorously assessed, and gaining them must represent real achievement. We welcome the increasing use of modular courses in schools, including GCSEs, and believe there would be advantage in developing a system for recognising achievement at modular level. (This could perhaps be recorded in each pupil’s National Record of Achievement.) Such a change would allow young people to take small steps towards qualifications and would help remove the fear of failure at 16 currently associated with GCSE.”

Amendment proposed, in line 3, after the word “group”, to insert the words “we recommend the abolition of A levels and Advanced GNVQs, and the introduction of a single qualifications framework”.—(*Mr Don Foster*).

Question proposed, That the Amendment be made:—Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Paragraph agreed to.

Paragraphs 112 to 114 read and agreed to.

Ordered, That the Minutes of Proceedings of the Education Sub-committee relating to the Report be annexed to the Report.

Resolved, That the Report, as amended, be the Fifth Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chairman do make the Report to the House.

Several Papers were ordered to be appended to the Minutes of Evidence.

Ordered, That the Appendices to the Minutes of Evidence taken before the Education Sub-committee be reported to the House.—(*The Chairman*)

Several Papers were ordered to be reported to the House.

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LIST OF UNPRINTED MEMORANDA

Papers have been received from the sources listed below; these have been reported to the House, but to save printing costs they have not been printed. Copies have been placed in the House of Commons Library where they may be inspected by Members. Other copies are in the Record Office, House of Lords, and are available to the public for inspection. Requests for inspection should be addressed to the Record Office, House of Lords, London, SW1A 0PW (Tel 0171 219 3074). Hours of inspection are from 9.30am to 5.00pm on Mondays to Fridays.

1. Cities in Schools
2. Mr Peter Yaxley
3. Archdiocese of Birmingham, Diocesan Schools Commission
4. Lewisham College of Further Education
5. London Borough of Lambeth
6. Dr Ann Howard, Faculty of Community Health, Royal Institute of Public Health and Hygiene
7. Further Education Development Agency
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11. The Total Learning Challenge
12. Mr Peter Wild
13. British Psychological Society
14. Board of Education, The General Synod of the Church of England
15. School Councils UK
16. Rathbone C.I.
17. The Who Cares? Trust
18. Working Group Against Racism in Children's Resources
19. The Place to Be
20. The Springline Trust
21. The Dalston Youth Project
22. Wessex EfteSkole Trust

ISBN 0-10-225698-5



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ISBN 0 10 225698 5