

# **Excluded But Not Rejected**

---

---

## **Contents**

### **Introduction**

### **Section 1 : Perspectives on exclusion**

### **Section 2 : The legal framework governing the exclusion process**

### **Section 3 : The professional agencies involved in exclusion**

### **Section 4 : Christian initiatives with 'at risk' and excluded pupils**

### **Section 5 : Getting started - key questions for new initiatives**

### **Section 6 : An introduction to mentoring**

### **Appendix 1 : Addresses and resources**

### **Appendix 2 : Facts and figures on truancy and exclusion**

'Excluded But Not Rejected' is a partnership between CARE for Education and the Youth and Children's Unit of the Evangelical Alliance, in association with the Senior Volunteer Network.

Written and edited by Jenny Baker, John Hallett and Grahame Knox.

Thanks to Arthur Brown for the section on 'Mentoring' and the members of the Senior Volunteer Network who researched and visited numerous local initiatives.

CARE (Christian Action Research and Education) and The Evangelical Alliance © 1999. All Rights Reserved.

## **Introduction.**

### **The Costs of Exclusion.**

Excluding children from school is costly. A survey by the Children's Society estimated that fixed-term (temporary) exclusions are running at 137,000 pupils per year with the loss of over 2 million days of education. In England alone during 1995-96, 12,476 pupils were permanently excluded from schools, 10,344 of these were secondary pupils. Although complete and accurate records were not available until recently, it is estimated that permanent exclusions have risen around fourfold in the preceding five years. Only just over a quarter of these permanently excluded young people re-entered mainstream schooling in another school. The Prime Minister has said such exclusion leads to the loss of critically important years which in many cases will never be recovered.

The effects of these permanent exclusions inevitably produce further disruptions in family life, and, to the child, loss of daily routine, educational opportunity and a feeling of social isolation because of the separation from their peers. Both The Children's Society and the Association of Chief Police Officers have highlighted the 'easy route' from school exclusion into drugs and criminal behaviour for many young people.

The Social Exclusion Unit was set up by the Government to help co-ordinate and integrate action across government and to bring a genuine cross-departmental focus on some of the worst problems in society. In May 1998 the SEU published a significant report 'Truancy and School Exclusion' (ISBN 0-10-139572-8).

One disturbing trend highlighted in the SEU report is the disproportionate impact of exclusion on the children who are looked after by local authorities. 25% of young people aged 14-16 in public care are either excluded or not attending school. This group is 10 times more likely than their peers to be permanently excluded which helps to create the appalling statistic of 75% of public care children leaving school with no qualifications. This directly leads to them being four times more likely to be unemployed between 16-24, 50 times more likely to serve time in prison and 60 times more likely to be young and homeless.

The Government has said that the present number of exclusions is too high and has committed itself to taking concerted action to reduce the levels of truancy and exclusions by one-third by 2002, alongside a commitment to ensuring that all pupils excluded from school for more than 15 days receive full-time and appropriate education.

Some initiatives to tackle rising exclusions are already in place. In October 1997, the Government called on Local Education Authorities to place greater emphasis on managing pupil behaviour through 'behaviour support plans'. These plans will require LEAs to make provision outside mainstream schools for pupils with behavioural difficulties, including arrangements for supporting the education of excluded pupils, as well as improving effective co-ordination

between all concerned local agencies.

In addition the Government has required LEAs to monitor and set targets for reducing exclusions, and the guidance recommends the development of good practice models in partnership with local community organisations. A 'Standards Fund' (£22 million in 1998-99) was made available via LEAs to support locally devised projects which tackle attendance and behaviour problems in schools.

### **Excluded but not rejected**

Being excluded says to many young people they are rejected and expendable. The resulting disaffection with school and society grows, with a high price to pay, unless someone can convince these young people that they matter. Searching the country to discover initiatives already taken by voluntary bodies, in particular by Christian agencies and churches, has convinced us it is possible to make a difference. Intervention prior to permanent exclusion can yield excellent results where funds allow a tailored input into the lives of the children, especially where one-to-one mentoring can be provided. This probably yields the best and most cost-effective results. Young people who are in their last years of schooling can be given a new opportunity and won from disaffection where 'out of school' provision, good mentoring and special units can be made available. Sadly, this is often hard to achieve as Local Authorities may not have the funds to provide these services on a large enough scale and many recognise that voluntary bodies can make a valuable contribution.

### **Why a resource on exclusion?**

Developed as a partnership between the Evangelical Alliance Youth and Children's Unit, Care for Education, and the Senior Volunteer Network, our aim through this resource is to encourage effective and significant Christian responses to the problems posed by the increasing number of 'at risk' and excluded children as well as the needs of the young people themselves. A number of churches, projects and agencies who have already developed successful initiatives have shared their experiences so that others may have the confidence to prayerfully consider entering this challenging and important area of ministry. A child or young person who has been excluded from school needs to know they are not completely rejected - someone still cares.

Throughout this resource the needs of excluded primary children have not been given specific attention. Much of the content, however, applies equally to work with these younger children.

## **Section 1 : Perspectives on exclusion**

In the area of school exclusions different responsibilities bring different perspectives. John Hallett is the Chair of Governors at a comprehensive schools and Arthur Brown, a youth worker, leads a Christian initiative working with disaffected young people.

### **A school governor looks at exclusion.**

A phone call asking me to chair a meeting of the Governors Exclusions Committee reminds me again of how, in a fallen world, the application of biblical principles are rarely as simple as we would want them to be. This time it is a year 10 girl, Lisa\*, (though years 10 and 11 have the highest exclusion rate generally, girls are excluded much less frequently than boys). Lisa's name is not new to me. As chairman of the Governors I receive a note about every exclusion, whether for a fixed period of a few days or, as in this case, permanent. I had met Lisa, when she was in year 9, when she and her mother came into the school after she had been excluded for six days. The headteacher and I had then to try to assess whether she understood why she had been excluded and whether she was ready to return to school.

A few days later a bulky envelope falls through the letterbox containing a record of the difficulties and incidents that have led to this last resort of permanent exclusion. Permanent exclusions at this comprehensive are still quite rare, though the number has risen slightly. However, I am aware that across England and Wales they have increased more than fourfold since 1990. I am aware too that there is staff and parent concern that we have recently admitted several children who have been permanently excluded from other schools in the area.

The documents show what I had expected, a record of incidents, starting in the primary school, which includes several fixed term exclusions and a range of disruptive behaviour. This includes several violent attacks on other pupils, and, in the last incident, on a member of staff. Lisa is not recorded as having serious learning difficulties, but erratic attendance and a short attention span have combined to put her in a low ability group for most subjects. She does get good reports from some teachers but is generally seen to be under-performing. Once again I am amazed at the cost in time involved, both in gathering this documentation, and in giving Lisa an individual learning plan. As a governor I have to ask whether this is good stewardship of valuable resources.

The procedures have been carefully laid down, and, from my knowledge of the headteacher, I know that he would not have taken this action lightly. Our legal obligation as governors is to ratify, or reverse, his decision and this must be done within 15 days of the exclusion. I know I must follow the procedures with precision, but I am also aware that Lisa and her parents could be overawed by the formality and need to be given a good opportunity to speak and to know they were listened to. Whilst it is important that the seriousness of the situation and the action taken needs to be seen by all, there must be room for compassion.

Lisa arrives at school with her father. I am joined by two other governors, the headteacher and an LEA representative. I set the scene by explaining what will happen during the meeting, emphasising the opportunities that will be given for Lisa and her father to ask questions and make statements. Lisa looks sullen and alienated by all this formality and tries to brave it out as though she wasn't fussed by it all. I ask the headteacher to summarise the report that we have all read, and invite all parties to ask questions about it. We reach the point where Lisa and her father ask questions and I try to lower the level of formality and encourage her to say how she feels. Lisa accuses the teacher of 'always picking on her' a defence that sounds very weak against the record of bad behaviour towards several different teachers. Her father seizes on an aspect of the incident which led to the exclusion and describes something the teacher said, after Lisa had assaulted her, as 'over the top', but this doesn't diminish the seriousness of Lisa's actions. We look at the ways in which the school has tried to help Lisa and I ask the father if he feels the school has done all it could. He acknowledges that there has been a lot of individual help. I ask if there is anything else the governors should know to enable us reach a just conclusion and then explain, once again, that our task is to check whether permanent exclusion was, on balance, the right action.

When the formal business is complete the governors meet to consider our response. We take into account the damage to authority in the school if the headteacher's decision was reversed and Lisa was allowed to come back to school 'in triumph'. This does not automatically rule out reversing the headteacher's decision but it is never the less significant. We have no difficulty reaching a decision and agree to confirm the exclusion. We can see Lisa's needs but we have to balance justice for her, against justice for the other pupils in her teaching groups, the staff, and the school generally. We cannot see a safe and workable arrangement that would allow her to continue in the school. As governors responsible for the finances of the school we have just been struggling to avoid setting a deficit budget and yet to find money for action to raise pupil performance in the school. The cost of more one-to-one attention for Lisa, and others like her, is too great.

So our responsibility has been faithfully discharged but the affair leaves us unhappy, because, what was not our business at the meeting, is still a matter of grave concern. We know that less than one in four of the permanently excluded pupils in this age group ever get back into mainstream schooling. We have enquired and we are told that the Pupil Referral Unit serving disaffected pupils in our area is so short of funds it will have to give priority to working with primary age children at risk. What will happen to Lisa now? Her father will take her to each of the other secondary schools in the area to try to find a place for her, which could take several weeks, and during this time her alienation from school will increase. She will probably hang out with older unemployed youngsters who will provide her with poor role models and she could well go further down the path towards serious trouble. Permanent exclusion will damage Lisa's life chances (which were not wonderful to start with). But all this is outside our control. We have

discharged, however uncomfortably, our legal responsibility.

During the hearing another thought comes to us. We wonder if some of our teachers and support staff have not always handled Lisa in the best possible way. We recommend that the school use an in-service training day for providing guidance and help with managing challenging behaviour and defusing confrontations. We look at the record of behaviour leading to exclusions and try to see if any pattern emerges. Could the school do anything to anticipate and avoid confrontational situations? We remember that our teachers are under pressure to raise standards and appreciate that dealing with challenging behaviour with an audience of peer pupils watching eagerly to see 'who wins' is very different from working with a pupil in the clinical one-to-one of the Educational psychologist.

If the school is not able to meet Lisa's needs who will? I am glad that there are Christian groups providing referral centres and mentoring, alongside the provision by the Local Authority, and that many are reporting a measure of success in changing the young people's attitudes and behaviour. Lisa needs to know that though she has been excluded she is not totally rejected.

NOTE : 'Lisa' is not a real person though the story is truly typical and based upon a number of actual cases.

### **A youth worker looks at Exclusion**

'Education, education, education', we've all heard the sound-bite boldly announcing the Government's priorities. What is more unclear is what this education will look like for the many young people who do not attend school through formal, informal or self-exclusions. The number of young people 'out of school' has been increasing in recent years and is a problem that is likely to lead to greater social exclusion for these young people in the future through unemployment, increase exposure to drug misuse, crime and even homelessness.

Leading the 'Fresh Start' project in the Borough of Southwark brings me into contact with a number of young people 'at risk' or excluded from school. David is one of the young people I am currently working with and mentoring. In Year 7 he seemed to be doing OK. His Dad had died the previous year and he was living with his Mum and younger sister. By year 8 his attendance and behaviour had declined considerably. He was disruptive in class, and when he felt unable to cope he would run out of the class, to hide somewhere else in the school.

I have built a good relationship with the staff at David's school, so the Year Head referred David and three other boys 'at risk' of exclusion to meet with me in a small group every week. There are also opportunities to meet David informally when I visit the school at other times. The aim of the group is to provide a safe atmosphere, both physical and emotional, where David and the other boys can talk about how they feel about school, the difficulties they have and how they might be able to work through their problems. I spend a lot of time 'just' listening but we also discuss things like dealing with anger,

coping, and 'getting on' with other people, usually through different activities and 'role playing'. David feels the group helps him, so does his Mum, and he appreciates someone taking time to listen to him and take an interest in what he's doing. I also believe David is now less likely to be excluded from school because of the progress he is making.

The behaviour exhibited by young people like David who are 'at risk' of exclusion, or who have been excluded from school, is normally the outworking of deeper issues. Young people who have limited aspirations and low self esteem are much less likely to see the value of achieving at school, often feeling they would be unable to achieve anyway. These feelings sometimes lead to 'acting out' behaviour not acceptable to the school.

A mentoring relationship between a youth worker and young people is one, which can foster trust and partnership. It is also one which provides opportunity for additional support, reflection and working towards mutually agreeable goals. Issues such as self-esteem, communication skills, relationship skills, anger management and conflict resolution, problem solving, dealing with feelings, planning and goal setting, reviewing developing values, can all be explored in some depth over a prolonged period of time. In being mentored young people also receive attention from an older person who can value them to give them the respect they deserve. Their teachers may not be able to manage the rest of the class when they are demanding attention, their parents or guardians may not have the time for they demand due to other pressures, and their social worker or Educational Welfare Officer is often viewed as just a part of 'the system'. The significance of having an appropriate adult spending time with them cannot be understated and the skilled youth worker can provide opportunities for a young person, caught up in a cycle of failure, a chance to succeed and develop self-worth.

Although very different in their approach, schools (formal education) and youth work (informal education) should seek to develop strategies that stimulate mutual respect and co-operation. Youth workers, volunteers and mentors can play a vital role alongside that of teachers, in supporting young people, often bringing new skills and making available new opportunities to the young people concerned.

Churches and Christian youth organisations are ideally placed to provide support for young people who are broken hearted, oppressed, without hope and who have more or less been rejected. They need encouragement to reach their potential and adults who can act as positive role models. Young people, created in God's image, who, despite their backgrounds and behavioural issues, have massive potential waiting to be released.

## **Section 2 : The legal framework governing the exclusion process.**

### **Education and Schooling.**

In the United Kingdom education is compulsory, schooling is not. For over fifty years the law has placed the responsibility for the education of children with the parents. They have the duty to ensure that every child of school age (5-16) receives an efficient full-time education suited to his age, aptitude and ability, either by regular attendance at school, or *otherwise*. This last clause is being taken up by increasing numbers of parents who are educating their children at home, and many are doing this from a Christian standpoint. In all such cases the parents are expected to notify the Local Authority and are liable to inspection by the Authority. The Local Education Authority (LEA) has an obligation to ensure that all children are being educated and to provide enough appropriate school places for all the children whose parents choose to delegate the schooling of their children to them.

### **Attendance at School.**

Local Authorities have powers to help them ensure that children are educated. They can serve a School Attendance Order (SAO) on parents who cannot prove that their child is receiving a suitable education. Failure to comply with an SAO is an offence and the LEA has the power to prosecute. If convicted, parents can be fined or even sent to prison. Where children attend school irregularly, without good cause, the parents can also be guilty of an offence, though LEAs have discretion as to whether to prosecute. LEAs can also apply to the courts for an Education Supervision Order that has the effect of placing the education of the child under their supervision. The proceedings in court are 'family proceedings' which means that the prime concern is the child's welfare. If a registered pupil 'disappears' from a school and cannot be traced, the school must inform the designated Child Protection Officer of the LEA, and, where there may be reason to suppose that a crime may have been committed, the Police.

### **Exclusion from school**

The decision to exclude a child from school is normally only taken by the headteacher. The exclusion may be for a fixed period of days (up to a total of 45 days in any school year), or permanently. The headteacher must notify the parent(s) or legal guardian of the exclusion as soon as is possible and give an explanation of the exclusion procedure and the right of appeal. The LEA and the Chair of the Governors must also be informed. Where the fixed period is five days or more, or exclusion is permanent, the parent(s) must be invited to the school to meet the headteacher and a panel of three members of the Governors' Discipline Committee. A representative of the LEA may be invited and the parent may bring a friend. The LEA will advise and assist parents in finding another school as soon as possible. A school which has a vacancy must take the pupil, unless the pupil has already been excluded from two other schools.

### **The Obligations of Schools.**

Schools are expected to be efficient and to provide an education suited to the age, aptitude and ability of the children sent to them. They can be inspected to ensure that this is the case. For Local Authority schools the content and sequence of the curriculum is laid down (the National Curriculum) and the schools will be inspected to ensure that this obligation is being met effectively. Some children have learning difficulties and in cases where this is formally recognised, schools can receive special funding to meet the needs of these 'statemented' children. These children will be under the special care of a member of staff known as the Special needs Co-ordinator, who normally has access to special funds set aside for children who have been formally identified as having special educational needs. The headteacher of a school can direct that the requirements of the National Curriculum can be 'disapplied' in the case of any particular child for a specified period of time. Educational needs and behavioural needs are frequently found together. Then children with poor attendance record or poor attention span, but whose difficulties do not lead to 'statementing', are frequently disaffected in school and exhibit disruptive behaviour.

### **The Role of Governors.**

The Governing bodies of Local Authority schools are unpaid volunteers, elected (or co-opted) from defined constituencies of the local community. They are given the heavy responsibility for ensuring that their school has appropriate policies in place. They will generally have called for each policy statement to be drawn up, ensured that this process has involved wide and appropriate consultation, considered the resulting document and, at a full meeting, formally incorporated it. The headteacher then has executive responsibility for the implementation of that policy in the day-to-day running of that school. Policy statements should be in existence for a wide range of matters, and will include pupil behaviour (rewards and sanctions), drugs, provision for children with special educational needs, and Personal, Social and Moral Education, including sex education.

Governors are involved in all cases of permanent exclusion. Whilst the decision to exclude is made by the headteacher, a panel of Governors has to meet with the headteacher, the parents, and the child to consider that decision to exclude permanently, and to ratify or reverse it. This has to happen within 15 days of the exclusion order. Most headteachers will be reluctant to expose themselves to the possibility of a reversal of their decision by the panel of Governors. Similarly governors should receive a termly report showing the number and the details of exclusions of all kinds. This involvement does give a Governing Body the ability to monitor exclusion practice as well as policy.

### **Education of Excluded Pupils.**

The education of excluded pupils continues to be the responsibility of the LEA, and it has an obligation to follow up each excluded child and determine what arrangements can be made for them. These arrangements can take a variety of forms but LEAs are obliged to search for ways of ensuring that the programme includes full time attendance. At present that remains a goal rarely attained. The child may be re-integrated into another mainstream

school or a special school. Alternatively the programme for a child may involve a mix of part time admission to a mainstream school and a variety of other arrangements. These may be at a Pupil Referral Unit, a Further Education college, a unit run by voluntary organisations or by home tuition. Many Further Education colleges have special programmes for excluded young people.

**Pupil Referral Units.**

A Pupil Referral Unit is an LEA school that provides education for children who, for reasons of illness, exclusion or otherwise, need to have special arrangements made for them. Admission and Attendance Registers are kept in the same way as any other school and the curriculum offered, though not bound by the National Curriculum requirements, is subject to similar scrutiny. The teacher in charge of the unit has the same powers and status as a headteacher. LEAs may also use a service provided by a voluntary body in order to meet their obligation to provide education for children excluded from school, though the legal responsibility remains with the LEA. Where a voluntary body offers to create and run what is, in effect, a Pupil Referral Unit, it must be approved and monitored by the Local Authority.

### **Section 3 : The professional agencies involved in exclusion.**

When a voluntary body begins to explore the possibilities of working with excluded children, those who are leading the work need to be aware of others already working in the field. This section is intended to provide a background understanding of the other agencies, their roles and obligations, so that positive co-operation can be fostered. Each agency has its own perspectives and statutory duties. It will take time to get to know the people involved, but unless this is done sensitively and diplomatically, well-laid plans can fail.

#### **The School.**

Most secondary schools have two or more deputy headteachers, and one of them will have particular responsibility for the pastoral care of pupils. When building up a working relationship with a school the first formal approach will be to the headteacher but subsequent development will be with the appropriate deputy. It would be normal to have a teacher who is designated head of each year, and, for each pupil, a teacher who is the group or pastoral tutor. The school will also have a member of staff designated as Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO). The Governing body will have a sub-group usually known as the Personnel and Pupils Committee. Primary schools, which are generally smaller, will have a SENCO and each pupil will have a class teacher, who will stay with the pupil for at least a year. Overall pastoral oversight will rest with the headteacher or the deputy.

#### **The Education Welfare Officer.**

Each family of schools in an area will have an Education Welfare Officer (EWO) appointed by the Local Education Authority to promote regular school attendance and assist parents and carers in meeting their responsibilities for the education of their children. The EWO will be aware of the statutory and voluntary agencies in the area that are available to help pupils, families and carers. The EWO will also be aware of all children who are excluded from these schools and will be involved in helping find alternative education for them. Most EWOs have a small office in a secondary school and a regular pattern of visiting and an appointment system to allow for individual conversations with pupils and parents or carers. EWOs usually work out an agreement with the schools they serve, as to the expectations each should have of the other.

The EWO will be away from the schools visiting parents in their homes for a substantial amount of the time they are on duty. They will also be working with the Social Services, the Police, the Educational Psychology Service, and Housing and Health Departments. EWOs are key partners in co-operative work with the Youth Service, both statutory and voluntary, and may well promote mentoring work, both in and out of school, with non-attenders or pupils who are in danger of being excluded.

#### **The Education Support Staff.**

Most LEAs appoint a number of experienced teachers as behaviour support staff, usually working as teams covering administrative areas within the Authority. They will often be based at a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) or school

annexe and their roles will include staffing the Unit, visiting schools to help with pupils needing special attention, giving support and advice to schools, including staff in-service training. Each LEA is required to have a Behaviour Support Plan which deals with all aspects of support for schools, and for parents and children. The PRU will develop special programmes for the pupils who attend. These pupils may be sent there by a school in order to offer an alternative strategy when their behaviour is causing problems, or be directed there after permanent exclusion. Most PRUs are small and a Management Committee carries out a similar role to that of the school governing body. The Support Staff usually will work closely with the team of Educational Psychologists on the LEA staff.

### **Colleges of Further Education.**

Colleges of Further Education now normally provide courses, often with individual learning plans for pupils who have been permanently excluded from nearby schools. They also provide courses for older secondary school pupils who have not been able to settle in school, where it is thought that the different atmosphere of the college could give them new motivation.

### **The Social Services.**

Difficult home situations can lead to disturbed behaviour in school. Children who are permanently excluded, or at risk of exclusion, include many whose home situation is already known to Social Services. Their family may be receiving help from social workers or they may be children who are being looked-after by the local authority. This latter group has been clearly identified as being at high-risk. Others who are already known to Social Services are children who are on the child protection register. Any work with excluded or disaffected children may bring voluntary workers in touch with the local Social Services Department and it is good to create an effective working understanding with them before venturing too far into this field. It is now general practice to find that social workers concerned with children and young people are grouped into specialist teams according to assessed need. There are likely to be teams concerned with child protection, with young offenders, with 'looked after' children and family support, though the detailed structure may vary from area to area. Another such specialist team will be concerned with 'youth and court services', covering the age range from 10 to 17. The level of co-operative work can vary, as effective multi-agency work is not easy to achieve. Different teams view excluded children differently, with some highlighting the view that they are deserving children in need, while others may see them as less deserving, potential or actual offenders.

### **Health Services.**

Health problems have their effect upon pupil attendance and behaviour. The local Health Authority (working with Social Services) will provide Child and Family Therapy teams comprising social workers together with clinical nurse specialists and doctors who offer support to families where a child has mental health and/or behavioural difficulties. Community Learning Disability Teams provide specialist community nurses to work with children and young people with moderate or severe learning difficulties. Normally an Education Welfare Officer will seek medical and psychological advice when there is any

suspicion of mental or physical health issues being factors involved in a disaffected child's behaviour.

### **The Police and the Courts.**

Criminal law makes a distinction between :

Adults	anyone over 17,
Young Persons	14 to 16 years inclusive,
Children	10 to 13 years inclusive,

The two younger categories taken together are known as Juveniles. Children under the age of 9 are not dealt with by the Police because they are under the age of legal responsibility. When a juvenile is arrested and taken to a police station special procedures exist as far as questioning, taking statements and having adult support present. Most police forces have a special unit (often known as the Juvenile Bureau, or Youth and Community Section) staffed by police specialising in working with juveniles. This unit will usually work in close consultation with social workers, schools and youth workers. If the charges go to a court hearing, this will be in a special juvenile court. The prosecution has to show beyond all reasonable doubt that the juvenile is guilty and, in the case of a child (under 14), it is also required to show that the child understood that what he was doing was wrong. A juvenile who is found to be guilty is not sent to prison. For offences for which an adult would normally be sent to prison, a juvenile can be placed under a supervision order for up to three years. This means that a social worker will supervise his activities and ensure that any attendance at supervised activities that the court orders is carried out. Many police forces have designated officers who have a special concern for young people of school age and who work closely with voluntary agencies.

## **Section 4 : Christian initiatives with ‘at risk’ and excluded pupils.**

Amongst the voluntary initiatives directed towards the welfare of excluded secondary children there are many that have been taken by Christians. Though the number of children and young people reached by them is a fraction of the very large total, we are thankful that Christians are providing high quality work in this area. Researchers visited a range of Christian projects which revealed a rich variety of activities. This section presents some examples chosen from the projects we have seen, and that have already enjoyed success. Our intention is to illustrate a range of effective models and ‘good practice’ to churches and youth agencies considering initiatives with ‘at risk’ and excluded pupils.

The base for most of the initiatives is established Christian youth work and in many cases excluded young people are a sub-group of those reached by this ministry. Understanding the mechanisms involved in the education process, as far as excluded youngsters are concerned, has enabled many youth workers to work co-operatively with schools. This is essential, especially for those under 15, where the objective must be to help them get back into mainstream schooling. The successful work has, in all cases we visited, become recognised by local schools and often by the LEA and other bodies working in the community, resulting in the negotiation of co-operative programmes and partnerships.

Our researchers also visited and spoke to several groups who were planning to expand or start new work with excluded pupils. As there is so much experience and good practice around the country we would strongly recommend making contact with well established projects, experienced workers and volunteers, to benefit from their advice and to learn from them. Summarising the variety of initiatives that were visited, we saw,

- *Work with young people generally, including some excluded pupils,*
- *Work carried out specifically with excluded pupils, outside school,*
- *Work with pupils identified by the school staff as in danger of exclusion, carried out in school,*
- *Work with pupils in danger of exclusion, or already excluded, following a structured course, carried out partly in school, partly at an outside venue,*
- *Work with pupils in danger of exclusion, in collaboration with the LEA and schools, following a full-time course, with school subjects and life skills programme, at a centre,*
- *Work with excluded pupils at a centre following a special programme recognised by the LEA*

## **The Initiatives**

### **YMCA, Hove**

The Hove YMCA, with a well-developed and extensive programme of activities, sees over 400 young people between the ages of 7 and 21 each week. The staff work intensively with those particularly at risk through crime and drug abuse. This includes working with a group using what they call the 'Peer Education Project'. About 1 in every 5 of this group is currently excluded from school. The aim is to provide *"a place where young people can have fun, feel secure, and learn to take greater control of their lives"*, rather than specifically getting them back into school. The work has been subject of an OFSTED inspection but at present no formal relationship seems to exist with the newly re-constituted LEA. This is expected to change in the future and currently Youth Workers do undertake counselling in local schools.

### **Youth for Christ, Waltham Forest**

Waltham Forest Youth for Christ (YFC) has long established youth work where the priority is evangelism and work with excluded pupils was, effectively, by default. About five years ago local schools asked the YFC workers to start some lunch-time activities for pupils and excluded pupils were drawn into this programme. This has developed to the point where 6 permanently excluded boys are being supported and mentored by YFC workers, in most cases in the school building they were excluded from. There is a clear awareness on the part of the workers that permanent exclusions are a serious problem.

### **'Fresh Start', Southwark, London**

Oasis launched 'Fresh Start' three years ago as a specific response to the challenge of the large number of permanent exclusions. Their youth work was well established in the area already. Oasis has the clear aim of demonstrating Christian beliefs in a way that is practical, caring and relevant. The particular aim of Fresh Start is to enable young people to stay in, or return to, mainstream schooling and realise their potential by establishing mentoring schemes and specialised group work. Most of this work is carried out in the school or the local Pupil Referral Unit, but there is also a programme of residential periods away from school for 2 or 3 days. Two full-time workers lead a team of trained volunteers which enables them to reach some 70-100 youngsters in the 13 + age group. Every youngster on the scheme is able to have one session of one-to-one mentoring each fortnight and one session of group work each week.

'Fresh Start' does much of its work in small groups and a carefully planned strategy is followed in order to enable young people who are at risk to become empowered to make their own decisions. The group work includes the management of emotions, e.g., anger, sadness and boredom, relating to others, including authority figures, and working co-operatively with others. It is thus very closely co-ordinated with the schools involved and Oasis declares its intention to ... *"support schools and their pupils rather than apportion blame when young people fail within the education system."*

Alongside the group work Fresh Start offers one-to-one mentoring where the young person at risk is given an opportunity (and encouraged) to form a relationship with an older person, who may become something of a role model for them. This aspect is explained at greater length in Section 6 : An Introduction to Mentoring. The programme also involves residential activities where in an environment which is new to them, they have to evolve new strategies for handling difficult situations, and the workers try to help them to see how what they have learnt transfers to their normal life. 'Fresh Start' uses volunteers, working under the direction of the core staff team, in a variety of patterns of involvement.

### **The 'Bridgeworks' Project, Gosport**

For some youth workers, usually on the basis of their proven record, the school has actively invited them in to work with children at risk of exclusion. The Bridgeworks Project, at Gosport, Hampshire, is an excellent example of this. Paul Fenton, an established Scripture Union worker, was asked by Bridgemary Comprehensive School to extend his work with disaffected pupils, given a student support room within the school and invited to become a governor. The resulting project involves a group of pupils from years 7, 8 and 9, following a programme of three days per week in a special unit set up in the school and two days on normal school timetable. Additionally, Paul is working with excluded youngsters outside school, making contact by going to places where they are known to congregate, and meeting with them in the unit building which, though nearby, is not part of the school itself. Paul Fenton describes his aim as to ... *"demonstrate a commitment to young people in a community school context that makes God's good news known, relevantly, and meets them at a place of need"*. To that end he is helping students in years 7,8 and 9 who are seen as 'at risk' to re-integrate into mainstream education and helping older excluded pupils to integrate into society, to find work and generally become responsible adults.

### **Matson Churches Youth and Community Project**

In Matson, Gloucester, three local churches and Spurgeons Child Care are operating an exclusions project that has grown out of youth work being carried out in the area by an LEA Youth and Community worker and the tutoring of an excluded pupil by a church member. The Youth and Community Centre is used as there is a good relationship with the Centre workers and the LEA provides information about excluded pupils who could benefit from being drawn into the project. Most of those involved are boys in the 14 - 15 age group who are already receiving some home tuition, and the Matson project concentrates on life skills, working with others, self- esteem and communication skills, in an unstructured and responsive manner.

### **Luton Churches Educational Trust Project**

Luton Churches Educational Trust (LCET) is a consortium of churches that has a keen interest in starting and running a Pupil Referral Unit. While the planning for this unit is going ahead, LCET has funded workers and volunteers to go into four local schools to do life skills work with small groups of pupils identified by staff as being at risk. The intention is for the project to move into premises that will be paid for, and adapted as necessary, by the

local churches who will also appoint a full time professional exclusions worker. The premises will also serve as a Youth centre. The Youth Worker will give one-to-one mentoring and counselling, offer social skills work with small groups of pupils on fixed period exclusions and generally support them during their time out of school. The LEA is aware of the scheme and has shown interest and keenness to see it succeed.

### **'Club 2000'**

One initiative that is enjoying national recognition and success is 'Club 2000'. This is a carefully structured scheme with professional quality materials available for any school wishing to participate. 10 pupils, from years 7 to 10, in any school can apply to become a Club. The school must offer it as a timetabled option, taking up two or more periods, identify and designate a volunteer staff member, and set aside a small budget to cover part of the costs. The Club programme consists of a set of challenges, each of which takes a minimum of four hours to complete, and involves the development of communication skills. The challenges come under three headings, Myself, My World, and My Future. A Club member who completes 15 challenges may enter for a Bronze Youth Award. All the challenges are designed to develop the pupil's key skills and help him understand the process of evidence collection. Additionally they will need to present an organised file of work showing action plans and review sheets. All this work is closely related to the GNVQ framework so that those who want to continue to study after leaving school are well placed to do so.

Club 2000 has a very teacher/pupil friendly approach and our researcher was ... *"impressed with the very high quality of the material"*. It is currently being used in over 60 schools in England and Scotland and has received national accreditation. Any school that wishes to use it can apply and will be sent explanatory materials and application papers. Our researcher also commented that .... *"behind this success is a history of patient sacrificial struggle by an individual Christian with a vision and dedication of a high order"*.

### **'Zacchaeus Centre', Birmingham.**

In Birmingham the Zacchaeus Centre is the product of co-operation between the Local Authority's ten Roman Catholic secondary schools. An intervention programme of four weeks operates in a special unit jointly sponsored by the ten schools, the Diocese and the LEA. After two years of pilot project status it is now fully accepted and receives a substantial annual grant from central government. The unit is able to vary the National Curriculum, (though still teaching many of the normal school subjects), and can concentrate on the life skills programme. The Centre is in an adapted church cellar with ample space for the unit at its present size. The space is also used for club activities after school. Parents are involved as much as they want to be, and can visit the Centre at any time.

The ten schools identify ten pupils from year 9 who are seen as heading for permanent exclusion and after a positive interview send them to the Centre for four weeks. The process of re-integration into their school is carefully

planned, and, in the rare case of a pupil not responding well to the course, there is the possibility of a further four weeks. The programme uses a developed approach known as 'Positive Discipline'. There is no contract but there is a clearly stated Code of Conduct. Each child is given five points at the beginning of a lesson and points can be lost by wilfully breaking this Code. At the end of each day the grades are recorded, with comments, on a Progress Record which is sent home for the parents to see, and sign. This is aggregated and an overall score of 80% is needed to maintain progress. At the end of the four weeks award certificates are given out and a Centre 'Record of Achievement' goes back to the school with the pupil.

Attendances at the Centre are counted as normal school attendances on a student's record and the other normal procedures of schooling are followed. There are three full-time staff members (all of whom are experienced qualified teachers), several part-time and volunteer helpers and a chaplain. Students on Initial Teacher Training also make a valuable input. The weekly timetable includes emphasis on Numeracy and Literacy, group work on behaviour management, and for a small amount of the time students are on individual study programmes. The emphasis is on coming to terms with living and working with others. A high proportion of its students are able to successfully rejoin their school programme.

### **'Level 3, Toxteth, Liverpool.**

Based in the Toxteth area of Liverpool, this project serves a slightly older group of pupils who would otherwise be permanently out of school. 'Level 3' is an initiative taken originally by members of a local church (Toxteth Baptist Tabernacle) and uses the adapted basement of the original church building. It aims to cater for 14 - 16 year olds excluded or disaffected from mainstream schooling who have been referred to it by local EWOs. The pupils come initially on a one-month trial and follow a full-time structured programme that can continue until they reach normal school leaving age (16). It is an alternative to normal school education with a strong emphasis on marketable skills. The subjects taught include Technology (offering IT, Pottery, Textiles, Woodwork and Electronics), Personal and Social Education, Religious and Moral Education, Environmental Studies, Social Studies and Humanities, French, in addition to Maths and Language. The unit is well staffed by qualified teachers, instructors and volunteers and individual tutorials monitor progress, difficulties and behaviour. In addition to these regular timetabled activities, students are involved with community projects, work experience, Youth Award schemes and careers guidance.

Level 3 now enjoys the full endorsement and support of the LEA and the practical backing of the EWOs. Its finance comes in part from donations and the original setting up costs were all gifts from Christians and others who wished to see it succeed. Now it is recognised as an alternative school, the LEA provides funding on a per capita basis for each of the enrolled students. The comment of our researcher was that "*as a majority of its students would be seen as unable to fit into normal schooling, the attendance and participation rates, and the changes in behaviour and attitudes achieved at Level 3 are clearly a remarkable achievement*".

### **Cornerstone Church Gap Project, Swansea**

In Swansea, Cornerstone Church has taken up the challenge of serving its local community in a variety of ways which include the 'Gap Project' for work with disaffected young people. The area is one of extreme deprivation with high crime, unemployment and drugs abuse. The church established a centre that has now received approval as an Accredited Training Centre with the Open Colleges Network and offers courses that command the full approval of the LEA, HMI, Community Education and local schools. The premises were purchased from offerings and a loan as the church has few high earners, but day-to-day funding comes from tithes and covenants. This is a remarkable project not only because it enjoys high levels of success with the young people but because, at first sight, Cornerstone's resources seem inadequate for the task. As Julian Richards, Church Leader and Project Director commented to our researcher, "*considering where we are and where we come from, we should not be able to do this at all. The success of all this goes to God*".

Because the project is staffed almost entirely by Cornerstone Church members, issues of authority, policy making and accountability are dealt with by the church Leadership Team.

The project cares for 15 students, currently all girls aged 14 - 16 from one local school, and runs for 39 weeks, in parallel with the school year. The Gap programme is unusual in that students register at school but after one hour are collected and taken to the Centre and are returned shortly before the end of the school day. These students already have strong negative reactions to school and work better in a non-school environment. For part of each week they follow a programme at the Centre, including activities that take them out of the Centre into the community for work experience and Outward Bound activities. The days spent in the Centre are largely concerned with a Life Skills programme, Counselling, and Continuing Education. Our researcher, who happened to be very experienced in Further Education work, considered the materials some of the most outstanding she had seen.

### **The Surrey Skillway Project**

SKILLWAY adopts a slightly different approach and aims to provide motivation by teaching manual skills together with group sessions that look at aspects of character building, behaviour management and social responsibility. The intention is that the wide range of skills taught will give all students an opportunity to achieve and so build up their self-esteem enabling them to go on to youth training and industrial apprenticeships. At present this is located in Surrey but the idea is exportable and could be replicated elsewhere.

## **Section 5: Getting started - key questions for new initiatives**

We hope that the section on Christian initiatives will provide any potential project with a range of possibilities and working strategies. It's clear that some of the projects outlined have been enterprising in seizing unique opportunities, whilst others have dedicated themselves to the slow patient work that is sometimes called for in establishing credibility in this area of ministry. All the initiatives we have researched were characterised by having someone (or a group of people) with the vision and determination to see the venture through to success. In this section 'Getting Started' we highlight several of the key questions which need to be answered in developing any new project with 'at risk' and excluded pupils.

Fundamental to success is to hear from God. Nothing helps more to overcome the obstacles and disappointments that may follow if you are building with a clear sense that this is what God has called you to do. For this reason we would urge you to pray with others and to examine what your role in any future project should be. A continuing group, sharing the vision and calling, is essential to avoid the possibility of collapse with changes in personnel. This type of project should never be a individual activity.

### **What is already being done?**

Before any public action is taken an audit of what is already being done in your area is essential. This includes 'sounding out' the statutory bodies as to their diagnosis of need and the way they are trying to meet it. For this task it may be helpful to use the services of a local Christian who has standing with the local authorities. For example, a Christian who is on the County Council, or a professional administrator in local government, is often better placed to access the information you need. The audit should also include seeing what other local Christians are doing or planning, both to be informed and to look for possible partnerships. Other voluntary bodies may also have taken initiatives in your area and it is good to know of these and identify common cause with them. The other benefit of an audit is the advice received from those already working in this area of what still needs to be done. Sensitive operation and willingness to learn from those already in the field is vital for good relations and effectiveness.

### **What are our aims?**

Because the number of children who need help is so large there is a clear need to set realistic goals. They may be staged goals identified in order of priority and sequence, but clarity of aims is essential. The vision may be big. To set up a centre where excluded youngsters can receive a structured, developed course including teaching and practical skills training, as well as personal development and life skills, may require a period of two or more years to bring it all together. The team needed will be larger and the financial vision will need to be large too. This may involve finding and adapting premises, owning property and employing people, all of which call for management expertise. Spelling out the magnitude of the task does not mean that having counted the cost you don't do it, but it does mean going into it with eyes wide open and with a lot of faith.

At the other end of the scale a church or Christian group with an established youth work programme could build a relationship with a local comprehensive school and set out a more modest target of spending time with Year 7 and 8 pupils identified by the teaching staff. The initial aim could be to see five pupils on one day each week in the school. From this base it would be possible to expand, by stages, to a larger scale or develop the work into a more ambitious scheme. In either of these cases, or for any other project, there is real value in visiting existing projects to draw on their experience and expertise.

*“Greenwich Youth for Christ have been active in schools for the last four or five years doing R.E. and P.S.H.E. lessons, assemblies and extra-curricular activities. As a result of the relationship and trust built with one particular school, they were asked to help with the problem of disaffected young people. The school has a high exclusion rate and is at the bottom of the local league tables, something that they naturally want to see change. The deputy head, who is a Christian, suggested to the Head that she talk to YFC to see if there was any way they could help in working with young people at risk of exclusion.*

*Nick and Bridget Shepherd, co-Directors of Greenwich YFC, then met with the Head. The plan was to find funding for a full-time worker which meant they had to be specific about what they were planning to do, and the concrete difference the worker would make. The main objectives of the project are to reduce the number of permanent and fixed term exclusions by offering support to pupils at risk, to make contact with the pupils' homes in order to secure the involvement of the parents and to involve local church volunteers either in mentoring or in support activities in school.*

*Funding was found and in April 1999 Bridget Shepherd started work full-time with the school as a Key Stage 4 pre-exclusion worker. Her targets are clear - a 15% reduction in exclusion rates in the first year, followed by 20% in each of the following two years. Bridget says "GYFC's involvement with pre-exclusion work came about very unexpectedly and at very high speed! It is a fantastic opportunity to build effective relationships with pupils, staff and parents connected to the school. However, in our excitement it is also easy to lose sight of our target - to substantially reduce the school's number of exclusions. Though we invested time and energy into planning and funding the project, it is now that the hard work begins. Having targets is one thing, but meeting them is another! Our plan has to be made to work in young people's lives; lives that are complicated, messy and involved."*

### **Under whose authority?**

Any work with disaffected young people is full of the possibility of disappointment and of rejection and is not to be undertaken lightly. Many youth workers have found the support and leadership provided by their church vital in overseeing their work with young people. Others have found added benefits from the management expertise of organisations like YWAM, YFC and Frontier Youth Trust.

Any potential project will need to develop an effective management team to oversee the planned work. This is usually a small group of people who, though not engaged in the work, have caught the vision, want to see it succeed, and have sufficient spiritual maturity and seniority to act as the project managers. All policy decisions can then be tested by them and they can act as critical friends. The expectations that full-time staff and volunteers have of each other and of the management team and vice-versa need to be agreed at the beginning of any project. It may seem a pity that in Christian circles we should have to advise spelling out conditions of service and procedures, but experience has shown that where these matters are agreed when all is well and relationships are good, there is less likelihood of strained relations than when a crisis makes plain their necessity. Luke records that the Centurion said to Jesus "I too am a man under authority", recognising that they both were. Jesus only said and did the things His Father gave him authority to say and do. We need to be under authority too. The existence of an experienced management team can also be a re-assurance to professionals working in the field and to statutory bodies, sometimes speeding up recognition and the release of funds. It will be to the management group that those engaged in the work will be accountable and to whom they will report at frequent intervals.

*"Level 3 is overseen by a Management Committee of six people. They in turn report to the Toxteth Vine Project Trustees who oversee the work of the three social action projects run by the church.*

*The Management Committee was set up in 1994 and is comprised of church leaders and members with specific roles and abilities to complement the work of the project. For example, a retired personnel officer is responsible for staff related issues, including staff appraisals. We also have a clinical psychologist who helps keep us all sane! We have a lady who works in the finance division of the Education Directorate who helps our links with the LEA and on various funding issues.*

*The committee meets bimonthly to consider issues pertaining to finance, staffing, curriculum planning and design. They are not directly involved in the day to day running of the project, although can be called on in emergencies! The daily running is in the hands of the staff team, led by the Administrator.*

*Elaine Rees, the project administrator also says, "I think the group's role and function has developed over time. I have always felt supported and trusted by them to fulfil my job and responsibility. There have been times when I have felt they have been led, but in recent months, they are taking more of a lead in discussion and decision making. I meet with the chair of the committee on a regular basis to talk through issues and pray, which I find extremely useful."*

### **Who will we be working with?**

Wherever professionals and volunteers work side-by-side there is the possibility of friction. Some professionals (e.g. teachers, Education Welfare Officers) will take time to be won over to the possibility that it can be done

successfully, because they have had unhappy experiences of things going wrong. So what can go wrong? Breaches of confidentiality, unwise promises of confidentiality, improper response to information divulged by youngsters, lack of accountability, and insensitivity to the constraints that are operating for the professionals are all aspects where problems could arise.

As success in getting the confidence of youngsters grows there is always the possibility that, in conversation, reference will be made to others not present. This could be about the parents of the young person or a teacher, and the youth worker receiving the comment will need to handle it with care. This care applies to both his immediate reaction, and to whether, and to whom, he should pass it on. Similarly it is not wise to give promises of confidentiality during mentoring. Speaking in a derogatory way about other workers, particularly teachers, in this setting is another temptation that must be resisted. Professionals have received such advice during training, but not all volunteers will be aware of the pitfalls. Setting a high professional standard is important and for those who are new to this type of work. Apprenticing them to experienced workers, in addition to receiving practical on-going training, is the most appropriate preparation.

### **Who can work with children and young people?**

To diminish the possibility of abusers getting access to children, vetting procedures exist for statutory agencies to screen all who are employed to teach, care for, or in any way work with children. These arrangements cannot ensure that unsuitable people will be barred from such employment, but can deter those convicted of offences against children from applying for jobs which involve close contact with children. At present these procedures only apply to workers who are employed, but many voluntary organisations also choose to carry out their own screening and monitoring. This involves asking for a written declaration (on a standard form) and paying for a police records check. Churches are seen by some paedophiles as an easy option and Christian organisations are well advised to make these screening procedures standard practice. In the near future the legislation will be extended to include all who work within voluntary agencies, whether paid or not. The Churches Child Protection Advisory Service provides advice on developing and monitoring child protection policies and 'good practice', as well as a range of useful resources.

Churches Child Protection Advisory Service,  
PO Box 133,  
Swanley,  
Kent.  
BR8 7UQ.  
01322 667207 / 660011  
CCPAS@aol.com

### **How do we contact local schools?**

Most churches have members associated in some way with local schools, either as teachers, parents or governors, and building positive relations through a personal link is always a great asset. Where this is not possible the

initial approach should be made to the headteacher, with a request to meet with the deputy head in charge of pastoral care. Such 'cold contacts' need to be made with care and to err on the side of formality. Once contact has been established it will be possible to assess the degree of formality required in the future in regard to giving notice of visits and on dress etc. To start too informally is to risk not being welcomed. In a typical comprehensive school, deputy headteacher's have teaching commitments and other responsibilities and so cannot be available to callers at all times. If it is possible to attend some functions at the school i.e. presentation evenings or school concerts, to demonstrate a wider interest and to see the positive achievements of the school, this can often oil the wheels of co-operation. In addition, time spent helping with some aspect of school life other than working with disaffected pupils is rarely time wasted.

### **How will our project be funded?**

This depends on the nature of your project. Small budgets to support a team of volunteer mentors may well be within the scope of the church and personal supporters from within the congregation. Local Authority Education officers across the country are finalising their Behaviour Support Policy and many will want to know about initiatives that they might collaborate with, because they know that they cannot adequately deal with the problem from their own resources. They often have freedom to use their discretion, up to certain financial limits, but misuse of funds in the past has led to lack of trust and tightening of controls. Setting up systems for recording all expenditure, keeping receipts and accounting fully may appear irksome, but it is essential in being able to access outside funds. This may be an area where the Christian friends, including 'retired' friends, who want to back the venture, can really find their place using their professional experience and skill.

Larger budgets, possibly involving capital expenditure, is likely to require substantial resources from beyond the immediate area. There are Christian charities and agencies available to help churches think through and manage social projects and they provide a range of support and advice on fund-raising, employing staff and managing projects. If you want to talk with experienced Christians before engaging with other professional bodies a good place to start is;

Shaftsbury Society,  
Development Department,  
16 Kingston Road  
London.  
SW19 1JZ  
0181 239 5585

Where there is social need and exclusions are high statutory funding may be available, although competition for limited resources is usually intense. This funding can come from a range of Government departments or the EEC. Specific details of funding bodies is beyond the scope of this resource, but we can point you to a free Government publication which includes advice on

preparing bids and managing funds, as well as providing a list of possible funding sources.

**'Funding Sources for Projects for Disaffected Young People'** is a 40 page resource commissioned by the DfEE Quality and Performance Improvement Division(QPID). The listed funding sources include :

- Charitable Trusts and Foundations
- Company giving
- European Funding (including Youthstart, Horizon, Integra, Socrates-Comenius and Leonardo Da Vinci programmes)
- Government 'Challenge' funds
- Statutory funding from Government departments (including The Standards Fund, Probation Service, Rural development, Opportunities for Volunteering)

This excellent resource is available from;

Department of Education and Employment,  
Quality and Performance Improvement Division,  
Level 3 North,  
Moorfoot,  
Sheffield.  
S1 4PQ  
0114 259 4786  
[gps.dfee.mf@gtnet.gov.uk](mailto:gps.dfee.mf@gtnet.gov.uk)

Alternatively, copies are available from CARE for Education or the Evangelical Alliance (contact details in appendix).

## **Section 6 : Guidelines for mentoring**

As a child or young person you may remember an adult who you 'looked up to' and thought was 'all right'. Someone who listened to you, understood where you were coming from, who didn't judge you when things went wrong, someone who generally 'looked out for you'. Studies have shown that young people who have a significant adult or 'mentor' in their life, other than family, are more likely to achieve in a variety of ways, including academically and socially.

Some mentoring relationships spring up completely by chance and are very informal. However, others can be developed and may have specific focuses such as education, employment, self-esteem, behaviour, or spiritual development. In the words of 'The Mentoring Guidebook', *"mentoring is a process by which an older and more experienced person takes a younger person under his / her wing, freely offering advice, support and encouragement. The older person (the mentor) becomes, amongst other things, a role model who inspires the younger person (the mentee). The scope of a mentoring relationship can be fairly broad, encompassing a wide range of personal, professional and educational issues, however, a more circumscribed interaction is usually developed"*. (Jeffrey & Ferguson, 1992).

As a church or organisation seeking to develop a 'mentoring scheme' for young people, there are a number of important issues you need to resolve. Some of these are touched on in this section, but further reflection and research will also be necessary. Talking with others in your area already working with 'at risk' and excluded pupils will provide many valuable insights and advice.

### **What is your aim?**

If you don't know what you are aiming for, how will you know you have hit the target? Specific aims for individual young people in the mentoring process are essential, but the potential project as a whole will also need a clear purpose. These may be 'hard targets' such as reducing exclusions in a particular school or class which are clearly measurable, or 'soft targets', for example, increasing the self-esteem of pupils.

Once your purpose is clear and agreed you can start to develop effective strategies for your mentoring project. For example, will the mentoring take place in the school or in the community? This will have implications for way your project is structured and organised.

### **What are your resources?**

Skilled people to mentor the young people 'at risk' are the biggest asset and resource to this type of project. However, availability of potential mentors will depend on whether you need people to volunteer during school time. Setting up a project, however small, also takes a lot of time and effort. Be realistic about what you can achieve. Bear in mind that working with people can be very time consuming. Don't rush in to a school with loads of ideas and promising the earth before you are sure you will be able to deliver on your

commitments!

### **Time commitment**

The majority of community based mentoring schemes put time limits on the relationship between a young person and a mentor. This is usually between one and two years. Young people, and particularly vulnerable young people, can easily become dependent on others especially those who show an interest in them. It is important that both mentor and young person know how long the 'formal' relationship will last. It is also important for both parties to know how much is expected of them in terms of the regularity of meeting. Many projects suggest meeting at least once a fortnight with the possibility of phone calls between meetings. Often young people 'at risk' have been let down in the past and if you want to break this cycle of disappointment it is important that mentors can commit to this.

### **Volunteers - Recruitment, selection, induction**

Your church or organisation may have a plenty of eager volunteers who want to support young people through a mentoring process. As an organiser it is vital that you select people to be involved who have, or are willing to develop, the appropriate skills and have the long term commitment and time.

Remember that young people are the primary concern and the reason for your mentoring project, so to let eager but inappropriate volunteers loose could easily do more harm than good, both for the young person and the scheme. A strict recruitment procedure should be adopted including :

- Application form
- Interview
- References
- Police check
- Induction and initial training

### **Young people**

Where you recruit young people from will depend on the type of project you are involved in. Referrals may come from parents, guardians or carers, concerned friends, the young people themselves, local schools (or Pupil Referral Units), Education Welfare Officers (or other statutory bodies) or the police. You will need to establish :

- A policy for referrals
- An application process - including application form, questionnaire about the pupils school history, parental permission, and arrange to meet the parents or carer.

### **Training**

It's important that all volunteers and staff are appropriately trained for what they are going to be involved in. We would recommend getting in contact with existing projects and experienced workers to advise and support you in a training programme. Subject areas you should include are :

- an introduction to exclusion and the issues surrounding it,
- an introduction to mentoring,
- basic counselling skills,

- school ethos,
- child protection policies and procedures
- boundaries and safe practice
- confidentiality
- the matching process
- where to go and what to do / resources
- recording / record keeping
- support and supervision

### **Matching**

Matching the right young person with the right mentor is vital. This stage will determine whether or not the relationship and its outcomes will be a success. As far as possible try to match people from similar backgrounds in terms of race, gender, interests, time availability etc. In terms of 'safe practice' male mentors should not be matched with female young people.

Explain to the young people and their parents or guardians about what you are proposing, the background to the project, and about the other agencies with whom you have contact, to help establish your relationship and credibility. Once you have introduced the young people to the project, provided basic training for your volunteers, put on an event where young people and volunteers can meet and get to know one another.

After this you will need to match the people involved. The young person can ask not to be matched with one mentor, but cannot choose with whom they will be matched. Once this has taken place a joint meeting involving the parents, project worker, young person and mentor can be arranged to start the relationship on a positive note.

### **Supervision and training**

Your volunteers need to feel a valued part of the team. They will need to be supported in the often daunting task of mentoring a young person. Develop a scheme of informal regular contact with your volunteers through phone calls, informal chats over coffee etc. As well as informal contact there should be regular meetings for further training (identified by the project and volunteers) and supervision. Supervision is vital as it provides a chance for volunteers to talk about their experiences, both positive and negative, within their role. They can bounce ideas off someone with more experience and bring up issues of concern. The sessions should aim to be a mixture of practical and personal development.

Supervision usually takes place on a one-to-one basis, although small group sessions can be really useful, as people sometimes feel more comfortable in groups and a sense of team can be developed.

### **Monitoring and evaluation**

It is very important to monitor the project at various levels to make sure it is achieving your stated aim(s) and to develop ways of enhancing the quality of the work taking place. Volunteers should complete evaluation forms after each meeting with a young person. Forms should include details of when and

where meetings took place, some information about what was done, any causes of concern or positive outcomes and future action points and goals.

### **'Safe' boundaries**

The safety of young people and volunteers is essential. Guidelines need to be developed covering the practical issues of where to meet (recommend meeting in public places and not in individual homes), methods of contacting each other, methods of reporting causes of concern etc. A clear Child (young person) Protection Policy is required which volunteers are fully aware of and have agreed to comply with. Advice and resources are available from The Churches Child Protection Advisory Service. CCPAS provides help and on-going support to churches and organisations in preparing and maintaining child protection policies. They can supply detailed guidance, a model policy, child protection manual and video workpack.

### **The potential benefits of a mentoring relationship**

Mentoring can be a very positive experience in a young persons development. It can provide a young person with emotional and behavioural problems the opportunity to be listened to and valued by an older person. It can allow a young person the time and space to examine the situation they are in, reflect on it, and develop goals and targets for the future. The relationship can also create opportunities and broaden the horizons of a young persons experience. The mentoring process can give them the opportunity to succeed in a number of areas not least in a relationship with an adult.

## **Appendix 1 : Addresses and resources**

**Christian Initiatives** (including a few which are in the early stages of development) :

Alumwell 7 -11 Project : Ruth Clay, WEC, Church at J10, 323 Wolverhampton Road, Walsall. WS2 8RL. *WECchurch @J10* (01922 639277)

Bridgeworks Project : Paul Fenton, Scripture Union, St Matthews Church, Wych Lane, Gosport, Hants. PO13 0NL. *Paulfenton@aol.com* (01329 283440)

Club 2000 : Chris Traxson, Unit 726, The Big Peg, 120 Vyse Street, Birmingham. B18 6NF. *Chris@Club2000.org.uk* (0121 6032220)

Eden Project : Mark Smethurst, Message to Schools Trust, PO Box 14, Cheadle, Cheshire. SK8 2FE. *edenwyth@message.org.uk* (0161 4915400)

First Base : Elizabeth Butlin, 12B InfoZone (Guildford YMCA), 12B Market Street, Guildford, Surrey. GU1 4LB. *theteam@y12B-Infozone.rmplc.co.uk* (01483 888122)

Fresh Start : Arthur Brown, Oasis Trust, 115 Southwark Bridge Road, London. SE1 0AX. *OasisTrust@compuserve.com* (0171 450 9000)

The Gap : Julian Richards, PO Box 355, Swansea. SA5 5YB.

Genesis : Preston Youth for Christ, Bamber Bridge Methodist Church, Station Road, Bamber Bridge, Preston. PR5 6GD. (01772 629314)

Greenwich Youth for Christ : Bridget Shepherd, Greenwich Youth for Christ, Floor 2, 184-186 Westcombe Hill, Blackheath, London. SE3 7DH. (0181 305 0508)

Hove YMCA: Don Brown, Hove YMCA, 17 Marmion Road, Hove, E Sussex. BN3 5FS. (01273 731724)

The Jigsaw Project : Miss Emilie Hall, Soul Survivor Watford, Unit 2, Paramount Industrial Estate, Sandown Rd, Watford, Herts. WD2 4XA. *emilie.hall@soulsurvivor.com* (01923 337000)

Level 3 Project : Elaine Rees, Toxteth Tabernacle Baptist Church, Park Road, Liverpool. L8 6SB. *esrees@aol.com* (0151 2815269)

London City YMCA Project : The Director, London City YMCA, 8 Errol Street, London. EC1Y 8SE. (0717 6288832)

Luton Churches Education Trust : Chris Curtis, 77-79 Reginald Street, Luton.

(01582 877220)

Matson Churches Youth Project : Robert Ayliffe, Matson Baptist Church and Community Project, Matson Avenue, Gloucester. GL4 6LA. (01452 381070)

New Life Community Association : Henderson Springer, Community Centre, St. Michael's Avenue, Wembley, Middx. HA9 6SA.

Re-Entry : Margaret Nichols, 80 Ellerton Walk, New Park Village, Wolverhampton. WV10 0UH. (01902 759262)

Skillway Project : Crispin Hill, Skillway, Skill Workshop Project, Crown Court, Godalming, Surrey. GU7 1DY. (01483 417097)

Southampton Millenium Trust : Mrs Jill Rattle, 81 Kiln Road, Fareham, Hants. PO16 7UL. (01329 513712)

U Turn : Rob Ryan, Gillingham Youth for Christ, The Old Vicarage, Vicarage Road, Gillingham, Kent. *rob@gyfc.freeserve.co.uk* (01634 856098)

Waltham Forest Youth for Christ : Andrew Hough, Truro Road Community Centre, Walthamstow, London. E19 7EY. *WFYFC@compuserve.com* (0181 521 9505)

Wandsworth Youth for Christ : Pauline Gibbs, Wandsworth YFC, 82 Wentworth Court, Garratt Lane, Wandsworth, London. SW8 4BT. (0191 974 1884)

Youth Start : Adele Sutcliffe, 89 High Street West, Glossop, Derbyshire. SK13 8BB. (01457 865291)

Zacchaeus Project : Moyra Healey, Zacchaeus Centre, St. Catherine's Church, Bristol Street, Birmingham. B5 7BE. (0121 622 3200)

**Christian agencies offering advice and information :**

CARE (Christian Action Research and Education) : Jenny Baker, CARE for Education, 53 Romney Street, London. SW1P 3RF. *mail@care.org.uk* (0171 233 0455)

CARE Remand Fostering : Tim Clewer, 3a Wilson Road, Reading. RG30 2RS. (0118 967 8440)

The Children's Society : Edward Rudolf House, Margey Street, London. WC1X 0JL. (0171 837 4299)

Evangelical Alliance : Grahame Knox, Youth and Children's Unit, Evangelical Alliance, 186 Kennington Park Road, London. SE11 4BT. *eayac@eauk.org* (0171 207 2100)

African and Caribbean Evangelical Alliance : Stephen Quashie, Youth & Community Development Team, 186 Kennington Park Road, London. SE11 4BT. [squashie@eauk.org](mailto:squashie@eauk.org) (0171 735 7373)

Frontier Youth Trust : Dave Wiles, The Frontier Centre, 70-74 City Road, London. EC1Y 2BJ. [wiles119@aol.com](mailto:wiles119@aol.com) (90171 336 7744)

Shaftesbury Society : Concetta Perot, Development Department, 16 Kingston Road, London. SW19 1JZ. [cperot@shaftsburysoc.com](mailto:cperot@shaftsburysoc.com) (0181 239 5555)

Worth Unlimited : Richard Passmore, 5 Parsonage Lane, South Molton, Devon. EX36 3AX. [rcfpassmore@hotmail.com](mailto:rcfpassmore@hotmail.com) (01769 574 400)

### **Books and Resources :**

**'Safe and Alert'** - Good practice advice for volunteers working with vulnerable clients. Available from : National Centre for Volunteering, Regents Wharf, 8 All Saints Street, London. N1 9LR. ISBN 1 897708 92 0 £7.50 (*published 1997*).

**'Working with Young People'** - The legal responsibility and liability aspect. Available from : The Children's Legal Centre, University of Essex, Wivenhoe Park, Colchester, Essex. CO4 3SQ. *4th Edition, £10.50 + p&p £1.50.*

**'From Disaffection to Social Inclusion'** - Many contributors on all aspects of this issue. Available from : John Huskins, 3 Somerset St., Kingsdown, Bristol. BS2 8NB. £16.50

## **Appendix 2 : Facts and figures on truancy and exclusion**

Officially 15% (1 million) children truant each year. Unofficially it is more likely to be 30 % (2 million).

2% of all truants miss school for weeks at a time. They suffer the effects of full exclusion by excluding themselves.

Temporary (fixed-term) exclusions were estimated to be running at 137,000 pupils per year during 1994/5 with the resulting loss of over 2 million days of education (The Children's Society).

Only 27% of the total 12,500 excluded children permanently excluded in 1995/6 were reintegrated back into mainstream education.

83% are boys.

80% are between 12-15 years old.

50% are 14 or 15 years old.

Children with special needs are 6 times more likely to be excluded.

African-Caribbean children are 6 times more likely to be excluded.

Children in care are 10 times more likely to be excluded.

Exclusions from primary schools have risen by 18% in 1995-6.

Rates are higher in areas of social deprivation. This suggests clear links with poverty and crime.

There is disparity between schools on exclusion policy and different expectations of what constitutes excluding behaviour. 25% of schools are responsible for 66% of all permanent exclusions. A further 25% never exclude. If the worst 25% cut their exclusions to the national average, exclusions overall would be halved.

Source : From a presentation by Angela Sarkis, a member of the Government's Social Exclusion Unit, to an Evangelical Alliance consultation on working with excluded pupils (28th May 1998).