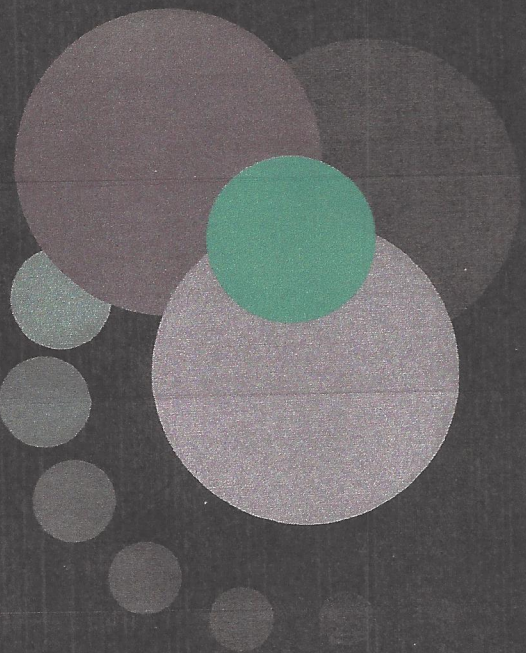


Therapeutic Approaches in Work with Traumatized Children and Young People

Theory and Practice

Patrick Tomlinson

Foreword by Paul van Heeswyk



Chapter 4

Therapeutic Education

Historically, those institutions providing therapeutic residential care and education for children with emotional difficulties have tended to focus on the emotional rather than educational needs of the children. To some extent, these needs were separated from each other and even seen to be in conflict. The Community's educational provision was initially designed for young boys who were perceived to be alienated from the education system and who would only engage if the approach used was sufficiently different from the mainstream school system. Hence, the use of the word 'poly' (polytechnic) which was clearly not 'school' and also created an emphasis on a broad rather than academic education. Evidence from national research (DH/DFEE 2000) in more recent years began to show clearly that long-term outcomes for children in care are correlated to academic educational achievements.

Throughout its history and in keeping with findings from research, the Community reviewed and improved its education provision. One of the central and most challenging tasks in residential care and education is ensuring high quality in both while maintaining the integration of care and education.

The interrelationship of education and therapy

We looked at this issue, focusing on how education and other aspects of a child's treatment fit together. We examined this particularly in the light of a more structured and planned approach to the National Curriculum, and the focus on enabling each child to reach his full educational potential.

The education of children in the Cotswold Community has developed rapidly in recent years. So far, this has not been conceptualized in relation to the theoretical base of the Community's work. There has been uncertainty as to how education fits within the psychodynamic framework. Education is increasingly led by national objectives with an emphasis on educational attainment. Young people and in particular those leaving care without qualifications can be disadvantaged after they leave care and have to make their way in the world. The approach of education varies according to the prevailing beliefs and attitudes in wider society. It is important that children are equipped in the best way possible to have opportunities and choices in that society.

There has been an underlying assumption in our work that children are referred primarily for treatment of their emotional disturbance. Children's difficulties in education are also often associated with this disturbance. There may be a concern that meeting the therapeutic needs of a child will be compromised by the demands of educational needs and requirements. For example, if a child needs to regress but is defending himself against this, is it likely education will be used to build up this defense? Sometimes anxiety is expressed that if we feed and develop a child's intellect without considering his emotional needs, he may use this defensively to protect himself emotionally. This can feel like an intellectual false-self which acts as a defense against dependency. On the other hand, functioning and educational achievement can strengthen a child's self-esteem, enabling him to feel less vulnerable to disintegration and more able to make use of a localized regression. Learning has the potential to facilitate emotional growth.

The way in which teachers work with children has the potential of both enabling academic achievement and providing appropriate relationship experiences. However, achieving these two aims may not feel easy and could seem to be in conflict. Teaching and learning does potentially involve dependency. First of all a child may be mistrustful and defended against the vulnerability involved in learning. Gradually through the relationship with his teacher, he may begin to trust her. As with other dependant relationships, he may feel that she has something good, which is not his and which he would like. If he can allow himself, the child may be able to take something from her, which helps him to learn. He may need to develop a belief in a benevolent teacher before he can learn academically.

Treatment is about providing opportunities for children to internalize valuable relationship experiences of which they have previously been deprived. It is not possible simply to transfer a child development model to our work with children. For example, while some of our children have the emotional needs of an infant, in other respects they are different and in some

areas far more developed. Intellectual and emotional aspects of the mind are linked together but also separate.

If a child is able and capable of achievement but is held back, this could be very frustrating for him and could be detrimental to his development, for instance, by feeding into his low self-esteem and sense of being no good. A child needs the opportunity to work at a level he is capable of, emotionally, cognitively and intellectually. For instance, if a child has a high IQ, that may not mean he is ready for demanding educational work. Too much pressure can cause emotional and educational progress to be set back. Careful judgments need to be made about a child's capacity to make use of 'failing'. Failing as well as succeeding can be of value but only if the experience can be made sense of by the child.

The approach towards education is based on the individual. Each child has an individual education plan, which is aimed at meeting his own needs within the framework of the National Curriculum. For example, children studying for GCSEs are worked with in a way that acknowledges their emotional needs. There is the opportunity for regressed play in school. If there is going to be more structure there will be less room for spontaneous play. This drew our attention to the importance of play and we wondered if there is enough room for this in the home.

We noted that home and school are becoming more distinct in their tasks, which implies a greater degree of separation between the two. As long as the child can make sense of the differences and adults are also clear about them, this can be a benefit to a child's treatment and development. It is important for adults to think about their own anxieties related to this issue, such as their own experiences and feelings connected to: school and education; rivalry between school and home; achieving and not achieving. If these anxieties can be thought about, they are less likely to impinge in an unhelpful way.

Though the National Curriculum can be used in a way that is appropriate to children at all different levels, its use will raise expectations to do with achievement. Increasing pressure is likely to be put onto the education department, possibly from social workers, parents and education authorities to demonstrate that each child is receiving the appropriate education. Careful work is necessary to ensure each child's needs are at the centre of his treatment and education plan. The children's treatment can be understood to consist of therapeutic child care and therapeutic education.

It is arguable education has been undervalued in the past and is now asserting its identity. Children in the Community are achieving more from an educational point of view and are leaving better equipped in this respect. There could be, though, an anxiety that teachers are too identified with

teaching and are not paying enough attention to the child's emotional stage of development.

The next section considers to what extent the children's care and education both need to be part of the same theoretical framework.

The importance of education in the treatment of traumatized children

This discussion, which forms the basis for this section, took place not long after the Cotswold Community was taken over by NCH. This change would mean being registered as a school rather than a CHE (community home with education). Inevitably, this change created some anxiety and prompted us to look at the implications and review the task of education. The education of traumatized children is an important and complex issue and relevant to those involved in therapeutic work and education with these children. Before exploring this, it is necessary to provide a context.

In 1997 the Community had provisional registration as a school. A process took place with NCH to decide the appropriate registration. With a school, the emphasis is on education and with a CHE it is more on the care side. This emphasis is reinforced by the inspection process. The primary inspection of a school is carried out by Ofsted and of a CHE by the National Care Standards Commission. The main objective is to achieve a registration that is supportive of its primary task, the treatment of emotionally unintegrated children. Whatever the registration, education in the academic sense has been a growing concern for all those involved in residential child care. Young people leaving care are often less qualified than their peers and this is often cited as one of the reasons for further difficulties after care (DH/DFEE 2000).

Until recent years, the approach to education in the Community was largely focused on the provision of a facilitating space in which children could learn through play and exploration. Education time was largely unstructured and an environment was provided in which children were supported in learning at their own pace. As a child evolved in his learning, education staff would be alert to this and provide him with further educational opportunities. For many years, children have been provided with structured individual reading times. However, these times were also linked to the idea of primary provision, a bit like a parent reading to an infant or vice versa.

One of the treatment aims has been to take the pressure off children to behave or perform at a chronological age level. This pressure could lead to a defensive type of functioning where the child will not allow himself to regress. At the same time, the therapeutic approach has also been to

support the child's ability to function or to provide ego-functioning (Docker-Drysdale 1990d, p.157). Some children feel less threatened by regression if their sense of self-esteem is built up in other areas. It has become clear that unintegrated children can be capable of academic achievement. Emotional and academic learning do not necessarily go hand in hand.

The approach of the school has become increasingly structured. This has been to ensure that the National Curriculum is provided to meet each child's individual needs. The National Curriculum is applied in a way that still enables children to have a regressed type of early childhood experience through play. The approach is largely about getting alongside a child and helping him to learn by adapting to his need. This adaptability happens within an expectation that each child will be working on a particular subject at a set time in each day. Mostly it feels as though each child's educational development is going in tandem with his emotional development. Generally, education and care staff work jointly together to help each child develop.

Sometimes a child's progress in school is the most tangible way he can measure his development. There is a step-by-step aspect about it and each step can boost his sense of self-worth and value. Conversely, there is a danger of implying to a child that he is unable to learn because of his emotional problems. A child's anxieties and worries about learning are now faced more directly in school, rather than waiting for them to emerge.

The main reason for these developments is to ensure that each child is offered the best educational opportunities possible. This provision includes meeting the external requirements connected to education. However, the emphasis on provision is different to an emphasis on outcomes. In the present education climate it is easy to be drawn into an overemphasis on outcomes measured through examination results. Teaching can aim at the exam rather than the child. Our therapeutic approach is about providing a facilitating environment, where each child can develop in his own way in his own time. We are trying to help him become a learner in the full sense of the word.

Rather than academic progress being spread over the normal school years, it is bunched together more for children here. Children who are at the beginning of their learning may feel a huge distance from children taking exams. It is important that we try to protect children at different stages from feeling a pressure to move on before they are ready. We need to give equal attention to all of the achievements a child makes, including his struggles where we feel his progress is very slow. We should not preempt his development. We need to be careful not to judge children purely in terms of examination results.

The therapeutic approach, which includes both care and education, first enables a child to reach and acknowledge a feeling of not knowing and of vulnerability. He may then allow himself to be dependant and believe in the idea of a benign teacher-carer who has something good, which she wants to give him to enrich his life.

The child's experience of separation between care and education

In addition to education, going to school provides children with an experience of emotional and physical separation that is a normal key aspect of child development. For traumatized children this separation may not have been achieved and their emotional difficulties can make this a complex and challenging task. The anxieties usually experienced in infancy and the first school years may still be prevalent and need to be worked through. This discussion is relevant to the education experience of traumatized children and in particular where residential care and education are provided on the same site.

The model that we have been moving towards is one of clearer distinction between the tasks of care and education, but which maintains the shared task of facilitating the growth and development of children. This is a shift from a model where children received education within a distinct unit incorporating home and school, to one where children leave their home to go to school. The difference may be one of degree, though there is now a greater emphasis on the experience of separation. All children with whom we work, except the most emotionally unintegrated, have some capacity to experience separation and differentiation. Children who have no such capacity would need an intense level of individual provision before being ready for school.

As work with unintegrated children is centered on facilitating dependant attachments, it can be difficult at the same time to manage and support separation. Children and their carers may have powerfully ambivalent and anxious feelings about separation. The potential danger is that we fail to stick with feelings such as guilt and rejection, and deny separation to make these feelings more bearable. For example, a carer may communicate to teachers in such a way that it implies a child is not ready or capable to sustain any separation. This could result in an overemphasis on the need for teachers to know everything about the child, so that they can more or less treat him as if they were his carer. Any breakdown for the child in school could then be seen as a failure by the teacher to understand him, leading to an even greater concern that communication is improved. The child may pick up a feeling

that he cannot manage the separation and needs to be with his carer. This could result in him frequently needing to return to the house.

As the way in which care and education work together has changed, the structures and routines between the two have not necessarily been adapted in a way to reflect the changes. Different approaches to house-school handovers have developed without being clear how they relate to the task.

In all the primary houses, the teachers go to the house before school starts. The teachers read the daily log and join the house meeting. Information is passed on about the school day and children ask questions. In some cases, children ask if they can take various items to school. As the teachers have a lot of information about what is happening in the house, a child who is beginning to have a sense of separation could feel there is not enough room to differentiate his behavior between house and school. For example, if he has had a difficulty with his carer, he may wish to arrive in school and present a different mood. Additionally, it could be more difficult for children to express difficult feelings about school and leave these in the house if this is going to be witnessed by the teachers. If the teachers see him as he was in the house, they may feel to him as if they are an extension of the house staff. While this could feel reassuring at times, it may not encourage the child to recognize his own anxieties and find his own ways of coping with them outside of his primary attachment. While all adults who work with him should show sensitivity to his feelings, there should also be a difference in the ways different people know and work with him.

GCSEs and the relationship between a child's academic and emotional development

During the 1990s the number of children taking GCSEs and the number of GCSEs taken by each child began to increase significantly. This had an impact on the culture of the Community and the related matters that needed to be understood.

Children in the Community tend to begin working towards a GCSE exam when they are assessed as capable of meeting the demands involved. This tends to be based more on their overall development, rather than on chronological age. In mainstream school children begin taking GCSE subjects at about 14 years of age and sit the exams two years later. Occasionally some exams are taken a year earlier. A child in the Community may begin a GCSE earlier than this, or in some cases start later and complete the subject in one rather than two years. An advantage of taking the GCSEs spread out can be to reduce the pressure of studying for many examinations at the same time. However, we need to be careful not to push children too

early. If the pressure is too great, this can disrupt development. If there is a possibility of failure, this needs to be an experience he can learn from and move on. There is also the risk of holding children back, sometimes through a fear of failure or success or an overprotectiveness. The process of an individual learning will also lead to changes in the relationships between him and others. If these potential changes are not thought about and acknowledged the anxieties involved could get in the way of and block emotional growth and learning.

To what extent can the education we provide be led by children's needs rather than other constraints? For example, can we run lessons where some children in the group are working towards an examination while others are not? Can we only value learning and studying a subject at a certain level if it is leading towards a qualification? There is an increasing emphasis on educational attainment, which can lead to a huge pressure on children to pass and achieve. How can we support a child at the stage that he has reached, without always thinking where we want him to get to?

To fail in an attainment-led culture can feel particularly awful to children who have low self-esteem. Our aim is that we help children with these feelings, while also working in such a way that we pay attention to and celebrate achievements. We need to be careful that we do not lose our own focus on what is achievement and development for a child. The emphasis on GCSE-type attainment may mean that we focus less on the broader skills a child can develop from the general living process and opportunities this can create. For instance, in the past many children at the Community have developed interests in things such as carpentry, electronics and farming. For some children these interests have then developed into work opportunities. There is a danger that we devalue some of these interests if they do not fit neatly into the educational system. As the education task becomes more distinct, how can we continue to offer children education in the widest sense of the word and not just in terms of the National Curriculum?

It is essential that education and care staff communicate well and work together on these matters. There are a number of possible scenarios in this area of work: we misunderstand a child's needs and work with him in such a way that increases his anxiety and difficulties; his needs are understood but not by all the adults who work with him; misunderstandings, conflict and suspicion between adults is picked up by the child and is distracting to him; there is a shared approach to work with the child, which he complies with by offering a picture of himself which is not true; there is a shared approach, which enables emotional and educational development to run side by side and complement each other.

Care and education staff need to have a joint understanding of a child's treatment that is based on his needs. To some extent, this understanding will develop through a process of exploration, explanation and negotiation.

Regression within the education setting

The approach developed by Dockar-Drysdale centered on the concept of regression and primary provision. Children were sometimes supported in a regressed state in school. With the shift to a more educational approach, we wondered whether regression ought to be more localized within the home and school more based upon age-appropriate expectations. Some children have suffered such developmental delay due to their extreme deprivation and abuse that they are not so much regressing as having never moved forward. These children really do need a basic level of primary experience in all aspects of their environment before they can move on. This experience provides the foundation for development. The Community conceived the idea that a foundation group in the school would be necessary to meet the needs of these children. This group would provide early educational experience within a highly supportive environment. Having broadly agreed with the task of the foundation group we examined the issue of regression in more detail.

The assessment during a child's referral will need to cover his educational needs in detail so this can be included alongside the assessment of his emotional needs. The issue of regression is particularly relevant to this group of children. There will be some emotionally unintegrated (frozen) children (Dockar-Drysdale 1958), whose development is so impaired that their treatment is less about moving forward from where they are and starting at the beginning. They have not progressed to a point from which they can regress. A child who regresses must have internalized some primary experiences and evolved to a point from which he can go back.

For children who do need to regress our general aim is to try to localize this as much as possible within a specific dependant attachment. An environment is provided that allows that to happen with a focus on the need for primary provision within this relationship. Hence the term 'focal-care'. However, we cannot predict exactly how or to what extent a child will regress. For some children the regression largely takes place within this context and outside of it he functions at a chronologically age-appropriate level. For others the regression is localized within the house as a whole and not confined to just the focal-carer relationship. Sometimes a child may need to regress completely for a short period of time.

It seems right that school does not encourage regression, though there needs to be some receptivity to the possibility of it. For example, a child who is regressed may actually go backwards in terms of his educational ability. We have seen cases where a child has temporarily lost the ability to read, as his need to be provided for has been so great. At these times, it is helpful to be accepting rather than critical of the child. Clarity about the reasons for these situations is necessary.

It is not appropriate for a focal-carer role to be provided within the school. However, a high level of care is needed at times, in the same way playgroup workers provide for the emotional and physical needs of infants in their parents' absence. As the playgroup worker or teacher in this situation is likely to be one of the first adult figures for the child other than his parents, it is likely the child will perceive the worker or teacher as a parental figure. The issue for the worker to remember is the distinction between being in this role and actually being the parent. As this is likely to be one of the earliest separations for the child he may not find it easy to make these distinctions. A good level of communication between the adults involved is necessary to ensure the child's needs are met without blurring boundaries and roles.

One of the needs of children in the foundation group will be the need for food. This need is likely to be greater than with children who are further on in their development. Holding on to experiences and waiting is not easy for children in this group. Feeling hungry is not easy to tolerate and the concept of time before the next meal may not mean much to these children. Some kind of provision needs to be available in a way that meets this need, but provided in a way that is not too distracting. Thinking about provision for individual need will be required as well as general provision for the group. Thinking and discussion will need to go on between the children's carer (or carers) and teacher, to find the best way for meeting these needs.

House-school handovers

So far as education is concerned, it does not seem necessary for teachers to go to the house for the handover. It is possible for grown-ups in the house to prepare children for school and pass on significant information about the day. The smaller detail about the school day can be explained when children arrive in school. Teachers could phone over to the house for a handover before children go over to school. Given the difficulties we work with, there is a need for teachers to have certain information before the school day begins so that this can be thought about and any plans made. This information should include matters about child protection, medical concerns, significant difficulties between particular children, absences of any children from

the school day significant events for particular children (for example, the visit of a parent).

When children are brought over to school, there is likely to be some anxiety between carers and teachers about the handover. When children are collected from school, teachers will need to give a brief handover to an adult from each house group about any particular event or incident. Handovers should be clear and focused, and we should be careful that they do not get used as a way of off-loading anxiety between the house and school.

The working relationship and rapport between a carer and teacher is critical in helping a child feel contained by their shared concern for his development, while also recognizing their different roles. There is an informal aspect to handovers, which is about establishing and maintaining this rapport. The safety and containment of children in the house and school will be affected by both the clarity of communication as well as underlying feelings between the two. To improve the relationship between care staff and teachers one education team has set up a link person system. One of the team is allocated to each house as a link person, with the aim of developing a closer relationship between the house and school.

The involvement of a child's carer with his time in school

In a setting where home and school are provided on site, the relationship between the two is close and establishing how close it should be is continuing work. The aim is to ensure that home and school staff work positively together enabling the child to experience care and education as being integrated as well as separate and distinct. Careful consideration of the issues and clear boundaries are necessary to ensure that care and education can function alongside each other without the task of either becoming blurred or merged into the other.

In thinking about a child's time in school and how his carer can show an interest and be involved, it is necessary to consider both the importance of what the child does in school and the separation between the child and carer during this time. The carer's involvement must be appropriate concerning these two matters. There are a number of possible ways for a carer to be involved, for example:

- discussing the child's time in school with the teachers;
- taking the child to school and collecting him, giving enough time to look at his work;
- helping the child do homework in the house;

- generally talking with the child about school;
- spending regular planned time with the child in school.

It is not a good idea for a carer just to drop into school unexpectedly. This would not help with separation and could be quite distracting. The aim is to establish concern and interest in the child's time in school, so that the whole of the child's experience and development is being thought about. Once this is established, it will be necessary for the carer to reduce actual time in school to prevent confusion with primary provision that takes place in the house.

Working with breakdown in the school

The discussion on this topic took place following a demanding period of working with breakdown in the school. Significant difficulties were being experienced in the new education system and the changed relationships between school and houses. The matters raised in this section are again particularly relevant to settings where residential care and education are provided on the same site.

One of the underlying principles in the Community's structure is the idea of containing boundaries or membranes. For example, a focal-carer provides a containing boundary around a child. The carer and her preoccupation support the child's fragile ego. Where this fails or breaks down there will be additional containment provided by the house culture and team, such as the role of back-up person. The house boundary represented by the house manager provides another layer of potential containment. Where the house does not contain a child, there are further boundaries within the Community as a whole. In practice, the way this works is by providing a third person in a relationship which can help create a thinking space. This in itself can help to change dynamics and contain anxieties and conflicts. There is always a senior manager available to houses, during evenings and weekends for this purpose. This person is clear about her supportive task. In the previous education system, the house-education team provided a similar sort of containment. The close working relationships allowed for a high level of sensitivity, understanding and support. Of course, there could be points of tension and breakdown between the two, requiring support from senior managers.

With the new education system there has been a reduction in closeness and sensitivity between house and education teams. It is not so easy to understand each other's context. For example, the daily handover meetings in the previous system between a teacher and house manager enabled a continuing relationship and understanding to develop. These points of contact also gave opportunities to refer to general matters and concerns. In many

ways, the present structures do not offer the same degree of containment. The simple fact of knowing who will be coming up for the handover or who is available to talk to if there is a breakdown can be supportive. If this type of support is lacking then primitive feelings are likely to build up. Strong feelings and anxieties are evoked in work with children. Where there is a lack of communication and understanding between adults these feelings are more likely to be displaced or projected. A persecutory and blaming atmosphere can soon develop. For children to feel safe and held there needs to be a sense of trust between the child's teachers and carers.

While there are some losses involved in the change to the new education system, some aspects of working relationships remain the same. There are possibilities of adapting and developing new approaches. For example, we can develop containing relationships between a teacher and house team through continuing communication and understanding. Specific teachers taking on the role of link person for a specific house may help this. This is similar to a school model where parents relate mainly to one teacher, though the child is often taught by a number of teachers. This gives a sense of clarity which helps a supportive relationship to develop. To improve containment it seems necessary to clarify the process for working with breakdown and who is available to the school from houses as a point of contact. To provide the most effective support we also need to find a way of achieving an overview of the school day across the whole group of children.

To some extent, the changes will take time to work through while new relationships between teachers and children, teachers and teachers, and teachers and carers grow and develop. There are many new relationships to be established. The relationship between teacher and child is central to the child's learning. With the changes to and development of the education task, the emphasis in work between a teacher and child will be less focused on the relationship. For example, a child who is disruptive in school is more often worked with by an adult coming in, enabling the teacher to continue teaching. The option of the supporting adult working with the group while the teacher works something through with the individual child has not been used so much. Comments such as that the supporting adult cannot teach the group may be used to rationalize this. The supporting adult can, however, oversee the group's work as set by the teacher. The teacher often follows work through with the child later in the house or school. The way in which disruption is responded to and worked through needs careful thought, so that appropriate authority and containment between teacher and child can develop. Flexibility should be maintained in our options for working on these matters.

Learning support

From the beginning of the Cotswold Community, all children living together in one house would attend the same education area (poly) together as a group. The staff from the house would provide direct support to their poly group. As the education moved towards a school approach with groups based more upon educational key stages, the single house-poly unit no longer existed, so the responsibility for support became less clear and at the same time the separation of house and school became more distinct and necessary. The concept of learning support provided by the school emerged during this period. This is a useful model in any education setting where children struggle to sustain uninterrupted time in the setting.

The main aim of the learning support resource would be to provide an additional layer of support for children between the school and house. Children who are struggling could be worked with either within their own classroom or within a specific learning support area. Symbolically this helps to create the sense of a school area that is more than a group of classrooms. Previously there has been little or no sense of school space between the class or school and the house. The closest to it has been the opportunity on a few occasions for a child to spend time in another class.

Matters for consideration

The actual operation of the learning support resource could be complex. If the emphasis of their work is mainly on anticipation and prevention of breakdown, the resource could become absorbed directly into the classrooms, like an extra resource to increase teacher-to-child ratios. The risk could be that this increases reliance on the resource and reduces expectations on children to function. If the resource becomes too easily absorbed, there would be little capacity to respond to further breakdown. On the other hand, if the resource is only used when things have completely broken down it may feel more like a crisis intervention resource. The potential emphasis on physical interventions at these points could create an unhelpful picture of the resource for children and adults.

The availability of a distinct space for the resource within the school does seem appropriate. A clear sense of a boundary between the resource and the classrooms will be necessary. The management of this boundary will need to strike a balance between anticipatory support and crisis intervention. The question as to when to involve additional staff from the house will need careful analysis. Communication, boundary management and authority need to be clear for the learning support resource to work with the potential difficulties involved.

The role of care staff within the school also needs careful planning. The roles of education and care staff have become more separate and distinct. This has largely centered around teachers becoming less involved in care and house tasks and focused increasingly on education (previously teachers worked in the houses some evenings and weekends). These changes sometimes raise anxieties and concerns about splits developing between care and education. The separation of education and care in itself will not create splits as long as the relationship between the two is seen as the essential part of the whole. It could be argued that clarity in role and task is likely to reduce splitting.

If care staff are in the role of learning support resource and become directly involved in classrooms, this could cause some difficulties for children in separating from their carers and focusing on education. There could be confusion about a carer also being a teacher. The aim is to support each child's capacity to function within the school. This also encourages primary provision to be localized within house-based carer relationships. Roles could become blurred if the learning support resource becomes too involved with children's education, rather than on support by establishing a sense of boundary between school and house.

The involvement and interest of carers in their children's education is positive and supportive. At times, it can feel as if this interest slips. For example, when work in the house is very stressful, a carer might be relieved to drop children off at school. The school may feel more like it is providing a childminding function rather than education. This can also happen the other way round: where teachers are so relieved to reach the end of the day that little space is left for considering what goes on outside of school. Systems need establishing to ensure there is a strong sense of connection between teachers and carers.

The issue of breakdown is particularly significant now. Anxieties about change and, in particular, mixing children from different houses together in the school, raise concerns about potential breakdown and acting out by children. The learning support concept could lend itself as a focus for these anxieties both from education and care, as it bridges between the two. For some of the reasons discussed above and for other practical ones, it might not be clear what the best model is. The nature of what is provided within the school, the positive support of care teams and communication between the two are essential components of helping the changes to work. We have our own anxieties about all these things and could displace them onto the children by, for example, saying the children will not cope – and then onto the learning support resource as a container for children's acting out.

School homework

The issue of school homework highlights the difficulty for emotionally troubled children in achieving educationally and the conflict that can be felt in those caring for them between addressing emotional and educational needs. A child with severe emotional problems needs specialized help to treat his emotional difficulties. This is hard work requiring time and energy. A child in this situation needs time for relaxation and an opportunity to be relieved of pressure.

Now there is a greater sense of school within the Community, it seems some children are expecting more of a mainstream school experience and have begun to ask for homework. Homework needs thinking about. The implications need to be considered carefully by all the adults working with a child. The Community's structure is not entirely comparable to a school-family situation. Children are placed here for treatment that includes care and education. The work involved for children takes place in the house and school. In the house, each child is expected to be involved with group meetings, individual meetings, work on his feelings, communication and primary provision. This is inevitably an intense experience and partly why it is so important for children to have an outside family placement for breaks away.

If a child is asking for homework, the teacher should find out why. We need to think what underlying factors might be connected to a child's request. It could be a reflection of his wish to continue learning. If this is coming from him, he could be supported in practicing what he has learnt and talking with his carer. This has also to be done within the context of working with all of his needs. The child may be anxious about other things and is using the homework to avoid them. Similarly, adults could also wish to avoid something in this way. Homework can be used in a way that controls the use of time. Sometimes a child's anxiety about endings and completing things he is doing make it difficult for him to leave unfinished work in the school. The main aim in work with him at these times should be to help him with this anxiety. We could try to plan his work so he is able to complete it within the school time or help him with the feelings he has about leaving something unfinished. This may also be connected to how he feels about endings and transitions in the wider sense.

It is not helpful for emotionally unintegrated children to be set homework with the expectation that it must be completed. Obviously, with children who are approaching GCSEs there is a different level of expectation. On a practical level, thought needs to be given from both house and education teams, about what goes from house to school and vice versa. Treatment processes are carefully planned for children in both the house and

school. The expectations about a child's time in house or school need to be set primarily by those adults working in the particular area. If anything is to cross over the house-school boundary, discussion and agreement between all the adults involved is necessary.

An adult's wish for a child to learn also needs thinking about. Is it based on a realistic understanding of his capability and needs? Is the adult anxious that he should learn to prove he has good carers and teachers? A child's carer and other adults who work with him should be attentive to his interest and curiosity in learning. This can happen in many different ways through the course of day-to-day living. Showing an interest in and supporting his schoolwork is part of this.

Education staff's involvement with needs assessments

As care and education became more separate the question arose of how a child's experience in school would be included as part of his needs assessment. Previously education staff attended a weekly team meeting with care staff. Needs assessments would be carried out in these meetings. The education staff's contribution into the meeting would not be possible on a regular basis so we needed to reconsider how they could contribute to needs assessment. In all settings working with traumatized children, the sharing of information between teachers and carers is essential in trying to gain an overall picture of a child's needs and development.

Now that teachers are not part of a specific house-education treatment team, they are no longer part of house team meetings. The care teams work on needs assessments and therapeutic management programs in these meetings (Docker-Drysdale 1990d, pp.158, 164). Ideally, it would be most beneficial for all those adults who work directly with a specific child to be involved in a joint team discussion. If this is not possible or practical, there are different ways of ensuring all aspects of a child are brought together. His treatment plan will be based on an understanding of this whole picture. It is a particularly important part of treatment that the adults working with a child are able to put their different experiences together and bear this in mind.

There will be many opportunities, formal and informal, for carers and teachers to share their experiences of children. There will be regular daily handovers. Focal-carers and teachers will meet at the beginning and end of each term to discuss each of the focal-carer's children. As well as focusing on academic educational progress, a significant part of the communication will be about a child's relationships with teachers and children, attitude towards others and the development of the capacity for concern. All of this communication between care and education staff needs to be borne in mind and

included in the work on needs assessments and therapeutic management programs. In addition to this, an education team could write something to be included or on occasions a teacher who is particularly involved with the child could join the meeting. Completed assessments and programs will be given and shared with the relevant education team, which gives another opportunity for feedback to ensure all relevant aspects of each child are considered.

Working on conflict between care and education staff

The task of providing effectively integrated care and education for emotionally troubled young people is inherently challenging. Providing either one is difficult; providing both and managing the relationship can be exceptionally difficult. Young people's experience of home and school, the relationship between the two, and more general issues such as separation and rivalry are raised. The staff involved in care and education will become a collective container for such matters and will be challenged to make sense of what they are containing. They will do this while considering their own questions related to real objective differences between care and education, their feelings about these differences, as well as their personal and subjective feelings related to their own experiences of care and education. At a time in the Community's history when the status of care and education was fundamentally changing due to the change in registration from CHE to school, matters that often arose were experienced more intensely. The capacity of care and education staff to contain the feelings involved was tested to the limit. We felt it useful to have a series of discussions, whereby the issues manifesting themselves in the staff group could be thought about and understood.

There is envy of the education team by care staff which often focused on the perception that education staff have more flexible and better hours of work. There is also a feeling that both the work of the education staff and their time off are more protected. One perception is that care staff are interrupted more often when they are doing things without children, that is, to respond to school breakdowns. There is envy from education staff towards the special relationship they perceive care staff to have with children. Some care staff acknowledge that they would not like to lose the relationship they have with children and feel protective of this. The resentment and envy may be greater during periods of change. At these times difficult feelings, which are not acknowledged and understood, might be disowned and projected onto another group. The other group becomes the 'enemy within'. Sometimes these feelings are expressed indirectly, such as joking about the 'easy' time education staff have.

It is one of the treatment aims to provide an opportunity for children to experience separation from their primary care. In this sense, the school should be in its own distinct area and the education staff a bit removed from the house. One of the difficulties was to provide for a whole range of needs in the same place. For instance, different children have needs that are similar to the needs of children at the stages of: mother and toddler group; preschool nursery or playgroup; and primary school reception class. The task of care staff in relation to the school is often to be available to children in a 'maternal' sense. The staff holding this responsibility can expect to feel as though they are constantly on call in the same way parents with an infant would.

Care staff can support children's education in different ways. Whenever possible it is a positive aim to try to support the school situation so that the children's functioning can be maintained and restored. At times, there can be a feeling of competition and suspicion between care and education staff. These feelings often centre on matters like: 'This child is not ready for school, why are you bringing him?' or 'Why are you sending him back to the house? You should be able to manage this.'

Sometimes resentment, envy and jealousy become focused on matters connected with money. For instance, care staff express feelings about teachers being paid more. This area of conflict could possibly be a displacement of general feelings and anxieties related to money and the work we do. Children often bring this to our attention with questions about how much we are paid, and comments like 'you only do this for the money, you don't really care.'