Child Protection, the Family and the Welfare State, 1933-1970

Jonathan Taylor

History
Magdalen College
University of Oxford

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SHORT ABSTRACT

This thesis is a study of child protection services between 1933 and 1970, with a focus on the activities of two local authorities, Birmingham City Council in the Midlands, and Westmorland Council in the north-west of England. This thesis explores the arguments articulated by senior policy makers, social workers and the parents of children placed in state and voluntary care to better understand the policies, practices, and experiences of those associated with the care system. It is argued that the efforts of both central and local government officials, tasked with protecting children's wellbeing, were often resisted by a public whose support was considered vital to keeping children safe. Acts of resistance often arose because of contrasting assessments of how best to support looked after children. Many of the practices endorsed by the state were informed by psychological principles. During the 1930s psychology was treated with scepticism by the public. In the aftermath of the Second World War, however, parents increasingly drew, selectively, on the work of psychological thinkers when opposing the practices of government social workers. By drawing upon the private correspondence of local authority staff, alongside government papers and articles published in both the national and local press, this thesis makes a substantial contribution to histories of the family and the welfare state in mid-twentieth century England. It also challenges the assumption that the public only began to take a concerted interest in child neglect following the 'discovery' of battered babies in the early 1960s.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the provision of child protection services between 1933 and 1970, with a focus on the activities of two local authorities, Birmingham City Council in the Midlands, and Westmorland Council in the north-west of England. While the history of the welfare state has been central to understandings of the mid-twentieth century, the services provided to children for whom state protection was thought necessary have been largely overlooked. This thesis seeks to rectify this. In doing so, it highlights important areas of continuity in attitudes towards family life and the central importance of class, gender and race to the experiences of children and adults who encountered the state's child protection services.

This thesis comprises five chapters which are structured chronologically to better explore change over time. Chapters 1 and 4 are primarily concerned with national changes, while chapters 2 and 5 examine comparatively the impact of these changes in Birmingham and Westmorland. The thesis begins in 1933; the year in which the Children and Young Persons Act was passed. By beginning in the inter-war period, this thesis contributes to studies which explore the extent to which the Second World War caused a significant transformation in the attitudes and services designed to support children. Existing histories have tended to treat the publication of the Curtis Report, in 1946, as a watershed moment for child welfare. Study of the 1930s allows us to re-examine this assumption. The decision to conclude in 1970 reflects the consensus among contemporaries that the Local Authority Social Services Act of that year ushered in the second stage of the welfare state. While this study is bookended by legislative milestones, the extent to which legal reforms serve as an accurate marker of change is questioned through study of the activities of local authorities and the public.

The first chapter examines the national discussions which culminated in the passing of the 1933 Children and Young Persons Act. This has important implications for prominent studies of the inter-war period which have suggested that the decade was characterised by feelings of public pessimism. Study of the 1933 Act reveals that many policy makers were optimistic about the power of experts to transform the lives of young people who were thought to be at risk of harm. This chapter reveals that many of the principles which shaped the reforms associated with the post-war period were established before the Second World War began. As boarding out became increasingly encouraged, child care practitioners became more reliant on sections of the wider community to assist with the care of looked after children. Study of local and national newspapers reveals that tabloid and broadsheet publications alike routinely devoted column inches to reporting on cases of child abuse. The tone and content of these reports reveal important differences between working class and elite cultures.

The second chapter argues that local authority officials were often aware of instances of child abuse occurring within institutions established to support looked after children. This chapter shows that by granting local authorities great autonomy the reforms contained within the Children and Young Persons Act, 1933, exacerbated pre-existing disparities in children's services. These differences are attributed, in part, to variations in the size of population, which informed the demand for services. This factor co-existed with different attitudes towards the purpose and priorities of local government, attitudes which had a profound impact on the services provided to children thought to be at risk of harm.

Chapter three explores the impact of the Second World War on child protection practices. In doing so, it tempers current understandings of the conflict which have often emphasised the way in which the outbreak of war led the state to expand its reach. Study of both national and

local policy makers, reveals that, even during wartime, parents retained considerable autonomy over how they raised their children. While the war has been credited with raising the public and political profile of experts, it is important to recognise the ways in which non-experts could, and did, defy the will of those in positions of political power. This chapter also explores the conflict's influence on post-war child protection services

Chapter four examines the history of child protection efforts in the years 1945 to 1970 and explores the ideals that guided policy makers and child-care professionals. The chapter argues that policy makers often believed that members of the public were crucial to the success of child protection efforts. These findings nuance accounts which have emphasised the rise of trained experts. Throughout this period, the press played an important role, providing both the space and information required for public debate. This work challenges the perception that the public represented little more than ignorant bystanders at a time of rising professional status. Study of child protection efforts reveals significant social divisions, ostensibly related to how best to care for children, at a time when economic affluence was thought to have narrowed social divisions. Finally, the chapter demonstrates that the family continued to be a valued social unit right through the 1960s, thereby challenging recent scholarship which has suggested that it suffered a significant decline in prestige in the latter half of the decade.

The final chapter examines the implementation of the Children Act, 1948, and subsequent reforms, in Birmingham and Westmorland. This chapter examines how far the ideals discussed in chapter four were realised in practice. The challenges faced by local authority staff and the steps taken to alleviate these difficulties are explored to better understand the relationship between national policy and local practice. It is argued that two of the key pillars of post-war

children's services – first, the desire to replicate, rebuild, and protect family units and, second, the growth in professionalism - proved more difficult to achieve than is acknowledged by the existing literature. By exploring the difficulties that local authorities encountered, this research allows us to reassess how we understand post-war British history and the influence of race and expertise on the development of welfare state.

Through a thorough analysis of a wide variety of source material – from case files and newspaper editorials to Hansard debates and retrospective oral histories – this thesis provides a more detailed understanding of the theory, practice and experiences of child protection. This thesis argues that the efforts of central and local government officials, to protect children's wellbeing, were often resisted by a public whose support was considered vital to keeping children safe. Acts of resistance often arose because of contrasting assessments of how best to support looked after children. Examination of child protection services nuances a tendency in recent scholarship to emphasise the influence of state endorsed experts on the delivery of welfare services. This thesis argues that the post-war years are better understood as a time of growing division between trained experts, whose legal authority expanded, and the public that they relied upon. By identifying the importance of the public to child protection efforts, this thesis makes a substantial contribution to histories of the family and the welfare state in mid-twentieth century England.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ABBREVIATIONS

ASW	Association of Social Workers
LA	Local Authority
LCC	London County Council
MOH	Medical Officer of Health
NCACH	National Council of Associated Children's Homes
NHS	National Health Service
NSPCC	National Society
SMOH	School Medical Officer of Health
WGPW	Women's Group on Public Welfare
WHO	World Health Organization

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis is a study of child protection services between 1933 and 1970, with a focus on the activities of two local authorities, Birmingham City Council in the Midlands, and Westmorland Council in the north-west of England. It explores the arguments articulated by senior policy makers, social workers and the parents of children placed in state and voluntary care to better understand the policies, practices, and experiences of those associated with the care system. It is argued that the efforts of both central and local government officials, tasked with protecting children's wellbeing, were often resisted by a public whose support was considered vital to keeping children safe. Acts of resistance often arose because of contrasting assessments of how best to support looked after children. Many of the practices endorsed by the state were informed by psychological principles. During the 1930s psychology was treated with scepticism by the public. In the aftermath of the Second World War, however, parents increasingly drew, selectively, on the work of psychological thinkers when opposing the practices of government social workers.

Far from diminishing in importance, following a rediscovery during wartime, this thesis will show that the family was consistently viewed as a vital social unit, one that child protection officials strove to emulate in their practices toward children in their care. The state's decision to place such a strong emphasis on the value of the family became a source of tension because child care professionals and the public often disagreed in their assessments of what made a good family. This thesis argues that the mid-twentieth century was host to important disputes over when and how privacy should be protected. With the power to make public things which may otherwise have remained private, the press served as key foot soldiers, although different titles aligned themselves with different sides of the argument. Examination of child protection services nuances a tendency in recent scholarship to emphasise the

influence of state endorsed experts on the delivery of welfare services. This thesis argues that the post-war years are better understood as a time of growing division between the principles of trained experts and the public that they relied upon. Study of the reception of child protection efforts supports David Cowan's argument, advanced with reference to mid-century parenting advice, that:

> rather than obediently implementing expert ideas, parents often ignored or criticized these suggestions, leaning on advice to reinforce decisions which they had already made, and injecting it with their own preconceptions.[1]

This thesis reveals that the consequence of these actions often impacted the children of other parents.

This introduction begins by examining the existing historiography, to which this thesis is contributing. Next, I explain how the categories of 'child' and 'child abuse' have been defined. Third, I provide an overview of the localities which serve as case studies for this project and then outline the sources that have been used. This discussion is followed by a review of the challenges encountered while conducting research for this thesis, and the strategies used to overcome them. Finally, I provide a chapter outline.

Historiography

The sections that follow discuss the themes explored by historians of childhood and children, and examine the debates associated with histories of abuse and child protection. The latter part of this review provides a survey of the history of the welfare state, which has been central to studies of English twentieth century social history.

[1] D. Cowan, '"Modern" Parenting and the Uses of Childcare Advice in Post-War England', *Social History*, 43:3 (2018), p. 335.

Writing in 1960, Philippe Ariès famously declared that that 'in mediaeval society the idea of childhood did not exist'. Ariès established the idea that childhood was not a 'natural' phenomenon, but represented different things at different points in time.[2] In the years that followed, alternative chronologies were posited as historians sought to offer a more convincing explanation of when childhood was first discovered. Early modern historians, such as Alan Macfarlane and Linda Pollock, contested that modern parental love existed long before the seventeenth century.[3] Others, such as Lawrence Stone, sought to push the crucial change in attitudes forward to the eighteenth century.[4] More recently, Hugh Cunningham has argued that 'it is in the twentieth century that there has been most rapid change in conceptualisation and experience of childhood'. Cunningham concedes that parents did show affection to children before this century, but argues that it is only in the twentieth century that the state fully enacted the ideals, first set out by Locke and Rousseau, that children should be supported to grow naturally by enjoying their own lives.[5] Study of child protection allows us to re-examine the legal definition of childhood, while also exploring the influence of age on the types of care provided.

Beginning in the 1990s, historians of childhood began to turn away from studying childhood as a social construction and began to consider children as social actors in their own right.[6] Linda Pollock and Anthony Fletcher have cautioned against drawing a clear connection between prescribed behaviours and those that were actually enacted.[7] An interest in

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[2] P. Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, [1960] (London, 1996), p. 125.
[3] A. Macfarlane, *Marriage and Love in England, 1300 - 1840: Modes of Reproduction* (Oxford, 1986); L. Pollock, *Forgotten Children: Parent-Child Relations from 1500 to 1900* (Cambridge, 1983).
[4] L. Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800* (London, 1977).
[5] H. Cunningham, *Children and Childhood in Western Society Since 1500* (Harlow, 2005), p. 202.
[6] C. Heywood, 'Centuries of Childhood: An Anniversary—and an Epitaph?', *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, 3:3 (2010), p. 359; H. Morrison, 'Children's Experiences', in H. Morrison, ed., *The Global History of Childhood Reader*, (Abingdon, 2012).
[7] Pollock, *Forgotten Children*, 54; A. Fletcher, *Growing up in England: The Experience of Childhood, 1600-1914* (London, 2008), p. xvi.

understanding the lived experiences of children has led historians to study, among other things, the games played by children, their reading habits and the relationships that they formed with their siblings.[8] Proponents of studying children's lives have rightly argued that doing so allows scholars to better understand 'the structure of the family [and] the relationship between the household and the state'.[9] Nearly twenty years after historians first began to take seriously the study of children's agency, Joseph Hawes and Ray Hiner, writing in the inaugural issue of *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, challenged historians to keep their focus on children and not return to the study of adults.[10] Hawes and Hiner acknowledge, however, that the history of childhood, which allows us to better understand the context in which children lived, can offer important insights into the lived experiences of children.[11] Likewise, Hugh Cunningham has suggested that historians of children and of childhood should invest their effort in understanding 'the relationship between public action and thought and private experience'.[12] This study has sought to heed this recommendation. What started out as a project primarily designed to uncover the lived experience of looked after children has over time, for reasons of source material, devoted greater space to the ideas, principles and practices related to the care of looked after children. While 'public action and thought' associated with child protection has been comparatively easier to capture, as far as possible the 'private experiences' of children have also been included.

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[8] N. Stargardt, *Witnesses of War: Children's Lives under the Nazis* (London, 2005); C. Kelly, '"Thank-You for the Wonderful Book": Soviet Child Readers and the Management of Children's Reading, 1950-1975', *Kritika*, 6:4 (2005), pp. 717–753; L. Davidoff, *Thicker than Water: Siblings and Their Relations, 1780-1920* (Oxford, 2012).
[9] M. Saxton, 'Introduction', *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, 1:1 (2008), p. 1.
[10] J. Hawes and R. Hiner, 'Hidden in Plain View: The History of Children (and Childhood) in the Twenty-First Century', *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, 1:1 (2008), p. 46.
[11] Ibid., 45.
[12] Cunningham, *Children and Childhood*, 201.

Historians have devoted considerable attention to tracing changing levels of public and political interest in child abuse. The 1880s have often been associated with the emergence of concerns about 'cruelty to children'. Harry Hendrick has argued that the 1889 Prevention of Cruelty to Children Act marked an important turning point in legal and social attitudes toward children which led to a 'new interventionist relationship between parents and the state'. For the first-time police were granted the ability to enter family homes to arrest parents for ill-treatment.[13] These decades also witnessed the establishment of many voluntary organisations committed to protecting children's welfare, including the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) (1884) and Dr Barnardo's Homes (1866).[14] Two studies deserve special mention. Louise Jackson's *Child Sexual Abuse in Victorian England* comprised the first book-length study to examine the treatment of child victims of sexual abuse and the welfare organisations that supported them. This study exemplifies the ways in which careful study of court records can help to shed light on highly private events. Much of Jackson's work is devoted to explaining the comparative leniency of sentences served on Victorian child abusers at a time when the public were often outspoken in their horror at child sexual abuse. Jackson's explanation draws upon the work of Harry Hendrick who has argued that the history of child welfare policy in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was characterised by shifting narratives of children as both victims of, and threats to, society.[15] This thesis, which centres on events which took place more than a generation later, allows us to examine how far the binary of victims and threats applied to children who were subject to state protection efforts in the mid-twentieth century.

[13] H. Hendrick, *Child Welfare: Historical Dimensions, Contemporary Debates* (Bristol, 2003), pp. 28–29.
[14] J. Crane, *Child Protection in England, 1960–2000: Expertise, Experience, and Emotion* (Basingstoke, 2018), p. 3.
[15] L. Jackson, *Child Sexual Abuse in Victorian England* (London, 2000), p. 7.

Lydia Murdoch's *Imagined Orphans* explores the changes which led to large residential institutions being replaced by smaller cottage communities. These insights provide a valuable prehistory to the reforms introduced during the twentieth century and help to cast these changes as part of a longer tradition of seeking to improve the care provided to looked after children.[16] Murdoch's work is especially innovative because it integrates the histories of children who were taken into charity and poor law institutions alongside those of their parents. In doing so, it reveals that children were frequently returned to their families after temporary stays in institutions, were visited by their parents and were often subject to custody disputes between their parents and authorities.[17] Murdoch's work exemplifies the importance of acknowledging the agency of parents whose children were in care. For the purposes of this thesis, Murdoch's work serves as a valuable reminder of the importance of adopting an holistic approach to studying the lives of children who were living apart from their parents. This thesis explores to what extent parents and the wider community continued to challenge the authority of policy makers.

While the late nineteenth century has been credited with an unprecedented interest in children's welfare, the five decades which followed the First World War have often been presented as a time when concerns about child abuse faded from public interest.[18] By adopting a chronological approach, this thesis re-examines the claim that during the first half of the century the issue of cruelty to children faded from public interest.[19] More recently, Adrian Bingham, Lucy Delap, Louise Jackson, and Louise Settle have argued that the 1920s

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[16] L. Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans: Poor Families, Child Welfare, and Contested Citizenship in London* (London, 2006), chap. 2.
[17] Ibid., chap. 4.
[18] H. Ferguson, *Protecting Children in Time: Child Abuse, Child Protection and the Consequences of Modernity* (Basingstoke, 2004), p. 80.
[19] I. Hacking, *The Social Construction of What?* (London, 1999), pp. 135–136; N. Parton, *The Politics of Child Protection: Contemporary Developments and Future Directions* (Basingstoke, 2014), pp. 15–16.

represented a 'time of high visibility and concern over child sexual abuse', because of campaigning by newly enfranchised female voters and female Members of Parliament.[20] Scholarship of the mid-twentieth century has primarily examined the ideas which informed services designed to promote children's welfare. Mathew Thomson has argued that during the years 1945 to the 1970s children were increasingly segregated from the outside world, particularly the urban world. These changes were accompanied by greater concern with child safety and an idealisation of the home and family.[21] Thomson focuses much of his attention on the work of social psychologists, a topic which has recently attracted growing attention.[22] Michal Shapira has shown that the middle decades of the twentieth century witnessed important changes in the way in which children were cared for, in response to the dissemination of psychological thinking. In each of these studies, however, children feature as objects of adult concerns, with far less written about children's experiences. Thomson himself concedes that while the work of scholars such as John Bowlby has been subject to considerable attention, we still lack a 'study of the broader influence, reception, and response to such thinking'.[23] This work builds upon David Cowan's recent study, which has shown how parents selectively adapted psychologically informed childcare advice, to show how the public interpreted psychological principles in relation to other people's children.[24]

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[20] A. Bingham et al., '"These Outrages Are Going on More than People Know"', *History & Policy*, February 2015; A. Bingham et al., 'Historical Child Sexual Abuse in England and Wales: The Role of Historians', *History of Education*, 45:4 (2016), pp. 414, 427.
[21] M. Thomson, *Lost Freedom: The Landscape of the Child and the British Post-War Settlement* (Oxford, 2013), p. 1.
[22] Other notable contributions include: M. Shapira, *The War inside: Psychoanalysis, Total War, and the Making of the Democratic Self in Postwar Britain* (Cambridge, 2013); J. Stewart, *Child Guidance in Britain, 1918-1955: The Dangerous Age of Childhood* (London, 2013).
[23] Thomson, *Lost Freedom*, 83.
[24] Cowan, '"Modern" Parenting and the Uses of Childcare Advice in Post-War England'.

The 1960s, and the concerns associated with 'battered child syndrome', have often been described as witnessing a 're-discovery' of child abuse.[25] Jennifer Crane has argued that public awareness of child abuse expanded during the 1960s as 'discussions of experience and emotion became increasingly visible'. Crane attributes these changes to the willingness of voluntary groups and individuals to capitalise on growing professional interest in experience and emotion.[26] The 'rediscovery of' poverty', in the mid-1960s, has been also credited with causing the 'problem family' to slip away from public interest.[27] Harry Hendrick and Michael Lambert have both argued that the death of Maria Colwell, who was murdered by her step-father, having been returned to her biological mother from foster care, in 1973, saw a return to viewing children as both the subject and object of concern. This thesis will reassess how far the 1960s marked an important moment of change in public attitudes towards child abuse.[28]

The questions posed by this thesis, and the answers it has arrived at, have been informed by and have implications that extend beyond, histories of childhood and child protection. The welfare state has been an integral part of histories of modern Britain. The inaugural issue of *Twentieth Century British History*, published in 1990, observed that one of the defining features of twentieth century British history was the 'ubiquity and authority of the state and those social institutions which [stood] between the individual and the state'. Indeed, the second volume of the journal was dedicated to exploring 'the ways in which the role of the

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[25] J. Crane, '"The Bones Tell a Story the Child Is Too Young or Too Frightened to Tell": The Battered Child Syndrome in Post-War Britain and America', *Social History of Medicine*, 28:4 (2015), pp. 767–788; Ferguson, *Protecting Children in Time*, 80, 105, 108–109; Hendrick, *Child Welfare*, 2003, 6.
[26] Crane, *Child Protection in England*, 8.
[27] J. Macnicol, 'From "Problem Family" to "Underclass", 1945-1995', in H. Fawcett and R. Lowe, eds., *Welfare Policy in Britain: The Road from 1945*, (Basingstoke, 1999), p. 90.
[28] M. Lambert, 'Between "Families in Trouble" and "Children at Risk": Historicising "Troubled Family" Policy in England since 1945', *Children & Society*, 2018, p. 4; H. Hendrick, *Child Welfare: England 1872-1989* (London, 1994), p. 242.

state in social provision … altered throughout the century'. This thesis continues in this tradition and has taken heed of the editors' advice that comparative history should not be limited to 'a nation-centred approach'.[29] It is vital to continue to develop English histories which acknowledge and explain regional differences.

While this thesis remains concerned with the state's changing relationship to its citizens, it explores this issue from a different perspective. Early histories of the welfare state were concerned with explaining the principles which underlay government reforms.[30] Studies of infant welfare in the first decades of the twentieth century have expanded to include school medical services, child guidance and child welfare. Child protection, however, has not received the same level of attention. The comparatively private nature of child protection, combined with the legal restrictions on accessing case files, have limited the sources available to historians. Laura King and Anna Davin have shown how policy makers justified investing state resources into provisions for children's welfare by presenting children as vital to the nation's future prosperity.[31] More recently, historians such as Jordanna Bailkin, Roberta Bivins, Christian Ydesen and Kevin Myers have documented the ways in which decolonisation and immigration were fundamental to the design and practice of the English welfare state in the post-war period.[32] This thesis provides historians of the welfare state with an alternative perspective from which to consider the changing relationship that developed

[29] 'Editorial', *Twentieth Century British History*, 1:1 (1990), pp. 1–8.
[30] See, for example: R. Lowe, 'The Second World War, Consensus, and the Foundation of the Welfare State', *Twentieth Century British History*, 1:2 (1990), pp. 152–182.
[31] A. Davin, 'Imperialism and Motherhood', *History Workshop*, 5 (1978), pp. 9–65; L. King, 'Future Citizens: Cultural and Political Conceptions of Children in Britain, 1930s-1950s', *Twentieth Century British History*, 27:3 (2016), pp. 389–411.
[32] J. Bailkin, *The Afterlife of Empire* (Berkeley, 2012); R. Bivins, 'Picturing Race in the British National Health Service, 1948-1988', *Twentieth Century British History*, 28:1 (2017), pp. 83–109; C. Ydesen and K. Myers, 'The Imperial Welfare State? Decolonisation, Education and Professional Interventions on Immigrant Children in Birmingham, 1948–1971', *Paedagogica Historica*, 52:5 (2016), pp. 453–466.

between the state and its younger citizens, and the extent to which these interactions were informed by racial differences.

Definitions

Historians of childhood have long emphasised the impossibility of defining childhood simply by age.[33] In fact, the ages at which certain behaviours were criminalised changed considerably during the forty years covered by this thesis. The Children and Young Persons Act of 1933 adopted different age limits for different offences. While a young person was defined as 'under 17', only a person aged under 16 could be subject to offences of neglect or cruelty.[34] Under the terms of the Children Act of 1948, local authorities had a duty to act in the interest of the welfare of anyone that 'appear[ed] to them to be under the age of seventeen'.[35] The 1962 Children and Young Persons Act enabled local authorities to advise, befriend and financially support young people, who were required to leave the care of local authorities at the age of 17, until the age of 21.[36] While most of the cases studied in this thesis relate to children aged between eight to 13, this thesis has adopted a flexible definition of childhood and youth to accommodate the range of age groups for whom local and national government officials were responsible. In this thesis, the term 'child' is used to refer to young children and the terms 'young person' and 'adolescent' have been used when discussing children over the age of thirteen.

Definitions of abuse, like those of childhood, are not straightforward. As children began to be perceived as people with rights, the question of appropriate and inappropriate use of force

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[33] L. Brockliss and H. Montgomery, 'Introduction', in L. Brockliss and H. Montgomery, eds., *Childhood and Violence in the Western Tradition*, (Oxford, 2010), p. 3; V. Morrow, 'What's in a Number? Unsettling the Boundaries of Age', *Childhood*, 20:2 (2013), pp. 151–155.
[34] Women's Group on Public Welfare, *The Neglected Child and His Family* (London, 1948), p. 74.
[35] *Children Act*, 1948, sec. 1(1).
[36] *Children and Young Persons Act*, 1963, sec. 58.

became more contested.[37] Louise Jackson has argued that 'the search for a definition of sexual abuse is … something of a red herring in a historical study'.[38] The work of the anthropologist Jill Korbin has helped to conceptualise the subject of abuse. Korbin differentiates between three types of practices. The first category relates to cultural practices which may be considered abusive by outsiders, but are approved of in communities in which they take place. The second category is characterised by individual maltreatment of children which falls outside of the culturally accepted continuum of behaviours. Finally, Korbin refers to social and structural forms of abuse, such as children suffering because of poverty, or inadequate health-care.[39] Structural or collective abuse is often 'differentially distributed. Not all families are affected, and not all children in a single family have similar experiences'.[40] While Korbin supports her argument with non-European examples, all three categories can be found in twentieth century British history. This thesis does not seek to provide a definitive definition of child abuse. By applying Korbin's framework, this work examines the extent to which definitions of, and responses to, child abuse were accepted by different sections of society. This thesis is concerned with explaining why certain contemporaries believed that particular actions towards children constituted abuse.

Local Case Studies

This thesis follows in a long tradition of using local case studies to understand the implementation of social policy decisions and the experiences of their intended beneficiaries. Until now, however, historians have predominantly focused on infant welfare and birth

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[37] Brockliss and Montgomery, 'Introduction', 7.
[38] Jackson, *Child Sexual Abuse in Victorian England*, 25.
[39] J. Korbin, 'Anthropological Contributions to the Study of Child Abuse', *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 1:1 (1977), pp. 7–24; J. Korbin, 'Children, Childhoods, and Violence', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 32 (2003), pp. 433–434.
[40] Korbin, 'Children, Childhoods, and Violence', 433.

control services, at the expense of considering child protection practices.[41] Paul Addison and Rodney Lowe have both suggested that 'comparative research is … essential to appreciate the common pressures that all welfare states have experienced and the unique response of each'.[42] Although Addison and Lowe advocate comparison at the level of the nation state, this thesis argues that intra-national comparative research is just as important to understanding the ways in which welfare policies were understood, implemented and experienced in different parts of the country. By focusing on Birmingham and Westmorland, this thesis demonstrates that the attitudes of local government officials towards spending had important ramifications for children's services.

Before examining the impact of legislative changes on child protection services, it is necessary to understand the two case studies investigated in this thesis. The decision to study these regions was informed by several different factors. Both areas boast good archival collections which run across the whole period of study, making it possible to study change over time. Furthermore, both Birmingham City Council and Cumbria County Council were prepared to release documents which contained data on living individuals. These practical areas of similarity coexisted with important social, economic, political and demographic differences.

Westmorland County Council was established in 1889, under the Local Government Act, and abolished in 1974, under the Local Government Act of 1972. Located in the north west of England, the council bordered Cumberland to the north, Lancashire to the south, and

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[41] P. Dale, 'The Bridgwater Infant Welfare Centre, 1922–1939: From an Authoritarian Concern With "Welfare Mothers" to a More Inclusive Community Health Project?', *Family & Community History*, 11:2 (2008), pp. 69–83; H. Marland, 'A Pioneer in Infant Welfare: The Huddersfield Scheme 1903–1920', *Social History of Medicine*, 6:1 (1993), pp. 25–50.

[42] R. Lowe, *The Welfare State in Britain since 1945* (Basingstoke, 2005), p. xi; I. Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 'The Road from 1945: An Interview with Paul Addison', *Contemporary Record*, 6:1 (1992), p. 189.

Yorkshire to the east. Agriculture comprised the single largest source of employment throughout the interwar period, with over 6,100 people recorded as working in the sector by the 1931 census. The Land Utilisation Survey of Great Britain, of 1931, classified 93% of the County's land as being either used either as farmland or as rough grazing.[43] Much of the housing available to working-class residents was of a poor quality. The annual report of the Medical Officer of Health for the Combined districts observed that the housing available to 'persons of the working classes' in Kendal, the county's largest town, was 'all old' and approximately half of all such housing was found to be in a 'dilapidated condition'.[44]

The rural nature of Westmorland stands in stark contrast to Birmingham, whose population density, in 1931, was over 40 times greater.[45] The development of the canals in the eighteenth century connected the city with the Mersey, the Humber and the Bristol Channel ports, and helped to facilitate the industrial development of the city.[46] By 1931, more than a quarter of all those employed in Birmingham worked in the metal industry, rising to more than a third of the industrial working population in the early post-war period.[47] Birmingham Council made considerable efforts to remedy housing defects. In 1935 a housing survey, involving

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[43] GB Historical GIS / University of Portsmouth, Westmorland AdmC through time | Agriculture and Land Use Statistics | Land Utilisation in the 1930s (LUSGB data), A Vision of Britain through Time. URL: http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/unit/10100926/cube/LUSGB Date accessed: 22nd March 2018
For further information about the survey see: L. Dudley Stamp, 'The Land Utilisation Survey of Britain', *Nature*, 129:3263 (1932), pp. 709–711.

[44] *Annual Report of the Westmorland Medical Officer of Health, 1930*, (1930), pp. 38–39.

[45] Details of population density were sourced from here: GB Historical GIS / University of Portsmouth, Birmingham MB/CB through time | Historical Statistics on Population for the Local Government District | Rate: Population Density (Persons per Acre), A Vision of Britain through Time. URL: http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/unit/10101001/rate/POP_DENS_A Date accessed: 22nd March 2018
GB Historical GIS / University of Portsmouth, Westmorland through time | Historical Statistics on Population for the Administrative County | Rate: Population Density (Persons per Acre), A Vision of Britain through Time. URL: http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/unit/10100926/rate/POP_DENS_A Date accessed: 22nd March 2018

[46] B. H. Reed, *Eighty Thousand Adolescents: A Study of Young People in the City of Birmingham* (London, 1950), pp. 11–12.

[47] GB Historical GIS / University of Portsmouth, Birmingham MB/CB through time | Industry Statistics | Persons of Working Age by Sex and 1931 Occupational Order, A Vision of Britain through Time. URL: http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/unit/10101001/cube/OCC_ORD1931 Date accessed: 22nd March 2018 Ibid., 12.

over 100 members of staff, was conducted. This found that more than 30,000 families were living in overcrowded homes.[48] In an effort to address these problems, the City Council oversaw a number of large-scale slum clearance programmes, which were combined with the construction of new housing estates.[49] More than 65,000 new homes were built between 1930 and 1938.[50]

Politically, the two regions were very different. The comparatively stable nature of politics in Westmorland stood in stark contrast to the political divisions found in Birmingham, divisions which served to encourage policy makers to embrace new ideas. For as long as it was a single seat constituency (1918-1983), Westmorland was occupied by a member of the Conservative Party. In fact, in the six general elections which followed the end of the First World War, the Conservative Party candidate was elected unopposed on four occasions. On the other hand, the political landscape of Birmingham fluctuated considerably. In the years before 1945, all the seats were represented by Conservatives, while Labour held a majority of the city's seats in every election between 1945 and 1970.[51]

These trends were replicated at the local level. In Westmorland, local elections were run on a non-partisan basis, albeit that certain candidates had clear political affiliations.[52] On many

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[48] *Report of the Birmingham Medical Officer of Health, for the Year 1936*, (1937), p. 56.
[49] *Report of the Birmingham Medical Officer of Health, for the Year 1933*, (1934), p. 40.
See also: J. W. Whitehand and C. M. Carr, 'England's Interwar Suburban Landscapes: Myth and Reality', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 25:4 (1999), pp. 483–501; J. W. Whitehand and C. M. Carr, 'The Creators of England's Inter-War Suburbs', *Urban History*, 28:2 (2001), pp. 218–234.
[50] *Report of the Birmingham Medical Officer of Health, for the Year 1938*, (1939), p. 135.
[51] 'How Birmingham Reformed', *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 12 May 1949, p. 4; 'Socialist Setback in Birmingham', *Birmingham Daily Post*, 13 May 1955, p. 1; 'Birmingham Socialists Achieve Objective', *Birmingham Daily Post*, 11 May 1956, p. 22; '13 Tory Losses in Birmingham', *Birmingham Daily Post*, 8 May 1970, p. 56.
[52] 'Other Councils', *Daily Mail*, 10 April 1964, p. 14; 'County Results', *Daily Mail*, 10 April 1970, p. 6.

occasions, local councillors were elected unopposed.[53] Indeed, some seats became available because of the non-attendance of previously elected officials.[54] As a result, many of the officials who were elected to local office remained in post for extended periods of time. Robert Crossfield, for example, was first elected leader of Westmorland Council in 1952 and retained this post until at least 1966.[55] In Birmingham, on the other hand, local politics followed a similar trajectory to its parliamentary contests.[56] During the interwar period, the Conservative party retained control of the City Council.[57] At the end of the Second World War, Labour formed its first majority national government and this result was replicated at Birmingham City Council level.[58] In the years that followed, overall control of the City Council alternated between the Labour and Conservative parties. Children's services were delivered by local authorities whose officials faced very different levels of electoral competition. These differences informed the readiness with which the respective local authorities were prepared to adopt new ideas.

Demography

As well as politics, the demographics of the two regions differed notably. Table 1 provides an overview of population differences. The urban nature of Birmingham stands in stark contrast to the predominantly rural Westmorland, although children as a proportion of the total population was similar in both regions. By 1921 Birmingham had overtaken Liverpool to become the second most populated city in England, behind London. On the other hand, by

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[53] See, for example: 'Four Unopposed Returns', *Penrith Observer*, 5 May 1931, p. 3; 'Westmorland Poll', *Lancashire Evening Post*, 24 February 1937, p. 4; 'Westmorland C.C. Elections', *Penrith Observer*, 2 March 1937, p. 2; 'Contest for Membership County Council', *Penrith Observer*, 25 March 1958, p. 1.
[54] 'Four Unopposed Returns'.
[55] 'C.C. Chairman for the Seventh Time', *Penrith Observer*, 29 April 1958, p. 13; 'Mansion May Be Centre for National Park', *The Guardian*, 2 March 1966, p. 6.
[56] For a discussion of Birmingham's local politics, see: B. Doyle, 'The Changing Functions of Urban Government: Councillors, Officials and Pressure Groups', in M. Daunton, ed., *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain, Volume III: 1840-1950*, (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 304, 306.
[57] 'Labour's Heavy Losses', *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 3 November 1930, p. 1.
[58] 'How Birmingham Reformed'.

the end of our period, Westmorland, which had always had a comparatively small population, was recorded as being the second least populated administrative county in England, after Rutland.

Table 1: Population by year

	1921		1931		1939		1951		1961	
	Total population	Total under 15 years old	Total population	Total under 15 years old	Total population	Total under 15 years old[59]	Total population	Total under 15 years old	Total population	Total under 15 years old
Birmingham[60]	919,444	262,821	1,002,603	246,795	995,039	189,312	1,112,685	263,862	1,107,187	257,752
Westmorland[61]	65,746	15,797	65,408	14,478	75,163	20,589	67,392	14,117	67,180	14,408

[59] This data refers to the ages 0 to 14¾ years
[60] GB Historical GIS / University of Portsmouth, Birmingham MB/CB through time | Population Statistics | Total Population, *A Vision of Britain through Time*: http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/unit/10101001/cube/TOT_POP
[61] GB Historical GIS / University of Portsmouth, Westmorland AdmC through time | Population Statistics | Total Population, *A Vision of Britain through Time*: http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/unit/10100926/cube/TOT_POP

These population differences were reflected in both the proportion and absolute number of children placed in care, as shown in Table 2, below. By 1970, Birmingham Council was responsible for over 46 times as many children as Westmorland. Across the period the proportion of looked after children in care relative to the rest of the population, remained relatively stable in Westmorland, while in Birmingham the figure increased steadily, with a slight dip in 1958, eventually reaching 8.1 per 1,000 of the population by 1970.

Table 2: Children in the care of Birmingham and Westmorland authorities[62]

	1952		1958		1964		1970	
	Number of children in care	Children in care per 1,000 of population	Number of children in care	Children in care per 1,000 of population	Number of children in care	Children in care per 1,000 of population	Number of children in care	Children in care per 1,000 of population
B'ham	1,502	4.8	1,276	4.1	1,722	5.6	2,579	8.5
W'land	81	4.7	59	3.5	45	2.6	55	3.1
English and Welsh LA average	452	5.6	487	5.1	462	5.1	385	4.8

The differences set out in Tables 1 and 2 were reflected in the number of services offered to children in each locality. The comparatively small population living in Westmorland, combined with low population density, meant that many parts of the county were not provided with infant welfare centres. In 1931, the departure of a large employer led to the

[62] M. D. Esposti et al., 'ICoverT: A Data Source on the Incidence of Child Maltreatment over Time in England and Wales', *Open Science Framework*, 2018, Children in Care Statistics.

closure of one of the few volunteer-led welfare centres.[63] The perception that the demands made by children were comparatively limited was also reflected in the decision to employ the same person for the posts of County Medical Officer of Health and School Medical Officer. These attitudes continued into the post-war period. In 1953, for example, it was decided that 'the number of children in the Kendal area requiring medical treatment' was so small that they could not justify paying for 'a children's ward at the Westmorland County Hospital'.[64] Several months later, in response to a Government circular which recommended 'setting up … local panel[s] of representatives of organisations concerned with Juvenile Delinquency', an issue that was thought to be associated with abused children, it was decided that 'the small amount of serious juvenile crime in the county did not warrant setting up of a local panel'.[65] When the Children Act 1948 was introduced Westmorland Council's services comprised a single residential nursery, accommodating 10 children, and a large children's home, Abbey Home, which was first opened in 1899 by the Kendal Board of Guardians.[66] As well as a small population to support, Westmorland's ability to provide a limited number of residential services was made possible by relying on out-of-area provision. The legislative requirement that courts have the option of sentencing children to remand homes, combined with the small number of such cases, resulted in the Westmorland Children's Committee entering a joint user agreement, in 1955, with Cumberland County Council for occasional use of their remand home. This arrangement worked to Cumberland's benefit. Before entering the arrangement with Westmorland, the Council had given thought to closing its remand home because of a

[63] *Annual Report of the Westmorland Medical Officer of Health, 1931*, (1931), p. 98.
[64] KA: WC/C/7/A797/1, Westmorland Children's Committee Meeting, 22 June 1953.
[65] KA: WC/C/7/A797/1, Westmorland Children's Committee Meeting, 16 September 1953.
[66] KA: WC/C/7/A797/1, Westmorland Children's Planning Sub-Committee, 15 December 1955.
On the closure of Abbey Home, see: KA: WC/W/A1568/Box 38/5, Letter to Under-Secretary of State from Clerk of the Council, 28 August 1956.
On the overcrowded condition of Abbey Home, see: KA: WC/W/A1568/Box 41/8, Letter from H.J. Bacon to Children's Officer, 11 October 1948.

shortage of referrals.[67] Later, in 1959, on learning that the Cumberland Home was full, Westmorland established a similar agreement with Lancashire County Council.[68]

Birmingham, on the other hand, was known to be in the vanguard of child welfare provision, while the large number of families for which the council was responsible ensured a reliable supply of children who could benefit from the introduction of new services. In 1931, the City council established the first Child Guidance Clinic outside of London, and four years later the city became the first of its kind to receive a grant from the Board of Education to fund the service. In the years that followed approximately half of all referrals were received through head teachers and doctors. By 1938, the clinic made use of the voluntary services of two psychiatrists, a full-time psychologist and a playroom supervisor.[69] The relocation of large numbers of families to new housing estates created new demands. While the central parts of the city were well served by infant welfare centres, the expansion of the City meant that the provision of additional welfare services became of 'increasing importance'.[70] County social workers were concerned that children on the new housing estates were 'in need of organized social activities', the absence of which was thought to lead some children to 'brood over [their] problems' and develop 'nervous symptoms'.[71]

Birmingham continued to provide a wide range of services after the Second World War. Shortly after the children's committee was established, in 1948, it was reported that

[67] KA: WC/C/7/A797/1, Westmorland Children's Committee Meeting, 11 March 1962.
[68] KA: WC/W/A1568/Box 41/29, Westmorland Children's Committee Memorandum, 16 September 1959.
[69] *Annual Report to the City of Birmingham Education Committee of the School Medical Officer, for the Year Ended 31st December 1935*, 1936, p. 26; Stewart, *Child Guidance in Britain, 1918-1955*, 66–68.
[70] *Annual Report to the City of Birmingham Education Committee of the School Medical Officer, for the Year Ended 31st December 1935*, 8; *Annual Report to the City of Birmingham Education Committee of the School Medical Officer, for the Year Ended 31st December 1936*, 1937, p. 6.
[71] *Annual Report to the City of Birmingham Education Committee of the School Medical Officer, for the Year Ended 31st December 1934*, 1935, p. 31.

'Birmingham had the largest number of deprived children and more Residential Nurseries than any other Local Authority'.[72] Within five years of the Children Act, 1948, being passed the Council was responsible for: one approved school, two hostels, two reception centres, three remand homes, seven nurseries, and three children's homes that accommodated between 80-230 children.[73] Like Cumberland, Birmingham received children from neighbouring areas, which enabled the sending authorities to stop maintaining homes in their own areas.[74] It is against this background of extreme differences in scale, that we will consider the development of child protection services in Birmingham and Westmorland. This comparison is designed to explore the extent to which the provision of child protection services were informed by local, as well as national, changes.

Sources

As with any research, the strengths and limitations of this project are informed by the source material consulted. Peter Stearns has reflected that 'the granddaddy issue [facing historians of childhood] involves the virtually unprecedented problems of getting information from children themselves, as opposed to adult perceptions and recommendations and adult-created artefacts'.[75] This thesis draws upon four main sources of information: Acts of Parliament and accompanying Hansard debates, newspaper articles, confidential case files and committee minutes, and oral histories. While many of the sources examined in the thesis are adult-authored, the information that they provide helps to create a clearer picture of the world that looked after children inhabited.

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[72] BA: BCC/1/CT/1/1/1, Birmingham Children's Committee Meeting, 15 September 1948.
[73] BA: BCC/1/CT/1/1/6, Birmingham Children's Committee, Report of Children's Officer, 22 June 1953.
[74] BA: BCC/1/CT/1/1/12, Birmingham Children's Committee, Report of the Finance and General Purposes Sub-Committee, 24 July 1959, p. 2.
[75] P. N. Stearns, 'Challenges in the History of Childhood', *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, 1:1 (2008), p. 35.
See also: C. Heywood, *Childhood in Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 2018), pp. 6–7.

Much like Jordanna Bailkin's study of decolonization, historians of child protection must acknowledge that policy makers and professionals have been especially effective in preserving their version of events in the historical archive, while first-hand accounts of those subject to their policies are much harder to find.[76] It is not surprising, therefore, that the few existing studies of the history of child protection are heavily structured around explaining legislative changes for which there is a relative plethora of material to be consulted in the form of Hansard records of parliamentary debates.[77] It is incumbent upon historians to challenge the archival authority observed by Bailkin. It is for this reason that a variety of different types of sources have been examined.

In seeking to move beyond easily accessible sources, historians should not throw the baby out with the bath water; changes legislated for in Westminster often played an important role in informing the scope and remit of child protection services. For this reason, the thesis draws upon information contained within Acts of Parliament. Indeed, the first chapter of this thesis establishes a case for why historians need to pay closer attention to an overlooked piece of legislation passed in 1933. Legislative reforms were not uniformly received. Their impact was often informed by regionally specific factors, such as the extent of existing services and the priorities of local decision-makers. While some laws, such as the 1948 Children Act, placed mandatory responsibilities upon local authorities, others, such as the 1963 Children and Young Persons Act, provided local officials with greater discretionary powers
In addition to legislation, considerable time has been spent researching the contents of parliamentary debates, as recounted within the Hansard Reports. Hansard comprises a

[76] J. Bailkin, *The Afterlife of Empire* (Berkeley, 2012), p. 10.
[77] R. Parker, *Change and Continuity in Children's Services* (Bristol, 2015).

substantially, rather than a strictly, verbatim account. Repetitions and redundancies are omitted, obvious mistakes corrected, and nothing is left out which adds to the meaning of the speech. Unlike histories of the nineteenth century, a time when Hansard reports often contained errors, this study refers to Hansard material confident that it represents an accurate record of events.[78] Hansard accounts were examined for two main reasons. First, their contents shed light on the events which took place immediately prior to an Act of Parliament being passed. Hansard Reports provide a valuable means of understanding the arguments of opponents and the aspirations and motivations of those supporting parliamentary reform. It also provides information about amendments, many of which were not incorporated into the final Act. Second, study of Hansard provides historians with a better insight into the information which sections of the public encountered. The discussions recorded within Hansard were often reprinted in local and national newspapers; the contents of Parliamentary debates quickly became known beyond the Westminster bubble.[79] Comparison of the Hansard Record, which contains the various speeches in full, and newspapers reports – which were likely to have a much wider audience – sheds light on the types of issues which newspaper editors believed would capture the interest of readers.

Study of parliamentary reform only tells us part of the story. John Macnicol, amongst others, has stressed that 'merely documenting legislative and institutional change is not enough, one must examine changes in ideas … social attitudes and relationships'.[80] More recently, David Edgerton has argued that 'the mere visibility of ideas … is no guide to their significance'.[81] Much like Peter Mandler's discussion of the field of cultural history, historians concerned

[78] B. Griffin, *The Politics of Gender in Victorian Britain: Masculinity, Political Culture and the Struggle for Women's Rights* (Cambridge, 2012), p. 33.
[79] See, for example: 'Mr Oliver Stanley's Great Speech', *Westmorland Gazette*, 16 April 1932, p. 9.
[80] J. Macnicol, 'The Effect of Evacuation of Children of School Age on Attitudes to State Intervention', in H. Smith, ed., *War and Social Change: British Society in the Second World War*, (Manchester, 1986), p. 5.
[81] D. Edgerton, *The Rise and Fall of the British Nation: A Twentieth-Century History* (London, 2018), p. xxix.

with child protection need to move beyond simply charting legislative milestones and consider their 'dissemination and influence'.[82] While the public reports of local authority committees and charitable organisations provide some insights, we are still left with, at best, a very partial understanding of children's experiences, and at worst a series of highly deceptive accounts.

Newspapers have been used as one means of better understanding the 'throw' of ideas found in Acts of Parliament and the accompanying Hansard Records.[83] As Adrian Bingham and others have noted, restrictions on access to criminal case material mean 'often newspaper coverage … comes closest to providing details of a case and the factors affecting the courtroom judgment'. In fact, police officials routinely sent newspaper reports of court cases when asked for information about teachers under investigation for blacklisting.[84] One of the central arguments of this thesis is that newspapers are a valuable historical source for three reasons. First, the press was an important medium through which people became aware of instances of child abuse. Britain was a nation of newspaper readers. At the beginning of our period, in 1934, every 100 families bought 95 daily and 130 Sunday newspapers.[85] By the middle decades of the twentieth century, the British read more newspapers per capita than any other nation.[86] Newspaper reports could transform individual tragedies, which would otherwise have been known by a comparatively small number of people, into high profile cases which were credited with stirring the nation's conscience. Bingham and others are right

[82] P. Mandler, 'The Problem with Cultural History', *Cultural and Social History*, 1:1 (2004), p. 96.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Bingham et al., 'Historical Child Sexual Abuse', 422.
[85] R. McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England 1918-1951* (Oxford, 1998), p. 503.
For a discussion of inter-war circulation figures, see: T. Jeffery and K. McClelland, 'A World Fit to Live in: The Daily Mail and the Middle Classes, 1918-39', in J. Curran and A. Smith, eds., *Impacts and Influences: Essays on Media Power in the Twentieth Century*, (London, 1987), pp. 29–30.
[86] A. Bingham, '"Putting Literature Out of Reach"? Reading Popular Newspapers in Mid-Twentieth Century Britain', in K. Halsey and W. R. Owens, eds., *The History of Reading: Evidence from the British Isles, c.1750-1950*, vol. 2, (Basingstoke, 2011), p. 139.

to argue that a 'robust investigative press' has been 'essential' to raising public awareness of child abuse.[87] Second, this thesis shows that newspapers were often understood – by politicians, public servants and the public alike – to have the power to bring about change.[88] This faith was often, but not always, well placed. The press provided a valuable forum for people to express their dissatisfaction with the way those alleged to have harmed children were treated by officials. Study of mid-century child protection efforts allows historians to better understand how readers responded to events reports in newspapers.

Finally, comparative study of newspapers, at a time when titles often catered to very different readerships, helps to reveal significant differences in people's attitudes towards state officials and how best to treat vulnerable children. In addition to recounting the facts of particular historical events, newspapers served as a conduit which enabled dozens of different opinions to coexist within a single newspaper stand. This thesis has examined material contained within the following national newspapers: *The Times*, *The Manchester Guardian*[89], *The Daily Mail*, *The Daily Express*, *The Daily Mirror*. These titles were reviewed for both historical and practical reasons. On a practical note, the digitalisation of each of these publications has made it possible to conduct far more 'ambitious and wide-ranging programmes of research'.[90] When searching through digital press and Hansard materials, care was taken to heed Bingham's suggestion that scholars should 'be both imaginative and persistent in trying

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[87] Bingham et al., '"These Outrages Are Going on More than People Know"'; Crane, *Child Protection in England*, 6.
[88] A. Bingham and M. Conboy, *Tabloid Century: The Popular Press in Britain, 1896 to the Present* (Oxford, 2015), p. 21.
[89] In 1959 the paper was renamed *The Guardian*. For more information about this change, see: G. Taylor, *Changing Faces: A History of The Guardian, 1956-88* (London, 1993).
[90] A. Bingham, 'The Times Digital Archive, 1785–2006', *The English Historical Review*, 128:533 (2013), p. 1038; A. Bingham, '"The Digitization of Newspaper Archives: Opportunities and Challenges for Historians"', *Twentieth Century British History*, 21:2 (2010), p. 226; King, 'Future Citizens', 392.
For discussion of the ethical implications of digitalisation see: H. Crossen-White, 'Using Digital Archives in Historical Research: What Are the Ethical Concerns for a "Forgotten" Individual?', *Research Ethics*, 11:2 (2015), pp. 108–119.

synonyms and other usages'. Care was also taken to consider the location and presentation of individual articles within newspapers, to avoid treating 'the newspaper archive as a repository of discrete articles'.[91]

The publications referred to above were also selected because they attracted readers of different classes and education. During this period, *The Times* and *The Guardian* were two widely read broadsheet newspapers, albeit that they were outsold by the *Daily Telegraph*.[92] The publications counted among their readers political leaders and senior officials.[93] In terms of editorial politics, the publications occupied opposite ends of the political spectrum: *The Times* was widely seen as the paper of the conservative elite, while *The Guardian* consistently championed the views on the left of the political spectrum.[94] While both publications claimed be conversing with those in power, their circulations were dwarfed by their tabloid counterparts.[95]

The popular press experienced its greatest expansion in terms of sales and readers in the 1930s and this trend continued into the post-war period. The decade was characterised by fierce competition and several newspapers regularly sold more than a million copies a day.[96] In 1933 the *Daily Express* and the *Daily Mail*, both right-leaning tabloids, were significantly redesigned and began to provide cleaner print, greater spacing and bolder headlines. The *Daily Express* outsold all other papers from the mid-1930s until 1949.[97] The most significant

[91] Bingham, 'Opportunities and Challenges', 230.
[92] A. Bingham, *Family Newspapers?: Sex, Private Life, and the British Popular Press 1918-1978* (Oxford, 2009), p. 20.
[93] Taylor, *Changing Faces*, x.
[94] McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, 506; Taylor, *Changing Faces*, 2, 6, 21, 35–36.
[95] For further information on newspaper circulation during this period see: J. Fisher, D. Denver, and J. Benyon, *Central Debates in British Politics* (Harlow, 2003), p. 197.
[96] K. Williams, *Read All About It!: A History of the British Newspaper* (London, 2009), p. 153.
[97] Bingham and Conboy, *Tabloid Century*, 12–13; Williams, *Read All About It!*, 156–159.

changes occurred at the *Daily Mirror*. As competitors began to make greater use of photos, the publication's original appeal disappeared.[98] The 'popular not vulgar' tone of the *Mail* and the *Express* began to coexist with the *Mirror*'s efforts to present itself as 'vulgar but honest'. By the start of the Second World War, the publication provided its working-class readers with a distinctive left-of-centre appeal; patriotism co-existed with a highly antagonistic attitude towards complacency among the nation's elites. In 1949 the *Mirror* overtook the *Express* as Britain's most widely read paper and in 1967 its daily sales exceeded 5.25 million copies.[99]

This study has also examined local newspapers, in part, because during the interwar period a very large proportion of households in England's largest provincial towns took a local paper. Most of these papers were sold in the evening and so did not compete with national dailies. A survey conducted in 1932 found that two-thirds of Birmingham household took a copy of the *Birmingham Mail*.[100] As with the national press, much of this research was conducted using the British Newspaper Archive (BNA), an online resource created by the British Library and findmypast. Unlike the national titles discussed above, the BNA had not yet digitalised all relevant publications. Digital copies of the major Birmingham newspapers (the *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, the *Birmingham Daily Post* and the *Birmingham Mail*) were consulted. At the time of writing, however, the BNA had yet to digitalise the *Westmorland Gazette*. This issue was partly addressed by consulting digital copies of local newspapers published in the surrounding regions (such as the *Penrith Observer* and the *Lancashire Evening Post*) this material was supplemented by reviewing microfilm copies of the *Westmorland Gazette*.[101]

[98] Bingham and Conboy, *Tabloid Century*, 9, 13.
[99] Bingham, *Family Newspapers?*, 19.
[100] McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, 505.
[101] Held at the Kendal Public Library.

To better understand the implementation, and impact, of changes passed in Parliament, the activities and attitudes of local authority and voluntary sector staff need to be examined alongside those of parents and their children. Council minute books and private correspondence have been consulted to build up a picture of the activities of local officials. While this thesis has benefited from being able to access records which are ordinarily restricted, even these documents need to be approached with caution. Children's case files often tell us more about what people who were neither children, nor those suspected of harming children, thought was true about those who were.[102] Council records do not provide a mirror image of practitioners' attitudes nor the opinions of children and their families. It is important, therefore to read the information that can be extracted from these records alongside different types of sources. Kaisa Vehkalahti is right to argue that 'when analysing child welfare sources – such as case records – … it is important to problematise whose voices are heard and recorded in the archives, and why'.[103] Only by combining a range of different sources has this research been able to trace the multiple conflicts which defined the histories of child protection.

Although the Birmingham local record office allowed me to consult the minute books of the City's Children's Committee, for which access is normally withheld, these records do not provide a complete picture of children's services. In Birmingham, most case files of former looked after children were destroyed until the mid-1980s so that few records relating to individual children's homes remain. In the late-2000s Birmingham City Council and the Heritage Lottery Fund jointly funded 'The Birmingham Children's Homes Project', which

[102] M. Peel, *Miss Cutler & the Case of the Resurrected Horse: Social Work and the Story of Poverty in America, Australia, and Britain* (London, 2012), p. 5.
See also: R. Soloway, 'Counting the Degenerates: The Statistics of Race Deterioration in Edwardian England', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 17 (1982), p. 138.
[103]K. Vehkalahti, 'Dusting the Archives of Childhood: Child Welfare Records as Historical Sources', *History of Education*, 45:4 (2016), p. 431.

sought to help fill in some of the gaps that have arisen as result of this policy.[104] This project – which sought to 'create heritage materials and prevent them being lost forever and help [to] redefine the heritage of public care provision as expressed through personal care in children's homes from 1948 to 1990' – goes some way to developing more representative archival collections.[105]

One strand of the project comprised the collation and transcription of 29 Birmingham oral histories conducted with former looked after children and staff members. These transcripts have been supplemented by material collected by the Ambleside Oral History Group. This collection was selected in part because many of the participants in the project could provide information about growing up in the Lake District, thereby helping to compensate for a comparative lack of material concerning the social history of Westmorland. The Ambleside Oral History Collection was also selected because several participants had grown up in care and provided recollections of personal experiences which are much harder to detect in other archival collections. The people interviewed as part of both collections, and the themes discussed, reflect oral histories' tradition of recording experiences and perspectives of groups of people rarely found in the archive.[106]

As with analysing any historical source, oral histories should be approached with 'a critical eye'; Ronald Grele, amongst others, has emphasised the importance of recognising that 'oral histories are products of the time of their creation'.[107] It is significant that all the interviews

[104] S. Pymer, 'Ethical Editing of Oral Histories: The Experience of the Birmingham Children's Homes Project Archivist', *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, 32:2 (2011), p. 192.
[105] I. Johnston, 'Whose History Is It Anyway?', *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, 22:2 (2001), pp. 213–229.
[106] A. Thomson, 'Unreliable Memories? The Use and Abuse of Oral History', in W. Lamont, ed., *Historical Controversies and Historians*, (London, 1998), p. 24.
[107] R. J. Grele, 'On Using Oral History Collections: An Introduction', *The Journal of American History*, 74:2 (1987), pp. 570–571.

consulted as part of this thesis were conducted prior to the recent child abuse cases involving celebrities. Apart from one interview, in which the participant referred to the Baby P case, none of the interviewees made any explicit reference to recent events informing their recollections.[108] Indeed, it was striking that many people reported that the child cruelty they described 'wouldn't happen [in this day and age]' because it 'wouldn't be tolerated today'.[109]

Use of the Birmingham oral histories brought with it a further set of challenges. All of the publicly available Birmingham transcripts have been edited, with certain names removed and on occasion whole sections of the original transcripts redacted. This means that some of the open transcripts do not provide information about individuals' lives prior to entering care or come to a very abrupt end.[110] These alterations were made even though no interviewees exercised the option to remain anonymous and all gave permission for their interviews to be used by researchers and publications. The edits were made in order to protect third parties from potentially defamatory statements which left the publisher of the material, Birmingham City Council, at risk of prosecution for libel.[111]

Oral histories have previously been used to better understand the experiences of people who have spent part of their childhood in care.[112] These sources help to reconsider the historical claims of officials who had a vested interest in presenting their work in a positive light. While historians drawing upon oral histories need to recognise that retrospective testimonies are

[108] BA: MS2838/1/25/2, Interview with SS, full transcript, p. 9.
[109] BA: MS2838/1/16/3, Interview with ML, edited transcript, p. 7; Ambleside Archive (AA): Interview with KP-Anderson.
[110] BA: MS2838/1/20/3, Interview with SH, edited transcript; see also: Pymer, 'Ethical Editing of Oral Histories'.
[111] Ibid., 196–197.
[112] B. Søland, '"Never a Better Home": Growing Up in American Orphanages, 1920–1970', *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, 8:1 (2015), pp. 34–54; S. Swain, 'Institutionalized Childhood: The Orphanage Remembered', *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, 8:1 (2015), pp. 17–33.

likely to have been informed by subsequent events, archival records must also be read as products of particular moments of history.[113]

Research Challenges

Accessing material

Studying the lives of children thought to have been, or at risk of being, abused and neglected, presents historians with a number of ethical and methodological challenges. This research has been shaped by differences in archival procedures concerning access to personal records. Many records of interest contain information of a sensitive nature as defined under the Data Protection Act, 1998 and so were restricted for 100 years. I received very different responses from the 11 local authority archives that I asked to allow me to consult restricted material. One local authority archive refused to grant me access to any restricted documents because they believed that doing so would result in private information being placed in the public domain. Indeed, information managers have noted that because 'information sensitivity is very important … the decision to restrict information is easier than the decision to declassify'.[114] Fortunately, several record offices were prepared to grant access to restricted documents, on the condition that I provided a written undertaking to comply with Section 33 of the Data Protection Act, 1998. This stipulates that 'personal data relating to living persons may … be accessed by third parties for historical or statistical purposes' on the condition that 'the data is not processed to support measures or decisions with respect to particular individuals' and that 'the data is not processed in such a way that substantial distress is, or is likely, to be caused to data subject'. To comply with section 33, when quoting from material

[113] E. T. Ewing, '"Life Is a Succession of Disappointments": A Soviet Girl Contends with the Stalinist Dictatorship', in J. Helgren and C. A. Vasconcellos, eds., *Girlhood: A Global History*, (New Brunswick, NJ, 2010), pp. 47–48.
[114] J. Kastenhofer and S. Katuu, 'Declassification: A Clouded Environment', *Archives and Records*, 37:2 (2016), p. 220.

which would ordinarily be restricted, the names of all people have been anonymised. This process was informed by guidance produced by the UK Data Archive and the Irish Qualitative Data Archive (IQDA), which serve as repositories for qualitative datasets produced by social scientists.[115] In accordance with advice given by both bodies, all major identifying data (real names and places) and all identifying details (names, street names, real names, occupational details) have been replaced with pseudonyms and vaguer descriptors. This has been done consistently throughout the document so that readers will be able to note when the same person is mentioned in different parts of the thesis. Where pseudonyms have been used, this is made clear in the accompanying footnote.

As Heidi McKee and James Porter have noted, 'archives create ethical grey zones for researchers where decisions about how to proceed – or even whether to proceed – can be difficult'.[116] Part of the reason for this is the absence of informed consent, a principle which is ordinarily central to qualitative research. This issue is especially relevant because much of the most historically insightful material consulted was collected without the consent of children or their families. Much of this material contains details about people – principally children and their parents – who were unlikely to be aware of the records that were being collected about them and may still be alive today.

Chapter Outline

This thesis comprises five chapters which are structured chronologically in order to better explore change over time. Chapters 1 and 4 are primarily concerned with national changes,

[115] 'Anonymisation', *UK Data Archive*, 2018; 'Anonymisation Guidelines', *Irish Qualitative Data Archive*, 2008.
[116] H. A. McKee and J. E. Porter, 'The Ethics of Archival Research', *College Composition and Communication*, 64:1 (2012), pp. 60, 66–68; H. MacNeil, *Without Consent: The Ethics of Disclosing Personal Information in Public Archives* (London, 1992), p. 167.

while chapters 2 and 5 discuss events which occurred in Birmingham and Westmorland. My thesis starts in 1933; the year in which the Children and Young Persons Act was passed. By beginning in the inter-war period, this thesis contributes to studies which explore the extent to which the Second World War caused a significant transformation in the attitudes and services designed to support children. As Gordon Lynch has noted, existing histories have tended to treat the publication of the Curtis Report, in September 1946, as 'a landmark intervention ushering in a new period of child welfare'.[117] Study of the 1930s provides an important means of re-examining this assertion. The extent of continuity and change in post-war welfare policies, as well as the reception of welfare interventions, comprise important wider historical debates.[118] The decision to conclude in 1970 reflects the consensus among contemporaries that the Local Authority Social Services Act of that year ushered in the second stage of the welfare state.[119] While this study is bookended by legislative milestones, the extent to which legal reforms serve as an accurate marker of change is questioned through study of the activities of local authorities and the public.

My first chapter examines the national discussions which culminated in the passing of the 1933 Children and Young Persons Act. This has important implications for prominent studies of the inter-war period which have suggested that the decade was characterised by feelings of public pessimism.[120] Study of the 1933 Act reveals that many policy makers were optimistic about the power of experts to transform the lives of young people who were thought to be at

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[117] G. Lynch, 'The Curtis Report as Post-War UK Policy Context for the Resumption of Child Migration', *Draft Chapter*, 2018, p. 1.
[118] On the question of continuity and change see: D. Fraser, *The Evolution of the British Welfare State* (Basingstoke, 2009), p. 284; Lowe, *The Welfare State in Britain since 1945*, 92.

On the issue of reception see: C. Davies, 'The Health Visitor as Mother's Friend: A Woman's Place in Public Health, 1900–14', *Social History of Medicine*, 1:1 (1988), pp. 39–59; J. Lewis, 'The Working Class Wife and Mother and State Intervention, 1870-1918', in J. Lewis, ed., *Labour and Love: Women's Experience of Home and Family, 1850-1940*, (Oxford, 1986).
[119] See, for example: 'The National Help Service...', *Daily Mirror*, 24 July 1968, pp. 12–13.
[120] R. Overy, *The Morbid Age: Britain Between the Wars* (London, 2009), p. 3.

risk of harm. This chapter also reveals that many of the principles which shaped the reforms associated with the post-war period were established before the conflict began, complementing the arguments of scholars such as Overy and Edgerton.[121]

My second chapter argues that, contrary to the suggestion that concerns about child abuse faded during the 1930s, local authority officials were often aware of instances of child abuse occurring within institutions established to support looked after children.[122] This chapter shows that by granting local authorities great autonomy the reforms contained within the Children and Young Persons Act, 1933, exacerbated pre-existing disparities in children's services. This chapter attributes these differences, in part, to variations in the size of population, which informed the demand for services. This factor co-existed with different attitudes towards the purpose and priorities of local government, attitudes which had a profound impact on the services provided to children thought to be at risk of harm.

Chapter three explores the impact of the Second World War on child protection practices. In doing so, it tempers current understandings of the conflict which have often emphasised the way in which the outbreak of war led the state to expand its reach. Study of both national and local policy makers, reveals that, even during wartime, parents retained considerable autonomy over how they raised their children. While the war has been credited with raising the public and political profile of experts, it is important to recognise the ways in which non-experts could, and did, defy the will of those in positions of political power. This chapter also explores the conflict's influence on post-war child protection services.

[121] Ibid., 364; Edgerton, *The Rise and Fall*, 222, 236.
[122] Crane, *Child Protection in England*, 4.

Chapter four examines the history of child protection efforts in the years 1945 to 1970 and explores the ideals that guided policy makers and child-care professionals. The chapter argues that policy makers often believed that members of the public were crucial to the success of child protection efforts. These findings nuance accounts which have emphasised the rise of trained experts.[123] Throughout this period, the press played an important role, providing both the space and information required for public debate. This work challenges the perception that the public represented little more than ignorant bystanders at a time of rising professional status. Study of child protection efforts reveals significant social divisions, ostensibly related to how best to care for children, at a time when economic affluence was thought to have narrowed social divisions.

Chapter five concludes the thesis by examining the implementation of the Children Act, 1948, and subsequent reforms, in Birmingham and Westmorland. This chapter examines how far the ideals discussed in chapter four were realised in practice. As part of this process, much of the chapter will explore the challenges faced by local authority staff and the steps taken to alleviate these difficulties. It is argued that two of the key pillars of post-war children's services – first, the desire to replicate, rebuild, and protect family units and, second, the growth in professionalism - proved more difficult to achieve than is acknowledged by the existing literature. By exploring the difficulties that local authorities encountered, this research allows us to reassess how we understand post-war British history and the influence of expertise on the development of welfare state. The chapter closes by examining the extent to which racial differences influenced the experiences of looked after children, their families and those seeking employment in the social work profession.

[123] H. Perkin, *The Rise of Professional Society: England Since 1880* (London, 2002), p. 405.

CHAPTER 1: NATIONAL CHILD PROTECTION FRAMEWORK, C. 1933-1939

Introduction

The state's relationship to children and their parents has been an important theme in the history of child welfare policy. Children were often cast as objects of optimism and anxiety, thereby helping to justify the decision to spend more on their welfare.[124] This chapter charts the ways in which legislative changes influenced these relationships, and argues that as the state transferred power to professionals, at the expense of parents, the seeds of later conflict were planted. Histories of the 1930s have focused predominately on State efforts to combat infant welfare and juvenile delinquency; compared to the post-war period, discussion of child protection efforts is remarkably scarce.[125] This scholarly oversight is especially regrettable because reforms enacted in the 1930s laid many of the central principles of subsequent legislative change. Introduced between the famous 1908 and 1948 Children Acts, the 1933 Children and Young Persons Act has been egregiously overlooked by existing scholarship. When the 1933 Act has been discussed, the focus has primarily concerned its implications for the treatment of young offenders.[126] The Act also enhanced officials' power to intervene in the private lives of families in the name of protecting children. This chapter advocates the inclusion of the 1930s as a key moment in the development of child protection efforts through five related sections. The chapter begins by outlining the key areas of historical debate. It then explains the background to the 1933 Children and Young Persons Act, and some of the central principles underpinning the legislation. Next, the reforms designed to

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[124] Hendrick, *Child Welfare*, 2003, 7; King, 'Future Citizens'; J. Stewart, 'Children, Parents and the State: The Children Act, 1908', *Children & Society*, 9:1 (1995), p. 90.

[125] For discussions of infant welfare during the 1930s, see: D. Dwork, *War Is Good for Babies and Other Young Children: History of the Infant and Child Welfare Movement in England, 1898-1918* (London, 1986); J. Lewis, *Politics of Motherhood: Child and Maternal Welfare in England, 1900-39* (London, 1980).

For discussions of juvenile delinquency during the 1930s, see: V. Bailey, *Delinquency and Citizenship: Reclaiming the Young Offender, 1914-1948* (Oxford, 1987).

[126] Bailey, *Delinquency and Citizenship*, chaps 6–7; L. Jackson, 'Care or Control? The Metropolitan Women Police and Child Welfare, 1919–1969', *The Historical Journal*, 46:3 (2003), pp. 623–648.

support children at risk of parental harm are examined. As part of this, privacy is shown to be a particularly important, but contentious, issue. The fourth section considers boarding out as a child protection practice, and discusses the ways in which the Act promoted this. The chapter closes by challenging existing histories, which have implied that despite legislative reform the public was relatively apathetic towards the issue of cruelty to children.

Historiography

Few decades in modern history have elicited such contrasting assessments. Popular memory has often associated the 'Thirties' with poverty, ill-health and the rise of fascism. Revisionist histories have pushed back against this assessment and sought to emphasise the benefits experienced by children during this period.[127] These contrasting assessments are encapsulated in the titles of two studies, Martin Pugh's *We Danced All Night* and Richard Overy's *The Morbid Age*.[128] Martin Pugh, who has adopted a more optimistic assessment, has argued that the inter-war period witnessed a 'trend … towards an increasingly calm and domesticated society as people devoted more time to the home, family and marriage'.[129] A reduction in birth and infant mortality rates meant that by the 1930s children were more likely to grow up within a family comprising one or two siblings. Parents enjoyed greater opportunities to spend time with their children.[130] In 1936 *The Times* described the 1930s as an age of 'wanted children' and three years earlier Britain observed its lowest birth rate.[131] Writing in the latter half of the decade, George Orwell observed that for working men 'present society [centres

[127] Williams, *Read All About It!*, 151.
[128] M. Pugh, *We Danced All Night: A Social History of Britain between the Wars* (London, 2009); Overy, *The Morbid Age*.
[129] Pugh, *We Danced All Night*, x.
[130] Ibid., 197.
[131] 'The Dwindling Family: Planning for Population', *The Times*, 29 September 1936, p. 15; P. Thane, *Divided Kingdom: A History of Britain, 1900 to the Present* (Cambridge, 2018), p. 122.
For further discussion of fertility rates, see: J. Gardiner, *The Thirties: An Intimate History* (London, 2011), pp. 561–563.

around] … family life, the pub, football, and local politics'.[132] Demographic change was accompanied by an expansion in products marketed at children; the 1930s saw the launch of *Dandy* and *Beano*, along with a growing number of toys and games.[133] Pugh's optimistic thesis has found support from Jon Lawrence who has shown that many British workers, particularly those living in the south, did well in the 1930s. Working-class home-ownership more than doubled across the decade, rising from approximately 8% in 1930 to 18% in 1938.[134] It was often cheaper to buy a new suburban house with a mortgage than to rent one.[135]

Overy's study of intellectual culture paints a very different picture. Overy argues that during the 1930s 'a strong presentiment of impending disaster touched many areas of public discourse' such that 'anxiety [w]as one of the defining features of contemporary culture'. The tone of the interwar period comprised, Overy argues, 'a language of menacing catastrophe in most areas of public debate' and a mood 'of despair or helplessness or sober pessimism' was pervasive.[136] These contrasting assessments partly arise because of the historians' decision to look at different areas of history; the popular culture studied by Pugh stands in stark contrast to the elite source material examined by Overy. Study of child protection services, challenges Overy's assertion that the 1930s represented a time of elite pessimism. The faith that sections of the political elite placed in scientific experts meant that they were optimistic about their ability to transform children's lives for the better.

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[132] G. Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier*, [1937] (London, 2001), p. 164.
[133] Pugh, *We Danced All Night*, 198.
[134] J. Lawrence, 'Class, "Affluence" and the Study of Everyday Life in Britain, c.1930–64', *Cultural and Social History*, 10:2 (2013), pp. 273–275.
[135] P. Scott, 'Marketing Mass Home Ownership and the Creation of the Modern Working-Class Consumer in Inter-War Britain', *Business History*, 50:1 (2008), p. 9.
[136] Overy, *The Morbid Age*, 2, 3, 360.

Overy concedes, however, that 'many of the post-war reforms had their roots in the inter-war years and were not post-war inventions'.[137] Likewise, Edgerton has argued that 'the welfare state ... owes a very great deal to innovations of the 1920s' so that by the 1930s there was 'an elaborate system of welfare for the working class: all was ready for Sir William Beveridge to rationalize'.[138] Edgerton goes as far to argue that the United Kingdom went to war in September 1939 'with a welfare state already in place'.[139] Study of child protection nuances these perspectives. While the thirties did witness important policy reforms, when Britain declared war on Germany significant regional disparities characterized the implementation of policy changes. This thesis supports Geoffrey Field's assertion that 'what was new after the war was not that social policy flowed in radically new directions, but that its scope and comprehensiveness widened measurably'.[140]

Background to 1933 Act

The involvement of women in the passage of the 1933 Children and Young Person's Act supports the findings of recent histories, which have challenged earlier scholarship that suggests that the women's movement lost its direction in the decades after the First World War.[141] In July 1927, Sidney Harris, the Assistant Private Secretary with responsibility for the Children's Branch of the Home Office, suggested that a Bill be presented to Parliament which would enact the recommendations of three separate reports: The Child Adoption Committee (Third Report), 1926, the Young Offenders Committee, 1927, and the Sexual

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[137] Ibid., 364.
[138] Edgerton, *The Rise and Fall*, 222, 236; D. Edgerton, 'War, Reconstruction, and the Nationalization of Britain, 1939–1951', in M. Mazower, J. Reinisch, and D. Feldman, eds., *Post-War Reconstruction in Europe: International Perspectives, 1945-1949*, (Oxford, 2011), p. 31.
[139] Edgerton, *The Rise and Fall*, 237.
[140] G. Field, 'Perspectives on the Working-Class Family in Wartime Britain, 1939–1945', *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 38 (1990), p. 20.
[141] R. Toye and J. Gottlieb, 'Introduction', in J. Gottlieb and R. Toye, eds., *The Aftermath of Suffrage: Women, Gender, and Politics in Britain, 1918-1945*, (Basingstoke, 2013), p. 5.
For an example of earlier histories see: S. Kent, *Making Peace: The Reconstruction of Gender in Interwar Britain* (Princeton, 1993).

Offences Committee, 1925. These committees, which were formed in response to campaigns waged by newly enfranchised female voters and female Members of Parliament, caused the 1920s to become a 'time of high visibility and concern over child sexual abuse'.[142] Harris believed that his proposed Bill would reform child welfare provision, including the registration and inspection of voluntary homes. While Harris was confident that such a Bill was 'not likely to be controversial', Adrian Bingham and others have revealed that civil servants considered the 1925 Committee 'a great source of embarrassment' and reflected that 'sooner or later it may be necessary to say outright that many of the Committee's recommendations are not acceptable'.[143] Despite this opposition, by January 1928 the Home Office had begun discussing the financial implications of a possible bill with the Treasury and local authorities. Election cycles and restrictions on parliamentary time, rather than a lack of support on the part of successive Home Secretaries, delayed the introduction of the bill. In the end, six years passed between Harris's proposals and the Children and Young Persons Act being enacted.[144] In closing stages of the Bill, women MPs played an important role on the Bill's Standing Committee. At a time when just 14 MPs were women, seven were on the Committee and all spoke and put forward amendments. The contribution of these women was consistent with a practice observed throughout the inter-war period of placing women on select committees responsible for issues which were defined as women's issues.[145] In 1932 the Children and Young Persons Act was passed and a year later an Act of the same name was passed which consolidated the 1908 Children Act and the Act of 1932.[146]

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[142] Bingham et al., '"These Outrages Are Going on More than People Know"'; Bingham et al., 'Historical Child Sexual Abuse', 414, 427.
[143] Bingham et al., 'Historical Child Sexual Abuse', 427.
NA: HO/144/20112, Sexual Offences Against Young Persons, 1929–32.
[144] Bailey, *Delinquency and Citizenship*, 69–72; R. M. Morris, 'Harris, Sir Sidney West (1876–1962)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2008.
[145] M. Takayanagi, 'They Have Made Their Mark Entirely Out of Proportion to Their Numbers: Women and Parliamentary Committees, c. 1918-1945', in J. Gottlieb and R. Toye, eds., *The Aftermath of Suffrage: Women, Gender, and Politics in Britain, 1918-1945*, (Basingstoke, 2013), pp. 193, 185.
[146] S. W. Harris, 'The New Children Act', *The Magistrate*, 3:46 (1933), p. 697.

The reforms introduced by the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 extended beyond strengthening child protection policies. Significant changes were introduced concerning the employment of children and young people as well as the treatment of young offenders. Before turning to changes in child protection, three central principles – expert informed training and inspection, changes in the attitudes towards children brought before the courts, and the value of privacy – need to be discussed.

Courting Expertise

Many of the reforms introduced by the Act were informed by a faith in the ability of experts to improve the support provided to young people who, whether as offenders or victims of maltreatment, appeared before the courts. The faith placed in experts by the 1933 Act challenges Overy's assertion that 'the human and natural sciences … played a key part … in creating the morbid culture that inhabited the Western world view in the 1920s and 1930s'.[147] While Overy has argued that the inter-war period was characterized by a 'diagnostic culture' which sought to 'examin[e] the pathology of civilization', diagnostic methodologies were also thought to be applicable to young people, upon whom future civilization depended.[148] The 1933 Act should be seen as an important moment in what Kevin Myers has described as the inter-war period's 'proliferating experts whose activities were central to the expansion of the state' and who were 'crucial in the identification of "problem" groups and behaviours'.[149] Successive drafts of the bill began by reforming the juvenile courts – its remit, constitution and procedures – on the understanding that it formed the cornerstone of efforts to deal

[147] Overy, *The Morbid Age*, 3–4.
[148] Ibid., 367.
[149] K. Myers, 'Contesting Certification: Mental Deficiency, Families and the State in Interwar England', *Paedagogica Historica*, 47:6 (2011), p. 755.

scientifically with young people.[150] This stood in stark contrast to the 1908 Children Act, which established juvenile courts and required that children under 16 should be tried at different times or at a different place from ordinary courts.[151] Sidney Harris, who worked at the Children's Branch of the Home Office, later described the changes to juvenile courts in the 1908 Act as a mere 'afterthought'.[152] The first purpose-built juvenile court was opened in Birmingham, in 1928, as a gift to the city from Geraldine and Barrow Cadbury.[153] The 1933 Act required that, wherever possible, juvenile court magistrates should meet regularly to discuss their experiences. Writing three years later, the magistrate Leo Page, who served as the chairman of a local juvenile court, observed that these meetings could be 'of great value to magistrates' and provided an opportunity to share their thoughts on social work.[154] The Home Office also stipulated Juvenile Court justices should be chosen from a specially qualified panel. What it meant to be 'specially qualified' was left to the discretion of the courts.[155] Assessments of magistrates' aptitudes were often heavily gendered. Prior to the bill being passed, an amendment was proposed which called for all courts to include at least one female magistrate. Proponents argued that the suggested clause had 'the support of a very large number of social workers'. Although regional shortages of female magistrates led to the defeat of the amendment, opponents accepted that there was an 'advantage [to] having a woman on … juvenile courts'.[156] Once the Bill had passed, Home Office officials argued that there was 'special need for the services of women magistrates' who were believed to be 'inclined towards practical methods of promoting child welfare'.[157] The expertise considered

[150] Bailey, *Delinquency and Citizenship*, 76.
[151] S. M. Cretney, *Family Law in the Twentieth Century: A History* (Oxford, 2003), p. 647.
[152] Harris, 'The New Children Act', 697.
[153] Bailey, *Delinquency and Citizenship*, 70.
[154] L. Page, *Justice of the Peace*, R. M. Jackson and P. J. Halnan, eds., [1936] (London, 1967), pp. 178–179; C. Mullins and A. Samuels, 'Page, Sir Leo Francis (1890–1951)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004.
[155] Harris, 'The New Children Act', 698.
[156] Hansard HC Debate vol 265 col 2225-2231 (12 May 1932).
[157] 'A Summary of the New Children Act', *The Magistrate*, 3:46 (1933), p. 702.

crucial to the Act's success coexisted with the belief that women were especially well placed to help children avoid the morbid future documented by Overy. These insights support the arguments of Gottlieb, Toye, and Thane and Breitenbach who have challenged Susan Kingsley Kent's assertion that after the First World War feminists lost sight of the strong egalitarian values which had informed their pre-war actions.[158] As Breitenbach and Thane note, 'political institutions [were not] … the only means by which women [could] engage with politics and the state, nor the only means by which they [could] influence policy'.[159] Women were seen as ideally placed to inform the implementation of policies designed to support the most vulnerable in society.

Services designed to support children came under increasing pressure to professionalize their workforce. This was shown most clearly in the field of probation work, which was subject to a Departmental Committee whose findings were reported in 1936. The 1933 Act allowed courts to issue supervision orders, which required probation staff to visit, advise, and befriend maltreated young people.[160] The 1936 Committee noted that most members of the probation services had not received any social work training, and were often drawn to the profession by a sense of vocation. This was no longer felt to be acceptable:

> The need for training is now generally recognised in all branches of social work and there is an increasing tendency to insist on the possession of a social science diploma or a similar qualification.[161]

See: A. Logan, '"A Suitable Person for Suitable Cases": The Gendering of Juvenile Courts in England, c. 1910–39', *Twentieth Century British History*, 16:2 (2005), pp. 139–140.

[158] Kent, *Making Peace*; P. Thane and E. Breitenbach, 'Introduction', in E. Breitenbach and P. Thane, eds., *Women and Citizenship in Britain and Ireland in the 20th Century: What Difference Did the Vote Make?*, (London, 2011); Toye and Gottlieb, 'Introduction'.

[159] Thane and Breitenbach, 'Introduction', 8.

[160] Home Office, *Fifth Report on the Work of the Children's Branch* (London, 1938), pp. 19–20.

[161] Home Office, *Report of the Departmental Committee on the Social Services in Courts of Summary Jurisdiction*, Cmd. 5122 (London, 1936), pp. 131–132.

This need was thought be especially acute as 'the range of the probation officers' duties had widened and 'the technique of their work has become more scientific'.[162] The importance of training was noted by social commentators. Earlier, in 1933, the magistrate and youth club founder Basil Henriques noted that 'the work of the probation officer for boys below the age of 21 is that of an expert, and it requires specialized training to be able to do it properly'.[163] While Overy credited science with increasing public anxiety, study of child protection reveals that the same discipline was considered vital to safeguard the nation's future citizens.

Probation officers also played an important role in providing courts with evidence about the young people before them. Prior to the Bill being introduced, arrangements to learn more about young people before the courts prior to determining their care arrangements were often extremely limited. The Young Offenders Committee recommended that 'a much better system of examination and observation [was] required', to allow juvenile magistrates to make more informed decisions.[164] As part of this, the Committee noted that:

> Though psychology is still a comparatively new science a great deal of attention is being given to it and many medical men constantly apply its principles in their private practice … in our opinion all the resources of approved medical science in relation to the functions of the mind should be available under any system of observation such as we envisage.[165]

Despite the committee recommending that the government introduce observation centres, and the popularity of the idea amongst child welfare groups, the financial circumstances that surrounded the introduction of the Bill led the government to oppose their inclusion on

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[162] *Ibid., 124.*
For further discussion of probation workers see: M. Nellis, 'The Century of Probation: Continuity and Change in the Probation Service in England and Wales 1877-1998', *Social Services Research*, 3 (1998), pp. 1–18.
[163] B. L. Q. Henriques, 'The Causes and Cure of Crime: A Social Worker's Point of View', *The Howard Journal*, 3:4 (1933), p. 68; 'Henriques, Sir Basil Lucas Quixano (1890–1961)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004.
[164] *Departmental Committee on the Treatment of Young Offenders*, Cmd. 2831 (London, 1927), p. 44.
[165] Ibid., 43.

economic grounds.[166] While King has argued that conceptualising children as future citizen helped to create a political consensus to invest in them, there were clear limits to what the state was willing to spend.[167] Two years after the Act was introduced the Government announced a policy of rearmament.[168] As the decade went on, the government's decision to increase rearmament spending limited the amount that could be invested in initiatives to support children and their families.[169] In 1936, Oliver Stanley, President of the Board of Education, refused a Labour Party motion to provide State maintenance grants to children, aged 14 and 15, who remained in school. This decision was criticised by sections of the left-wing press who believed that it reflected a government that prioritised rearmament over education.[170] In response to Stanley's position, the artist Will Dyson, whose work was often published in the *Daily Herald*, produced a cartoon, below, with the caption 'Children (and other trivialities) last! "Battleships come before Education" Tory cry in the Commons'. Nicholas Crafts and Terence Mills have argued that the government's policy of rearmament 'provided a significant stimulus to [economic] recovery in the late 1930s'.[171] In the mid-1930s the decision to devote funds to rearmament was perceived to come at the expense of children's welfare.

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[166] Hansard HC Debate vol 261 col 1242-1243 (12 February 1932); 'The Treatment of Offenders', *The Manchester Guardian*, 12 October 1927, p. 4.
For a discussion of the economic context, see: R. Middleton, 'British Monetary and Fiscal Policy in the 1930s', *Oxford Review of Economic Policy*, 26:3 (2010), pp. 414–441.
[167] King, 'Future Citizens'.
[168] N. Crafts and T. Mills, 'Rearmament to the Rescue? New Estimates of the Impact of "Keynesian" Policies in 1930s' Britain', *The Journal of Economic History*, 73:4 (2013), p. 1082.
[169] For a discussion of interwar rearmament, see: D. Edgerton, *Warfare State: Britain, 1920-1970* (Cambridge, 2006), chap. 1; Crafts and Mills, 'Rearmament to the Rescue? New Estimates of the Impact of "Keynesian" Policies in 1930s' Britain'.
[170] 'Battleships Before Education', *Daily Herald*, 13 February 1936, p. 17; 'The School-Leaving Age', *The Manchester Guardian*, 9 March 1936, p. 6.
[171] Crafts and Mills, 'Rearmament to the Rescue? New Estimates of the Impact of "Keynesian" Policies in 1930s' Britain', 1096.

Figure 1: Will Dyson, 'Finance 1936'[172]



Treasury Officials were keen to avoid establishing a precedent whereby Central Government would relieve local authorities of their financial duty to fund services of this kind.[173] For opponents, such as the educationalist and socialist politician, Lord Sanderson, the decision represented a 'false economy' and failed to acknowledge the 'good investment' that observation centres represented.[174] For child welfare proponents, children's services were thought to have been overlooked by a government preoccupied with rearmament.

[172] British Cartoon Archive: WDC0150, Will Dyson, 'Finance 1936', [n.d. 1936], ink and crayon on card, 51 x 54 cm.
[173] Bailey, *Delinquency and Citizenship*, 85–88.
[174] Hansard HL Debate vol 84 col 464 (26 May 1932); Morris, 'Harris, Sir Sidney West (1876–1962)'.

Observation centres were not the only means of information, however. Before the passing of the 1933 Act, a limited number of courts routinely requested information about a child. Section 35 of the 1933 Act standardised this procedure, so that in all cases of suspected maltreatment information about a child had to be sought from a probation officer and the local authority. Courts were required to be informed about children's home surroundings, school records, health and character. These changes occurred at a time of growing interest in the contribution that could be made by the field of psychology. Henriques argued that 'no Children's Court can adequately deal with their cases unless there is a Psychiatrist to advise the Bench'.[175] Scientific insights were thought to provide a valuable complement to the work of professionals concerned with children's welfare.

Inspection

The 1933 Act extended officials' responsibilities beyond the court room, by requiring closer inspection of the care providers to which children were entrusted by magistrates. The conditions that these inspections revealed caution against viewing the years after the Second World War as a sudden moment of discovery. Until the 1933 Act, there were no reliable records of the number of voluntary institutions established to support neglected children and only a minority were inspected by government officials.[176] Section 93 of the Act required all voluntary homes to register with the Secretary of State.[177] By 1938 more than a thousand voluntary homes had done so. Section 94 of the Act authorized the Secretary of State to arrange the inspection of voluntary homes that were not already subject to inspection by a government department, and within five years more than 300 homes had been visited under

[175] Henriques, 'The Causes and Cure of Crime', 67.
[176] C. Burt, *The Young Delinquent* (London, 1925), p. 116.
[177] Home Office, *Fifth Report on the Work of the Children's Branch*, 103–104.
For details of the information required, see: 'Children and Young Persons Act: The Voluntary Home Rules', *The Magistrate*, 3:48 (1933), pp. 741–742.

this clause. Officials with experience of visiting homes over several decades were broadly optimistic and noted that 'the old system of repression, locked doors, silence at work [and] at meals … [was] much less frequently found'.[178] Inspections, however, still revealed cause for concern, with certain institutions described as 'appalling'. Many homes had insufficient bathrooms and bedding was often discovered to be thin and worn out. Earlier, in 1932, an inspection of a children's home used by Birmingham Council, found that 'about half the beds were of a very uncomfortable type'.[179] The Home Office reported that some homes continued to dress girls in matching 'charity' uniforms and monotonous diets persisted. Financial hardship, often compounded by inadequate senior management, prevented many voluntary homes from improving the food supplied to children in their care.[180]

The findings of the Home Office in 1938, when read alongside later publications, serve as a useful point of comparison. As we shall see, the Curtis Report, published shortly after the Second World War, also documented instances of poor care. Where the reports differed, however, was in their public reception. The Curtis Report was described by certain sections of the press as 'the most terrifying official report ever written'.[181] In contrast the Fifth Report attracted very limited press coverage, and was thought noteworthy by *The Times* for being the first state paper to include an extract from *Jeeves and Wooster*. When commenting on the substance of the findings, the tone was one of optimism rather than condemnation. The report demonstrated, *The Times* argued, that the work of the Children's Branch of the Home Office comprised 'one of the most inspiring and hopeful of all philanthropic enterprises'.[182] This sympathetic assessment of the Children's Branch of the Home Office reflected an elite faith

[178] Home Office, *Fifth Report on the Work of the Children's Branch*, 104–105.
[179] BA: BCC/1/BH/5/5/5/1/2, Meeting of the Cottage Homes and Residential Schools Sub-Committee, 7 March, 1932.
[180] Home Office, *Fifth Report on the Work of the Children's Branch*, 106–109.
[181] 'Name These People', *The Daily Mirror*, 29 October 1946, p. 2.
[182] 'Wards of State', *The Times*, 27 January 1938, p. 13.

that scientifically informed changes would contribute to a better future.[183] This faith, however, did not go unchallenged.

Attitudes towards children

Influenced by the experts that courts were required to consult, the 1933 Act encouraged officials to treat young offenders and neglected children alike.[184] Speaking in 1938, the under-secretary at the Home Office, Geoffrey Lloyd MP, noted that 'there is not much difference fundamentally between children who are in need of care and protection and children who have actually committed a small offence'. Lloyd argued that 'the children in the care and protection class are those in bad circumstances who are, no doubt, just about to commit an offence if the process goes a little further'.[185] The juvenile magistrate Leo Page went one step further, and argued that 'although they have not been charged with an offence … the care or protection cases are often worse in morals and behaviour than any delinquents with whom justices have normally to deal'.[186] These observations were not without precedent. In the mid-1920s, the Committee on Young Offenders extended its remit to include services provided to neglected children, because issues of juvenile delinquency and children's welfare were 'closely connected' and so could 'conveniently be dealt with together'.[187]

The flattening of these divisions was most evident in the introduction, in 1933, of approved schools, which removed the 'obsolete distinction' between industrial schools and reformatory schools.[188] Children sent to such schools were classified by their age and the nature of

[183] H. Mannheim, *The Dilemma of Penal Reform*, (1939), pp. 169–170.
[184] Hansard HL Debate vol 246 col 219 (24 January 1963).
[185] Hansard HL Debate vol 332 col 969-970 (1 March 1938); Mannheim, *Penal Reform*, 180.
M. C. Curthoys, 'Lloyd, Geoffrey William, Baron Geoffrey-Lloyd (1902–1984)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2013.
[186] Page, *Justice of the Peace*, 197.
[187] *Report of Young Offenders Committee*, 6.
[188] Home Office, Children and Young Persons Act, 1933, Circular No. 665,560/2: 13.

training required. School managers could no longer refuse particular young people and the Home Secretary was empowered to transfer children from one school to another.[189] This reform received a mixed reception which was indicative of wider social divisions regarding how best to support vulnerable children. The move was welcomed by professional child welfare bodies, including the Child Guidance movement and the Howard League, who believed there was no injustice in placing delinquent and non-delinquent children together.[190] Advocates of the change acknowledged that the public disagreed and believed there was a 'great gulf fixed, morally, between the child who has been proved guilty of an offence and the one who has not'.[191] This view was also held by a minority of parliamentarians.[192] Voluntary organisations also discriminated between groups of children, depending on the reason they had been placed in care. This was particularly true when caring for the victims of sexual abuse, whose presence could be seen to threaten the 'innocence' of others.[193] This rationale was affirmed by the 1925 Sexual Offences Committee, which noted that 'children who have been subject to more than one indecent assault' could become 'a source of danger to other children'.[194]

Disagreement regarding how best to support children, which arose in part from disparities in people's confidence in expert opinion, extended beyond approved schools to attitudes towards psychology. Policy makers' confidence in science was not shared by all. Indeed,

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Earlier, the 1908 Act had blurred the boundaries between the two types of school by making it possible to transfer young people between them. See, Stewart, 'Children, Parents and the State', 92.
For a discussion of the origins of industrial and reformatory schools, see: S. M. Cretney, *Family Law in the Twentieth Century: A History* (Oxford, 2003), p. 630.

[189] Bailey, *Delinquency and Citizenship*, 98.
[190] 'Editorial', *The Howard Journal*, 4:2 (1935), p. 123; Stewart, *Child Guidance in Britain, 1918-1955*, 84.
[191] 'Editorial', 1935, 123.
[192] See, for example: Hansard HC Debate vol 324 col 1382 (4 June 1937).
[193] P. Cox, 'Girls, Deficiency and Delinquency', in D. Wright and A. Digby, eds., *From Idiocy to Mental Deficiency: Historical Perspectives on People with Learning Disabilities*, Studies in the Social History of Medicine, (London, 1996), p. 194.
[194] *Departmental Committee on Sexual Offences Against Young Persons*, Cmd. 2561 (London, 1925), p. 66.

recognising the distrust shown by some practitioners towards the claims of science nuances Overy's assertion that 'scientific solutions … enjoy[ed] support from a wide circle of influential thinkers', and it was widely believed that 'science represented some form of absolute truth'.[195] Five years after the 1933 Act had been passed, the Home Office noted that 'the attitude of the ordinary member of the public to medical psychology is perhaps not yet one of complete confidence' and observed that the efforts of 'ignorant amateurs … [and] pure charlatans' undermined the profession.[196] At times this distrust was presented in heavily classed terms. In 1937 James Gillespie, who had previously worked as an assistant lecturer at the University of Manchester, observed that 'the working-class at present can place very little reliance … upon scientists', in part because of the 'social origin of the majority of scientific workers' since 'most are drawn from the ranks of the bourgeoisie'. While Gillespie, whose opinions were printed in the official magazine of the National Council of Labour Colleges, was writing for a very particular – leftist – audience, his remarks are consistent with the observations of middle-class welfare workers who encountered working-class resistance to their 'scientifically' informed methods.[197] Indeed, scepticism of the claims of scientists was also expressed by Members of Parliament. Conservative MP Noel Goldie, for example, argued that approved schools would perform better 'if there was just a little more practical sense and a little less of the Institute of psychology'.[198] These comments contextualise the work of John Stewart who has charted the rise of child guidance, which was underpinned by scientific pretensions.[199] Although science was increasingly invoked as a source of authority by policy makers, it was not uncritically received.

[195] Overy, *The Morbid Age*, 373, 374.
[196] Home Office, *Fifth Report on the Work of the Children's Branch*, 17–18.
[197] J. Gillespie, 'How Much Can We Expect from Science', *The Plebs*, 30 (1938), p. 67.
[198] Hansard HC Debate vol 324 col 1387 (4 June 1937).
[199] Stewart, *Child Guidance in Britain, 1918-1955*, chap. 3.

While courts were encouraged to treat all children attending court alike, the 1933 Act simultaneously sought to accentuate the differences between adults and children in the hope that greater informality would make it easier for children to provide evidence. Changes to court room procedures reflected the belief, articulated in the 1925 Sexual Offences committee, that children were ill-suited to the formality of adult settings. The 1933 Act required that juvenile courts either sit in a different building or room from that of the other courts or on different days from those of other courts.[200] Previously, juvenile courts could sit on the same day as adult courts, at different times.[201] The changes introduced in 1933 were indicative of efforts to increase the divide between children and adults. Much like the 1925 Committee, supporters of this change were keen to emphasise the need to do away with the formality found in adult courts. Leo Page noted that 'the more we insist upon formality … the more tightly do we shut the mouths of many children'.[202] When dealing with juvenile delinquents, courts were encouraged to 'act in the capacity of a parent who on occasion may have to be stern as well as sympathetic'.[203] Page reported that 'many prosecutions are brought which otherwise would have been dropped' as a result of the changes.[204] Courts were expected to serve as exemplar parents, combining firmness with kindness. Children were understood to be emotionally fragile and in need of a degree of informality which would not ordinarily be shown to adults.

Privacy

The belief that the privacy of children alleged to have been sexually abused needed to be protected, which was noted to be important by both the 1925 Committee on Sexual Offences

[200] *Children and Young Persons Act*, 1933, sec. 47(2).
[201] *Children Act*, 1908, sec. 111.
[202] L. Page, *For Magistrates and Others* (London, 1939), p. 26.
[203] 'A Summary of the New Children Act', 702.
[204] Page, *For Magistrates and Others*, 31.

and the 1927 Committee on Young Offenders, was reflected in the 1933 Act. The Committee on Sexual Offences noted that publicity often served to deter people from reporting concerns:

> In some cases the dislike of publicity has been so great that parents … have thought it better to keep to themselves the fact that a sexual offence had been committed, rather than risk the publication of the trial with names and addresses, which would cause great embarrassment to them.[205]

Two years later, the Young Offenders Committee noted that 'it is obviously undesirable that names and addresses of the children or any other matter should be published that can lead to their identification'.[206] The act of publicly recounting abuse in the presence of male journalists who attended court hearings could also cause girls, in particular, to become distressed. Concerns were raised regarding:

> the number of reporters present in Court when young witnesses are giving evidence on an indecent offence, and to the youthfulness of some of the reporters. The reporters' table is often close to the witness box, and some young girls have been much embarrassed by this proximity.[207]

At a time when the journalistic profession was heavily dominated by men, some of the challenges associated with disclosing abuse were informed by differences in gender between those testifying and those reporting the cases. In fact, local police forces were encouraged to employ women to serve as police officers to support children when testifying as part of cases that related to sexual offences.[208]

The importance of protecting the privacy of children emerged at a time when social surveys consistently found that adults rated their own privacy very highly. Juliet Gardiner has noted that residents responding to Mass Observation enquiries 'repeatedly mentioned … th[eir]

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[205] *Departmental Committee on Sexual Offences Against Young Persons*, 54.
[206] *Report of Young Offenders Committee*, 37.
[207] *Departmental Committee on Sexual Offences Against Young Persons*, 54–55.
[208] Ibid., 32.

appreciation of privacy'.[209] David Vincent has attributed these concerns to 'the rise of totalitarian regimes in Fascist and communist Europe'.[210] Deborah Cohen has argued that among the middle-classes a confessional culture emerged as people began to distinguish between 'matters to be discussed within the family and secrets to be divulged outside it'.[211] Study of child protection reveals that certain groups of children feared confessing certain experiences to strangers. The curative qualities that Cohen argued were associated with confession were mediated by matters of age, gender and class.[212]

The importance of privacy was reflected in significant changes introduced by the 1933 Act. While the reforms were designed to better protect children's well-being, the protections offered to those accused of harming children were controversial. Acknowledgement of these changes challenges Heywood's recent assertion that British court procedures, concerning the treatment of children, remained unchanged between the 1920s and 1990.[213] In fact, the 1933 Act ensured that children who were taken to court were afforded greater privacy. Section 49 of the 1933 Children and Young Persons Act stated that 'no newspaper report of any proceedings in a juvenile court shall reveal the name, address or school, or include any particulars calculated to lead to the identification, of any child or young person concerned in those proceedings … nor shall any picture be published in any newspaper … of any child or young person.'[214] These changes were designed to offer greater protection to children who were thought to be at risk of harm from press publicity. To prevent a child from being

[209] Gardiner, *The Thirties*, 281.
[210] D. Vincent, *Privacy: A Short History* (Cambridge, 2016), p. 83.
[211] D. Cohen, *Family Secrets: Living with Shame from the Victorians to the Present Day* (London, 2013), p. 194.
[212] Lucy Delap has also commented upon the difficulties encountered by people who disclosed past abuses, see: L. Delap, '"Disgusting Details Which Are Best Forgotten": Disclosures of Child Sexual Abuse in Twentieth-Century Britain', *Journal of British Studies*, 57:1 (2018), p. 88.
[213] Heywood, *Childhood in Modern Europe*, 203.
[214] *Children and Young Persons Act*, 1933, sec. 39(1).

identified, parents' details were often concealed, thereby allowing parental abusers to go unnamed.

Opponents of section 49 argued that the law unjustly protected those convicted of wrong-doing. Not all people were thought to warrant the level of privacy now afforded them. In the Midlands, Conservative Councillor Paul Griffiths complained that 'the Courts are governed by laws passed by well-intentioned "nannies"'. Griffiths, who had served as a Councillor for 20 years and a magistrate for 13, was particularly incensed that:

> In many cases that come before the Juvenile Courts, the parents are to blame, but we can do nothing about it. Even the names and addresses cannot be published. So if we reprimand the parents, they do not suffer in any way as they should'.[215]

Griffiths believed that justice could not be achieved by the courts alone. Publicity was thought to be necessary to ensure that perpetrators of abuse 'suffer[ed]' appropriately. A public response needed to accompany the findings of the court.

Parents discovered to have mistreated their children could face severe social hostility. In 1938, the NSPCC prosecuted a 'Victorian' father for disciplining his son – who became known as Burnt-Hands Boy - with excessive force, after he made him pick up hot coals as a punishment for lying. That the father described himself as 'Victorian' suggests that he was aware that his disciplinary practices were at odds with what wider society believed was acceptable. The NSPCC's decision to prosecute the father through the magistrates courts, rather than the juvenile courts, meant that the press could publish full details of the case, including the name of his son, as well as details of his employment in the RAF. In the

[215] 'Children's Courts Are Too "Namby-Pamby," Birch Best Treatment', *Birmingham Gazette*, 27 August 1938, p. 7.

aftermath of the trial, a crowd of more than 1,000 people surrounded the man's home, leading to police protection.[216] In a subsequent interview with *The Mirror*, the father described having to leave his home of twenty-seven years: 'All my neighbours will think me an inhuman brute, my wife will be shunned'.[217] The man was discharged from the RAF, and his 8-year-old son was taken into the long-term care of the Waifs and Strays Society.[218] The case attracted extensive coverage from the tabloid press, an example of the human-interest stories which inter-war market research surveys found to be particularly popular.[219] Councillor Griffiths' comments emerged within a month of the case being resolved. They reflected his frustration, rooted in his experience as a local magistrate, that all too often bad parents could escape the 'virtuous anger' that greeted the RAF employee because of a law principally designed to protect the privacy of victims of child abuse.

The Construction of Care and Protection

Having looked at the central themes which underpinned the legislation, and the reactions they provoked, we now turn to the sections which concerned neglected children in particular. The procedural aspects of the Act were often presented as a significant evolutionary step which addressed problems which had come to light in the twenty-four years since the Children's Act 1908.[220] On the other hand, changes to laws relating to children and young people understood to be at risk of harm went beyond moderate reform and marked a significant departure from the 1908 Act. Writing five years after the 1933 Act was introduced, *The*

[216] 'Police Protect Burnt Boy's Father', *Daily Mail*, 4 June 1938, p. 9.
[217] 'And His Father Was Fined: Have We No Prisons?', *Daily Mirror*, 3 June 1938, p. 17.
[218] 'Burnt-Hands Boy With His New Friends', *Daily Herald*, 2 July 1938, p. 9.
[219] J. Curran, A. Douglas, and G. Whannel, 'The Political Economy of the Human Interest Story', in A. Smith, ed., *Newspapers and Democracy: International Essays on a Changing Medium*, (London, 1980).
[220] Hansard HC Debate vol 261 col 1169 (12 February 1932).

Times described the legislation as 'the most important event in the history of the treatment of … neglected boys and girls in this country'.[221]

The Act enhanced magistrates' authority by introducing a more general definition of neglect. The subtlety with which the Government sought to redefine the relationship between children, parents and the state, in 1908, had resulted in a very narrow definition of the circumstances in which the state could intervene to protect children.[222] Courts determining cases of child neglect were restricted to seven categories, set out in section 58 of the 1908 Children's Act. The 1927 Committee on Young Offenders found that the definition contained within the 1908 Act failed to 'provide for many cases where protection [was] urgently required'.[223] Prior to the 1933 reforms, adults concerned for the wellbeing of children felt, in some cases, forced to bend the law in absurd ways. Stanley noted that there had been instances where, to prove that a child for whom they had concerns was wandering, teachers would deliberately send certain students out of school while a Local Education Authority inspector was waiting in the street. The circumstances that the 1908 Act recognised as child neglect led to an artificial straining of the law.[224] In response, the 1933 Act provided magistrates with a wider definition of when the state could legitimately intervene in the lives of families. Speaking to the NSPCC as the Bill was going through Parliament, the Home Secretary, Herbert Samuel MP, argued that the decision to expand the definition of what constituted neglect represented 'the most important clause' of the new legislation.[225] Under the 1933 Act, the state became responsible for supporting a new category of children, those

[221] 'The Children's Charter: Results of 1933 Act', *The Times*, 27 January 1938, p. 9.
[222] Stewart, 'Children, Parents and the State', 97.
[223] *Report of Young Offenders Committee*, 118–119; 'Jubilee Year of the NSPCC: Now Able to Save Children Who Were Previously Unprotected', *The Manchester Guardian*, 2 November 1933, p. 13.
[224] O. Stanley, 'The Children Bill', *The Magistrate*, 2:37 (1932), p. 570.
[225] 'Child Neglect: Extended Definition in New Bill', *The Manchester Guardian*, 30 May 1932, p. 6.

who were understood to be 'in need of care or protection'. Section 61(1)(a) of the Act defined a young person in need of care or protection as:

> a child or young person who, having no parent or guardian or a parent or guardian unfit to exercise care and guardianship or not exercising proper care and guardianship, is either falling into bad associations, or exposed to moral danger.

Stanley believed that this section would prevent the court from abusing their powers. Prosecutors were required to prove (a) that the parent was failing to provide proper care and, (b) that because of this failure, the child was either falling into bad associations or exposed moral danger.[226] The vice-chairman of the NSPCC believed that the law contained sufficient safeguards to prevent 'any parent being arbitrarily deprived of his children'.[227] Despite the speaker's confidence in the parental safeguards, which relied upon parents appealing to the quarter session once their children had been removed, the expansion in the number of cases to which the law applied meant that parents faced a greater risk of state intervention.[228] Reporting in 1938, the Home Office found that between 1934 and 1936, more than 700 children over the age of 14 had been assisted under the new Act for whom it had not been possible to support under the previous legislation.[229]

The legislation did not provide a statutory definition of what neglect comprised. An editorial in *The Manchester Guardian* noted that 'exactly what constitutes neglect in a parent has never been closely defined' before speculating that 'nor, perhaps, could it be'. In 1938, the Home Office noted that:

[226] Stanley, 'The Children Bill', 570.
[227] 'Jubilee Year of the NSPCC'.
[228] *Children and Young Persons Act*, 1933, sec. 102.
[229] Home Office, *Fifth Report on the Work of the Children's Branch*, 39.

> what constitutes 'proper' care and guardianship depends upon the degree of care and guardianship which the court regards as normal. This degree obviously varies with the age of the boy and girl. The degree of care which the average parent may be expected to give to a child of 10 is obviously greater than the degree of care ordinarily to be given to a boy or girl of 16.[230]

That officials were required to make their assessment based on what an *ordinary* parent would *ordinarily* do makes the issue of child neglect an especially valuable means by which to consider the historical development of parent-child relations. Policy makers acknowledged that child abuse was a construction, built upon changeable understandings of the home, the child, and the family.

Study of the phrase 'in need of care or protection', a choice of words which was not included in either the 1925 nor the 1927 Committees, reveals that parents were not the only groups upon whom the act trespassed. Prior to 1933, the State had singled out certain groups as being especially in need of care and protection, but this language was not applied to children specifically. In the first half of the nineteenth century, the phrase was most commonly associated with people who were understood to be lunatics. In 1831, for example, *The Observer* included an advertisement for a pamphlet which discussed the 'Acts of Parliament for the better care and protection of insane persons in England'.[231] Reference to lunatics as requiring care and protection continued through to the early twentieth century. A report published in 1907 described how adults who had experienced a 'failure in mental capacity' were in 'need [of special] care and protection'.[232] This language was also reflected in legislation; the Feeble-Minded Persons (Control) Bill, which subsequently become the Mental Deficiency Act 1913, was designed 'to provide for the better care and protection of

[230] Ibid., 37.
[231] 'Cases of Insanity', *The Observer*, 25 September 1831, p. 1.
[232] *The Sixty-First Report of the Commissioners in Lunacy* (London, 1907).

Feeble-minded Persons'.[233] The State was not averse to intervening in the lives of certain groups of people with the explicit intention of caring for and protecting them. By the end of the interwar period close to 100,000 people were under some form of care because of the Act.[234] The phrase's association with people who were thought to be of 'unsound mind' suggests that the protective element held a double meaning, reflecting the need to protect certain groups of people as much from themselves as from other people.

As well as those thought to be of unsound mind, the phrase could be extended to children. Until the Children and Young Person's Act 1933, however, the language of care and protection was used by voluntary, rather than state, organisations. In 1900, *The Times* published a letter from members of the Waifs and Strays Society, asking for donations, in which they referred to the work supporting children 'in need of care and protection'.[235] The phrase was also incorporated into the names of voluntary organisations. In the late nineteenth century, for example, the Ladies Associations for the Care and Protection of Young Girls was established to prevent prostitution.[236] Unlike statuary services for those of 'unsound mind', the phrase 'in need of care and protection' does not feature in any Acts relating to children's welfare before the 1933 Act. When the term was used by parliamentarians debating the Children Act of 1908, it was only associated with voluntary organisations.[237] It is not until after the 1933 Act was enacted that the State was popularly recognised as having committed itself to supporting children 'in need or care and protection'.[238] Not only did the legislation

[233] *Feeble-Minded Persons (Control) Bill*, 1912, p. 1.
[234] M. Thomson, *The Problem of Mental Deficiency: Eugenics, Democracy, and Social Policy in Britain, c.1870-1959*, Oxford Historical Monographs (Oxford, 1998), pp. 2, 22.
[235] M. London et al., 'Church of England Waifs and Strays Society', *The Times*, 4 December 1900, p. 13.
[236] P. Bartley, 'Preventing Prostitution: The Ladies' Association for the Care and Protection of Young Girls in Birmingham, 1887-1914', *Women's History Review*, 7:1 (1998), pp. 37–60.
[237] See, for example: Hansard HL Debate vol 196 col 460 (12 November 1908).
[238] See, for example: 'Civic Centre At Southampton', *The Times*, 4 November 1933, p. 7; 'Magistrates and Education Authorities: Home Office Urges Co-Operation', *The Manchester Guardian*, 11 August 1933, p. 11; 'Year-Old-Baby as "Defendant"', *The Daily Mirror*, 5 January 1934, p. 12.

mark a significant expansion in the State's responsibilities, and the language through which this expansion took place presented a significant, but subtle, encroachment on voluntary work. This was most clearly reflected in the decision to register all voluntary homes and subject them to closer inspection.

Efforts by central government to expand its remit developed alongside restrictions on the rights of non-officials. Section 62(2) of the Act abolished the ability of members of the public to bring a child, suspected of having been neglected, before the court. Stanley justified this change because 'it is possible that that power [in conjunction with the expanded definition] may be used by an individual … to make trouble for a neighbour'.[239] Following the 1933 Act, the only figures who could bring a child thought to be in need of care or protection before a juvenile court were local authority staff, police constables and NSPCC officials.[240] While Stanley believed these reforms would stop community members from making vindictive allegations, the law did nothing to prevent the public from bringing their complaints to the attention of officials who could then press charges. Rather than shutting down the ability of community members to make false accusations of abuse against their neighbours, the clause caused people to complain to a different set of officials. Section 62 of the Act is better understood as an example of the State using the 1933 Act to advance the development of an expert-elite to determine how best to support children in need of care or protection. For a case to come to trial, public concerns now had to be vetted by state appointed officials.

The elitist qualities of the Act were also exemplified in reforms which limited the procedural options available to parents and empowered justices to withhold information from children

[239] Stanley, 'The Children Bill', 570.
[240] Hansard HC Debate vol 555 col 88 (5 July 1956); *Children and Young Persons Act*, 1933, sec. 62(2).

and their guardians. Courts could consult reports produced by probation officers, local authorities, or registered medical practitioners in private. Magistrates could also request that children and/or their parents be removed from the court for certain lines of questioning. If either practice was invoked Courts were required to tell the child or young person the 'substance' of any part of the report bearing on his or her character. For proponents of the Act, such as the Magistrates' Association, this change was welcomed at it allowed justices to obtain information which would not have been appropriate to discuss in front of a child and/or their parent.[241] These principles were adopted on the understanding that magistrates required as much information as possible 'before … deciding the best way [to] treat a child'.[242] Many parents, however, viewed things differently. Mannheim, who was himself in favour of the changes, observed that tensions often existed between 'jurist and layman' and noted that 'parents regard these secret papers with the greatest disfavour', and, if their child was sent away, often 'conclude that someone has done them a bad turn by making a malicious and untrue statement in one of these secret reports'.[243]Although the public could no longer bring cases, the ability of justices to consult material in private led to public suspicion of Court proceedings. While parents often sought to protect the privacy of their children, many were also wary of extending privacy to groups, such as neighbours and family members, who they did not trust.

The act also removed the right of parents or guardians to request a trial by jury. Stanley was confident that this reform would not disadvantage children appearing in court and noted that 'parents [who are] often uneducated people … have not the knowledge to make a choice to the best advantage of the child'.[244] These changes demonstrate the ways in which the Act

[241] 'A Summary of the New Children Act', 701.
[242] Harris, 'The New Children Act', 699.
[243] Mannheim, *Penal Reform*, 186–188.
[244] Stanley, 'The Children Bill', 568–569.

advanced officials' professional standing while restricting the information and decisions available to parents. The Act led to parental power being ceded to state appointed experts, in the name of protecting children's interests.

Boarding out

The penultimate section of this chapter demonstrates how, because of greater concern for children's emotional wellbeing, the 1933 Act promoted the practice of boarding out children taken into the care of the state.[245] The 1933 Act promoted boarding out in several ways. The Act allowed local authorities to be designated a 'fit person'. This empowered them to board children out with foster parents, who did not have to have any prior connection to the child, or his or her family. Prior to the 1933 Act, magistrates could, in suitable cases, commit a child or young person to the care of a relative or friend, in practice the number of children dealt with by this method was very small, often averaging fewer than 20 cases a year. Alternatively, children committed to industrial schools, if under the age of eight, could be boarded out by school managers.[246] The Young Offenders Committee concluded that the limited numbers of children who were being boarded out, combined with the benefits associated with the practice, meant that:

> some procedure is needed whereby guardianship can be transferred to some responsible authority whose duty it will be to find a new home for [children whose parents are worthless and do not require training in an institution]. We think the local education authority might well fulfil this function.

This recommendation was consistent with the findings of the earlier 1913 Committee on Reformatory and Industrial Schools, which had suggested that the responsibility for boarding out children be transferred from the managers of industrial schools to local authorities.[247] This

[245] For information about earlier efforts to board out children, see: M. Horsburgh, '"No Sufficient Security": The Reaction of the Poor Law Authorities to Boarding-Out', *Journal of Social Policy*, 12:1 (1983), pp. 51–73.
[246] *Report of Young Offenders Committee*, 63.
[247] Bailey, *Delinquency and Citizenship*, 104; *Report of Young Offenders Committee*, 64–65.

'ingenious' use of the Court's existing powers was designed to promote greater use of boarding out.[248]

By granting local authorities the ability to be designated a 'fit person', for the first time it became possible for young people to be committed to the care of a local authority with a view to their being boarded out.[249] The Act required that children who had been placed in the care of a local authority be boarded out unless there were good reasons why this was not possible.[250] The reforms led to an increase in the numbers being boarded out. Between 1933 and 1936 the number of orders which committed a boy or girl to a fit person increased year on year, from 354 to 833.[251] By 1936 all public assistance authorities in England and Wales, bar five, had boarded out children, bringing the total number of children in foster care to 6,396, compared to fewer than 400 children boarded out by industrial schools 10 years earlier.[252]

Proponents of boarding out often cited the expertise of psychology when advocating for family inspired forms of care. Speaking in 1938 Labour MP George Benson, who was chairman of the Howard League for Penal Reform, argued that 'children should go into homes and not into institutions because the psychological development of the child demands a parent, even if it be only a foster parent'.[253] This stance was consistent with the League's faith in psychological expertise.[254] Part of the value of family life was thought to be derived

[248] Harris, 'The New Children Act', 700.
[249] C. Rackham, 'The New Children Act: Advances and Omissions', *The Manchester Guardian*, 3 November 1933, p. 18.
[250] Parker, *Change and Continuity in Children's Services*, 45.
[251] Home Office, *Fifth Report on the Work of the Children's Branch*, 20.
[252] Hansard HC Written Answers vol 325 col 576-577 (17 June 1937); Burt, *The Young Delinquent*, 114.
[253] Hansard HC Debate vol 332 col 961 (1 March 1938).
[254] See, for example: M. H. Smith, 'Corporal Punishment for Cruelty', *The Howard Journal*, 4:1 (1934), pp. 15–18.

from its ability to provide children with the attention required for their development. James Ede MP, who later oversaw the passing of the 1948 Children Act as Home Secretary, advocated greater use of fostering on the grounds that:

> in a reasonably small family, the child is more likely to be living a normal life where it can receive attention under normal conditions than in the best regulated school where it is living under school conditions and, quite frequently, under institutional conditions.[255]

During the same debate, Labour MP Samuel Viant, a graduate of Paddington School for Social Science, called upon the Government to do more to encourage local authorities to board children out by arguing that the 'family life' that foster arrangements provided was vital to the 'development of character', a quality often considered essential to developing future citizens.[256] Indeed, King has argued that by presenting children as the future, spending on measures to improve children's welfare became easier to justify politically during the 1930s. The virtues of boarding out complemented this focus.[257] While these positions were supported by the 1933 Act, the arguments pre-dated the legislation. Writing in 1927, the Young Offenders Committee argued that 'for the young child boarding out is often more suitable than an institution because it approximates more nearly to family life'.[258] In advancing boarding out, the 1933 Act promoted a form of care that had long been endorsed by sections of the child welfare movement.

In 1936, the Public Health Act reformed the rules concerning foster children.[259] Anyone who was paid to look after a child under nine years old, apart from their parents, was required to notify the Welfare Authority. Local Authorities were also empowered to prohibit

[255] Hansard HC Debate vol 332 col 965 (1 March 1938).
[256] Hansard HC Debate vol 332 col 967 (1 March 1938).
[257] King, 'Future Citizens', 389.
[258] *Report of Young Offenders Committee*, 64.
[259] 'Public Health Bill Next Session', *The Times*, 28 September 1935, p. 6.

'undesirable people' from receiving children and to control the conditions under which children are looked after by foster parents. These changes were consistent with the government's efforts to have greater control over the types of care provided.[260]

Given the advantages associated with families raising children, it is striking that among the children who were fostered, the majority were not boarded out with relatives. Statistics collected by the Home Office revealed that just 10% of all cases were committed to the care of relatives, compared with two-thirds of cases that were committed to the care of local authorities, with a view to being fostered.[261] The Home Office offered no explanation for this phenomenon, but if we work from the basis that neglected children were disproportionately referred from impoverished backgrounds, and by extension were likely to have impoverished relatives, three explanations present themselves. First, the poverty of relatives could prevent them from receiving foster children. Under the terms of the 1933 Act, children could not be fostered with 'any person who is at the time, or who has been within twelve months preceding, in receipt of poor relief'.[262] Second, the low payments provided to foster parents meant that even families who had not been in receipt of poor relief could struggle to meet the financial cost of housing a relative's child. Finally, the Act extended the power of local authorities to supervise foster parents and enabled 'a higher standard of care to be insisted on' so that 'unsuitable foster homes and foster parents can more readily be eliminated by time being available for preliminary inspection'.[263] Later chapters will reveal the highly classed ways in which officials determined whether a foster home was 'unsuitable'.

[260] NA: MH/102/1378, 'The Break Up of the Poor Law and the care of Children and Old People', 1944, 5.
[261] Home Office, *Fifth Report on the Work of the Children's Branch*, 21.
[262] 'Children and Young Persons Act: Boarding Out Rules', *The Magistrate*, 3:48 (1933), p. 740.
[263] *Report of the Birmingham Medical Officer of Health, for the Year 1933*, 133.

The changes described above also informed attitudes towards child migrants. Indeed, it is important to include child migration schemes when discussing English child protection, rather than view them simply as part of an imperial policy.[264] Efforts to promote safer domestic fostering arrangements informed discussions of child migration schemes. In 1934 an inter-departmental committee on migration policy recommended that the 'Canadian Government should be approached with a view to the re-introduction of the boarding-out system'.[265] This suggestion was debated in 1937, as part of discussions concerning whether to extend the 1922 Empire Settlement Act. This Act facilitated the resettlement of juvenile immigrants across the Empire. Opponents of sending children to Commonwealth countries, without their parents, raised concerns about the care provided to those who were boarded out. Labour MP William Lunn, who served on the Hunslet Board of Guardians, was concerned that 'in many cases these children will not be treated as members of the family', and noted that 'all the women's organisations of which I know in this country are opposed to any such idea'. Female led organisations, much like women magistrates, were presented as credible advocates for children's welfare. Lunn believed that the safeguards proposed by the Government '[would] be of no use whatever' and argued that 'Poor Law children are of equal importance as human beings as our own children, and we ought to take as much care of them'.[266] In defending his position, Lunn cited the 1924 Bondfield Report, which was produced following a serious of high profile deaths of British children while in the care of Canadian foster parents. Bondfield concluded that overall the child migration system was adequate. The report, however, contributed to the end of large-scale juvenile migration to

[264] See, for example: S. Johnston, '"Only Send Boys of the Good Type": Child Migration and the Boy Scout Movement, 1921-1959', *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, 7:3 (2014), pp. 377–397; R. L. Schnell, 'The Right Class of Boy: Youth Training Schemes and Assisted Emigration to Canada under the Empire Settlement Act, 1922–39', *History of Education*, 24:1 (1995), pp. 73–90.
For an overview of the history of child migration, see: Cretney, *Family Law in the Twentieth Century*, 638–639.
[265] *Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Migration Policy*, Cmd. 4689, 1934, p. 47.
[266] For discussion of proposed safeguards see: *Ibid*.
Hansard HC Debate vol 319 col 608 (25 January 1937)

Canada as its Government enacted Bondfield's recommendation that children should not be transported to Canada until they reached 14.[267] Speaking in 1937, Lunn argued that the migration of family units comprised 'the best form of migration' possible, and was far preferable to boarding out individual children.[268] While Lunn failed to stop the British Government condoning the migration of children with a view to them being boarded out, his arguments were consistent with the rationale for domestic fostering. In Britain, all foster parents had to promise to bring up their foster child 'as one of [their] own children' and treat them as members of the family, the very qualities that Lunn feared would not be found abroad. Lunn's concerns regarding the safeguards emerged at a time when foster carers were coming under increasing scrutiny within Britain.

Changes to boarding out were complemented by reforms to infant life protection. The 1908 Children Act required foster parents to notify officials within 48 hours of receiving a child. Writing in 1931, the NSPCC found that this arrangement led 'not infrequently to undesirable happenings that might otherwise have been avoided'.[269] The 1933 Act stipulated that foster parents had to notify the authorities a week before receiving a child. Local authorities were also given greater powers to prevent a child from being kept in undesirable foster homes: old age, infirmity, ill-health, negligence and inebriety were grounds on which a child could be removed from a foster-mother.[270] Given that many neglected children previously lived in impoverished communities, changes included in the 1933 Act help to explain why relatives comprised such a small proportion of foster carers. These changes are further examples of

[267] M. Rutherdale, '"Canada Is No Dumping Ground": Public Discourse and Salvation Army Immigrant Women and Children, 1900–1930', *Social History*, 40:79 (2007), pp. 133–134.
[268] Hansard HC Debate vol 319 col 605 (25 January 1937).
[269] *NSPCC Annual Report for 1930-31* (London, 1931), p. 13.
[270] 'The Children's Charter Revised', *Times Educational Supplement*, 16 July 1932, p. 277.

how the expansion of the state's ability to determine how best to care for neglected children limited the autonomy of children's family members.

Unaware or Apathetic?

Given the important reforms passed during the 1930s, why have scholars so often associated the decade with public apathy towards child protection? Although there is no straightforward way to measure public engagement with child abuse, current histories have often equated moments of change with a growth in public concern with child protection. The establishment of multiple child welfare organisations, in the late nineteenth century, in combination with the passing of the 1889 Prevention of Cruelty to Children Act, has led to these years being referred to as an era of 'child-saving'.[271] While studies of the late nineteenth century often cite clear examples of change to support the assertion that people were aware of the need to protect children, evidence of concern also manifested itself through sources suggestive of continuity. Careful re-examination of newspaper articles related to the issue of child protection reveals that it continued to attract popular attention. In fact, over the course of the 1930s, the press drew attention to the rising number of children being supported by the NSPCC. The decade was punctuated by high-profile cases which concerned children killed or injured while in the care of their parents. Although these cases were reported very differently from the stories described in the post-war period, their presence challenges Ian Hacking's assertion that 'cruelty to children faded from notice by 1910' as the public became more preoccupied with 'infant mortality and juvenile delinquency'.[272]

[271] Cretney, *Family Law in the Twentieth Century*, chap. 18.
[272] Hacking, *The Social Construction of What?*, 135–136; N. Parton, 'The Natural History of Child Abuse: A Study in Social Problem Definition', *British Journal of Social Work*, 9:4 (1979), p. 444; Parton, *The Politics of Child Protection*, 15–16.

While arguing that the public were concerned with child protection during the 1930s, it is important not to overstate the case. The news stories discussed below coexisted with other issues which competed for readers' attention. For many people the early 1930s represented a time of economic uncertainty, while the decade's latter years observed increasing anxiety about the future of European peace. It is not surprising, therefore, that MPs opposed to the 1933 Act, largely on grounds of economy, were quick to argue that 'the whole nation [was] not clamouring' for the introduction of the Children and Young Persons Bill, despite the clear case for reform set out in recent Committees.[273] A perception among the public, as recorded by child welfare organisations, that children were being looked after made these claims more plausible. In 1931, the NSPCC noted that many people had been hopeful that 'the increased social services of recent years would result in restraining cruelty as shown by neglectful parents'.[274] The following year the charity reported that 'there are people who say there is no cruelty to children nowadays', an attitude the Society worked hard to challenge.[275]

The opinions of a minority of MPs, and sections of the public, however, did not accurately represent social attitudes towards child protection. People were aware of the problems of child abuse and newspapers regularly covered related stories. In 1937 the *Daily Mirror* argued that more needed to be done to 'watch out for cases of cruelty to children'.[276] Earlier that year, the paper devoted a full page to detailing instances of child abuse and called on its readers to report their concerns to the NSPCC.[277] The annual reports of the NSPCC were a regular feature of newspapers.[278] In 1938, the organisation observed that while 'some case of

[273] Hansard HC Debate vol 261 col 149 (3 February 1932).
[274] *NSPCC Annual Report for 1930-31*, 6, 20.
[275] *NSPCC Annual Report for 1931-32* (London, 1932), p. 7.
[276] 'Should a Mother -', *Daily Mirror*, 23 July 1937, p. 12.
[277] 'This Is Our Manifesto!', *Daily Mirror*, 24 February 1937, p. 12.
[278] See, for example: 'NSPCC & Child Neglect', *The Manchester Guardian*, 25 April 1931, p. 15; 'Far and Near', *Daily Mail*, 7 August 1936, p. 7.

neglected children are noted by our Inspectors in the streets', in the 'overwhelming majority of cases' it was only able to act because of receiving a report from a member of the public.[279] To suggest that child abuse had disappeared from public interest ignores the efforts of people involved in more than 29,000 cases referred to the NSPCC.[280] Newspaper editorials often discussed the rise in the number of cases being dealt with by the NSPCC and included examples of the types of cases encountered by the charity.[281] These commentaries often drew attention to public concern with such cases. In 1935 the *Daily Mirror* reported that a record number of instances of violence against children had been reported to the NSPCC the article ended by noting that 'In the whole of this saga of misery … there is just one shining light, one healthy sign. The public is waking up! … There is spreading among us to-day a spirit of raging resentment against cruelty to infants'.[282] The public were thought to be increasingly concerned with child abuse.

Press reports about the NSPCC were also accompanied by articles which related to specific cases of child abuse. Just as significant as the press coverage, however, was the way in which certain sections of the local community responded. In 1938, a crowd of two thousand people formed in Birmingham to search for a person responsible for trapping a child in a dustbin.[283] When the culprit later handed himself in to the police, the police opposed bail on the grounds that there had been a crowd of approximately 1,000 people outside his house and they feared for his safety.[284] The tabloid and broadsheet press accounts of this case differed markedly in their tone and style. Although the papers often drew upon the same quotations, this material

[279] *NSPCC Annual Report for 1937-38* (London, 1938), pp. 7–8.
[280] 'Ill-Treatment of Children', *The Manchester Guardian*, 21 August 1935, p. 11.
[281] See, for example: 'The Cry of the Child', *Daily Mirror*, 23 August 1935, p. 10.
[282] Ibid.
[283] 'Girl, 4, Found in Dustbin', *Daily Mirror*, 25 August 1938, p. 28.
[284] 'Child Aged Four Found in Dustbin', *The Times*, 26 August 1938, p. 12; 'Girl in Dustbin, Youth for Trial', *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 2 September 1938, p. 5.

was presented in ways that reflected important differences in the readership of certain titles. The *Daily Mirror*, whose working-class readership encountered bigger and bolder headlines as the 1930s went on, adopted an especially sentimental tone and devoted half a page to describing the actions of angry local people. The paper was the only one to publish a photograph of the child at the centre of the Birmingham case, with her head in a bandage.[285] This sensationalist tone continued when the case went to trial.[286] The *Manchester Guardian* and *The Times*, on the other hand, each published a single, brief, story on the case when the news first broke. Neither publication covered the subsequent trial or the sentencing of the accused several months later.[287]

The public did more than just read about child neglect. In the early 1930s, children's charities consistently received some of the largest sums donated as part of the BBC's 'The Week's Good Cause' initiative. In 1931 more than £65,000 was donated in response to appeals broadcast by the BBC, of which the NSPCC, Dr Barnardo's and the National Children's Home and Orphanage charities were among the largest beneficiaries.[288]

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that studies of 1930s need to do more to incorporate histories of child protection policies. Doing so allows historians to better understand the extent to which the reforms enacted after the Second World War built upon important principles first established by the 1933 Children and Young Persons Act. Study of child protection reform lends further

[285] 'Girl, 4, Found in Dustbin'.
[286] 'Girl in Dustbin - Theory of Blood Lust', *Daily Mirror*, 2 September 1938, p. 20.
[287] 'Child Aged Four Found in Dustbin'; 'Child Found in Dustbin', *The Manchester Guardian*, 26 August 1938, p. 17.
[288] *The British Broadcasting Corporation, Fifth Annual Report*, Cmd 4095 (London, 1932), pp. 13–14.

support to the arguments of scholars such as Lawrence and Pugh.[289] Among supporters of reform to children's services, the 1930s was not perceived to be a time of 'menacing catastrophe'.[290] Instead, this chapter has shown that sections of the political elite were optimistic about their ability to positively transform children's lives. Much of this optimism arose from a faith that policy makers placed in experts to improve children's services. The latter half of this chapter has stressed the importance of including the attitudes and actions of the public in future histories of child protection. As boarding out became increasingly encouraged, child care practitioners became more reliant on sections of the wider community to assist with the care of looked after children. Far from having 'faded from notice', cruelty to children continued to attract attention from the public.[291] As newspaper sales rose, tabloid and broadsheet publications alike routinely devoted column inches to reporting on cases of child abuse. The tone and content of these reports reveal important differences between working-class and elite cultures, with tabloids quick to emphasise the behaviour of local people on discovering child abuse. The 1930s were neither a time of public apathy towards children's welfare, nor a decade in which people of different classes agreed on how best to support those placed in the care of the state.

[289] Lawrence, 'Class, "Affluence" and the Study of Everyday Life in Britain, c.1930–64'; Pugh, *We Danced All Night*.
[290] Overy, *The Morbid Age*, 2, 3, 360.
[291] Hacking, *The Social Construction of What?*, 135–136; Parton, 'The Natural History of Child Abuse', 444; Parton, *The Politics of Child Protection*, 15–16.

CHAPTER 2: CHILD PROTECTION IN ACTION, BIRMINGHAM AND WESTMORLAND, C. 1933-1939

Introduction

The early decades of the twentieth century witnessed an unparalleled growth in interest in the well-being of children and young people. While historians have produced a plethora of works concerned with local infant welfare initiatives, this thesis goes some way towards addressing the absence of scholarship concerned with local child protection schemes.[292] This chapter argues that because the optimism expressed by national policy makers, explored in chapter one, was predicated on an active local government, not all regions benefited equally from the 1933 Act. By granting local authorities greater autonomy over how to support looked after children, the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 exacerbated pre-existing differences between the services offered in rural and urban regions. Children's services were informed by contrasting attitudes among local authorities towards the role of local government, as well as the attitudes of front line staff and parents. Councils that prided themselves on their local services shared much of the optimism expressed by national proponents of the 1933 Act. On the other hand, the response of councils which sought to minimise local expenditure is better thought of as apathetic, rather than pessimistic. Children's services are examined in two contrasting areas of England: the city of Birmingham, located in the West Midlands, and Westmorland County Council, in north west England.

The chapter begins by outlining the ways in which children entered state and voluntary extra-familial care. The chapter then discusses the varied ways in which local authorities responded to the national reforms discussed in chapter one and the implications that these had for the

[292] Dwork, *War Is Good for Babies*; Lewis, *Politics of Motherhood*; Marland, 'A Pioneer in Infant Welfare'.

experiences of children placed in care. The latter half of the chapter explores the actions of residential staff and parents which influenced the experiences of looked after children in ways that were not anticipated by the national government.

Care for Children

There are significant limits to what we can know about the reasons why children entered extra-familial care in the 1930s. The wide-ranging criteria which determined whether children should be taken into care, combined with an absence of records which provide a more detailed breakdown of why children entered care, mean that records for the interwar period provide only a limited indication of the kinds of children entering care. Nor do quantitative interwar records allow scholars to develop a clear idea of the relationship between a child's characteristics (their age, gender, reason for referral) and the type and length of time in care. The absence of this information is indicative of a state which had yet to fully adopt social scientific forms of knowing, a process that Michael Savage has argued only began to take place in the second half of the twentieth century.[293] The lack of records is also suggestive of a state which had yet to fully grasp the need to understand why children were being placed in care to provide the most appropriate support.

The section that follows draws upon four sources of information published by the government. The first set of information has been sourced from the Departmental Committee on the Treatment of Young Offenders, 1927, which devoted a section of their report to explaining 'the various classes of neglected children and how they are provided for'.[294] Many of the principles set out in this report remained in place through the 1930s. The second

[293] M. Savage, *Identities And Social Change In Britain Since 1940: The Politics of Method* (Oxford, 2011), p. 10.
[294] *Report of Young Offenders Committee*.

document, the Fifth Report on the Work of the Children's Branch, 1938, provided an update on the treatment of neglected children following the Children and Young Persons Act, 1933. This report provides the only comprehensive overview of the number of children taken into care because of the 1933 Act.[295] Third, the Report of the Care of Children Committee, 1946, reviewed statutory provisions concerning 'children deprived of a normal home life' which were in place during the 1930s.[296] Finally, the annual reports of the Ministry of Health provide yearly summaries of the number of children supported through the Poor Law. It is important to note, however, that not all the children supported through the Poor Law were considered to have been mistreated by their parents. Figures regarding the number of children maintained by public assistance authorities on 1 May, 1946, the earliest statistics that have been identified, reveal that approximately 20% of children were in hospitals, rather than boarded out, or placed in state or voluntary children's homes.[297] Unfortunately, the statistics collected annually by the Ministry of Health, during the interwar period, do not detail the types of care provided to children maintained by public assistance authorities, nor were the reasons why children entered care recorded.

Information provided by government records is supplemented by quantitative data presented in the annual reports of the NSPCC which provide more information on why cases were referred to them. These statistics are an imperfect substitute for more detailed longitudinal data regarding children placed in care by the state as fewer than 2% of all NSPCC cases ended in prosecutions. Table 3, below, demonstrates how the NSPCC's child protection officers sought to differentiate between the broad category of 'neglect' and specific practices such as abandonment and sending children out to beg. Over the course of the 1930s, the number of cases referred to the NSPCC rose by 14%. When broken down by category, we

[295] Home Office, *Fifth Report on the Work of the Children's Branch*.
[296] *Report of the Care of Children Committee*, Cmd. 6922 (London, 1946), pp. 8–27.
[297] Ibid., 12.

can see that there was a 44% increase in the number of cases in which people sought out the advice of the NSPCC. Much of what we know about child protection has been sourced from court cases, in which children became the subject of official concern through contested assessments of their needs. It is important to acknowledge that every year large numbers of families (between 7,000-10,000) voluntarily sought the support of the NSPCC. While adversarial encounters are often easiest to identify in the archive, they coexisted with instances of parents who proactively sought the support of external organisations. These figures also reveal that cases of cruelty were vastly outnumbered by instances of neglect. Referrals which most closely related to issues associated with poverty (exposure and children found begging) witnessed a considerable decline, falling by 77% and 60% respectively. These trends are consistent with the improvements in the economy which were observed in the latter part of the 1930s.[298] As well as providing a statistical overview, the

the annual reports of the NSPCC detailed instances of both child sexual abuse and cases of cruelty and neglect against children. However, the level of detail provided varied considerably. Much more information was provided when describing examples of cruelty and neglect against children.[299]

[298] C. Webster, 'Saving Children During the Depression: Britain's Silent Emergency, 1919–1939', *Disasters*, 18:3 (September 1994), pp. 214–215.
[299] A. Brown and D. Barrett, *Knowledge of Evil: Child Prostitution and Child Sexual Abuse in Twentieth-Century England* (Cullompton, 2002), p. 110.

Table 3: Number of cases investigated by the NSPCC, in a 12-month period, ending 31 March.[300]

Year	Advice Sought		Neglect		Manslaughter		Abandonment		Exposure		Ill-treatment and assault		Exposure for Begging		Corruption of Morals		Other	
	Cases	% of all cases	Cases	% of all cases	Cases	% of all cases	Cases	% of all cases	Cases	% of all cases	Cases	% of all cases	Cases	% of all cases	Cases	% of all cases	Cases	% of all cases
1929-30	7,099	16.5%	29,226	67.9%	-	-	62	0.1%	446	1.0%	3,440	8.0%	208	0.5%	341	0.8%	2,221	5.2%
1930-31	7,450	17.5%	28,348	66.5%	-	-	56	0.1%	463	1.1%	3,518	8.3%	190	0.4%	260	0.6%	2,316	5.4%
1931-32	8,412	19.5%	27,640	63.9%	-	-	80	0.2%	403	0.9%	3,645	8.4%	176	0.4%	277	0.6%	2,613	6.0%
1932-33	8,021	18.4%	27,937	64.2%	1	> 0.0%	83	0.2%	253	0.6%	3,852	8.9%	177	0.4%	303	0.7%	2,884	6.6%
1933-34	8,459	19.1%	27,597	62.2%	-	-	52	0.1%	225	0.5%	4,208	9.5%	180	0.4%	352	0.8%	3,283	7.4%
1934-35	8,280	18.4%	27,212	60.6%	-	-	52	0.1%	191	0.4%	4,814	10.7%	132	0.3%	361	0.8%	3,844	8.6%
1935-36	8,634	18.9%	27,087	59.3%	-	-	58	0.1%	180	0.4%	4,915	10.8%	147	0.3%	301	0.7%	4,336	9.5%
1936-37	8,903	19.4%	27,168	59.1%	-	-	54	0.1%	130	0.3%	4,706	10.2%	134	0.3%	272	0.6%	4,636	10.1%
1937-38	9,400	19.4%	29,190	60.2%	1	> 0.0%	46	0.1%	112	0.2%	5,065	10.4%	85	0.2%	342	0.7%	4,282	8.8%
1938-39	10,194	20.7%	29,472	60.0%	-	-	62	0.1%	102	0.2%	5,269	10.7%	83	0.2%	344	0.7%	3,620	7.4%
Percentage change between 1929/30 and 1938/39	+44%		+1%		0%		0%		-77%		+53%		-60%		+1%		+63%	

[300] Esposti et al., 'ICoverT', NSPCC Database.

While the government did not record the reasons for children entering care, crime statistics provide an alternative means by which to consider trends in child abuse. This information, when read in conjunction with the NSPCC records, highlights the need to be mindful of different categories of abuse, such as neglect and sexual abuse, even if Government reports from the interwar period failed to note this distinction when recording the number of children who entered care. Crime data were collated and published as national crime statistics by the Home Office in an annual Command Paper titled *Criminal statistics, England and Wales*. Each year, the number of persons proceeded against and found guilty were recorded for following offences: cruelty to and neglect of children, unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl under 13 (which was viewed as a s serious felony) and unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl between 13 and 16 (which was categorised as a less serious misdemeanour).[301]

Table 4 , below, provides an overview of the number of cases which proceeded to go to court, the number of criminal convictions and the proportion of cases which resulted in a conviction, as broken down by the category of offence. It also reveals a significant distinction, both in the absolute number of cases, and the proportion of cases that resulted in a conviction, between the categories of cruelty to and neglect of children and unlawful sexual intercourse. Over the 10-year period 1929-1938, more than 9,000 cases which concerned allegations of cruelty to and neglect of children were brought to court. During the same

[301] *Criminal Statistics* also collated information relating to the category of 'indecent assault on females', which could include sexual acts involving touching. However, the reports only detail the number of cases categorised as 'indecent assault on female (under 16)', for trials dealt with summarily.
For further information about the difficulty of establishing the number of people prosecuted for sexual offences against children, see: Bingham et al., 'Historical Child Sexual Abuse', 415-416; L. A. Jackson, 'Child Sexual Abuse in England and Wales: Prosecution and Prevalence 1918-1970', History & Policy, June 2015, http://www.historyandpolicy.org/index.php/policy-papers/papers/child-sexual-abuse-in-england-and-wales-prosecution-and-prevalence-1918-197, accessed 2 October 2015.

period, fewer than 2,500 cases concerning unlawful sexual intercourse were brought to court. The latter figure should be read in light of Louise Jackson's finding that the 'complexity of the law regarding sexual offences made it impossible to monitor the proportion of cases involving children'.[302] Furthermore, the 1925 Committee noted that child welfare organisations and social workers found that 'there are very many more cases of sexual offences against young persons that there are cases reported to the police'.[303]

Qualitative research, conducted by Bingham, Delap, Jackson and Settle has shown that even when cases of child sexual abuse did come to trial, the victims were often viewed with suspicion.[304] The 1925 Committee observed that children that had been sexually abused on more than one occasion were perceived as a 'source of danger to other children'.[305] Based on their study of court cases, conducted in the 1930s, Alyson Brown and David Barrett have argued that the boundaries between 'child sexual abuse and child prostitution' were often highly contested.[306] Their findings are supported by Lucy Delap's study of a mid-century autobiography, *A Cornish Waif's Story,* which centres on the life of a working-class woman who was sexually abused as a child. The book's protagonist, who was referred to pseudonymously as Emma Smith, recounts how welfare practitioners labelled her a prostitute throughout her adolescence and denied her status as an innocent victim of sexual abuse.[307]

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[302] L. A. Jackson, 'Child Sexual Abuse in England and Wales: Prosecution and Prevalence 1918-1970', History & Policy, June 2015, http://www.historyandpolicy.org/index.php/policy-papers/papers/child-sexual-abuse-in-england-and-wales-prosecution-and-prevalence-1918-197, accessed 2 October 2015.
[303] *Departmental Committee on Sexual Offences Against Young Persons*, 12.
[304] A. Bingham et al., 'Before Jimmy Savile, There Was "Mr G" – the 1920s Philanthropist Who Abused Children in Hospitals', *The Conversation*, February 2015, https://theconversation.com/before-jimmy-savile-there-was-mr-g-the-1920s-philanthropist-who-abused-children-in-hospitals-38061, accessed 20 April 2017.
[305] *Departmental Committee on Sexual Offences Against Young Persons*, 66.
[306] A. Brown and D. Barrett, *Knowledge of Evil: Child Prostitution and Child Sexual Abuse in Twentieth-Century England* (Cullompton, 2002), p. 104.
[307] L. Delap, '"Disgusting Details Which Are Best Forgotten": Disclosures of Child Sexual Abuse in Twentieth-Century Britain', *Journal of British Studies*, 57:1 (2018), pp. 87, 89.

The sources examined by Brown, Barrett and Delap reflect the fact that newspaper accounts of sexual abuse, during the interwar period, often deployed euphemistic language and increasingly pathologised sex offenders.[308] The widespread and graphic coverage afforded the case of the 'Burnt-Hands Boy', discussed in chapter one, was starkly absent in the few instances when newspapers did report on cases of child sexual abuse. The move towards pathologising perpetrators of child abuse, which was observed in the 1930s, in combination with a decline in militant feminism, has been has been credited with causing the 'the subject of the sexual abuse of … children [to be] raised less in public circles than it had been during the 1920s'.[309] As a result, while the issue of white slave traffic gained prominence in the popular press, other forms of child sexual abuse were rarely discussed.[310] The reforms contained within the 1933 Act emerged at a time when far greater cultural space existed to talk about cruelty and neglect when compared with child sexual abuse.

[308] A. Bingham, '"A Stream of Pollution through Every Part of the Country?" Morality, Regulation and the Modern Popular Press', in M. Bailey, ed., *Narrating Media History*, (London, 2008), p. 115; Bingham et al., 'Historical Child Sexual Abuse', 416.
[309] Brown and Barrett, *Knowledge of Evil*, 92.
[310] Ibid., 100.

Table 4: Overview of Criminal Cases, in England and Wales, 1929-1938

Year	Cruelty to and neglect of children			Unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl under 13			Unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl between 13 and 16		
	Proceedings	Convictions	% of cases which resulted in conviction	Proceedings	Convictions	% of cases which resulted in conviction	Proceedings	Convictions	% of cases which resulted in conviction
1929	971	839	86%	43	21	49%	183	93	51%
1930	931	800	86%	23	17	74%	216	124	57%
1931	902	786	87%	40	29	73%	211	140	66%
1932	726	622	86%	30	25	83%	165	113	68%
1933	676	567	84%	39	29	74%	156	111	71%
1934	846	717	85%	49	39	80%	229	156	68%
1935	942	814	86%	31	27	87%	246	176	72%
1936	967	821	85%	33	29	88%	254	174	69%
1937	1018	888	87%	55	48	87%	249	177	71%
1938	1071	944	88%	44	41	93%	276	211	76%
Total	9,050	7,798	86%	387	305	79%	2,185	1,475	68%

Most children who were dependent on state or voluntary care were not perceived to have been abused, either physically or sexually,. Poverty rather than parental mistreatment lay behind many referrals.[311] During the 1930s, there were three main mechanisms by which children could be taken into non-familial care: through the Poor Law, placement in voluntary homes, and under the Children and Young Persons Act, 1933. To these procedures must also be added private boarding arrangements, which were required to be registered with the state. The scrutiny of these practices, at a time when children placed in independent boarding schools were not subject to state mandated inspection, reflects the class based concerns of policy makers responsible for determining whose children merited state monitoring.[312]

Most children in the care of the state were supported through the Poor Law.[313] The Poor Law Act, 1930, required local public assistance authorities to 'provide such relief as may be necessary for … such persons as are poor and not able to work'. The provision of relief under the Poor Law varied considerably across the country because the Act did not prescribe the amount of relief that should be provided, nor were local authorities provided with a standardised definition of poverty.[314] Every year between 1930 and 1939, most children supported by the Poor Law (85%-92%) were in receipt of domiciliary relief. Between 1930 and 1939, the total number of children supported fell from 394,340 to 293,510, with a high of 519,828 in 1935. Children in receipt of institutional relief, other than rate-aided patients in mental hospitals, comprised at most 15% of all cases supported by the Poor Law. Between 1930 and 1939 the total number of children boarded out, as a proportion of children in

[311] Hansard HL Debate vol 135 col 856 (29 March 1945).
[312] Hansard HC Debate vol 303 col 1988 (4 July 1935).
See also: Bingham et al., 'Historical Child Sexual Abuse', 419.
[313] For more information about the history of the Poor Law, see: Cretney, *Family Law in the Twentieth Century*, 636–637.
[314] H. J. Marshall, 'Recent Administration of Public Assistance In London, Especially 1934-37', *Charity Organisation Quarterly*, 11:3 (1937), p. 198.

support of institutional relief, increased slightly, from 15% in 1930 to 18% by 1939.[315] This increase is consistent with government efforts, revealed in chapter 1, to increase the proportion of looked after children placed in foster homes.

Children that local authorities believed should be removed from their homes were either boarded out or placed in institutional care. The 1930 Act allowed local authorities to gain custody of children, until the age of eighteen, in cases of desertion, mental deficiency, parental imprisonment, disability, or if they became an orphan.[316] These powers were subject to the right of appeal by a parent or guardian to a Court of summary jurisdiction.[317] By 1945, local authorities had gained custody of 5,700 children in this way. Throughout the 1930s the boarding out of Poor Law children was restricted to orphan or deserted children and children for whom authorities had assumed parental rights. Inspectors employed by the ministry of Health were empowered by the Poor Law Act, 1930, to visit and inspect foster homes.

The economic austerity of the 1930s meant that policies developed to protect children were not always followed. Beginning in 1913, children aged 3-16 were not permitted to stay in workhouses for more than six weeks. However, in the early 1930s, as result of financial austerity, the Ministry of Health observed that 'in many areas the accommodation for children outside the general institutions is gravely inadequate'. This meant that some children remained in workhouses for longer than six weeks.[318] By 1939, the number of children placed in workhouses had declined to 154 and the Ministry was optimistic that there was 'no valid reason why the position should not be [fully] rectified before the 1st January [1940]'.[319]

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[315] Reports of the Ministry of Health, (London, 1930/31 – 1938/39).
[316] *Report of Young Offenders Committee*, 115–116.
[317] *Report of the Care of Children Committee*, 8–11.
[318] *Thirteenth Annual Report of the Ministry of Health 1931-1932*, Cmd. 4113, 1932, p. 208.
Thane, *Divided Kingdom*, 31.
[319] *Twentieth Annual Report of the Ministry of Health 1938-39*, Cmd. 6089 (London, 1939), p. 72.

Reforms enacted shortly before the Poor Law Act, 1930, provided local authorities with a greater say over children's services. These changes, in combination with the powers delegated to local authorities by the 1933 Act, meant that the actions of local councils determined whether policy makers' optimism in state services, to improve children's lives chances, was realised in practice. The Local Government Act 1929 abolished historic Boards of Guardians and transferred their powers to county and borough councils in England and Wales.[320] Popular dislike of the Poor Law meant that Parliament was unwilling to trust the Guardians with administering new social services. As a result, many overlapping agencies appeared in the field of social services.[321] The reforms held out the possibility of unifying services previously provided concurrently under the Poor Law and local authority departments.[322] In 1948, Maureen Schulz, who worked as research assistant at Nuffield College, observed that many local authorities, including Westmorland, 'did not take advantage of the permissive clauses of the 1929, either from poverty or from inertia'.[323] Other commentators, however, were keen to stress the benefits derived from the Act. Writing in the immediate aftermath of the creation of the NHS, the academic J.M. Mackintosh described the 1930s as the 'zenith of responsible local government' in part because of the changes brought about the by the 1929 Local Government Act.[324] While the Act was designed to improve the coordination of local authority services, it also widened discrepancies between local authorities. Histories of infant welfare provision have drawn attention to the way in which the

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[320] M. Schulz, 'The Local Government Act of 1929 and Subsequent Legislation', in C. Wilson, ed., *Essays on Local Government*, (Oxford, 1948), p. 69; *Annual Report of the Westmorland Medical Officer of Health, 1929*, (1929), pp. 4–8.
For discussion of the division of responsibilities by Birmingham County Council, see: *Report of the Birmingham Medical Officer of Health, for the Year 1931*, (1932), p. 18.
[321] Schulz, 'The Local Government Act', 74–75.
[322] A. Levene, M. Powell, and J. Stewart, 'The Development of Municipal General Hospitals in English County Boroughs in the 1930s', *Medical History*, 50:1 (2006), p. 3.
[323] Schulz, 'The Local Government Act', 77.
[324] A. Levene, M. Powell, and J. Stewart, 'Patterns of Municipal Health Expenditure in Interwar England and Wales', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 78:3 (2004), p. 636.

practices of pioneering local authorities were quickly replicated in other parts of the country.[325] This thesis explores the extent to which this also occurred in relation to child protection services.

Local authorities were encouraged to transfer Poor Law functions to a Public Assistance Committee.[326] The 1929 Act empowered local education committees to act as agents of Public Assistance committees to support looked after children. In Birmingham, the Education Committee took responsibility for the local authority's children's homes, with general direction from the Public Assistance Committee.[327] This approach was consistent with the recommendations of the 1909 Royal Commission on the Poor Law but was only adopted by a minority of local authorities.[328] By contrast, in Westmorland oversight of boarding-out and the county's single children's home became the responsibility of the County's Public Assistance Committee after the County's Education Committee argued that 'there would be no advantage in their accepting responsibility for the maintenance and care of boarded-out children or children in Institutions'.[329] While the committee minutes do not offer an explanation for this decision, the resolution suggests that the Westmorland councillors did not believe that the Education Committee possessed the specialist staff which the 1909 Minority Report had envisaged. The autonomy afforded local authorities by the 1929 Act meant that the recommendations of specific committees were refracted through the perspectives of local officials.

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[325] C. Dyhouse, 'Working-Class Mothers and Infant Mortality in England, 1895-1914', *Journal of Social History*, 12:2 (1978), p. 250.
[326] Thane, *Divided Kingdom*, 97; 'Taking Over Poor Law Work', *The Manchester Guardian*, 12 August 1929, p. 11.
[327] 'Passing of the Guardians', *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 27 March 1930, p. 8.
[328] M. Stocks, 'The Lost Children', *The Manchester Guardian*, 23 March 1944, p. 4.
[329] 'Westmorland County Council', *The Penrith Observer*, 4 March 1930, p. 2; 'North Westmorland Poor Law Work', *The Penrith Observer*, 18 March 1930, p. 3.
KA: WC/E/1, Westmorland County Council, Education Committee, 27 September 1929, p. 92.

Although the Poor Law Act, 1930, did not place on local authorities any general duties to uphold children's welfare, they were empowered to provide for children by maintaining them in institutions described as 'schools' managed by local authorities or in voluntary institutions which were not required to be certified by central government. The phrase 'school' originally referred to self-contained residential establishments, in which education was delivered on site. The decision by Birmingham Council to delegate responsibility for their children's homes to the education committee was consistent with the efforts of nineteenth century philanthropists who sought to depauperise children by removing them from adult workhouses.[330] By the 1930s, most children in 'Poor Law Schools' were accommodated in a wide variety of children's homes, from 'large schools of the barrack type, [to] groups of Cottage Homes or still smaller Homes'.[331] Most of the children in Poor Law Schools were educated at ordinary day schools.[332]

Following the Poor Law Act, 1930, Poor Law services were overseen nationally by the Minister of Health. The 1930 Act placed on local authorities a duty to 'set to work or place out as apprentices all children whose parents are not, in the opinion of the Council able to keep and maintain their children'.[333] The records of the Superintendent of Abbey Home, a children's home run by Westmorland Council, reveal that some children remained within the care of local authority institutions for a very short period. In 1931, Roland Lewis, whose age was not recorded, spent just two nights in the care of Abbey Home, which was run by Westmorland Council, before being found work with a local employer.[334] The reason for

[330] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, 61; P. Roy, 'The Age of Separation', in N. Frost, ed., *Child Welfare: Historical Perspectives*, (Abingdon, 2005), p. 293.
[331] *Sixteenth Annual Report of the Ministry of Health 1934-35*, Cmd. 4978 (London, 1935), p. 226.
[332] *Report of Young Offenders Committee*, 115–116.
[333] *Report of the Care of Children Committee*, 9.
[334] KA: WC/W/2/17, Abbey Home, Superintendent Report for four weeks ending 20 March 1931 [pseudonym].

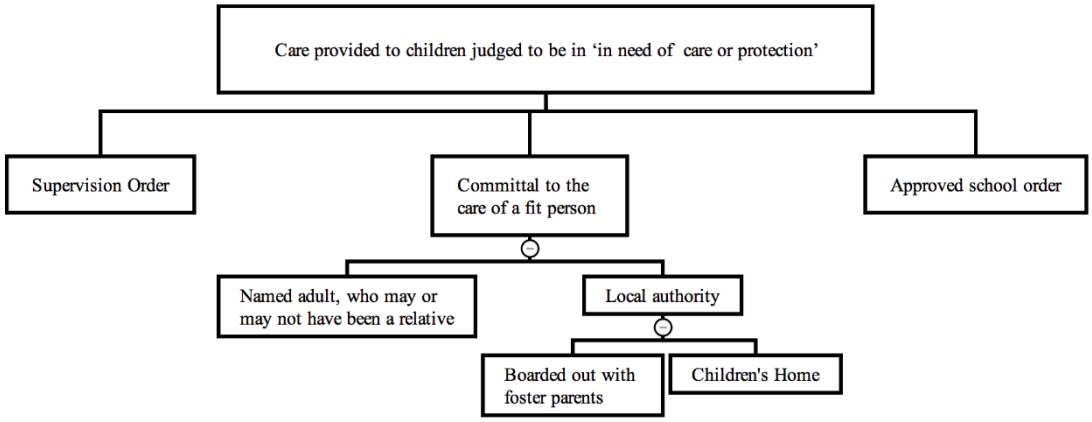
Roland's admission to care is not recorded, however, the Superintendent's actions suggest that he had been received because his parents were judged to be unable to keep and maintain him, possibly as a result of financial hardship. It was not uncommon for children to return to Abbey Home for periods of holiday, thereby allowing employers to avoid providing accommodation when the children were not working. In May 1932, for example, seven boys and one girl stayed at the home for the Whitsuntide holidays.[335] The lives of children supported by the Poor Law could oscillate between institutional care and life with their employers, the latter was arranged with no pretence of providing a substitute family environment.

Alongside the Poor Law, children could enter care through the Children and Young Persons Act, 1933, the substance of which has been discussed in chapter one. As shown in Figure 2, Children who were found to need 'care or attention' could be supported in one of three ways: supervision order, which would involve the child remaining with their own family, committal to the care of a fit person (including a named adult, who may or may not have been a relative, or the local authority) or an approved school order. When the act was passed, it was anticipated that approved school orders would primarily be issued to juvenile delinquents, but it was possible to refer 'care and protection' cases to approved schools. Children who had completed a period of detention within an Approved School were placed under the supervision of the schools' managers until the age of 18. The Children and Young Persons (Boarding Out) Rules, 1933, made it obligatory for local authorities, when entrusted to act as a 'fit person', to board out children who had been placed in their care, unless granted special dispensation by the Secretary of State.[336] These actions, which were authorised by a juvenile

[335] KA: WC/W/2/17, Abbey Home, Superintendent Report for four weeks ending 22 May 1932.
[336] *Report of the Care of Children Committee*, 15.

court, did not require the consent of either the parents or their children. However, a child or his or her parent could appeal to the quarter sessions if they disputed the juvenile court's findings.[337] The courts were only required to obtain parental consent when dealing with children who were deemed to be beyond control.[338]

Figure 2: Care Provision



Unfortunately, the government did not publish an annual record of the number of children deemed to be in need of care and protection. A report published by the Home Office, in 1938, came closest to providing this information, although the categories of 'care and protection' and children deemed to be 'beyond control' by their parents, were conflated. As shown in Table 55, below, the number of 'care or protection' and 'beyond control' cases increased in each of the three years that followed the introduction of the Act. Approved School orders comprised the largest proportion of cases (between 36%-47%), although by 1936 there was greater parity between the three forms of care.

[337] *Children and Young Persons Act*, 1933, 102.
[338] Ibid., sec. 64.

Table 5: Resolution of 'Care or Protection' and 'Beyond Control' Cases, England and Wales, 1934-1936[339]

	Supervision orders	Committals to care of fit persons	Approved School Orders	Total
1934	261	284	478	1,023
1935	402	371	529	1,302
1936	490	596	603	1,689

The number of children committed to the care of a fit person, in accordance with the 1933 Act, varied across the country. In 1936, 53 children were placed in the care of Birmingham City council and three children resident in Birmingham were sent to fit persons who were not related to them. A further 43 of the city's children were placed under supervision orders. In contrast, in Westmorland, during the same year, no cases were dealt with in any of these ways.[340]

Data collected by Birmingham City Council shows that many of the children who were placed into foster care, either by the council or through private arrangements which were recorded on the infant life protection registers were short term. Between January 1938 and January 1942, 1,934 foster children were placed within the city. Most cases (86%) involved a child being placed in a single foster home. Amongst the children who were referred to a foster home, 25% were in foster care as an emergency arrangement for a period of less than three months, a further 23% left care within 12 months.[341]

[339] Home Office, *Fifth Report on the Work of the Children's Branch*, 38.
[340] Ibid., 130.
[341] *Report of the Birmingham Medical Officer of Health, for the Year 1945*, (1946), p. 55.

A third category of children were supported by institutions that were funded through voluntary donations. Children could be placed in these homes by local authorities through the Poor Law and the Children and Young Persons Act, in addition to parents directly placing their children in the care of voluntary institutions. Unfortunately, based on the records available it is not possible to know what proportion of children in the voluntarily funded organisations were placed there by a court order. Much like Murdoch's study of institutional care provided to children in the late nineteenth century, during the 1930s some parents used these services as part of temporary care arrangements.[342] Until the Children and Young Persons Act, 1933, there were no reliable records of the number of voluntary institutions which maintained many thousands of young people. Voluntary organisations were able to set their own admissions criteria and so the reasons why children entered care are difficult to ascertain. Some organisations were designed to support certain groups – such as babies born to unmarried mothers – while others discriminated based on religion or age. Lydia Murdoch's study of children's homes in the late nineteenth century found that 'the inability of poor families to find adequate housing was a main factor leading to children's institutionalisation'.[343] Likewise, when writing about the interwar period, George Behlmer observes that 'it is important to realize that by no means [were] all the children [admitted to the care of voluntary organisations] wrested from bad parents'. Instead the poverty experienced by some families 'left no obvious alternative to parting with one's young'.[344]

These findings are supported by the experiences of individuals, as recorded in case files and autobiographies. Born in 1903, Kathleen Dayus spent her childhood in a Birmingham slum, before marrying at the age of eighteen. In 1927 a series of tragedies befell her family and she

[342] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, 96.
[343] Ibid., 83.
[344] G. K. Behlmer, *Friends of the Family: The English Home and Its Guardians, 1850-1940* (Stanford, 1998), pp. 291–292.

became unemployed. Writing many years later, she reflected that 'life was unbearable … I was at my wit's end. Finally, I had to let my children go into a Dr Barnardo's home. I was heartbroken, but what could I do? We were starving and helpless'.[345] Kathleen was forced to wait until the outbreak of the Second World War, which led to an upturn in her economic fortunes, before she could be reunited with her children. For people living in poverty, changes outside their immediate control could result in the break-up of the family unit.

While Kathleen could visit her children, this was not the case for all parents who placed their children into voluntary care. The emigration of children to Commonwealth nations often resulted in the permeant separation of children from their families. The poverty which forced Kathleen to part with her children is also recorded in the admissions records of Middlemore Homes, a voluntary run children's home located in Birmingham.[346] The organisation was founded by John Middlemore, the son of a wealthy businessman, in 1872. The homes that he established in the later part of the nineteenth century trained children before sending them to Canada. The first party of children arrived in Canada in 1873 and the practice continued until 1932, at which point Australia became the main destination. Middlemore received children through a mixture of court orders, often arising from parental mistreatment and voluntary referrals, which were often attributed to family poverty. While the organisation's involvement with facilitating the migration of children to Canada and Australia was not representative of most voluntary homes, its records are referred to because of their rich nature, encompassing annual reports, private correspondence and admissions registers.

[345] K. Dayus, *Her People* (London, 1982), pp. 192–193.
[346] BA: MS/517/120, Middlemore Emigration Homes Report, 14 January 1932, p. 2.

Finally, the government also extended a duty of care to children under the age of nine who were 'nursed and maintained by any person for reward apart from their parents'. People who cared for children who were not their own, for reward, were required to notify the welfare authority not less than seven days before receiving their first child. The private nature of these transactions make it difficult to know why children were placed in private foster care. Existing research has noted that many of the children who were privately fostered were the children of single parents, unmarried mothers and widowers alike, who struggled to care for their children alongside working.[347]

Although these transactions occurred between private individuals, a court of summary jurisdiction reserved the right to order that a child, being maintained for reward, be removed if they were discovered to be kept in 'overcrowded, insanitary or dangerous premises, or by persons unfit to have the care of the child … or in an environment detrimental to the child'.[348] In practice, only a very small number of children were removed from private foster care by state officials. Between 1931 and 1938 the number of children placed on the English and Welsh infant life protection register rose from 16,369 and 17,136.[349] Many more children were privately boarded out than were placed in foster homes under the Poor Law Act, 1930. Likewise, the number of 'care or protection' and 'beyond control' cases were vastly outnumbered by the number of children on infant life protection registers. This is even more striking because only children below the age of 9 had to be registered, while 'care and protection' cases extended until the age of 17. Part I of the Children Act, 1908, as amended by the Children and Young Persons Act, 1932 and later the Public Health Act, 1936, set out a series of offences to which private foster parents could be guilty. These offences included

[347] M. Arnot, 'Infant Death, Child Care and the State: The Baby-Farming Scandal and the First Infant Life Protection Legislation of 1872', *Continuity and Change*, 9:2 (1994), pp. 271–311.
[348] *Report of the Care of Children Committee*, 20–21.
[349] Reports of the Ministry of Health, (London, 1933/34 – 1938/39).

failing to register with the local authority or providing false or misleading information, and failing to allow welfare inspectors to visit or examine the child.[350] A tiny proportion of private foster parents were subject to proceedings each year because of their failure to comply with the relevant legislation. In 1931, more than 16,000 children were on the infant life protection register and 41 removal orders were issued, representing just 0.25% of all cases.[351] Research by Delap and others has revealed that during the four-year period July 1925–May 1929, 110 teachers, employed by state funded schools, were placed on a blacklist for sexual misconduct.[352] This was five more than the number of removal orders which were obtained between 1931-1934. That private schools, whose students were largely drawn from wealthier sections of society, were not subject to the same level of scrutiny as children placed on the infant life protection registers, who were overwhelmingly drawn from working-class homes, at a time when it was known that sections of the state teaching profession were suspected of sexual misconduct, is indicative of class based prejudices. The anxieties of policy makers were not evenly distributed. The separation of certain groups of children attracted more attention, from state officials, than others.

Study of the way in which children placed in extra-familial care were treated affirms recent calls to adopt age as a category of analysis.[353] Many of the reforms introduced during the 1930s extended the supervision provided to looked after children, thereby prolonging the length of childhood. The 1933 Act extended the supervision of privately fostered children from under the age of seven to under the age of nine. The Act also expanded the types of care that could be provided to older children. Prior to 1933, justices who were responsible for

[350] *Public Health Act*, 1936, secs 206–220.
[351] Reports of the Ministry of Health, (London, 1933/34 – 1938/39).
[352] Bingham et al., 'Historical Child Sexual Abuse', 417.
[353] S. Mintz, 'Reflections on Age as a Category of Historical Analysis', *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, 1:1 (2008), pp. 91–94.

neglected children under the age of 14 could either send them to a school or place them in the care of a fit person. Young people aged between fourteen and sixteen could be dealt with only by committing them to the care of a fit person. Under the reforms, these distinctions were removed and the upper age limit was raised by a year; children and young people aged up to seventeen could be treated alike.[354] Some types of care which were introduced by the 1933 Act were only available to children above a certain age. The Courts were unable to send children under ten to approved schools unless all other options had first been exhausted.[355]

The importance of age was also reflected in practices which were not legally mandated, but instead emerged from experience. In 1938 the Home Office observed that 'experience has shown that it is easier to board out younger children than older children'.[356] The observations of local authority staff support this position. In Birmingham, the Hostels and Boarding-out Sub-Committee noted that:

> It has generally been found that the younger the child, the greater is the immediate success of placing in a foster-home. Older children present a much more difficult problem … [Before entering care] they often learned that the world was a hostile place and it is small wonder if, by the time they reached the Authority, they were prepared to fight with aggression.[357]

These observations, which assumed that early childhood informed the character of a person, are consistent with the arguments advanced by national policy makers who claimed that improving the care given to children was vital to ensuring the development of future citizens.[358]

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[354] Stanley, 'The Children Bill', 570; A. Whitfield, 'Stanley, Oliver Frederick George (1896–1950)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2011.
[355] *Report of the Care of Children Committee*, 14.
[356] Home Office, *Fifth Report on the Work of the Children's Branch*, 117.
[357] BA: BCC/1/CT/1/1, City of Birmingham Education Committee, Report of the Hostels and Boarding-out Sub-Committee, December 1948, p. 7.
[358] Hansard HC Debate vol 332 col 967 (1 March 1938).

The importance of age to children's experience intersected with gender. Older girls were often singled out as being especially difficult to care for because of concerns about their sexual behaviour. In 1938, the Home Office emphasised the difficult nature of certain girls who were admitted 'within the innocent description of being "in need of care or protection"'. Some of the cases concerned girls who were 'in a state of emotional, adolescent disturbance', which was thought to manifest itself in disruptive behaviour and multiple efforts to run away.[359]A decade earlier the Departmental Committee on Sexual Offences, observed that the practice of gathering together girls who had been sexually abused into a single home 'creates special difficulties which do not exist in an ordinary Home'.[360] The separation of girls in this way was consistent with earlier nineteenth century efforts to isolate children who were 'contaminated' by sexual knowledge.[361] Despite the innovations introduced in the 1930s, certain practices continued to reflect Victorian understandings of gender differences.

The actions of parents also informed children's experiences. The state was limited in how far it could control the environment in which looked after children grew up. The recommendations given to local authorities, by the Home Office, suggested that the parents of some foster children made unannounced visits, which did not take place when children were in institutional care. The Home Office noted that 'if a child is transferred from its own home to another home in the same district the natural parents are very likely to disturb both the child and the foster-parents by unreasonable visits.' Local authorities were encouraged to

[359] Home Office, *Fifth Report on the Work of the Children's Branch*, 41–42.
[360] *Departmental Committee on Sexual Offences Against Young Persons*, 77.
[361] Jackson, *Child Sexual Abuse in Victorian England*, 97.
For further discussion of the gendered association between sexual ignorance and respectability, see: S. Szreter and K. Fisher, *Sex Before the Sexual Revolution: Intimate Life in England 1918–1963* (Cambridge, 2010), chap. 2.

'approach other authorities with a view to making … an "exchange" arrangement'.[362] These recommendations highlight both the agency of parents to circumnavigate officials' efforts to separate family members and the willingness of local authorities to go to extra lengths to keep certain families apart.

On occasions, parents and their children worked together to undermine the authority of officials tasked with caring for children. In 1937, James Watson, aged 13, was admitted to Abbey Home, Westmorland, for reasons that are not recorded.[363] In the months that followed, James ran away from Abbey Home on five separate occasions. Following the penultimate case of running away James was placed in the care of his mother.[364] The decision to return James to the care of his mother, combined with the absence of any reference to his father, suggests that he may have been admitted to care under the terms of the Poor Law Act, 1930, because of his family's poverty, rather than because he was judged to be in need of 'care and protection'. Two months later, however, James was readmitted to the Home. The following day he absconded in the early hours of the morning. In response, a member of staff was dispatched to James's mother's house, where he was told that the boy had not been seen. The following morning the member of staff returned to the house. James's mother admitted that he had stayed at her home the previous night, but reported that he had since 'gone off'.[365] The chronological style in which this account was recorded by the Superintendent of Abbey Home provides little indication of how this episode was viewed by the staff of the Home. It is reasonable, however, to imagine that the actions of James's mother frustrated council staff.

[362] Home Office, *Fifth Report on the Work of the Children's Branch*, 117.
[363] KA: WC/W/2/17, Report of the Superintendent of Abbey Home for the four weeks ending 22 March 1937, [pseudonym].
[364] KA: WC/W/2/17, Report of the Superintendent of Abbey Home for the four weeks ending 19 May 1937.
[365] KA: WC/W/2/17, Report of the Superintendent of Abbey Home for the four weeks ending 12 July 1937.

Private correspondence produced by the staff of Middlemore Homes reveals that parental efforts to withdraw children from the care of voluntary actions could be a source of grave frustration. In 1932, the mother of a child referred to the home requested that she be returned to her. She was entitled to do this because she had voluntarily sent her daughter. The Secretary of the home explained to a colleague that:

> I had to let the child go. I tried my best to make [the mother] see it was to the little girl's advantage to go, and that she was standing in her daughter's light - but all to no purpose … I'm afraid I can do no more ... I feel very angry with the woman and disappointed for the child.[366]

While the secretary acknowledged the legal rights of the mother, and granted her request, it was done with great reluctance. Parents often remained important figures in the lives of children admitted to homes and could help to facilitate their efforts to subvert the authority of the home. The actions of James and his mother undermined the authority of an institution which ordinarily had control over when a child admitted to their care would be released.[367] Alternatively, the parents of children who were voluntarily admitted to care could exert much greater control over when they were discharged, much to the annoyance of the staff employed to facilitate their emigration.

Study of local authorities is especially important because during the 1930s their powers expanded considerably. National policy makers were heavily reliant on local authorities to deliver the reforms, which they were optimistic could deliver positive change, contained within the 1933 Act. The central state created the conditions under which local authorities operated but rarely compelled them to pursue a particular policy.[368] As a result, the

[366] BA: MS/517/120, Middlemore Correspondence, letter dated 22 May 1932.
[367] KA: WC/W/2/17, Report of the Superintendent of Abbey Home for the four weeks ending 16 May 1940
[368] Doyle, 'The Changing Functions of Urban Government: Councillors, Officials and Pressure Groups', 289–290.

experiences of looked after children were informed by important regional disparities in the services provided.

Child protection policy was shaped by the actions of senior local officials, principally the Medical Officers of Health (MOH) and the School Medical Officers of Health (SMOH).[369] These officials displayed very different levels of engagement with professional best practice in Westmorland and Birmingham. These differences were consistent with the attitudes that their employers held towards social reform. In Birmingham, Dr H. P. Newsholme was appointed MOH for the city in 1928, a position that he held until his retirement in 1950. Newsholme was the MOH for Croydon for four years prior to taking up the position in Birmingham and served as Professor of Hygiene and Public Health at Birmingham University from 1937 to 1941.[370] Newsholme was supported in his work by Dr G. A. Auden, the city's SMOH. Auden first arrived in Birmingham, to take up the role, in 1908 and retired nearly 30 years later, in 1937.[371] Prior to working in Birmingham, Auden worked as a physician to the York County Hospital where he developed an interest in the care of children. Both men were active members of the Society of the Medical Officers and were awarded life membership.[372]

In Westmorland, the positions of MOH and SMOH were both held by Dr W. E. Henderson. Henderson was first appointed SMOH in 1908 and took up the role of MOH three years later. Henderson retired from both positions in 1939.[373] A fellow of the Society of Medical Officers

[369] Marland, 'A Pioneer in Infant Welfare'.
[370] 'Obituary: Dr H.P Newsholme', *Birmingham Daily Post*, 23 December 1955, p. 7.
[371] 'Children Much Healthier in Birmingham', *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 25 June 1937, p. 11.
[372] 'Midland Branch', *Public Health*, 51 (1938), p. 115; 'Midland Branch', *Public Health*, 64 (1951), p. 83; 'Obituary: G.A. Auden', *British Medical Journal*, 1:5028 (1957), pp. 1187–1188.
[373] *Annual Report of the Westmorland Medical Officer of Health, 1939*, (1940), p. 51.

of Health, Henderson was far less actively involved in the Society than Newsholme.[374] Instead he devoted his energy to promoting the Boy Scouts Association, having been a friend of Lord Baden Powell.[375] Speaking in 1930, Henderson attached special importance to play, arguing that 'play is one of nature's chief and most important methods of training the young for the responsible duties of adult life'.[376] While all three men took a professional interest in children's wellbeing, the actions of Newsholme and Auden amongst the Society of Medical Officers of Health meant that they were more likely to be exposed to new and innovative ideas relating children's welfare. The progressive views of Newsholme and Auden were consistent with the city's reputation as a pioneer of social services.[377]

National Standards Refracted Through Local Differences

The 1933 Act sought to improve the care provided to all children in receipt of extra-familial care, however, the government's unwillingness to invest large sums into new buildings meant that the services available to children were shaped by the facilities that were already in place. Public attitudes also informed the experiences of children in care because of the drive to better integrate local authority children within local communities. In Westmorland, prior to the 1933 Act being passed there were no industrial or reformatory schools, which could have been transformed into approved schools. Nearly two years after the Act had been passed, the Council finally opened its first Approved School, with space for up to 35 boys, by repurposing a council property.[378] While proponents of approved schools argued that they helped to remove artificial distinctions between reformatory and industrial schools, the

[374] 'Obituary: William E. Henderson', *Public Health*, 56 (1943), p. 143.
[375] 'Obituary: William E. Henderson', *The Yorkshire Post*, 5 July 1943.
[376] 'Sayings of the Day', *Lancashire Evening Post*, 17 March 1930, p. 4.
[377] I. Grosvenor and K. Myers, 'Progressivism, Control and Correction: Local Education Authorities and Educational Policy in Twentieth-century England', *Paedagogica Historica*, 42:1–2 (2006), pp. 231–232.
[378] KA: WC/E/1, Minutes of the Westmorland County Council, School Management Sub-Committee, 8 April 1935.

decision to open the approved school in Westmorland proved highly controversial.[379] Within weeks of the school opening, local parents began to object to approved school children being educated alongside their own children. Following a meeting of the Westmorland County Council a resolution was passed requesting that the Home Office make alternative arrangements. While one of the councillors present at the meeting acknowledged that many of the children at the approved school 'merely came from unfortunate homes', he was still concerned that the 'village children [risked] learning to take a less heedful view of vice'.[380] The actions of Westmorland's councillor attracted national attention. The Howard League was highly critical of the 'extraordinary outburst of indignation' expressed by the county's officials.[381] While it has not been possible to consult case records for children sent to Westmorland's approved school, the remarks of the county councillors suggest that their experiences would have been informed by hostility and suspicion from sections of the public. These attitudes may have exacerbated the hostility which older children were thought to display, which was believed to have made it harder to board them out. The position adopted by Westmorland's councillors was directly at odds with the type of care advocated in Birmingham where children who were in care were encouraged to mix with other children.[382] These insights challenge Victor Bailey's assertion that 'local authorities … warmly supported' the decision to 'do away with the distinction between … the neglected and the delinquent child'.[383] Not all local officials accepted the recommendations of child welfare experts.

[379] Stanley, 'The Children Bill'.
[380] 'Danger of Contacts', *Leeds Mercury*, 17 August 1935, p. 3.
[381] 'Editorial', 1935, 124.
[382] BA: BCC/1/BH/5/5/5/1/2, Meeting of the Cottage Homes and Residential Schools Sub-Committee, 7 March 1932.
[383] Bailey, *Delinquency and Citizenship*, 98.

Birmingham boasted three different approved schools. Two of the institutions were established in the mid-nineteenth century as industrial schools and repurposed as approved schools, allowing the new scheme to be implemented far more quickly than in Westmorland. The third School, St. John's Home for Girls, was established in 1936.[384] The provision of approved school spaces exemplifies the ways in which discrepancies in institutional arrangements, which pre-dated the 1933 Act, informed the ways in local authorities responded to the new legislation. This is also evidenced in the provision of remand homes.

As observed in chapter one, the government did not legislate for observation centres for financial reasons.[385] However, children in progressive local authorities received very similar services through remand homes. The 1933 Act transferred responsibility for remand homes from police authorities to local councils.[386] These services helped courts to decide how best to support the children referred to them.[387] Nationally, the use of remand homes was very mixed. In 1935, C. P. Hill, an assistant principal in the Home Office, was appointed to encourage local authorities to improve remand home accommodation. At the time of Hill's appointment, the proportion of juvenile court cases for which remand reports had been provided varied from 1 to 25 per cent. Birmingham was believed to provide some of the best remand homes and was encouraged to offer medical examinations for cases sent by neighbouring local authorities.[388]

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[384] Birmingham City Council, *The First Four Years: Report of the Children's Officer of the City of Birmingham, 1949-1953* (Birmingham, 1953), p. 149.
[385] Hansard HC Debate vol 261 col 1242-1243 (12 February 1932); 'The Treatment of Offenders'; 'Editorial: The Children Act', *The Howard Journal*, 3:3 (1932), pp. 11–14.
For a discussion of the period's economic context, see: Middleton, 'British Monetary and Fiscal Policy in the 1930s'.
[386] BAC: ACC/2201/M/8/4, Home Office Circular, 'Children and Young Persons Act, 1933', 9 August 1933, 9.
[387] Hansard HC Debate vol 332 col 956-957 (1 March 1938).
For an example of a Remand Home report, see: L. Page, *Crime and the Community* (London, 1937), pp. 290–291.
[388] Bailey, *Delinquency and Citizenship*, 148.

The ability to make use of pre-existing services was in part the result of earlier philanthropic efforts. Some of Birmingham's children's homes were founded by civic leaders, rather than through investment from the city council. In 1911, Geraldine and Barrow Cadbury provided the city with the first purpose-built children's remand home in Britain. Several years later, in 1928, they paid for a second home, catering exclusively for girls.[389] These efforts reflected the couple's active interest in the welfare of children and young people. In 1920, following the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act of 1919, Geraldine Cadbury became one of the city's first women magistrates and from 1923 she chaired the justices' panel in the children's court. In 1925 she was appointed to the Home Office's departmental committee on the treatment of young offenders, whose findings framed much of the 1933 Act. Stewart has noted that many of Bristol's children's services owed their existence to local people, particularly Lady Inskip, whose husband was a leading politician and a member of an influential Bristol family.[390] In both Birmingham and Westmorland, charitable giving also took the form of much smaller donations, particularly for special events such as Christmas.[391]

As a result of the 1933 Act, Birmingham Council delegated authority for the remand homes to the Education Committee.[392] While the homes primarily received children and young people suspected of an offence, research carried out by Birmingham's SMOH found that nearly 60% of the boys admitted had experienced 'unfavourable home conditions', including experience as single and double orphans. These conditions were thought to have led to

[389] *Annual Report to the City of Birmingham Education Committee of the School Medical Officer, for the Year Ended 31st December 1932*, 1933, p. 8; Birmingham City Council, *Four Years*, 154.
[390] Stewart, *Child Guidance in Britain, 1918-1955*, 68.
[391] KA: WC/W/2/17, Report of the Superintendent of Abbey Home for the four weeks ending 5 January 1931; BA: BCC/1/BH/5/5/1/1, Meeting of the Cottage Home and Residential School Sub-Committee, 12 January 1931.
[392] *Annual Report to the City of Birmingham Education Committee of the School Medical Officer, for the Year Ended 31st December 1933*, 1934, p. 40.

'psychological reactions' which manifested themselves in 'unsatisfactory behaviour'.[393] These findings were consistent with the position of parliamentarians, such as the Conservative MP for the Birmingham constituency of Ladywood, Geoffrey Lloyd.[394] Having pioneered the introduction of remand homes it is not surprising that Birmingham's homes were developed in the spirit that their advocates intended. Remand homes were viewed as an important means by which to better understand children and young people who, for a variety of different reasons, were due to appear before the courts.

In Westmorland the reach of philanthropy was much more limited. The county had only one boys' remand home, in Kendal, leaving the north of the county without any provision. Due to the small number of girls referred to remand homes, the few cases that did arise were sent to a separate institution managed by the South Westmorland Social and Moral Welfare.[395] Unlike in Birmingham, however, Westmorland Council had no direct say on the running of the girls' remand home and for much of the 1930s this arrangement was not formally agreed to by the Education Committee. In 1935, the manager of the Kendal remand home resigned, prompting the Westmorland Education Committee to contact the Home Office and the Lancashire County Education Authority to ask for assistance.[396] These problems were common to small areas, whether rural or inner city. In 1932 the remand home in West Ham was closed because the cost of running it proved to be excessive owing to the small number of children accommodated. As a result, children had to be transported long distances to be admitted to remand homes run by the London County Council and several girls were

[393] *Annual Report to the City of Birmingham Education Committee of the School Medical Officer, for the Year Ended 31st December 1936*, 20.
[394] Hansard HC Debate vol 332 col 969-970 (1 March 1938).
[395] Kendal Archive (KA): WC/E/1, Minutes of the Westmorland County Council, Minor Education Sub-Committee, 7 December 1934.
[396] KA: WC/E/1, Minutes of the Westmorland County Council, Minor Education Sub-Committee, 12 November 1935.

accommodated in Wormwood Scrubs prison, because of a lack of facilities.[397] The government's reluctance to fund the construction of new facilities, combined with the budgetary constraints faced by local authorities, meant that councils which were unable to benefit from alternative sources of income were restricted in the services they could provide.

Local Authorities' Spending Priorities

Different attitudes towards local government spending exacerbated the differences in the services available to children. Previous histories have concluded that 'greater [social] expenditure [by local authorities was] associated with … Labour strength'.[398] It is significant, therefore, that despite all the parliamentary constituencies contained within both Westmorland (one parliamentary seat) and Birmingham (12 parliamentary seats) being held by Conservatives, from 1931 to 1945, attitudes towards local government spending differed notably. These differences reflected contrasting assessments of the role of local government. In Westmorland, the county council passed a series of rate reductions in the early 1930s, so that by 1932 the rates stood at 6s. 5d. These made Westmorland one of the lowest rated counties in the country.[399] By 1937, rates had risen slightly to 7s 2d.[400] In contrast, rates in Birmingham in 1932 came to 14s, rising to 15s by 1937.[401] The city's rates would have been even higher had they not been able to rely on municipal services, such as its gas works, which contributed £2 million in the late 1930s.[402] Birmingham's officials defended the rates charged, in the face of some opposition from local business, with references to the social services provided.[403] An editorial in the *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, produced in 1936 noted

[397] Hansard HC Debate vol 266 col 1303-1304 (2 June 1932).
[398] M. Powell, 'Did Politics Matter? Municipal Public Health Expenditure in the 1930s', *Urban History*, 22:3 (1995), p. 376.
[399] 'Westmorland's Rate Reduced by 7d in the £', *Westmorland Gazette*, 19 March 1932, p. 9.
[400] 'Unchanged Rate', *Lancashire Evening Post*, 19 February 1937, p. 14.
[401] 'Birmingham's New Rate - 15s. 6d: Third Successive 6d Rise', *Birmingham Gazette*, 19 February 1938, p. 4.
[402] Doyle, 'The Changing Functions of Urban Government: Councillors, Officials and Pressure Groups', 295.
[403] 'Lord Mayor Hits Back', *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 10 March 1938, p. 7.

that ‘keeping the rates down just for the sake of parsimony is no policy for a “Forward” city’. Two years later the Lord Mayor justified the recent rate rises on the grounds that ‘we are building up a social service that is the pride of the world, and we have got to pay the price for it’.[404] Council officials were keen to honour the municipal socialism that they had inherited.[405]

These comments stand in stark contrast to those of Westmorland officials, such as Alderman C. E. Greenall, who was keen to keep rates as low as possible. In 1937, he was reported to have argued that ‘the right course was to pay as they went and not be too keen on trying to borrow money which the next generation would have to pay off’.[406] Several years earlier, while discussing the Council’s rates, Greenall implied that residents were largely uninterested in what local government could provide for them, and remarked that rate-payers ‘did not care tuppence’ what the council was spending, and were only concerned to know ‘how much they had to pay against last year’.[407] The following day councillors carried a motion opposing the compulsory raising of the school-leaving age, partly on the grounds that ‘agriculturalists regarded the scheme as a waste of the children’s time and the ratepayers’ money’.[408] The fact that these comments were made by elected officials, who were accountable to an electorate amongst whom readership of local newspapers, in which these remarks appeared, was very high, suggests that the attitudes of men such as Greenall and the Lord Mayor of Birmingham were not only held by a narrow group of elites. The comments reflected important differences in the ways in which people in the respective regions viewed the role and responsibility of local government. In Birmingham, it was widely believed that council spending represented an important social investment which helped to define the city as modern and forward

[404] ‘City Rates’, *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 15 February 1936, p. 6; ‘Lord Mayor Hits Back’.
[405] J. Gehrke, ‘A Radical Endeavor: Joseph Chamberlain and the Emergence of Municipal Socialism in Birmingham’, *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, 75:1 (2016), pp. 23–57.
[406] ‘Unchanged Rate’.
[407] ‘Westmorland Rates’, *Lancashire Evening Post*, 14 March 1930, p. 7.
[408] ‘School Leaving’, *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer*, 15 March 1930, p. 16.

thinking. In Westmorland, officials, and those they represented, were more fiscally conservative, often sceptical of proposed social reforms and keen to keep rates as low as possible even if that meant limiting the services available.

Although the disbandment of the Poor Law administrative system had been designed to develop national standards in social services, by concentrating power in the hands of local authorities, neither the 1929 Local Government Act, nor the 1933 Children and Young Persons Act successfully addressed important historic differences in children's service. While the 1933 Act sought to promote initiatives first pioneered in specific localities, discrepancies in the demand for such services, combined with the financial climate of the 1930s, meant that less populated regions such as Westmorland were often slower to introduce new services.

Policing Infant Life Protection

As shown in chapter one, proponents of boarding out were confident that its expansion would result in better future citizens. Differences in local authorities' working practices informed how far these objectives were achieved. Despite the Government's efforts to encourage the practice, the proportion of looked after children who were boarding out varied considerably. In 1936, the Ministry of Health noted that in Birmingham the practice was 'considered by far the best', while in other areas 'no children are boarded out save in exceptional circumstances'.[409] Birmingham's commitment to boarding out was also evidenced by the funds it set aside to pay foster parents. Statistics collected by the Hostels and Boarding-Out Sub-Committee in 1931 showed that only two out of 50 local authorities paid higher weekly maintenance and quarterly clothing allowance for boarded-out children than Birmingham.[410]

[409] *Seventeenth Annual Report of the Ministry of Health 1935-36*, Cmd. 5287, 1936, p. 131.
[410] I. Grosvenor, 'Geographies of Risk: An Exploration of City Childhoods in Early Twentieth-century Britain', *Paedagogica Historica*, 45:1–2 (2009), p. 216.

In Westmorland, the number of children living with foster parents, who were known to county officials, fluctuated during the 1930s. Table 6, below, shows that although the number of boarded out children increased in the year in which the Children and Young Persons Act was introduced, by the end of period the number of children boarded out had fallen below the level recorded in 1931. The table also shows that the proportion of all looked after children who were boarded out fluctuated, from more than a third of cases to fewer than a quarter.

Table 6: Number of children boarded out in Westmorland, over time[411]

Year	Number of children boarded out	Average number of children resident in The Abbey	The proportion of looked after children boarded out
1931	24	55	30.4%
1932	16	50	24.2%
1933	21	47	30.9%
1934	22	47	31.9%
1935	26	46	36.1%
1936	20	43	31.7%
1937	18	44	29.0%
1938	17	52	24.6%
1939	18	53	25.4%

These figures reflect the fact that in Westmorland the 1933 Act had little impact on the Council's approach towards boarding out. The only significant change was the decision to transfer responsibility for inspected foster homes to the district nurses who were also required to serve as part-time Health Visitors.[412] A survey conducted on behalf of the Ministry of Health, in 1935, found that most Councils adopted this approach, although local authorities were encouraged to appoint full-time salaried visitors, who could devote all their time to

[411] KA: WC/CD/MOH, *Annual Reports of the Westmorland Medical Officer of Health*, 1931-1939.
[412] *Annual Report of the Westmorland Medical Officer of Health, 1934*, (1934), p. 16.

boarded out cases.[413] Westmorland's MOH justified the county's practice on the grounds that it allowed the nurses to 'combine the duties of health visitor with inspector, resulting in great benefit to the boarded-out child'.[414] The nurses reported quarterly as to the care of the children who had been boarded out in addition to producing interim reports when circumstances dictated that a more immediate response was required.[415]

The experiences of children who had been placed in private foster homes were likely to have been heavily shaped by the policies adopted by the local authority in which they lived. The attitude of Westmorland's councillors was reflected in the limited supervision extended to children on the county's infant life protection. Apart from recording the number of children known to be boarded out, the MOH's annual reports reveal remarkably little about the reasons why children were privately boarded out, or the children's experiences. Every year between 1934 and 1939 the MOH reported that 'it is gratifying to find that the majority of children were in charge of worthy foster mothers who were bestowing adequate care upon their wards'. Beginning in 1935 the following words were added, 'the nurses in their capacity as infant protection visitors are welcomed by the foster mothers, who do their best to carry out the nurses' suggestions'. These visits were legally prescribed for all children who were privately fostered up until the age of nine. Although it is disappointing that more information is not available, these two brief sentences, and their unaltered reappearance each year, shed some light on Westmorland's boarding out practices. References to the 'majority of children' suggests that not all foster mothers were thought to be bestowing adequate care upon their wards. Indeed, figures collected by the Ministry of Health reveal that every year a small number of removal orders were issued, to which it is likely that undocumented warnings were

[413] *Sixteenth Annual Report of the Ministry of Health 1934-35*, 228.
[414] *Annual Report of the Westmorland Medical Officer of Health, 1936*, (1936), p. 16.
[415] *Annual Report of the Westmorland Medical Officer of Health, 1935*, (1935), p. 21.

also issued. The minutes of the Public Assistance Committee suggest that on occasion council staff did follow up on reports that a foster child was not receiving adequate attention and investigated if this was the case.[416] The accuracy of the second sentence, found in the reports from 1935 onwards, should be treated with suspicion. The MOH's reports were publicly available documents, making explicit criticism of foster mothers difficult. The repetitive nature of the reports, combined with the absence of any deliberate effort to promote boarding out, is indicative of an authority for which the practice of boarding out was not taken especially seriously.

Rather than seeing boarding out as a superior form of care, the practice of placing children with foster parents appears to have developed on a rather ad hoc basis. Much like the children received through the Poor Law and subsequently found apprenticeships, children who were boarded out by the council often retained contact with the residential homes to which they had first been referred. Children who had been boarded out often joined the Abbey Home children on holiday.[417] This practice could suggest that the foster families selected by the council could not afford to take the children on holiday. Alternatively, the holidays spent with the children of Abbey Home may have served as respite for their foster parents. The practice was directly at odds with what the Birmingham Council's Hostels and Boarding-Out Sub-Committee advocated. In 1938 the committee concluded that when supporting children who have been boarded out 'it is essential that the break with the old [residential] associations should be as complete as possible if the children are to settle down happily'.[418] The position adopted in Birmingham was consistent with the belief that foster care could help

[416] KA:WC/E/1, Westmorland County Council Minutes, 1933-34, Minutes of the North Westmorland Boarding-Out Committee, 22 April 1933, p. 177.
[417] See, for example, KA: WC/W/2/17, Report of the Superintendent of Abbey Home for the 8 weeks ending 12 September 1932; Report of the Superintendent of Abbey Home for the 8 weeks ending 10 September 1934.
[418] BA: BCC/1/BH/5/5/5/1/8, Minutes of the Cottage Homes and Residential Schools Sub-Committee, 21 December 1938.

to provide children with a closer approximation to a normal family life. Westmorland's stance was indicative of an authority which placed less emphasis on the importance of helping children to feel part of a family unit, at a time when this was widely promoted by child care experts.

Unlike Westmorland, where boarding out practices did not fundamentally change as a result of the 1933 Act, in Birmingham the council proactively sought to increase the proportion of looked after children who were boarded out. In 1930, the city's Cottage Homes committee concluded that boarding out children in care provided the best means by which to provide them with a normal life.[419] The MOH welcomed the changes introduced by the 1933 Act, which extended supervision of foster parents and children until the age of nine. He believed that the requirement that prospective foster carers had to register with the council *before* receiving a child into their care would allow 'entirely unsuitable foster homes and foster parents' to be 'more readily eliminated', because more time would be available for 'preliminary inspections'. Efforts to increase the number of children boarded out meant that local officials became more reliant on the assistance of the public. However, it was also recognised that not all foster parents would be suitable.

Prior to the Act being introduced, Westmorland and Birmingham Council monitored children who had been fostered privately and were on the infant life protection register. In Birmingham, dedicated boarding-out visitors produced individual reports on behalf of the Hostels and Boarding-Out Sub-Committee. In Westmorland, four relieving officers served as infant protection visitors. The number of children that these officials were responsible for

[419] BA: BCC/1/BH/5/5/5/1/1, Minutes of the Cottage Homes and Residential Schools Sub-Committee, 2 June 1930.

varied considerably. In Birmingham, more than 100 reports were received each month and time was set aside to discuss matters arising from individual cases. Alternatively, in Westmorland fewer than 200 visits were paid across the entire year.[420] An additional level of supervision existed in Birmingham where foster homes were also visited by School Attendance Officers. While this was ostensibly to ensure that children were attending school, the officers also assessed the suitability of individual families. The home of each boarded-out child in Birmingham was, therefore, routinely examined by at least two agencies.[421] In 1932, 57 foster mothers were interviewed regarding their failure to comply with the Children Act.[422] The actions of Birmingham's workers suggest that they were making full use of the reforms passed during the 1930s.

Compared to Westmorland, staff in Birmingham displayed much greater concern for the wellbeing of children who were boarded out. Speaking in 1934, a member of the City Council emphasized the importance of carefully selecting foster parents and homes because 'nothing could be more disastrous than the boarding out of a child in surroundings that were not congenial'.[423] Despite these concerns, instances of private fostering arrangements breaking down were brought to the attention of Birmingham Council staff. In 1939, one of the city's infant life protection visitors revealed, while speaking at the National Conference on Maternity and Child Welfare, that one child had been transferred to seventeen foster parents within the first year of his life, as a result of delays in being paid.[424] Local authorities dealt with foster parents that were judged to be unsuitable in different ways. Birmingham Council developed a register of foster mothers who had been inspected, which included the

[420] *Annual Report of the Westmorland Medical Officer of Health, 1934*, 14.
[421] Grosvenor, 'Geographies of Risk: An Exploration of City Childhoods in Early Twentieth-century Britain', 224–226.
[422] *Report of the Birmingham Medical Officer of Health, for the Year 1933*, 98.
[423] 'Maternal Mortality Rate - A Mystery', *Birmingham Gazette*, 4 July 1934, p. 11.
[424] '35 Mothers in Four Years', *The Daily Mirror*, 29 June 1939, p. 5.

names of 340 women by the end of 1933.[425] In Westmorland this step was only taken towards the end of the Second World War.[426]

Regional disparities in the attention devoted to children boarded out were noted by policy makers. In 1938, during his Presidential address to the National Conference on Maternity and Child Welfare, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Health noted that 'those sections of the Public Health Act of 1936, which dealt with child life protection, were not regarded with sufficient seriousness by [some local authorities]'.[427] These comments were made shortly after the Ministry of Health had begun a survey of child life protection work which found that some local authorities 'fail to appreciate their powers to regulate the number of children kept in any one home'. This 'undermin[ed] the whole basis of providing [a] family up-bringing and a home atmosphere in preference to that of an institution, and reduce[d] the likelihood of adequate individual care'. The report also found instances in which 'unsuitable foster parents were allowed to keep children'.[428] These remarks affirmed the importance of a well-functioning workforce which could help to safeguard children placed on the infant life protection register.

In addition to employing a dedicated inspection staff, in 1935 Birmingham Council introduced the country's first foster-mother registration scheme, which applied to those taking guardianship of children up to the age of five. The introduction of the scheme was consistent with the city's commitment to provide world class public services. Speaking in

[425] *Report of the Birmingham Medical Officer of Health, for the Year 1933*, 133.
[426] CA: WC/H/118A, Letter from Social Worker to Nurse Richards, 25 October 1944, [pseudonym]; CA: WC/H/118A, Letter from Social Worker to Nurse Harbron, 10 October 1944, [pseudonym].
[427] 'Birth-Rate in Britain', *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer*, 6 July 1938, p. 12.
[428] *Twentieth Annual Report of the Ministry of Health 1938-39*, 41.

1937, Dr Ethel Cassie, the Senior Assistant MOH, explained that prior to the system being introduced

> Children were being moved from home to home because a mother fell ill or lost her work and could not keep up the payment to the foster mother. Moving a child from home to home in this fashion is the worst possible thing for the young child.

Earlier, in 1934, the MOH noted that the precarious nature of the payments owed to foster parents deterred people from volunteering their services.[429] In response, and to develop more stable fostering arrangements, the Council organized a dedicated foster mother service.[430] This was designed to:

> Provide a service of selected foster mothers giving a high standard of child-care, where the remuneration of the foster mother was guaranteed, and where the child's mother or guardian [was supported to] remain in close touch with the child, while contributing to the fullest possible extent to the child's maintenance.

To become an approved foster mother, women had to commit to accept 'any child allotted by the Public Health Department' and promise that their foster children would receive 'regular supervision at the Child Welfare Centres'.[431] The number of approved foster mothers registered with the council increased every year, between 1935 and 1938, rising to a total of 156. During this time, placements with approved foster mothers as a proportion of all children privately boarded out increased from just over a quarter in 1935 to just under half by 1938. When interpreting these figures, it is important to note that approved foster mothers were only able to receive children under the age of five, while supervision of foster children placed with other families continued until the age of nine.[432] Writing in 1934, the SMOH reported that Birmingham officials had recently begun making a concerted effort to 'board-

[429] *Report of the Birmingham Medical Officer of Health, for the Year 1933*, 133.
[430] 'Foster-Mothers Ought to Be Registered, Says Woman Welfare Worker', *Birmingham Gazette*, 2 June 1937, p. 7.
[431] *Report of the Birmingham Medical Officer of Health, for the Year 1934*, (1935), pp. 139–140.
[432] *Report of the Birmingham Medical Officer of Health, for the Year 1937*, (1938), p. 85.

out the children who become the wards of the Local Authority rather than retaining them … in Cottage Homes.' Following these changes, one of Birmingham's residential children's homes, Marston Green, which was the first of its kind when it opened in 1879, was closed due to a lack of demand for its services.[433]

The people who used this service were anticipated to be 'unmarried mothers, widows' or women who were temporarily 'ill or invalid'. The Welfare Committee promised to meet the cost of any fees which parents failed to pay. In addition to helping the child to have a more 'settled home instead of being constantly changed from one foster mother to another', the scheme was designed to secure 'a better type of foster mother' and develop 'closer cooperation between the foster mother and the Public Health Department'. In 1939 the Minister of Health singled out the scheme for praise, and encouraged other local authorities to emulate a programme which helped to ensure that 'a good type of foster mother is secured' while 'mothers are able to keep contact with their children'.[434] Both the Minister of Health and the Assistant MOH emphasised the importance of ensuring that mothers could maintain contact with their children. This was because foster care was often anticipated to be a means of providing short term care which would end when children were returned to their biological parents.

Internal Disparities

The experiences of children placed in state and voluntary care were shaped by more than policy makers' ideals. Although policy makers' aspirations are well represented in the archive, it is important to acknowledge that they were not always shared by paid staff. Staff

[433] *Annual Report to the City of Birmingham Education Committee of the School Medical Officer, for the Year Ended 31st December 1933*, 24–25.
[434] NA: MH/102/1378, 'The Break Up of the Poor Law and the Care of Children and Old People', [n.d. 1944], 11; *Twentieth Annual Report of the Ministry of Health 1938-39*, 42.

working in Birmingham's residential homes questioned the benefits of boarding children out. This was, in part, because children who were well behaved were often the first to be boarded out, leaving the more difficult cases behind. This was acknowledged to be the case by the MOH, who observed that

> There is a natural tendency for the brighter and more intelligent children to be boarded-out, rather than the slower witted with the result that there is likely to be a gradually increasing number of children of the lower ranges of intellectual capacity.

Some people believed that the 'emotional damage' caused by parental cruelty meant that children admitted to care were more likely to be 'slower witted'. In fact, the SMOH found that 'not infrequently children [admitted to residential care] are regarded by their teachers as lacking in intelligence [when in fact they] are only bewildered or disheartened'. The SMOH's position suggests that looked after children encountered adults who differed in their understanding of the possible effects of childhood adversity. While the SMOH sought to promote a more nuanced understanding of the abilities of children who had experienced 'emotional damage', he acknowledged that 'many of the children shew [sic] evidence of their instability by all kinds of difficult behaviour and disorders'.[435] The tendency for such children to remain in residential care, rather than be boarded out, annoyed the staff of residential children's homes. In 1938, the Matron of Shenley Fields Cottage Homes expressed her frustration at being left with children that were thought of as difficult:

> Posts for these Homes are advertised as ordinary Cottage Homes posts, and I sympathise with members of my Staff when they feel they have been misinformed, and that instead of the normal Cottage Homes where the child is likely to stay for a considerable time, we are only a kind of Receiving Home. The children who are at all normal are passed on after 1, 2, or 3 years.

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[435] *Annual Report to the City of Birmingham Education Committee of the School Medical Officer, for the Year Ended 31st December 1933*, 25–26.
For an earlier example of this practice, see: M. Mason, 'A Grave National Question: The Boarded-out Children of the Poor', *The Nineteenth Century and After*, 92 (1922), p. 1056.

> It has been a difficult task to get a Staff together, and I view with misgiving the unrest produced by a batch of Boarding-Out Papers.

The Matron complained that although the behaviour of children could show notable improvements as a result of spending time in the Cottage homes:

> It takes time and effort to achieve, yet as soon as the child thrives, that effort is wasted - the child is Boarded Out. The women become restive under feelings of frustration. It is obvious that best results can not be obtained unless you have a contented staff.[436]

A tension existed between the SMOH, who was confident that 'the beneficial effect of boarding-out selected cases … needs no stressing' and the staff of residential homes to which children were often first sent, before being boarded out.[437] Part of the difficulty arose from the fact that residential staff struggled to adjust to their new role. Instead of seeing the importance of helping to provide stability for children admitted with what the SMOH described as symptoms of 'emotional trauma', the practice of boarding out was seen as a direct threat not only to the child but to staff morale. While the 1933 Act allowed Birmingham Council to take a more active role in boarding children out, the legislation failed to convince residential workers of the value of fostering when it appeared to undermine their efforts to support children in ways familiar to them.

Family Involvement

The experiences of children taken into care were informed by the attitudes and actions of care staff, teachers and family members. While some parents voluntarily sought the assistance of

[436] BA: BBC/1/BH/5/5/5/1/8, Minutes of the Cottage Homes and Residential Schools Sub-Committee, 16 November 1938.
[437] *Annual Report to the City of Birmingham Education Committee of the School Medical Officer, for the Year Ended 31st December 1939*, 1940, p. 23.

philanthropic and state services, the contribution that children, particularly those of school leaving age (which stood at 14 throughout this period) could make to the family income explains why some parents resisted the removal of their children. In 1938 the *Birmingham Gazette* reported the case of a 10-year child whom the court ruled should be removed from her mother, on the grounds of being in need of care and protection. On hearing the court's judgement, her mother burst into tears and cried 'I want my baby at home. I can't do without her'. What precisely the mother could not 'do without' went uncommented upon in the article. The mother's referral to the 10-year-old-child as 'my baby' is suggestive of an emotional need for guardianship of the child. It is difficult to determine the sincerity of these remarks given the mother's desire to present herself in a positive light. Her reference to wanting the child 'at home', however, seems to imply that the need for the girl was at least in part associated with her ability to contribute to domestic tasks.[438] Five years earlier a similar case was reported upon, where the parents' concerns were easier to disentangle. In December 1933, the Birmingham branch of the NSPCC successfully prosecuted Mr and Mrs Hopkins, for causing unnecessary suffering to their 12-year-old daughter Nellie. During the trial, it was revealed that an NSPCC inspector had found Nellie to be 'verminous and suffering from sores caused by neglect'. When questioned, Nellie's father asked the court not to 'remove the child' as 'she's coming to an age when she would really be useful to us'.[439] The willingness of parents to access support which could result in their children being placed in care was informed by the contribution that older children could make to the family income.

The value of children to their family members was also acknowledged by organisations established to safeguard children's wellbeing. In 1928, a Committee representing Voluntary

[438] 'Mother's Outburst', *Birmingham Gazette*, 15 September 1938, p. 12.
[439] 'Neglect of Their Child', *Birmingham Gazette*, 20 December 1933, p. 4.

Societies involved in the migration of children to Canada drafted a memo setting out the importance of being able to send children abroad before they turned 14. This position was advocated because 'as they approach an age at which they can earn wages in this country their relations and guardians tend to withdraw them from the care of the Emigration Institution'.[440] Correspondence produced by staff working for the Middlemore Emigration Home, in Birmingham, indicates that voluntary organisations took steps to deter parents from withdrawing children prematurely. In 1937, the home demanded that the parents of a returned child repay the fares incurred as a result of transporting their child from Birmingham to their parent's home in the north east of England, in an effort to try and 'prevent other parents from changing their minds about the emigration of the children'.[441] This action assumed that news of the payment demand would spread among parents and prospective parents of children in the care of Middlemore, and influence their behaviour. The request that parents repay the return travel costs was likely to be particularly significant for families who were already struggling to pay the bills.

The remarks of parents accused of mistreating their children and those of child welfare organizations support Selina Todd's argument that during the interwar period most working-class families were heavily dependent upon the earnings of their children.[442] The disappointment felt by parents was exacerbated by the power held by the state. During the 1930s it became harder for parents to initiate the withdrawal of their children from state care once it was determined that the children were in need of care or protection.[443] Shortly after the Children and Young Persons Act was passed the *Westmorland Gazette* noted that the

[440] BA: MS 517/119, Empire Migration Committee, Draft Memorandum, 3 January 1928.
[441] BA: MS/517/123, Middlemore Correspondence, Letters to Mr Plenderleith, 26 April 1937 and 29 June 1937.
[442] S. Todd, 'Young Women, Work and Family in Inter-War Rural England', *Agricultural History Review*, 52 (2004), pp. 83–84; S. Todd, 'Breadwinners and Dependants: Working-Class Young People in England, 1918–1955', *International Review of Social History*, 52:1 (2007), p. 63.
[443] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, 96–98.

legislation represented a 'new limitation of the rights of parenthood'.[444] For parents, reliant on their children's support, the powers newly bestowed upon the state had consequences which went beyond parenting alone. For children placed in the care of voluntary organisations, such as Middlemore, parents retained the ability to withdrew their children, despite attempts to deter them from doing so.

The circumstances which contributed to a child being understood to need care or protection also shed light on the gendered expectations of family members. Case studies included in the reports produced by the Birmingham Branch of the NSPCC often centered on the failure of husbands to provide for their wives financially. In 1939 the Branch encountered a father who was 'lazy and work-shy' and spent his earnings on drink. As a result of being spoken to by an inspector, the man gained 'regular employment' and began to 'give his wife his earnings'. The report ended by noting that the mother thanked the inspector for making 'a man out of her husband'.[445] Leaving aside the accuracy of such accounts, which appeared in a publication designed to elicit contributions to the NSPCC, these reports show that to be 'a man' was closely associated with providing for one's family. Elizabeth Roberts has argued that in the post-war period wages were normally seen as the property of those who earned them. It is striking therefore that as late as 1939 wages continued to be seen as belonging to the whole family.[446]

Conclusion

By granting local authorities greater autonomy the reforms contained within the Children and Young Persons Act, 1933, exacerbated pre-existing disparities in children's services. Local

[444] 'Mr Oliver Stanley's Children's Act', *Westmorland Gazette*, 4 November 1933.
[445] *Birmingham and District Branch, Annual Report for 1939*, 1939, pp. 4–5.
[446] E. Roberts, *Women and Families: An Oral History, 1940-1970* (Oxford, 1995), p. 234.

authorities had to be proactive for the optimism that national policy instilled in the 1933 Act to be achieved. The autonomy afforded local authorities resulted in considerable regional differences in the services that children received. In this respect, study of the delivery of child protection services supports the findings of earlier history of interwar public services, which have primarily examined infant and maternal health. While national policy makers intended for local authorities to have greater freedom, their hope that the abolition of Poor Law administrative system would alleviate disparities in the standard of social services was not realised. Differences in the delivery of child protection services reflected differing attitudes towards the role of local government. Elected officials in Birmingham perceived children's services as a means of cementing the city's international reputation as a pioneer of municipal welfare. In Westmorland, councillors and those they represented, were more fiscally conservative, and perceived that reforms to children's services risked jeopardising their efforts to keep down the local rates. These differences were exemplified in the approaches taken towards boarding out in each of the localities. The latter half of this chapter has shown how study of local child protection efforts reveals that even within highly progressive local authorities front line staff opposed initiatives which were designed to improve the care provided to looked after children.

This chapter has also shown that the experiences of children in care were informed by more than legislation. The actions of parents, community members and social workers each shaped the experiences of looked after children in different ways. The ability of parents to undermine state and voluntary efforts to protect children from harm reveal important limits to the power of both national and local officials. Likewise, despite child welfare experts calling for looked after children to be better integrated with the wider community, the hostility shown towards

children attending approved schools undermined one of the central reforms contained within the 1933 Act.

CHAPTER 3: THE SECOND WORLD WAR AND CHILD PROTECTION, 1939-1945

Introduction

This chapter, which examines the impact of the Second World War on child protection practices, demonstrates that the advice of government experts was often contested by the very people it was designed to protect. The systems established during the interwar years, discussed in chapters one and two, were designed to protect children from domestic threats to their safety. The process of evacuation saw the government play a more active role in protecting children from foreign dangers. Discussions of the influence of evacuation on the introduction of the post-war welfare state have recently been supplemented by greater investigation of the experiences of evacuation.[447] Significant gaps, however, remain in our understanding of the conflict's impact on children and those tasked with looking after them.

While policy changes had national repercussions and determined the direction of children's services across the country, current studies have neglected to explore the extent to which the consequences of evacuation were determined by whether a region sent or received evacuees. Existing studies have paid closer attention to international differences than internal disparities.[448] The section that follows rectifies this omission and in doing so responds to Ian Grosvenor's call for more research into 'the impact of evacuation and the Second World War in general on children's services'.[449] The experiences of provincial cities and rural counties

[447] M. Andrews, '"Nationalising Hundreds and Thousands of Women": A Domestic Response to a National Problem', *Women's History Review*, 24:1 (2015), p. 113.
For discussion of children's wartime experiences see: J. Welshman, *Churchill's Children: The Evacuee Experience in Wartime Britain* (Oxford, 2010).
[448] See, for example: N. Gärtner, *Operation Pied Piper: The Wartime Evacuation of Schoolchildren from London and Berlin 1938-46* (Charlotte, 2012); L. L. Downs, 'Au Revoir Les Enfants: Wartime Evacuation and the Politics of Childhood in France and Britain, 1939–45', *History Workshop Journal*, 82:1 (2016), pp. 121–150.
[449] Grosvenor, 'Geographies of Risk: An Exploration of City Childhoods in Early Twentieth-century Britain', 216.

have been comparatively overshadowed by discussion of London.[450] Investigation of Birmingham and Westmorland, which sent and received evacuees, respectively, allows for greater consideration of the diversity of wartime experiences. This chapter considers the experiences of evacuees alongside those children taken into the care of the state before and during the conflict. Consideration of these two groups side-by-side reveals that many of the principles which informed the care provided to looked after children, in the inter-war period, were extended to evacuees.

The next section outlines the historiographical debates which have centred on the Second World War. Study of the principles that informed evacuation procedures nuances a literature which has often focused on the contribution of experts. Next, the implementation of evacuation, in the autumn of 1939, at both a national and local level is discussed. The fourth section considers the responses to children who were evacuated. The penultimate section examines concerns raised about children who were not evacuated. The chapter closes by providing an alternative perspective on the consequences of evacuation on children's services immediately after the Second World War.

Historiography

Study of the conflict from the perspective of looked after children helps to nuance longstanding historical arguments concerning both the immediate and long term impact of the war. Considerable attention has been devoted to the impact of the conflict on welfare provision. The disruption caused by the war has long been credited with revealing underlying social issues which helped to inform the foundation of the welfare state.[451] Richard Titmuss

[450] Welshman, *Churchill's Children*, 15, 17.
[451] J. Welshman, 'Evacuation, Hygiene, and Social Policy: The Our Towns Report of 1943.', *The Historical Journal*, 42:3 (1999), p. 782.

famously asserted that evacuation and civilian bombing 'stimulated inquiry and proposals for reform long before victory was even thought possible'.[452] By the 1980s, historians such as Jose Harris and John Macnicol began to challenge 'the supposedly "revolutionary" impact of the war upon British social structure and institutions' and 'the "consensual" image of the war'.[453] Macnicol has argued that far from promoting social reform, 'the social debate on evacuation probably served to *reinforce* existing analyses of working-class poverty than to change them'.[454] Likewise, Harris's examination of G.D.H Cole's 1942 Reconstruction Survey led her to conclude that working-class respondents envisaged reforms which were 'more modest and less ambitious' than those later put forward by William Beveridge.[455] Most recently, John Welshman has advanced a post-revisionist position which holds that while the war did not bring 'unanimity on the need for reform, the evacuation did lead to a major reassessment of the effectiveness of health services for schoolchildren and to significant policy changes'.[456] Likewise, Pat Starkey's study of Family Service units has shown how the conflict resulted in the development of important voluntary services for children, whose activities continued long after the armistice.[457]

Study of children's services in Birmingham and Westmorland supports Welshman's assertion that the conflict accelerated the expansion of children's services during the war itself. These changes narrowed inter-war disparities, identified in chapter two, between local authorities. Through study of evacuees' case files and confidential correspondence produced by local

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[452] R. Titmuss, *Problems of Social Policy* (London, 1950), pp. 507–508.
[453] J. Harris, 'War and Social History: Britain and the Home Front during the Second World War', *Contemporary European History*, 1:1 (1992), p. 19.
[454] Macnicol, 'The Effect of Evacuation', 27.
[455] J. Harris, 'Did British Workers Want the Welfare State? G. D. H. Cole's Survey of 1942', in H. Pelling and J. M. Winter, eds., *The Working Class in Modern British History: Essays in Honour of Henry Pelling*, (Cambridge, 1983), p. 214.
[456] Welshman, 'Evacuation, Hygiene, and Social Policy'.
[457] P. Starkey, 'The Medical Officer of Health, the Social Worker, and the Problem Family, 1943 to 1968: The Case of Family Service Units', *Social History of Medicine*, 11:3 (1998), pp. 421–441.

authorities, this thesis reveals that while the war drew attention to conditions which were harmful to children, in the immediate aftermath of the conflict, people were reluctant to assist with the care of looked after children in the manner recommended by experts. This work supports Harris's assertion that histories of the Second World War must 'look closely not merely at large-scale, communal, "progressive" forces but at those minuscule roots of idiosyncratic private culture'.[458] Wartime life brought both social revelations and social fatigue. The latter led to people withdrawing offers of help at the very moment the issue of child protection was gaining greater public interest.

The public's ability to withdraw support, which was vital to certain welfare services, reveals important limits to the influence of experts. Edgerton has argued that 'the politics of expertise was central to wartime politics' and Churchill ran 'the most expert government Britain has ever had'.[459] Likewise, Geoffrey Field has argued that the *Our Towns* study, produced by the Women's Group on Public Welfare, advocated a future in which the expertise of social work professionals would be called upon to support the poorest strata of society.[460] This thesis argues that respect afforded experts by the country's political elites coexisted with multiple opportunities for families to resist their advice. These opportunities arose because of the government's reluctance to trespass upon the sanctity of family life, an institution held in such high esteem that the state was unwilling to forcibly separate parents from their children.

A Passive Pied Piper?

The planning and implementation of evacuation, which was code named 'Operation Pied Piper', provides one of the clearest examples of the way in which the will of experts was

[458] Harris, 'War and Social History', 34.
[459] D. Edgerton, *Britain's War Machine: Weapons, Resources and Experts in the Second World War* (London, 2012), p. 9.
[460] Field, 'Perspectives on the Working-Class Family in Wartime Britain, 1939–1945', 10.

subservient to the actions of the public. While experts were central to planning evacuation, the voluntary nature of the scheme allowed the public to ignore advice issued by the government which was designed to keep them safe. The Anderson Committee, which was chaired by the former civil servant and Independent MP Sir John Anderson, and tasked with planning for evacuation, concluded that children represented a 'liability … from the standpoint of war-time efficiency'.[461] The evacuation of children was considered vital to ensure that adults could 'stand firm', by reducing the likelihood of civilian panic.[462]

During the war, individual MPs continued to refer to civilian morale when advocating for evacuation. In June 1940, the Labour MP Frederick Cocks urged the government to facilitate evacuation to the dominions 'on the largest possible scale' because 'soldiers will fight more happily if they know that their … children are safe'.[463] Cocks's comments discounted the fact that many mothers refused to be parted from their children, something that was often necessary to relocate them to safety. His remarks, however, exemplified the dual way in which children were viewed: they represented both the nation's hope for the future and a threat to its very survival. Children's essays reveal that they too recognised the purpose of evacuation. Part of the way through the war, a boy of 12, who had been evacuated to Oxford, explained that 'I miss my parents and relatives, but I realise that if I go back to London I only hinder them and the war effort'.[464] The boy's writing suggests that children internalised some of the arguments expressed by policy makers, before and during the conflict.

[461] *Report on Committee on Evacuation*, Cmd. 5837 (London, 1938), pp. 19–20.
[462] Lord Privy Seal's Office, *Evacuation: Why and How?*, Public Information Leaflet No. 3, July 1939.
[463] Hansard HC Debate vol 362 col 5 (18 June 1940).
[464] Barnett House Study Group, *London Children in War-Time Oxford: A Survey of Social and Educational Results of Evacuation* (Oxford, 1947), pp. 31–32.

The experts who organised civilian evacuation were sensitive to public opinion, which valued the family unit very highly.[465] While the work of experts contributed to an expansion of the state's reach, the respect afforded public opinion limited how far the state was prepared to intrude on family life. Before the war, the Anderson Committee recommended that evacuation should be conducted on a voluntary basis, since the public would not 'accept any scheme for the compulsory transfer from their homes of vast numbers of town dwellers'. The obligation to host evacuees, on the other hand, was compulsory for those living in areas deemed to be safe and categorised as reception areas.[466] Parents were thought to be particularly opposed to compulsory evacuation. The Committee was 'forcibly [warned] … that in times of severe stress many parents would refuse to be parted from their children'.[467] Although the report did not attribute this claim to a particular group, evidence was provided by women's organisations such as the Women's Co-operative Guild. The value that policy-makers placed on family meant that it was considered unacceptable to remove children without the consent of their parents. These sentiments were echoed in a leaflet issued by the Lord Privy Seal's Office, in July 1939, which stressed that any future evacuation scheme would be 'entirely a voluntary one', before adding that 'clearly the children will be much safer and happier away from the big cities where the dangers will be greatest'.[468] These sentiments complemented the Anderson Committee's suggestion that voluntarism be accompanied by advice. The report predicted, optimistically, that:

> In a time of grave national emergency, the [public] would be entirely responsive to [Government] guidance … [Advice] given in clear and precise terms … would have a powerful effect in securing an ordered evacuation.[469]

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[465] B. Dibley and M. Kelly, 'Morale and Mass Observation: Governing the Affective Atmosphere on the Home-Front', *Museum and Society*, 13:1 (2015), pp. 22–41.
[466] Andrews, '"Nationalising Hundreds and Thousands of Women"', 116.
[467] *Report on Committee on Evacuation*, 4, 20.
[468] Lord Privy Seal's Office, *Evacuation: Why and How?*
[469] *Report on Committee on Evacuation*, 4.

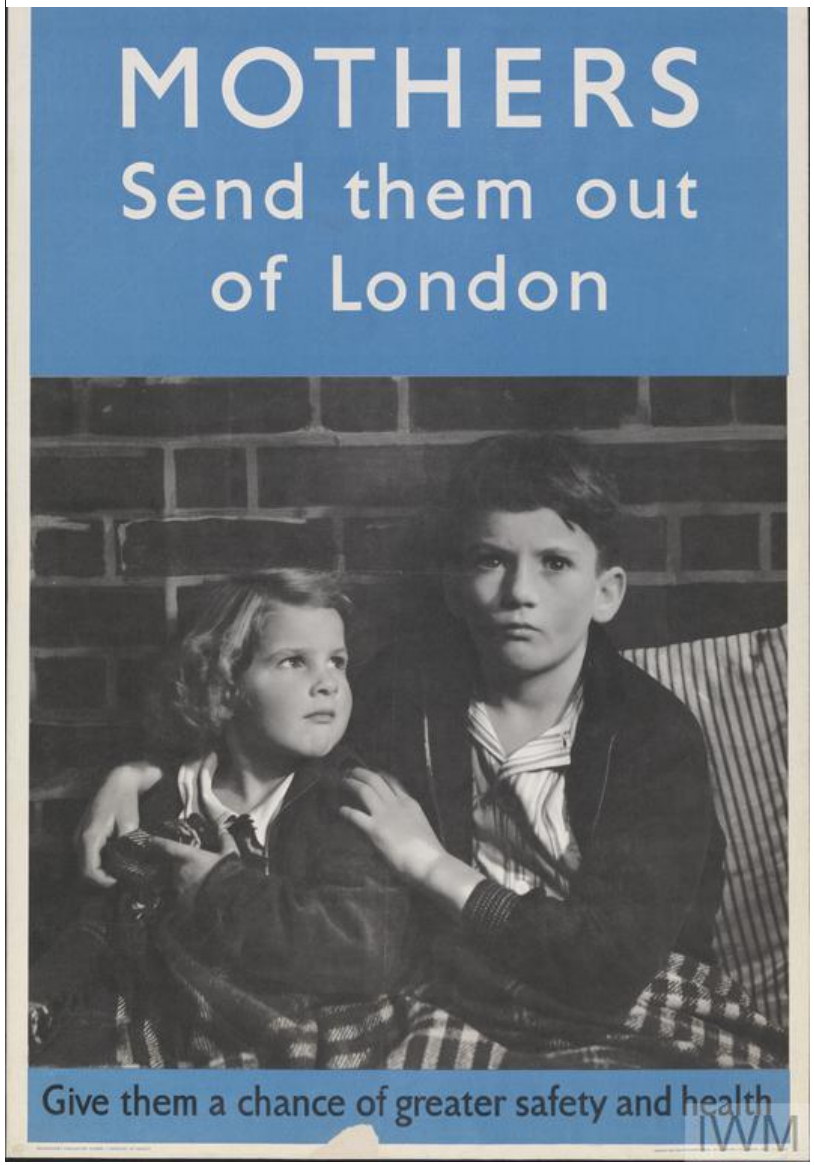
Voluntary evacuation assumed that members of the public would respond rationally to information provided to them by the Government. For those not won over by reason, wider social pressures were often applied. The psychologist John Bowlby observed that mothers who did not evacuate their children, or subsequently brought them back, were made to feel 'wicked and selfish' by their contemporaries.[470] While the Anderson Committee referred to the concerns of 'parents', it was not a coincidence that Bowlby observed that certain mothers were ostracised. Much of the material designed to promote evacuation was explicitly gendered. Posters, such as the ones below, were targeted at mothers and were predicated on the assumption that they determined whether children would be evacuated.[471]

[470] J. Bowlby, 'Psychological Aspects', in M. Cole and R. Padley, eds., *Evacuation Survey: A Report to the Fabian Society*, (London, 1940), p. 191.
[471] The Imperial War Museum, Art.IWM PST 3095: 'Don't do it, mother', Ministry of Health, [n.d., 1940]; Art.IWM PST 0076, 'Mothers – Send them out of London', Ministry of Health, [n.d., 1939].

Figure 4: Don't do it, mother', [n.d., 1940]



Figure 3: 'Mothers – Send them out of London', [n.d., 1939]



Sources produced by mothers whose children were evacuated contain many of the terms used by officials. The virtues of safety and happiness, which both posters emphasised, spoke to maternal concerns. This was evidenced in letters sent by Birmingham parents to John Goode, a teacher at Handsworth New Road School, a state senior school for boys and girls, located in an affluent part of the city.[472] The school's pupils were evacuated to Worcestershire, in the autumn of 1939. Shortly after arriving, Goode informed the evacuees' parents that their children were doing well. Mothers' replies highlight the importance of their children's happiness and safety. Mrs Smith lived in North West Birmingham. In her letter to Goode she explained 'I have missed [my two children] very much as we were more like chums' but she took strength from 'the fact that they are safe + health + happy'.[473] The safety, health and happiness, of Mrs Smith's children – verified through visits – made their temporary relocation bearable. The ability to visit one's children was also important for Mrs Summerfield, who explained that 'I know that Robert is happy and content, [as we] … see him every Sunday'. Mrs Summerfield explained that 'in the event of us not being able to go we shall rest assured as to his safety and happiness.'[474] Parents' abilities to visit children evacuated nearby helped to reduce the upset caused by their departure. Indeed, the Anderson Committee proposed that evacuees be sent to the nearest possible safe region to make parental visits easier.[475]

Public opinion continued to inform child protection measures during the conflict, albeit in ways that challenged official policy. Many parents were unwilling to be separated from their children because of the importance of the family unit. In May 1940, the Government concluded that if evacuation was made compulsory 'hundreds of thousands of [parents]

[472] Birmingham Archives (hereafter BA): MS 4259/1.
[473] BA: MS 4259/1, Letter from Mrs Smith, 1 October 1939, [pseudonym].
[474] BA: MS 4259/1, Letter from Mrs Summerfield, 5 October 1939, [pseudonym].
[475] *Report on Committee on Evacuation*, 13–14, 38.

would not obey the law', and pledged not to remove children without parental permission. The Minister of Health, Malcolm MacDonald attributed the public's opposition to compulsory evacuation to the 'sacred… ties binding families together'.[476] This sentiment was echoed beyond Parliament. The *Manchester Guardian* noted the limited uptake in evacuation and concluded: 'parental feeling has beaten us'.[477] A widely read survey of evacuation to Cambridge noted that 'the feeling of family unity and the intense resistance to its being broken up was apparent in the reasons which many parents gave for not wishing to send their children away'. The survey's editor, the educational psychologist Susan Isaacs, criticised the Government's planning and argued that 'much more might have been done … to allay the anxieties of parents about their children'.[478] Given the Government's rationale for evacuation, the strength of family ties undermined official efforts to protect not only children, but civilian morale more widely.

Class and Family Unity

Much like in the interwar period, class informed officials' understanding of the importance of family ties. In July 1939, Herbert Morrison, Leader of the London County Council, attributed the limited number of children that had been registered to be evacuated to the 'sense of duty' felt by 'working class mothers' to support their '[family] in [a] time of crisis'.[479] The following year, a contributor to *Social Work*, the journal of family case workers, noted that the behaviour of working-class families, who lived in evacuation regions, had revealed important social differences in attitudes: 'it is not easy for the Public-school-educated Empire

[476] 'Why Child Evacuation Is Not Compulsory', *Manchester Guardian*, 14 May 1940, p. 9.
[477] 'Is Evacuation a Failure?', *Manchester Guardian*, 16 October 1939, p. 6.
See also: T. C. Gardner, 'Some Administrative Aspects of the Evacuation Scheme', *Public Administration*, 18 (1940), p. 112.
[478] S. Isaacs, *The Cambridge Evacuation Survey, a Wartime Study in Social Welfare and Education* (London, 1941), p. 8.
[479] 'Popular Dislike of Evacuation', *The Times*, 12 July 1939, p. 9.

Builder to understand the reluctance with which working-class parents have parted from their offspring'. Britain's political elites were accused of failing to understand the attitudes of those impacted by their decisions. Isaacs's Cambridge evacuation survey observed that the bombing of London's East End had revealed how the 'need to keep the family together … may override even the worst dangers'. Isaacs attributed these attitudes to East Enders' lack of wealth which meant that 'love for the members of one's own family and joy in their bodily presence alone make life worth living'.[480] The commonality of Morrison and Isaacs's remarks suggests that establishment figures, whose work informed government policy, associated the working-classes with having an especially pronounced sense of family loyalty. These loyalties were understood to exist alongside a strong sense of community. In 1940, writers for the Fabian Society noted that 'working class streets are readily influenced by a common and infectious idea … [so that] beliefs are quickly assimilated by a large neighbourhood'. These ties were thought to explain the speed with which evacuees drifted back to their homes in the winter of 1939-40.[481]

These middle-class tropes were repeated throughout the war. Writing in 1944, the Austrian artist Marie Paneth, described the working-class children who attended her North London youth club as 'fiercely loyal'.[482] The Government's unwillingness to disrupt the sense of attachment that working-class families were assumed to possess informed the implementation of policies designed to protect children from harm. These observations nuance James Greenhalgh's work on the state's interactions with the home during the blackout. Although the government's wartime schemes may have been most disruptive to the working-classes, the strength of family loyalty associated with this class was thought most impenetrable to

[480] Isaacs, *The Cambridge Evacuation Survey, a Wartime Study in Social Welfare and Education*, 9.
[481] F. Le Gros Clark and R. Toms, *Evacuation: Failure or Reform* (London, 1940), p. 4.
[482] M. Paneth, *Branch Street: A Sociological Study* (London, 1944), p. 39.

Government evacuation efforts. While the wartime government extended its reach in some important respects, the high esteem with which the family was held meant that it represented an important example of the limits to the state's willingness to intervene in the lives of its citizens.[483] These observations challenge the argument that the conflict brought about a '"rediscovery" of the value of the family' or a 'revival of family life'.[484] Officials' reluctance to make evacuation compulsory suggest that value of the family was reaffirmed, rather than rediscovered.

Beyond public opinion, evacuation planning was heavily informed by recent conflicts.[485] Against the backdrop of the Spanish Civil War, the fear of aerial attack dominated evacuation arrangements. Cambridge teachers who supported Spanish refugees noted that many of the children were 'war-shocked. . . from their bombing experiences'. Children produced pictures of 'bombing aeroplanes and fighters … week after week'.[486] During the Second World War, participants in the Spanish Civil War cited their experiences to call for more to be done to encourage evacuation. Fred Copeman, for example, served as the commander of the British section of the International Brigade in Spain. Speaking in 1940, Copeman drew on his experiences in Spain to argue for evacuation to be made compulsory:

> ['In Spain I witnessed] Hitler bombing towns which [were] being evacuated and I … said to myself over and over again, "If only these people had gone when they had the chance" … If you depend on sentiment and rely on the mothers to send their children away you will get nowhere - naturally they will not be parted from their children if they can help it. But if it is made

[483] J. Greenhalgh, 'The Threshold of the State: Civil Defence, the Blackout and the Home in Second World War Britain', *Twentieth Century British History*, 28:2 (2017), p. 203.
[484] A. Davis, *Pre-School Childcare in England, 1939-2010* (Manchester, 2015), p. 62; Field, 'Perspectives on the Working-Class Family in Wartime Britain, 1939–1945', 3, 23–24; H. Hendrick, *Narcissistic Parenting in an Insecure World: A History of Parenting Culture 1920s to Present* (Bristol, 2016), p. 63.
[485] *Report on Committee on Evacuation*, 7.
[486] K. Myers, 'National Identity, Citizenship and Education for Displacement: Spanish Refugee Children in Cambridge, 1937', *History of Education*, 28:3 (1999), p. 317.

> compulsory, mothers after the first raid will bless those who send their children away.

Copeman argued, unsuccessfully, that the destruction caused to Guernica meant that Britain's government should override the 'natural' inclinations of mothers, in the interests of their children's wellbeing.[487] His belief that the state could legitimately extend the reach of its power should be read in light of his political views, which had previously aligned him with the Communist Party.[488] Indeed, in Sheffield the local Communist Party called for compulsory evacuation and issued pamphlets proclaiming 'Sheffield must never be a second Barcelona!'.[489] That the State rejected the argument of Copeman and others, and retained voluntary evacuation, is further evidence of the Government's unwillingness to intervene in certain aspects of family life.

Psychologically ignorant?

Historians have repeatedly argued that Government officials gave little thought to the emotional impact of war on families.[490] This thesis challenges these positions and argues that officials were concerned about the psychological impact of bombing on children. Writing in early 1940, Madge and Harrisson, the founders of the social research organisation Mass Observation, observed that 'the main distinction between this and previous wars is the terrific physical and psychological threat to the civilian population'.[491] Addressing Parliament in 1940, the Minister of Health, Malcolm MacDonald, argued:

> Perhaps the greatest argument for taking children away from these centres is that the effect … [of aerial bombing] on their minds … may be very terrible.

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[487] 'Compulsory Evacuation of Children Urged', *Manchester Guardian*, 15 June 1940, p. 8.
[488] F. Copeman, *Reason in Revolt* (London, 1948), pp. 8–9.
[489] A. Elcock, *Government Evacuation Schemes and Their Effect on School Children in Sheffield During the Second World War*, (University of Sheffield, PhD, 1999), p. 32.
[490] Ibid., 385; Hendrick, *Child Welfare*, 2003, 128.
[491] C. Madge and T. Harrisson, *War Begins at Home* (London, 1940), p. 415.

> We ought to safeguard our children as much as we can … during their young and impressionable years.[492]

The sensory overload of aerial bombardments was thought to risk causing long term psychological harm to children who were still developing.

As the conflict went on, the psychological impact of war was not dismissed but revised considering new evidence. Children were found to be more psychologically resilient than policy makers had anticipated. Speaking in June 1942, the Minister of Health, Ernest Brown MP, reported that: 'at the beginning of the war it was feared [that] … aerial bombardment would lead to a serious increase of mental disorders', before noting a reduction in the number to mental hospitals admissions between 1938 and 1942. These figures could be attributed to the closure of mental health institutions at the beginning of the war. David Pearce has noted 'the number of admissions is not necessarily a good measure of the psychiatric health of a nation'.[493] Brown, however, believed that the numbers served as an 'eloquent testimony to the nerves of the nation'.[494] Professionals also found that, contrary to early anxieties, the war did not result in significant mental ill-health among children.[495] A report, produced shortly after the conflict, by the Chief Medical Officer of the Ministry of Education noted that medical officers across the country often remarked upon how well the children stood up to aerial warfare. A survey of 8,000 schoolchildren exposed to air-raids, in 1941, found that only 4% showed any symptoms 'either purely psychological or else psycho-somatic'.[496] These findings nuance recent research which has argued that the conflict significantly advanced the

[492] Hansard HC Debate vol 361 col 1421-1422 (13 June 1940).
[493] D. Pearce, 'Evacuation and Deprivation: The Wartime Experience of the Devon and Exeter City Mental Hospitals', *History of Psychiatry*, 22:3 (2011), p. 341.
[494] Hansard HC Debate vol 381 col 64-65 (30 June 1942).
[495] Dorothy Burlingham and Anna Freud, *War and Children* (New York: Medical War Books, 1943), 20–21.
[496] Ministry of Education, *The Health of the School Child: Report of the Chief Medical Officer of the Ministry of Education for the Years 1939-1945* (London: HMSO, 1947), 71–72.

fields of psychology and psychiatry.[497] The development of these fields, which is not disputed, is even more remarkable given how psychologically healthy large sections of the child population appeared to contemporaries.

The Logistics of Evacuation

At the recommendation of the Anderson Committee, the country was divided into three regions: evacuation, reception, and neutral.[498] When planning for evacuation, the government anticipated that school age children (between the ages of five and fourteen years old) would not be accompanied by their parents, while children below school age (under five years old) were expected to be 'accompanied by their mothers or other responsible persons'.[499] Age was used as a means of differentiating between the needs of different groups of children. As revealed in chapter two, prior to the outbreak of war, children up to the age of nine, who had been privately boarded out, were required be registered. The decision to allow children up to the age of fourteen to be evacuated through the official evacuation scheme suggests that the threats posed by enemy wartime activity were thought to merit the government extending the care and supervision it afforded children who were boarded out with private families without recourse to the courts.

Children located outside of evacuation regions were still able to relocate, but were not able to make use of the infrastructure formed to assist those in the eligible regions. In Birmingham, this was significant because when war broke out the children cared for by the Middlemore Emigration society were situated 200 yards outside the 'evacuable zone'. Middlemore's

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[497] Downs, 'Au Revoir Les Enfants'; Shapira, *The War Inside*.
[498] J. Welshman, 'Evacuation and Social Policy During the Second World War: Myth and Reality', *Twentieth Century British History*, 9:1 (1998), p. 31.
For discussion of controversies that arose regarding the demarcation of regions see: M. Brown, *Evacuees: Evacuation in Wartime Britain, 1939-1945* (Stroud, 2005), p. 8.
[499] Lord Privy Seal's Office, *Evacuation: Why and How?*

superintendent, however, was 'not happy about having [so many] boys and girls in one building close to a large city', so in July 1939 the Home made its own arrangements for the children's removal to safety.[500] By February 1941, partway through the Birmingham Blitz, the whole city became an evacuation area.[501] In Westmorland matters were more straight forward. The county's rural setting meant that it was chosen as a reception area.[502]

Over the course of the war, three distinctive evacuation waves occurred. The first began a few months prior to and immediately after war was declared in September 1939. By the first week of September approximately 2 million people had privately evacuated. They were joined by nearly 1.5 million people, the majority comprising mothers, their young children and unaccompanied school children. The population of the reception areas increased from 1,958,000 to 2,693,000, while that of the evacuation areas decreased from 1,914,000 to 1,179,000.[503] By early 1940, however, nearly 700,000 evacuees had returned home, so that by the beginning of 1940 at least two-thirds of evacuable children were in danger areas.[504] In Birmingham, 90% of mothers had returned to the city by 31 October 1939.[505] In February 1940, Madge and Harrisson noted that 'so many mothers and children have now returned to their homes that the whole [evacuation] scheme would have to be put over again if air danger became serious'.[506] A second wave of approximately 300,000 evacuees left cities in the spring of 1940. Following the outbreak of the London Blitz, in September 1940, a further 1,250,000 left for safer regions. In Birmingham, officials sought to evacuate 70,000 people during this

[500] BA: MS 517/101, Letter dated 11 July 1939.
[501] BA: MS 517/101, Letter dated 7 February 1941.
On Birmingham Blitz, see: Juliet Gardiner, *Blitz*
[502] Ministry of Health Annual Report, 1939.
[503] Ministry of Education, *The Health of the School Child: Report of the Chief Medical Officer of the Ministry of Education for the Years 1939-1945* (London, 1947), p. 31.
[504] Le Gros Clark and Toms, *Evacuation: Failure or Reform*, 3.
[505] C. Chinn, *Brum Undaunted: Birmingham During the Blitz* (Studley, 1996), p. 52.
[506] Madge and Harrisson, *War Begins at Home*, 295.

period.[507] The third, and final, substantive wave, began in the summer of 1944 as V2 rockets attacks were launched on London and the south-east of the country. These attacks led to around 1 million leaving their homes over the course of two months.[508] During this last phase, several cities situated outside the range of flying bombs, including Birmingham, which were formerly evacuating regions, became receiving areas.[509]

Evacuation in Birmingham and Westmorland

In September 1939 more than 30,000 children were evacuated from Birmingham and the immediate area and schools were closed until further notice.[510] This figure represented fewer than 25% of school children.[511] These steps were well justified. The Spitfire aeroplane factory at Castle Bromwich was an important strategic target for the Luftwaffe. During the war, Birmingham experienced more than 70 air raids, which cost the lives of more than 2,000 city residents.[512] In total, more than 103,000 homes were destroyed or damaged.[513] The intensity of bombing caused some parents who had been initially reluctant to evacuate their children to change their minds.[514] The intensity of enemy action also caused the Birmingham NSPCC to close seven branches within the city.[515]

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[507] 'The Chaos of the Schools', *Manchester Guardian*, 28 November 1940, p. 4.
[508] S. Rose, *Which People's War?: National Identity and Citizenship in Wartime Britain 1939-1945* (Oxford, 2003), p. 57.
[509] Ministry of Education, *The Health of the School Child*, 32.
[510] https://birminghamchildrenslives.wordpress.com/tag/evacuation/, accessed 26 January 2018.
[511] R. Padley and M. Cole, *Evacuation Survey: A Report to the Fabian Society* (London, 1940), pp. 46–47.
[512] J. P. Ray, *The Night Blitz: 1940-1941* (London, 2000), p. 264; P. Starns, *Blitz Families: The Children Who Stayed Behind* (Stroud, 2012), p. 144; S. Sokoloff, '"How Are They at Home?" Community, State and Servicemen's Wives in England, 1939-45', *Women's History Review*, 8:1 (1999), pp. 41–42.
[513] C. Chinn, *Homes for People: 100 Years of Council Housing in Birmingham* (Exeter, 1991), p. 76, Ray, *The Night Blitz*, 226.
[514] J. Purcell, *The Domestic Soldier: War, Women and the Home Front* (London, 2009), pp. 70–73.
[515] *Birmingham and District Branch, Annual Report for 1944*, 1944, p. 4; *Birmingham and District Branch, Annual Report for 1942*, 1942, p. 4.

In Westmorland, matters were very different. More than 9,000 evacuees arrived in September 1939. This figure represented just over half (55%) the number of people expected and left 67% of the available accommodation, as recorded by officials in February 1939, unused.[516] Most were sent from Newcastle, South Shields and Barrow-in-Furness.[517] This led to a doubling of the school population. Official evacuees were joined by children supported through private charitable initiatives. In September 1939, Teresa Merz, a Newcastle philanthropist, relocated 27 children who attended her residential nursery to a country house, belonging to her family, in Grasmere.[518] A month later, Merz wrote to the *Newcastle Evening Chronicle* and encouraged other mothers to evacuate their children and take advantage of the 'pure mountain air' offered by the Lake District.[519] Councils in receptions areas were responsible for providing welfare services to meet the needs of evacuees coming to their areas.[520] In contrast to Birmingham, the conflict allowed north western branches of the NSPCC to expand. In Carlisle, a town that received more than 5,000 evacuees, the Society launched two new branches of the League of Pity, in 1943.[521] As 1945 passed, Westmorland hosted a small groups of liberated allies. On V.J. Day, 300 Jewish refugee children arrived in Windermere from concentration camps in occupied Europe. In the days that followed, Westmorland's senior dental officer provided emergency dental treatment, including the installation of dentures for children whose teeth had been knocked out by S.S. guards.[522] On one level, therefore, Birmingham and Westmorland experienced very different conflicts. The departure of tens of thousands of children in one part of the country was matched by the

[516] Titmuss, *Problems of Social Policy*, 553.
[517] *Annual Report of the Westmorland Medical Officer of Health, 1939*, 49.
[518] *Ibid., 19, 49.*
[519] 'Safer Away', *Newcastle Evening Chronicle*, 8 November 1939, p. 4.
[520] Ministry of Education, *The Health of the School Child*, 32.
[521] *Carlisle, Penrith and North Cumberland Branch of the NSPCC, Annual Report for 1943*, 1943, p. 3; *Carlisle, Penrith and North Cumberland Branch of the NSPCC, Annual Report for 1945*, 1945, p. 4.
[522] *Annual Report of the Westmorland School Medical Officer, for the Year 1945*, (1945), p. 12; 'Netherlands Children at Sedgwick House', *Westmorland Gazette*, 28 July 1945, p. 10.

arrival of large numbers of children elsewhere. These case studies provide an opportunity to consider the war's impact on efforts to protect children from harm, in different parts of the country.

Study of children's services during the Second World War supports Sally Sokoloff's assertion, made with reference to women's wartime experiences, that, 'although historians need to take account of the regional differentiation of experience, there is a great deal of evidence for the nationalising impact of war on the Home Front'.[523] Study of child protection services which were targeted at children who had not been evacuated reveals that the war narrowed the disparities in local authority services observed in chapter two. Birmingham retained many of the initiatives which had been introduced during the interwar years. In contrast, in Westmorland the conflict resulted in an expansion in the number of trained staff as the council began to improve the services offered to looked after children.

In Birmingham, many of the city's children's homes were evacuated over the course of the war. In 1942 the city's SMOH reported that following the decision in February 1941 to recognise the whole of the city as an evacuable area, 'the children at the Shenley Fields Cottage Homes over the age of five … whose parents were willing to for them to be evacuated, were sent away from Birmingham with the children from the nearby primary schools'.[524] This decision was consistent with the Council's efforts, as evidenced in chapter two, to help looked after children to integrate with the local community. That these looked after children could only be evacuated with their parents' consent reflected the government's decision to make evacuation voluntary.[525]

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[523] Sokoloff, '"How Are They at Home?', 44.
[524] *Annual Report to the City of Birmingham Education Committee of the School Medical Officer, for the Year Ended 31st December 1941*, 1942, p. 10.
[525] Ibid., 11.

In December 1941, the city launched a Children's Home Service which involved members of the public registering their homes with the local authority. Applicants' homes were inspected and those that passed were eligible to receive a grant from the local authority to care for other people's children, who were likely to be employed as part of the war effort. During the first month of the scheme more than 200 homes were inspected and registered and 31 homes were deemed unsuitable. The council was keen to promote the initiative because many of the children accompanied could be cared for 'with people known to them, so that difficulties of adjustment or altered conditions do not occur'. Much like in the inter-war period, Birmingham council was mindful of the need to help children adjust to new surroundings.[526] Writing in 1943, the city's MOH reported that more than 2,800 homes had been inspected of which 22% had been refused admission to the scheme, or had withdrawn their application. The officer noted that although 'the standard of care is variable' he was confident that 'in no case has a child been allowed to stay in a home if it is considered to be detrimental to the child in any way'.[527]

The continuity of Birmingham's services, despite difficulties which arose from the wartime environment, was evidenced by the decision to continue to operate the foster mother scheme. Reporting on the year 1941, Birmingham's MOH noted a decline in the number of new homes being registered, a phenomenon which was attributed to 'war conditions'.[528] The following year the MOH observed that that 'there has been a marked increase in the number of cases coming outside the Foster Mother Scheme' as 'many of the war workers have found their own foster homes'. In 1942, 31% of all privately fostered children were placed with

[526] *Report of the Birmingham Medical Officer of Health, for the Year 1941*, (1942), pp. 28–29.
[527] *Report of the Birmingham Medical Officer of Health, for the Year 1942*, (1943), p. 34.
[528] *Report of the Birmingham Medical Officer of Health, for the Year 1941*, 36.

foster mothers under the Birmingham Scheme. Compared to the interwar period, this comprised a marked reduction in the proportion of children who were privately boarded with women who were registered with the city's foster mother scheme.[529] The following year the MOH reported that the number of council approved foster mothers had declined. This was attributed in part to the fact that women could earn more money through part-time employment at a time when they were being urged to undertake industry work.[530]

In Westmorland, during the early stage of the war there was little indication that the supervision of children who had been privately boarded out had become a bigger priority. The annual report of the County's MOH, for 1943, included a single sentence on the matter: 'Infant Life Protection Visiting … is still being carried out very satisfactorily in all county district by the Nurses'.[531] In 1944, Westmorland Council appointed a professionally trained social worker whose time was split between evacuees and children who were ordinarily resident in the county. In the five months that followed her appointment the social worker was required to deal with 59 separate cases. While the majority (28) of inquiries concerned the preparation and follow-up of referrals to psychiatric and speech clinics, a small number (6) concerned the investigation of children's homes.[532] Shortly after being appointed, the social worker revealed plans to develop a scheme mirroring Birmingham's, whereby 'the County Council will guarantee payments to [Council approved] foster mother[s]'.[533] The appointment of a trained social worker contributed to efforts to introduce schemes which aimed to ensure greater consistency in the level of care that children received. Compared to the interwar years, the care provided to looked after children in Westmorland was much more

[529] *Report of the Birmingham Medical Officer of Health, for the Year 1942*, 27.
[530] *Report of the Birmingham Medical Officer of Health, for the Year 1943*, (1944), p. 39.
[531] *Annual Report of the Westmorland Medical Officer of Health, 1943*, (1944), p. 9.
[532] *Annual Report of the Westmorland School Medical Officer, for the Year 1945*, 5.
[533] CA: WC/H/118A, Letter from Social Worker Notes to Nurse Glendinning, 25 October 1944.

consistent with the care advanced by experts. The social worker was supported in her role by a part-time speech therapist, appointed in November 1944, and an educational psychologist, appointed in June 1945. The Council's decision to employ additional child care workers stands in stark contrast to the interwar period, when elected officials had shown considerable resistance to government encouragement to expand the services that it offered. These changes were also noted at a national level.[534]

The case notes of Westmorland's social worker reveal that psychological principles, such as the concept of phantasy, became more influential in the county.[535] In 1941, a social worker commented upon the play practices of a 12-year-old girl, who had been raised by her grandparents. She noted that:

> [The child's] playing with dolls is related to … her fantasy and [they provided] an outlet for the companions she wanted. Also, it may be connected with her own father and stepmother and her step sister & brother who she has never seen but whom she visualises in play.

The loneliness inferred from the child's play practice was thought to explain why she had recently stolen some money from her host: 'I should say she is trying to get something which she feels she had been denied (i.e. real love of her own parents) though this would be an unconscious motive'. Wartime social workers applied the concept of phantasy to explain the behaviour of children referred to them as being challenging to placate frustrated hosts. By attributing the child's actions to her relationship with her own family, the host in the example above was exonerated from any blame in the matter.[536]

[534] S. Isaacs., 'Children in Homes', *The Times*, 18 July 1944, p. 5.
[535] For a discussion of the origins of the concept, see: D. Bell, 'Unconscious Phantasy: Some Historical and Conceptual Dimensions', *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 98:3 (2017), pp. 785–798.
[536] CA: WC/H/118A, Letter dated 2 January 1941.

In October 1944, the Ministry of Health announced that arrangements could be made for the return of Birmingham evacuees. As a result, the number of children resident in the city's Cottage Homes increased steadily. The return of evacuees was reported to have exacerbated the staff shortages, experienced in both the Erdington Cottage Homes and the Shenley Fields Homes, which emerged as women were presented with a greater range of alternative forms of work.[537] In Westmorland, the evacuation scheme was terminated in 1945. The following year, the SMOH noted that 'the remaining evacuees consist mainly of residual children retained for special reasons in hostels controlled by the Ministry and administered by the Local District Authorities'.[538] The working structure described by the Officer suggests that the expansion in the number of services available to children was made possible because the central government, in order to ensure that evacuees were properly cared for, was prepared to fund services for which there had previously been inadequate demand.

The reforms to Westmorland's services accompanied a national increase in prosecutions for child cruelty and neglect.[539] Between 1939 and 1944 the number convicted of such crimes doubled.[540] In fact, soldiers could be granted compassionate leave if it was discovered that their children had been abused in their absence.[541] The NSPCC also emphasised the risks associated with wartime disruption. Writing in 1940, the President of the Society observed that:

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[537] *Annual Report to the City of Birmingham Education Committee of the School Medical Officer, for the Year Ended 31st December 1944*, 1945, pp. 18–19.
[538] *Annual Report of the Westmorland School Medical Officer, for the Year 1946*, (1946), p. 4.
[539] Hansard HL Debate vol 135 col 849-855 (29 March 1945); Hansard HC Debate vol 428 col 14-15 (24 October 1946).
[540] J. Gardiner, *Wartime: Britain 1939-1945* (London, 2005), p. 601.
[541] Hansard HC Debate vol 404 appendix III (7 November 1944).
See, for example: 'Boston Mother Sent to Gaol', *Lincolnshire Standard*, 3 June 1944, p. 4.

> When the normal routine of life is upset by the tragic events of war … it is more important than ever that every possible step should be taken to safeguard the children of this country from negligence and ill-treatment.[542]

In March 1945, Lord Denman argued that child neglect had been exacerbated by a reduction in the number of professionals, and unsuccessfully called for trained social workers to be released from the armed services.[543] Earlier in 1939 psychiatric social workers were included in the list of reserved occupations.[544] The following year the government determined that full-time social workers, over 30-years-old, comprised a reserve occupation.[545] By 1941, more than 400 men had avoided being called up and continued their work with young people.[546] Officials recognised the value of social work professionals and anticipated that the conflict would place additional strains on children and their families.

While official returns indicated that convictions for child abuse increased during the war, not all cases attracted the same level of interest. Social work studies have often credited the death of thirteen-year-old Dennis O'Neill, in January 1945, with concentrating public attention on the inadequate care provided to looked after children.[547] The trial of Reginald and Esther Gough, O'Neill's foster parents, captivated the nation's attention. While chapter one demonstrated that during the interwar period sections of the tabloid press devoted extensive coverage to child abuse cases, the wartime context in which the O'Neill case took place amplified the public's interest. In the summer of 1944, Dennis and his younger brother Terry were sent to live with Mr and Mrs Gough by Newport County Borough Council. The boys had been placed in the care of Newport Council, who subsequently boarded them out,

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[542] *Birmingham and District Branch, Annual Report for 1940*, 1940, p. 5.
[543] Hansard HL Debate vol 135 col 848-854 (29 March 1945).
[544] S. Wheatcroft, 'Cured by Kindness?: Child Guidance Services during the Second World War', in A. Borsay and P. Dale, eds., *Disabled Children: Contested Caring, 1850-1979*, (London, 2012), p. 150.
[545] BA: BCC/1/BH/14/1/2, Birmingham Youth Committee Meeting, 10 July 1940.
[546] Hansard HC Debate vol 368 col 322 (23 January 1941).
[547] R. Parker, 'The Gestation of Reform: The Children Act of 1948', in P. Bean and S. MacPherson, eds., *Approaches to Welfare*, (London, 1983), pp. 203–204.

because they had been found to be in need of care and protection. The boys were admitted to care after both of their parents were sent to prison on being convicted of neglecting their children.[548]

Mr and Mrs Gough were charged with the manslaughter of Dennis and first brought to trial in March 1945. For much of the proceedings it was impossible to find a vacant hotel room in the town in which the trial was held.[549] During the trial, the *Daily Mirror* reported having received more than 300 letters from readers wanting to know why Mr Gough had been charged with manslaughter rather than murder.[550] Keen to capitalize on the public's fascination with the case, the paper dedicated multiple pages, in the same issue, to covering the trial, with special investigative reports produced concerning the character of Reginald Gough, who became branded "the Bully of Bank Farm".[551] The testimony of Dennis's surviving brother Terry (aged nine), which detailed the beatings that he and Dennis endured, was reported in the national papers.[552] The popular press also seized on Mrs O'Neill's claims that she had been denied the opportunity of contacting her son Dennis and his two younger brothers for over five years, to the point that she '[felt as if] they were all dead'.[553] This accusation was particularly impactful because, as shown in chapter two, experts encouraged local authorities to enable families to retain contact with children in care. In fact, an independent committee later concluded that 'there was no evidence that the parents asked for… access [to their children] or information about their whereabouts'. The court which

[548] Home Office, *Report on the Circumstances Which Led to the Boarding out of Dennis and Terence O'Neill at Bank Farm, Minsterley and the Steps Taken to Supervise Their Welfare*, Cmd. 6636 (London, 1945), pp. 3–4.
[549] 'Billeted Boy's Death: Trial of Farmer and Wife Transferred', *The Manchester Guardian*, 28 February 1945, p. 8.
[550] 'Live Letters: Murder', *The Daily Mirror*, 23 March 1945, p. 6.
[551] 'Fresh Demands for Inquiry on Dennis O'Neill Case', *Daily Mirror*, 20 March 1945, pp. 1, 8.
[552] See, for example: 'Gough Trial Reaches End Today', *Daily Mirror*, 19 March 1945, pp. 4–5; 'Causes Of Boy's Death', *The Times*, 13 February 1945, p. 2.
[553] '5 Years, Then ... "Your Child Was Hit, and Died"', *The Daily Mirror*, 7 February 1945, p. 8.

committed the boys to the care of Newport local authority stipulated that their parents could apply to revoke the order, which they failed to do.[554]

Such was the outrage provoked by the trial that the Government commissioned an independent inquiry into the circumstances which led to the death of Dennis O'Neill. The public inquiry, which was overseen by Sir Walter Monckton, exposed a catalogue of failings by the local authorities responsible for overseeing the care of Dennis.[555] Miss Myra Curtis, who had recently been appointed to chair her own inquiry, was present throughout the proceedings. Although the report was well received – with the *Daily Mirror* optimistically predicting that, 'Britain's thousands of foster-children ought to have better homes and more care in the future, as a result'[556] – the fatal errors it exposed led to a 'torrent of vilifications and abuse directed towards the officials involved in the case.[557] The public's response was indicative of a culture in which children's welfare was valued highly while the sensationalist tone adopted by many tabloid papers reflected wider social distrust of those in positions of authority. The hostility experienced by social workers after the trial needs to be acknowledged when discussing the extent to which the conflict brought the nation together and so represented a true 'People's War'. High profile cases of child abuse caused greater animosity between sections of the public and professionals employed to protect the nation's children.

As with evacuees, the allocation of blame for neglected non-evacuees was heavily gendered. When considering awareness of neglect, however, it is important to heed Harris's cautions

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[554] 'Local Authorities Criticised in O'Neill Inquiry Report: "No One Was Deliberately Callous"', *The Manchester Guardian*, 29 May 1945, p. 3; 'O'Neill Case Inquiry: Tragedy Could Not Have Been Averted by Monthly Reports', *The Manchester Guardian*, 11 April 1945, p. 6.
[555] Home Office, *Monckton Report*.
[556] 'Dennis O'Neill - The Blame', *The Daily Mirror*, 29 May 1945, p. 1.
[557] 'O'Neill Case Report May Be Made In A Fortnight', *The Manchester Guardian*, 14 April 1945, p. 3.

against presenting the war as a uniform chronological period.[558] Indeed, in the first half of the conflict child welfare organisations claimed to have observed a reduction in the number of cases of child neglect. Early in 1943, the *Manchester Guardian* reported that 'there is nothing to suggest that cruelty [towards children] has become more generally prevalent [since the war]'. With men considered the primary perpetrators of violence, the paper suggested that 'some children are less in danger of active ill-treatment because their fathers or stepfathers are in the forces'.[559] In the latter half of the war, an increase in the number of women in paid war service, combined with the absence of their spouses, was blamed for the growing 'social menace' of mothers leaving children accompanied.[560] A 1944 study of Leicester school children, aged two to seven, found that among a subsample of 35 children, 17 were neglected or were frequently left at home alone while their mothers were at work. The children were also found to be more aggressive.[561] In the North West, the Carlisle branch of the NSPCC argued that 'the absence of fathers and the fact that many mothers are on war work has produced circumstances inimical to the well-being of … children'.[562] These observations are striking given the dramatic expansion in nursery provision during the war, so that between 1941 and 1944 the number of places for children under five in public nurseries rose from 6,000 to more than 106,000.[563] Officials' concerns indicate that mothers were not making use of services designed to protect children.

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[558] Harris, 'War and Social History', 32.
[559] 'Care of Children in War-Time: Some New Factors Leading to Neglect', *The Manchester Guardian*, 27 February 1943, p. 3.
[560] '"Public Whipping" for Child Neglect: Magistrate's Regret', *The Manchester Guardian*, 12 February 1944, p. 6.
[561] J. D. Cummings, 'The Incidence of Emotional Symptoms in School Children', *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 14:3 (1944), pp. 159–160.
[562] *Carlisle, Penrith and North Cumberland Branch of the NSPCC, Annual Report for 1942*, 1942, p. 2.
[563] Field, 'Perspectives on the Working-Class Family in Wartime Britain, 1939–1945', 21.
See also: Davis, *Pre-School Childcare*, 7–8, 27–37.

Safeguarding Children

Historians have often emphasised the chaotic nature of evacuation.[564] Indeed, scholars can draw upon a wide range of evidence to support these claims.[565] Study of individual local authorities and voluntary organisations reveals that amid the disruption which attracted so much attention, people were appointed to oversee the wellbeing of evacuees. On occasions action was taken to prevent children being sent to live with people who were deemed unsuitable. This work challenges Starn and Parson's assertion that 'government officials did not consider the safety of children to be of prime importance', an attitude which they believed was exemplified 'by the absence of character checks on host families'.[566] Evacuees from the Middlemore Emigration Homes, were billeted in homes that had been investigated.[567] Before placing children with families, local civic figures, such as nurses and clergy, were asked to provide character references.[568] In one instance, a member of the public offered to provide references to substantiate her claim that she would have a 'decidedly good' influence on children billeted with her.[569] Character checks also resulted in offers of help being rejected. Another woman, who volunteered to host a child, was confident that her neighbour would confirm that she would provide 'a good little home'. Middlemore's staff, however, disagreed and concluded that her home was 'not … desirable'.[570] It is unclear on what basis this conclusion was reached. The woman's neighbour, who met with Middlemore staff, may have given an unfavourable reference. In any event, the wellbeing of children was actively considered when selecting which homes to send children to.

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[564] G. Field, *Blood, Sweat, and Toil: Remaking the British Working Class, 1939-1945* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 12–13; M. Parsons, *I'll Take That One: Dispelling the Myths of Civilian Evacuation, 1939-45* (Peterborough, 1998), p. 188.
[565] See, for example: Madge and Harrisson, *War Begins at Home*, 295–298; 'The Chaos of the Schools'.
[566] P. Starns and M. Parsons, 'Against Their Will: The Use and Abuse of British Children during the Second World War', in J. A. Marten, ed., *Children and War: A Historical Anthology*, (London, 2002), p. 268.
[567] Brown, *Evacuees*, 5.
[568] See, for example, BA: MS 517/101, Letter dated 7 August 1940.
[569] BA: MS 517/101, Letter dated 18 January 1940.
[570] BA: MS 517/101, Undated letter [c. January 1940].

For children evacuated through official channels, teachers often played an important role in ensuring the suitability of billets. Many of the teachers and helpers who accompanied the children evacuated in the opening days of the conflict, who numbered close to 90,000, assumed a more active role in monitoring the wellbeing of children who had been forced apart from their families. As well as attending to the children's learning needs, these teachers often retained a high degree of contact with the homes in which the children had been billeted.[571] This provided them with an excellent vantage point from which to observe the way in which the children were treated. Isaacs's survey of the Cambridge evacuation found that:

> Almost without exception the teachers who were evacuated with the children had given personal undertakings to parents to keep a watchful eye on [their children … As a result,] more than a few foster parents [were] dissuaded from precipitous action.[572]

In West Sussex, teachers were responsible for allocating clothes donated to the Christ Church Women's Guild because it was understood that they 'should be able to judge the requirements of the children'.[573]

Westmorland social workers also exercised discretion when billeting children. In March 1943, for example, the county's social worker sought to re-billet a child who was unhappy with where she was living because of her relationship with her host's daughter. The social worker contacted a representative of the Women's Voluntary Service for Civil Defence who apologised for being unable to help and noted that 'the only women who will shoulder the extra responsibility, are those who see the financial standpoint only'. The social worker was

[571] P. Cunningham and P. Gardner, '"Saving the Nation's Children": Teachers, Wartime Evacuation in England and Wales and the Construction of National Identity', *History of Education*, 28:3 (1999), pp. 327, 332.
[572] Isaacs, *The Cambridge Evacuation Survey, a Wartime Study in Social Welfare and Education*, 186.
[573] 'Finding Clothing For Child Evacuees', *Worthing Herald*, 22 September 1939.

encouraged to persuade the girl to stay with her original host for a few months longer, at which point she would be able to leave school and begin work on one of the nearby farms.[574] These exchanges reveal that social workers perceived that some people were volunteering their services for the wrong reason and were selective about in whose care they placed children within their region. The Barnett House Study group, which investigated the experiences of London children who were evacuated to Oxford, came to a similar conclusion:

> In the reception area … the school and the billeting officer exercised a much more direct control over a child's development and whereabouts than any Child Welfare Authority had possessed in peace-time, and a change of billet or a transfer to a hostel could be effected at a much earlier time and much less conspicuously that the normal process of bringing a child before the Juvenile Court for committal to the care of a fit person.

The conflict helped to normalise the transfer of children between different care arrangements and so removed some of the stigma which might ordinarily have made co-operation with a child's parents more difficult.[575] As revealed in chapter two, during the interwar period, the economic utility of older children caused some parents to object to their removal. During the war, however, the separation of children from their families, because of evacuation, made it easier for council staff to remove children considered to be in unsuitable billeting arrangements. Although the government was unwilling to make evacuation compulsory, once a child had been separated from his or her parents, local authority staff could exercise more autonomy than had previously been possible.

Historians have often commented on the role of evacuation in revealing the extent of social deprivation.[576] Chapters one and two have complicated this narrative by showing that before the Second World War, the public and professionals alike were aware of the risk that children

[574] Carlisle Archive Centre, (hereafter CA): WC/H/118A, Letter dated 2 March 1943.
[575] Barnett House Study Group, *London Children in War-Time Oxford*, 98–99.
[576] Rose, *Which People's War?*, 56–57; Welshman, 'Evacuation, Hygiene, and Social Policy'.

could be maltreated. During the war, several studies were published about the experiences of children whose lives had been disrupted by the conflict. These projects were much more attentive to the psychological consequences of childhood trauma, at a time when the government was eager to harness psychiatric expertise to better understand civilian morale.[577] While child care staff encountered abused children prior to the outbreak of war, the conflict led to greater interest in the psychological impact of these experiences. Nursery provision expanded considerably during the Second World War. Much like the drawings produced by Spanish refugees, the behaviour of some of the children who attended wartime nurseries, was understood to indicate exposure to abusive behaviour. The child psychoanalysts Dorothy Burlingham and Anna Freud arrived in London in 1938, after fleeing Nazi anti-Semitism. In January 1941, the pair opened the Children's Rest Centre, in London, with financial support from the American Foster Parents' Plan for War Children. Most of the children who attended were from the East End of London, which was bombed heavily during the Blitz. Burlingham and Freud noted that some of the behaviour exhibited by children was consistent with having observed domestic abuse. A five-year-old boy, for example, became known to be someone who 'flies into violent tempers, turns against the people loves most, attempts to destroy furniture … At the end of the scene he suddenly becomes gentle and affectionate'. The authors noted that the boy's 'father is known to act in a similar manner towards the mother; he also ends up [sic] their violent quarrels with a love scene with his young wife'. Examples of children enacting private behaviours could, they argued, 'be continued endlessly'.[578] The behaviour of evacuees was believed to reveal more than just economic hardship; the actions of certain children were thought to indicate exposure to traumatic experiences.

[577] E. Jones and S. Wessely, 'The Impact of Total War on the Practice of British Psychiatry', in R. Chickering et al., eds., *The Shadows of Total War: Europe, East Asia, and the United States, 1919-1939*, (Cambridge, 2003), p. 141.
[578] D. Burlingham and A. Freud, *War and Children* (New York, 1943), pp. 71–72.

The behaviour of other parents could also cause mothers who were evacuated with their children to become uncomfortable. Madge and Harrisson found that many evacuees were removed because of the behaviour of their hosts.[579] Often tensions reflected differences in people's understanding of what constituted acceptable behaviour towards children. The wife of a Romford hairdresser, who was evacuated with her children at the start of the war, explained that the conditions she had been presented with meant that 'I'd rather be bombed into little bits than go back again'. The mother's discomfort derived in part because her former hosts 'beat their children.'[580] The actions of evacuees' hosts towards their own children could undermine Government efforts to protect children at risk of harm from enemy activity. The decision of the hairdresser's wife to leave was made possible because of lack of compulsion to stay. The intimacy of evacuees' living arrangements meant that normally private family practices, such as parental discipline, could be labelled abusive by critical observers. Definitions of acceptable uses of physical force had long varied. During the interwar period, parliamentary debates about whether to ban corporal punishment, which preceded the enactment of the 1933 Children and Young Persons Act revealed disparities in MPs' understandings of acceptable behaviour. The process of evacuation, however, led some to become more intimately aware of these differences and provoked some parents to return to areas at risk of enemy attack, inadvertently placing their own children at greater risk of harm.

There is a risk, however, that accounts such as the one provided by the hairdresser's wife, when read alongside retrospective testimonies, can uncritically be cited as examples of wartime abuse. Starns and Parsons have argued that 20% of evacuees were subject to physical and mental abuse. Their assertion is based on the findings of retrospective oral

[579] Madge and Harrisson, *War Begins at Home*, 298.
[580] Ibid., 301–302.

history testimonies provided by more than 500 adults who were evacuated as children. It is unclear whether the practices that the authors define as abusive were understood in these terms at the time as no definition of physical and mental abuse is provided. Case files relating to children sent to Westmorland suggest that in certain cases parents who lived apart from their children granted their hosts permission to physically punish their children. Eleven-year-old David, for example, was evacuated to Kendal, from Newcastle in 1939. A report produced by the county social worker, in 1942, provoked by David's anti-social behaviour, noted that things had improved following his re-billet. The report ended by noting that there was a good relationship between David's parents and his host, and cited the fact that his hosts had been granted permission to 'punish David as they see fit'.[581] Scholars need to be cautious when deploying retrospective evidence to support historical claims. While some evacuees were understood to have been physically mistreated, other accounts of physical punishment, which would today be interpreted as abusive, took place with the consent of children's parents and were not understood to deviate from contemporary norms.[582] Indeed, the stresses and strains associated with evacuation could lead parents to take out their frustrations on their own children. In 1940, a Mass Observation contributor quoted a mother, who had been overheard on a bus in Essex, saying that her 6-year-old son who had been evacuated with her 'has had more wallopings than he's ever had in his life. It makes you feel sort of spiteful.'[583] While there was no suggestion that the mother thought her actions were abusive, the sense of 'spite' she described implies that her actions provoked remorse and extended beyond what she normally believed to be acceptable.

[581] CA: WC/H/118A, Case Notes, date of visit 16 March 1942, [pseudonym].
[582] 'Foster-Father Is Gaoled', *Daily Mail*, 24 February 1940, p. 7.
[583] Madge and Harrisson, *War Begins at Home*, 315–316.

Empathetic Evacuation

Study of the experiences of Westmorland's evacuees tempers more sensationalist accounts, which have suggested 'host families took the view that all city children were young criminals who wet their beds and would arrive in reception areas covered in fleas.[584] This disparity can be attributed, in part, to looking at alternative sources. The section that follows draws upon case files about evacuees who had been brought to the attention of the Westmorland billeting officer. While Starns and Parsons have substantiated their assertions with reference to former evacuees' retrospective testimonies, the case files shed greater light on the actions of hosts, which may have gone unnoticed by evacuees.[585] There is no evidence to suggest that any of these children had previously been in state, voluntary or private foster care. The case files consulted are replete with examples of hosts responding to difficult behaviour with empathy. In 1944, a county social worker visited Mr Hughes, after John, the evacuee staying with him, had hit a girl at school. The social worker gave Mr Hughes 'a lecture on the matter of fighting folk younger than oneself'. Mr Hughes, however, was protective of John. He felt that with a father who drank, the 'lad ha[d] no sort of home life, and that a certain amount of allowance should be made'.[586] Likewise, the local vicar, of whose scout troop John was a member, explained that 'He's quite happy where he lives … he has no Mother and if he were returned to Barrow he would be knocked about and deteriorate'. The vicar, who promised to keep an eye on the boy, closed his letter to the social worker by noting that:

> I have heard a story about him striking a girl, but if the girl named is the one he hit and hurt, she has wanted a good smacking for a long time, though John is not the right person to do it. My advice is … [sic] leave him where he is.[587]

[584] Starns and Parsons, 'Against Their Will', 270.
[585] See, for example: Welshman, *Churchill's Children*, 206–207.
[586] CA: WC/H/118A, Case Notes, date of visit 19 August 1944.
[587] CA: WC/H/118B, Letter dated 26 August 1944.

The ability of hosts to piece together information about the difficult home lives of evacuees, meant that their behaviour could often be given a sympathetic hearing. The vicar's suggestion that the girl 'wanted a good smack', exemplifies a culture in which physical chastisement, when appropriately deployed, was widely accepted as legitimate a means of disciplining children.

In Westmorland, incontinence was the single biggest issue for which children were referred to the county social worker. Nationally, the issue attracted considerable attention. During the war, the *Lancet* and the *British Medical Journal* published nineteen articles and letters which mentioned enuretic evacuees.[588] The time, effort and cost involved in having to wash evacuees' bedding left many hosts at their wits' end. The behaviour of hosts with evacuees who soiled themselves or were enuretic was often more sympathetic than revisionist histories have implied.[589] Mary, for example, had lived with Mrs Lewis for 15 months before the county social worker was called because of her habit of soiling herself. Mrs Lewis liked having Mary, but found that she could not manage the washing involved. When Mary first arrived in Westmorland, she was 'dirty' with 'no habit-training', although her host found her to be a 'likable child … honest and well-behaved'. Far from seeking to cast Mary out, Mrs Lewis was 'rather apologetic about the situation' and said that she would 'be glad to have [Mary] back if the soiling clears up'.[590] A desire to be reunited with evacuees once they had been 'cured' recurs in a several case files. Many hosts understood evacuees' misbehaviour as something that could be rectified, by appropriate specialist support. Children such as Mary were often sent to one of the four hostels in the county for 'difficult children'. Hostels were

[588] J. Crane, 'Rethinking How Evacuees Influenced Post-War British Thinking on Health', *Retrospectives*, 2 (2013), p. 27.
[589] Parsons, *I'll Take That One*, 16.
[590] CA: WC/H/118A, Case Notes, date of visit 1 September 1942.

frequently credited with curing enuretic children.[591] These hostels helped hosts to distinguish between the child and the symptoms with which they presented. The ability of hosts to call upon the social worker for help formed part of a longer tradition of trusting experts to address enuresis.[592] Having placed much of the blame for evacuees' behaviour on their mothers, many hosts viewed the children in their care with considerable sympathy. Indeed, hosts were praised for the ways in which they heeded the Government's advice to treat their evacuees 'as if they were your own'.[593] Some hosts viewed the war as an opportunity to positively support the children in their care. The social worker's belief that 'evacuation should prove a blessing in disguise to [Sarah]', a young girl she supported in 1941, was a view that many hosts, who believed they could influence their evacuees' lives for the better, also expressed.[594] While some evacuees were mistreated, historians must ensure that retrospective accounts, which have often served as the basis for pessimistic assessments of evacuation, are read alongside confidential and published contemporary accounts, which provide an alternative means to assess children's experiences.

Social class informed the experiences of evacuated children. While historians have traditionally devoted attention to the ways in which class resulted in social confrontation, social workers also found that social difference contributed to more positive experience for children.[595] The focus of existing histories on class based animosity is not unreasonable. In their study of the first evacuation wave, Madge and Harrisson found that 'the main drawback

[591] *Annual Report of the Westmorland Medical Officer of Health, 1942*, (1943), p. 32.
[592] A. Maberly and B. Sturge, 'After-Results of Child Guidance', *British Medical Journal*, 1:4091 (1939), pp. 1130–1134.
[593] 'The Government's Evacuation Scheme', *The Mid-Sussex Times*, 5 September 1939.
[594] CA: WC/H/118A, Letter dated 2 January 1941
[595] Macnicol, 'The Effect of Evacuation'; Parsons, *I'll Take That One*, 122, 207.

of the evacuation scheme was that it underestimated the differences which exist between the various sections of the population'.[596]

Class also emerges as an important feature of evacuees' experiences in Birmingham and Westmorland. Evidence from Birmingham indicates that some parents were pleased when their children were placed with families of a similar social class. Mrs Smith, whose letter to the Birmingham school teacher was quoted above, was grateful that her children were billeted together in 'a home on about the same level as their own'.[597] Mrs Smith's visits to her children were likely to have helped her to develop this opinion. Staff responsible for re-billeting children in Westmorland considered matters of class when deciding how best to support evacuees. Twelve-year-old Jane was originally billeted with a middle-class spinster, Miss Harris, who complained that she was dishonest and deceitful.[598] Miss Harris attributed much of Jane's 'unsatisfactory' behaviour to her having been spoilt by her grandmother, who had brought her up.[599] Having assessed that Jane had come 'from a good home', the psychiatric social worker, suggested that she be re-billeted with 'a working class home … where the standard expected of her would not be beyond her effort'. With class and aspiration thought to be closely aligned, at times it was considered appropriate to place children in surroundings which may not have been familiar, in order to maximise their chances of finding 'affection and security'.[600]

The loyalty associated with the working-class, which was thought to have hindered the evacuation process, was considered a virtue for evacuees struggling with a lack of affection.

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[596] Madge and Harrisson, *War Begins at Home*, 329.
[597] BA: MS 4259/1, Letter from Mrs Smith, 1 October 1939, [pseudonym].
[598] CA: WC/H/118A, Case Notes, date of visit 31 December 1940.
[599] CA: WC/H/118A, Letter dated 26 January 1941.
[600] CA: WC/H/118A, Letter dated 2 January 1941.

Social workers found that children who they believed had been spoilt by affluent parents adjusted well to working-class life. David, for example, whose parents were happy for his hosts to physically discipline him, was raised by a mother who was 'rather hoity-toity and considers herself a cut above [others]'.[601] These remarks were informed by observations which were made about the mother when she, and her husband, came to visit David. Visits allowed parents and social workers alike to form opinions about the social settings in which children were being cared for as well as the environment from which they had come. David's behaviour, which caused him to leave his former elderly host, improved considerably once he was placed with a childless working-class couple. The social worker noted that 'this seems to be an excellent billet … and David enjoyed being in the [husband's joinery] workroom'.[602] Class differences were central to social workers' concerns, but they did not inevitably lead to conflict.

Ending Evacuation

The end of evacuation was less uniform that its beginning. On 6 December 1944 the official process of returning evacuees began in regions unaffected by the V-weapon attacks. These included Birmingham and the northern areas from which children were evacuated to Westmorland. For those returning to the south of England, official plans took effect in March 1945.[603] In London all schools were closed for a week, to allow teachers to assess the conditions awaiting the returning children. A Ministry of Health directive, issued in October 1944, stated that 'mere unwillingness on the part of the parents or guardians to receive their children should not be allowed to act as a bar to the children's return'.[604] By August 1945, more than 75,000 children remained in reception areas, most often because of housing related

[601] CA: WC/H/118A, Case Notes, date of visit 16 March 1942.
[602] CA: WC/H/118A, Case Notes, date of visit 16 March 1942.
[603] Brown, *Evacuees*, 113.
[604] Gärtner, *Operation Pied Piper*, 136.

problems. The civil servants who were accused, by Harrisson and Madge, of neglecting psychology when planning evacuation, were more sensitive when returning evacuees.[605] In May 1945, the Ministry of Health encouraged care workers, who supported the families of returning evacuees, to emphasize to parents the extent of the changes that their children had experienced: 'children cannot be expected to stand on their own two feet for some years and then automatically become docile, obedient, considerate and helpful to their parents'.[606] Implicit within these remarks was a distinctively middle-class understanding of childhood. For children returning to impoverished neighbourhoods, the independence implied by the reference to children 'stand[ing] on their own two feet', was something that many experienced prior to the conflict.[607] Indeed, as shown in chapter two, during the interwar depression some working-class families relied upon their children to 'stand on their own two feet' in order to support the household economy.

In July 1948, the billeting allowance paid by central Government ceased and local authorities arranged, under the Children Act 1948, to pay boarding out allowances for children for whom they were responsible but who were in the care of another local authority.[608] These arrangements applied to children who had been placed in care during the interwar period and were subsequently evacuated as well as children who had lived with their families prior to being evacuated. Records from Birmingham Council revealed that 22 children from the city who had been evacuated remained in other areas, while Birmingham took responsibility for four children who were chargeable to other authorities.[609]

[605] Madge and Harrisson, *War Begins at Home*, 304.
[606] Gärtner, *Operation Pied Piper*, 139–140.
[607] Todd, 'Breadwinners and Dependants'.
[608] BA: BCC/1/CT/1/1, Report of the Hostels and Boarding-out Sub-Committee, December 1948, p. 5.
[609] BA: BCC/1/CT/1/1, Report of the Hostels and Boarding-out Sub-Committee, December 1948, p. 7.

The Legacy of Evacuation for Children's Services

As shown in chapters one and two, interwar policy makers and experts encouraged local authorities to increase the proportion of looked after children placed in foster care. Nationally these efforts were accompanied by a rise in the number of children who were boarded out. Social fatigue, caused by six years of conflict, undermined efforts to increase the number of foster homes. The official evacuation scheme ended in March 1946, at which point more than 5,000 unaccompanied children had not yet been reunited with their families, so became the responsibility of the local authorities from which they had been sent.[610] The Curtis Committee, which was established in 1945 to investigate the care provided to looked after children, observed that as the war ended it became harder to billet the remaining children, in part because:

> The weariness induced by war conditions … has made [many] very suitable foster parents who have housed evacuated children feel a strong desire … to have their homes to themselves.[611]

These observations were observed in practice. In September 1944, the Ministry of Health issued a circular, requesting that local authorities 'prepare lists of householders who had proved successful in caring for evacuated children in the past and who might be prepared to act as foster-parents in the future'. It was hoped that this action would help to 'increase the supply of good foster-homes' once the conflict had ended.[612] The Ministry's ambitions proved ill-founded. A survey conducted in West Riding, revealed that out of 284 people classified as suitable, more than 220 refused outright to continue hosting children. By 1948, only 10 of those approached were continuing to provide foster care.[613] Likewise, in

[610] Gardiner, *Wartime*, 674–675.
[611] *Report of the Care of Children Committee*, 153.
[612] *Summary Report of the Ministry of Health, for the Year Ended 31st March 1945*, Cmd. 6710 (London, 1945), p. 28.
[613] Hansard HC Debate vol 153 col 960 (10 February 1948).

Birmingham, the MOH reported that over the course of 1944 the number of women registering with the city's Children's Home Service had declined 'due to general fatigue of the mothers'.[614] These finding are all the more remarkable because a study of Oxford households, that had received evacuees, conducted between 1942 and 1943, found that 66% of foster-parents reported that they would take children in peace-time.[615] A shortage of people coming forward to serve as foster parents meant that some local authorities resorted to boarding out children with the families of Canadian servicemen, despite the fact that these families were known to be returning to Canada.[616] The enthusiasm that people expressed towards foster care in the middle years of the war waned as the conflict ended and the compulsion for families in reception areas to accept evacuees was rescinded.

As shown in chapter two, prior to the Second World War, the practice of boarding out was not actively promoted in Westmorland. Towards the end of the conflict, however, council staff hoped that families' experiences of hosting evacuees would prove valuable when looking after foster children. This aspiration is found in case files compiled about adults who expressed a desire to become foster parents. Miss Edwards, for example, lived with her elderly mother and planned to foster a child through Barnardo's. The social workers noted that Miss Edwards 'has had boy evacuees … she understands the rough side of them, and is not worried'.[617] For Miss Edwards, and the person tasked with checking her suitability as a foster parent, evacuation was credited with providing would be foster-carers with valuable experience. Despite providing useful transferable skills, however, in Westmorland the process of having received evacuees was more often thought to serve as a barrier to future fostering arrangements. A report produced by the Children's Officer, in May 1949, noted that

[614] *Report of the Birmingham Medical Officer of Health, for the Year 1944*, (1945), p. 44.
[615] Barnett House Study Group, *London Children in War-Time Oxford*, 44.
[616] NA: MH/102/2069, Letter to Mr Astbury, 1 February 1954.
[617] CA: WC/H/118B, Social Work Notes, 21 March 1945.

'the difficulties of finding foster homes … are far greater than was expected'. This was, in part, attributed to 'war weariness and a desire by people generally to have their homes to themselves.'[618]

The challenge of recruiting foster parents was also reported in Birmingham, a city which had actively promoted the practice in the interwar period and had seen an expansion in the proportion of children cared for in this way. A report produced by the Hostels and Boarding-out Sub-Committee, in December 1949, acknowledged the numbers of foster parents coming forward had declined, when compared to pre-war levels. This trend was attributed to several factors, including: 'the aftermath of evacuation; employment of married women; difficulties of rationing; and shortage of accommodation due to the influx of much adult labour into Birmingham'.[619] While evacuation was acknowledged as a factor, many of the issues identified by Birmingham officials were the result of more general social changes, such as inward migration and the expansion in the number of married women who remained in employment.[620]

The reports of the Westmorland Children's Officer and the Curtis Committee, which both referred to hosts' desire to 'have their homes to themselves', reveal the social cost of hosting evacuees and the desire for greater personal privacy in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War. This aspiration for privacy had important consequences for the care that local authorities could offer looked after children. In Westmorland, the shortage of foster homes impacted directly on the support that the Council could provide to families in need. Miss

[618] KA: WC/W/A1568/Box 41/26, Children Committee, Planning Sub-Committee, Memorandum from the Children's Officer, May 1949.
[619] BA: BCC/1/CT/1/1, Report of the Hostels and Boarding-out Sub-Committee, December 1948, p. 9.
[620] See: H. McCarthy, 'Social Science and Married Women's Employment in Post-War Britain', *Past & Present*, 233:1 (2016), pp. 269–305.

Green was unable to place her illegitimate child in foster care because of a lack of foster homes. This led her to disclose the child to her parents.[621] This issue lasted long after the war had ended. As late as 1951, the Council reported on 'the difficulty … experienced in finding suitable foster homes.'[622] The expression of these concerns, in Westmorland, marked a stark contrast to the interwar period when boarding out was not actively promoted. While evacuation may have raised the profile of children's wellbeing, it also meant that, at least in the short term, people often were less willing to provide the very support called for by experts.

Evacuation provided those interested in a career in child care work with opportunities to acquire skills and experience which were often thought relevant to post-war work with disadvantaged children. The formation of local children's committees, following the Children Act, 1948, meant that local authorities across the country were required to recruit staff to new posts. Applicants for positions in both Birmingham and Westmorland often cited experience connected to evacuation. Evidence drawn from the job applications of the couple who were appointed to be the new Matron and Superintendent of Abbey Home, Westmorland's only children's home, reveals that they noted their involvement, in the immediate post-war period, with Save the Children's efforts in Brunswick, Germany. Immediately prior to taking up their position in Westmorland, the pair were employed by the Manchester branch of the Family Service Unit, an initiative that sprang directly out of war-time concerns for children's wellbeing.[623]

[621] CA: WC/H/118B, Letter dated 11 July 1947, [pseudonym].
[622] KA: WC/W/A1568/Box 37/3, Report of Ladies Sub-Committee of Brantfield Nursery Sub- Committee, 20 February 1951.
[623] KA: WC/W/A1568/Box 37/8, Appointment of Superintendent and Matron, Abbey Home, Schedule of Applicants, September 1948.

Evacuation provided people, with a similar upbringing to the children supported by the new legislation, opportunities to support 'ordinary' children, and therefore acquire insights that their own childhood was understood to have prevented. In Birmingham, many of the applicants for positions associated with the children's committee referred to their wartime involvement with children. Mr Wilson, for example, successfully applied to the position of Assistant Children's Officer. As part of his application, which detailed that he had been 'a deprived child himself from the age of 7 to 13', he explained that during the war he and his wife, 'opened a Hostel for difficult Evacuees', which subsequently became a 'Hostel for maladjusted children'.[624] While Mr Wilson viewed his childhood experiences as an advantage and claimed it motivated him to 'assist children similarly placed', the actions of his prospective employer suggest that Wilson's wartime experience was vital to securing the position. This is shown when we consider the reception of another application from a care leaver, whose age and professional qualifications closely matched those of Mr Wilson. Mr Granger referred to his experience of growing up in care, and suggested that his upbringing gave him 'extensive practical experience of the kind of work the Children Act, 1948, envisage[d]' along with a 'genuinely sympathetic understanding of children placed in similar circumstances'.[625] Unlike Mr Wilson, however, Mr Granger's professional experience was limited to teaching. As such, the Secretary of State, who was required to approve the appointment, felt that, due to his upbringing, 'his knowledge of children outside the Home which he himself was in is not … likely to be sufficiently extensive to form a good foundation'.[626] As shown in chapter two, creating a 'family environment', one modelled on the upbringing of children who were not raised in care, was the hallmark of good residential

[624] BA: BCC/1/CT/1/1, Summary of particulars given by Applicants selected for interview in connection with the appointment of Assistant Children's Officer, [pseudonym].
[625] BA: BCC/1/CT/1/1, Summary of particulars given by Applicants selected for interview in connection with the appointment of Children's Officer, [pseudonym].
[626] BA: BCC/1/CT/1/1, Letter regarding Appointment of Children's Officer, from S.M. Rosling, 4 November 1948.

care provision. The fact that Mr Granger's professional experience was not thought to have done enough to develop his knowledge beyond 'the Home which he himself was in', meant that employers doubted his ability to serve effectively.

Conclusion

Re-examining the Second World War from the perspective of child protection causes us to rethink our understanding of the conflict. From rationing and blackouts to conscription and censorship, the demands of war led the state to extend its reach in well-known ways. Amidst these changes, however, parents retained considerable autonomy over how they raised their children. Historians of the Second World War have shown how the conflict promoted a new respect for experts: from Keynesian economics and state planning to the concerns of psychologists.[627] Study of children's services in Birmingham and Westmorland has shown that the disparities in the care provided to looked after children in the inter-war period narrowed as less progressive local authorities began to employ staff with greater professional training. To fully understand the conflict, however, we need to appreciate the ways in which non-experts could, and did, defy the will of those in positions of political power. The same government that was central to the defeat of Nazi Germany failed to persuade the parents of even half of Britain's children who lived in designated danger zones to leave their homes for safety. Children were viewed as both potential victims and threats to civilian morale. Parents who refused to allow their children to be evacuated were, therefore, implicitly undermining the country's war efforts. That this was possible speaks to the respect with which the family unit was viewed both before (when evacuation was being planned) and during (when evacuation remained voluntary) the conflict. Rather than resulting in the '"rediscovery" of the

[627] Shapira, *The War Inside*; J. Tomlinson, 'Planning: Debate and Policy in the 1940s', *Twentieth Century British History*, 3:2 (1992), pp. 154–174.

value of the family', the war reaffirmed a respect that predated the war.[628] Evacuation revealed more than differences in wealth and prosperity. It highlighted discrepancies in the ways in which children were punished, and presented some parents with practices that they considered abusive. Amidst these confrontations, however, many children were greeted with empathy rather than antagonism, as hosts drew a distinction between parents whose actions they objected to and children they hoped to mould in their image. As the conflict ended, the public's resistance to Government efforts re-emerged. Schemes designed to transform wartime hosts into longer term foster parents failed to win over war weary householders. Ultimately, sensitivity to issues of child protection reveals the ways in which the 'People's War' was host to significant internal conflicts. Amidst the 'quiet heroism of ordinary British civilians', domestic battles were fought between government and the families they sought to protect.[629] These divisions coexisted with important reforms, which had been resisted by some councils during the interwar years, at a local authority level.

[628] Hendrick, *Narcissistic Parenting*, 63.
[629] Downs, 'Au Revoir Les Enfants', 124.

CHAPTER 4: NATIONAL CHILD PROTECTION FRAMEWORK, C. 1945-1970

Introduction

In December 1946, the *Daily Express*, Britain's largest circulated newspaper, featured the cartoon below. Now, as then, the Curtis Report, and Children Act 1948 that it informed, have often been overlooked by histories of the welfare state. As the cartoon suggests, the report was marginalised by other post-war reforms which competed for Parliament's time. This chapter rectifies this oversight and argues that study of child protection challenges existing histories of post-war expertise.

Figure 5: 'The Waits', *Daily Express*, 26 December 1946, p. 2.



THE WAITS

The years 1945 to 1970 have been presented as a period of optimism in the ability of the state to improve the lives of its young citizens. Rather than providing a chronological history, this chapter adopts a thematic approach to argue that the claims of post-war experts were often

contested by the very public upon whom they depended.[630] After setting out the positions of existing histories, this argument is advanced through three related sections. The first section argues that, among policy makers and practitioners, the family unit was perceived as vital to the wellbeing of children. Importantly, the family unit continued to be viewed as the best provider of care through to 1970. The second section contends that policy makers and practitioners consistently emphasised the need for public support. Throughout this period, the press played an important role, both in providing a space for debate to occur and the information which often informed such debates. This work challenges the perception that the public represented little more than ignorant bystanders at a time of rising professional status. By writing out the public, existing histories have misrepresented the development of child protection services. In the third section two case studies are examined to show that public understanding of what constituted a proper family could often be at odds with the respect afforded to birth parents by child welfare professionals

Historiography

The rise of experts has recently been presented as one of the defining features of the post-war period. Matthew Hilton, Nicholas Crowson, James McKay, and Jean-François Mouhot have argued that the twentieth century was characterized by an expansion in expertise and enthusiasm for planning.[631] Indeed, during the Second World War, many proponents of an enlarged welfare-state envisaged a 'technocratic cadre of expert planners'.[632] This continued into the post-war period, when, as Michael Lambert has argued, '"problem family" policies

[630] For examples of historical overviews of the post-war period, see: C. Ball, 'Regulating Child Care: From the Children Act 1948 to the Present Day', *Child & Family Social Work*, 3:3 (1998), pp. 163–171; S. Jackson, 'Looking after Children Away from Home: Past and Present', in E. Chase, A. Simon, and S. Jackson, eds., *In Care and after: A Positive Perspective*, (London, 2006); R. Jones, 'Children Acts 1948-2008: The Drivers for Legislative Change in England over 60 Years', *Journal of Children's Services*, 4:4 (2009), pp. 39–52.
[631] M. Hilton et al., *The Politics of Expertise: How NGOs Shaped Modern Britain* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 7–8.
[632] M. Grimley, 'Civil Society and the Clerisy: Christian Elites and National Culture c. 1930-50', in J. Harris, ed., *Civil Society in British History: Ideas, Identities, Institutions*, (Oxford, 2003), p. 233.

and practices depended heavily upon the professional expertise of a myriad of welfare and social service technocrats and officials'.[633]

Examination of child protection services helps to temper this narrative. Far from witnessing the inexorable rise of a single set of experts, post-war Britain was shaped by a plurality of authority; professional opinion coexisted with, and was challenged by, the public's faith in their own expertise drawn from experience. These arguments challenge the conclusions of recent research which has suggested that 'experience' only became a respected form of 'expertise' in *late* twentieth century Britain.[634] Alternatively, this research affirms David Cowan's argument that, over the course of the 1950s and 1960s, increasing numbers of parents adopted more psychologically inspired styles of parenting.[635] This chapter reveals that parents invoked their own psychological expertise to undermine the efforts of professional social workers to reunite foster children with their families.

Study of child protection policy enables a reanalysis of attitudes towards the family. Recent histories have argued that public perceptions of the family unit underwent a unique transformation in the years 1945-1970. Pat Thane has described the 1930s to the 1950s as a 'golden age … of near universal, stable, long-lasting marriage', one in which 'the small contented, "normal" family' was supported with 'considerable social investment'.[636] In contrast, the 1960s have been presented as a time of faltering confidence in the family.[637]

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[633] Lambert, 'Historicising "Troubled Family" Policy', 4.
See also: D. Kynaston, *Austerity Britain, 1945-1951* (London, 2008), p. 24.
[634] J. Crane, *The Expertise of Experience: Representative Associations and Child Abuse, 1974-2015*, (University of Warwick, PhD, 2015), pp. v, 337.
[635] Cowan, '"Modern" Parenting and the Uses of Childcare Advice in Post-War England', 333.
[636] P. Thane, 'Family Life and "Normality" in Postwar British Culture', in R. Bessel and D. Schumann, eds., *Life after Death: Approaches to a Cultural and Social History of Europe during the 1940s and 1950s*, (Cambridge, 2003), p. 198.
[637] Cohen, *Family Secrets*, chap. 7; Thomson, *Lost Freedom*, chap. 7.
See also: F. Caber, 'That Family Life Is Finished', *Punch Magazine*, 6399 (1963), pp. 634–636.

Deborah Cohen has argued that 'by the late 1960s … the notion of the family's repressive character and penchant for secrecy had migrated from long-haired bohemia to the mainstream'.[638] Study of child protection challenges this periodization and reveals that the popularity of family based care, among child welfare professionals, remained more durable than Cohen has implied. The first three chapters have shown how, contrary to what Harry Hendrick and Angela Davis have argued, the family was recognised as an important social structure for the care of the children before the Second World War and so was not suddenly rediscovered as important as a result of the conflict.[639] This chapter builds upon this thesis and shows that the family remained a highly valued institution right through the 1960s. Study of what social workers believed characterized a 'good family' allows us to develop a better understanding of family life in post-war Britain, thereby providing a useful counterpoint to existing studies of 'problem families'.[640]

The importance that policy-makers ascribed to public involvement with child protection challenges a related set of debates, namely the extent to which the public were aware of child abuse. Writing in the early 1980s, George Behlmer argued that 'there remains to be explained the curious decline of public interest in child abuse between 1914 and the early 1960's'. Chapter one detailed how the late nineteenth century has often been presented as a time of heightened interested in children's welfare. Behlmer suggested that 'the material and psychological wounds of two world wars and protracted economic crises tended to divert humane attention'.[641] This thesis has been affirmed by subsequent studies, which have often credited the discovery of battered babies, by medical experts, as ushering in a new era of

[638] Cohen, *Family Secrets*, 213.
[639] Davis, *Pre-School Childcare*, 62; Hendrick, *Narcissistic Parenting*, 63.
[640] For histories of problem families, see: Starkey, 'The Medical Officer of Health, the Social Worker, and the Problem Family, 1943 to 1968'; J. Welshman, 'In Search of the "Problem Family": Public Health and Social Work in England and Wales 1940–70', *Social History of Medicine*, 9:3 (1996), pp. 447–465.
[641] G. K. Behlmer, *Child Abuse and Moral Reform in England, 1870-1908* (Stanford, 1982), pp. 225–226.

public awareness of child abuse.[642] A re-examination of the decades that preceded the publication, in 1962, of the C. Henry Kempe's article on 'The Battered Child Syndrome', reveals that far from being ignorant of child abuse, policy-makers often viewed the public as key allies.

The Family Unit

The respect afforded the two-parent family in the 1930s, discussed in chapters one and two, was subject to considerable continuity. Across the mid-twentieth century the family was considered to be the model care provider for children. The consolidation of family life was a central aim of post-war social reconstruction.[643] The enthusiasm for family life was not limited to those concerned with the care of looked after children. The 1948 Children Act, which substantially reformed children's services, and the *Report of the Care of Children Committee* which informed it, noted the importance of family. The Committee, which was chaired by Myra Curtis, a retired Civil Servant and Principal of Newnham College, Cambridge, was presented to Parliament in September 1946. At the time, the report represented the most substantial investigation into the care provided to children who were living apart from their families. Its findings were based on inspection visits to 451 residential institutions and an unstated number of foster homes, located in 41 local authorities. This evidence was supplemented by 114 memoranda submitted by Government Departments, voluntary organisations, professional associations and individuals as well as oral testimony from 229 witnesses.[644] The value of the family was emphasised throughout the Curtis Report,

[642] See for example: Crane, '"The Bones Tell a Story the Child Is Too Young or Too Frightened to Tell"'; Ferguson, *Protecting Children in Time*, 80; I. Hacking, 'The Making and Molding of Child Abuse', *Critical Inquiry*, 17:2 (1991), p. 259.
[643] J. Finch and P. Summerfield, 'Social Reconstruction and the Emergence of Companionate Marriage, 1945-59', in D. Clark, ed., *Marriage, Domestic Life and Social Change: Writings for Jacqueline Burgoyne, 1944-88*, (1991), p. 7.
[644] *Report of the Care of Children Committee*.

whose terms of reference referred to investigating 'existing methods of providing for children … deprived of a normal home life with their own parents or relatives'. The report worked on the assumption that children living apart from their family had deviated from a desired norm.[645]

Shortly after the report was published, Lulie Shaw, who trained as a social worker at the LSE during the Second World War, noted that 'it would have been of value, were such a thing possible, to have had a scientific study of normal families' to better understand 'what the family do[es] for the child'.[646] Despite not studying 'normal families', the report implied that family environments provided children with individual attention and treated them with pride and affection.[647] Normal families were also characterised as ones in which children 'help with the housework and shopping, run errands and, especially in the case of boys, work with the foster father'.[648] Family life was also thought to comprise 'opportunities for varied human contacts and experiences', qualities that many institutions were thought to fail to provide.[649] The report argued that the virtues of living in an institutional home which reflected these values were exemplified by the behaviour of the children themselves. The committee noted that children fostered with 'a family of normal size in a normal home' were found to exhibit 'much greater happiness' than those growing up in institutional care. Children living in environments which more closely emulated a 'normal family' were found to 'suffer less from segregation, starvation for affection and lack of independence'.[650] The Curtis Committee's

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[645] *Ibid., 2.*
[646] L. A. Shaw, 'Children Without Homes', *Social Work*, 4:1 (1947), p. 10; J. Kanter, *Face to Face with Children: The Life and Work of Clare Winnicott* (London, 2004), pp. 12–14.
[647] For discussion of wartime commentaries on the importance of family see: H. Hendrick, 'Children's Emotional Well-Being and Mental Health in Early Post-Second World War Britain: The Case of Unrestricted Hospital Visiting', in M. Gijswijt-Hofstra and H. Marland, eds., *Cultures of Child Health in Britain and the Netherlands in the Twentieth Century*, (Amsterdam, 2003), p. 220.
[648] *Report of the Care of Children Committee*, 120–121, 139.
[649] Ibid., 152.
[650] Ibid.
See also: I. M. Leslie, 'Some Problems of a Hostel in a Reception Area', *Social Work*, 1:5 (1940), p. 309.

preference for foster care was closely associated with its perceived ability to most accurately replicate the qualities found within family life.

The Curtis Committee's arguments were reflected in public and parliamentary discussion of the report as well as the 1948 Children Act which arose in response to the committee's findings. Speaking in May 1948, the Labour MP Leslie Haden-Guest observed that:

> What a child requires is not very elaborate institutions … [but] a home in which its mother looks after it and surrounds it with loving care and attention. That is the whole essence of looking after children. I would very much prefer to leave a child in a dirty home, if I were sure that the mother loved and cared for it, than to take it to the most satisfactory premises which any expert committee could devise.[651]

Guest's comments echoed the importance that the Curtis Committee ascribed to meeting the emotional needs of children. The critical reference to an 'expert committee' should be read in light of the plethora of White Papers which had been published about post-war reconstruction. His remarks revealed continuity in the heavily gendered ways in which the care of children was understood. The assumption that women were uniquely placed to care for children was reflected in discussions about the qualities expected of Children's Officers, a newly established position which local authorities were mandated, by the 1948 Act, to fill. The Officers were described as the 'linchpin' of the legislation.[652] They were responsible for representing the council in its parental functions and for developing a more integrated service for looked after children.[653] Both the Curtis Report and subsequent public discussions of the officers assumed that the position would be filled by a woman who would become 'a real

[651] Hansard HC Debate vol 450 col 1655-1656 (7 May 1948).
[652] Hansard HC Debate vol 452 col 1893 (28 June 1948).
See also: A. E. Martin, 'Child Neglect: A Problem of Social Administration', *Public Administration*, 22 (1944), p. 107.
[653] *Report of the Care of Children Committee*, 146–147; Parker, *Change and Continuity in Children's Services*, 69.

friend' to the children in her care.[654] The assumption that women were uniquely suited to become Children's Officers complements Louise Jackson's work which has shown that women police officers were often described as performing a 'welfare' or 'social' role, which led many women to actively participate in child protection efforts.[655] Social work was overwhelming practised by women and in 1959 Barbara Wootton found that 95% of all social workers were women.[656]

The practice of boarding out, which chapters one and two have shown was promoted in the interwar period, was viewed by many policy-makers as a means of better emulating the family environment. The Curtis Committee was surprised to find that despite its popularity, only 25% of the children in care were boarded out.[657] Against this background, politicians from all parties urged the government to do more to increase the proportion of children who were boarded out. Scottish Unionist Thomas Galbraith MP called on local authorities to 'do their utmost to develop the boarding-out system to the greatest possible extent, for that is the solution which gives the child the greatest scope for a happy and natural development'. These observations were consistent with Scotland's historic preference for foster care.[658] Implicit in Galbraith's remarks was the belief that childhood represented an important time of social development. Institutional care was thought to be unable to provide the '[intimate] atmosphere and freedom' of the home, in which a child's natural development could best take place.[659]

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[654] Hansard HL Debate vol 153 col 917-918 (10 February 1948).
See also: M. Harvey, 'The Curtis Report', *The Times*, 20 December 1946, p. 5.
[655] L. Jackson, *Women Police: Gender, Welfare and Surveillance in the Twentieth Century*, Gender in History (Manchester, 2012), pp. 138–139, 145.
[656] B. Wootton, *Social Science and Social Pathology* (London, 1959).
[657] Of the 125,000 children who fell within the Committee's remit, only 31,000 were boarded out.
See: *Report of the Care of Children Committee*, 152.
[658] L. Abrams, *The Orphan Country: Children of Scotland's Broken Homes from 1845 to the Present Day* (Edinburgh, 1998), pp. 39–41.
[659] Hansard HC Debate vol 450 col 1620, 1619 (7 May 1948).

The legislation passed in 1948 supported Galbraith's position. It stipulated that when accommodating children, local authorities should only place them in a residential home if it was not first 'practicable or desirable for the time being to make arrangements for boarding-out'.[660] In the years that followed, this message was promoted in numerous reports, memoranda and circulars.[661] A report produced by the National Council of Social Service noted that foster care could 'save the child going into an institution or Home, which might be a frightening experience for the younger ones'.[662] Admission to institutional care was cast as inferior to foster care. In the early 1950s, the Home Office encouraged local authorities to 'train children to become suitable for boarding out, if they are not suitable when first coming into care'.[663] The policy changes were accompanied by an increase in the proportion of children in care being placed in foster homes, from 15% in 1939, to 28% in 1946, rising to 51% by 1966.[664] The figures referred to above represent a considerable increase in the proportion of children boarded out when compared to the proportion of Poor Law children who were boarded out. As shown in chapter two, most children in the care of the state were referred to care through the Poor Law. Between 1930 and 1939 the total number of children boarded out, as a proportion of children in support of institutional relief, increased slightly, from 15% in 1930 to 18% by 1939.[665]

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[660] *Children Act*, 1948, sec. 13(1)(b).
[661] R. Parker, *Decision in Child Care: A Study of Prediction in Fostering* (London, 1966), pp. 19–20.
See also: BA: BCC/1/CT/1/1/8, Memorandum by the Home Office on the Care of Children under Five Years of Age, 20 September 1955.
[662] KA: WC/W/A1568/Box 43/18, National Council of Social Service, Paper on Children Deprived of a Normal Home Life, 1949, p. 2.
[663] KA: WC/W/A1586/Box 41/29, County Councils Association, Report of the special Sub-Committee on Children's Estimate, 1 January 1953, p. 2.
[664] Parker, *Decision in Child Care*, 18; *Twentieth Annual Report of the Ministry of Health 1938-39*, 73.
[665] Reports of the Ministry of Health, (London, 1930/31 – 1938/39).

The growing authority afforded to psychological experts by policy makers was reflected in the justifications given for boarding out.[666] Study of the arguments advanced in support of boarding out affirms Michal Shapira's assertion that psychology made an important contribution to public debates and social policy in post-war Britain.[667] As shown in chapter one, psychology was referred to by a small number of policy makers, in support of reform to children's services, during the inter-war period. The elevation of psychological expertise because of the Second World War led to the psychological needs of children being referred to much more widely in post-war discussions of how best to care for looked after children. In 1951, the Home Secretary, James Chuter Ede MP, reflected that:

> Perhaps the most important single development in recent years [has been] the widespread realisation that a [looked after child] … needed not only decent material conditions but a home in the true sense where he would find understanding, interest and affection.[668]

This sentiment was also articulated outside the House of Commons. Compared to the inter-war period, sections of the popular post-war press displayed a far greater willingness to discuss the psychological health of Britain's children. Shortly after the Curtis Report was published an editorial in the *Daily Express* noted that 'the damage to a child's receptive mind is even more lasting than bodily injury. These are scars carried through life'.[669] At a time when the nation was looking to the future, the public and policy-makers alike were keen to avoid raising a generation of children who could risk undermining the future prosperity of the country. Providing the right care could was thought to have a life-time of benefits. In 1951 the Home Office noted that:

> The success of family life within a children's home will be seen in the degree to which a child who has been brought up there feels himself to be an

[666] Parker, *Decision in Child Care*, 18.
[667] Shapira, *The War Inside*, 6.
[668] KA: WC/W/A1568/Box 41/4, Conference of Chairmen of Children's Committees and Children's Officers, Opening Address, 4 April 1951.
[669] 'Opinion: The Children', *Daily Express*, 25 October 1946, p. 2.

> individual with rights and responsibility, equipped to take his place in the world … the aim of all that is done is to produce stable, happy and self reliant citizens.[670]

The Home Office's reference to developing future citizens is consistent with Matthew Grant's assertion that individuals' lives were affected by a post-war citizenship discourse which 'could be subject to intense government intervention'.[671]

The state was not alone in seeking to develop future citizens. Publicity material produced by voluntary run institutions, which relied upon local authority referrals, also valorised the need to develop good citizens. In the early 1950s, the Oxfordshire based Wallington Farm Training School for Boys concluded an information pamphlet by noting that 'the best any school can do is to send out useful and God-fearing citizens, and but for this school many of its pupils might have had little chance of being either'.[672] Abigail Wills has shown that this preoccupation with developing future citizens was shared by the staff of residential institutions for delinquents in post-war Britain.[673] The government was not only concerned with transforming '"anti-citizens" into citizens'.[674] It was just as anxious to ensure that children admitted into state care, through no fault of their own, were supported to attain the status of 'happy and self reliant citizens'. Implicit in this desire, however, was the belief that unless provided with appropriate – family-inspired – care, looked after children could all too easily become the 'anti-citizens'.[675] With chapter one in mind, these aims were part of a longer tradition, amongst policy-makers, of viewing neglected children and juvenile

[670] CA: CA/C/6/167, Memorandum by the Home Office on the Conduct of Children's Homes, July 1951, pp. 3, 7.
[671] M. Grant, 'Historicizing Citizenship in Post-War Britain', *The Historical Journal*, 59:4 (2016), p. 1197.
[672] KA: WC/W/A1568/ Box 41/23, Wallington Farm Training School Leaflet, [n.d. 1952].
[673] A. Wills, 'Delinquency, Masculinity and Citizenship in England 1950-1970', *Past & Present*, 187 (2005), pp. 157–185.
[674] Ibid., 159.
[675] See also: BA: BCC/CT/1/1/8, Letter to Birmingham Town Clerk from F. Seebohm, 19 August 1955.

delinquents as sharing many of the same characteristics and the possibility of a similar destructive life trajectory unless properly supported.

The value of affection was evidenced by calls to include parental displays of affection as mitigating factors when deciding whether to remove a child from their care. Evidence drawn from parliamentary figures, psychological experts and social researchers reveals that the value attributed to affection transcended policy makers. In 1952, during a debate on how to reduce the number of cases of 'gross cruelty to children', Viscount St Davids argued that homes which remained affectionate should be given a second chance:

> It is largely a matter of whether there is any natural affection remaining in the family—whether the father and mother continue to be together, and whether the children, in spite of the cruelties which have been inflicted on them, continue to love their parents … Where that is so, I believe that … [parents should be supported to] continue to look after their children'

On the other hand, homes which lacked affection represented a lost cause:

> Where… natural affection has been killed by the cruelty—and in most of the bad cases that does happen—and where the child is terrified of its parents, then, of course, there is nothing left to do. The home must be broken up.[676]

Several years later, a study by the psychiatrist Dr Hilda Lewis also emphasized the importance of affection. Lewis found that children who were shown no parental affection became aggressive and anti-social, while 'affection was often the saving grace of the most inept and mentally dull mother'.[677] Lewis's work illustrated that childcare continued to be perceived as a maternal duty and presented the ability to love a child as a priceless quality.

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[676] Hansard HL Debate vol 175 col 398 (25 March 1952).
See also: Hansard HC Debate vol 467 col 1744 (22 July 1949).
[677] 'The Deprived Child: A Study of 500 "in Need of Care and Protection"', *The Manchester Guardian*, 23 September 1954, p. 5; H. Lewis, *Deprived Children: A Social and Clinical Study* (London, 1954), chap. 4.

The breakup of the extended family and community networks were credited with placing additional burdens on children's services. The actions of community members, who were shown in chapter three to be experienced at providing care, continued to inform the demand for specialist children's services. The perception that community ties were weakening predated the conflict. The involvement of working-class families in the suburban housing boom of the 1930s, occurred alongside changes to welfare provision, which provided older people with greater independence.[678] In 1939, an NSPCC inspector attributed the rise in the actual number of children being left at home alone to changes in family life: 'owing to the old-age pensions scheme, many family units are now without old people, and there are no grandparents to leave at home to look after the children'.[679] The inspector's remarks show that many children had been cared for by several generations. Reforms which allowed older people greater independence could deprive families of child care support and contribute to parents leaving children unattended. Shortly after the end of the Second World War, similar concerns were expressed by the Women's Group on Public Welfare (WGPW). The group was established in July 1940 and aimed to use their research to influence policy-makers.[680] Their 1948 publication, *The Neglected Child and his Family,* noted that 'in many families there used to exist an accommodating grandmother or aunt [who could assist with child care]. This is now rare, particularly in urban areas … In many child-neglect cases [neglect occurs] because no such accommodating relative exists'.[681] Later, in the mid-1960s, the *Daily Mail*, as part of a discussion of battered baby syndrome, claimed that an unnamed 'London psychiatrist' had argued that 'a family living in isolation, without friends [or] grandparents to help care for children' were more prone to have children who displayed the symptoms of

[678] Lawrence, 'Class, "Affluence" and the Study of Everyday Life in Britain, c.1930–64', 275.
[679] 'Temper Is Raised by Flats', *Daily Mirror*, 17 August 1939, p. 14.
See also: P. Thane, *Old Age in English History: Past Experiences, Present Issues* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 293–296, 417, 434–435.
[680] Welshman, 'Evacuation, Hygiene, and Social Policy', 786.
[681] Women's Group on Public Welfare, *The Neglected Child and His Family*, 114, see also pp. 25-27.

battered children syndrome.[682] That a lack of family support was credited with contributing to child abuse at such different stages in the evolution of the welfare suggests that despite the expansion in state support the extended family was still assumed to have an important role to play in protecting children.

Child welfare experts feared that the physical relocation of large numbers of people would exacerbate these problems. These experiences also pre-dated the war. Ben Jones's study of inter-war re-housing schemes notes that families who moved to estates, through slum clearance programmes, often struggled when faced with a lack of community cohesion.[683] The 1954 Housing Repairs and Rents Act accelerated the slum clearance process. More than 900,000 slum dwellings were demolished and a further 2.5 million people were re-housed between 1945 and 1968.[684] The fresh start provided to those who had moved was widely reported as disorientating and there was greater expectation on the state to support families. John Bowlby predicted that demand for 'family services [would] increase with time' as a result of 'social mobility, both economic and geographic' which had served to 'break up the extended family and to throw an increased strain on the nuclear family'.[685] These observations continued right through the 1960s. In 1961 Lancashire County Council issued a booklet designed to recruit more foster parents. The publication explained that much of the Children Committee's work concerned new arrivals on housing estates who 'miss the support of their friends and relatives left behind in the older towns'.[686] In 1966 the National Association of Probation Officers (NAPO) anticipated that in future more people would use

[682] H. McLeave, 'What Makes These Parents So Cruel', *Daily Mail*, 22 April 1965, p. 10.
[683] B. Jones, 'Slum Clearance, Privatization and Residualization: The Practices and Politics of Council Housing in Mid-Twentieth-Century England', *Twentieth Century British History*, 21:4 (2010), p. 522.
[684] M. Hollow, 'The Age of Affluence Revisited: Council Estates and Consumer Society in Britain, 1950–1970', *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 16:1 (2016), p. 282.
[685] J. Bowlby, 'Family Service', *The Times*, 26 March 1965, p. 13.
[686] 'Need for More Foster Parents', *The Guardian*, 25 September 1961, p. 17.

social services 'because of the changed structure of society and the diminishing influence of the family'.[687] During an era presented as the golden age of the nuclear family, social services faced additional work as parents struggled to cope without the assistance of extended family members. NAPO's prediction demonstrates that far from being viewed as 'unnecessary' the family unit was viewed an important source of support.[688]

Despite an expansion in the number of families moving to suburban housing estates, which was associated with a breakdown in family and community support networks, the behaviour of many parents continued to be informed by a concern for what other people might think. Study of parenting behaviour nuances the findings of existing studies which have associated post-war suburbanization with greater familial privacy.[689] In 1958 a child was brought before a juvenile court on the grounds of being in need of care and protection. During the trial the boy's mother, who was alleged to have neglected her son, explained that 'if he could have a good hiding maybe it would do him some good. But he can't have one. I have tried, and he screams the place down'. The child's father concurred and explained that he was too scared to punish his son for fear of what the neighbour would think of his screams.[690] The concerns expressed by these parents were shared by many mothers who were interviewed by John and Elizabeth Newson. As part of their study of parenting practices in the 1950s and 1960s, the couple observed that 'the need for social approval' from their adult peers was 'especially strong among women' so that 'most mothers seem[ed] to be permanently sensitized to indications of their rating as good or bad mothers'.[691] These anxieties could even cause parents to alter their private disciplinary practices if they feared that they could mistakenly be

[687] D. Johnson, 'Call for Changes in Social Service', *The Guardian*, 3 August 1966, p. 3.
[688] Cohen, *Family Secrets*, 214.
[689] Vincent, *Privacy*, 89–90.
[690] 'Boy They Dare Not Spank...', *Daily Mirror*, 30 May 1958, p. 9.
[691] J. Newson and E. Newson, *Four Years Old in an Urban Community* (London, 1970), p. 407.

thought of as being abusive towards their children. These observations challenge Crane's assertion that family home was a private separate sphere were parents felt able to discipline their children as they saw fit.[692] While families may have had more space to themselves, many families still had to work hard to avoid drawing attention from others.

Amidst these changes, a range of solutions were suggested. The diversity of recommendations was indicative of the varied, and changing, ways in which people viewed professional social work. Many believed that the wider community should take more responsibility for supporting children who would otherwise be placed in care. In 1958, the *Observer*'s educational correspondent, Dinah Brook argued that 'if people were more neighbourly … some of these [looked after] children would never suffer the unnecessary shock of being cared for by total strangers'.[693] In 1954, this sentiment was expressed by a Westmorland social worker, who privately reflected that a child's development will 'depend as much on the whole community feeling a real responsibility for the problem as upon all the tireless work of the Children's Service'.[694] Community members were thought have an important responsibility to play in supporting children at risk of being admitted to care.

While policy makers recommended that two-parent families provided the best model of child care, some commentators argued that the respect shown to families could obstruct child protection efforts. In 1948, as part of their investigation into the treatment of children neglected within their own homes, the WGPW observed that 'respect for the family is so great in the mind of society and of the law that action is frequently not taken to remove a child from a situation which is demonstrably damaging to his whole personality'.[695] The

[692] Crane, '"The Bones Tell a Story the Child Is Too Young or Too Frightened to Tell"', 769.
[693] D. Brook, 'The Unlucky Ones', *The Observer*, 25 May 1958, p. 11.
[694] KA: WC/W/A1568/Box 38/4, Children's Officers' Conference, Symposium on Residential Care, 1954, p. 4.
[695] Women's Group on Public Welfare, *The Neglected Child and His Family*, 82.

group's reference to 'the mind of society' suggests that the respect with which the family was treated by law makers was shared by practitioners. The valorisation of the family by the 1948 Children Act was part of a wider legal respect afforded the family.[696] Professionals' reluctance to remove children from inadequate surroundings, because of a desire to keep children with their families, was also criticized by Basil Henriques, an East London Juvenile Court Magistrate. On being made aware of the facts of a case involving four children who were subsequently removed from their parents, Henriques criticized the NSPCC official involved: 'You stood by and watched these children cruelly treated while you had the case under observation for a whole year'.[697] While the family was widely believed to provide the best means of caring for a child, the reverence afforded it could also leave children vulnerable to being harmed through being allowed to remain in surroundings which would otherwise be considered harmful.

In the latter half of the 1950s local authorities began to acknowledge that there were occasions when staff placed too much emphasis on the importance of affection. Affection continued to be considered a necessary attribute for carers, but it was no longer thought to be sufficient. In 1956 Southampton Town Council conducted an internal inquiry after one of its foster mothers had been convicted of ill-treating and neglecting a child who had been placed in her care. The inquiry found that the council had exercised inadequate supervision of its foster parents and was guilty of placing too much weight on the emotional tie between child and foster-parent at the expense of physical and moral conditions.[698] This case also reveals

[696] C. Langhamer, 'The Meanings of Home in Postwar Britain', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 40:2 (2005), p. 345.
[697] 'Magistrate Tells NSPCC "You Have Failed"', *The Daily Mirror*, 2 January 1951, p. 7.
See also: 'N.S.P.C.C.'S Reply To Criticism', *The Times*, 1 September 1954, p. 3.
[698] 'Case of the Child Drudge', *Daily Mirror*, 26 July 1956, p. 3.

that child abuse was not only experienced by children prior to entering care. In fact, on occassions, foster homes were also found to be abusive.

The change in the value given to affection was also evidenced in the attributes associated with a good social worker. In 1965, the Association of Children's Officers argued, in sharp contrast to Coupar's article in the *Daily Express*, that 'affection for the children is very necessary, but it is not enough in itself, it must be backed by training and experience'. The increase in foster care goes some way to explaining this transition. As more children were boarded out, those who remained in residential care were more likely to display disruptive behaviours which required specialist care. Residential staff were expected to be highly adept at supporting children with 'behaviour problems'.[699] The increasing importance of professional training was also evidenced in the job advertisements, which in turn reflected the increasing number of people graduating with social work degrees.[700] In 1966, the Sparkbrook Association, which ran several child welfare initiatives in Birmingham, observed that 'voluntary work comes with a good heart ... but sometimes without the necessary skill ... [O]ne can hinder rather than help with the best will in the world'.[701] Training was not just valued. By the 1960s, untrained staff were viewed as a risk to efforts to support vulnerable groups.

As social work professionals placed a greater emphasis on developing a trained workforce understandings of how best to support looked after children began to change. It had long been recognized that foster care, if managed badly, could prove to be the most damaging form of

[699] KA: WC/W/A1568/Box 41/4, Association of Children's Officer, 'The Training of Residential Child Care Staff', 1965, p. 2.
[700] 'Looking after Children in Trouble', *The Times*, 28 February 1963, p. 7.
See, for example: 'Job Advertisements', *The Guardian*, 6 June 1969, p. 16.
[701] BA: MS1914/1/5/1/1, The Future Casework Needs of Sparkbrook, September 1966.

care.[702] As a result of increased concern for the psychological wellbeing of children, the early 1960s witnessed an expansion in the number of people criticising foster care. In 1963, the journalist Janet Hitchman, who had herself been brought up in care, published two articles in the *Observer*. In the latter of these articles she reported 'I am not madly in love with boarding out … Nothing I have seen has convinced me that boarding out today is the panacea some would have us believe'. The article quoted several children who had very negative fostering experiences, and contrasted these with the consistency presented by a children's home. The editor acknowledged that 'Hitchman's preference for homes as against fostering cuts right across accepted views today', and the article provoked a considerable response from readers, some of whose letters were published the following weeks.[703] A review of the letters published indicates that Hitchman was not alone in her concern about foster care. Of the 22 letters of reply that were printed, 17 stated a clear preference for either foster care or residential homes.[704] Ten were opposed to foster care, while seven voiced a preference for fostering. Critics of foster care represented a wide range of backgrounds, from school teachers and a child guidance worker to a former foster mother.

The harm caused to children when foster-care arrangements broke down was noted in many of the letters. One correspondent cited the findings of a Home Office study which found that 25% of foster children, included as part of a survey, had experienced four or more foster homes and 17% were forced to move, not because of their own difficulties, because the foster parents were later found to be unsuitable.[705] In response to these findings, some organisations

[702] See, for example: *Sixteenth Annual Report of the Ministry of Health 1934-35*, 228.
[703] J. Hitchman, 'Life with Aunty', *The Observer*, 27 October 1963, p. 29.
[704] 'Letters: Foster-Home or an Institution?', *The Observer*, 3 November 1963, p. 33; 'Letters: In Our Care', *The Observer*, 10 November 1963, p. 33.
[705] 'Letters: In Our Care'.

took active steps to try and reduce the likelihood of foster arrangements breaking down. In 1966, Dr Barnardo's began to arrange 'meetings between foster parents ... where matters can be discussed with a professional child care worker' to reduce the number of foster care arrangements that broke down.[706] While in the early 1950s the Home Office suggested that children be trained to help them settle into foster care, by the 1960s it was recognised that adults could be responsible for the breakdown in foster arrangements.[707]

While Hitchman's critiques of foster care, in 1963, were thought to 'cut right across accepted views', by the end of the decade they were being shared by a growing number of professionals.[708] The topic of long-term foster care was examined by three different research groups over the course of the decade.[709] Writing in 1969, Geoffrey Banner, who worked as a superintendent at a large children's community, argued that the reforms of the immediate post-war period were characterized by 'the desire to seek a panacea be it in fostering or family groups', however 'subsequent experience suggests that neither of these features was totally adequate nor indeed realistic'. Banner was pleased to report that 'we have at last realized that there is no best form of care' and instead child care professionals should seek to 'place the right child in the right place at the right time'. His faith in the contribution that residential care could offer partly arose because of the 'rapid development in the field of training', which meant that residential workers were now better prepared to support 'seriously disturbed and damaged children'.[710] Indeed, the Curtis Report had emphasized that 'some institutional provision is indispensable' and that 'the employment of fully qualified

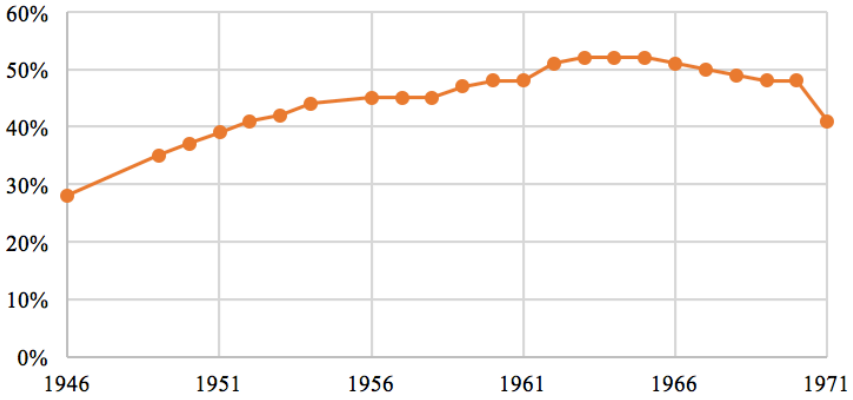
[706] 'Ever-Changing Role', *The Times*, 15 July 1966, p. 18.
[707] KA: WC/W/A1586/Box 41/29, County Councils Association, Report of the special Sub-Committee on Children's Estimate, 1 January 1953, p. 2.
[708] B. Khan, 'Residential Task in Child Care', *British Hospital Journal and Social Service Review*, April 1969, p. 649.
[709] E. Younghusband, *Social Work in Britain, 1950-1975: A Follow-up Study*, vol. 1 (London, 1978), p. 63.
[710] G. Banner, 'Residential Care Comes of Age', *British Hospital Journal and Social Service Review*, October 1969, pp. 1950–1951.

and trained staff is … essential if the general standard of child care is to be improved'.[711] Banner's thinking was not new but it emerged following several decades in which residential care had been presented as an inferior option.[712]

A decline in the early post-war enthusiasm for fostering children is shown in the statistics collected by the Home Office, detailed in Figure 6, below. To date, historians have devoted much of their attention to explaining the dramatic increase in the proportion of looked after children, in England and Wales, who were boarded out, from 28% in 1946 to 45% ten years later.[713] Much less attention has been devoted to explaining the equally dramatic decline, from 52% in 1965 to 41% by 1971. In theory, this decline could be accounted for by a decline in the total number of children in care, so that the cases that remained were more serious and thought to be less eligible for foster care. In fact, the decline in the percentage of boarding out cases coincided with an increase in absolute number of cases - between 1965 and 1971 the number of children in care increased by 30%. Changing understandings of professional best practice had a very direct impact on the types of care given to looked after children.

[711] *Training in Child Care: Interim Report of the Care of Children Committee*, Cmnd 6760 (London, 1946), p. 2.
[712] KA: WC/W/A1568/Box 42/9, Central Training Council in Child Care, 1st Report of the Study Group on Fieldwork Training, March 1970, p. 13.
[713] Jackson, 'Looking after Children Away from Home: Past and Present', 13; Parker, *Change and Continuity in Children's Services*, 14–15.

Figure 6: Percentage of looked after children who were boarded out, England and Wales[714]



If the 1950s were concerned with providing looked after children with care arrangements which better replicated the positive qualities associated with the family, the 1960s witnessed a more concerted effort to keep birth families together. This change was found among both state and voluntary groups. Writing in 1970, Pat Healy, *The Times*' social services correspondent, noted that 'nearly half the children under the care of Barnardo's are living in their own homes and the emphasis is on keeping the family together' and that 'preventing families reaching the point where children have to be taken away from their homes and into care is rapidly becoming the most important side of its work'.[715] The move away from foster care, towards the end of the decade, was preceded and subsequently accompanied by a greater emphasis on helping parents to retain custody of their children.

Preventing homelessness

Against this background, the Ingleby Committee, established in 1956, was formed to investigate the services provided to children who came before the courts, either as a result of being charged with an offence, or because they were thought to be at risk of harm.[716] The

[714] Esposti et al., 'ICoverT', Children in Care Statistics.
[715] P. Healy, 'The Changing Role of Dr Barnardo's', *The Times*, 25 September 1970, p. 10.
[716] J. Packman, *The Child's Generation: Child Care Policy from Curtis to Houghton* (Oxford, 1975), pp. 62–63.

value of the family was a central working assumption of the committee, whose findings were eventually published in 1960.[717] State intervention, the report argued, should seek to work with families because they offered 'the best upbringing to the child' and 'there can never be a complete substitute for the good parent'.[718] Indeed, the report held that local authority efforts to 'prevent or forestall the suffering of children through neglect in their own homes' could not be considered 'in isolation from … arrangements for helping families'.[719]

Building on the findings of the Ingleby report, the 1963 Children and Young Persons Act embraced the calls for a positive approach to preventive work. Section 1 of the Act required that local authorities take a more active role, not only to prevent the need to receive children into care but, in promoting their welfare:

> It shall be the duty of every local authority to make available such advice, guidance and assistance as may promote the welfare of children by diminishing the need to receive children into or keep them in care under the Children Act 1948 … any provisions made by a local authority under this subsection may, if the local authority think fit, include provision for giving assistance in kind or, in exceptional circumstances, in cash.[720]

Parliamentarians often considered the first section to be, in the words of the Home Secretary of the time, Henry Brooke MP, 'far and away the most important Clause'. The significance that Brooke attributed to this section arose from his belief that 'it should enable a large number of families to be kept together who would otherwise be broken up'.[721] These remarks recognized that families could be at risk of being forced apart through no fault of their own, while reaffirming the importance of the family unit. Indeed, the Home Office later noted that:

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[717] 'New Procedure Urged For Juvenile Courts', *The Times*, 28 October 1960, p. 4.
[718] *Report of the Committee on Children and Young Persons*, Cmnd. 1191 (London, 1960), p. 8.
[719] Ibid., 10.
[720] *Children and Young Persons Act*, 1963, sec. 1(1).
[721] Hansard HC Debate vol 681 col 292 (15 July 1963).

'Section 1 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1963 gives statutory recognition to the principle that the best place for a child is with his family'.[722]

Brooke's hopes for the Act were well placed, as shown by the growth in the number of families supported in their own homes. By July 1964, Oxfordshire Council had assisted more than 650 children under section 1 of the Act, a figure that rose to more than 830 by May 1966. Across England and Wales, in the year ending March 1970, more than 350,000 children were referred to children's departments, of which 42,000 were admitted to care and 220,000 were helped in their own homes.[723] These figures were accompanied by an increase in the amount spent on direct cash grants, under second 1 of the 1963 Act, from £88,000 during the financial year 1965-66 to £261,000 for the year 1968-69.[724] By the 1960s children supervised in their own homes vastly outnumbered those 'in care', for which the 1963 Act played an important role.[725] The shift revealed by these figures reflected a clear and concerted effort on the part of children's officers to support families. Writing in 1968, the journalist Michael Dixon noted that 'the first aim [of child care officers] is to keep the family together'. What's more, 'the efforts to keep families together are succeeding: only about a third of the children whom children's departments and other bodies help are eventually taken into care'.[726]

Housing shortages increased the opportunities to support families under section 1 of the Act. As part of the 're-discovery of poverty' which occurred in the 1960s, a growing number of

[722] Home Office, *Report on the Work of the Children's Department, 1964-1966*, Paper Number: 603 (London, 1967), p. 1.
[723] Packman, *The Child's Generation*, 68.
[724] *Report on the Work of the Children's Department, 1967-1969* (London, 1970), p. 5.
[725] Packman, *The Child's Generation*, 68–69, 72.
[726] M. Dixon, 'Child Care Officers Aim at Togetherness', *The Guardian*, 16 January 1968, p. 13.

organizations highlighted the scale of the nation's housing problems.[727] This work complements existing histories which have discussed the formation of new organisations which aimed to support those affected by the newly discovered poverty.[728] Children were often presented as the victims of housing shortages, and their plight was frequently referenced when calling for change. In 1961, the writer Jeremy Sandford, who had spent much of the previous decade producing short documentaries for the BBC, began to investigate the living conditions of people affected by the 'housing crisis'. The link between housing and children's services was made clear to readers of an *Observer* article he published:

> Families who've [stayed at LCC run hostels] the longest are asked to leave. That means that they go out with their children, try to sleep in a park or station waiting-room and are picked up by the police. Their children are taken away from them as being in "need of due care and protection". The break-up of a family by society is complete.[729]

Several years later, in 1966, the BBC broadcast the drama *Cathy Come Home,* which was based on a play written by Sandford and directed by Ken Loach. The programme focused on the plight of homeless families and drew explicit links with homelessness and child removal. Social services were depicted as unfeeling and unhelpful. In the final harrowing scene, social workers forcibly remove Cathy's children. By coincidence, the housing charity Shelter was established just a few days after the programme was first shown. A year later, in 1967, the homelessness charity Crisis was formed as a direct result of the public reaction to the film.[730] In 1968, Des Wilson the founding director of Shelter, noted that 'five thousand children will spend tonight in State institutions, cut off from their parents because they cannot find a

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[727] N. Timmins, *The Five Giants: A Biography of the Welfare State* (London, 2001), pp. 256–258.
[728] R. Lowe, 'The Rediscovery of Poverty and the Creation of the Child Poverty Action Group, 1962–68', *Contemporary Record*, 9:3 (1995), pp. 1962–68.
[729] J. Sandford, 'Families Without a Home', *The Observer*, 17 September 1961, p. 33.
See also: 'Obituary: Jeremy Sandford', *The Guardian*, 15 May 2003.
[730] S. Fitzpatrick and H. Pawson, 'Fifty Years since Cathy Come Home: Critical Reflections on the UK Homelessness Safety Net', *International Journal of Housing Policy*, 16:4 (2016), p. 543.

decent home'. The importance of the family was presented as one of the overriding arguments for prioritizing housing: 'we still regard the family as the essential unit in our society, and the home is the basis for family life'. The National Bureau for Cooperation in Child Care also noted the link between homelessness and the numbers of children in care: 'a systematic and determined attack upon the problem of homelessness could, in a very short time result in a dramatic reduction in the number of children living in public care'.[731] The problems associated with homelessness were closely associated with what were presented as entirely preventable reasons for taking children into care.

The importance of keeping birth families together mean that Children's Officers often organised preventative and rehabilitative services for homeless families. In 1966, Westmorland's Children's Officer found that following the 1963 Act 'there was a tendency … for children's committees to assume responsibility for providing accommodation for homeless families in addition to try[ing] to prevent the break up of families'.[732] Somerset Council adopted this decision because many homeless families had 'problems which led to their homelessness and [were] therefore in need of rehabilitation before they [could] be rehoused'.[733] This opinion was shared by Westmorland's County Welfare Officer, who reported that 'generally 90% of cases dealt with have been rendered homeless owing to difficulties created by themselves'.[734] The moralising judgement implicit within this

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[731] D. Wilson, 'Abolish Slums', *The Guardian*, 5 October 1968, p. 8.
See also: D. Wilson, 'The Housing Scandal', *The Observer*, 30 August 1970, p. 17.
[732] KA: WC/W/A1568/Box 42/2, Joint Sub-Committee, Emergency Accommodation for Homeless Families, 20 July 1966.
For a discussion of later moves to reverse this trend, see: Packman, *The Child's Generation*, 166.
[733] KA: WC/W/A1568/Box 42/2, Somerset County Council, Children's Committee, Accommodation for Homeless Families, 1966.
[734] KA: WC/W/A1568/Box 42/2, Memorandum by County Welfare Officer, Accommodation for Homeless Families, 1966.
These changes were later halted at the recommendation of the Seebohm Report, which advised that provision of accommodation for homeless families should be the responsibility of the housing department, see: *Report on the Work of the Children's Department, 1967-1969*, 10.

observation bears a striking similarity to the attitudes of late nineteenth century Charity Organisation Society workers.[735]

The value attributed to the family was also shown through discussions regarding how best to support children at risk of being removed from their parents' custody.[736] In 1965 the Labour government produced a White Paper, entitled *The Child, the Family and the Young Offender*. This was introduced as part of the government's commitment, as set out in the Queen's Speech, to 'make more effective the means of sustaining the family' and reflected the party's belief, as set out in its 1964 general election manifesto, that 'drastic reforms are now needed in our major social services'.[737] The White Paper asserted that 'many social problems ... can be traced back to inadequacy or breakdown in the family. The right place to begin, therefore, is with the family'.[738] To better meet children's need, the White Paper proposed that local authorities be empowered to form 'local family councils' which would seek to 'deal with each case as far as possible in consultation and agreement with the parents'.[739] The councils would comprise 'social workers of the children's service and other persons selected for their understanding and experience of children'. Together, the council members would have the power to determine whether a 'child was in need of care, protection or control'.[740] These proposals were later dropped, in part, because it was felt that they would not provide families with the necessary legal safeguards, which were offered by the juvenile courts.[741] Although the model of family councils was not introduced, its inclusion in the White Paper supports

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[735] M. Peel, *Miss Cutler and the Case of the Resurrected Horse: Social Work and the Story of Poverty in America, Australia, and Britain* (London, 2012), p. 6.
[736] Jones, 'Children Acts 1948-2008', 43.
[737] I. Dale, ed., 'Labour Party General Election Manifesto, 1964: The New Britain', *Labour Party General Election Manifestos, 1900-1997*, (London, 2000), p. 114.
[738] *The Child, The Family and The Young Offender*, Cmnd 2742 (London, 1965), p. 3.
[739] Ibid., 5.
[740] Ibid., 6.
[741] 'In Need Of Care', *The Times*, 1 May 1968, p. 11; *Children in Trouble*, Cmnd 3601 (London, 1968), p. 3. For further discussion of the Government's decision to move away from the proposals contained within the White Paper, see: Jones, 'Children Acts 1948-2008', 44.

John Welshman's observation that by the mid-1960s the narrative of problem families, which emerged after the Second World War, was waning in influence among professional social workers.[742]

Although family councils were not introduced, respect towards the family was evident in reforms passed several years later. In December 1965, the Chairman of Barclays Bank, Frederic Seebohm, was appointed to oversee a committee tasked with reviewing 'the organisation and responsibilities of the local authority personal social services in England and Wales and to consider what changes are desirable to secure an effective family service'.[743] The report's main recommendation was that local authority social services – children's departments, welfare services, education welfare services and child guidance services, home help services, mental health services, adult training centres, day nurseries, and housing related social work – should be reorganized into a unified department.[744] An editorial in the *Daily Mirror* described the proposal as 'the first step towards a National Help Service', while social workers were largely supportive.[745] The substantive recommendations, including wholesale reorganization of social services, were later enacted as part of the 1970 Local Authority Social Services Bill.[746] Central to the Report upon which the 1970 Act was based was a faith in the value of the family. In fact, in the early 1970s, the radical social work movement Case Con, criticized the reforms for placing too much attention on the shortcomings of families, at the expense of the wider social context.[747] While the reforms

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[742] Welshman, 'In Search of the "Problem Family"', 463–464.
[743] *Report of the Committee on Local Authority and Allied Personal Social Services*, Cmnd 3703 (London, 1968), p. 11.
For discussion of the background to the report see: Packman, *The Child's Generation*, 158.
[744] *Report of the Committee on Local Authority and Allied Personal Social Services*, 11.
[745] 'The National Help Service...'; Packman, *The Child's Generation*, 162.
See also: 'Social Workers Lobby MPs over Seebohm', *British Hospital Journal and Social Service Review*, 1969, p. 1244.
[746] Hansard HC Debate vol 796 col 1406 (26 February 1970).
[747] R. Bailey and M. Brake, eds., 'Appendix: Case Con Manifesto', *Radical Social Work*, (London, 1975), p. 145.

contained within the 1970 Act have subsequently been criticized for diluting the expertise which had developed over the previous years, at the time the reforms were envisaged as a means of improving the services provided to all sections of society, by working through the family.[748]

Public Engagement

The public were thought to have a vital role to play in supporting professionals to identify children living with families who needed assistance. The sensitivity that the Government displayed towards public opinion during the Second World was replaced by a desire to ensure that public optimism in the power of the state was fulfilled in the post-war period.

Perseverance, Press and Politics

The actions of Lady Allen of Hurtwood have often been credited with stimulating public demand for what became the Curtis Committee. Lady Allen spent the interwar years as a landscape architect. Following the death of husband in 1939, she devoted her energy to the promotion of landscape architecture and children's welfare.[749] Lady Allen's actions are an example of how well connected individuals could harness the power of the press to mobilize wider public opinion in support of reforms to children's welfare. During the war, Lady Allen spoke at meetings around the country in her capacity as chair of the Nursery School Association of Great Britain (1942-8). These talks made her more aware of the impoverished conditions of looked after children. Her initial observations led her to visit many residential

For a discussion of Case Con, see: J. Weinstein, 'Case Con and Radical Social Work in the 1970s: The Impatient Revolutionaries', in M. Lavalette, ed., *Radical Social Work Today: Social Work at the Crossroads*, (Bristol, 2011).

[748] For discussion of the critiques of the 1970 Act see: Parton, 'The Natural History of Child Abuse', 441; J. Dickens, 'Social Work in England at a Watershed—As Always: From the Seebohm Report to the Social Work Task Force', *The British Journal of Social Work*, 41:1 (2011), p. 29.

[749] H. Moggridge, 'Allen [Née Gill], Marjory, Lady Allen of Hurtwood (1897–1976)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2007.

schools and caused her to conclude that 'it was time the abuses were known and talked about and seen as a public responsibility'. In March 1944, Lady Allen circulated a memorandum on the need for an official inquiry.[750] When this failed to materialise she wrote to *The Time*s. On 15 July 1944, after the paper had carried out its own investigations, the letter was published. Lady Allen began her correspondence by acknowledging the 'thoughtful consideration being given to many fundamental problems [associated with] reconstruction'. She was concerned, therefore, to find that children in the care of the state had been 'entirely forgotten' and called for a 'public inquiry [to examine] … whether public and charitable organisations are, in fact, enabling the children [within their care] to lead full and happy lives'.[751]

By the end of August, *The Times* had published more than 60 letters of reply. Lady Allen herself received more than 600 responses.[752] Not all the correspondence was supportive. A minority accused Lady Allen of basing her 'judgement on Dickens's writing rather than any wide personal experiences' and insisted that there was no need for an inquiry.[753] Many, however, agreed with Lady Allen's call for action and when Parliament reconvened after the summer recess, 158 MPs demanded a public inquiry. The Government granted this four weeks later.[754] While Lady Allen published her letter in *The Times*, a newspaper of Britain's elites, her concerns were discussed much more widely and captured the attention of newspapers which were read by a cross section of classes.[755] In February 1945, *The Daily*

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[750] A copy of the memorandum can be found at: NA: MH 102/1289

[751] M. Allen, 'Children In "Homes"', *The Times*, 15 July 1944, p. 5.
See also: Martin, 'Child Neglect: A Problem of Social Administration', 105.

[752] Field, *Blood, Sweat, and Toil*, 191–192.

[753] M. Allen and M. Nicholson, *Memoirs of an Uneducated Lady: Lady Allen of Hurtwood* (London, 1975), pp. 180–182.
See, for example: A. G. Evershed, 'Wards of the Public', *The Times*, 19 July 1944, p. 5.

[754] S. J. Haley, *The Formation of Public Opinion* (London, 1958), p. 11.
For an overview of wartime discussions of how best to support children unable to return to their homes at the end of the war, see: Parker, 'The Gestation of Reform: The Children Act of 1948'.

[755] See, for example: 'Brickbats and Bouquets: Homisy, Sweet Homist?', *Daily Mail*, 21 August 1945, p. 2; 'Brickbats and Bouquets: Who Goes Home (and When)', *Daily Mail*, 14 August 1945, p. 2.

Mail published an editorial which argued that the cruelty reported by Lady Allen was being conducted 'in our name' since 'the homes where these brutalities occur are for the most part owned and run by local authorities representing the citizens themselves'.[756] As local authorities expanded their services, the public were expected to take a greater interest in the quality of support provided to children.

When considering the influence of Lady Allen's letter, it is important to be aware of the popularity of newspapers' letter pages. These were repeatedly cited as among the most well read newspaper sections. In 1933 a survey by the London Press Exchange found that letters were the most viewed feature in the mass circulation dailies. Likewise, a post-war survey by Mass Observation found that 'Letters to the Editor are always popular, whether in *The Times* or the *Daily Mirror*, as the reader then feels that he is actively assisting the newspaper to present its (and his) view'.[757]

Lady Allen's contemporaries and historians have credited her actions with 'initiating the demand for an inquiry into the conditions of "children deprived of a normal home life"'.[758] Closer study, however, reveals that Lady Allen was not the first person to publicly raise concerns about the treatment of children during the latter stages of the war. In March 1944, several months before Lady Allen's letter had been published, Mary Stocks, wrote to *The Manchester Guardian* to voice her concerns regarding 'the treatment of destitute children'.[759]

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[756] 'In Your Name', *The Daily Mail*, 3 February 1945, p. 2.
[757] Mass Observation, File Report 2557, *Attitudes to Newspapers*, January 1948, p. 42.
[758] For contemporary commentaries see: K. Lindsay, 'The Curtis Report', *The Times*, 23 October 1946, p. 5.; Mass Observation, Topic Collection. 'Beveridge Social Surveys 1942 & 1947: 53-3-B, Proposals for New Social Services', 1947, p. 95.
For historical assessments see: Field, *Blood, Sweat, and Toil*, 191–192.
It is important to be aware, however, that prior to Lady Allen's letter being published government officials were already discussing the breakup of the Poor Law in relation to the care of children, see: NA: MH/102/1378, Letter to Sir Alexander Maxwell from Sir John Maude, 9 May 1944.
[759] Stocks, 'The Lost Children'.

Stocks was well qualified to write on the welfare of children. She had previously participated in the Manchester University Settlement movement before becoming Secretary of the London Council of Social Services.[760] Stocks shared Lady Allen's concern that no single department had responsibility for looked after children and believed that amidst unprecedented 'popular interest in and concern for the social services [children formerly cared for by the Poor Law] seemed to have disappeared from view.' Stocks closed her letter by calling for a departmental committee 'to examine the care being provided to such children'. Although the letter attracted the attention of the Home Office, unlike Lady Allen's correspondence Stocks' letter failed to provoke a wider public response.[761] In the months that followed *The Manchester Guardian* published a single letter of reply. Its author criticised Stocks for failing to acknowledge the work done to support destitute children but welcomed her suggestion of an interdepartmental committee on the care of children.[762]

Differences between the newspapers approached provide the best explanation for the discrepancy in the reception of the women's letter. Both women enjoyed a privileged social status. Lady Allen could rely upon the support of high profile figures, including George Bernard Shaw and the Home Secretary, Herbert Morrison, as well as her earlier work as a member of a Ministry of Health Advisory Committee on the Welfare of Mothers and Young Children.[763] Meanwhile, Stocks served as the Principal of Westfield College and was a close friend and ally of Archbishop William Temple.[764] The influence of the *Manchester Guardian*, in which Stocks' letter appeared, was primarily felt in its Northern hinterland. On

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[760] D. Sutherland, 'Stocks [Née Brinton], Mary Danvers, Baroness Stocks (1891–1975)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004.
[761] An annotated copy of the letter can found in: MH 102/1293,
[762] H. A. Derry, 'The Lost Children', *The Manchester Guardian*, 3 April 1944, p. 4.
[763] Allen and Nicholson, *Memoirs of an Uneducated Lady*, chaps 13–14.
See, for example: Evershed, 'Wards of the Public'.
[764] Sutherland, 'Stocks [Née Brinton], Mary Danvers, Baroness Stocks (1891–1975)'.

the other hand, *The Times*, which published Lady Allen's letter, represented a much more establishment paper and commanded a wider national readership. Reflecting many years later, Lady Allen concurred with Sir Hugh Greene's assessment that:

> A letter to *The Times* is … like a large stone thrown into a pond. The ripples go on spreading for a long time, the wild fowl are alarmed and rise from the rushes, and soon the whole countryside is alive with the beat of wings and the bleats and moos of the livestock.[765]

While Lady Allen's stone was not the only object thrown into the pond, her decision to publish her letter in *The Times* contributed to it having a greater impact that Stocks' earlier correspondence.

The importance of public interest in children's welfare was repeatedly noted. Whom this public comprised, however, was rarely stated explicitly. Indeed, as we shall see, while people agreed on the importance of keeping children safe, they often disagreed about how this should be achieved. Public concern for children's wellbeing was thought to be essential to keeping the nation's children safe. This argument challenges earlier suggestions that Labour's post-war reforms were 'predicated on the continued existence of popular passivity' and that 'the party leadership had no wish to encourage the public to take a more active role' in the political system.[766] Study of welfare services reveals that Labour politicians wanted the public to play a proactive role in keeping children safe. Speaking in March 1945, the Labour peer Charles Latham, who served as Leader of the LCC from 1940 to 1947, argued that 'all of us want the conscience of the nation to be stirred in the matter of dealing with children, and

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[765] Allen and Nicholson, *Memoirs of an Uneducated Lady*, 179.

[766] S. Fielding, '"Don't Know and Don't Care": Popular Political Attitudes in Labour's Britain, 1945-51', in N. Tiratsoo, ed., *The Attlee Years*, (London, 1991), p. 107.
See also: M. Daunton, 'Payment and Participation: Welfare and State-Formation in Britain 1900-1951', *Past & Present*, 150 (1996), p. 209.
Fielding has since adapted his position, and acknowledged that Labour sought to 'encourage initiative and endeavor' on the part of the nation's citizens: S. Fielding, 'Labourism in the 1940s', *Twentieth Century British History*, 3:2 (1992), p. 146.

especially unfortunate children'.[767] Lord Latham's reference to 'unfortunate children' is consistent with the belief that children suffered because of being separated from their families. In 1948, Lulie Shaw, a trained social worker, argued that 'legislation, without a change in public attitude' risked making matters worse if it served to 'soothe the troubled public conscience into inactivity again'. Implicit in Shaw's remarks was the belief that public awareness of children's vulnerability had been heightened but that this public consciousness risked fading away.[768] These remarks are even more significant given the extent to which the Children Act has been credited with marking a new age of professionalization. At the same time as the government was developing a new social work training regime, designed to foster a new generation of expert children's officers, the public was viewed as vital to the success of child protection efforts. These insights nuance the work of Jennifer Crane, who has suggested that prior to the 1960s cruelty to children was 'seen as primarily the responsibility of voluntary societies and philanthropists'.[769] Prior to 1960, policy makers repeatedly argued that the public had an important role to play in ensuring that children who had been placed in care were properly looked after. Much like definitions of 'the public', the mechanisms by which people were expected to hold care providers to account was rarely set out in any detail.

Those who called for the public to take a greater interest could draw encouragement from strong evidence that the public were concerned about the safety of young people. The findings of the Curtis Report, which was published in October 1946, were described as having 'touched the heart and consciousness of the nation'. The *Daily Mirror*, whose coverage focused on the poor conditions discovered in many of the homes inspected by the Committee, received more than 200 letters from readers in the days after the report was

[767] Hansard HL Debate vol 135 col 859 (29 March 1945).
See also: Martin, 'Child Neglect: A Problem of Social Administration', 112.
[768] Shaw, 'Children Without Homes', 10; Kanter, *Face to Face with Children*, 12–14.
[769] Crane, '"The Bones Tell a Story the Child Is Too Young or Too Frightened to Tell"', 769.

published.[770] The editor of the *Daily Express* was confident that Parliament would introduce the reforms called for by 'public conscience'.[771] Several weeks later, the Conservative MP Sir Godfrey Nicholson called upon the government to act quickly so as 'to cash in on the uneasiness created by th[e Curtis] Report'.[772] The tone adopted by the Nicholson indicated both the public's interest in the report, but also the risk that such concern could, amidst the disruption of post-war reconstruction, gradually be lost. When the Children Bill was eventually debated in Parliament, the Labour MP Charles Royle noted that the findings of the Curtis Committee had 'stirred public opinion as it had never been stirred before about the children of our country'.[773] Studies of post-war Britain have often drawn attention to public interest in the Beveridge Report. Mass Observation famously found that shortly after the report had been published 'as many as 92% questioned at random knew about the Report'.[774] While similar studies were not produced for the Curtis Report, qualitative analysis reveals that Beveridge's proposals were not alone in capturing the public's interest. Study of child protection reveals that the sense of 'social vulnerability' that Nick Hayes has suggested characterized the immediate postwar years extended beyond economic concerns and encompassed the care provided to children and young people.[775]

Engaging the Public

Press reports of government committees comprised just one of many ways in which the public were likely to learn about child abuse. Over a series of days in November 1946, the *Daily Express* published a specially prepared version of the play 'No Room at the Inn'. The

[770] G. McCarthy, 'They Called It Home', *The Daily Mirror*, 29 October 1946, p. 2.
[771] 'Opinion'.
[772] Hansard HC Debate vol 430 col 778-779 (19 November 1946).
[773] Hansard HC Debate vol 452 col 1898 (28 June 1948).
[774] 'Popular Reaction to the Beveridge Report', *Mass Observation*, January 1943, p. 3.
[775] N. Hayes, 'Did We Really Want a National Health Service? Hospitals, Patients and Public Opinions before 1948', *The English Historical Review*, 127:526 (2012), p. 640.

play was written by Joan Temple and opened at the Embassy Theatre, in London, on 10 July 1945. It was later adapted for the *Daily Express* by the screen writer Guy Morgan. The paper's rationale for publishing the story - '[to] reach the hearts of our people more poignantly than any Government document could ever do' – suggests that official reports were not thought to be the best means of capturing the attention of tabloid readers.[776] Days later, the paper remarked upon its ability to 'present to an audience of millions a specially prepared version of the play', reminding readers and advertisers alike of its ability to reach large sections of public opinion.[777] The story, which was delivered through a serious of flashbacks from the perspectives of different characters, concerned a group of evacuee children who were abused at the hands of their hostess. The first instalment was issued to coincide with the publication of a Home Office circular which drew local authorities' attention to the findings of the Curtis Report. The play reminded readers of the important role that they could play in stopping child abuse. The *Daily Express* was not the only organization which saw a value in presenting information about the role that the public could play in helping to care for children in a more emotive and accessible form. Several years later, the Association of Child Care Officers (ACCO), which was formed in response to the reforms contained within the 1948 Children Act, persuaded the BBC to arrange the placement of a foster child in the radio serial *The Archers*, alongside offering advice on this.[778] Although it is not clear what plot line was used to introduce the foster child, the ACCO's actions are a further example of the varied ways in which the public encountered the issue of child protection.

A Divided Public

[776] 'How Long Must the Children Weep?', *Daily Express*, 23 November 1946, p. 1.
[777] 'No Room at the Inn', *Daily Express*, 25 November 1946, p. 2.
[778] A. Sackville, *Professional Associations and Social Work: The Association of Child Care Officers*, 1988, p. 13.

A longstanding debate among historians of modern British politics concerns the extent to which the post-war period was characterised by a period of consensus.[779] Most recently, Richard Toye has shown that the term's political use can be traced back to the 1940s.[780] Study of child protection, whose implementation was debated beyond Parliament, enables historians to open the issue of consensus to wider social matters. This approach complements recent work, by scholars such as Roger Davidson, Gayle Davis and Claire Langhamer, who have argued that significant social reforms, such as the abolition of capital punishment and the decriminalization of homosexuality, were the result of expert analysis overriding public opinion.[781] Matthew Grimley has noted that histories of permissive reform have often considered the actions of pressure groups and cast official bodies as wholly reactive, when in fact they could be well ahead of public opinion.[782] Study of child protection provides historians with an alternative perspective from which to consider the extent to which there a consensus between child professionals, who were empowered by the government, and those they served. While policy makers emphasised the importance of the public's support, the tabloid press undermined the public's faith in official child protection procedures.

A broad consensus existed among policy makers, practitioners and the public regarding the importance of the latter's role in reporting concerns that they had about children's wellbeing. In 1952, with the framework established by the Children and Young Persons Act in place, Conservative MP Norman Cole argued that 'however much legislation we have on the matter

[779] Lowe, 'The Second World War, Consensus, and the Foundation of the Welfare State'.
[780] R. Toye, 'From "Consensus" to "Common Ground": The Rhetoric of the Postwar Settlement and Its Collapse', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 48:1 (2013), pp. 3–23.
[781] For the role of experts in the decriminalisation of homosexuality, see Davidson, Roger, and Gayle Davis. "'A Field for Private Members': The Wolfenden Committee and Scottish Homosexual Law Reform, 1950–67." Twentieth Century British History 15, no. 2 (January 1, 2004): 174–201.
For the role of experts in the decision to remove capital punishment, see: Langhamer, Claire. "'The Live Dynamic Whole of Feeling and Behavior': Capital Punishment and the Politics of Emotion, 1945–1957." Journal of British Studies 51, no. 2 (April 2012): 419-420
[782] M. Grimley, 'Law, Morality and Secularisation: The Church of England and the Wolfenden Report, 1954–1967', *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 60:4 (2009), pp. 725–726.

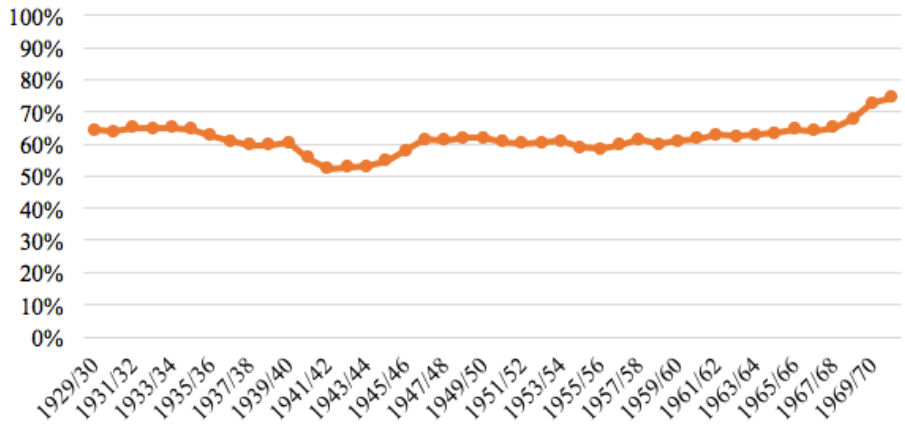
of child cruelty and neglect, it is of little use unless we have the complete co-operation of members of the public'.[783] The same year the Children and Young Persons (Amendment) Act was passed into law. This enlarged the definition of children 'in need of care or protection', to include cases of neglect that were not in any sense 'willful'. The Act also placed on local authorities the duty to investigate any cases where any information was received 'suggesting' a child was 'in need of care or protection'. The Government circular which accompanied the Act noted that 'members of the public, who are the principal source of information in matters of ill-treatment or neglect, are sometimes uncertain to whom they should report … local authorities may wish to consider means of making known the address at which information may be received'.[784] Now that local authorities were required to investigate reports that children were being harmed, it was even more important that the public, who were relied upon to provide information, knew who to contact.

The importance of the public to child protection workers predated the post-war reforms. As shown in Figure 7, below, in every year between 1930-1970 the public comprised the NSPCC's primary source of referrals. Following a slight decline during the Second World War, public referrals consistently contributed to around 60% of all new cases (representing between 19,000 and 26,000 cases a year), gradually rising to 73% by 1970.[785] While these figures indicate that people were prepared to report cases, it is important not to infer too much from the rise experienced in the late 1960s; because these figures relate to the percentage of new referrals, the increase could be accounted for by other referral routes, such as those from police and schools, declining as professionals choose to refer cases to statutory

[783] Hansard HC Debate vol 501 col 880 (23 May 1952).
[784] LMA: LCC/CM/M/46/5, Home Office Circular No. 208/1952, Children and Young Persons (Amendment) Act, 19 September 1952.
See also: Hansard HC Debate vol 501 col 881 (23 May 1952).
[785] Esposti et al., 'ICoverT', pt. NSPCC Database, v.1.

social workers rather than NSPCC inspectors. Evidence from individual branches, however, shows that NSPCC staff attributed a rise in cases to an increase in the public's willingness to report them.[786]

Figure 7: Proportion of new cases referred to the NSPCC by the public[787]



Tabloid news stories of child neglect cases often emphasized the important role played by members of the public in bringing the perpetrators of child abuse to justice, thereby overlooking the role of professionals. In 1951 the *Daily Express* drew attention to the story of Miss Teresa Cremmins, who, a headline explained, had 'ask[ed] questions and save[d] two little girls'. The *Daily Mirror* also covered the story, devoting its front and back pages to detailing how Miss Teresa Cremmins' 'stroll on [sic] prom ended nightmare for 2 children'. Both headlines emphasized the ways in which ordinary actions – asking questions and walking along a promenade – could result in extraordinary outcomes. Readers were shown that by remaining vigilant they could help to save the lives of vulnerable children. The papers documented how Miss Teresa Cremmins noticed bruises on two girls, aged 10 and 12. The defensive behaviour of the girls' foster mother caused Miss Cremmins, who had never meet the children before, to become suspicious. On discovering that the woman had provided her

[786] 'Child Neglect Cases Doubled in Three Years', *The Guardian*, 9 February 1963, p. 12.
[787] Esposti et al., 'ICoverT', NSPCC Database.

with a false address, she reported the matter to an LCC welfare officer, along with the name of the school provided to her by one of the girls. When the Welfare Officer arrived at the girls' house he found the eldest child unconscious on a blood-stained bed. The case subsequently came to trial and the LCC registered foster mother was sentenced to three years' imprisonment after pleading guilty to 12 counts of GBH.

The vital role played by 'the persistent typist' in saving the girls lives was emphasised by the *Daily Express*, whose readers were shown a large photo of the smiling 'rescuer – and rescued', under the title 'See you on Sunday says "Aunt Teresa"'. The familial relationship which Miss Cremmins was presented as having struck up with the young girls served as a powerful reminder, to would-be heroes and heroines, of the life changing benefits that asking the right questions could obtain.[788] In an interview quoted in the *Daily Mirror,* Cremmins called upon readers to 'do as I did and be on the lookout for … cruelty to little children'.[789] The sympathetic press accounts exemplified their belief that a family's privacy was not absolute and that with reliable information, officials could intrude upon it. A year later the *Daily Mail* reported that '400,000 women [had] pledged themselves to fight child cruelty – and not to shirk from reporting their neighbours the moment they feared that a child was being ill-treated'. The figure of 400,000 represented the number of people who were members of the Women's Institute (WI), whose representatives had made the pledge during a conference in London.[790] The actions of Cremmins and the WI challenge the arguments of earlier historians who have suggested that prior to the introduction of the battered baby syndrome, in 1962, 'child abuse' was 'ignored, denied and left within the privacy of family

[788] 'Miss Cremmins Asks Questions and Saves Two Little Girls', *Daily Express*, 19 October 1951, p. 5.
[789] 'Her Stroll on Prom Ended Nightmare for 2 Children', *Daily Mirror*, 19 October 1951, p. 12.
[790] '400,000 Women Promise "We Will Report Cruel Parents"', *Daily Mirror*, 28 May 1952, p. 3.

homes'.[791] While Cremmins was praised for being particularly proactive, the coverage devoted to her actions indicates that long before the concept of battered babies had been introduced members of the public were prepared to confront what they believed were instances of child abuse.

Public vigilance was promoted in highly gendered ways. Each of the examples above concerned the behaviour, whether enacted or pledged, of women. The first three chapters each showed how women's actions were especially vital to protecting children. Little wonder, therefore, that during the Second World War government efforts to promote evacuation were directed at mothers. That women continued to play the primary role in protecting children from abuse in the post-war years contradicts the findings of recent work on fatherhood. Laura King has argued that the 1950s witnessed 'a new emphasis on equal and democratic relationships between family members'.[792] Study of child protection reveals that in practice women were still viewed as primarily responsible for ensuring the safety of children. These findings are more in keeping with King and Davis's recent argument, based on oral testimonies collected from *both* men and women, that 'parenting often remained a gendered and gendering experience for individuals'.[793] Although the ideals of fatherhood that King examines may have changed, gendered divisions continued to define the child care provided.

By the 1960s, child welfare professionals observed that the public showed a greater willingness to report their concerns. This decade observed an increase in the proportion of cases referred to the NSPCC by the public. In 1963, the Manchester and Salford branch of the

[791] Crane, '"The Bones Tell a Story the Child Is Too Young or Too Frightened to Tell"', 788; Ferguson, *Protecting Children in Time*, 80.
[792] L. King, *Family Men: Fatherhood and Masculinity in Britain, c.1914-1960* (Oxford, 2015), p. 15.
[793] A. Davis and L. King, 'Gendered Perspectives on Men's Changing Familial Roles in Postwar England, c.1950–1990', *Gender & History*, 30:1 (2018), p. 70.

NSPCC reported that the number of investigations into cases of child neglect and cruelty had doubled in the space of three years. The NSPCC's district superintendent stressed that the increase was not thought to reflect a rise in the number of children being maltreated. Instead, he argued that 'there is a greater public awareness of such offences. The public is far more alive to ill treatment these days, and pass on more information'.[794] Three years earlier the *Daily Mirror* noted that there was 'an encouraging sign that neighbours no longer concerned at being dubbed "nosey-parkers" are co-operating more with the police and NSPCC'.[795] These findings were echoed in parliament. Speaking in 1960 the Conservative MP Dennis Vosper, who considered 'public opinion' to be of the 'greatest help in [tackling child abuse and neglect]', welcomed the news that the 'public have reported more cases'.[796]

While people were perceived to be more willing to report cases government officials were often presented as at odds with the public on sentencing policy.[797] In the early 1950s, the Conservative MP John Vaughan-Morgan accused the Home Secretary of being 'some way behind public opinion' in his attitude concerning the penalties imposed on people convicted of cruelty to children. Vaughan-Morgan drew attention to a newspaper campaign that had called for tougher sentences and argued that 'magistrates' attention should be drawn to the very great public feeling on [the] matter [of cruelty to children]'.[798] Proponents of the legal status quo argued that the press failed to accurately report the facts of the case, while magistrates arrived at their decisions based on a fuller understanding of a case.[799]

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[794] 'Child Neglect Cases Doubled in Three Years'.
[795] 'When a Child Waits in an Empty House', *Daily Mirror*, 25 October 1960, p. 12.
[796] Hansard HC Debate vol 625 col 675 (23 June 1960).
[797] Hansard HL Debate vol 135 col 859 (29 March 1945).
[798] Hansard HC Debate vol 483 col 537 (26 January 1951).
[799] Hansard HC Debate vol 494 col 185-186 (19 November 1951).
Shortage of newsprint meant that during the Second World War typical daily newspapers comprised just four pages, it was not until 1956 that newsprint restrictions were finally abolished. See: Curran, Douglas, and Whannel, 'The Human Interest Story', 298; Williams, *Read All About It!*, 173–174, 177.

Tabloid newspapers were at the forefront of calls for tougher sentences for those convicted of abusing children. In 1953, the Association of Social Workers (ASW) observed that:

> Public opinion as evidenced in the Press is still extremely uninformed. A great deal of clamour has gone on about [the need for] more severe punishments, and it is still largely taken for granted that the removal of the child from its parents is essential.

Tabloid calls for more children to be removed from their parents were particularly objectionable to the ASW who believed that doing so risked harming the development of a child.[800] This stance was consistent with the increasing respect afforded psychology, whose proponents believed that the family offered the ideal environment in which to raise children. The Women's Group on Public Welfare adopted a similar position and argued that a better understanding of the causes of child neglect revealed that tougher sentences were not the answer: 'when a case is given prominence in the press a clamour arises for longer sentences which, in our view, … could not be appropriate treatment'.[801] By the early 1950s disparities had begun to emerge between the public – who were calling for stricter treatment of parents convicted of cruelty or neglect towards their children – and child protection professionals, whose positions were informed by psychological understandings of maternal attachment.

Press coverage, when found to be inaccurate, could undermine public confidence in government services. Allen was not alone in using the press to encourage the government to investigate children's services. In 1944 Mr John Watson, Chairman of the Tower Bridge Juvenile Court, presided over a case which concerned the parents of a seven-year-old girl whom they were alleged to have abused. Part way through the trial Watson severely criticized

[800] LMA: LMA/4016/IS/A/3/33, The Association of Social Workers, 'Children Neglected or Ill-Treated in Their Own Homes', January 1953, pp. 2-3.
[801] Women's Group on Public Welfare, *The Neglected Child and His Family*, 84.

the LCC decision to place the girl in a remand home, in which 'the large majority [of the other girls] were of immoral character'. In fact, Watson requested the press attend the hearing, so as to maximize the coverage given to his comments.[802] Watson later explained that 'my criticism of this home is the lack of segregation and the herding together of clean-minded little girls with moral perverts'.[803] In response to Mr Watson's comments, the LCC issued a statement in which it asserted that 'the child … had at no time been in danger of contamination', and had been carefully supervised.[804] Both statements reflected a longer Victorian tradition of viewing sexualized children as a potentially contagious threat that need to be contained.[805] It was agreed that to protect children from harm, the experiences of those who knew too much needed to be kept secret. In the days that followed, the Home Secretary, Herbert Morrison, announced a full inquiry into the case, led by Judge Godfrey Vick and Myra Curtis. Their report, which exonerated the remand home and found that 'the child was … properly cared for', criticized Watson's decision to alert the press and noted:

> We regret also that by deliberately securing the co-operation of the Press, Mr. Watson … incurred responsibility for a type of publicity which caused much undeserved distress to the workers in the Homes and to the girls themselves and their parents … The general effect of the statements to the Press and therefore on the public mind was that a "scandal" had been unearthed and we do not regard this as a just description.[806]

Watson's decision to involve the press reflected his belief that public awareness, made possible through the publicity generated through newspapers, was a powerful spur to action.

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[802] Home Office, *London County Council Remand Homes: Report of Committee of Inquiry* (London, 1945), p. 8.
[803] 'Mr Morrison Orders Inquiry', *Daily Express*, 16 November 1944, p. 3.
[804] 'Child's Associates in Remand Home', *The Times*, 15 November 1944, p. 2.
[805] R. D. Egan and G. Hawkes, 'Producing the Prurient through the Pedagogy of Purity: Childhood Sexuality and the Social Purity Movement', *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 20:4 (2007), pp. 443–461; Jackson, *Child Sexual Abuse in Victorian England*, 135.
[806] Home Office, *London County Council Remand Homes: Report of Committee of Inquiry*, 20.

A belief in the power of the press to inform and mobilize the wider public was also articulated by newspaper readers themselves. In 1952, amidst complaints that child cruelty was being inadequately punished, Mr. C. Brodie wrote to *The Express* and suggested that 'If *The Express* gave a lead to the country, a crusade might be initiated which would offer some sort of protection to these hapless children'.[807] Brodie's use of the word 'crusade' suggests a suspicion of official child protection services and a desire for members of the public to take action into their own hands. Several months later, the Labour MP James Simmons observed that:

> The Press is still the most powerful instrument capable of moulding public opinion and creating a worthwhile sense of values. I say that in spite of the cinema and the great developments in broadcasting.[808]

That Brodie and Simmons came to similar conclusions is even more striking given their contrasting motives. While Brodie sought to mobilize the power of the press to achieve a very specific outcome – providing protection to children - Simmons presented his assertion as part of a wider debate on the need for a Press Council, in accordance with the recent Royal Commission on the Press.[809]

Faith in the ability of newspapers to offer protection to children could also be shown by the actions of struggling parents, who sought to avoid the attention of state and voluntary organizations. In 1959 a mother, Mrs Love, left her four young children in a station waiting room. Along with the sandwiches she had prepared for them, the mother left a letter addressed to a national newspaper: 'Please find someone to look after my children for me. I

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[807] 'Are We Losing Our Love for Children?', *Daily Express*, 29 August 1952, p. 5.
[808] Hansard HC Debate vol 508 col 725-819 (28 November 1952).
[809] For further discussion of Simmons' debate, see: A. Bingham, '"A Stream of Pollution through Every Part of the Country?" Morality, Regulation and the Modern Popular Press', in M. Bailey, ed., *Narrating Media History*, (London, 2008), p. 119.
See also: Hansard HC Debate vol 570 col 972 (17 May 1957).

have nowhere to go'. Shortly after leaving her children, Mrs Love made sure that her children would be found quickly by ringing a newspaper office. The mother later explained that her actions were motivated by a desire to avoid her children being placed in a home. The mother's actions are an example of the type of behaviour that Hitchman later argued could be prevented by clearer explanation of the support available.[810] Mrs Love's decision to contact an unknown newspaper outlet, rather than a state or voluntary body, was consistent with an optimism in the ability of the press to protect children in ways that could circumnavigate official child protection procedures. The outcome to the case also shows that people's faith in the press could be misplaced. While the police acknowledged that Mrs Love had taken precautions 'to make sure that the children were well cared for and were not put into any danger', the children were subsequently taken in to the care of London County Council. While alerting the press was recognized as a means of safeguarding the children, the press was not able to prevent them being dealt with by the official channels.[811] Mrs Love's decision to turn to the press to protect her children, rather than child care professionals, suggests that the experts that government relied upon to enforce its child protection policies were not always trusted by the wider public. Newspapers were entrusted with more than just informing their readers, some believed that they could be trusted with their children's wellbeing.

Policy makers continued to credit the press with the ability to influence public opinion despite stalling newspapers sales in the late 1960s. In 1967, Sir Keith Joseph, who would later become Secretary of State for Social Services, was invited to be a guest speaker at a conference hosted by the Association of Children's Officers. During his speech Joseph

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[810] Hitchman, 'Life with Aunty'.
For further information about Hitchman, see: P. Cox, 'Home Girls: Writing Delinquency and Neglect in Early Twentieth-Century Britain', in K. Reynolds, ed., *Childhood Remembered*, (London, 1998).
[811] 'Four Little Lost Loves', *Daily Mail*, 12 February 1959, p. 1; 'Woman Abandoned Children on Railway Station', *The Manchester Guardian*, 19 February 1959, p. 6.

argued, that '[while] there should be a social [services] inspectorate similar to the schools inspectorate … there was a weapon even more powerful – public opinion.' While Joseph's position as a member of the shadow cabinet gave him some licence to be critical of existing practice, it is striking that while speaking to Children's Officers he singled out public opinion, rather than experts, as the real drivers of change. This line of argument was consistent with the Conservative Party's commitment to reducing the size of central government. During the 1970 general election campaign the party pledged to secure 'greater freedom from government regulations and interference' alongside tax reductions.[812] Joseph went on to express the desire for 'local and national press [to have] more social service correspondents comparing one area's services with another'. These remarks, which suggested an unacceptable level of disparity between local authorities' children's services, indicate that the press continued to be viewed as an important means of holding professionals to account.[813] Three years earlier a similar argument was made by a contributor to the *British Medical Journal*. The correspondent, who predicted that 'this journal will not be read by the next potential baby-killer', believed that 'an atmosphere in the community can be created which is not conducive to overlooking violence. What is really needed is a cause célèbre with front-page treatment in the press'.[814] While the author's prediction betrayed a highly classed understanding of the type of person likely to abuse their child, the faith placed in the press derived from the belief that newspapers provided an effective means of harnessing the power of communities to prevent future tragedy.[815]

[812] Dale, 'Labour Party General Election Manifesto, 1964: The New Britain', 180, 182.
[813] 'Areas of Need in the Child Care Service', *British Hospital Journal and Social Service Review*, October 1967, p. 2001.
[814] E. Turner, '"Battered Baby" Syndrome', *The British Medical Journal*, 1 (1964), p. 308.
[815] In fact, numerous psychological studies emphasised that violent parents did not typically belong in any one social class. See: Crane, *Child Protection in England*, 36.

The influence that newspaper were believed to wield, in part, reflected their ability to cater to readers' interests. As commercial ventures, newspapers' long-term success depended on this. *The Mirror*, which became the most sold daily in 1949, made a point of emphasizing its attentiveness to the opinions of its readers.[816] Writing in 1953, the paper's editor, Hugh Cudlipp, described the newspaper as an 'immense, permanent Gallup Poll Survey of changing mass opinion'.[817] As well as increasing public interest in matters of child maltreatment, stories related to child abuse were attractive for newspapers as they comprised an example of human-interest stories, a genre which was consistently found to be among the most popular.[818] Earlier, in chapter one, it was shown that during the interwar period tabloid newspapers devoted prominent coverage to cases of child abuse. The popularity of human interest stories continued after the Second World War and was observed across the categories of sex, class and age.[819]

The People and Professionals

Assessing Alternative Families

Having considered the importance of public concern for children's welfare, and the value given to the family, the final part of this chapter explores instances when these issues came to be in tension with one another. Public concern for looked after children was often sparked by opposition to what officials believed to be the most appropriate forms of family care. At the heart of these disputes were conflicting understandings of what comprised the ideal family. Under the terms of the 1948 Children Act local authorities had 'a duty to return the child to

[816] A. Bingham, 'Representing the People? The Daily Mirror, Class and Political Culture in Inter-War Britain', in L. Beers and G. Thomas, eds., *Brave New World: Imperial and Democratic Nation-Building in Britain Between the Wars*, (London, 2012), pp. 111, 120.
[817] H. Cudlipp, *Publish and Be Damned!: The Astonishing Story of the Daily Mirror* (London, 1953), p. 236.
[818] Bingham, 'Representing the People?', 116.
[819] Curran, Douglas, and Whannel, 'The Human Interest Story', 302–303, 326.

his home, if he has one, as soon as the home is fit to receive him again'.[820] Indeed, Eileen Younghusband, who previously worked as a juvenile court magistrate, and chaired a working party on the role of social workers, observed that in the 1960s Children's Officers often found encouraging foster parents to accept birth parents' visits the hardest part of fostering.[821] Disputes arising from foster care arrangements revealed important tensions between care givers and local government officials. This point is illustrated by two examples, taken from 1954 and 1970, in which the custody rights of foster parents vis-à-vis biological parents were subject to nationwide scrutiny.

Despite occurring more than 15 years apart, the cases shared several striking similarities. Both concerned foster parents who were unable to have children of their own. This was not uncommon. A Home Office Study, published in 1957, found that 36% of foster mothers had no biological children of their own.[822] Both sets of foster parents had both cared for their respective children from when they were 7 months old and so neither child had any recollection of their birth parents.[823]

The first case occurred in 1954 and concerned a married couple, Mr and Mrs Knowles, who were foster-parents to a child called Patricia. Shortly before beginning proceedings to adopt Patricia, who was now three years old, Mr and Mrs Knowles were informed that her biological mother wanted to regain custody of her daughter. Despite having signed an

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[820] Hansard HC Debate vol 672 col 1269-1270 (27 February 1963).
See also: Birmingham City Council, *Four Years*, vii.
For discussion of the legal interpretation of this requirement see: C. Davies, 'The Departmental Committee on the Adoption of Children and the Tug of War Cases', *The Modern Law Review*, 36:3 (1973), p. 247.
[821] Younghusband, *Social Work in Britain, Volume 1*, 1:66.
K. Williams, 'Younghusband, Dame Eileen Louise (1902–1981)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004.
[822] P. G. Gray and E. Parr, *Children in Care and the Recruitment of Foster Parents* (London, 1957), p. 37.
[823] 'Foster-Parents Keep Child', *Birmingham Daily Post*, 1 February 1954, p. 11.

agreement with Patricia's mother, promising to return Patricia if requested to do so, the couple refused. Council officials tried, and failed, to remove Patricia from her foster parents five times before taking the matter to the High Court where they were granted a writ of habeas, which empowered the Council to regain custody of the child.[824] Having received more than £100 towards their legal costs from members of the public, the couple appealed the decision.[825] The case attracted nationwide attention from foster parents. Part-way through the trial, Mrs Knowles reflected that 'only our love for our baby has kept us going and the knowledge that hundreds of foster parents up and down the country who were equally afraid of losing loved ones have been carefully following our fight'.[826] Their appeal was eventually dismissed and Council officials, accompanied by a policeman, removed Patricia from the care of her foster parents.[827]

The second example, which came to public attention in 1970, relates to a nine-year-old foster child called Jeanette, who had been placed in the care of Mr and Mrs Callaway. Jeanette was removed from the care of her biological parents, along with six of her siblings, by Dorset Council for unknown reasons. Over time Jeanette's birth mother had regained custody of her other children, until eventually she asked the Council to return Jeanette to her. A two-year legal battle ensued and eventually the High Court ruled that Jeanette should be returned to her birth mother.

In both cases the actions of council officials provoked scorn and derision from the wider community which reflected the public's increased interest in the psychological needs of

[824] 'Baby Patricia Goes Back to Mother', *Daily Mail*, 23 February 1954, p. 1.
[825] 'Foster Parents' Habeas Corpus Appeal', *The Birmingham Post*, 2 March 1954, p. 5.
[826] 'Fate of Baby Pat Settled in Secret', *Birmingham Gazette*, 29 April 1954, p. 1.
[827] 'Baby Pat Screams as She Is Taken', *Birmingham Gazette*, 27 May 1954, p. 1.

children.[828] The public's response to the cases, as reported in the popular press, made it clear that their sympathy lay firmly with the foster parents. Several council officials, and the child's biological mother, were booed and hissed at by a crowd of nearly 100 people, as they visited the Knowles' property.[829] Cheers erupted as the visitors left, along with shouts of 'Keep your chin up – this is where Pat belongs'. Neighbours, along with Mr Knowles's workmates, offered to raise funds to cover the cost of fighting a High Court action.[830] The *Daily Mail* described the case as a battle between 'humanity ... [and] the law', while neighbours organised themselves into a 'vigilante committee' to guard Pat.[831]

In the case of Patricia, the local vicar and the family's doctor both supported the foster parents and cited concerns for the child's psychological wellbeing. Several years later, *The Times* journalist Mary Ellison drew attention to the psychological harm which could cause children to be emotionally 'maimed for life' because of being 'rough[ly] transplant[ed]'.[832] The language of both groups reveals the extent to which psychological thinking, which has traditionally been studied from the perspective of professional groups, had permeated into sections of working-class society.[833] These observations support Elizabeth Roberts's argument, which drew upon oral history interviews with Lancashire women, that young parents 'increasingly sought' the 'help and advice' of the authorities who advised paying attention to 'the emotional, psychological and intellectual needs of their children'.[834] A similar response greeted those involved in removing Jeanette. In July 1970, a petition in

[828] For further discussion of the growing interest in psychology among parents, see: Cowan, '"Modern" Parenting and the Uses of Childcare Advice in Post-War England', 334.
[829] 'Crowd Boos as Mother Tries to Take Child Back', *Daily Mirror*, 1 February 1954, p. 1.
[830] 'Boos for Council Officials - and Baby Pat Stays', *Birmingham Gazette*, 1 February 1954, pp. 1, 5.
[831] 'Mother Told: We Keep Pat', *Daily Mail*, 1 February 1954, p. 5; 'Little Pat Is Under Guard', *Daily Mirror*, 2 February 1954, p. 8.
[832] M. Ellison, 'The Need for Greater Humanity in Child Fostering Procedure', *The Times*, 2 January 1969, p. 9.
[833] For studies of post-war psychology see: Shapira, *The War Inside*; Stewart, *Child Guidance in Britain, 1918-1955*.
[834] Roberts, *Women and Families*, 141.

support of Mrs Callaway was signed by more than 1,400 people and sent to the Home Secretary.[835] Opponents took to the street of the town in which Jeanette had been staying and besieged the home of her birth mother. As a result, Dorset Council were forced to rehouse the family 20 miles away.[836] The sensational press and TV coverage that accompanied the case delayed Jeannette's return to her birth mother by several days.[837] The unfolding drama was recounted in detail by the national tabloid press, whose reports included large-scale photographs of the moment that Jeanette, accompanied by angry shouts of protest from the neighbours - 'I have never seen anything so bloody cruel in my life' - was removed from the custody of her foster mother.[838] The language used by the unnamed neighbour suggests that they had a much weaker grasp of contemporary psychology than Mary Ellison, but their actions were still informed by what was perceived to be in the child's best interest.

While greater newspaper coverage was devoted to the latter custody battle, this coverage also attracted greater criticism, indicating that large sections of public opinion had grown further at odds with child care professionals. Legal experts were highly critical of the sensational reporting that accompanied the custody battle over Jeanette, while Dorset Council defended its decision by arguing that it has been taken 'after careful consideration of all the circumstances'.[839] An editorial in the *New Law Journal* described the press and television coverage of the case as 'deplorable' and accused it of having done 'absolutely nothing to establish the objective facts on which the rightness or otherwise of the local authority's

[835] Photos of later protests can be found here: 'Picture Gallery', *The Times*, 23 July 1970, p. 2.
[836] 'A New Life for "tug of War" Jeanette', *Daily Mirror*, 7 August 1970, p. 9.
For an earlier example of Press attention forcing a child to leave their home see: 'Boy Who Lived Alone With Dog: "Harmed by Publicity"', *The Manchester Guardian*, 18 April 1956, p. 14.
[837] 'Tug-of-War Girl to Be Kept in Council Home to Avoid Publicity', *Birmingham Daily Post*, 18 July 1970, p. 19.
[838] "Tug of Love 'Mummy, Don't Let Them Take Me', *Daily Mirror*, 17 July 1970, p. 3.Girl." Daily Express, July 17, 1970.
[839] 'Foster Girl Move "Right"', *Daily Mirror*, 1 August 1970, p. 4.

decision in relation to the child's future might be assessed'.[840] The *Daily Mail* disagreed, and later published a front page editorial, entitled 'Seeing is believing', which argued that

> Publicity is an unblinking searchlight … It can be crass and cruel in the hands of a sensation-monger. But there is no alternative to publicity … We must see that justice is done, not hope or have it on good authority, but see it with our own eyes. And that means relying on the press.[841]

Secrecy, as far as the tabloids were concerned, could represent a threat to children's safety, allowing officials to make decisions without proper scrutiny. Several years earlier, in the case of Patricia, the *Birmingham Gazette* noted that the foster parents' appeal was heard in secret, but the matter was not remarked upon by the national tabloids.[842] This chronology, whereby opposition to secrecy became more pronounced as the post-war period went on, conforms to Deborah Cohen's periodization, which has held that by the 1970s the privacy of the family was increasingly under attack.[843]

Officials' efforts to promote foster care were undermined by the right of recall afforded children's biological parents combined with local authorities' responsibility to reunite families where ever possible.[844] The desire to provide children with family models of care, in the short term, through fostering, was undermined by the long term aim to return children to their birth families, where possible. A study, commissioned by the Home Office in the mid-1950s, reported that 19% of surveyed foster mothers thought that people were deterred from fostering children because of the 'fear of losing child after becoming fond of it'. The survey also found that one in six foster mothers did not want to foster again because of the attachment they had developed with their present child, whom they did not want to replace.[845]

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[840] 'Publicity and Privacy', *The New Law Journal*, 120 (1970), pp. 673–674.
[841] 'Seeing Is Believing', *Daily Mail*, 28 September 1970, p. 1.
[842] 'Fate of Baby Pat Settled in Secret'.
[843] Cohen, *Family Secrets*, 214.
[844] 'Foster-Parents', *The Times*, 24 August 1957, p. 7.
[845] Gray and Parr, *Children in Care and the Recruitment of Foster Parents*, 39, 40.

The standards to which foster parents were held could prove emotionally demanding, to the point of discouraging people from fostering in the future.

Despite viewing the public as vital to the smooth running of child protection services, disagreement over the rights of foster parents vis-à-vis biological parents, pitted the public against practitioners. The financial and practical actions of local people (from raising funds and assembling petitions, to heckling social workers, and keeping watch) demonstrate a sincere support for long-term foster parents who sought to retain custody of their children despite their precarious legal position. While the press made it clear that Knowles had agreed to return Pat if required to, the tone and images used in their reports left readers in no doubt regarding whom they should support.

The support shown to the foster parents sheds light on what people understood family to represent. Longevity of care, relative to the age of a child, combined with provision of care when a child was still young, were both cited in support of claims that the foster parents should retain custody of the children. Despite what the courts recognised, it was widely believed that biological parents should forgo their parental rights if they left their children in the care of another adult for long enough. Having given birth to a child was, for many, no longer enough to justify parental rights. Shortly after Jeanette had been removed from her foster parents, a mother wrote to the *Daily Mail* and argued that 'It is not giving birth to a child that forges the bond between mother and child. It is the years of care and devotion ... A 'natural' mother who really loved her child would … leave the child where it is loved, happy and secure'.[846] In the aftermath of the disruption caused by the Second World War, what it meant to be a family was closely associated with the ability to provide stable and long-term

[846] 'Devotion', *Daily Mail*, 21 July 1970, p. 2.

care. The anxiety expressed for the children's emotional well-being, which stands in sharp contrast to the inter-war period when psychology was viewed with considerable suspicion, suggests some public understanding of the psychological needs of children.

Outwardly the experiences of Jeanette and Patricia shared many similarities. Among neighbours and the tabloid press the support for the foster parents remained consistent. If we turn our gaze to the broadsheet newspapers, however, important areas of change emerge. Neither the *Guardian* nor *The Times* devoted any attention to the case of Patricia. This was consistent with the coverage of child abuse cases in the inter-war period, when broadsheets failed to report on several stories which attracted considerable attention in the tabloid press. By 1970, however, both the *Guardian* and *The Times* dedicated at least 10 articles to discussing the experiences of Jeanette. More significant still, however, is the way in which the editorial tone adopted by *The Times* changed. Despite not reporting on the custody battle that surrounded Patricia, several years later, in 1957, the paper produced an editorial which acknowledged the legal and ethical problems which could arise in cases in which the custody rights of long-term foster parents were challenged by a child's biological parents. The paper's editors argued that that 'in disputes about children's custody the child's own needs cannot be the overriding consideration generally', although they acknowledged that readers' letters indicated that some believed 'the courts too readily allow the rights of parents to override the need of their children'. The editorial went on to cite the recent Hurst committee on adoption, which concluded that 'if paramount importance were always given to the child's welfare, the way would be open for any parent who gave up the care of his child for a time to be deprived permanently of the child, merely because adopters had been found for him who appeared to

be more suitable or financially better able to bring him up'.[847] The following year the same argument was made in Parliament, when the Lord Chancellor argued that:

> Nobody would deny that [the welfare of the child] should rank … very high [when determining their care arrangements] - but I suggest that one cannot make it paramount, otherwise the result might be (I take an obvious example) that poor parents might lose a child against their wishes because a wealthy couple wanted to adopt it.[848]

By 1970, the editorial line in *The Times* had changed. Writing shortly after the Houghton Committee on adoption had produced an interim report, the paper observed that 'The first principle is that the needs of the child should come first. This may seem so self-evident that it requires no emphasis … the child's wellbeing should have absolute priority' even if this 'infringe[s on] the rights of the natural parents'.[849] It would be wrong to infer from these editorials that *The Times* no longer valued the family. In fact, the article from 1970 noted that 'the child's need above everything else is for security – if possible with his natural parents'. The increased respect afforded psychology, following the 'psychiatrist deluge' in social work training which occurred in the 1950s, led to greater concern being expressed at the harm that children could experience when removed from foster homes in which they had settled.[850] The analysis presented here supports Shapira's observation that in the post-war period psychological language was not limited to official circles, but permeated 'public forums and discussions about the child-mother relationship'.[851]

Professional divisions

[847] 'Foster-Parents'.
[848] Hansard HL Debate vol 208 col 48 (11 March 1958).
[849] 'The Child Must Come First', *The Times*, 22 October 1970, p. 11.
[850] K. Coates and R. Silburn, *Poverty: The Forgotten Englishmen* (Nottingham, 1983), pp. 28–29.
[851] Shapira, *The War Inside*, 229–231.

The ambiguity contained within child welfare legislation meant that professionals also disagreed about how best to support children in care. Evidence of these disagreements is significant because it undermines histories which have implied that social policy was shaped by a group of united experts.[852] Important differences emerged as a result of difference between the public's interpretation of psychology and that of professionally qualified and trained staff. The disputes which emerged regarding the care of Jeanette and Patricia were quickly presented, in the tabloids, as a battle between officialdom and common sense. However, this binary fails to fully capture the complexity of social work practice during this time. Research conducted by the social worker Jean Packman, in the early 1960s, which sought to explain variations in the numbers of children in local authority care, found that 'attitudes towards admitting children to care and definitions of what constituted need varied considerably from area to area'.[853] Likewise, former social workers interviewed by David Burnham observed that their colleagues 'were chalk and cheese and each had their own approach'.[854] Packman's study drew on evidence collected through interviews with children's officers in 48 different local authorities, selected based on a stratified sample.[855] Packman observed that differences, primarily of emphasis, operated on two separate axes. One group stressed the importance of parental rights and duties and 'the prime importance of the natural family', while others focused on 'the protection for the child in the face of inadequate or harmful home circumstances'.[856] Packman found that 'variations [in child care policies had] an effect on the proportions in care'.[857]

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[852] Kynaston, *Austerity Britain, 1945-1951*, 24.
For discussion of sociologists' faith in their abilities to inform post-war planning, see: Lawrence, 'Class, "Affluence" and the Study of Everyday Life in Britain, c.1930–64', 280.
[853] J. Packman, *Child Care: Needs and Numbers* (London, 1968), p. 191.
[854] D. Burnham, *The Social Worker Speaks: A History of Social Workers Through the Twentieth Century* (Burlington, 2012), p. 105.
[855] Packman, *Child Care*, 26–28.
[856] Ibid., 191.
[857] Ibid., 203.

Children's officers who stressed the importance of family emphasized the importance of blood ties which 'cannot be replaced'. These officials were, in general, pessimistic about the good that would be achieved by taking children into care. This was, in part, because of their encounters with the children of former care leavers. In their experiences, admission to care appeared to have contributed to intergenerational deprivation. These officials were also concerned that if children's services were offered too easily, officials risked 'sapping the very sense of responsibility that [they were] trying to encourage'. Part of their job was thought to involve 'taking risks so that the public authority did not appear "soft" or gullible'.[858]

On the other hand, Packman encountered children's officers who placed greater emphasis on the need to protect children. These officials often had 'a far greater sense of optimism about the benefits that could be derived from local authority care'. Unlike the officers associated with the first group, these social workers operated on the assumption that 'it was better to act in an emergency and to find out later that action had been unnecessary, than to refuse help and find out later that action was no longer possible'.[859] Packman met one children's officer who explained, 'if a father threatened to jump off the pier, unless I took his children into care, I would take them in at once. If I found out later that it had been a deliberate blackmail – then too bad'.[860] For this officer, the father's safety was more important than being thought of as gullible.

While Packman identified important differences in attitudes towards admitting children to care, she also observed that 'these different attitudes … did not automatically go hand in hand

[858] Ibid., 192–193.
[859] Ibid.
[860] Ibid., 193–194.

with scepticism about prevention'. In fact, some children's officers who were most optimistic about the effects of admitting children to care were also 'very active in their efforts to keep some families together'. Packman cautioned against simply dividing officials into 'those with a tendency to "take in" children and those with a tendency to "keep out"'.[861]

Packman argued that the variation in child care policies observed in different parts of the country could be explained by differences in training.[862] This is important because, despite the Curtis Committee's call for a better trained workforce, by the late 1960s considerable differences continued to exist among in the education levels of social workers. In 1967, it was revealed that only two out of 17 social workers stationed in Newcastle were recognized as qualified by the Home Office.[863] Earlier that year, the Williams Committee, which surveyed the staff of nearly 2,000 homes in the public, voluntary and private sectors, discovered that nearly two-thirds of staff employed to look after children in care had no formal qualifications.[864] Similar findings were observed about Children's Officers. In October 1967, the Association of Child Care Officers estimated that their workforce comprised '30 per cent fully qualified officers, another 30 per cent have degrees or diplomas in some form of social science, but the remainder, 40 per cent, in post, have … no training'.[865]

Disparities in the level of training provided to child care staff were exacerbated by the ambiguity of the legislation which framed child protection practices. Section one of the Children Act, 1948, required that when caring for looked after children, local authorities must

[861] Ibid., 196.
[862] Ibid., 202.
[863] J. Ardill, 'Too Few Child Care Officers', *The Guardian*, 11 August 1967, p. 3.
[864] R. Means and R. Smith, *From Poor Law to Community Care: The Development of Welfare Services for Elderly People 1939-1971* (Bristol, 1998), p. 199; 'Caring for People, Young and Old', *The Guardian*, 25 May 1967, p. 8.
[865] J. Woollcombe and H. Haywood, 'Delinquency among Girls...', *The Times*, 11 October 1967, p. 7.

act in accordance with 'the welfare of the child'.[866] What this meant in practice, however, was left to the discretion of individual children's committees. Packman noted that in practice this meant that 'child care administrators are … in the uncomfortable situation of trying to balance evils; of having to make qualitative judgements between bad and less bad, between one form of deprivation and another'. Little wonder, she argued, that 'interpretations differ'.[867] Rather than criticizing the flexibility afforded Children's Committees, however, Packman argued that the discretion provided by child protection statues were necessary 'because the concept of need must alter as the general standard of living alters'.[868] As shown in chapter two, in the inter-war period the autonomy provided to local authorities caused significant regional disparities in the level of care provided to children. The spending priorities of local officials, rather than changing standards of living, ultimately determined the care provided. Packman's remarks are more striking when we consider that in the post-war period important structural reforms were introduced, such as the establishment of children's committees, which were designed to provide a more consistent level of care. So long as local authorities were able to determine their spending priorities disparities in the care provided to children would continue.

Conclusion

This chapter has challenged Deborah Cohen's assertion that 'by the late 1960s … the notion of the family's repressive character and penchant for secrecy had migrated from long-haired bohemia to the mainstream'. Study of the principles which informed child protection efforts has revealed that experts continued to view family life as central to the upbringing of future citizens. Practitioners, whose work was increasingly informed by psychology, believed that

[866] *Children Act*, 1948, sec. 1(2).
[867] Packman, *Child Care*, 203–204.
[868] Ibid., 205.

the emotional wellbeing of children was most fully met while remaining within the family unit. Amidst the economic affluence of post-war Britain, families were perceived to have become more vulnerable as community networks weakened. The 'rediscovery of poverty' in the mid-1960s, coincided with increasing anxiety about the harm caused to children as a result of housing difficulties. Study of child protection reveals that despite these challenges, the family unit continued to be viewed as a valued social unit right through the 1960s. The decade was, however, characterised by a growing recognition that meeting the needs of certain groups of children would require additional care, the delivery of which was often not thought possible through foster-care arrangements. This transition, which began in the late 1950s, was accompanied by greater emphasis on need to provide social workers with training. Although a trained workforce was acknowledged to be important by the Curtis Committee, as early as 1946, it was not until the latter half of the next decade that social workers began to stress the need for a professionally qualified workforce. The second half of the chapter has undermined the arguments of existing histories, which have credited the early-1960s with the 'discovery' of child abuse. Immediately after the Second World War, large sections of the public took considerable interest in children's welfare. Policy makers and practitioners consistently emphasised the need for public support. The press played an important role, in publicising what became high profile child protection cases in addition to providing a space for debate to occur.

Finally, this chapter has tempered the emphasis that current histories have placed on the expansion of expertise as a defining feature of the welfare state. The enactment of child protection policies was shaped by a plurality of competing opinions on how best to look after children. Public understanding of what constituted a proper family was often at odds with the laws used to determine child custody disputes. While the law privileged the rights of the

biological parents, the dissemination of Bowlby's attachment theory, which emphasised the importance of emotional bonds to children's development, led growing numbers to argue that it was in a child's best interests to remain with longstanding foster parents.

CHAPTER 5: CHILD PROTECTION IN ACTION, BIRMINGHAM AND WESTMORLAND, C.1945-1970

Introduction

As the Children Bill worked its way through the Houses of Parliament legislators emphasised the importance of local authorities to the reforms' success. During the second reading of the Bill, in February 1948, the Lord Chancellor observed that:

> It is one thing to pass an Act of Parliament and quite another thing to get effective work done under it … [Everything] will depend on the way in which the children's committees of the local authorities function.[869]

These predictions were largely accurate. For much of two decades that followed the 1948 Act, considerable discretion was placed in the hands of local officials to decide how best to identify and intervene in the lives of parents who were thought to have failed their children.[870] Against this background this chapter explores the implementation of the Children Act, 1948, and subsequent reforms, by investigating the actions of Birmingham City Council and Westmorland County Council. Earlier, in chapter two, we saw how, during the inter-war period, these bodies adopted very different approaches to children's welfare, approaches which reflected broader differences in their conception of the role of local authorities. Birmingham strove to be at the forefront of child welfare provision; Westmorland, on the other hand, was much less progressive and its officials worked on the assumption that their electorate was keen to minimise the role of government. Faced with a much smaller number of children to support, the range of services available in Westmorland was far more modest than found in Birmingham. Chapter three has shown that the Second World War caused these disparities to narrow as Westmorland adopted practices pioneered in Birmingham.

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[869] Hansard HL Debate vol 153 col 942 (10 February 1948).
[870] Lambert, 'Historicising "Troubled Family" Policy', 4.

This chapter argues that two of the key pillars of post-war children's services – first, the desire to replicate, rebuild, and protect family units and, second, the growth in professionalism – proved more difficult to achieve than is acknowledged by the existing literature. By exploring the difficulties that local authorities encountered, this research allows us to reassess how we understand post-war British history and the influence of expertise. While the Curtis Report has often been presented as the cornerstone of post-war children's services, many of its central recommendations were not fulfilled because of matters that the report's authors failed to anticipate.[871]

This chapter begins by providing an overview of the scale of demand for services in each of the two regions. Next we examine the steps taken in the early post-war period to honour the obligations placed on local authorities by the Children Act, 1948. Here we see that efforts to improve the services provided to looked after children were undermined by resource shortages in the aftermath of the Second World War. The remainder of the chapter explores how these initial problems were experienced, by adults and children, how they were addressed and what they can tell us about the post-war period more broadly.

Overview of Children Entering Care

Understanding the changes in the proportion of, and absolute number of, children in care in England and Wales, in the years since 1948, provides an important context against which to consider local practices. The Curtis Report, which was published in 1946, estimated that 46,000 children were in the care of local authorities.[872] By November 1949, the numbers had

[871] Ball, 'Regulating Child Care'.
[872] J. Heywood, *Children in Care: The Development of the Service for the Deprived Child*, [1959] (London, 1998), pp. 160–161.

risen to 55,255 and by 1953 the numbers rose to a peak of 65,309, which represented 6.2 per 1,000 children under eighteen years old. Much of this initial rise can be attributed to the fact that the Children Act 1948 was broader in scope. The upper age limit for admission to care was raised from fifteen to sixteen years, while children could now be maintained in care up until their eighteenth birthday, two years later than was previously the case.[873] The rise in the number of looked after children coincided with a decline in the number of children cared for in voluntary and private placements, as central and local government became more proactive in closing down unsuitable arrangements.[874]

Before examining the implementation of child protection policy at the local level, it is necessary to discuss the reasons why children entered care. Most children who were admitted to the care of local authorities did so through one of two legal procedures.[875] As shown in chapter 2, Section 62 of the Children and Young Persons Act, 1933, empowered juvenile courts to place a child or young person in the care of a local authority if he or she was considered to be in need of care or protection.[876] Additionally, section 1 of the Children Act, 1948, placed on local authorities the duty to receive children into their care if it appeared:

> (a) that he has neither parent nor guardian or has been and remains abandoned by his parents or guardian or is lost; or
> (b) that his parents or guardian are, for the time being or permanently, prevented by reason of mental or bodily disease or infirmity or other

[873] Packman, *Child Care*, 17.
[874] 'Need For More Foster Homes', *The Times*, 24 July 1952, p. 6; *The Sixth Report from the Select Committee on Estimates, Session 1951-1952 (Child Care)* (London, 1952), para. 31.
[875] *Report on the Work of the Children's Department, 1964-1966* (London, 1967), p. 7.
[876] Women's Group on Public Welfare, *The Neglected Child and His Family*, 74–75, 78–81.

> incapacity or any other circumstances from providing for his accommodation, maintenance and upbringing; and
> (c) in either case, that the intervention of the local authority under this section is necessary in the interests of the welfare of the child

Of the 62,691 children in care in England and Wales at the end of 1951, 45,585 (73%) had been admitted in pursuance of section 1 of the 1948 Act.[877] Importantly, under this section, local authorities could obtain custody of a child without recourse to the courts. In most cases the parent or guardian who was in difficulty approached the local authority and asked for the child to be received into care. If parents objected to their child being removed, local authorities could take proceedings under the care of protection provisions of the 1933 Act.[878] Both Acts set out the procedures to be followed if parents wished to regain custody of their children.[879] In practice, social workers recognised that it was easier to return children to their parents if they had been admitted under section 1 of the Children Act 1948, while the court process for revoking orders issued under the 1933 Act was slower and more difficult.[880]

Children entered care for a wide range of reasons. Much more information was collected about why children entered care after the 1948 Children Act was passed. An investigation conducted in the early 1960s, regarding local authority experiences, recorded 46 separate reasons for applications and committals to care.[881] When recording the number of children in care, the Home Office distinguished between short-stay and long-stay cases. The former related to children who were in care for fewer than 6 months, while the latter referred to stays

[877] *The Sixth Report from the Select Committee on Estimates, Session 1951-1952 (Child Care)*, para. 9.
[878] KA: WC/W/2/17, The Place of the Residential Establishment in the Scheme of Child Care, an address given by Miss A. M. Scorrer to the Association of Hospital and Welfare Administrators, 22 June 1950, p. 3.
[879] Birmingham City Council, *Four Years*, 15, 43–44; Packman, *Child Care*, 225.
[880] Packman, *Child Care*, 221, 223.
[881] Ibid., 35.

longer than 6 months. These differences were also observed among local authorities. In February 1949, the Birmingham Children's Committee resolved that 'the needs of the short-stay and long-stay cases are entirely different'.[882] The reasons for children being admitted to care often informed the services made available to them.

Throughout the period studied here, short-stay cases represented most of the children who entered care.[883] In the year ending 31 March 1966 almost half of all children who came into care – 27,124 – did so because of their mother's childbirth or because of the short-term illness of one of their parents. These cases remained in care for a short period, normally for only a few weeks.[884] As shown in the table below, this trend was observed throughout the period studied here. Study of child protection services provides an alternative perspective from which to consider histories of childbirth and the rise of hospital births. While the trend towards hospital delivery began before the Second World War, the introduction of the National Health Service in 1948 enabled more women to give birth in hospital. By 1954, 64% of births occurred in hospital, rising to 91% by 1972.[885] King's recent study into 'what the experience of childbirth meant for families' has argued that 'attitudes and practices around men's involvement in childbirth start[ed] to change in the 1950s', so that by the late 1960s men were increasingly present at the birth of their children in hospital.[886] Examination of care admissions reveals that for many families childbirth was experienced as a time when children temporarily entered care. That children were taken into care when their mothers were temporarily unable to care for them suggests that fathers were not trusted to

[882] BA: BCC/1/CT/1/1, Meeting of Children's Committee, 25 February 1949, paragraph 406.
See also: BA: BCC/1/CT/1/1, Children's Committee, Policy Report, February 1949.
[883] 'Family Homes Instead of Institutions: Changes in Child Care', *The Guardian*, 16 August 1961, p. 2.
[884] *Report on the Work of the Children's Department, 1964-1966*, 6–7.
[885] L. King, 'Hiding in the Pub to Cutting the Cord? Men's Presence at Childbirth in Britain c.1940s–2000s', *Social History of Medicine*, 30:2 (2017), p. 391.
[886] Ibid., 390, 405, 397.

independently look after their own children. Table 7, below, reveals that the late 1960s, when fathers were increasingly present at childbirth, observed a decline in the number of children entering care because their mothers were giving birth. This may indicate that as a growing proportion of fathers attended the birth of their children, greater faith was placed in them to look after children on their own.

Table 7: Proportion of children who enter care because of incapacity of parent or guardian[887]

Year	Proportion of children who enter care because of incapacity of parent or guardian
1952	58%
1953	58%
1954	64%
1956	63%
1957	62%
1958	60%
1959	61%
1960	62%
1961	61%
1962	58%
1963	56%
1964	57%
1965	57%
1966	54%
1967	53%
1968	52%
1969	50%
1970	47%

[887] For the years 1952-1962 the category of incapacity is recorded under the heading of 'infirmity (including temporary illness of parent or guardian)'. For the years 1963-1970 the category of incapacity comprises three separate headings: 'short-term illness of parent or guardian', 'long-term illness of parent or guardian', and 'confinement of mother'.

The prominence of short-stay cases was also noted by mid-century social researchers.[888] Among the 42 local authorities who returned Jean Packman's 1962 survey, 41% of all applicants and committals to care arose primarily because of mothers' confinements or parental short-term illness.[889] In contrast, fewer than 2% of all applicants and committals to care arose primarily because a child was subject to either cruelty or neglect.

The high turnover of short stay cases meant that at any one moment in time they comprised a very small proportion of the number of children in care. Despite accounting for more than half of all admissions over a 12 month period, when surveying the population of looked after children on a single day, the children of confined mothers or parents with short-term illnesses only comprised 6% of all cases. On the other hand, the number of all children committed to care in the preceding 12 months because their unmarried mother was unable to provide for them stood at 3%. However, this group of children actually accounted for 10% of all looked after children recorded on the same single day.[890] Table 8, below, illustrates that the reason for being admitted to care also informed the type of care provided.

Table 8: Care provided by reason for entering care[891]

Reason for entering care	Care Provided	
	Boarded out	Placed in Local Authority Home
Confinement of mother or guardian; Short-term illness of parents or guardian (up to six months)	36%	54%
Illegitimate (Mother unable to provide)	64%	22%

[888] Packman, *Child Care*, 29.
[889] Ibid., 37.
[890] Gray and Parr, *Children in Care and the Recruitment of Foster Parents*, 8.
[891] Ibid., 9.

Among the local authorities included in Gray and Parr's study, more than half of all children admitted to care because of the confinement of mother or guardian or the short-term illness of a parent or guardian were placed in local authority homes, compared to 22% of all cases of illegitimate children who were admitted because their mother was unable to provide for them. In fact, the Home Office encouraged local authorities to treat short- and long-term cases differently. Speaking in 1950, the Deputy Chief Inspector of the Home Office's Children's Department noted that 'it may not be practicable to provide separate accommodation for short and long term cases, but the long stay cases should be protected, as far as possible, from the disturbing effects of the frequent movement in and out of short stay children'.[892] Although, as shown in chapter four, boarding out was widely encouraged by policy makers in the immediate post-war period, among practitioners it was often thought to be unsuitable for short-term cases which represented the majority of all care admissions. The concerns of the Deputy Chief Inspector were consistent with the arguments of social workers, encountered in chapter four, who emphasised the importance of stability and the emotional distress that could be experienced by children who were taken away from individuals with whom they had developed a close bond. Implicit in the Deputy Chief Inspector's comments was the belief that children in long term care needed to be protected from developing an attachment to children who were expected to return to their parents, because the departure of children could cause emotional distress.

[892] KA: WC/W/2/17, The Place of the Residential Establishment in the Scheme of Child Care, an address given by Miss A. M. Scorrer to the Association of Hospital and Welfare Administrators, 22 June 1950, p. 6.

The criminal statistics, discussed in chapter two, continued to be collected through the post-war period. While children at the centre of these cases were not necessarily placed in care, these statistics serves as an important reminder of the need to distinguish between different types of abuse. Table 9, below, provides an overview of the number of cases which proceeded to go to court, the number of criminal convictions and the proportion of cases which resulted in a conviction, as broken down by the category of offence. The table presents two distinct trends. Between 1946 and 1970 the number of court proceedings which related to cases of cruelty to and neglect of children fell by nearly 70%. In contrast, during the same period, the number of court proceedings which concerned allegations of unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl rose by 146%. This trend was also noted by sections of the British press.[893] In 1958, for the first time, the latter category exceeded the number of court proceedings which related to cases of cruelty to and neglect of children. This trend continued for the remainder of the period. Despite this shift, there was surprisingly little concern amongst welfare professionals and policy makers over children's sexual vulnerability.[894] Writing in 1958, Nesta Wells, who worked as a police surgeon in Manchester, observed that although the Wolfenden Report 'brought homosexuality and prostitution into the headlines', heightened public interest did not extend to child sexual abuse.[895] Bingham has noted that newspapers' idealization of the family meant that sexual abuse committed within the family home 'was not an appealing subject, and it was generally addressed on an individual basis in 'problem columns' rather than in major feature articles'.[896]

[893] See, for example: 'General Decrease In Crime: More Sexual Offences', *The Manchester Guardian*, 29 July 1950, p. 4.
[894] Delap, '"Disgusting Details Which Are Best Forgotten"', 93.
[895] N. Wells, 'Sexual Offences as Seen by a Woman Police Surgeon', *British Medical Journal*, 2:5109 (1958), p. 1404.
[896] A. Bingham, *Family Newspapers?: Sex, Private Life, and the British Popular Press 1918-1978* (Oxford, 2009), p. 157.

Much like in the interwar period, welfare practitioners believed that only a minority of those who had been sexually abused disclosed their experience to the police 'largely because their parents fear publicity and the risk of increasing psychological trauma in an already disturbed child'. Writing in 1961, Nesta Wells, argued that in order to overcome parents' reluctance to report cases, 'the public should be asked to co-operate and report cases even when the man has disappeared'.[897] Pre-war concerns that children who had been sexually abused represented a danger to their peers also continued to inform the experiences of children who suffered sexual abuse in the post-war period.[898]

[897] N. Wells, 'Sexual Assaults on Children: Medical Aspects', *British Medical Journal*, 2:5267 (1961), pp. 1631, 1633.
[898] Delap, '"Disgusting Details Which Are Best Forgotten"', 88.

Table 9: Overview of Criminal Cases, in England and Wales, 1946-1970

Year	Cruelty to and neglect of children			Unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl under 13			Unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl between 13 and 16		
	Proceedings	Convictions	% of cases which resulted in conviction	Proceedings	Convictions	% of cases which resulted in conviction	Proceedings	Convictions	% of cases which resulted in conviction
1946	1,145	1,068	93%	51	46	90%	300	249	83%
1947	1,117	1,045	94%	65	60	92%	263	197	75%
1948	1,120	1,040	93%	44	39	89%	295	241	82%
1949	975	907	93%	62	59	95%	314	260	83%
1950	1,051	974	93%	70	66	94%	310	237	76%
1951	1,149	1,079	94%	76	68	89%	427	353	83%
1952	1,132	1,032	91%	70	65	93%	400	325	81%
1953	1,023	941	92%	83	78	94%	348	300	86%
1954	878	826	94%	79	74	94%	396	344	87%
1955	1,025	973	95%	91	84	92%	437	381	87%
1956	809	760	94%	67	66	99%	432	381	88%
1957	863	792	92%	101	99	98%	433	392	91%
1958	711	669	94%	93	90	97%	636	561	88%
1959	698	655	94%	87	87	100%	775	670	86%
1960	734	687	94%	98	95	97%	838	740	88%
1961	841	789	94%	89	85	96%	879	792	90%
1962	913	875	96%	96	95	99%	832	754	91%
1963	715	673	94%	66	61	92%	836	752	90%
1964	708	625	88%	68	66	97%	729	631	87%

Year	Cruelty to and neglect of children			Unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl under 13			Unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl between 13 and 16		
	Proceedings	Convictions	% of cases which resulted in conviction	Proceedings	Convictions	% of cases which resulted in conviction	Proceedings	Convictions	% of cases which resulted in conviction
1965	617	556	90%	86	76	88%	655	581	89%
1966	467	415	89%	92	81	88%	668	568	85%
1967	454	387	85%	104	91	88%	663	570	86%
1968	437	366	84%	93	88	95%	740	647	87%
1969	447	367	82%	100	91	91%	739	632	86%
1970	355	274	77%	88	77	88%	776	696	90%
Total	20,384	18,775	92%	2,019	1,887	93%	14,121	12,254	87%

While this chapter is primarily concerned with discussing the process by which national reforms to child protection services were implemented at the local level, it is important to acknowledge that some children continued to be abused once they had been placed in residential or foster care. In 1966, for example, it was revealed that a child, who had been placed in the care of Dorset County Council, had been sexually abused while living with a council approved foster family for three years. The case only came to light after the boy's father began a legal challenge to have his son removed from the Council's care.[899] Shortly after the case came to public attention, Roy Jenkins, the Home Secretary, ordered that a full inquiry be carried out.[900] The investigation subsequently concluded that 'although inspectors found no serious failures in the county's general standard of child care … the report does disclose some shortcomings', which the Home Secretary asked to discuss with the council as a matter of urgency.[901] Nearly 50 years later, in July 2014, Theresa May, while serving as Home Secretary, established an Independent inquiry into Child Abuse to 'consider whether public bodies— and other, non-state, institutions—have taken seriously their duty of care to protect children from sexual abuse'.[902] While the inquiry's scope is unprecedented, it is important to recognise that its focus is not.

Preparation Amidst Competing Priorities

Despite efforts to prepare for the arrival of the Children Act, the scale of the changes being introduced meant that some local authorities were unable to fully adopt the responsibilities allocated to the Children's Committee by the time the legislation was enacted on 5 July 1948. Several months before the Children Act was passed, local officials met to discuss how best to

[899] 'Scandal at Gaunts Common', *Daily Mail*, 28 January 1966, pp. 1, 10.
[900] 'Home Office to Hold Inquiry over Case of Assaulted Boy', *The Guardian*, 10 February 1966, p. 5.
[901] 'The Scandal of Gaunts Common', *Daily Mail*, 12 May 1966, p. 9.
[902] J. Crane, *Child Protection in England, 1960–2000: Expertise, Experience, and Emotion* (Basingstoke, 2018), p. 1.

prepare. In Birmingham, an interim committee was formed in May 1948. Its members included representatives of the health and education committees who were anticipated to serve on the Children's Committee once the Children Bill was enacted.[903] At the time responsibility for looked after children was dispersed among several different committees. Residential children's homes were managed by the Education Authority, while children who resided in Poor Law Institutions were the responsibility of the Public Assistance Committee. In Birmingham, a survey of existing services was conducted in order 'to know exactly the "load"' that the Children's Committee would be inheriting.[904] The interim committee was confident that many of the posts attached to the Children's Committee could be filled by staff who would be made redundant once the Poor Law had been abolished and planned to alert staff in all Council Departments to the opportunities available. In fact, all but one of the Children's Visitors appointed by the Department had previously worked for the Education and Welfare Departments.[905] From the outset, the Committee aimed to 'engage whenever possible … trained worker[s]' and anticipated that extra staff might be necessary in the event that unqualified employees needed to take time off to attend university courses.[906] Later that year, the Children's Committee agreed that the position of Children's Officer must be filled by someone 'holding a Social Science Diploma'.[907] The importance that officials in Birmingham attached to qualifications was consistent with the city's reputation of going beyond the statutory minimum and providing public services of a very high quality.

[903] BA: BCC/1/CT/1/1/1, Birmingham Interim Children's Committee Meeting, 10 May 1948.
[904] BA: BCC/1/CT/1/1/1, Memorandum Submitted by Councillor Mrs Murtagh to the Birmingham Children Interim Committee, 10 May 1948, pp. 3-4.
[905] BA: BCC/1/CT/1/1/2, Report of Reception Sub-Committee to the Children's Committee, 24 June 1949, p. 3.
[906] BA: BCC/1/CT/1/1/1, Memorandum Submitted by Councillor Mrs Murtagh to the Birmingham Children Interim Committee, 10 May 1948, p. 5.
[907] BA: BCC/1/CT/1/1/1, Report of the Finance and General Purposes Sub-Committee to the Children's Committee, 22 October 1948, p. 3.

A month earlier, in April 1948, Westmorland's officials received a report on the steps that needed to be taken before the break-up of the Poor Law and the formation of the Children's Committee. Much like in Birmingham, the Council planned to draw up a list of all property held by the council, with a view to 'determining which will be required by the welfare department and the children's department respectively'. Staff were also required to liaise with officials working in the Education, Health and Public Assistance Departments and arrange the transfer of children in their care to the Children's Committee. While the need to recruit additional staff was noted, the issue of training received no mention.[908] The omission of any reference to training was consistent with the approach adopted by Westmorland during the inter-war to invest limited resources in children's services.

The speed with which the Children Act was implemented varied considerably across the country. In Westmorland, the reallocation of responsibilities amongst the council's committees was relatively seamless. In Birmingham, on the other hand, the scale of services which fell within the remit of the Children's Department meant that it took longer for all the responsibilities to be allocated. While the Children Act, 1948, came into effect on the 5 July 1948 it was not until 1 February 1949 that the Children's Officer started his duties. The transfer of work from the Education Department was staggered across several months, over the course of 1949, while the Children's Department had to wait until May 1950 before it took control of seven nurseries previously run by the Health Department.[909] The growth in the Department's responsibilities was demonstrated by the expansion in the number of sub-committees. When the Children's Committee was first formed three Sub-Committees were

[908] KA: WC/W/A1568/Box 17/W/1/1, County Public Assistance Officers' Society, Notes on matters to which consideration will need to be given before the final break-up of the Poor Law, 28 April 1948, pp. 3, 6.
[909] BA: BCC/1/CT/1/1/1, Birmingham Children's Committee, Report of Children's Officer, 22 March 1949; Birmingham City Council, *Four Years*, 8, 99.

established.[910] Ten years later this number had risen to six Sub-Committees. While Sonia Jackson, whose professional background is in social work research, is right to identify the 1948 Act as a 'landmark' moment in the development of children's services, implementation of its most basic principles – such as amalgamating responsibilities in a single committee – took a considerable time to establish.[911]

Guiding Principles

The family unit

The family unit was commonly presented as the ideal means by which children should be brought up. The national consensus which formed around the value of family can be attributed to the disruption caused by the Second World War, in conjunction with the belief that the family represented the 'natural' means of raising children. In 1949 the Birmingham Children's Committee issued a policy report which argued that 'the family is the natural unit in society. It is doubtful whether children can fully develop … their mental, emotional and spiritual sides, if they are kept indefinitely in any other environment'.[912] The document made a clear case for returning children to their families wherever possible. The value of the family was also used to justify preventive work. Four years later, during a conference attended by representatives of Birmingham's Health and Children's Committees, the Town Clerk explained that 'the first aim of the Children's Committee, and … the [Children] Act itself, is to ensure that a family is kept together wherever possible'.[913]

[910] These were concerned with 'The Reception Centre', 'Institutional Management' and 'Finance and General Purposes'; see: BA: BCC/1/CT/1/1/1, Birmingham Interim Children's Committee Meeting, 31 May 1948.
[911] Jackson, 'Looking after Children Away from Home: Past and Present', 10.
[912] BA: BCC/1/CT/1/1/1, Children's Committee Policy Report, 22 February 1949.
[913] BA: BCC/1/CT/1/1/6, Conference of Representatives of the Children's and Health Committees, 29 June 1953.

In Westmorland, the importance of familial attachments was referred to much later. In 1973, the Director of Social Services responded to a letter that she had received from Mrs Andrews, a mother with two children, who was separated from her husband. Mrs Andrews's children had been living with her mother-in-law, and when this arrangement broke down the children were taken into the care of the council. The language adopted by the Director was heavily gendered. To allay Mrs Andrew's concerns that her husband would gain custody of their children, the Director noted that Mr Andrews had been 'contributing very little towards the [children's] keep'. This was significant because to gain custody of the children, the local authority needed to be assured that 'he [could] provide a suitable home'. These observations spoke to traditional notions of men as the sole providers for their wives and children.[914] The manner in which the Director encouraged Mrs Andrews to retain custody of her children was equally gendered:

> Please give careful thought to all your futures. The benefit and love you would gain would I am sure outweigh the disadvantages for yourself; for the children, the opportunity to grow up with a mother's love and care would be a big factor for their future development.[915]

A mother's love was presented as uniquely beneficial to children's development. While the Director emphasised that in the eyes of the law the couple were equal – 'you are legally as entitled as your husband to have the care of your children' – the qualities that they associated with a good mother and a good father were very different.[916] The value that the social worker placed on maternal love reveals a stark departure from the principles which informed nineteenth century child custody cases, when a child's moral welfare was afforded great

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[914] L. King, 'The Perfect Man: Fatherhood, Masculinity and Romance in Popular Culture in Mid-Twentieth-Century Britain'', in A. Harris and T. Jones, eds., *Love and Romance in Britain, 1918 - 1970*, (Basingstoke, 2014), p. 46.
[915] KA: WC/W/A1568/A1568/1, Letter from Director of Social Services, 2 April 1973.
[916] KA: WC/W/A1568/A1568/1, Letter from Director of Social Services, 2 April 1973.
For a discussion of the law concerning parental custody rights, see: Cretney, *Family Law in the Twentieth Century*, chap. 16.

importance.[917] One hundred years later, child welfare professionals were far more concerned with the emotional and developmental welfare of a child. This change, which reflected the growing influence of psychology, strengthened the position of women who were still assumed to be uniquely capable of caring for children.

For children who were taken into care, the family continued to serve as a reference point. In 1955 the Birmingham Children's committee reported that 'it has been the aim of the Committee to act towards the children in their care as a good parent might be expected to act', before detailing the additional spending that had been authorised to meet unexpected needs.[918] Special expenditure was often granted to support vocational training of children in care. Alternatively, children who were found to be musically gifted could be provided with funds for music and singing lessons.[919] The decision of officials in both Westmorland and Birmingham to spend money on the leisure pursuits of children in their care was consistent with the findings of post-war surveys which revealed that many working-class parents also paid for their children's leisure activities.[920]

Privacy

Privacy was understood to be an important component of family life. However, local authorities were not always clear on when it should be respected. In 1951, the Birmingham Children's Department decided to replace the wire netting, which surrounded one of the residential nurseries, with a close-boarded fence in order to 'give both staff and children the privacy which the average citizen would expect in his own garden'.[921] Providing staff and

[917] Ibid., 566.
[918] BA: BCC/1/CT/1/1/8, Children's Committee's Report, 20 September 1955, p. 372.
[919] BA: BCC/1/CT/1/1/8, Children's Committee, Report of the Child Care Sub-Committee, 28 October 1955.
[920] M. Carter, *Home, School and Work: A Study of the Education and Employment of Young People in Britain* (Oxford, 1962), p. 280.
[921] Birmingham City Council, *Four Years*, 108.

children with an environment similar to that experienced by the average citizen was not the only factor which informed this change. The decision was primarily motivated by the actions of 'more vociferous onlookers' who had 'not [been] slow in offering advice to the staff as to how they should treat the children in their care'. While certain members of the public considered themselves qualified to comment on how best children should be looked after, the actions of the Children's Committee suggest this advice was not welcomed. The privacy enjoyed by 'the average citizen' was viewed as a necessary defence against the unwelcome intrusion of members of the public.

At times child welfare professionals struggled to agree on how much privacy children in care should be given. In October 1955, a representative of Birmingham Council attended a meeting of the Midland's Branch of the Association of Approved School Managers. Part way through the meeting Mrs Hopkin, who worked at a local Approved School, raised the issue of censoring children's mail. Hopkin believed that censorship, 'unless absolutely essential', should 'not be encouraged as it was not typical of the treatment of adolescents in a normal family life' and so 'did not represent good training for the boys'. The meeting's chairman, however, noted that 'a considerable amount of information about family affairs could be gleaned from scrutiny of the boys' mail'. A colleague of Mrs Hopkin brought the matter to a close by arguing that 'the ideal arrangement towards which we should all work should be that boys should bring letters voluntarily to the staff to read in a state of complete confidence'.[922] This position was remarkably like the Curtis Report's hope that 'the Children's Officer would be so well known … that individual difficulties would be brought to her [sic] as a matter of course'.[923] While it is not clear how often, if at all, this aspiration was fulfilled, this

[922] BA: MS/994/12, Association of Managers of Schools Approved by the Secretary of State, Midland Branch, 24 October 1955.
[923] *Report of the Care of Children Committee*, 147.

discussion brought to light some important wider issues. The importance of emulating a 'normal family life' – something that led Hopkin to oppose censorship – was a central aspect of child protection efforts. The value attributed to being able to subtly observe families' interactions, noted by the chairman, exemplified the state's willingness to invade the privacy of others in the name of protecting children.

An Inadequate Inheritance

The delivery of child protection services in the immediate post-war period was heavily informed by structural problems which limited the implementations of reforms advocated for by non-governmental organisations such as the Women's Group on Public Welfare. The ability of both local authorities to fulfil their responsibilities, under the Children Act 1948, were limited by wider economic factors. A combination of post-war housing shortages and the actions of sections of the public limited local authorities' efforts to emulate the family. The sections that follow examine these problems, before discussing the strategies used to tackle them. These insights help historians to better understand the implementation of child protection policies and responds to Todd's call for historians to pay closer attention to the relationship between discourse and experience in post-war Britain.[924]

Overcrowding

Both authorities inherited residential homes that were severely overcrowded.[925] In February 1949 the Erdington Children's Homes, in Birmingham, were visited by a Home Office Inspector. He was concerned to discover that each of the cottage homes contained sixteen beds, when 'to conform to modern standards of child health and hygiene' the homes should

[924] S. Todd, 'Family Welfare and Social Work in Post-War England, c.1948–c.1970', *The English Historical Review*, 129:537 (2014), p. 364.
[925] Birmingham City Council, *Four Years*, 70–71.

not have had more than twelve. The Children's Committee were urged to act as soon as possible to address the 'serious overcrowding' and instructed to report to the Secretary of State with proposals for doing so.[926] A later report raised serious concerns about the hygiene of the homes and noted that 'the general standard of cleanliness was not good' with 'the clothes of a bed-wetter found lying about'.[927] These findings would not have come as a surprise. In June 1948 Birmingham officials convened a special committee to discuss the long-term future of the city's two Cottage Homes. At the time the Erdington Homes were accommodating 317 children, with a further 226 children housed at Shenley Home. The plan was to reduce these figures to 200 and 120 respectively.[928] Overcrowding was attributed to several post-war changes. In September 1949, the Children's Officer reported that:

> My officers feel that more people are inclined to look to the Children's Committee for the temporary or permanent care of children … [because] it is becoming increasingly known that desertion of children is no longer a punishable offence.[929]

The Officer's remarks help to explain the sudden rise in children entering care in the immediate post-war period. Despite the expansion in local authorities' services, the attitudes of the public could disrupt officials' efforts to ensure that children were only admitted when 'there [was] no possibility of making other arrangements'.[930] An increase in the number of children entering care would not necessarily have resulted in overcrowding, had there been enough space to receive additional referrals. It is significant that the availability of foster carers did not keep pace with the increase in referrals. A year earlier, the Interim Children's Committee blamed 'the over-crowded situation' in each of the Cottage Homes on a 'shortage

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[926] BA: BCC/1/CT/1/1/1, Letter to Town Clerk from H.J. Bacon, 11 February 1949; BA: BCC/1/CT/1/1/2, Letter to Town Clerk from T. Fitzgerald, 11 May 1949.
[927] BA: BCC/1/CT/1/1/2, Children's Committee, Homes Sub-Committee, Report of Medical Officer of Health, 12 January 1950.
[928] BA: BCC/1/CT/1/1/1, Education Committee, Special Schools Sub-Committee, Cottage Homes, Long-Term Policy, 6 June 1948, p. 32.
[929] BA: BCC/1/CT/1/1/2, Children's Committee, Report of Children's Officer, 20 September 1949.
[930] BA: BCC/1/CT/1/1/6, Conference of Representatives of the Children's and Health Committees, 29 June 1953.

of foster homes'.[931] People's unwillingness to become foster parents, which was attributed to fatigue caused by evacuation, observed in chapter three, had a knock-on effect for children who were taken into care and increasingly found themselves placed in overcrowded residential institutions.

Overcrowding was also identified as a problem in Westmorland. In 1949, the Medical Officer of Health visited Abbey Home, the County's only local authority run home. They were concerned to find the 'beds in the dormitories' were 'overcrowd[ed] … to a gross and dangerous extent'.[932] Several months earlier, Abbey Home had been visited by a Home Office inspector who found it to be 'seriously overcrowded' and recommended that steps should be taken to 'raise the standard of comfort in the dormitories and render them more attractive'.[933] Officials in Westmorland interpreted these comments in light of the Curtis Report. In 1949 the superintendent of Abbey Home concluded a report detailing his concerns by arguing that 'only drastic support and fundamental action can reprieve this state of affairs, and will allow us an opportunity to approach the task of trying to implement the main recommendations embodied in the Curtis Report'.[934] The salience of the report was likely to have been enhanced by the fact that the Home had been inspected by members of the Curtis Inquiry Committee.[935] The superintendent's remarks reveal that the appetite for reform provoked by the Curtis Report transcended the House of Commons and informed the attitudes of those who would be directly affected by the proposed changes.

[931] BA: BCC/1/CT/1/1/1, Birmingham Interim Children's Committee Meeting, 31 May 1948.
[932] KA: WC/W/A1568/Box 37/8, Letter to Children's Officer from Medical Officer of Health , 27 January 1949.
[933] KA: WC/W/A1568/Box 41/8, Letter to Clerk of Westmorland County Council from H.J. Bacon, 11 October 1948.
[934] KA: WC/W/A1568/Box 37/8, Report on 9 boys absconding from Abbey Home on Sunday, 2 January 1949.
[935] KA: WC/W/A1568/Box 37/10, Abbey Home, Superintendent's Half-Yearly Report for December Half-Year, 1945.

Despite clear enthusiasm for change, problems persisted. In 1951 the Chairman of the Children's Committee reported that the Home was 'happier than ever before' because of changes introduced by the new Matron and Superintendent: 'corporal punishment has practically disappeared, the diet is revised, the children decently clothed, much internal decoration done'. Despite these improvements, however, structural problems remained: 'the sanitary and washing accommodation is not up to the Home standard'.[936] These remarks support Edgerton's assertion that 'the great legislative activity of the late 1940s, important as it was in establishing new universal system … should not be confused with a massive expansion of welfare spending'. In fact, apart from retirement pensions, the government did not spend significantly more on social services after 1948 than it had done before 1939.[937] Delays in implementing welfare reforms were observed in other services. Scholars of post-war education have also noted that it took a very long time for the principles set out in the 1944 Education Act to be realised in practice.[938]

In addition to health concerns, overcrowded cottage homes were blamed for limiting the social development of children and undermining efforts to emulate family life. In 1949, the Homes Sub-Committee of the Birmingham Children's Department complained that 'owing to the present state of over-crowding in the Cottage Homes … children [are unable] to invite friends to tea', an activity which was associated with a normal childhood.[939] Several years later, Birmingham's Children's Officer was pleased to report that the reduction in overcrowding had allowed staff to 'give much more personal attention to each individual child in their care'.[940] The concerns that the Curtis Committee expressed regarding the lack of

[936] KA: WC/W/A1568/Box 41/29, Children Committee, Long-Term Plan for Children's Home, May 1951.
[937] Edgerton, *The Rise and Fall*, 243.
[938] Edgerton, 'War, Reconstruction, and the Nationalization of Britain, 1939–1951', 32.
[939] BA: BCC/1/CT/1/1/1, Report of the Homes Sub-Committee to the Children's Committee, [n.d. 1949].
[940] Birmingham City Council, *Four Years*, 113.

individual attention shown to children in residential care were shared by, and motivated, staff working in Birmingham's Children's Department.

Overcrowded conditions harmed staff retention, which in turn destabilised the care provided to children in the Cottage Homes. In September 1949, the Birmingham Children's Officer noted that 'staff [are] leaving because of the overcrowded conditions'. At the time, approximately half of all the posts associated with the Shenley Fields Cottage Homes were vacant.[941] Those who did remain were required to take on more work.[942] The same year, the Children's Officer urged more to be done to tackle overcrowding and pointed out that doing so would allow staff at the Erdington home to 'find it much easier to settle down to creating family life within its cottages since its population would be much more stable than is the case at present'.[943] This concern with stability was consistent with the Home Office's belief that children's homes should aim to produce 'stable' future citizens. Children were perceived to be products of the environment in which they were raised.[944]

The connection between staff morale and overcrowding was also noted in Westmorland. In 1949, the Westmorland Children's Committee predicted staff would leave unless they were 'comfortably housed, with reasonable facilities for leisure and entertaining friends'. Staff resignations were understood to have a direct impact on wellbeing of looked after children since 'the happiness of the children' was thought to depend on the quality of staff employed

[941] BA: BCC/1/CT/1/2, Children's Committee Meeting, 23 September 1949.
[942] BA: BCC/1/CT/1/2, Children's Committee, Homes Sub-Committee, 12 January 1950.
[943] BA: BCC/1/CT/1/1/2, Children's Committee, Supplementary Report of Children's Officer, 22 July 1949.
[944] CA: CA/C/6/167, Memorandum by the Home Office on the Conduct of Children's Homes, July 1951, pp. 3, 7.

to look after them.[945] This assumption shows how the principles of the Curtis Report informed local authorities' working practices.[946]

Responses

The ways in which overcrowding, and the associated problems, were addressed, and the related difficulties that emerged, reveal important discrepancies between the aspirations of policy makers and the services provided to those in need. These discrepancies require historians to rethink how we conceptualise the development of the post-war welfare state.

Residential provision

In Birmingham, the problem of overcrowding in the Cottage Homes was largely tackled by increasing the number of residential beds available, across several different sites. This strategy was adopted even though the Curtis Committee, and the accompanying Children Act, set out a clear preference for foster care. This approach is all the more significant because in the inter-war years the City Council successfully encouraged greater use of foster care. In September 1949, the City's Children's Department negotiated to lease Middlemore House. The property had previously served as the main premises of Middlemore Emigration Society. While child migration continued in the post-war period, it did so in such small numbers that Middlemore could no longer justify use of the building.[947]

The use of the Middlemore House was complemented by the construction of several family homes. By the early 1952 six such properties had become available.[948] These homes were

[945] KA: WC/W/A1568/Box 41/26, Children's Committee, Planning Sub-Committee, Memorandum from the Children's Officer, 1949.
[946] *Training in Child Care: Interim Report of the Care of Children Committee*, 2.
[947] Birmingham City Council, *Four Years*, 71.
[948] Ibid., 72.

described by Birmingham's Children's Officer as a 'further advance in the technique of child care'. The scheme was premised on the belief that it was better for children to live in small family units which were clearly part of a larger community of ordinary families. Earlier in 1948, the city's Hostel and Boarding Out Sub-Committee noted that 'annual holidays have been great events in the lives of the boys … the boys gained most by being able to mix with youths from other towns, particularly those who came from normal homes'.[949] These aims aligned with the Curtis Report's recommendation that local authorities develop 'scattered' homes, which would comprise 'an ordinary house in a street', so that children could be 'more readily absorbed into the life of the neighbourhood'.[950]

In Birmingham, family homes were designed to replace the Cottage Homes that the Children's Department inherited. The Cottage Homes had been founded in the late nineteenth century by the city's Board of Guardians.[951] They were designed to accommodate between twelve and twenty children, with each group managed by a housemother and an assistant. While children were meant to live in smaller, family-inspired, units, because the cottages collectively accommodated several hundred children, institutional qualities were noted in the early post-war-years. Food and clothing was purchased on a wholesale basis by a superintendent who was not living with the children. The Cottage Homes residents had very limited contact with the wider community, something that was considered detrimental to the social wellbeing of children who 'would have to fend for themselves once they came to adolescence'.[952] Learning how to interact with the wider community was presented as an important life skill that Cottage Homes failed to instil. Those who remained in Cottage

[949] BA: BCC/1/CT/1/1, 'Report of the Hostels and Boarding Out Sub-Committee, December 1948.
[950] *Report of the Care of Children Committee*, 164.
[951] *Annual Report to the City of Birmingham Education Committee of the School Medical Officer, for the Year Ended 31st December 1932*, 34–35.
[952] Birmingham City Council, *Four Years*, 123–124.

Homes were encouraged to participate in organised youth groups, such as the Scouts and Guides, which provided them with 'outside contact' thought to characterise a 'normal home life'.[953] This assumption implies that a 'normal home life' extended beyond familial forms of care to encompass wider socialisation.

Family homes were designed to be different from the Cottage Homes that the Children's Committee inherited, as they were not grouped together. By isolating the family homes it was hoped that children could more easily integrate with the surrounding community. House parents were given full responsibility for sourcing food and clothing, as well as arranging holidays and other activities.[954] These changes were designed to allow the homes to more closely emulate family life. Birmingham's Children Committee was keen to emphasise the success of the scheme. In 1953, the council published a report entitled *The First Four Years* which detailed the first four years of the Children's Committee. Part-way through the book, the Children's Officer cited the example of a house mother whose was approached by a neighbour and asked which of the eight children was her own son: 'a sure sign that the parents treat the committee's children as they do their own'.[955] While the Children's Officer had a clear professional interest in presenting the Department in a positive light, the use of this anecdote indicates that family models of care continued to provide the bench mark against which care arrangements were assessed.[956]

The recommendations of experts were, however, vulnerable to being undermined by the attitudes of other children. This has important implications for future studies of child protection; the peers of looked after children could be just as influential as the professionally

[953] BA: BCC/1/CT/1/2, Letter to Town Clerk from T. Fitzgerald, 11 May 1949.
[954] Birmingham City Council, *Four Years*, 123–124.
[955] Ibid., 125.
[956] BA: BCC/1/CT/1/1/12, Children's Committee's Report, 2 February 1960.

trained staff who cared for them. Oral histories collected from people who were in care in the post-war period makes it possible to gain a better sense of children's experiences of living in the family homes. While the house mother's neighbour may have struggled to differentiate between the children under her care, oral testimonies from individuals who grew up in the city's family homes suggests that looked after children still felt different. Rosie Butler was taken into care around the age of 5, in the mid-1950s. To begin with, Rosie lived in one of the cottages attached to the Erdington Cottage Homes.[957] At the age of 13 she was transferred to one of the new family homes built by the Council:

> Rosie: They started changing it so that we would be normal - a normal upbringing – which meant going to family homes … the children that were in my home were all taken to a home in a normal street which was then a family house … [T]hey made it as normal as they could in the respect that we still went out to school but when you came home from school you didn't go out to play with the local children, you still came home to the home. So your normal was school.

Rosie's recollection of this move illustrates the limits to what could be achieved by a change in surroundings. At first the interviewer was told that to be 'normal … meant going to family homes … in a normal street', however, the emphasis quickly shifts so that normality was associated with attending the local school, 'so your normal was school'. Rosie's suggestion that the staff 'made it as normal as they could', implies that some of the children who were placed in family homes continued to feel different. Part of the reason why Rosie felt different derived from her encounters with other children whose behaviour the family home staff had very limited control over:

> Interviewer: If someone at your school had had a birthday party after school could you have gone?
>
> Rosie: On the odd occasion, but the children at school probably won't ask you anyway. Because you weren't the normal average child. You weren't. You were different from them.

[957] BA: MS2838/1/1/3, Interview with RB, edited transcript, p.1.

It is possible that had Rosie been a 'normal average child' she would still not have been invited to the birthday parties of some classmates. Reflecting many years later, however, she was in no doubt that her exclusion was closely related to her status as a looked after child.[958] Rosie's account reminds us that the assumptions of adults, particularly when documented in books, such as *The First Four Years*, which were to designed to present children's services in a positive light, should be treated with caution. While looked after children like Rosie may have appeared, to certain adults, as if they were 'normal', the actions of their peers could serve to reinforce a sense of being different, despite the best efforts of staff to provide them with a 'normal' upbringing.

Westmorland also adopted a family group home model. In May 1955, the Children's Officer submitted the names of eight children, who had previously lived in Abbey Home, to transfer to a new Family Group Home located at 27a Greenbank Road, Ambleside.[959] The following year Abbey Home was closed and converted into an Old Person's Home.[960] After the children were relocated the Town Clerk discussed a memorandum that he had received regarding Family Group Homes. In response, it was decided that 'as much freedom as possible' should be given to the house mother when purchasing supplies, in much the same way that a mother would have freedom to purchase household essentials.[961] This resolution was honoured a year later when the committee gave the housemother of Greenbank Home the authority to allow

[958] BA: MS2838/1/1/3, Interview with MS, edited transcript, p. 2.
[959] KA: WC/C/7/A797/1, Abbey Home Committee, 9 May 1955.
Child care officers in Durham adopted a similar approach and agreed, in 1954, to close the county large children's home in favour of 25 small family group homes. See: 'Children's Homes in Durham', *The County Councils Association*, 49:5 (1956), pp. 107–108.
[960] KA: WC/W/A1568/Box 38/5, Letter to Clerk of the Council from the Under-Secretary of State, 28 August 1956.
[961] KA: WC/C/7/A797/1, Children's Accounts, Supplies and Recoveries Sub-Committee, 17 February 1955.

children to swim in a nearby lake at her discretion.[962] The transfer of power, away from local authority committees and towards house parents, was designed to better emulate the family environment. Noting this transfer advances our understanding of the power held by local authority officials. Indeed, as Martin Daunton has noted, 'a central theme in the analysis of modern British history is the shifting boundary between the central and local state'.[963] To date, much of the attention has been concerned with the transfer of power, towards Whitehall at the expense of local authorities.[964] Harris has argued that 'legislation after the Second World War created in Britain one of the most uniform, centralized, [and] bureaucratic … welfare systems … in the modern world'.[965] While this is true, it is important not to overlook the practical ways in which local authority committees ceded power to individual house parents, in an effort to better replicate family dynamics.

Opposition to Westmorland Council's efforts to transition away from large children's homes indicated that a reluctance to invest in children's services, observed in the inter-war period, persisted into the post-war years. The progressive changes enacted during the Second World War, discussed in chapter three, were not accompanied by significant changes in attitude among councillors and the people they were elected to serve. In 1953, Kendal Town Council narrowly voted to oppose the sale of a site on a housing estate to the County Council for the construction of a small group home for children in care. Kendal Town Councillor F. T. Long, who led the opposition, explained that 'if we sell them land for these grandiose schemes formulated by cranks we are only encouraging extravagance'. Long argued that the land

[962] KA: WC/C/7/A797/1, Greenbank Sub-Committee, 27 June 1956.
[963] Daunton, 'Payment and Participation', 170.
[964] Sackville, *The Association of Child Care Officers*, 2.
For contemporary discussion of this issue, see: Hansard HL Debate vol 177 col 1052 (15 July 1952).
[965] J. Harris, 'Political Thought and the Welfare State 1870-1940: An Intellectual Framework for British Social Policy', *Past & Present*, 135 (1992), p. 116.

would be better used to provide homes for some of the 900 people on the housing waiting list.[966]

The Councillors, however, were not alone; an editorial produced at the time observed that, 'if a cross section of public opinion were obtained it would undoubtedly fully support the views [of Long]'. Earlier, in 1952, Westmorland County Council discussed whether to replace the Abbey Home with four decentralized group homes. While the proposals were narrowly passed, opponents complained that smaller homes were 'bound to involve an increase in public costs'.[967] This position was supported by the local paper, whose editor argued that the Home was well run and suggested that 'Were the Abbey Home a relic of Dickensian times … public opinion would readily rally to the proposed arrangement'.[968] This position belied the fact that professional best practice held that local authorities should seek to do more than merely avoid Dickensian conditions. The strength of opposition in Westmorland – among town councillors, county councillors, and members of the public – reveals that the welfare of looked after children competed with other concerns. Not only could public opinion be at odds with the recommendations of child care professionals, this opposition could serve to delay the introduction of reforms which were thought to be in the best interest of children. Social workers later complained that decisions were being reached based on political, rather than professional, priorities. In 1968, Robert Holman, a social work lecturer at the University of Birmingham, alleged that councillors in an unnamed authority 'recently … favoured the return of eight children to a mother, not because it would benefit the children but because it would ease the burden on the rates'. [969] Our understanding of the 'welfare state' needs to recognize that what was widely perceived as best practice amongst welfare professionals was

[966] KA: WC/W/A1568/Box/38/2, 'No Children's Home on Kendal Housing Estate', [n.d. 1953]
[967] KA: WC/W/A1568/Box/38/2, *Westmorland Gazette,* Editorial, 11 April 1953.
[968] KA: WC/W/A1568/Box/38/2, *Westmorland Gazette,* Editorial, 11 April 1953.
[969] R. Holman, 'Beyond Seebohm', *The Guardian*, 25 March 1968, p. 4.

not always welcomed by certain local officials, and their electors, who understood the role of government to be more limited.

Boarding Out

Greater use of boarding out was also mooted as a means of reducing the levels of overcrowding. Indeed, as shown in chapter 4, following the recommendations of the Curtis Report, foster care was widely encouraged in the post-war period though to the 1960s. The extent to which this was achieved, however, varied considerably. Boarding out figures from 1949 show that while some authorities fostered nearly three-quarters of all their looked after children, other struggled to find homes for 10% of such cases.[970] Westmorland and Birmingham occupied two extremes. In the former county boarding out was credited with helping to reduce, and eventually remove, the need for additional residential homes. In the latter, the desire to increase the proportion of looked after children in foster care proved difficult to realise in practice. These discrepancies were in part the result of differences in the number of children who had been boarded out prior to the outbreak of the Second World War. Birmingham's success at increasing the number of children in foster care during the interwar period meant that it struggled to find additional homes for the remaining children after the conflict. In Westmorland, on the other hand, very few children had been boarded out prior to the Second World War. The county's experience of evacuation, which resulted in the council appointing its first full time social worker, helped the Council to develop a greater expertise in fostering children, which was then put to use in the post-war period.

[970] KA: WC/W/A1568/Box 41/4, Conference of Chairmen of Children's Committee and Children's Officer, Opening Address by the Home Secretary, 4 April 1951.

In 1951 the chairman of the Westmorland Children Committee set out a long-term plan for the Children's Homes. The proposals, which sought to reflect the findings of the Curtis Committee, recommended that that the Council 'continue to encourage boarding' since it was 'best for the child'. The chairman was pleased to note that 'by great efforts and much propaganda we have doubled our boarded-out children and no child has gone from Brantfield [nursery] to Abbey Home for a considerable time'.[971] Indeed, between 1948 and 1951 the number of children boarded out rose from 10 to 29, while the population of Abbey Home halved to 30.[972] This trend continued into the 1960s, each year saw a rise in the number of foster placements while the overall number of looked after children declined.[973] By 1960, Westmorland decided that, in light of the large number of children boarded out, it was no longer necessary to keep the Greenbank Family Home open. The Children's Committee closed the Home for a trial period of six months after it had come to an arrangement with some local foster parents, who agreed to accept children immediately on request. The arrangement was a success and the Home never re-opened.[974] In Westmorland, the virtues of boarding out were thought to extend beyond the welfare of children to benefiting rate payers more generally. Westmorland's success at increasing the number of foster homes was singled out for praise in 1962, when the Home Office Children's Department conducted a survey of the care provided to looked after children in the county. Along with complementing the rise in foster placements, the inspector found that there was 'now too much fieldwork for one person to cover'. It was therefore recommended that a child care officer be appointed to assist the children's officer to manage the work of boarding out children.[975]

[971] KA: WC/W/A1568/Box 41/29, Children Committee, Long-term plan for Children's Homes, May 1951.
[972] KA: WC/C/7/A797/1, Children's Planning Sub-Committee, 15 December 1955.
[973] KA: WC/C/7/A797/1, Westmorland Children's Committee Meeting, 4 January 1956; Westmorland Children's Committee Meeting, 2 May 1961.
[974] KA: WC/C/7/A797/1, Children Committee Minutes, 13 April 1960.
[975] KA: WC/C/7/A797/1, Children Committee Minutes, 19 April 1962.

While boarding out was credited with reducing the need for residential care in Westmorland, it proved a much less successful solution in Birmingham because of broader social changes. The comparatively limited contribution made by boarding out was not for lack of trying, however. In 1948, a meeting of the City's Interim Children's Committee observed that 'the Boarding-Out Visitor will be the King-pin on which the success of finding [children foster homes] rests'.[976] Enthusiasm for boarding out was accompanied by caution. Birmingham's Chief Education Officer was keen to dispel the impression that boarding out represented a silver bullet to the issue of overcrowding. In a report issued by the Education Committee, the Officer noted that:

> While [more boarding out] may appear to be a solution in theory, it is necessary to bear in mind that a vigorous boarding out policy is already pursued in Birmingham, and that children in the Cottage Homes constitute the residue for whom no foster homes can be found.[977]

It was recognised that not all children would be suitable for foster care and so there would be limits to what could be achieved by boarding out alone. Internally, officials acknowledged that there were often more children who could be fostered than adults who were able but unwilling to take them. This is most clearly evidenced by ongoing discussions regarding how best to incentivise more people to volunteer as foster parents. Beginning in 1950, Birmingham staff attended, and arranged, a series of meetings with representatives of local authorities in the Birmingham area, to discuss the allowances paid to families who received foster children. Proponents of increased rates often argued that doing so could persuade otherwise reluctant adults to come forward as volunteers.[978] In 1956, Birmingham Councillor Mrs Edith Wright, who was Chairman of the City's Children's Committee, argued that 'more

[976] BA: BCC/1/CT/1/1, The Children (Interim) Sub-Committee, 24 May 1948, p. 5.
[977] BA: BCC/1/CT/1/1, Education Committee, Special Schools Sub-Committee, Cottage Homes: Long-Term Policy, 6 June 1948.
[978] The connection between the rates paid and the recruitment and retention of foster parents predated the post-war reforms, but was subject to far more discussion once the Children Act, 1948, had been passed, see: BA: MS/517/248. Application Book 4, 15 April 1933.

foster homes could be found … but not unless the scales of payment were such that foster parents could meet the child's needs'. That increased rates would encourage people to come forward was noted in other parts of the country. In 1956 the Children's Officer of West Riding recommended that the rates paid to foster parents be raised because 'such revision would materially assist in the campaign to increase the number of children boarded out'.[979] Wright was also concerned that unless the rates were increased:

> Many people who would otherwise be willing to take a child into their home would refrain from offering their services because they could not themselves afford the additional costs involved.[980]

The 1950s have been characterized as a time of increasing affluence for most Britons.[981] The remarks of West Riding's Children's Officer, which occurred amidst the rapid growth in ownership of consumer appliances, suggest important limits to post-war affluence, but also the perceived impact that these limits had on looked after children. Further study is needed to explain why, at a time when many Britons were economically more prosperous than ever before, people were unwilling to become foster parents 'because they could not themselves afford the additional costs involved'. The work of Todd and Young offers one explanation, namely that families used their affluence to subsidise the leisure pursuits of their teenage children in order to provide them with an easier life than was experienced by the pre-war generation. Todd and Young's work provides evidence to suggest that the expansion of youth culture, partly funded by parental generosity, may have deterred some families from volunteering as foster parents.[982]

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[979] BA: WC/W/A1568/Box 41/12, Children's Department Staffing, *Hospital and Social Service Journal*, [n.d. 1956].
[980] BA: BCC/1/CT/1/1/8, Conference of Representatives of Local Authorities in the Birmingham Area, Boarding Out Allowances, 17 January 1956.
[981] A. Offer, 'Consumption and Affluence, c.1870-2010', in R. Floud, J. Humphries, and P. Johnson, eds., *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Britain: 1870 to the Present*, vol. 2, (Cambridge, 2014), p. 209.
[982] S. Todd and H. Young, 'Baby-Boomers to "Beanstalkers": Making the Modern Teenager in Post-War Britain', *Cultural and Social History*, 9:3 (2012), p. 452.

The discussions that took place concerning boarding out rates also revealed a faith in the ability of council staff, on the part of their elected colleagues. In 1956 attendees of a regional planning meeting, chaired by Wright, acknowledged that an increase in the rates could 'encourage the wrong type of person to act as a foster parent'. Councillors, however, were confident that 'local authorities could rely on their visiting staff to ensure that this did not happen'.[983] This confidence was consistent with the value ascribed to the boarding-out visitor by the interim Children's Committee and suggested a high degree of faith in the ability of staff to protect children.[984] Four years later, the Child Care Sub-Committee noted that the best person to oversee boarding out arrangements would ideally have 'experience in the district' and have developed 'good contacts there', contacts which, we can assume, were expected to help them to avoid placing children with 'the wrong type of people'.[985]

The faith placed in visiting staff was preceded by the decision, in response to revisions made to the Boarding Out Rules in 1948, to replace volunteer visitors with staff who were employed by the council.[986] This move, which reflected a growing professionalization of foster care, proved controversial. Prior to the changes, children under the care of the Birmingham Council had been boarded out in Bewdley, a town approximately 20 miles from the city. The care of children fostered in Bewdley had been overseen by a group of philanthropic women who were responsible for visiting them and distributing payments to foster parents. On being told that they would no longer be able to handle Birmingham City Council money, the group's members disbanded in protest at having their 'authority'

[983] BA: BCC/1/CT/1/1/8, Conference of Representatives of Local Authorities in the Birmingham Area, Boarding Out Allowances, 17 January 1956.
[984] BA: BCC/1/CT/1/1, The Children (Interim) Sub-Committee, 24 May 1948, p. 5.
[985] BA: BCC/1/CT/1/1/12, Children's Committee, Child Care Sub-Committee, 18 December 1959.
[986] BA: BCC/1/CT/1/1, Report of the Reception Sub-Committee to the Children's Committee, 25 February 1949.

removed.[987] The professionalization of social work, which saw local authorities acquire responsibility for roles previously undertaken by voluntary groups, was interpreted as an affront by long established philanthropic groups whose working practices lagged behind contemporary thinking.

Despite calls for more trained social workers, many residential staff continued to object to practices recommended by child protection experts. In April 1951, Westmorland's Children's Officer attended a conference which brought together the Chairmen of Children's Committees and Children's Officers. John Ross, who served as head of the Home Office Children's Department, from 1947 to 1955, was one of the conference speakers. Ross acknowledged that although 'boarding out … was accepted as the best form of care' by many, there was still a need to overcome 'opposition' which was found among some of the staff who worked in children's homes.[988] These remarks reveal that the aversion to boarding out, among some residential staff, which was observed in the inter-war period, continued. Two years later a meeting was convened by the County Councils Association's Children and Welfare Sub-Committee at which similar concerns were implied. While the Sub-Committee was supportive of boarding children out, wherever possible, it acknowledged that 'there is a fairly general … reluctance on the part of matrons and staff of children's homes to part with their more intelligent and attractive children'. Despite how widely the Curtis Report was referenced by senior managers, who comprised the audience for Ross's speech and the attendees of the Sub-Committee, among certain sections of the workforce its recommendations were not fully supported.

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[987] BA: BCC/1/CT/1/1, Children's Committee, 25 March 1949; 3 May 1949.
For a more sanitized account of proceedings, see: Birmingham City Council, *Four Years*, 92.
[988] KA: WC/W/A1568/Box 41/4, Conference of Chairmen of Children's Committee and Children's Officer, Opening Address by the Home Secretary, 4 April 1951.
'Obituary: Mr John Ross', *The Times*, 8 December 1967, p. 12.

Against this background, of competing understandings of how best to care for children in need, Birmingham, which had historically been a pioneer in foster care provision, struggled to find more foster parents. While the number of foster care placements did increase, foster care as a proportion of all forms of care provided to looked after children declined. This can be seen in the table below, which sets out the number of children who were boarded out and the proportion of all children were placed in foster care, as a proportion of all looked after children. By the end of the 1960s, Birmingham's boarding out rate was among the lowest in the country. In 1969, it was reported that Birmingham was boarding out 38% of all the children in its care, compared to figures of 53% in nearby Wolverhampton and 54% in Solihull.[989]

Table 10: Birmingham foster placements [990]

	1954	1956	1964	1966	1970
Total number of foster placements	467	439	535	673	818
Foster placements as a percentage of all looked after children	34.9%	33.3%	31.1%	33.3%	31.7%

In 1959 a report issued by Birmingham City Council's Technical Committee noted that 'Birmingham have [sic] rather less than 500 foster homes and consider they need at least double this number'. The lack of foster homes was attributed to the fact that the City was 'enjoying full employment and there is a constant demand from industry for married women for part-time work'. By contrast, in 1954 an attendee at a conference on child care from

[989] 'Report on Fostered Children', *Birmingham Daily Post*, 6 March 1969.
[990] BA: BCC/1/CT/1/1/22, Birmingham Children's Committee, Statistical Returns, 1 April 1969.

Northumberland was reported to have observed that 'her authority was fortunate in getting plenty of foster parents, perhaps because of the low percentage of women in that county who went to work after marriage'.[991] These observations may also help to explain the expansion in foster care provision in Westmorland, whose socioeconomic profile was very similar to Northumberland. In 1955 it was estimated that married women comprised nearly a fifth of the total industrial labour force in the Midlands.[992]

Even families which had successfully been vetted could prove unsatisfactory. In 1948, the Lord Mayor of Birmingham and the Chairman of the City's Education Committee issued a joint appeal, through the press, for foster-homes. Initially, the appeal appeared a great success. A further 78 homes were approved to serve as foster parents. As time went on, however, a large proportion of the foster-placements broke down, so that approximately half of all the children were returned and had to be allocated to different families.[993] These figures foreshadowed similar findings, observed in chapter four, reported in the 1960s. That such a large proportion of approved homes subsequently broke down suggests that councillors' confidence in professional staff was not always well placed.[994]

Class and Looked After Children

With the above in mind, class was often used to determine the suitability of foster parents' applications. In 1949 the Westmorland Children's Committee agreed that 'more children could be boarded out if suitable homes were available'. However, it was reluctant to canvass for more foster parents through press advertisements since 'this is generally considered to be

[991] 'Birmingham's Experience of Child Care', *The Birmingham Post*, 29 April 1954, p. 3.
[992] 'Unemployment Falling West H'pool', *Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail*, 8 March 1956, p. 6; 'More Married Women in Industry', *Birmingham Daily Post*, 11 March 1955, p. 8.
[993] BA: BCC/1/CT/1/1, Report of the Hostels and Boarding-out Sub-Committee, December 1948.
[994] For an overview of the assessment process see: Birmingham City Council, *Four Years*, 81.

unfruitful, [with] very few of the homes offered being found suitable'. This problem was exacerbated by small communities in which people lived: 'in a rural area … difficulties [are] likely to be caused by acceptance [of one] home and refusal of another in the same village'. The depth of community cohesion, combined with the expectation that not all those volunteering their services would be suitable, meant that certain, highly public, forms of advertisement were not thought suitable. The Committee decided that a better means of recruiting potential foster parents was by 'bring the need to the notice of the public through the Churches, Women's Institutes, etc. with a view to placing children in more of the comfortable middle-class homes which have room for them'.[995] This statement, when read alongside the aversion to newspaper articles, reveals the highly classed ways in which 'suitable' foster parents were determined.

The significance of class also informed the actions of Birmingham staff. In 1969 the city's Children's Committee agreed to develop a more concentrated advertising campaign because city-wide campaigns had been found to 'bring many offers from people who are quite unsuitable' which resulted in 'a great deal of work which is unproductive'.[996] Earlier, in 1963, the committee agreed to distribute bookmarks explaining how to volunteer through the city's public libraries in order to 'draw the attention of the public to the need for more foster homes'. This strategy was expected to enable the committee to reach 'suitable homes' more effectively than newspaper articles.[997] This approach was also implicitly gendered as consumer surveys noted that men living in the Midlands read much less than women, so that women were more likely to encounter publicity material placed in libraries.[998] Recognising

[995] KA: WC/W/A1568/Box 41/26, Children's Committee, Planning Sub-Committee, May 1949.
[996] BA: BCC/1/CT/1/1/22, Birmingham Child Care Sub-Committee, 'Fostering: Blueprint for Birmingham', December 1969.
[997] BA: BCC/1/CT/1/1/15, Report of the Child Care Sub-Committee, 25 January 1963.
[998] D. E. Allen, *British Tastes: An Enquiry into the Likes and Dislikes of the Regional Consumer* (London, 1968), p. 112.

the heavily classed way in which foster parents' suitability was determined helps to explain why so many white working-class women privately fostered the children of Commonwealth immigrants after they had repeatedly been rejected by children's departments. Indeed, Bailkin has argued that for white working-class foster mothers, who had been judged unsuitable to act as foster parents by their local authorities, the ability to care for African children served as a 'vital assertion of their own powers against the state'.[999]

The significance of class was also noted by aspiring foster-parents. In 1945 Miss Edwards, who was first encountered in chapter three, contacted Westmorland's Medical Officer of Health to ask that someone inspect her property. Miss Edwards had recently been accepted to serve as a foster mother by Dr Barnardo's and she was required to register her home with the local authority. Case notes compiled by the social worker dispatched to Miss Edwards detail arriving at 'an old house' which had been 'tidied up' with plenty of outdoor playing space. The social worker's positive first impression was affirmed once she met Miss Edwards, whom she believed had a good understanding of children. While the social worker 'found it impossible to ask about income', she was confident that the family had 'small independent means' at their disposal, which ensured their financial suitability. The visitor's notes detailed that Miss Edwards wanted 'a child of middle-class parents, in the hope that it may be fit for secondary school'. Given that Miss Edwards was planning to foster a child of three years old, her preference suggests that she believed that educational ability was strongly associated with social class.[1000] Miss Edwards's remarks indicate the rather crude way in certain foster parents deployed class as a factor in determining the suitability, or otherwise, of potential

[999] Bailkin, *The Afterlife of Empire*, 183–184.
[1000] This belief was shared by public figures, such as Cyril Burt. See: C. Burt, 'Ability and Income', *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 13:2 (1943), pp. 83–98.

foster children.[1001] These confidential records reveal that class informed the decisions of foster parents and social workers alike.

Boarding out children was made harder because staff had to reconcile the motives of potential foster parents with local authorities' duty to return children to their birth parents whenever possible. Often foster parents stipulated that they wished to receive children who were no longer in contact with their birth families.[1002] This request became harder to fulfil as professional best practice stipulated that children should be encouraged to maintain contact with their birth families. Chapter four revealed the way in which 'tug-of-love' cases could become national news stories as foster parents battled to prevent foster children from being returned to their birth families.[1003] In 1949 the Birmingham Children's Committee began to arrange for parents to be able to visit their children 'on a more frequent and less formal basis'.[1004] Likewise, in Kent the Children's Committee held that 'a relationship between a child and its own parents and relatives is, with few exceptions, of fundamental importance to the child even though he is boarded-out'. Foster parents were expected to 'co-operate in maintaining this relationship'.[1005] Earlier in 1948, the Birmingham Hostels and Boarding out Sub-Committee noted that 'there has been a great deal of bitterness on the part of some foster-parents when children … [have been] restored to their own families'.[1006] The concerns of children's own families could also limit the likelihood of them being fostered. The children's officer noted that when dealing with short term care admissions 'we are frequently asked not to place the children in a foster home' because of concern 'about the possibility of

[1001] CA: WC/H/118B, Social Work Notes, 21 March 1945.
[1002] Birmingham City Council, *Four Years*, 39.
For an earlier example of this problem, see: Mason, 'A Grave National Question', 1055.
[1003] 'Petition Starts for Tug-of-Love Girl', *Daily Express*, 20 July 1970, p. 7.
[1004] BA: BCC/1/CT/1/2, Children's Committee Report, 26 July 1949.
[1005] 'The Work of Children's Committees', *The County Councils Association*, 48:1 (1956), p. 17.
[1006] BA: BCC/1/CT/1/1, Report of the Hostels and Boarding-out Sub-Committee, December 1948.
See also: Birmingham City Council, *Four Years*, 67, 87.

[the] child becoming too fond of the foster parents'. This was all the more significant given that the majority of admissions were short term cases. While the Curtis Report encouraged councils to provide care which closely replicated that found in a family, it could prove difficult to reconcile this with the concerns of foster parents and birth parents. These concerns centred on the belief that what was originally envisaged as a temporary care arrangement could disrupt the child's relationship with its birth family.

Race and Child Protection

Social class informed the actions of council officials and the experiences of looked after children, in both Westmorland and Birmingham. Consideration of class alone, however, limits our understanding of this period. Historians of the welfare state can only fully appreciate the development and practice of children's services if they acknowledge the importance of race, an issue that was not addressed by the Curtis Report. Indeed, the omission of this issue from the Curtis Report, when considered alongside the importance that was later associated with matters of race, reveals important limits to the Committee's research. These assertions, however, are accompanied by several caveats. First, it is important to recognise that the extent to which race was thought to inform the needs of children in, or at risk of entering, care was far more regionalised than class. Second, when examining local authority records concerning the lives of Commonwealth migrants' children it is important to read against the grain and critically re-consider certain narratives which emphasised the exceptionalism of immigrant children. While certain experiences associated with the children of West Indian and South Asian migrants were uniquely shaped by racial identity, many of their behavioural traits had much in common with experiences discussed in relation to members of the working class.

With the above in mind, the section below begins by outlining the regional disparities in Commonwealth migration to England. Next we consider some of the difficulties associated with caring for children whose parents were West Indian and South Asian migrants which appear to have been unique to these racial groups. Third we explore different attitudes towards the contribution, if any, that could be made by migrant social workers. Finally, the section will consider important areas of similarity between the experience of the children of Commonwealth migrants and other groups. Taken as a whole, this section demonstrates the complexity of professionalizing social work, at a time when the arrival of Commonwealth migrants was understood to place new demands on local authority services, albeit that their novelty should not be taken at face value.

Regional disparities

In 1948 the British Nationality Act was passed, thereby granting the right of entry and settlement in the United Kingdom to all people living in the British Commonwealth. In the fourteen years that followed, approximately 500,000 Commonwealth immigrants entered the United Kingdom.[1007] The strength of Britain's post-war economy, combined with the expansion of employment opportunities in public services, served as important pull factors.[1008] Prior to the Act being introduced, the United Kingdom had no experience of substantial colonial immigration. A survey conducted in the 1950s found that less than half of the population had seen or interacted with a 'coloured colonial subject'.[1009] Indeed, at no point in the parliamentary debates, nor in the accompanying press accounts was it anticipated that substantial numbers would exercise their right to reside permanently in the UK.[1010]

[1007] R. Hansen, 'The Politics of Citizenship in 1940s Britain: The British Nationality Act', *Twentieth Century British History*, 10:1 (1999), pp. 67–95.
[1008] Ibid., 94.
[1009] S. Small and J. Solomos, 'Race, Immigration and Politics in Britain: Changing Policy Agendas and Conceptual Paradigms 1940s–2000s', *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, 47:3–4 (2006), p. 237.
[1010] Hansen, 'The Politics of Citizenship', 90.

Where free entry was discussed, the precedent referred to by politicians was students from the colonies, notably the West Indies, whose presence in Britain was largely valued.[1011]

While 1948 marked an important legal milestone, the racial identity of looked after children only gradually assumed greater significance in the post-war period. In 1955, members of the National Council of Associated Children's Homes (NCACH) began to discuss matters regarding 'coloured children'.[1012] The group were particularly concerned about 'the problems arising … from the number of West Indians … in the United Kingdom'. The group concluded, however, that 'the admission of children [of colour into care]' was not yet a 'problem … of any considerable magnitude'.[1013] In the same year, the child care journal *Nursery World* published its first advertisement for a private foster home for a West African child in Britain.[1014] The following year, the Council held a short discussion about West Indian children and concluded 'this was an increasing problem' but 'Local Authorities were not trying to deal with it as it had not been brought to their notice'.[1015] The remarks of the NCACH, whose founding members were drawn from the country's six largest children's charities, suggests that voluntary organizations did not fully trust local authorities to respond to changes in the needs of children.

Despite receiving large numbers of Commonwealth migrants, records from Birmingham Council reveal that the Children's Officer only began reporting on 'coloured children' as a

[1011] Ibid., 87–88.
[1012] For a discussion of the history of the Council see: J. Grier, 'A Spirit of "Friendly Rivalry"?: Voluntary Societies and the Formation of Post-War Child Welfare Legislation in Britain', in J. Lawrence and P. Starkey, eds., *Child Welfare and Social Action in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: International Perspectives*, (Liverpool, 2001), p. 240.
[1013] BA: MS517/85, Minutes of National Council of Associated Children's Homes, 8 July 1955.
[1014] Bailkin, *The Afterlife of Empire*, 1955.
[1015] BA: MS517/85, Minutes of National Council of Associated Children's Homes, 6 July 1956.

separate group in 1960.[1016] In October 1960, there were reported to be 206 'coloured children' in care, representing 14% of all such cases.[1017] Between 1963 and 1968 the proportion of 'coloured children' in the care of Birmingham's Children's Department rose from under a fifth to a third.[1018] The admission of children of colour into care was often attributed to accommodation difficulties, combined with an absence of support from relatives.[1019] By 1967 it was reported that 'most of the cases were short stay' and that 'the improved housing situation' had helped to contribute to a 'levelling off' in the number of children born to Commonwealth migrants who were admitted to care in Birmingham.[1020] The prominence of short stay cases was noted in other parts of the country. A senior supervisor of the Manchester Children's Department attributed the trend to West Indian efforts to 'use children's departments as extended family', leading the council to exercise 'strong restraints' because 'poor outcast whites' were thought to provide a poorer standard of care.[1021]

While important, the significance of race was heavily regionalised. These differences were evident in the census returns. As shown in Table 111, below, people born in Commonwealth, Colonies and Protectorate nations (which included Pakistani and West Indian migrants) comprised just 0.6% of those living in Westmorland in 1951 and 1961. In contrast, in Birmingham, people born in Commonwealth, Colonies and Protectorate nations comprised 0.6% of those reported to be living in Birmingham, in 1951, rising to 2.8% by 1961. By the mid-1960s the 'coloured' population of Birmingham – which primarily comprised Indian,

[1016] BA: BCC/1/CT/1/1/12, Report of Children's Officer, Statistical Return, 22 February 1960. However, it is important to note that Birmingham's Education Committee often reported on children's race prior to this date, see: Grosvenor and Myers, 'Progressivism, Control and Correction', 238.
[1017] 'T.B. Danger in Lodging Houses', *Birmingham Daily Post*, 5 December 1960, p. 23.
[1018] 'Alarm at Rise in Juvenile Crime Rate', *Birmingham Daily Post*, 5 December 1968, p. 38.
[1019] 'T.B. Danger in Lodging Houses'.
[1020] NA: BN/29/1883, Notes of meeting held at the Midlands Regional Office between Home Office Representatives and Children's Officers from the Midlands on the Problem of Coloured Children in Care, 25 April 1967.
[1021] NA: HO/361/88, Course on Working with Immigrants, [n.d. 1969].

Pakistani and West Indian migrants – was estimated to be between 60,000 and 80,000, making it the second largest outside of London.[1022]

[1022] L. Lindsey, 'The Split-Labor Phenomenon: Its Impact on West Indian Workers as a Marginal Working Class in Birmingham, England, 1948-1962', *The Journal of African American History*, 87 (2002), p. 121.

Table 11: Population by country of birth[1023]

Birthplace	Birmingham		Westmorland	
	1951	1961	1951	1961
United Kingdom, Islands of the British Seas and the Irish Republic	97.3%	95.7%	97.7%	98.3%
Commonwealth Countries	0.5%	1.2%	0.5%	0.5%
Colonies and Protectorates	0.1%	1.6%	0.1%	0.1%
Foreign Countries and at Sea	0.8%	1.0%	1.3%	0.8%
Birthplace not stated	1.2%	0.5%	0.4%	0.3%

[1023] General Register Office, *Census 1951, Westmorland County Report* (London, 1951) Tables 9-10; General Register Office, *Census 1951, Warwickshire County Report* (London, 1951) Tables 9-10; General Register Office, *Census 1961, Westmorland County Report* (London, 1961), Tables 9-10; General Register Office, *Census 1961, Warwickshire County Report* (London, 1961) Tables 9-10.

While certain areas of the country collaborated to address the 'problems' associated with 'coloured children in care', other regions reported that little had changed. The two case studies explored in this thesis represent two ends of this spectrum. The records of Westmorland County Council devote very little space to issues arising from Commonwealth migration. Attendees at a 1970 Home Office working party on immigration were informed that 'no significant overt problems had arisen in the North West from the presence of immigrants'.[1024] Two years earlier, the Westmorland Children's Officer was asked, by the North Eastern Regional Branch of the Association of Children's Officers, if the county was aware of 'any cases in which immigrant children have entered this county to live in undesirable situations'.[1025] In response, the officer explained that 'Westmorland seems to be unattractive to immigrants' and explained that 'I know of no case here where an immigrant child … has been placed in an undesirable situation'.[1026] The lack of major industry in Westmorland, combined with opportunities elsewhere, deterred Commonwealth migrants from relocating to the region.

Birmingham, on the other hand, quickly became home to many Commonwealth migrants. Beginning in the late 1950s, the city, which boasted high levels of job vacancies, was an attractive place for migrants, to settle .[1027] In 1964, the Labour MP Fenner Brockway, who was concerned at the high levels of overcrowding in certain communities, called for 'a redistribution of employment so that the immigrant communities do not concentrate in ghettos in particular areas'. Brockway, who objected to imposing immigration controls

[1024] NA: HO/361/88, Working Party on Immigrants, 4 June 1970.
See also: NA: HO/361/88, Working Party: The Needs of Immigrants and their Families, 25 November 1968.
[1025] KA: WC/W/A1568/ Box 42/3, Minutes of the North Eastern Regional Branch of the Association of Children's Officers, 9 March 1968.
[1026] KA: WC/W/A1568/ Box 42/3, Letter to Miss Forster from Westmorland Children's Officer, 29 April 1968.
[1027] J. Rex and R. S. Moore, *Race, Community and Conflict: A Study of Sparkbrook* (London, 1969), p. 55; Lindsey, 'The Split-Labor Phenomenon: Its Impact on West Indian Workers as a Marginal Working Class in Birmingham, England, 1948-1962', 121.

without the agreement of the Commonwealth nations, believed that 'redistribution' offered a better means of addressing the challenges associated with large-scale Commonwealth migration.[1028] It is against this background of regional disparities in the numbers of Commonwealth migrants that we should consider the importance of race to children's experiences of being cared for by state and voluntary organizations.

Attributes unique to Commonwealth migrants

The desire to provide looked after children with an upbringing which emulated a 'normal family' meant that the experiences of many Commonwealth migrant children were informed by racial differences. The aspiration that children should be raised by adults of the same ethnicity meant that racial differences often limited the type of care available.[1029]

Before discussing the socio-cultural problems that were perceived to be unique to Commonwealth migrants it is important to acknowledge inter-group differences. In 1965 Home Office staff observed that it was 'difficult to generalize about children of non-European descent as a group, partly because the description covers a number of groups who have not necessarily much in common with each other'.[1030] Likewise, Philip Jones, of the University of Hull, observed in 1967 that 'enormous barriers divide Indians, Pakistanis and West Indians, both among themselves and from one another'.[1031] The same year an attendee at a Children's Conference convened in the Midlands expressed concern at 'the prevalence of West Indian girls becoming pregnant', something they attributed to a 'cultural background which accepted illegitimacy'. This was contrasted with 'the Indian and Pakistani way of life'

[1028] F. Brockway, 'The Colour Problem in Britain: Left', *The Spectator*, 4 December 1964, p. 7.
[1029] 'Integration Problems for Coloured Barnardo Children', *The Guardian*, 29 July 1966, p. 5.
[1030] NA: BN/29/1882, Letter to Mr Longfield from M.G. Russell, 2 December 1965.
[1031] P. Jones, *The Segregation of Immigrant Communities in the City of Birmingham, 1961* (Hull, 1967), p. 19.

which 'tended to be more family centred' and so illegitimate births were less frequent.[1032] The warden of the Bradford Reception Centre agreed and noted that although most immigrants were Pakistani, the 'West Indian minority throw up major problems, largely arising out of children arriving years after their parents'. Pakistanis, on the other hand were 'strengthened by family and religious bonds'.[1033] This process of differentiation conforms to what Stephen Small and John Solomos have described as a:

> Tendency to write in a way that implies a distinction between good minorities and bad minorities. The West Indians, including their children born in the UK are bad minorities. They don't adapt to the situation well, don't acquire the necessary social and cultural capital … and their children are socially maladapted … The good minorities are the Asians – they work hard, the children are obedient and hard working (in stories and in schools) and they acquire good education.

While Small and Solomos have supported this assertion with reference to material published in the late twentieth century, study of child protection initiatives reveals that these characterizations were being discussed much earlier.[1034] Indeed, although these observations were applied to comparatively recent arrivals to England, the ability to attribute differences to variation in family structure was consistent with a long-standing belief that family units were central to social stability.

In response to these cultural differences, staff working in areas with large migrant populations reported adapting their traditional working practices.[1035] In 1969 an employee of the London of Borough of Lewisham reported that 'group discussion with coloured parents appear[ed] to be more profitable than the traditional one to one case work interview'.[1036]

[1032] NA: BN/29/1883, Notes of meeting held at the Midlands Regional Office between Home Office Representatives and Children's Officers from the Midlands on the Problem of Coloured Children in Care, 25 April 1967.
[1033] NA: HO/361/88, Course on Working with Immigrants, [n.d. 1969].
[1034] Small and Solomos, 'Race, Immigration and Politics in Britain', 253.
[1035] 'Foster Homes: Coloured Children Not Wanted', *The Guardian*, 20 May 1960, p. 14.
[1036] NA: HO/361/88, Immigration, Meeting held at Regional Office, 29 September 1969.

Attendees of a course entitled 'working with immigrants', held the same year, were told that 'in Moslem [sic] families the husband plays a very important role' and so 'any dealing with a Moslem family must be through the husband'.[1037] Study of child protection reveals that social workers were trained to anticipate that companionate forms of marriage, which Finch and Summerfield have argued represented 'the most distinctive feature of domestic life', were informed by ethnicity.[1038]

Study of confidential case notes indicates that racialized thinking found in the training provided to social workers informed the attitudes of individual staff. In 1959, an investigation was launched into the treatment of the young people living in one of Birmingham's hostels. During the investigation, a male visitor to the hostel compiled a series of notes on several boys whom he had interviewed. Lewis Green, aged 15, was described as follows: 'There is something brooding, violent and subversive about this lad which rather disturbed me. I don't think it was his colour and the different outlook which almost invariably goes to a greater or lesser extent with a person of a different race'.[1039] The visitor's comments make it clear that racial differences were directly associated by staff with particular temperaments. These observations are consistent with Ian Grosvenor's finding that in Birmingham in the 1960s 'black children [were] … viewed by white policy makers, education officers and managers in a profoundly racialized way'.[1040]

Records compiled as part of a recent oral history of Birmingham care leavers also highlight that children of colour who were placed in residential care often experienced racism from

[1037] NA: HO/361/88, Course on Working with Immigrants, 12 December 1969.
[1038] Finch and Summerfield, 'Social Reconstruction and the Emergence of Companionate Marriage, 1945-59', 7.
[1039] BA: BCC/1/CT/1/1/12, Special Meeting, Report of Children's Officer, 2 October 1959 [pseudonym].
[1040] I. Grosvenor, *Assimilating Identities: Racism and Educational Policy in Post 1945 Britain* (London, 1997), p. 139.

their peers. Claire Panton (b. 1947) who grew up in the Shenley Fields and Edrington Cottage Homes between the ages of five and thirteen, recalled how:

> I remember a little coloured girl, [Sarah], a lovely little coloured girl … She was like a half-caste and they used to run her down terrible 'cos she was you know, half caste … the whites didn't play with the coloureds … And if you went out with a black child in the home you were looked down [upon].[1041]

While the attitudes of adults attracted the most attention from officials - in part because adults were thought to be most influential in determining the care provided to children – when seeking to understand the experiences of these children, it is important to recognize that racism could also be perpetrated by children themselves.[1042] On the other hand, developmental psychologists John and Elizabeth Newson found, as part of their study of how parents behaved towards their seven year old children, in the early 1960s, that some children became upset where their black class mates were verbally abused.[1043] Children's involvement with, and exposure to, racism defies simple categorization and merits further study in order to better understand the changing experiences of the children of Commonwealth migrants and their peers.

Over time officials began to recognize the need to address racism amongst welfare staff. In 1970, Home Office inspectors recommended that staff, and residential workers in particular, should be provided with opportunities to reflect on their own 'personal prejudices'.[1044] The same report acknowledged that young people of colour would need 'help in dealing with prejudice as they grow up' as well as support to develop 'a sense of identity and self-

[1041] BA: MS/2838/1/14/3, Interview with PC, edited transcript, p. 20.
[1042] For an example of Birmingham children being racist towards black adults see: Lindsey, 'The Split-Labor Phenomenon: Its Impact on West Indian Workers as a Marginal Working Class in Birmingham, England, 1948-1962', 123.
[1043] J. Newson and E. Newson, *Seven Years Old in the Home Environment* (London, 1976), p. 55.
[1044] NA: HO/361/88, Immigrants and the Child Care Service, July 1969.

value'.[1045] A report issued the same year by the Home Office, entitled 'Immigrant Children in Care', also emphasized the importance of self-reflection: 'we need to analyse our own attitude to coloured people to make sure that we are not "nice" to them because we are ashamed of our prejudice and try to conceal our guilt by over-compensating'.[1046] The repeated use of the word 'we' suggests that the Home Office assumed a collective consciousness among the overwhelmingly white workforce to which the report was directed.

While the Home Office sought to shape the attitudes of staff, it proved far harder to influence the opinions of potential foster parents. Commentators repeatedly voiced concern at the shortage of foster homes, overseen by local authorities, for the children of Commonwealth migrants.[1047] This shortage reflected widespread unwillingness, among council approved foster parents, to care for non-white children. In May 1960, *The Guardian* reported that in Tottenham all but one of those registered to foster children, who were not yet caring for a child, refused to accept 'coloured children'. Even the foster mother who was willing to accept a child whose parents were Commonwealth migrants 'stipulated that the child would have to be pure black, so that there could be no question of her being regarded as the mother'.[1048] This stipulation is significant because it reveals that during an era in which households were believed to enjoy greater privacy, potential foster parents continued to take an interest in what their communities thought. Indeed, the importance of community perceptions was noted ten years later when the Home Office reported that 'community prejudice may need to be taken into account when planning [a foster care] placement'.[1049] By considering the influence of

[1045] NA: HO/361/88, Immigrants and the Child Care Service, July 1969.
For further discussion of illness associated with immigrant groups see: NA: HO/361/88, Immigrant Children in Care, Their Needs Now and for the Future, [n.d. 1970], pp. 17-29.
[1046] NA: HO/361/88, Immigrant Children in Care, Their Needs Now and for the Future, [n.d. 1970], p. 2.
[1047] For further information on the history of foster-care provided to Commonwealth migrants see: Bailkin, *The Afterlife of Empire*, chap. 5.
[1048] 'Foster Homes: Coloured Children Not Wanted'.
[1049] NA: HO/361/88, Immigrants and the Child Care Service, July 1969.

race to the history of child protection services, historians can better assess the extent to which community relations broke down in the post-war period. While families had become less reliant on community members to assist with private matters, such as child care, they were still sensitive about their public standing.

One of the consequences of a lack of registered foster carers was a rise in private boarding out arrangements. By 1969 it was estimated that over 1,000 children of colour had been placed in private foster homes.[1050] This practice was particularly widespread in southern counties, such as Kent, where officials expressed concern at the 'large numbers of very young children placed privately in foster homes by their parents … [in arrangements which] lack[ed] the careful selection and planning of children's departments foster home placements'.[1051] These comments indicate that a faith in official procedures to select appropriate foster parents coexisted with the ability of certain households to subvert local authority efforts to control who could take responsibility for other people's children.

Although local authority staff remarked upon the cultural habits of children born to Commonwealth migrants, national policy makers emphasised that Commonwealth migrants should not be treated differently. In the early post-war period, this tension arose because of a desire among senior parliamentarians to promote membership of the British Commonwealth. Randall Hansen has shown that the 1948 British Nationality Act was motivated by the desire to 'ensure the uniformity of British subjecthood' in the light of competing identities. Policy makers viewed 'British subjecthood' as a means of 'tempering Dominion nationalism' and strengthening 'Britain's international position as holder of an empire'.[1052] As the 1948 Bill

[1050] NA: HO/361/88, Inspectors' Working Party on Immigrants, 27 November 1968.
[1051] NA: HO/361/88, Immigrants and the Child Care Service, July 1969.
For discussion of specific problems associated with private foster care see: Bailkin, *The Afterlife of Empire*, 174.
[1052] Hansen, 'The Politics of Citizenship'.

passed through parliament, contributors sought to ensure that it would not result in differentiation between subjects.

The importance of treating Commonwealth citizens equally continued to be remarked upon throughout the 1960s, despite successive Conservative and Labour governments passing legislation which restricted the number of Commonwealth migrants able to enter the country.[1053] In 1965 Richard Crossman, while serving as the Minister for Housing and Local Government, urged colleagues not to devote additional resources to tackle overcrowding and poor housing experienced by 'coloured people', for fear that doing so would 'ask for racial trouble'.[1054] These assertions coincided with Labour's efforts to develop a more collaborative set of relationship with Commonwealth members. The formation of the National Committee for Commonwealth Immigrants in the early 1960s exemplified this integrationist policy agenda. The Committee was followed by the establishment of the Community Relations Commission and local Community Relations Councils, which sought to improve relations between majority and minority communities.[1055]

The desire to avoid treating Commonwealth migrants differently was reflected in the actions of Central Government departments. In 1965 Home Office officials noted that while 'it would be unrealistic to pretend that there are no special problems when dealing with coloured children in care … the general line about coloured children [had] been that they should not be regarded as a separate, special problem'.[1056] Later that year a meeting was held with the Chief Inspectors of Children's Homes. While attendees discussed several challenges which were

[1053] Small and Solomos, 'Race, Immigration and Politics in Britain', 240–241.
[1054] D. Dean, 'The Race Relations Policy of the First Wilson Government', *Twentieth Century British History*, 11:3 (2000), p. 270.
[1055] Small and Solomos, 'Race, Immigration and Politics in Britain', 240–241.
[1056] NA: BN/29/1882, Extract from the Minutes of the C.I.'s meeting with S.I's, 21 July 1967.

thought to be unique to child migrants, the meeting concluded that 'it was desirable that no advice should be given to local authorities which would result in immigrant children being dealt with differently from native-born children'.[1057] Separate correspondence drafted by the Home Office affirmed this position and noted that 'it would be undesirable for the Home Office to do anything which might tend … to encourage local authorities to introduce an element of racial discrimination into their child care arrangements … our view is not that problems do not exist, but that it would be inappropriate for us officially to offer guidance'.[1058] It was for this reason the Home Office declared itself unable to contribute to a report commissioned by Barnardo's regarding the needs of migrant children.[1059] While voluntary groups were prepared to differentiate between the needs of migrant and non-migrant children, the Home Office was unwilling to condone this approach publicly.

By 1969, however, the official position had begun to change. A report produced by Home Office Inspectors noted that 'for many years the policy [was] not to treat immigrants as "special" and different from the rest of the community and thus warranting special measures and facilities'. It was recognized that this position had left local authorities in difficult position: '[new] problems stare them in the face … [yet] solutions devised for the indigenous population are sought for without any clear assessment as to their effectiveness'. All too often 'cases are dealt with on an ad hoc basis … with little attempt at anticipating problems by effective preventive measures'.[1060] In future, the report recommended, 'services for immigrants should be an integral part of general social services for the community', but the presence of immigrants should comprise' just one factor' amongst many, when determining

[1057] NA: BN/29/1882, Extract from the Minutes of the Chief Inspector's Meeting with Superintending Inspectors and Administrative Officers, 13 October 1965.
[1058] NA: BN/29/1882, Draft Letter to Mr Longford, [n.d. 1965].
[1059] NA: BN/29/1882, Draft Letter to Mr Longford, [n.d. 1965].
[1060] NA: HO/361/88, Immigrants and the Child Care Service, July 1969, p. 5.

the social needs of an area. Although the report stopped short of explaining the catalyst for this change in approach, the actions of proactive local authorities such as Birmingham City Council, were likely to have demonstrated the need for change.

In May 1967, a meeting took place between Home Office representatives and 12 Children's Officers – drawn from parts of the Midlands in which 'coloured people' comprised at least 2% of the population – to discuss the 'problem of coloured children in care'.[1061] The meeting was consistent with earlier Home Office calls to 'promote conferences [to] disseminat[e] the knowledge and experience gained by those children's officers most closely concerned with coloured children'.[1062] This meeting appears to mark the first effort to systematically consider how best to support the children of Commonwealth migrants who found themselves in care. A year later, local authorities in the Birmingham area were praised for the ways in which they handled the 'influx of coloured children' who were admitted to care.[1063]

Resolutions passed at the Midlands conference indicate the heavily quantitative methods thought necessary to address social issues. Attendees resolved that 'more accurate statistics need to be obtained' in order to better consider the 'problems involved'.[1064] A later meeting, held with London officials, also revealed that 'very few departments [had] made a serious attempt to assess the nature of the problem or measure it statistically'.[1065] Several years later, Home Official Officials reported that the Home Office's failure to 'centrally collate … records and statistics about immigration or coloured children in care' meant it was

[1061] NA: BN/29/1883, Coloured Children in Care, Meeting between Home Office representatives and Children's Officers in the Midlands, 8 May 1967.
[1062] NA: BN/29/1882, Internal correspondence produced by J.B. Sharp, 17 November 1965.
[1063] NA: HO/361/88, Inspectors' Working Party on Immigrants, 27 November 1968.
[1064] NA: BN/29/1883, Coloured Children in Care, Meeting between Home Office representatives and Children's Officers in the Midlands, 8 May 1967.
[1065] NA: HO/361/88, Immigration, Meeting held at Regional Office, 29 September 1969.

'impossible to assess the size of the problem'.[1066] The Conservative MP for South Paddington, Nicholas Scott, echoed these sentiments and called on the government to 'turn [its] back firmly on the attitude which dominated the 1950's and early 1960's that there is something vaguely indecent with keeping records mentioning colour'.[1067] Policy makers perceived that in order to address a problem it first had to be quantified. Scott's call for change indicates that the decision not to collect such data was no accident, but rather the result of political unease. In the years that followed the Midlands meeting, the care of children born to Commonwealth migrants increasingly became the focus of professional training events, including a one day conference organized by the London Borough of Haringey on 'Social Services and a Multi-Racial Society'.[1068] In 1968, the Central Training Council in Child Care began a short course on 'Working with Immigrants', which was attended by local authority and voluntary sector staff.[1069] The efforts of progressive local authorities helped to promote the needs of children of Commonwealth migrants at a time when the Home office was reluctant to be drawn on the issue.[1070]

Staffing issues

Council officials were unsure what, if any, contribution could be made by Commonwealth migrants who expressed an interested in working in children's services. The inconsistent advice provided indicates that histories of post-war professionalization need to pay closer attention to the racial prejudices which informed the experiences of individuals who sought employment in the expanding social service sector.

[1066] NA: HO/361/88, Immigrants and the Child Care Service, July 1969.
[1067] N. Scott, 'A Challenge to the British Tradition of Fair Play', *The Times*, 10 July 1969, p. 11.
[1068] NA: HO/361/88, Immigrants and the Child Care Service, July 1969.
[1069] NA: HO/361/88, C.T.C Short Course on Working with Immigrants, 27 May – 1 June 1968.
[1070] For evidence of regional disparities in the services provided by local authorities see: Dean, 'The Race Relations Policy of the First Wilson Government', 268.

In 1967 the Children's Officer for Manchester contacted Clare Winnicott, in her capacity as Director of Training at the Central Training Council in Child Care, to ask whether she thought it would be a good idea to 'employ … coloured child care officers'. This was because Manchester's Children's Department had 'a considerable number of coloured children in its care'.[1071] Winnicott cautioned against the idea in part because 'coloured immigrants … often lack the knowledge about the cultural background, including the educational background, of this country'. She also expressed concern regarding their educational abilities: 'they … often lack the language in which to express themselves easily either verbally or in writing'. Ten years earlier, Harvey Green, a white Birmingham bus union official, had raised similar objections to black workers becoming conductors.[1072] Winnicott supported her position with reference to a 'coloured immigrant student' who failed to pass his course 'owing to a lack of educational background'.[1073] Earlier that year, the children's officer for Derby, Mr. Stimpson, justified the decision not to employ any non-white Child Care Officers, on the grounds that 'one had to be careful and not dilute standards'.[1074] The views espoused by Winnicott and Stimpson are indicative of the way in which Britain's imperial history left a significant impression on colonial officials and welfare-state professionals alike. As Christian Ydesen and Kevin Myers have noted, social workers and teachers 'grew up, trained and lived in a world where the British Empire was a banal and everyday presence' and 'a world suffused with imperial images, objects and knowledge is likely to have had some impact on professional identities and practices'.[1075]

[1071] NA: BN/29/1312, Letter to Mrs Winnicott from Mr Brown, 14 November 1967.
[1072] Lindsey, 'The Split-Labor Phenomenon: Its Impact on West Indian Workers as a Marginal Working Class in Birmingham, England, 1948-1962', 131.
[1073] NA: BN/29/1312, Letter to Mr Brown from Mrs Winnicott, 20 November 1967.
[1074] NA: BN/29/1883, Notes of meeting held at the Midlands Regional Office between Home Office Representatives and Children's Officers from the Midlands on the Problem of Coloured Children in Care, 25 April 1967.
[1075] C. Ydesen and K. Myers, 'The Imperial Welfare State? Decolonisation, Education and Professional Interventions on Immigrant Children in Birmingham, 1948–1971', *Paedagogica Historica*, 52:5 (2016), pp. 456-458; B. Schwarz, *The White Man's World* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 5–10.

An important contrast can be drawn between the reception of Commonwealth immigrants in the field of social work and the more established medical profession. Rebecca Bivins has shown that by the 1950s discussion of race and the NHS often comprised two important tropes. The first trope, which depicted immigrants as 'burdensome' and exploitive, was levelled at Commonwealth immigrants who accessed health and social work services alike.[1076] Alternatively, the remarks of Winnicott and Stimpson show that second trope identified by Bivins, that '"foreign" doctors and nurses' could represent 'migrant saviours of the NHS', did not extent to social work.[1077] Winnicott and Stimpson's observations indicate not only a reluctance to employ non-white children's officers, but also a concern with upholding professional standards at a time when social work was seeking to justify its claims to expertise. That the second trope did not extend to social work indicates the racialised consequences of placing such a high value on cultural awareness, at a time when social work professionals sought to justify, and defend, their expertise.

Winnicott and Stimpson both implied that immigrant social workers were less likely to have the required academic skills and cultural understanding to perform the roles required of them. Different social expectations were also noted by members of a Home Office working party on immigration, which found that 'coloured case workers often had a stricter attitude towards the failures of their own lower classes'.[1078] These remarks reveal that social workers' actions were assumed to reflect their racial background, just as much as their social class. The ability to take advantage of the increasing opportunities to become professionally trained were not equally distributed. Commonwealth migrants often faced significant barriers to accessing training and experience as a result of racialized assumptions about their academic and

[1076] NA: HO/361/88, Course on Working with Immigrants, [n.d. 1969].
[1077] R. Bivins, vins, s, 88, Course on Working with Immigrants, [n.d. 1969].69. 5 Br*Twentieth Century British History*, 28:1 (2017), pp. 83tish
[1078] NA: HO/361/88, Working Party on Immigrants, 9 October 1969.

cultural abilities. The importance attached to cultural understanding meant that, unlike medical professionals, Commonwealth migrants whose had received their social work training abroad were met with much greater suspicion than their Commonwealth colleagues in the medical profession.

The difficulty of recruiting immigrant social workers was not only the result of opposition from key figures within training colleges. Structural issues, related to immigration trends, combined with social attitudes acquired while abroad were also thought to undermine recruitment efforts. The recruitment of immigrant staff was made more difficult because immigrant school leavers were not eligible for grant-aid, to study a course in child care, until they had been in the UK for three years. This policy was especially significant because many children did not join their parents until just before their sixteenth birthday, at which point their right to entry ceased.[1079] The negative perception of child care held by many migrants provided an additional obstacle to developing a more culturally diverse workforce. In 1969 a Home Office Working Party on Immigration noted that 'coloured immigrants … were inclined to regard caring for other people's children as belittling and [so] were not much attracted to residential work'.[1080] Cultural attitudes acquired while living abroad could have important consequences for the racial makeup of staff employed in English children's homes.

Not all councils held prejudicial attitudes towards employing Commonwealth migrants as staff. In 1967, Birmingham's Children's Officer reported that his staff included a Jamaican woman who was a qualified social worker. Although the Council stipulated that her caseload should not exclusively concern coloured cases, she proved to be 'of great value as an advisor

[1079] NA: HO/361/88, Working Party on Immigrants, 4 June 1970.
[1080] NA: HO/361/88, Working Party on Immigrants, 9 October 1969.

to other Child Care staff'.[1081] Several years later, a Home Office working party on immigrants affirmed Birmingham's stance and recommended that 'coloured workers of a good calibre should be encouraged to enter child care'. The group agreed with the position adopted in Birmingham and believed that 'such staff should have a general caseload, and not be used solely for immigrant families and children'.[1082] This stance was consist with Home Office efforts to discourage local authorities from adopting 'an element of racial discrimination into their child care arrangements'.[1083] Correspondence received by the Home Office reveals that representatives of the YMCA also urged for 'greater use of immigrant social workers' as it was believed that they could help the organisation gather 'more specialist knowledge of cultural backgrounds [and] family patterns'.[1084] While Winnicott perceived cultural differences as a barrier to Commonwealth migrants entering the social work profession, the YMCA believed that Commonwealth staff were well placed to help reconcile the cultural differences of new arrivals and longstanding communities.

New groups, old challenges

Despite promoting the principle of inclusivity, senior policy makers responsible for the welfare of Commonwealth migrants privately acknowledged that the children of Commonwealth migrants were harder to accommodate. As historians, it is important to read against the grain and recognize that many of the issues presented as unique to Commonwealth migrants had clear parallels with anxieties that had been expressed earlier in relation to working-class communities. These arguments do not seek to diminish the

[1081] NA: BN/29/1883, Notes of meeting held at the Midlands Regional Office between Home Office Representatives and Children's Officers from the Midlands on the Problem of Coloured Children in Care, 25 April 1967.
[1082] NA: HO/361/88, Working Party on Immigrants, 4 June 1970.
[1083] NA: BN/29/1882, Draft Letter to Mr Longford, [n.d. 1965].
[1084] NA: HO/361/88, Immigrants and the Child Care Service, July 1969; BN/29/1883, Letter to T.H. Parkinson from the Under Secretary of State, 26 May 1967.

importance of race as a category of analysis, but instead question some of the exceptionalism assumed to have risen because of racial differences. This section begins by considering behaviours associated with migrant groups, identified by social workers, which were remarkably similar to those expressed about sections of the working-class.

Dietary deficiencies, combined with cultural differences in the types of food that people consumed, were often discussed in relation to Commonwealth migrants. In 1965, during a meeting with Home Office Inspectors, a medical professional present noted that a 'previous lack of protein in the diet of immigrant children sometimes caused difficulties on reception into care'.[1085] Five years later, as part of its report into 'Immigrants and the Child Care Service', the Home Office noted that the diets of children of colour placed 'special demands on residential staff and foster parents'.[1086] While these issues were presented as unique to Commonwealth migrants, they formed part of a much longer history of middle-class professionals critically scrutinizing the eating habits of sections of the working-class. The authors of the *Our Towns* report noted that 'foster parents complained extensively of the bad feeding habits of their charges'.[1087] The report went on to note that 'all investigation shows that at the lower income levels diet contains too much starchy food and shows a deficiency in first-class protein'.[1088] Mass Observation's wartime report of evacuation reached similar conclusions : 'evacuation brought to light the strange diet of the industrial population – strange that is, by other people's standards'.[1089] The food problems associated with caring for Commonwealth migrants are better read as forming part of a longer tradition in which

[1085] NA: BN/29/1882, Extract from the Minutes of the Chief Inspector's Meeting with Superintending Inspectors and Administrative Officers, 13 October 1965.
[1086] NA: HO/361/88, Immigrants and the Child Care Service, July 1969.
[1087] Women's Group on Public Welfare, *Our Towns: A Close-Up* (London, 1943), p. 29.
[1088] Ibid., 34.
[1089] Madge and Harrisson, *War Begins at Home*, 326.

differences in diet have repeatedly been remarked upon by those tasked with looking after children whose life experiences were very different from their own.

The children of Commonwealth migrants and evacuees often experienced time apart from their parents, albeit for very different reasons. Problems were frequently reported when children re-joined their families after time away. Case files compiled by Birmingham social workers detail multiple cases in which children arrived in the city from the West Indies and found it difficult to be accepted by their parents. In June 1966, fifteen-year old Charlie Lawrence arrived in England from Jamaica. The timing was unlikely to be coincidental. A year earlier the law was changed so that Commonwealth children over the age of sixteen were barred from entering England, even if their parents had already settled in Britain.[1090] For the previous six years, Charlie had been brought up by his grandmother, someone that officials concluded had exercised 'very little control over the boy' so that he was 'allowed to run wild'. On arriving in England, Charlie found himself living with a mother that officials believed was unsupportive and showed little affection. Matters were further exacerbated by Charlie's difficult relationship with his step-father, Robert Gale, whom he had only known for a matter of weeks before Gale and Charlie's mother left for England. At the request of his mother, Charlie was eventually placed in a Remand Home. At the time of his admission, Charlie was found to be 'deeply disturbed and insecure'.[1091] This episode, indicates some of the circumstances which led certain children being admitted to care, but also the impact of the social disorientation felt by certain young people who had been reunited with family members after many years apart.

[1090] Bailkin, *The Afterlife of Empire*, 174.
[1091] NA: BN/29/1883, Letter from T.H. Parkinson to the Under Secretary of State, 26 May 1967, [pseudonym].

The return of evacuees was also credited, in several high profile cases, with contributing to animosity between family members. The most high profile case concerned a young girl called Jean Titchner, whose parents were later convicted of child abuse.[1092] Born in London, Jean spent the latter part of the Second World War as an evacuee in the care of a middle-class family in Devon, before returning to her family. Following an anonymous letter to the NSPCC, Jean's parents were charged with abusing her. During the trial, the prosecution inferred that Mrs Titchner's abuse of Jean – which involved withholding food from her – was provoked by feeling threatened by the middle-class mannerisms that Jean was felt to have inherited from her wartime hosts.[1093] In both instances, the experiences of children who had come to the attention of social services were credited to the culture shock experienced by themselves and their parents on being reunited after time apart.

These cultural differences could be exemplified by migrant parents who were alleged to apply cultural practices which were no longer acceptable in Britain. West Indians were often singled out for criticism because of their approach towards disciplining children.[1094] During the 1967 regional meeting, the rise in the number of Birmingham children described as being beyond the control of their parents was attributed to 'West Indian culture' and particularly their 'lax' attitude towards 'discipline'.[1095] During the same meeting, an attendee argued that the 'arbitrary' attitude of West Indians towards punishment, including instances of children being 'beat[en] with bamboo canes', had 'lead to care and protection cases'.[1096] These issues

[1092] 'Mrs. Titchner Sentenced to Two Years' Imprisonment: Husband Guilty of Neglecting Child', *The Manchester Guardian*, 27 November 1946, p. 6.
[1093] 'Face Surgery for Jean', *Daily Express*, 21 December 1946, p. 3.
[1094] E. Younghusband, *Social Work in Britain, 1950-1975: A Follow-up Study*, vol. 2 (London, 1978), p. 201.
[1095] NA: BN/29/1883, Notes of meeting held at the Midlands Regional Office between Home Office Representatives and Children's Officers from the Midlands on the Problem of Coloured Children in Care, 25 April 1967.
[1096] NA: BN/29/1883, Notes of meeting held at the Midlands Regional Office between Home Office Representatives and Children's Officers from the Midlands on the Problem of Coloured Children in Care, 25 April 1967.

were also publicly discussed. In 1969 the sociologists John Rex and Robert Moore published a study of immigrant groups in the Birmingham community of Sparkbrook. Their research, which had been commissioned by the Survey of Race Relations, found that West Indian parents were known for their use of harsh physical punishment.[1097] The perception that West Indian parents had a greater predisposition to excessively chastise their children caused some parents to be erroneously accused of battered-baby syndrome. In 1970, the Home Office issued a report which observed that while there was 'no predominance of [battered babies] among coloured immigrants' the bruises observed on West Indian children, because 'corporal punishment is quite common in West Indian households', had led to 'false accusations about battered babies'.[1098] People were prepared to report what they believed to be cases of child abuse, even if their diagnoses differed from that of expert opinion.

Although West Indian parents were often criticized for their use of physical chastisement, researchers also reported that working-class parents had a greater tendency to physically chastise their children. In 1958, two developmental psychologists, John and Elizabeth Newson, set out to understand 'how infants are being reared in England'.[1099] The Newsons sought to answer this question by interviewing 700 mothers of one year old children, who lived in Nottingham. Collectively these works highlight important variations in the ways in which parents, of different classes, applied corporal punishment, a practice that could be viewed as abusive, if excessively used. The Newsons' research coincided with the arrival of large numbers of Commonwealth migrant children to cities such as Birmingham, making their studies a valuable resource with which to compare West Indian parenting practices with those of people born in England.

[1097] Rex and Moore, *Race, Community and Conflict*, 243.
[1098] NA: HO/361/88, Immigrant Children in Care, Their Needs Now and for the Future, [n.d. 1970], p. 27.
[1099] J. Newson and E. Newson, *Infant Care in an Urban Community* (London, 1963), p. 13.

Among mothers interviewed for the Newsons' study, 97% reported smacking their four-year-old children on at least some occasions. Table 12 shows that the frequency with which children were smacked was strongly associated with social class, and differences were particularly pronounced between those judged to be low and moderate smackers.

Table 12: Frequency of smacking at age 4, by social class[1100]

Frequency of smacking	Social Class					
	I & II	III white collar	III manual	IV	V	All
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Never	2	2	3	3	3	3
Low (less than once per week average)	33	23	20	24	11	22
Moderate (between once per week and once per day, inclusive)	61	68	70	66	79	68
High (more than once per day: or implement used or actively threatened)	4	7	7	7	7	7

These findings were also noted three years later when mothers were asked about their treatment towards their seven-year-old children. The proportion of mothers who reported smacking their children once a week or more fell from 75% at the age of four, to 41% by the

[1100] Newson and Newson, *Four Years*, 415.
The Newsons adopted the Registar Generals *Classification of Occupations*: I Professional occupations; II Managerial and technical occupations; IIIwc Skilled non-manual occupations; IIIman Skilled manual occupations; IV Partly-skilled occupations; V Unskilled occupations, see: J. Newson and E. Newson, *Childhood into Adolescence: Growing up in the 1970s*, P. Barnes and S. Gregory, eds. (Abingdon, 2018), pp. 13–14.

age of seven, partly because verbal alternatives to smacking became more available. Working-class mothers, however, continued to report smacking their children more often.[1101] Table 13 shows that when asked how they would respond to instances of bad behaviour, middle-class mothers were much less likely to describe reacting by smacking their children.

Table 13: Use of smacking in specific situations, at age 4, by social class[1102]

Type of bad behaviour	Working-class	Middle-class
Smacking in response to rudeness	47%	29%
Smacking in response to bad language	15%	7%

While it is not possible to quantitatively compare the disciplinary practices of white working-class parents and West Indian parents, the Newsons' findings strongly indicate that the use of corporal punishment varied considerably even among children whose parents were born in England. This position is affirmed by Cowan's study of social researchers' field notes.[1103] To simply distinguish between English and West Indian parenting practices fails to recognize the variations contained within each of these categories. Indeed, both West Indian and working-class families were more likely to live in overcrowded conditions. This is significant because the Newsons found that frequent punishment was more likely to occur in districts that were overcrowded.[1104] Philip Gardner's study of teachers' use of corporal punishment also observed a correlation between overcrowded classrooms and a propensity to physically chastise children and young people.[1105] While mid-century policy makers often attributed

[1101] Newson and Newson, *Seven Years*, 306–307.
[1102] Ibid., 320.
[1103] Cowan, '"Modern" Parenting and the Uses of Childcare Advice in Post-War England', 345.
[1104] Newson and Newson, *Four Years*, 425.
[1105] P. Gardner, 'The Giant at the Front: Young Teachers and Corporal Punishment in Inter-war Elementary Schools', *History of Education*, 25:2 (1996), pp. 145, 154.

Commonwealth migrants' use of physical punishment to racial differences, it is incumbent upon historians to highlight the connection between structural issues, such as overcrowded conditions, and practices which were criticised, such as excessive use of corporal punishment.

A recurring theme in many discussions about Commonwealth children concerned the lack of support available to West Indian and South Asian families from members of the extended family and the wider community. In 1970, Home Office officials recommended that, in order to reduce the number of care referrals, migrant communities should be supported to 're-establish or strengthen group and community feeling[s]' which were thought to have been 'loosened in the immigration process'.[1106] While the distances travelled by Commonwealth migrants were far greater, as revealed in chapter four, the disruptive effects of working-class suburbanization were discussed in very similar terms. Several years earlier, research published by the NSPCC credited the breakup of community networks with a rise in the number of children at risk of being taken into care: 'many of the problem families have moved from one area to another, leaving behind their friends and relations who once looked after the children while their parents were out at work'.[1107] Although the commonality was not remarked upon at the time, the needs of Commonwealth migrants and non-migrant working-class communities alike were thought to have been enhanced by the breakdown of community support networks.

West Indian parents, who had become separated from their extended family, were often singled out for their reliance on local authority services. In 1960 the Children's Officer for

[1106] NA: HO/361/88, Immigrants and the Child Care Service, July 1969.
[1107] P. Coleman, 'Children Locked in Homes', *The Times*, 24 July 1967, p. 7.

Middlesex reported that 'there are no grandmothers to look after the children as they would do at home and it does seem to us that the children's department in this country is rapidly taking the place of grannie in the West Indies'.[1108] Similar behaviours were noted by a senior supervisor working in Manchester's Children's Department, who reported that her colleagues had to exercise 'strong restraints' to prevent West Indian parents using the 'children's departments as extended family'.[1109] These concerns were strikingly similar to the anxieties expressed by the NPSCC inspector and the WGPW referred to in chapter four, who attributed the rise in the number of children being left at home alone to the absence of grandparents. The importance of intergenerational support was clear in the case records of individual children. Several years earlier, the Birmingham Public Assistance received an application from a widower who wanted to admit his seven-year-old child into care. This was because the child care that had previously been provided by the child's grandparent had been withdrawn.[1110] While it is unclear why the child care arrangement broke down, the change had a very tangible outcome; for the next seven years the child was cared for in children's homes run by Birmingham Council. Although how families became separated from their relatives differed, Commonwealth migrants were not alone in missing the support of family members.

The section above has shown how a wide range of issues – from diet and discipline, to a loss of family support networks – which led officials to intervene in the lives of other people's children, were found in both working-class and migrant communities. Despite clear similarities, however, officials stopped short of drawing connections between the two groups.

[1108] 'Foster Homes: Coloured Children Not Wanted'.
See also: Younghusband, *Social Work in Britain, Volume 2*, 2:204.
[1109] NA: HO/361/88, Course on Working with Immigrants, [n.d. 1969].
[1110] BA: BCC/1/CD/D/1/1/2/1/10, Public Assistance Department, Examination Book, 2 December 1924 – 17 June 1937, p. 40.

The efforts of senior civil servants to promote a culture of inclusivity failed to prevent racial differences from informing the attitudes of child care professionals, even though – race aside – many of the children were exposed to similar experiences. The inability of white middle-class professionals to empathise with either Commonwealth migrants, or members of the working-class, helps to explain why both groups were singled out for criticism.

Conclusion

This chapter has revealed important differences in the priorities of front line staff and policy makers. Study of local child protection practices tempers the credit often afforded experts when explaining the development of the welfare state. The value that senior child care practitioners in Birmingham placed on formal qualifications, reflected the city's proudly held tradition of promoting best practice in social welfare services. In Westmorland children's services continued to reflect local official's reluctance to invest in children's services.

Study of the attitudes of local officials toward the family unit reveals that even when social workers agreed with legislators, emulating what was believed to be best practice proved to be more difficult than first imagined. In Birmingham, a shortage of suitable foster homes meant that many children were perceived to have been denied the chance of a more familial upbringing. Housing shortages delayed the speed with which local authorities were able to transition away from large-scale residential homes. The significance of looked after children's relationships with their peers present a strong case for historians to pay closer attention to children's private cultures.[1111] The playground actions of school children could considerably undermine professional efforts to make children in care feel 'normal'.

[1111] Harris, 'War and Social History', 34.

Study of boarding out practices in Birmingham reveals that broader social changes – including the growth in the number of married women who entered employment – undermined professionals' efforts to implement best practice. These socio-economic issues were exacerbated by resistance among sections of the residential work force towards boarding out; the warm reception given to the Curtis Report did not always result in a change of attitudes. Residential staff were not alone, social commentators repeatedly remarked upon the lack of trust that many sections of the public felt towards trained social workers. Many of the decisions taken by social work professionals were informed by social class, which was widely referred to when determining the suitability of potential foster parents.

The closing section of this chapter has shown that in certain regions, racial differences played an important role in influencing the experiences of both looked after children and those seeking employment in the child care profession. The professionalization of social work was racialized to a far greater extent than is currently appreciated. Senior figures, in the world of social work, such as Winnicott, were reluctant to train Commonwealth migrants for fear that they would undermine the credibility of the profession. Despite the British government seeking to downplay the importance of racial differences, the experiences of Commonwealth migrants' children who entered the care system were profoundly informed by their racial differences. This is even more striking when we appreciate that many of the attributes associated with Commonwealth families were also associated with sections of the working-class. These groups were bound together by the fact that their life experiences were both culturally distinct from the white middle-class social workers they encountered.

CONCLUSION

This conclusion brings together four key themes developed over the course of this thesis – family, the public, expertise and the welfare state – to show that study of child protection efforts offers a valuable means by which to re-consider the history of mid-twentieth century England. The sections examine each of these issues in turn before exploring future research areas which have arisen from this work.

Family

This thesis has shown that recent histories have over emphasised the degree of change in social attitudes, and experiences of, family and household privacy. Policy makers consistently revered the family unit and viewed it as the ideal setting in which to raise children. Contrary to what has recently been suggested, the value of the family was neither rediscovered during the Second World War, nor was it widely viewed as socially defunct in the 1960s. Over time professionals came to acknowledge that efforts to emulate the family in alternative surroundings would prove harder than first expected. During the inter-war period, a time when people were devoting more time to the family home, advocates of boarding children out commonly supported their position by stressing the importance of family life to the emotional wellbeing of children.[1112] Nearly two decades before Bowlby published his famous WHO study, families were thought to provide the ideal setting in which to raise children because of the attention they offered. Harry Hendrick's assertion that the Second World War led to a 'rediscovery' of the value of the family under-estimates how highly the family was viewed in the years that preceded the conflict.[1113] With the work of Linda Murdoch in mind, this project set out to explore the extent to which parents and the wider

[1112] Pugh, *We Danced All Night*, x.
[1113] Hendrick, *Narcissistic Parenting*, 63.

community continued to influence the actions of non-familial care givers, amidst an expansion in state authority.[1114] This thesis has shown that because the state sought to return children to their birth families, where possible, the parents of looked after children remained important figures in their children's lives. Parents who invoked their right to reclaim custody of children placed in foster care risked provoking opposition from sections of the public who believed that a child's need for stability should take priority over the interests of birth parents. Cunningham has claimed that the twentieth-century observed 'the most rapid change in conceptualisation and experience of childhood'.[1115] This thesis has shown that the rapid changes that Cunningham associates with these decades included debates, which cut across working-class communities, about where childhood should be experienced. The uneven way in which conceptualisations of childhood changed was reflected in disagreements about how best to care for children who had been separated from their parents by the state.

Family members' lives were severely disrupted by the outbreak of war. Study of wartime child protection efforts, however, has revealed that amidst the disorder parents retained a great deal of autonomy over how their children were cared for. The government's unwillingness to forcibly remove children, thought to be at risk of enemy bombing, from their parents, demonstrates how powerful the family ideal proved to be. The authority of wartime experts, whose activities have been described as 'central' to Britain's war effort, must be placed alongside the respect shown, by senior policy makers, to individuals who sought to retain family unity. The binaries of victim and threat, that Hendrick shows characterised late nineteenth century child protection work, were extended to wartime evacuees. The separation of children, at risk of enemy bombing, from their families was cast

[1114] Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*.
[1115] Cunningham, *Children and Childhood*, 202.

as necessary for their safety and the nation's morale which was thought to be undermined by the presence of children in danger zones.

From the outset of the post-war period, the family was an important reference point for those concerned with supporting children understood to need protection. The value of the family was emphasised throughout the Curtis Report and the accompanying debates. The influence of psychological thinking ensured that the family continued to be valued though the 1960s, with state and popular efforts largely untouched by the progressive critiques that Deborah Cohen has emphasised. Families were perceived as uniquely well positioned to develop a new generation of citizens. Study of child protection efforts has demonstrated that the desire to develop future citizens, observed in Abigail Wills' study of delinquent children, extended to all looked after children.[1116] While the family continued to be viewed as the ideal place in which to bring up a child, beginning in the early post-war period, policy makers and practitioners began to express concern at the breakdown in family support mechanisms. The loss of intergenerational support among family members combined with a breakdown in community feeling, were commonly cited as explanations of child abuse. The difficulties associated with placing the children of Commonwealth migrants into foster care, arrangements believed to best emulate the family environment, reveal important limits to what the Curtis Report anticipated.

The rise in post-war domestic privacy, commented upon by both mid-century social researchers and present day historians, should be understood as a relative and not an absolute change. While Elizabeth Bott could argue that 'informal social control by relatives and neighbours is much less stringent and less consistent', this thesis has shown that community

[1116] Wills, 'Delinquency, Masculinity and Citizenship in England 1950-1970'.

members remained willing to report cases of concern.[1117] Although by the end of our period, 80% of all homes had their own demarcated lawns, these did not stop neighbours from learning about the private interactions of parents and their children. The decisions of adults with respect to disciplinary practices and offers of foster care were both informed by concerns for how they might be perceived by others.

This thesis has shown that the relationship between the State and its citizens continued to be heavily gendered. Women were assumed to be naturally suited to child care roles. This was evident in efforts to increase the number of female magistrates in the 1930s, the decision to appeal to mothers when promoting the wartime evacuation scheme, and the gendered assumptions which accompanied the role of post-war Children's Officer. King has over-emphasised the extent to which gender roles within families changed in the 1950s and 1960s. The post-war practice of placing children in care on a mother's admission to hospital reflected the breakdown in support networks combined with a belief that fathers were not sufficiently capable of looking after children on their own. The vast majority of people that children in care encountered – from social workers to house mothers and support staff – were women. The families that raised children – both biological and state created – continued to operate on heavily gendered lines.

The Public

This thesis supports Jennifer Crane's assertion that 'children, parents, and survivors were not only objects of child protection policy … but also subjects and agents'.[1118] A prominent theme in the existing literature has been the extent to which the public was aware of child

[1117] E. Bott, *Family and Social Network: Roles, Norms, and External Relationships in Ordinary Urban Families* (London, 1957), pp. 100, 101.
[1118] Crane, *Child Protection in England*, 15.

abuse. Current histories have focused most of their attention on reforms passed in the late nineteenth century and the discovery of battered babies in the early 1960s, with far less attention devoted to the intervening years. By making use of recently digitalised local and national newspaper collections, this thesis has shown that people were aware that increasing numbers of children were being supported by the NSPCC, with public reports the primary referral mechanism. People's anger on learning that children had been abused indicates that the public were concerned about children's safety and were aware of child abuse long before the social revelations often attributed to evacuation.

Wartime evacuation represented a nationally organised effort to utilise public resources to protect children at risk of harm from enemy attacks. Prior to the conflict, the public was aware that certain parents abused their children and many felt moved to very public displays of action. Cases of children evacuated to Westmorland have revealed that households that received maltreated evacuees often responded sympathetically and sought the advice of experts to address behavioural problems. The actions of Lady Allen in conjunction with the high-profile death of Dennis O'Neill, in the final months of the war, dramatically enhanced the public's awareness of the vulnerability of looked after children, a group whose wellbeing had not previously been questioned in such a public way. While people were aware of child abuse prior to the war, the conflict heightened public concern with the way in which these children were cared for once they had been placed into state care.

Study of digitalised newspapers and Hansard records has shown that largely as a result of press activity, the issue of child abuse was the topic of much wider discussion in the post-war period. Rather than associate this change with the 1960s, and the 'discovery' of battered babies, this thesis has shown that the years immediately after the Second World War, which

witnessed the publication of the Curtis Report, alongside a series of high profile cases, marked a highpoint in public concern with child protection. The post-war period observed a significant shift in the attitude of policy makers towards the wider public. The professionalization of child protection services coexisted with an acknowledgment that there were significant limits to what experts could achieve on their own. The actions of the public, in reporting cases of concern, were repeatedly identified as key to the smooth running of child protection efforts. These findings complement Crane's recent exploration of the ways in which expertise grounded in experiences played an important role in shaping child protection policy in the latter half of the twentieth century. Voluntary groups, such as Kidscape and Parents Against Injustice, studied by Crane, were the product of an earlier era examined in this thesis, in which the public were encouraged to play their individual part in protecting children.[1119] Much like Adrian Bingham's discussion of the popular press and attitudes towards sex, this thesis has shown that newspapers were widely seen as a vital means through which the public could be made aware of the risks faced by children. The press coverage of a series of high profile cases of child abuse, however, reveals that they did not speak with one voice. Given that newspapers, as commercial enterprises, sought to appeal to subsections of the population, this discovery should come as little surprise. Editorial differences were indicative of wider social divisions which centred on the extent to which people trusted the authority of professionals tasked with protecting the nation's children. Study of child protection efforts undermines the narrative of public apathy and reveals a populace who were often keen to intervene in order to protect children, even if their actions were at odds with professional best practice.

[1119] Crane, *Child Protection in England*.

While policy makers believed that all members of the public had a role to play in reporting concerns, officials actively discriminated on grounds of race and class, when responding to offers of help from prospective foster parents and aspiring social workers. These observations, which have been supported with reference to private correspondence between teaching staffing, Home Office officials and local authority employees, should serve as the starting point for future research. This thesis, when read in conjunction with the work of Jordanna Bailkin, creates a strong case for conducting further research into the experiences of Commonwealth migrants who entered the social work profession at a time when attitudes towards staff and children alike were heavily racialized. The archival papers of Paul Stephenson, the first black social worker employed in the city of Bristol, and the published writings of E.R. Braithwaite, who worked as a social worker in London, offer a valuable starting point from which to consider the experiences of Commonwealth migrants in positions of authority.[1120]

Experts

Study of child protection allows us to re-evaluate the extent to which experts shaped the direction of welfare policy in Britain before, during and after the Second World War. In his recent study of the interwar period, Richard Overy argued that 'language of menacing catastrophe' predominated 'in most areas of public debate'.[1121] The way the opinions of experts were discussed, in relation to the 1933 Children and Persons Act, directly challenges Overy's position. Far from an atmosphere of 'despair or helplessness', the insights of experts were taken to represent a renewed optimism in the ability of the state to positively transform the lives of disadvantaged children.[1122] The reforms that accompanied the passage of the 1933

[1120] See, for example: E. R. Braithwaite, *Paid Servant*, [1962] (New York, 2014).
Paul Stephenson's Paper are held at the Bristol Archives, catalogue number 42840.
[1121] Overy, *The Morbid Age*, 3, 360.
[1122] Ibid.

Act, which required that courts pay closer attention to expert opinion before determining how best to care for children who had been taken into state care, were described as 'inspiring and hopeful'.[1123] It is important to recognise, however, that expert opinion was not universally accepted. Calls to treat young offenders and neglected children alike proved controversial, while residential staff often opposed efforts to board out more children in their care. Nor were the opinions of experts disseminated equally. Study of local authority figures associated with children's welfare, who worked in different parts of the country, reveals striking disparities in the extent to which officials encountered the opinions of experts. This thesis has shown that provision of child protection services was heavily influenced by the way in which local authorities perceived their role. The services of experts came at a cost that councils committed to a small local government were unwilling to pay.

Turning to the Second World War, Edgerton has recently argued that 'the politics of expertise was central to wartime'.[1124] Study of efforts to safeguard children at risk of harm from enemy attacks affirms this position and helps to draw attention to a new set of experts. Government officials were receptive to the theories of psychological experts and were concerned about the psychological impact that wartime bombing could have on children. Examination of case files compiled by social workers in Westmorland has revealed that many adults who looked after evacuees placed faith in child behavioural experts to rectify difficult behaviour. Finally, we have seen that the war provided a new generation of future welfare staff, who would benefit from the new training opportunities which emerged after the conflict, with valuable experiences of caring for the children of others. These experiences were quickly used as new positions opened up as a result of the 1948 Children Act.

[1123] 'Wards of State'.
[1124] Edgerton, *Britain's War Machine*, 9.

The years the followed the passing of the 1948 Act have widely been associated with the rise of a new generation of experts. Improved training opportunities were central to many of the reforms promoted by the Curtis Committee, a Committee whose report was accepted among social work professionals as providing the blueprint for how best to support children in the care of the state. Even before the 1948 Children Act had been passed, however, experts acknowledged their reliance on the wider public to report concerns. Study of several high-profile cases of child abuse has shown that community members were often more aware of the private behaviours of particular family members than even the most diligent social worker could be. A central argument of this thesis has been that the claims of experts were not uncritically received by a passive public. Psychology was viewed with suspicion by much of the public in the interwar years, leading people to question the wisdom of experts who sought to break down the barriers that existed between maltreated children and juvenile delinquents. In the post-war period, the dissemination of psychological thinking through mass media provided the public with a new vocabulary which they drew upon selectively when resisting social worker practices which they believed were at odds with children's best interests.

Amidst the social affluence so often associated with post-war affluence, social prejudice continued to shape the thinking of decision makers responsible for protecting children. The process of replicating family life, which experts consistently thought of as the best means of raising children, presented professionals with a series of problems which the Curtis Report overlooked. Foster care was often resisted by parents who feared that it would cause their children to develop divided loyalties; that these opinions mattered reveals that the views of parents continued to influence the care provided to their children, even if they were removed from their custody. Much like in the interwar period, this thesis has shown that not all child

care staff agreed with the promotion of foster care. Examination of child protection services reveals that, far from witnessing the inexorable rise of a single set of experts, post-war Britain was shaped by a plurality of authority; different professional opinions coexisted, and were challenged by, the public's faith in their own expertise drawn from experience and supplemented by a selective reading of psychology, alongside less academically qualified residential staff who objected to efforts to expand foster care provision. While historians of the twentieth century have often emphasised the professionalization of services, this thesis has revealed a story of greater continuity among the child protection work force. Despite government efforts to increase the number of trained social workers, by the 1970s professionally qualified staff were still greatly outnumber by untrained colleagues.

Welfare State

The 1948 Children Act has often been presented as a moment of historic change, ushering in a new era of child centred care.[1125] One of the central arguments of this thesis is that study of the 1933 Children and Young Persons Act challenges this periodisation and demonstrates that significant reforms pre-dated the outbreak of the Second World War. The 1930s represented a key moment of expansion in the State's responsibilities towards children, which has hitherto been overlooked by historians. While the 1948 Act has often been associated with an expansion of foster care, it is important to note the changes contained within the 1933 Act. By allowing local authorities to be designated a 'fit person', the Act meant that for the first time it became possible for young people to be committed to the care of a local authority with a view to being boarded out. By stipulating that committed children be boarded-out unless there were good reasons why this was not possible, the 1933 Act introduced principles more commonly associated with the post-war era. Examination of records produced by

[1125] Ball, 'Regulating Child Care', 163.

Birmingham and Westmorland local authorities has revealed that in practice the enthusiasm with which foster care was promoted varied widely. An important determinant for whether foster care was actively pursued was the attitude of local authority officials; the progressive attitudes of Birmingham staff contrasted with local authorities who more reluctant to change.

A re-examination of the principles and practices which informed efforts to keep children safe during the Second World War challenges Harry Hendrick's assertion that 'the trauma of separation from family, and the emotional adjustment this involved, was rarely taken seriously by those who made policy'.[1126] This thesis has shown that policy makers and local practitioners were sensitive to the needs of children and invested time and resources to try and mitigate the emotional impact of evacuation. The evacuation scheme was drawn up so that where possible parents would be able to visit their children and policy makers were concerned about the psychological impact of war upon the civilian population.

Finally, this thesis has enabled us to reassess what child protection officials believed comprised best practice, and how far these principles were realised in the post-war period. While David Edgerton has recently argued that post-war Britain was a time of flourishing nationalism, comparative study of Birmingham and Westmorland has demonstrated that historians need to pay attention to local variation when explaining the development of the welfare state.[1127] Edgerton is undeniably right, however, in his assertion that the British government's military spending came at the expense of enacting welfare reform.[1128] While the Curtis Committee promoted the use of smaller residential homes, funding restrictions in the immediate post-war period meant that the construction of family homes was widely delayed

[1126] Hendrick, *Child Welfare*, 2003, 128.
[1127] Edgerton, *The Rise and Fall*.
[1128] Ibid., 245.

until the mid-1950s. The enthusiasm with which local authorities embraced the changes set out in the Curtis Report varied considerably and in ways that reflected wider differences in attitudes towards the role of government. The actions of local government, however, were just one of many factors which shaped efforts to increase the proportion of looked after children who had been placed in care. Post-war best practice envisaged a hierarchy of care, with family care at the top, followed by adoption, fostering, and then residential care. In Birmingham, whose promotion of boarding out was widely perceived as pioneering in the interwar period, the expansion in the number of women entering employment contributed to difficulties in finding additional foster homes. Over time, the early enthusiasm among many sections of the child protection profession towards foster care became more muted as people began to recognise the difficulties associated with the practice. By the late 1960s, advocates for residential care were increasingly arguing that children's homes offered a more stable and supportive environment for children who were at risk of being harmed emotionally if foster care arrangements broke down.

Future Research

In closing, this thesis has identified several important areas for future study. Chief among them is the need for a better understanding of the experiences of foster children and their biological and foster families. The limited oral histories which relate to people who spent time in care overwhelmingly capture the experiences of those in institutional care. The Birmingham oral history project, for example, concerns the experience of council run children's homes. Far less, however, is known about the experiences of those involved in foster care. This is significant because foster care was heavily promoted in the post-war period. A future oral history of these arrangements would also help to overcome the comparatively limited reference to foster children's lives, in Council documentation, when

compared to children who grew up in council managed accommodation. Closer study of foster care would enable scholars to examine the State's relationship with its citizens from an alternative perspective while also shedding further light on social expectations of what family life comprised in the middle decades of the twentieth century.

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