Final Report of the Learning Together about Making Choices Project

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Executive Summary

The children at the centre of this project endure highly adverse social and economic circumstances including the despair of living with parental substance abuse and addiction. They are most likely to have been denied the experience of learning how to build a warm, trusting, and reliable relationship with any adult, including their parents. They have rarely if ever had the security of knowing what it is to come first in any adult's life and they have depended on instinctive survivalist behaviours to keep themselves in perceived safety. The resulting unacceptable and/or inappropriate behaviours lock them out of the benefits of their years in primary school and 'hide in plain sight' their chronic distress and need for help. Traditional behaviour management responses from teachers regularly exacerbate their distrust of adults and ensure their likely continued exclusion. Positive changes in their favour *can* happen, as we discovered, and action *can* be taken to ensure progress towards creating a secure learning base for arguably the most vulnerable children in our schools today.

This project was not a survey-style snapshot but an iterative developmental process over three years, based in an ongoing interaction between the project team and teaching staff. The aim was to develop and sustain an inclusive model of support for young children disadvantaged by the impact of unmet attachment needs. The purpose was to focus on the provision of a secure base for learning that would endure through the primary school years. Two inner city Glasgow primary schools agreed to engage in the project not least because recognition of the enduring challenge presented by behaviours that undermine progress in learning and teaching was shared by staff at all levels. The initial focus for the school-based fieldwork was a small group of children moving on from the Jeely Nursery in Glasgow into Primary One but numbers grew rapidly over the duration of the project as class teachers grew confident in the identification of other vulnerable individuals.

Central to the success of engaging teachers in the classroom and at management level, was the practice of linking theoretical knowledge immediately and concurrently with practice. An experienced practitioner from the research team (the Director of Liaison) ensured that teachers were *not* left to determine how to move forward with new knowledge unsupported (as is often the case) but were invited to follow briefings and workshops from the team with practical responses in their classrooms supported by direct face-to-face discussion *in real time as issues arose,* keeping the work focused with immediate relevance to everyone.

There was a very real challenge for everyone in making the change from traditional views of 'challenging' children and their 'management' to a new perception which demanded a journey through self-reflection, personal insight and professional self-evaluation as a part of the process of understanding and responding to the disruptive and sometimes disturbing behaviours of chronically distressed children. The teachers in the project schools achieved this and did it with interest, commitment and compassion and were pleased to have been given the opportunity to engage. It made sense to them and was helpful to their daily practice and this was reflected in the fact that schools were formalizing new guidelines when the project ended. With more time, the work of involving parents would have been further established as would a continuation of the practical, teacher-initiated exploration of child led pedagogy.

If the likelihood of sustainability can be measured by evidence of embedded knowledge and understanding, the degree of self-initiated engagement, an empathic response to difficult behaviour and further measured by evidence of positive changes to pedagogy supported by a genuine, increasing interest at all levels of the organisation, then the project has successfully established that sound foundations can be laid on which to build sustainable support for children who experience unmet attachment needs.

Learning Together about Making Choices

Developing and sustaining an inclusive model of support for children with attachment issues as they move through school: a longitudinal study

The choice is ours, to act on what we know
Bessel Van Der Kolk (2014)

Rationale and Context

Why is this project so important?

Hidden in plain sight in our schools every day there are of children in urgent need of help and support. The prognosis for their lives is bleak, with repeated studies showing a life of chronic failure and misery (Furnivall et al., 2012; Moullin et al., 2014). They fail consistently during their years in school, they endure repeated failure in sustaining relationships and in securing employment throughout their lives; they grow to be amongst those most vulnerable to substance abuse, criminality, severe mental illness, exclusion from mainstream society and early death (van der Kolk, 2014). In what is anyway an unsure world, they are the children with the least hope of achieving a settled life underpinned with warmth and emotional security. They are deeply unhappy and afraid, a circumstance which does not diminish as they grow through adolescence into adulthood - yet they are largely invisible.

Unlike other children with an additional support need, the *source* of their damage is usually invisible to primary school teachers (Furnivall et al., 2012). It stems from the acute misery of their earliest years when, through abuse or neglect or both, for whatever reason, they were denied the opportunity to form a warm, reassuring, consistently reliable relationship or attachment to a person for whom their care and emotional state was paramount. They were left to fend for themselves, distressed and anxious, never sure when or how or if they would be looked after. Wary and untrusting of adults and acting on instinct to protect themselves from threat, whether perceived or real, children with impaired attachment exhibit the kinds of undesirable behaviour that will mask their misery, fear, and distress but provoke a negative reaction in those around them. They rarely inspire empathy and the schools' regular response to their behaviour is based on general school management principles, which is likely to exacerbate and deepen a situation over which the children have no understanding and no control.

Context

The wider context for the project is provided by the focus on *inclusion* which drives contemporary national educational and social policy, is supported by the philosophy and structure of the Curriculum for Excellence and is firmly located in the current interest in early years education and development, the role of the family, Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) and other home/school focused projects national and international. The Scottish Government's position on its vision for children is clear: 'we want Scotland to be the best place in the world for them to grow up in' (Scottish Government, 2016).

For other authors fairness or *equity* is a dominant concern. Exclusion from the benefits of education is clearly not limited to those who are absent from the classroom. A powerful theme emerges from writers on social justice who are concerned when the distribution of limited resources is based on broad theoretical policy principles that aim to meet the needs of a wide population but do not take into account the inequities in individual situations and circumstances. If the circumstances of the most disadvantaged are not taken into account the outcomes for these children will not be equitable. At the level of the schooling system Marmot (2015) for example, provides evidence which reinforces the initial claims above that children excluded within the school as well as without, for no fault of their own, suffer dire consequences in life. He provides a sad list: lack of knowledge, skills, opportunity, a measure of control over your life, gender equity and social inclusion. He adds:

> *The unfairness comes if children, by dint of circumstances acting over years, are deprived of the opportunity to flourish* (Marmot op. cit.; 112).

If the view is valid, that avoidable barriers to learning are unjust, many schools could be situated unwittingly within this model of deprivation and deepening disadvantage. Studies show that it is most likely to be in the *school* that chronic problems with behaviour will first be identified, but primary school teachers do not normally relate undesired behaviours to the child's underlying unmet attachment needs or necessarily understand the relationship of this behaviour to the need for additional support. In such cases it is arguable that a clear opportunity to put support planning into place for the child and his family has been lost, to the severe detriment of the child and his future life. If the educational environment is the setting in which impaired attachment becomes most obvious it could be the place where alternative, more positive, attachments can be fostered and/or maintained as they have been in other contexts.

Conceptual Framework - Concepts critical to the project

The question we were asked to address was: how can a secure base for learning be sustained for children who have experienced adverse socio-economic circumstances in their early lives as they move through mainstream education?

A number of themes and ideas have been identified in the text above that are critical to the understanding of this report. The dominant issues, central to *all* aspects of the project, are the concepts of *attachment, a secure base for learning* and the implications for learning in the primary school for children who endure the disadvantage of having *impaired* or *unmet attachment needs*. The concepts of *choice* and *behaviour* similarly have significance for this study. They help us to understand the nature of the difficulties the children face and the nature of the task for the school in providing a response that will help them. Differing interpretations of the conceptual language identified above are common however and threaten to undermine the shared understanding we need to have with readers. It is sensible therefore to begin by defining our terms and in doing so, meet the children.

Attachment Theory

This is a vast, complex and crucial area of research and debate with a very significant contribution to make to the field of education. *Attachment* is associated at the beginning of life with security and survival. It describes and explains the crucial nature of the relationship between

the infant and the primary carer, usually but not always the mother, the central tenet being the absolute need for an infant to have a close, continuous and comforting relationship with at least one primary caregiver continuing from the first hours of birth. Attachment has become an influential force in the understanding of early social development, secure attachment being the ideal circumstance for all infants.

Secure Attachment

Fortunate children receive love, warmth, attention, are kept safe from harm and fearful anxiety as well as being provided with food, shelter and clothing from a dedicated carer from the beginning of their lives. They thrive, because they are secure in their sense of safety and the warm closeness of their relationship to their significant person and it is the quality of the attention given by the caregiver to the baby on a consistent basis, the degree of *attunement* she has with infant, which will determine the depth of security of the attachment. *Attunement* focuses on the need for sensitive and responsive care given in the form of high quality, consistent attentiveness which means a quick readiness to read the baby's mind and tune into verbal and non-verbal cues, readiness to respond to distress and pleasure in a way that reassures the child and reduces anxiety. From this foundation the baby learns the rudiments of the self-regulation essential for later competence in social, emotional and learning relationships, a process which will support the growing child as he learns how to make and build relationships, respond to others, listen and empathise, negotiate, take turns, show respect and experience self-respect, do as he is bid and *choose what to do or say.*

Developing such fundamental skills in human interaction is a challenge for most children as they grow through the primary school years but those with a secure or internalised attachment have the most solid base from which to build. Internalised attachment is fundamental to the secure base for learning children need to thrive in the primary school. They are provided as infants with a model of relationships with other human beings that sustains through life.

Misunderstandings

Before examining the issues this last statement raises for children who are not in this happy position, two common misunderstanding of *attachment* theory need to be addressed, the first being that it applies only to babies and their mothers. The nature of the relationship developed in our earliest days, the way we see and relate to other people, how we feel about others, how we deal with other people and expect them to deal with us, is established at this crucial stage of development and has ongoing implications for children as they grow and mature through adolescence into adulthood. However, the ability to create and sustain mutually beneficial relationships in all manner of diverse contexts matters to every individual from the beginning to the end of life and therefore has significant implications for the whole schooling system. *Attachment* and the issues that surround it are far from being just the preserve of nursery and pre-school and remain very relevant to primary education and beyond.

The second misunderstanding relates to the 'resilience' of childhood and the often held belief that children will 'grow out of' early difficult experiences and leave them behind. If children have endured adverse conditions and circumstances such as abuse and/or neglect in their earliest years, this will not, according to numerous authorities in the field, ever be likely to happen. (Perry, 1995; Marmot, 2015; van Der Kolk, 2014). For instance, children who don't feel safe in infancy have trouble regulating their moods and can either be aggressive or spaced out and disengaged.

This does not 'click back to normal' in later life as a matter of course as the child gets older. Children in this position need help from knowledgeable adults if their attachment relationships are to enable them to flourish and thrive and eventually contribute to their community in a positive way. Chronic lack of knowledge of a child's life circumstances outside of the school building, for whatever reason, will not therefore support the child or his learning.

The benefits of *secure attachment* go beyond even the ability to develop sustaining relationships. There is now a vast scientific literature that shows the parental effects on the physical, cognitive, linguistic, as well as social and emotional aspects of children's early development and while there is not time here to examine these themes in depth, the significance of early development in each of these areas has been well established as having wide and far reaching consequences for learning in the primary school and beyond. Access to such knowledge should arguably be a resource available to all primary teachers if vulnerable children are to feel secure in school

Secure Base for Learning

Securely attached children feel safe and cared for and are ready to explore, examine, risk, investigate, play and cooperate. They have learned to trust adults enough to expect that if trouble calls or there is something to celebrate, someone will be there to respond to them in a way that soothes and reassures. They have a *secure base for learning* and an opportunity to thrive.

The phrase, *a secure base for learning* can also however be misunderstood. In a school setting it can appear to refer to a quiet, ordered classroom where the teacher is prepared and in control of all aspects of the learning environment and the children are seemingly engaged in useful activities. This description refers mostly to the skill and quality of the teacher's organisation and the ethos of the school overall. Important as this is, there is no focus on how individual children are coping or how comfortable they feel. Important work on the effects of a child's anxiety and distress in the learning environment indicate the need to be able to recognise and understand unmet or impaired attachment needs in the classroom if we are to be able to ask the right questions, help and support.

A *secure base for learning*, in this report therefore, refers to the interior life of the child, in particular the need to be, as far as possible, free from chronic fear and anxiety and other negative emotions in the classroom. It focuses on the quality of the relationships the child has within the school, how they are built and sustained, how this relates to ethos and working practice and how they meet the needs of children in difficulty. *It is the quality and depth of the interaction with the child* and his family that is significant for this research rather than a generalised observation of outward appearing function, process and procedure.

Impaired attachment or unmet attachment needs

In contrast to the securely attached child who is emotionally safe and ready to put his efforts into external exploration, the insecurely attached child is in no such comfortable place. As indicated above, insecurely attached children are chronically frightened and/or anxious. They have not had in their lives a consistent adult to turn to or depend on when they were afraid, anxious or needing comfort. They may be unsure when or even if their basic needs for living will be met and whether or not they will be alone or remain unhurt. As they grow their brains become specialised in a different way to those with secure experiences (van der Kolk, 2014). They regularly present with less development in the physical, cognitive, and linguistic as well as in the social and

emotional domains (Moullin et al., 2014) compared with their securely attached peers. Their focus is on managing fear and abandonment, the chief motivation being to keep safe and survive in an inconsistent, untrustworthy world. They are increasingly at risk for internal problems such as anxiety, withdrawal, and sadness and external socio-emotional problems such as aggression, defiance and hyperactivity. There is little or no space for exploration and play in their lives.

Clearly, insecurely attached children rarely have the skills necessary to benefit from the formal learning environment of the primary classroom, however ordinary and unremarkable those every day interactions may be. If the nature and quality of the child's relationship to the primary caregiver in his earliest days has taught him to distrust and be wary of adults and depend on his own resources, he will relate to the world around him and to the people who enter his limited understanding of that world in the same way. This of course includes his teachers, whose normally assertive, instructive, requesting, or critical manner for instance, may be bewildering and interpreted as threatening to the frightened child.

As indicated, this pupil is not likely to reveal his fear or distress in ways that might prompt sympathy from his class teacher or others. Various authors have described the kinds of behaviours which are indicative of the difficulties the children are facing. They are often sensitive to changes in voice and face, tending to respond to them as threats rather than cues to conform to the expected. They tend to be hyper alert to the slightest features of anger and may become defensive and aggressive. They may overreact to peer behaviours, are certainly not likely to recognise other children's feelings, they may easily shut down and withdraw or lose control of their actions in disruptive and challenging ways. They may be bullied or a bully, they may be overly clingy or cover fear by learning to put on a tough front or spend more and more time alone, thereby falling further behind in developing interpersonal skills and learning about emotional self-regulation.

How individuals respond will depend on the child and his own sad experiences of impaired attachment; such children will be similar however in one respect. Under pressure the emotional brain initiates *pre-programmed escape plans*. Van der Kolk describes these as muscular and physiological reactions which are automatic, set in motion without thought or planning. This means that the child's actions are instinctive, and he has *no choice over what he does instinctively* unless the professionals involved with him seek to understand his needs and provide him with support. Without this help, however well organized a classroom, this child has no secure base from which to learn and little chance of understanding how the school requires him to be, much less of benefitting from the education offered to him.

The crisis points often arise around children's behaviour, particularly if teachers feel they have 'tried everything' and 'nothing works'. The concept of behaviour and the management of behaviour are crucial issues for many primary schools today and for this project. Therefore, as with the other concepts above, we seek to attain a shared understanding of behaviour, not least because the effects of impaired attachment first become evident in school, through children's learning difficulties or behavioural problems (van der Kolk, 2014; Furnivall et al., 2012).

Behaviour/Behaviour Management

Many words have been written about the characteristics of a stable and supportive working environment in a classroom, many more on how to manage behaviour to ensure that this can be achieved. The achievement of 'desirable' behaviour is approached from a range of perspectives depending on the belief system in the individual school. Some may be sanction heavy and

punitive in nature but in more positive situations schools have policies geared towards encouraging children to change their behaviour, to be 'the best that I can be' and will teach self-regulation supported by a variety of reward systems. In the main, children do manage to alter their behaviour, to fit their behaviour to the occasion or select the appropriate behaviour for the circumstance. It is well documented for instance that children can use a playground language which does not appear in the classroom. They understand the choices they have, and even though it may take some time to learn to choose wisely, they can conduct an internal dialogue, they are aware of what they are doing. This is not the case for the child with unmet attachment needs.

Schools rely on the assumption that this supported self-regulation process will provide the answer to the establishment of the consistently stable working climate necessary to for both children and staff. They depend on an ever increasing and wide-ranging number of behaviour techniques and strategies to solve the problems *they* are having in achieving goals as professionals, and for most children they are effective. When teachers say they have tried everything and nothing works however we are brought back again to the plight of the child with an impaired attachment whose behaviour, as described above, is instinctive and self-protective. He cannot make choices or understand what that means because he is as unaware of his own behaviour as he is wary of others. He has no internal dialogue to rely on. He is hyper aware of negative attitudes towards himself, real or imaginary, but has no way to manage the threat other than to act instinctively. In these situations behaviour management strategies exacerbate both the child's problem and that of the teacher attempting to take control. It is not a new problem. So common is it that the CELCIS report (CELCIS, no date), in its reference to children with impaired attachment, speaks of 'predictable ' behaviours and suggests children are 'excluded for things they do because of what has happened to them at home, what's happened to them in their early years' (op.cit.; p.15). Unless teachers understand where negative rejectionist behaviours come from they are likely to want to 'manage' rather than help and this creates a situational impasse. Once the teacher's journey begins with understanding the *reason* for the behaviours the focus could shift from the child's actions to those of the teacher and progress can then be made.

In this report, reference to schools' perspective on behaviour will look for an awareness of the difference between managing behaviour in the functional sense and having an informed understanding of why the behaviour is occurring at all. There is a way forward: professionals working in other agencies focused on vulnerable children have set valuable precedents. Before the children can learn to make a *choice* about and for themselves, the school has the responsibility of making the choice to recognise and address the additional needs of a neglected group of children.

Choice/Equity

The ability to make choices is deeply relevant for the child with an insecure attachment whose behaviours are instinctive and unplanned, because it is an important indicator of growing self-directedness, self-regulation and the development of decision making skills. It indicates a sense of agency, an ability to assess and reflect on situations and choose a course of action. Other studies have shown that this can be achieved and that children can form secure attachments beyond their first years if the adults who structure and plan his life are informed and committed to the process.

Away from the classroom and the learning journey that schools and children can take towards making positive and beneficial choices for their own futures, there is another context relating to choice which impinges significantly on children's lives. As a society we cherish the notion of free choice and often assume its general availability. Our choices however, extend to or are

limited by the circumstances and conditions in which we are born, grow, live, work and age and over which we have little or no control. Writers such as Marmot have examined the myriad causes, influences on and eventual consequences of choice at a socio-political and economic level for children and their families and, while there is no space in this report to examine this wealth of literature in any detail, what is clear is that few choose deprivation as a life style. Some of the implications of acute deprivation are no more clearly seen than in the home lives of children with unmet attachment needs and few have fully realized the influence of the *generational* legacy (Furnivall et al., 2012; Moullin et al., 2014) of early bonding impairment, a downward spiral that is beyond the family to address without help.

Schools cannot, of course, be responsible for the difficulties in which some families find themselves nor for the decisions made which affect people's lives and disrupt the educational chances of some of their children. But, without knowledge and understanding among staff, the behaviour of parents with impaired attachment experiences themselves, can mirror those of their children and appear just as demanding if not threatening. In such circumstances a gulf may form between home and school. Lack of positive involvement of parents in the child's school life has long been identified as detrimental to eventual success, particularly for children with additional support needs. However challenging, schools may need to revisit their policies on parental involvement and make the choice to reach out to vulnerable parents in a more positive manner. Successful attachment to primary carers has been achieved when professionals agreed a specific aim and were prepared for the task. When relationships are sensitively built on trust, reliability, consistency and a warmth free from judgement and blame, the results for both the family and particularly children's progress, has been remarkable (Marmot, 2015; Baldry and Moscardini, 2010).

Choice is a highly significant concept for this report but it is clear that the children will only benefit when adults, especially those at school choose to take steps to help at what ever level they can. Children with negative attachment experiences can only change their behaviours when their teachers take the onus upon themselves to question their own.

Historical context - Jeely Nursery Project

Role of the Jeely Nursery project

The project model is designed to meet the requirements of a primary school and is a new initiative in that it does not replicate any other trial. It is however informed by experience and findings from established best practice in other disciplines, most particularly from the ground-breaking work carried out by the staff of the Jeely Nursery in Castlemilk, Glasgow. The insights from child based relationship therapy and child led pedagogy underpinned by concepts of attachment, attunement and resilience they achieved have been of particular value to this project (see Final Report, Baldry & Moscardini, 2010).

In brief, the Jeely Nursery staff provided children with a narrative to their own lives and experiences, which enabled them to see themselves as actors in their own daily-lived experience. They learned to detach themselves from the unthinking, instinctive emotional action and reaction which usually governed their behaviour, to reflect and become accepting of the idea that in each situation they could present themselves with a *choice* about what they might do or say next. Key workers taught individuals what and how to choose over time in a one to one newly established attachment relationship. This was often the first secure relationship in the child's life. The

narrative of their own lives now provided the basis for growing autonomy and self-directedness. They were taught how to gain control and were aware of, and gained satisfaction from, doing so.

A powerful imperative to take and test the work at the next stage of education, in the Primary school became the instigation for this project. A direct transfer of the Jeely Nursery model of support was inappropriate, not least because of differing organisational requirements and circumstances, yet there remained a recognition of a fundamental need for schools and teachers to have knowledge and understanding of the implications for children of their unmet attachment needs; to know how to identify vulnerable children; to recognise and understand the kind of help a child might need in addition to what is normally available, to recognise the integral role of the parent/carer and to have structures in place to secure and formalize appropriate support for the child and his family over time. Fundamental requirements for meeting the needs of vulnerable children such as those represented by this group are well recognised and located within the current context for support in Scotland.

Aims

The overarching aim of this longitudinal study was to develop and sustain a secure base for learning for children as they moved through mainstream education.

- The initial focus was on children who had experienced highly adverse socioeconomic circumstances in their early lives.
- The mid-to-long term aim was to recognise and develop this support as appropriate for all children.

Project Design

The project was designed over a three year cycle based on a critical action research model. The method of developing practice within the schools was not pre-planned in detail, neither was it imposed nor instructional. The central driver for the project was an action research model which, essentially, created the need for staff on both sides to engage in a continuous cycle of the monitoring and adjustment of aspects of practice in order to plan an appropriate forward agenda which was relevant and meaningful to, and supported by, all participants.

The project used the well-established CPD strategy of designing experiences which build on current levels of knowledge and understanding and of gathering information on teachers' established approaches to self-identified classroom problems and perceived need. This approach underpinned the regular input of workshops, briefings and materials produced for the schools over the three years of the project. The chief sources of information were semi-structured interviews with school staff, observations by and classroom discussion with project staff, discussion at management meetings and reported discussion between teachers. Ongoing plans were negotiated on a regular, and in reference to classroom practice, a weekly basis and were founded on mutually identified need. Classroom teachers were listened to and responded to in real time and staff at all levels were consistently recognised and valued for their contributions. Vigilance as to the degree to which all input furthered the purpose of the project was a constant imperative for the project team.

The overall aim was that an ethos of ownership would underpin the work of this project and that teachers would be engaged in continuing opportunities to investigate and reflect on aspects of practice from the point of view of their own activities and experiences in the classroom. Further to this it was hoped that in building on existing support structures in the schools and with the consistent help and support of the school-based project field worker, the Director of Liaison (DoL), the school could assume responsibility

Data collection

As well as weekly in school collaboration and observations led by the DoL other members of the project team also carried out classroom observations and had discussions with the class teachers and school managers. These visits and discussions were ongoing and ensured a robust and rigorous approach to the project. The observations and discussions corroborated the observations and reports of the DoL. They also provided useful additional information. The DoL provided highly detailed reports and information on a weekly basis. Class teachers recorded and shared information about children that they have identified as requiring support. Referral forms were reviewed regarding adherence to research criteria before inclusion in the project. Teachers had identified children who had barriers to effective learning, and they sought support in responding to the children's needs.

The project was structured in a way that allowed a rich bank of information to be gathered at various levels. In addition to the observational data which we collected over the three years we also carried out participant interviews at key stages and gathered relevant documents for analysis. The method of analysis used was one developed at the National Centre for Social Research (Ritchie, Spencer and O'Connor, 2003). Collecting and analysing information from a range of perspectives was an ongoing process throughout the duration of the project which helped to provide a robust picture. This analysis was essential in informing next steps and was integral to the action-research model of the project. The ongoing analysis also provided a source of information and evidence about the project for discussion with the project participants and relevant stakeholders at meetings and at conferences and seminars.

Timescale and overview of data collection process

Year 1
The project commenced on schedule in August 2011 with preliminary meetings with the participating teachers in the two participating schools. Baseline interviews with participating staff were carried out. Interviews were transcribed and coded. The role of a key liaison person from the Jeely Nursery (DoL) with teachers and parents was agreed.

Informed consent was obtained from parents taking into account their literacy needs, and ensuring that they understood the remit of the project.

The position of the DoL was established and took immediate effect as the case study pupils entered both schools. This involved weekly classroom observations, time for discussion with the teachers involved with these pupils and regular meetings with the parents/carers. The DoL provides detailed accounts of all observations and records meetings with teachers and parents which were fed back to the project team. The project team had regular meetings during which the

analysis of the information was discussed, points for action identified and strategies for developing practice considered and implemented.

Year 2

In the first six months of year two the development of practice within the schools was at a highly individualised level through ongoing, usually weekly, meetings between individual class teachers and the Director of Liaison (DoL) from the Jeely Nursery. These sessions involved dialogues centred on classroom observations and discussions of particular children whom teachers have identified as being a cause for concern. The number of teachers with whom the DoL was now working increased to 13 across the two schools with indications, based on discussions with senior management that this number would increase further.

In the latter six months of year two the project the team consolidated work within both schools with the aim of ensuring that both schools were acting upon the observations of teachers regarding particular children. The effectiveness of this follow through was supported by the aim of establishing strong links between classroom practice and more formal support and recording procedures as set out in policy such as GIRFEC and the Additional Support for Learning Code of Practice (Scottish Government, 2010). The team worked on making these links more explicit.

An important aspect of this work was the aim of developing a level of expertise with key staff within the schools that would allow these staff members to assume the current functions of the DoL thereby ensuring the sustainability of the work of the project. Both schools engaged well in this process of development, with one school engaging particularly strongly from the outset.

The DoL also worked with teachers in developing the use of the resilience matrix, a resource within the national policy documentation of *Getting it Right for Every Child* (GIRFEC) to identify, record and to understand the links between influences upon a child's development, aspects of resilience, vulnerability, protective environment and adversity for individual children. This is an area acknowledged by the Scottish Government GIRFEC team as challenging. Support in the process of mapping and applying new learning to policy support frameworks continued to be ongoing.

Year 3

In the final year of this three-year cycle we focused on developing a sustainable model of practice which could be maintained by the schools autonomously. An important aspect of developing a sustainable model involved working with the management teams in both schools to assume the functions of the liaison person from the Jeely Nursery (DoL) and to link this practice with existing support procedures which are in line with national policy. In August 2013 the project team led further development in both schools. This had two aims: to update existing staff in the schools and to introduce new members of staff to the principles of attachment and the aims of the project; to develop a particular focus on identifying and supporting passive children who may often be overlooked and overshadowed by children who are more overtly demanding.

In the final year the team worked particularly with the senior management teams in each school to move staff towards assuming more responsibility for maintaining the practice models which the project had introduced into the schools. This responsibility meant that in each school a member of the senior management team would gradually assume the functions of the DoL. In order to ensure this transition was as effective and comfortable as possible the development was implemented through a carefully monitored mentoring programme. Concurrent with this development, the

team worked with the schools to connect this practice to national practice models as set out in national policies. Specifically, we worked with the SMTs to update policies and procedures in the area of educational support and relate these to the national policy of GIRFEC (Getting it Right for Every Child). This development is very much in line with the development of GIRFEC, which recently went through legislation in the Scottish Parliament in the Children and Young People's Act. The relevance of the work of the project to this legislative and policy context was highlighted by members of the GIRFEC team on the LTaMC advisory group.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was an ongoing and iterative process for the duration of the project. Data were qualitative so our concern was trustworthiness and rigour. All four members of the project team worked with these data which helped to ensure rigor and trustworthiness.

Data were analysed adhering to an iterative method, 'Framework', developed at the National Centre for Social Research (UK). Framework is a matrix-based analytic method that permits a rigorous and systematic analysis of data. At each stage of the analysis it is possible to work at increasing levels of abstraction with the original data being accessible at every stage of this process (Ritchie, Spencer and O'Connor, 2003). The study involved collation of data from a range of sources. These data included interviews at the outset, mid-point and end of the project, gave an insight into classroom and school practices and procedures and pupil engagement. Interviews were transcribed, then read and re-read. Topics were identified and a coding system developed and applied. Once the transcripts were coded a descriptive analysis was developed following the framework outlined by Ritchie & Lewis (2003). Data were decontextualized and then recontextualized (Tesch, 1990) within these analytical frameworks so that similar content could be located together. The frameworks supported the analysis of data across categories by participant but importantly they also facilitated a cross-sectional analysis of each category. Hardcopy and observational data comprised: school policy and planning documents; fieldnotes of observed classroom episodes; teachers' maintained logs and observations; project team journal comments; email correspondence and notes of meetings with school staff; fieldnotes of project team members/observers.

The fieldnotes of the project team members/observers were an important part of the data collection process. These were written up in situ often in discussion with staff within the schools. They were returned on a weekly basis for the duration of the project. Qualitative data was shared with the teachers in situ to ensure accurate recording of information, and permission for the use of quotes was established at this point of data collection.

NVivo was used as a data management tool to store and organise these data. Gathering evidence from a range of sources allowed a rich picture to emerge, permitting data to be analysed through a wide lens and at the same time allowing each element to be analysed individually. These multiple perspectives ensured that a rich picture was produced (Ritchie, 2003).

Advisory group

A highly qualified and experienced advisory group was established at the outset of the project. The group met twice a year. Over the three years of the project as members moved on, their replacements would attend thus maintaining continuity. See Appendix 1 for details of the advisory group members.

Findings and Discussion

To understand the implications of the project findings and to reach any conclusions concerning current or future practice in schools, the discussion will be structured around five interlocking principles which underpin a pedagogy that we propose would support children with unmet attachment needs and which would provide the foundation of a secure base for learning in the primary classroom. The aim for the discussion, drawn from our investigation of data collected over three years, is to make as transparent as possible the conflicts and the strengths of such a proposition in the context of the primary school.

Key Principles

The five principles were constructed through reference to the findings from the successful Jeely Nursery Project. We also consulted leading authorities in the field of negative attachment issues related to school age children and educational progress. Cairns (2002), as well as providing material representative of many other writers, offers a perspective which has resonance with the philosophy underpinning the pedagogy of the successful Jeely Nursery Project.

Cairns identifies an axiom or general agreement which lies at the heart of building the trusting, mutually respectful relationships necessary to the provision of a secure base for learning;

> '…. reaching out to the other… *not in some set pattern of relationships* but in a *real interchange* between individuals. People usually respond to this, feeling not only that they have had their *feelings recognized and acknowledged*, but also that they have been *recognised as persons with dignity and value'* (op. cit.; p41) [our italics].

From the above we have drawn the following five interlocking principles;

- Establish a positive relationship based on a real interchange, *rethinking set patterns of relationship* between the teacher and the child.

- Be sensitive and responsive, recognizing that individual *children are entitled to have their feelings recognized and acknowledged.*

- Treat children as individuals and *explicitly recognize their dignity and value.*

- Treat *parents as individuals*, rethinking patterns of relationships and recognizing their dignity and value.

- The above principles to be recognised in an agreed, *whole school commitment* to the help and support of children who have experienced negative attachment, developed from a shared understanding that is consistently monitored and addressed. This culture to be inclusive of both teachers and parents.

In addition, Cairns offers a procedural guideline by which the principles above might be achieved:

'…the process of relationship thus begins with *what we know and what we have learned about ourselves and others.'* (op. cit.; p41) [our italics].

If the quality and extent of what we know and have learned 'about ourselves and others' is essential to the building of good relationships, it is arguably *central* to the provision of a learning environment for children whose negative experience severely limit or effectively exclude them from the benefits of primary education. We have now to determine how this understanding can inform the planning of an appropriate response to vulnerable children at school level and in the classroom.

Procedural Guidelines: School level support structures

What schools need to 'know and have learned about' in order to guide teachers to develop and sustain the relationship-building skills indicated above. While school-focused issues are highlighted as a priority, work with the children's parents and/or carers remains crucial to overall success, particularly for this group of children. The following suggestions support the above principles:

- Examine what beliefs, attitudes and knowledge with regard to 'challenging behaviour' in the classroom drive policy and practice and whether they currently provide a secure base for learning for vulnerable children, (this will include attitude to parents), and identify areas for professional development.
- Ensure that teachers understand the significance of negative attachment or unmet attachment needs to learning and can recognise the range of behaviours that indicate vulnerability, *including their own behaviours* in particular relationships, including relationships with parents.
- Provide informed guidance on a range of appropriate response strategies for children with unmet attachment needs and opportunities to develop a school response.
- Provide opportunities for teachers and others to discuss and communicate their views on relationship issues focused on the children for whom they have concerns. Include the contribution parent/carer can make.
- Establish procedural routes for the formal recording of essential information and the dissemination of essential information for those involved in planning appropriate curricular activities (formal and informal) for children who need consistent support.
- Ensure teachers have available, through an established school ASN policy, guidelines which help them to look for relevant sources of information to build into a detailed profile, analyse the information and, with support, select appropriate activities for progress. The programme should also include details of monitoring the *usefulness or otherwise of the programme for the child* which will then form the basis of future planning.

Procedural guidelines: classroom teacher level

What the teacher needs to know and learn about themselves and others in order to develop and sustain the relationship-building skills indicated above.

- Be ready to examine personal knowledge, beliefs and attitudes with regard to children whose behaviours are perceived to undermine professional effectiveness.
- Take a positive approach to professional development with regard to relationship- building skills in a one to one situation within an appropriate curricular response.

- Take an active part in developing a whole school response to the range of issues arising from the needs of children whose educational and other life prospects are undermined by early and often continuing negative attachment experiences.
- Be aware of the use of language in all aspects of classroom life.
- Be aware of the parental contribution that could enhance progress for the child.

School based provision should resource all these aspects.

Factors guiding discussion of the project findings

The principles and supporting guidelines above suggest a number of key factors that inevitably overlap. To provide structure and clarity for the discussion, several sub-factors have been extracted. They will be addressed throughout the narrative with the aim of reinforcing key concepts and creating coherence to complex discussion.

Essential to both the focus and the ethos of this project is the quality of interchange within relationships in the school. We identify relationship patterns between teacher and child and other relationships relating to the child that might hinder or support progress for the individual. We examine teacher beliefs attitudes and knowledge, particularly on behaviour and aspects of pedagogy and comment on the degree to which teachers and managers were prepared to examine their own beliefs and values and to change practice in the light of new learning. We consider the impact of the school culture and ethos on the above and the degree to which classroom teachers were supported in their professional practice. The issue of *sustainability* is the overarching factor throughout the discussion but above all, we look to reveal how the work of the project affected the lived experience of vulnerable children in school whose behaviours are unlikely to attract empathy, understanding and an informed professional response, but who need just that.

The themes identified for the analysis of the data in the findings section reflect the factors above and provide focused access to information relevant to the discussion. Using our guiding structure we intend first to set out the findings for the initial stage of the project as a base line narrative then identify *signals of change over time* and assess the impact of the project on the same factors at the end of three years.

Project Narrative

Context

Rarely, if ever, are schools submitted to the degree of policy scrutiny such as this research team carried out in our endeavours to discover the requirements for supporting children with negative attachment experiences, or unmet attachment needs, in the primary school; we were thankful and grateful as a team for the generous cooperation of our colleagues in the participating schools. The purpose of the report was *not* to report back on *individual* schools or their *dedicated staff* but to see the issues raised as representative of many. Their cooperation allowed us to investigate in depth aspects of support in the contemporary Scottish primary school that help us to identify the foundations of a secure learning base for our most fragile and vulnerable children. We look to identify strengths in current practice and discover areas amenable to development. The results are

illuminating and offer positive prospects for children with unmet attachment needs. Firstly however, a brief reminder of why a school *should* be working to support every child.

Focus on the individual

Imagine standing before a class of primary school children, then make a cone shape holding your arms out in front of you. Since the 1980s it has been known that individuals who fell outside of that central group rarely received an education appropriate to their needs and were therefore to all intents and purposes *excluded* from the benefits of their years of schooling. From that time to this an effort has been made at national and local level in Scotland to redress the balance. Now, in the 21century, inclusive planning which takes into account the learning needs of *individual children* rather than the traditional approach of planning for the class as a single entity has become, within the rhetoric at least, a central purpose of education practice. *Inclusion* continues to be the watchword for education thinkers and policy makers, the aim being to ensure that as far as possible all children receive the educational provision they need within their regular mainstream classroom and in their own community. Despite official policy however, *some children still remain outside* of this support shield. They find a champion in writers like Marmot (2015) who assert that the implicit exclusion of vulnerable children, for reasons related particularly to the worst effects of poverty and social disadvantage, raises fundamental issues of *inequality* within the education system which should not go unaddressed. Children with unmet attachment needs rest very firmly within this disadvantaged group.

The debate and discussion on educational inclusion runs to millions of words and will continue. The reality for teachers in the classroom however is very apparent. The day–to-day challenge of planning for teaching has changed, the work is demanding and progress towards the ideal provision for all children is, arguably, typically slow to develop in the reality of busy primary school life. This project for example was not the only initiative being addressed in the schools at the time. The team was therefore mindful of the challenges to staff, but necessarily focused on the experiences of the children vulnerable to being adrift from the system of help.

Attachment is the story of a child's first experiences of relationship building. The damaging impact of abuse and or neglect over time can be successfully addressed through the development of warm, trustworthy and consistent relationships with other adults. With appropriate knowledge and understanding the child's teacher is in prime position to offer crucial support.

Quality relationships

Understanding behaviour

Evidence of recognition that individual children with unmet attachment needs are entitled to have their feelings recognised and acknowledged relates, arguably, to an ability to *recognise* and *understand* a child's behaviour in relation to knowledge about *attachment* issues on one hand and knowledge of the child's *individual circumstances and context* on the other. Lack of knowledge and/or understanding in either or both of these aspects, even when an individual teacher is benevolently inclined towards helping a struggling pupil, will be detrimental to a child who already copes with significant disadvantage as the background to his or her life.

Awareness of attachment theory

Data collected at the start of the project indicated a significant issue for primary education, on both counts. Attachment theory, though known of, was largely bedevilled by misinformation or simply misunderstood at classroom level. Teachers who had a clearer understanding of the theory struggled to relate it to primary aged children perceiving the focus to be on infants, or didn't know how to relate their knowledge to practice; others challenged the relevance of such 'family' matters in the school context. Recognising principles of attachment in terms of human relationships, what it means to relate to others and how this is relevant to society was not universally recognised. Describing her view of the nurture class, one teacher stated:

> 'no I do not feel this is real teaching, I did not train to be like a mother – that would frustrate me. I trained to teach them education and make a difference to society.'

Many teachers were frustrated by their lack of success in managing the seemingly unassailable behaviour of their most challenging children and were often disappointed by the many and various initiatives introduced to 'manage' the difficulties they experienced in the classroom:

> 'the nurture boys from P1 are now in P2, nothing more can be done about them.'

More appropriate responses, which would be evidenced in the findings by an understanding of *why* certain behaviour was happening and *why* it was persisting, were rare; nor was there any formal focus on those areas in which individuals needed particular help, for instance with emotional growth towards self-regulation.

In spite of the emotional tension regularly present in classroom life, teachers were unlikely to have engaged with professional development focused on relationship building or on developing an awareness of the *two way* nature of relationships with children which would require an examination of self. It is perhaps interesting to note that while primary school children are frequently now set the task of examining how they are feeling and are required to consider their emotional states and relationships, (supported by the Curriculum for Excellence) primary school teachers traditionally are not regularly required to consider the possibility that their own part in the relationship may be creating a problem for children who have never learned to trust an adult.

Essential elements of the skills needed for building a quality relationship with a child who had negative experiences of adults were found chiefly in the intuitive and personal responses of individual members of staff but were arguably absent in general terms at the beginning of the project.

Understanding of secure base for learning

Further to this, a secure base for learning was chiefly understood by the project participants to be related to the classroom environment, chiefly whether it was organized, well prepared and industrious. The degree to which the emotional states of individual children could prohibit their inclusion in a settled classroom was recognised in the main only through a need to *manage* disruptive behaviour so that a controlled working environment could be maintained. This difference in interpretation of 'secure base' is critical for a child with unmet attachment needs. In this view, *the secure base becomes a physical context to which he must earn acceptance by a change in his behaviour*. However, without informed help from the teacher the child with

attachment issues will not be able to comply. Lack of knowledge of the implications of insecure attachment arguably places stress on the teacher as well as the child and adversely affects the relationship that the child is reliant on for security in learning.

Behaviour

For individual children with unmet attachment needs, behaviour would appear to be the rock on which their need for an informed response will crash. Our early findings support the claims made above that teachers and schools recognise and respond to behaviour from the perspective of management rather than understanding, and that teachers can feel uncomfortably compromised by challenging behaviour in the classroom both professionally and personally. Faced with chronic, disruptive behaviour teachers' responses indicated frustration, exasperation, a sense of diminished professionalism:

> 'we're not qualified to identify these things'.

> 'I'm not actually the right person to be talking to about these big things, I actually don't really know'.

and even resigned defeat:
> 'I have run out of ideas and I feel frustrated, not with the children, but with myself because I do not know where to turn to for help.'

Crucially perhaps, knowledge of the link between a child's state of chronic stress and insecurity arising from negative domestic experiences characterised by distress, distrust, and anxiety if not fear, and the ability to develop consistent and trusting relationships with adults in school, was not generally understood by staff. Teacher recognition and understanding of a child's emotional state and how it presents in a formal schooling situation, a prerequisite for a relationship in which the child's feelings are recognised and acknowledged, was an issue at the start of the project. For example:

> 'What is getting in the way of this child's well-being? Lack of respect for authority, difficulty in making relationships'.

Other relationships

The quality of interaction between school and home in relation to parents or carers is investigated separately below because of its significance to the effectiveness of support available to a child with negative attachment issues and because of the complexity of the difficulties in seeking a possible transfer of the Jeely study experience to the contemporary primary school.

Links with external agencies relating to the child and his welfare, or indeed the lack of them, are without question important to the overall narrative but lie beyond the scope of inclusion in this report.

Individual circumstances and context

The second aspect of a teacher's ability to 'recognise and acknowledge' a child's learning needs requires an understanding and respect for the situation and circumstances of life outside of the school. Studies over decades have indicated the significance of what is happening at home to the emotional space a child has for learning in the classroom. Similarly the effects of chronic stress on the growing brain are now well documented in the fields of child development and neuroscience. If a respectful and empathetic relationship is to be developed, teachers do, arguably, need to be aware of the history and the daily-lived experiences of children with unmet attachment issues.

It was clear from the findings at the beginning of the project that information on the context of an individual child's life outside the school was not automatically available to teachers for planning purposes neither were regular updates on contemporary circumstances within children's families, even when serious incidents occurred. For example it is important to recognise that issues of communication were at an inter-agency level and went beyond schools. On one occasion a school was not informed that a pupil had been taken into care during the summer holidays.

Nor was there a sense that staff set out to discover what was going on in a child's home life. Evidence indicates that the history and background of the Jeely Nursery children who transferred to the primary schools did not impact on their class teachers. The precarious nature of their home circumstances and the fragility of their hard won emotional stability was not understood, to the extent that one member of staff was reported to have said that she would not have regarded the child as needing extra attention except that he was identified as being part of the project.

Primary school culture has traditionally separated home and school in spite of current national initiatives to address the disconnect (see below) and while individual teachers felt uneasy about their lack of knowledge of the lives of vulnerable children and individuals at senior management level similarly felt there were important gaps in the knowledge they receive (from other agencies) relating to individuals, there is a pervading sense still, that teachers relate to the child primarily in the context of the school itself. The findings indicate that while teachers felt more information would be useful, it was not seen to be *essential* to the day to day running of the school or the education of its pupils.

'It does not really matter about who the children stay with, or what has happened, as long as (child) is happy in school'.

At the start of the project, as well as a lack of knowledge of the *implications for learning* of negative attachment and of the significance of having a secure learning base within the child, the dominant traditional perspectives (or set patterns) concerning behaviour and connection with home life further contributed to the fragility of support available for this group of children. In many cases there was much missed information about the child's life in every aspect in or out of school and too little knowledge to interpret and respond appropriately, to ensure the basis of a knowledgeable and trusting relationship between the teacher and a child with unmet attachment needs. Perhaps because of this the systems and procedures for support within the school also presented some missed opportunities to find and help children with negative attachment issues.

School support structures

The quality of help available for any particular child is understood best by examining the way in which schools carry out the process of support for individual pupils. Reduced here to a skeletal level for clarity, national guidelines established since the 1990s begin with putting in place effective guidance for the identification of a child who needs help, followed by the gathering of information relevant for analysis of his or her learning needs and then to establish curriculum experiences appropriate to the particular needs of that pupil; finally, consistency is required in the monitoring and adjustment of individual plans over specified periods of time, as is the communication of this information to new teachers or other involved educational personnel. If a child has enduring need, this level of support is necessary across all the classes he or she attends in a school and good communication becomes vital to a sustained and positive experience. This is to be achieved through a shared understanding and commitment from the whole school to children who need support.

National guidelines

A number of initiatives at national level since the last century, for example *Effective Provision for Special Educational Needs* (Scottish Office, 1994), *Manual of Good Practice in Special Educational Needs* (SOEID, 1999), National Priorities for Education as set out in the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act, 2000, have enriched this fundamental plan, giving substance and depth to advice for teachers and others concerned with supporting children who cannot thrive in the classroom without help. Teachers in Scotland are expected to support all children, as outlined in the Additional Support for Learning Act, 2004 (amended in 2009). *Supporting Children's Learning: Code of Practice* (Scottish Government, 2010) is the policy framework detailing how children requiring additional support in Scotland should be supported. This includes Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) and Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) policy, and the use of planning formats such as individualised education plans (IEPs) and coordinated support plans (CSPs).

Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) is the national approach that aims to improve outcomes and support the wellbeing of children. GIRFEC promotes a collaborative approach involving partnership between parents and all services to ensure that children receive the right help at the right time from the right people. In practice this involves the use of the National Practice model and tools such as the My World Triangle, the Resilience Matrix and SHANARRI indicators.

Children identified as having additional support needs are supported using the Staged Intervention model. Education Scotland outlines four levels of Staged Intervention. The first level, Universal Stage, is for all pupils taught and supported within regular curriculum; at Stage One, the teacher will plan for and support a pupil with additional support needs within the classroom or school, an individualised plan such as an IEP/ASP may be used; at Stage Two, the pupil may be supported within the local school cluster and a CSP (Co-ordinated Support Plan) may be implemented; Stage Three is when pupils require support outwith the resources of the local cluster; Stage Four is when pupils require support outside the local authority.

It is the universal level and first stage of this progression that most concerns this report: these are the stages for which the class teacher takes front line responsibility for the child's experience of school. We therefore highlight those aspects above that have most relevance to our discussion i.e.

the readiness of the schools to address the needs of children with negative attachment issues. These include particularly: the extension of the team involved in the decision making elements of the process to include *parents*; an inclusive approach to the range and diversity of individual circumstances which are *now* recognised to give rise to additional support needs in the classroom; a recognition of the wide range of factors which need to be taken into consideration when deciding why and how to plan learning experiences for vulnerable children, and the degree to which the planning adheres to the care and rigour indicated above.

Cairns' axiom - '*consider what we know and what we have learned about ourselves and others'* (Cairns, 2002; p 41*) -* is particularly relevant to this fundamentally mechanistic aspect of the support process. Influences on a child's ability to learn successfully in the classroom cover factors never before officially considered as indicative of a need for help; these must now include influences on a child's physical and emotional health emanating from outside of the school. Teachers are expected to take into account the impact of bereavement or bullying for instance as well as the implications of more obvious support needs which can be as diverse as hearing loss and asthma, supporting emotional fragility being far the greater challenge for teaching staff. Implicit in the message also is the requirement for teachers individually and collectively to engage in a self-evaluatory approach within the school; not all sources of difficulty surely, can be laid at the feet of the children.

The importance of the aspects outlined above is linked to the procedural guidelines for school support structures that are related to the key principles. We looked at evidence that might give us a measure of the degree to which the systems essential to success are in place and ready to guide staff; we also looked for evidence of a shared understanding and a whole school commitment to vulnerable children, and a sense of self awareness in the face of demanding circumstances.

Guidelines to staff

It is without question that the support frameworks and their accompanying structures and procedures were efficient at the administrative level in the project schools. They had not prompted concerns from official inspection and were effective to the extent that children with normative difficulty were regularly identified within the system and supported according to the school plan. Our focus therefore was to gather information on aspects of the support framework that were particularly important to supporting children with non-normative difficulty, for whom rigorous observance of the features previously detailed was essential to success. Though children with unmet attachment needs are mainly "hidden" in the school context, it was important to know that once their underlying difficulties had been recognised, further help could be offered through the support mechanisms in place in the school.

The schools' context for supporting children with unmet attachment needs

Evidence that schools had embedded significant features of the current thinking on Additional Support Needs (ASN) into support policies was not apparent at the initial stages of the project. The manner of the introduction of GIRFEC to the teaching force, and subsequent management and quality of the organized engagement with schools is called into question here, because it appeared to have left head teachers and teachers alike in the dark as to its significance. Initiatives such as the Resilience Matrix, SHANARRI wheel and My World Triangle, integral to GIRFEC and designed to help teachers reach into core difficulties experienced by a *child*, were not universally used, nor always understood correctly when in use.

'We don't use GIRFEC for individual children. We plan activities for the whole class in relation to the indicators.'

'The (resilience) matrix I might think about but not use. It does not give me any information that I don't already know. I am already competent in that information.'

'I don't know any policies, maybe you've caught me too early in the term…'

'There is a policy, it's in my cupboard somewhere, but the school is good.'

The Code of Practice was not generally known and GIRFEC, despite assertions from national officials, was not guiding ASN policy development, with some class teachers being unsure even of its relevance to Scottish primary education. GIRFEC was variously described by teachers as: a new initiative; not having information on it; it was English not Scottish and therefore not relevant; it was not applicable to schools. Without detailed explanation and the opportunity to discuss purpose, schools were, reasonably perhaps, reluctant to change practice for initiatives that appeared to be unclear and superfluous.

Support framework for children with unmet attachment needs

Every primary school has a member of staff designated to coordinate support for learning and in the project schools support plans were in place where children had been identified as needing help. The staged intervention process was understood and within the schools other support mechanisms were in operation. Individual plans, careful production of which is so important for children needing very specific help, were also in use; however the findings indicate that teachers were not always aware of the presence of an individual plan or of its purpose. A phrase that was repeated on several occasions was 'someone else will be dealing with it'. It became evident also that the degree of involvement or engagement of classroom teachers in the mechanics of supporting learning varied widely and in some cases lacked the close attention to process described as necessary in the national guidelines; the *formal* sharing and communicating of information crucial for planning for instance, when teachers changed or children moved on to another class.

Where ASN policy is developed with the collaboration of class teachers the sense of ownership and involvement generally facilitates a unified response arising from a shared understanding and shared values. A *whole school* response is regularly identified as an important factor in consistency of practice across a school and across the years. A considerable number of teachers however seemed to know little about the support policy and rarely sought it out to guide their practice; these two situations, including the varied response outlined above, may not be unrelated.

In spite of the undoubted value of national initiatives for pupils with ASN and certainly for pupils with unmet attachment needs, there was little sense from school staff initially that national advice or guidance would be particularly useful to *their* perceived difficulties. There was a confidence that they were covering the requirements in any case and most were satisfied in their own terms that vulnerable children were supported. Over three years, project workers provided opportunities for teachers to explore various aspects of their own practice with very positive results for individual *self-awareness* and *self-evaluation,* and equally positive results for individual children.

Ethos and self-reflection

In the practice context, the degree to which teachers consider self-evaluation or engage in self-awareness in their relationships with children as individuals, and explicitly recognise their *dignity and value* (Cairns, 2002) will be directed by their personal views but influenced also by the ethos of the school and its management lead value system. School ethos, as evidenced in the beliefs and values that shape organisational practice has long been recognised as a powerful force within an institution. It can and will influence teachers' attitudes as to whom they identify as being vulnerable or not, or in need of support or not, and what *should* happen next. This is particularly true when the behaviours of distressed children can promote negative rather than positive responses from the adults involved.

Messages from the overall ethos of the school will also, arguably, influence the degree to which teachers are aware of or are sympathetic to the need to examine their own behaviours and to contemplate a change in their own practice; in the context of relationship building for instance, to ask themselves whether the way they communicate with a child and the messages they are sending are promoting dissonance and distance rather than warmth and trust.

This degree of self-examination and discussion is well established in other contemporary professional child focused agencies, but is very late coming to education practice. As stated previously, children can be asked routinely to examine their own emotional states, yet it is not an issue most teachers are required to deal with. The schools in the project were described as caring and nurturing, as many schools are, and there was genuine support for staff experiencing stress, as well as a positive attitude towards children. However, the basic need for a child with negative relationship experiences to have the skills to build and maintain a consistent warm and trusting relationship and to move towards self-regulation, has to be both taught and modelled by a knowledgeable adult. We experienced a warm and caring ethos in the project schools but the critical relationship between *one teacher and one child* remained highly dependent on the personal value system of the adult. One vulnerable child might spend time with or pass between adults with very different views and responses to children's behaviour. For children with unmet attachment needs the untrustworthiness of all adults is thus reinforced and they will withdraw into their own particular survival behaviours, few if any of which are going to enable learning. Claims that a nurturing ethos operates throughout a school can arguably only be valid if it is inclusive of all teachers and all children.

The clarity resulting from a whole school discussion and agreement on policy, focused on this specific group of children, was a major factor in the success of the Jeely Nursery project (Baldry and Moscardini, 2010) and is an issue in this context also.

Base line summary

At the start of the project it was established that school ASN responses were routinely in place and effectively supporting the majority of children within a positive school ethos. Our task however was to analysis the findings to determine *readiness* to make effective provision for children with *unmet attachment needs* and assess the likelihood of the *sustainability* of consistent provision for this group. This required close observation at the two levels of operation suggested in the five key principles detailed at the start of this section: that of school/teacher values, attitudes and beliefs at

one level and the expression of those values in the rigour of the functional, mechanical operations for supporting individual children at the other.

Without an understanding of the sources or causes of the difficulty that lie behind chronic negative behaviour patterns and lacking knowledge about the implications of unmet attachment needs for learning in the classroom, some teachers/schools struggled to provide effective and appropriate help on a day to day basis for their most vulnerable and challenging children. While it would be unfair, even disrespectful, to criticize anyone for 'not knowing what they don't know', there is perhaps an underlying set of values which could be examined: the implicit belief that children should and can conform to the requirements of the school as an organization, that behaviour should be managed/controlled rather than understood, the pervading influence of the traditional distance regarding family and home life. The ambivalent role of the teacher in the development of emotional self-regulation, the need for unity in approach to whole school challenges (which would include investigating the value of available guidelines), all suggest a lack of connection with the lived experience of some children within the school's remit of responsibility - particularly children with abuse and/or neglect in their personal histories.

Similarly gaps in awareness and knowledge of available advice and guidelines, were evident in the lack of depth in planning for individuals over time and in the inconsistent monitoring of the implementation of individual plans at class level. There were also indications that some aspects of support procedures for instance, cross-school communication of information for planning, disrupted the consistency of provision for an individual child. This was the situation with some of the children connected with the project. For instance in the case of one child information concerning him was not transferred to the next teacher through the transition process.

With almost one hundred years of experience between us as workers in various roles in the pre – five and primary aged child arena, the team feels confident in its claim that the issues presented through the experiences of the project schools are shared by, and relevant to some degree, to the majority of Scottish primary schools.

To account for the complexity of the subject and for the sake of coherence and clarity we have chosen to include the narrative on *pedagogy* with reference to children with unmet attachment needs in the next section of this report where the impact of the work of the *Director of Liaison* will also be addressed.

Impact of the project

Towards establishing a secure base for learning for children with unmet attachment needs

Indicators of change

Our principal aim with regard to negative attachment issues and the "hidden" nature of children's difficulties was to identify any impact the project may have had on the way teachers identified and perceived children's behaviour, whether relationships with the children were discussed in positive, helpful ways at class teacher level or at school level, whether changes in pedagogy and teaching practice could be observed and on whether the management teams had responded by strengthening the support structure and procedures for children with unmet attachment needs. Because a degree

of self-reflection and self- awareness are arguably prerequisites to change in working practice and professional development these attributes are also addressed. The five key principles identified throughout will guide the discussion below.

Building quality relationships

Good relationships undoubtedly underlie good learning experiences in the classroom. A dominant requirement of the five key principles is that children have their feelings recognised and acknowledged and that they themselves are respected and valued. There is no doubt that participants responded well to input addressing these themes. Findings reveal a significant development over the three years of the project of an awareness and understanding of unmet attachment needs and how they present in children in the context of the classroom. Teachers understood that they were *not* being encouraged to 'diagnose' deficit neither were they encouraged to 'label' children. The debate on labelling is contentious in the field of education and there is no time to address it in this report. It is important to say however that the objective for the team was to encourage teachers to come to a new understanding of the frequently perplexing professional situations in which they found themselves and to feel confident about interacting with individual children in an empathetic manner.

Evidence over time clearly shows that having been involved in the process of recognizing and understanding the complexity of behaviour of children in their own classroom and relating it to knowledge about attachment and relationship building, all of which were project related activities, teachers were quickly and accurately "picking up' on children they previously would have missed and were very motivated to move to the stage of providing an appropriate response for children whom *they now saw as vulnerable*:

> 'I have a better understanding of the child's behaviour and I can now understand what is underlying this behaviour and how I can use this interpretation of my observations to inform how I might work with and support him.'

In this as in other aspects of development within the schools, in communication links across the school, and in links between home and school, the Director of Liaison was the regular and accessible co-worker.

Value of the Role of Director of Liaison

Working in real time

The DoI was involved in extending and developing the themes and issues raised during the professional development sessions with school staff but also with a remit to respond to need and enquiry *as it arose,* keeping the work focused and with immediately relevance to everyone. The value of working together in real time with an experienced professional was universally recognised at all levels of the school organisation but most particularly perhaps, by the classroom teachers. It is also reinforces the message of the project that the quality of the relationships developed with the DoL greatly contributed to the progress made, particularly in view of the crucial aspect below.

Growth of self-awareness and self-reflection

In the classroom setting teachers became aware of aspects of their professional practice into which, they were at ease to admit, they had not had previous insight. Across the range this included for instance body language, awareness of stress or indeed distress in children, awareness of stress in their own behaviour, awareness of their own use of language and an awareness of the quality of interchange between child and teacher/ behaviour management. Teachers also looked beyond strictly interpersonal relationships and took the opportunity to raise issues they had had no opportunity to discuss previously, for instance, the impact of the total classroom environment on learning or the anxiety children experience related to transitions within the school or the concept of choice. New understandings were discussed with the DoL, with the most feasible being addressed in situ with her help and reassurance.

Growth of professional awareness

The authenticity and relevance of the project themes was borne out in evidence by teachers reporting that issues raised by the project were being discussed spontaneously, informally and positively in staffrooms and in classrooms:

> ' … it's nice for all these teachers that have these children to know they can chat about the project and feel that there is a network of support.'

> 'I've certainly found it much better since (DoL) has been involved that she is providing that liaison between us all.'

Schools began to take the initiative in identifying and requesting input from the team with reference to "quiet children", those whose response to neglect and/or abuse was to fade and retreat from human society.

The growth of this form of collegiate strength has benefits for professional knowledge, confidence and development and is a positive indicator of what would hopefully be the start of the embedding of support for children with negative attachment issues.

Focus on family/home circumstances

Since the provision of a secure base for learning is reliant also on teacher knowledge of circumstances outside the classroom, the contribution of the DoL in creating a link between home and school for the project children, originally from the Jeely, was reported by their teachers as being particularly valuable. For instance:

> 'I had no information until today when you (DoL) described his family background…I can understand his reactions much better now.'

Staff with responsibility for providing day-to day learning for vulnerable children welcomed her knowledge of the wider community and her ability to provide updates on current circumstances and also on the kind of appropriate historical detail that helped to illuminate present difficulties. An appropriate response was easier to select and non-co-operative behaviour better understood for

instance knowing that an abusive father has returned to the home or that mum has had a relapse and disappeared from home leaving your world changed and frightening – again.

Formal procedures for recording and reporting

Though formal changes or amendments to ASN policy documents are seen as the remit of senior members of staff, a number of formal arrangements for the identification and gathering of information were introduced through the aegis of the (DoL) Teachers found these useful as aids to discussion and exploration of issues relevant to their practice. A more detailed discussion of aspects of this key principle at school level will follow later.

Response through pedagogy

Transferring pedagogies

The importance of the philosophy underlying curriculum delivery cannot be overstated with reference to the likely success of children with unmet attachment needs in primary school. Child-led curriculum, which underpins the continuing success in the Jeely Nursery presents a real challenge to traditional pedagogy and therefore a real challenge to primary teachers. It is highly structured in the sense that teachers require a deep knowledge of the child, child development *and* of the area they are teaching, be it self-regulation, maths or any other subject, if they are to *create a fit* that ensures satisfactory progress for a child. The national aims and desired outcomes for schooling remain the same for all, but the *journey* towards those outcomes should arguably be different and could be supported well beyond the levels of differentiation currently available to class teachers. The child–led, constructivist philosophy is generally misunderstood, *as it was by all the teachers in the project* schools. It is neither a nursery approach exclusively for infants nor is it that the personal likes or dislikes, *whims,* of a child drive a loose form of incoherent planning; but rather it is a carefully conceived learning journey based on a real understanding of the *learning needs* and *strengths* of an individual child and a deep knowledge of the material to be encountered.

Traditional curriculum planning in the primary school removes much of the need for this degree of professional knowledge because it is largely pre-planned over the school year and beyond. Put simply, teachers were expected to introduce pre-selected content and materials at recognised times with the expectation of achieving success, at least for the majority, using long established teaching methodology. The Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) and supporting guidelines aimed to *reduce* the *reliance* teachers have on pre-planned content which gives little more than a rhetorical nod to the individual nature of learning and allow more scope to schools and teachers to develop curriculum practice in ways more suited to their own population of children. C*f*E however, is not universally understood and evidently struggles to overcome the established teaching culture in most primary schools. Whether this is due to the power of established behaviour, fears of changes in working practice or of accountability, the transfer of a *truly* child-led pedagogy to the organization and culture of the primary school arguably remains a long term goal. It will require planned, focused support on real time quotidian issues, as happened during the project and it would have to take account of contemporary societal views. However child friendly the focus instigated at national level and repeated in some form at local level, as we have seen earlier, it is rarely presented in a meaningful or relevant manner for many in primary education.

Where children are unable to understand or keep pace with the demands on their cognitive, physical or emotional abilities the results are emphatic. School failure, usual for children with negative attachment issues, exacerbates the disadvantage they already endure. With knowledge and understanding however, school can be a place of stability if not refuge for the fragile child. In spite of the underlying complexity outlined above, and with the advice and support of the DoL, the story of the endeavours of individual teachers in the project schools to reach vulnerable children was both heartening and illuminating.

Theory to practice

Irrespective of the newness of the theoretical input from the team, at classroom level it was abundantly evident that many teachers responded intuitively to children they knew instinctively to be vulnerable. They only knew they were responding appropriately in discussion with the DoL and were relieved and reassured by her affirmation of their practice. They were able to build on their own experience and share it for the first time within the open discussion ethos created by interested members of staff. Notably, a small number of teachers found that the new way of interacting with the children in their classrooms both refreshed and invigorated their practice. Their grasp of the fundamental principles of respectful interaction indicated as much an insight into their own professional behaviour as to that of the child. When asked to comment on changes to practice one teacher spoke about:

> 'Going through observation, taking notes and reflecting on that and what I need to do when building next steps.'

Some teachers engaged with this aspect of education practice more deeply and expressed an interest in following up on the project in their own professional development time, while others requested relevant literature to deepen their professional understanding. For most teachers however, the awakened understanding of the plight of a child in their classroom was quickly overtaken by the realisation that there was no practical help available to them on a day to day basis. Over three years of regular meetings with teachers an impressive collection of advice and response strategies were built up in relation to children with unmet attachment needs. They were used and shared through time. It was clear that bridging the gap between theory and practice was a considerable strength of this project, as evidenced consistently through the years in teachers' comments.

Summary of impact at class level

It is quite clear that, falling short of a fully established child-led pedagogy, it is still highly possible for a secure learning base to be established for children who have negative attachment issues. The indicators of change set out at the start of this section have all been engaged. Teachers responded with enthusiasm both personally and professionally to the call for help for vulnerable children. They took the opportunity to use the new information, discuss the implications for teaching practice and put into place strategies and approaches with the purpose of reaching children formerly unrecognized. There was also clear indication of changes in attitude and a degree of self-reflection in discussion with the DoL and with colleagues. The five foundation principles are respected at this level, and teachers commented that they cannot now 'unknow' what they *now* know. However, whether the progress made in the classrooms becomes embedded as part of established ASN policy or whether children with unmet attachment needs would still be subject to the attitude and beliefs of individual teachers will depend on what impact

the project had at the level of the school as an organization and the response of the management teams.

School level indicators of change

Throughout the project the importance of high quality leadership was evident. Senior managers in the schools recognised the importance of all members of staff understanding attachment and they took the necessary steps to ensure that staff had the opportunity to develop this understanding not only at a theoretical level but most importantly in relation to practice.

Support systems

There was an overall sense of confidence at the outset of the project amongst the initial group of teachers and the management teams in both schools in providing effective support for children with additional support needs. This related to a belief in the system and that it was working effectively. Senior management were confident that support systems were effective and considered the involvement of all staff vital for effective pastoral care. However this came to be challenged more when considering children whose behaviour proved challenging. Staff in both schools had received professional development on recent policies and procedures relating to educational support through Local Authority and school-based practice. Throughout the project we explored how these frameworks for support came to be operationalised in practice through individual teachers' understandings and school wide practice. A significant and persistent finding was a perceived lack of information and the related issues of communication. This concern was highlighted by teachers as well as by senior managers.

Systems – frameworks of support

At the outset of the project some children were only identified as requiring support because they had been identified through the project, they were not identified through the existing school-based support structures. A significant indicator of change was that, over the course of the project, teachers were beginning to identify children as requiring support who previously would have been over-looked.

In providing particular forms of support which may be beneficial to particular children there is an inherent and recognised dilemma that some children may come to be pathologised and defined by the provision and support they receive. Through the project teachers developed a more complete understanding of attachment but there was no evidence to suggest that they used this as a means of labelling or pathologising particular children. As the project developed teachers demonstrated an increasing awareness of the need to be responsive to all learners and teachers in both schools became more concerned about children who they referred to as 'the quiet ones' who they may previously have overlooked.

A strong finding was the extent to which practice was system driven. Senior managers in the schools believed that the principles and philosophy of GIRFEC were already being enacted in practice; in other words GIRFEC represented a confirmation of what was already happening. However some teachers saw the responsibility represented through GIRFEC as resting with senior management. They did not recognise their role in the process. Throughout the project, but especially in the later stages, members of the project team worked with the schools in linking their understanding of policy to implementation and practice. For example in one school a senior

manager was keen to develop use of the GIRFEC Resilience matrix and she requested support and detailed guidance from the project team. This work with the resilience matrix extended into teachers' use of the tool.

Throughout the duration of the project there were issues relating to communication and transition processes and gaps in transition records in both schools. This issue related to both internal and external lines of communication sometimes beyond the control of the school and relating to what would be considered high tariff cases. This problem was recognised by the schools and was responded to actively and positively. For example one of the schools developed a communication system for sharing knowledge about particular children. In another school the headteacher was particularly aware of what was happening in classrooms and what support strategies were in place for particular children. She was also acutely aware of circumstances in their lives beyond school. She stated that as a result of the project several children had ASPs where previously they would not have had anything in place. The school continued to work on communication procedures across and beyond the school.

One HT commented, '(the) most significant lesson that's concerned me and that is at the early stages is not having the whole picture of the child and the complexities they are living with, I mean we see them here in school as they enter P1 and yes we have transition information from the nursery and it's very good information…but sometimes there are gaps.'

There was evidence that as the project progressed the schools began to think more strategically about how important information could be shared and communicated. A significant challenge for schools was how to maintain effective communication with parents. Examples of good and in some cases excellent practice were seen in relation to communication and providing effective support, however this practice was observed at the level of what individual teachers did rather than at a systemic level.

Support systems in relation to curricular developments

Moving from the 5-14 curricular approach to Curriculum for Excellence has allowed teachers to be more creative and flexible as far as making use of contexts and resources are concerned. However there was little evidence of its implementation as authentic child-led pedagogy, instead it permitted a different presentation of teacher-led approaches and aspects of discovery learning. Curriculum development was seen more as an opportunity for displaying existing knowledge and understanding rather than as a context for the development of deeper knowledge.
'(CfE) gives you permission to use your skills and experiential learning'.

Important aspects relating to well-being and resilience was often seen in relation to the curriculum and its delivery. For example Shanarri indicators were mapped to existing curricular practices to demonstrate that these were being covered rather than being used an assessment tool in relation to an individual child, thus reinforcing a curricular and system-driven approach rather than a dynamic approach responsive to the needs of a child. GIRFEC was often described in a formulaic way, rather than as a holistic and collaborative framework for ensuring effective support for individual children. This finding raises questions about the nature and effectiveness of the development of GIRFEC in practice at a wider level.

Staged intervention and additional support planning

There were recommendations from senior managers in both schools that schools should have more support from the LA in improving and implementing support systems. There was a notable absence of specific reference to staged intervention in the data over the duration of the project and there were issues of communication at the lower levels of staged intervention (SI). A senior manager in one school stated that they were reliant on teachers informing them of children's needs and changes of circumstances. However teachers were unsure of the process of SI and how particular children were recorded. There was evidence in relation to particular children that information did not appear to be shared between professionals, or across year groups as children progressed through school. The process of establishing an ASP and contacting other agencies was described as 'an awful long process sometimes' by one class teacher. Although there was also evidence that this sharing of information did take place during the transition of a child from one year to the next one senior manager stated that this was an area which could be improved and she put in place in place folders for sharing information about 'high tariff' children.

Summary of total impact on fine-tuned support at the end of project

By the end of the project there was an increased awareness and understanding of attachment and a recognition of the importance of this in a whole-school approach to supporting children. There was evidence that there was an increase in support given to particular children who had come through the Jeely Nursery, which was being maintained, but the central role of a key person (DoL) in supporting this process was crucial.

Teachers and managers in the schools recognised the challenges they faced particularly around communication and were putting specific strategies in place to address this issue. They also recognised this as an inter-agency problem which could not be resolved by schools alone.

The schools were taking ownership and responsibility for supporting all learners. The project highlighted the fundamental importance of recognising the complexity of effecting change. It cannot be imposed through a top-down model of delivery of theory, practice models or policy with an expectation that this will be absorbed and enacted. The process of teacher learning and development of practice needs to be recognised as embedded and supported in ways that respect teachers' professional identities. The collaborative and supportive nature of working alongside the DoL in situ presented opportunities for staff in the schools to reflect on practice and make fine-grained adjustments in the classrooms in ways that reflected policy. This is a process of professional learning and development of practice that requires a whole-school approach with ongoing support and quality leadership.

Parental Involvement – impact of project

The relationship of parents with workers in the Jeely Piece nursery was significant if not central to the success of their project overall. The closeness of the collaboration and the high quality of the attachments built slowly and painstakingly between parents and nursery staff with families who were enduring disadvantage, and/or chaotic functioning, provided a foundation for progress in children's development within and beyond the nursery walls. Relationships were consistent and long lasting where continuing support was needed and often extended beyond the time the child or children were using the nursery. This became evident during the LTaMC project when parents of

children attending the project schools looked back to Jeely nursery staff for help and reassurance. The entire nursery team was united in its purpose and aims, and in its belief that little progress would be made by addressing the child's needs outside of the context of family life.

This situation did not easily transfer to the primary school context. The establishment of a positive dialogue with the parents of the most vulnerable children remained a challenge for the duration of the LTaMC project. As previously indicated, entrenched school culture can result in a struggle to recognize the individual dignity and value of 'challenging' or 'invisible' parents particularly where knowledge of home life is already weak or missing. The need to 'rethink patterns of relationship' though necessary was evidently not established for all teachers. The link between the vulnerability of some parents and their lack of engagement with the school or even their hostility towards it was not generally understood, nor was there a sense that a closer relationship was *central* to progress for children vulnerable to failure. Parental expectations of school reflected their own, usually negative, experiences and some of those who did engage showed a wariness and a lack of ease in entering into the formal events offered to them. After a classroom based workshop for parents held with the class teacher for example, one parent confided in discussion with a researcher that she was embarrassed that she had no idea what it was about but was too afraid of seeming stupid to ask any questions. Meeting with other parents afterwards she discovered that no one in her group had understood and they had all been uneasy. She thought she might come back but she didn't think others would. Such situations are easily addressed if teachers are sensitive and knowledgeable about parental circumstances and contexts.

Following discussion with staff on the issue of developing stronger links, schools attempted to increase their focus on nurturing relationships with individual parents. Some positive outcomes were achieved. One parent for instance had her second child in school when the project commenced and over three years of positive and deliberate effort on the part off the staff, built a relationship which grew from non-engagement as with her first child, to a point where she was comfortable in advising other parents on school procedures and aspects of school life by the time her third was in attendance. In general the role of the DoL was significant in relation to the success in bringing knowledge of the home to school staff and communicating to parents aspects of school behaviours not clearly understood.

Clearly however, in spite of the welcome successes, if collaborative relationships offer the most positive ways forward there remains a significant amount of work to be done to engage teachers and parents in a positive effort towards helping vulnerable children. Without knowledge of the reasons behind parental behaviour and in the absence of a *shared* understanding across the school with a commitment to improving relationships with this particular group of parents a vital opportunity is arguably being missed.

Conclusion

'How can a secure base for learning be sustained in mainstream education for children who have experienced highly diverse socio–economic circumstances in their early lives '

Reproducing the Jeely Nursery project in a simple transference to the complex context of the primary school so completely different in terms of organisational structures, procedures and culture, was never going to be possible. One adopted aspect that remained powerful throughout however, apart from the lessons of child-led pedagogy, was the linking of theoretical knowledge

immediately and concurrently with practice. Teachers were *not* left to determine how to move forward with new knowledge unsupported (as is often the case) but were invited to follow briefings and workshops from the team with practical responses in their classrooms supported by direct face-to-face discussion and the advice of an experienced practitioner. This approach was immensely successful as it had been in the Jeely Nursery.

Changing educational practice has been likened however to turning an ocean liner through 180 degrees, not something to be achieved easily or quickly. In the education field, twenty years has been suggested as being a reasonable estimate for establishing deep level change and, while that tongue may have been firmly planted in the cheek, there is no doubt a measure of truth in the assertion. In the short time allowed for this project however and, in spite of the impediment of the regular and well-recognised barriers to change typical of traditionally structured organisations, we found evidence to indicate very real movement in thinking at a fundamental level. We saw a significant advance in understanding and a sustained imperative to engage in practice related to the newly introduced theory; in fact, to be given an opportunity to *do* something about it now we have the information *we did not have before*.

Hearts and Minds

Enduring and *sustainable* success is, arguably, determined by the degree to which teaching staff engage with, believe in and *own* the new practices they are asked to employ. In a time where teachers will tell you they experience continuing top-down pressure from requirements for change, asking for focus on yet another initiative in an already packed schedule might have been one step too far; this was particularly so as we were setting out with the aim of creating a change in the hearts and minds of hard working and committed people towards a group of children whose behaviour was more likely to promote frustration and a challenge to professional competence than empathetic understanding.

Far from disinterest however, teachers rose to meet us in our endeavours to explain and unpack the complexity of the implications of negative attachment experiences on children's lives. In the classroom, with the help of the Director of Liaison, they felt empowered to move forward in their own practice with a real desire to make a difference where they could. A great number of valuable pedagogical issues were explored and discussed throughout the three years with an obvious and growing confidence evident as teachers responded with new understanding. To the end of the project requests for continuing briefings, workshops and discussion of practice remained consistent at management and at classroom teacher level.

Bones and muscle

Sustainability also requires, in this context, consistent, dependable guidance for teachers from the organisational structures and procedures related to support. Official amendments can take time to come into being in any organisation and for many reasons and in this case the differing rates within schools of development towards change in official policy and guidelines perhaps also reflects the manner in which the research team worked with school staff. The model for the project was to collaborate with and support senior teachers as we worked together towards developing an appropriate response to a particular group of children. *Imposed* requirements have little history of success without a rigorous monitoring/policing programme, rarely in place, and initiatives often disappear over time as familiar routines return to dominate practice. New working

practices are more likely to sustain where teachers have ownership of, and an investment in, changes that they perceive to be meaningful and ultimately helpful to them as they carry out their professional duties. Many developments *were* evident with some changes to policy formalised by the end of the project. In some cases new procedures were being carried out regularly ahead of the official paperwork and the intention officially to amend changes in favour of children, now perceived as vulnerable, was universally agreed.

Summary

Three years is a very short time indeed to turn the ocean liner that is education practice through 180 degrees. The turn in this case is from traditional views of 'challenging' children and their 'management' to a new perception demanding not the introduction of yet another strategy but a journey through self-reflection, personal insight and professional self-evaluation as a part of the process of understanding and responding to the often disruptive and sometimes disturbing behaviours of chronically distressed children. The teachers in the project schools achieved this and did it with interest and commitment and were pleased to have been given the opportunity to engage. It made sense to them and was helpful and this was reflected in the fact that schools were well on the way to formalizing new guidelines when the project ended. With more time, the work of involving parents would have been further established as would a continuation of the practical, teacher-initiated exploration of child led pedagogy described as very helpful at classroom level.

If the likelihood of sustainability can be measured by evidence of embedded knowledge and understanding, the degree of self-initiated engagement, an empathic response to difficult behaviour and further measured by evidence of positive changes to classroom practice in relation to pedagogy supported by a genuine, increasing interest at all levels of the organisation, then the project has successfully established that sound foundations can be laid on which to build sustainable support for some of the most vulnerable children in our schools.

If we are to ask children to think about and work hard towards making the choices that benefit their own lives it requires first that the adults in their world make the choices that will allow this to be possible. The children cannot do this on their own. Equity demands that their problems are recognised and addressed. The Scottish imperative for "*Getting it right for every child*" includes this group of children as much as any other. This project showed that there is a way forward and began a journey that begs to be completed. Teachers, children and their parents deserve this commitment and, like fanning the flames of a just ignited fire, be helped toward establishing a blaze.

Recommendations based on the five principles

The children at the centre of this project are those who are most likely to have been denied the experience of learning how to build a warm, trusting, and reliable relationship with anyone, including their parents. They have rarely if ever had the security of knowing what it is to come first in any adult's life and they have depended on instinctive survivalist behaviours to keep themselves in perceived safety. The resulting unacceptable and/or inappropriate behaviours lock them out of the benefits of their years in primary school and 'hide in plain sight' their chronic distress and need for help. Regular or typical responses from teachers often exacerbate their distrust of adults and ensure their likely continued exclusion. Positive changes in their favour *can* happen, as we discovered, and action *can* be taken to ensure progress.

Following the evident successes of the project, our chief concern now is to focus on sustainability. We *congratulate the schools on their considerable achievements* and recommend action to support the embedded change, to build on the professional motivation for continued development, and to ensure continued progress towards an established, systemic response to children with negative attachment experiences. We use the five principles to guide our deliberations as before and continue the theme of *ownership* of change as the most efficient way of sustaining the current position and embedding future developments in ASN policy and practice in schools.

At school and individual class teacher level – broad view

School Additional Support Needs (ASN) Policy

Where guidelines to staff were not clear or were absent or not expected to be used or followed the quality of school experience for some fragile children appeared to be uncertain. Findings indicated that individual teachers were apparently subject to misunderstanding or misinformation and were unclear as to the best way to proceed. In some cases it appeared that the quality of a child's experience in school depended on the personal beliefs or understanding of the teacher with whom they had daily contact. This situation runs contrary to the spirit of *Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC)* and other national initiatives described earlier in this section. We recommend that schools should regularly address the type and quality of policy guidelines they produce concerning the teaching of children with unmet attachment needs and respond to teachers' need to feel confident and effective. A *whole school* addressing of the issues involved should be undertaken and use made of the guidance literature available. Details of a formal systemic approach to helping vulnerable children, from identification of need to the formation and monitoring of an ongoing learning/teaching plan, have been available since the 1980s. The whole school model for developing practice guidelines in primary schools is similarly well documented.

Information that is significant for sustainability requires regular updating or revisiting. The policy should ensure input for current teaching staff and a facility for informing and briefing new or part time members of staff when appropriate. A policy statement on the role of the school based director of liaison would also have a section in the ASN policy and would similarly be developed through discussion with the teaching force.

The role of the Director of Liaison

The role of the Director of Liaison (DoL) was central to the success of engaging teachers in a highly significant way in the classroom. It inspired confidence and deepened professional knowledge in ways that benefitted both the teacher and the child and it sustained over time. Project schools were just beginning the change over from project DoL to school based DoL at the end of the project. We recommend continuing head teacher support for the development of this process and the involvement of *all* teachers; the aim being to identify the particular needs of their own school and develop a consistent, formalised, service arising from discussion based in class practice and led by the DoL. The eventual inclusion of parent/carers in this model would be beneficial. Development is likely to differ according to the needs of the individual school but *ownership* of a process that is meaningful and perceived as useful to daily practice will better ensure sustainability.

Since the start of the LTaMC project the Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland have suggested in their own literature (CELCIS, no date) that every school should have a 'Designated Manager' for looked after children, with a very similar remit to that of the DoL. This is an interesting circumstance that arguably points to a general lack of knowledge in the primary school system about some groups of vulnerable children. We add our message to theirs and though it lies beyond the remit of this report, suggest there is a strong message here for Initial Teacher Education.

Set Patterns of Behaviour

Set patterns of behaviour in staff responses did emerge from the findings. The issues about interpreting the actions of children were successfully addressed during the years of the project and the suggestions above would sustain and develop embedded knowledge in this area over time. More problematic was the traditional approach to family and home and the evidence of a lack of a sense of urgency about knowing what was happening to a child outside of the school and how it might be impacting on the ability to settle and learn. We also found some evidence of minimal knowledge in how to build a relationship with 'hard to reach parents' in order to generate the kind of inclusive, welcoming atmosphere which would put anxious people at ease. We identify here a strong need for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and recommend that teachers be given the opportunity to investigate the issues with informed practitioners to develop a school based approach to developing a closer link with the parents of children with unmet attachment needs.

Relationship building

The findings on the attention given to recognizing *emotional* status in children were limited. The ability to tune into children's feelings and understand their perspective and its impact on learning was mostly dependent on the attitude of the individual teacher. This does not supply the consistency of cross school relationship needed by the child with negative attachment experience. The Jeely Nursery project attention to the language of self-regulation and the gradual development towards self-direction and choice making is similarly elusive. Importantly and perhaps tellingly, the opportunity for teachers to engage in self-awareness and self-evaluation of the beliefs and the attitudes that drive their own practice on a day-to-day basis was also missing. These two aspects of response to behaviour are arguably well linked. We recommend *informed* input (CPD) followed by regular focused discussion within and between staff on relationship issues, their own as well as those of the children they teach.

Parents

We also recommend the provision of similar development opportunities which focus on the building of trusting and non-judgmental relationships with the parents or carers of children with unmet attachment needs.

At school and individual level – specific focus

Continuing Professional Development - Package of materials

To motivate present and future developments in this area the team built on the above and produced the detailed outline of a package of materials specifically focused on the ***building of strong***

relationships and providing a secure base for learning in the primary school for children with negative experiences of attachment. The school would take ownership of a progressive, interactive process that would require a commitment to a collaborative approach as well as individual involvement at every level of the school. Outcomes would be expected to upgrade and enhance current ASN policy in context. Resulting work would be supported beyond individual schools by connecting with a wider group of similarly engaged teachers and experts in the field. We hope that an opportunity to develop and trial this package will become available.

A final word from one of the headteachers:

> 'My staff love the project and they are looking forward to being involved this year. Every council should become involved because it is so useful for the whole school. It has transformed our thinking.'

Dissemination and sharing practice

The project has generated significant interest at a high level and across sectors. Our learning from the project has informed content for teaching of undergraduate student teachers, and post-qualified teachers taking courses at the University of Strathclyde. Members of the project team have come in to share lessons learned from the project with these students. The study has informed the content of a module, which has been submitted for academic approval, on attachment and supporting emotional well-being in the MEd in Inclusive Education at the University of Strathclyde.

Below are specific details of some of the dissemination activities which have taken place in connection with the project:

- Presentation of interim findings to Scottish Government directors of the GIRFEC team and the Learning Division, Victoria Quay, Edinburgh 23rd May 2012.
- Presentation at *Attachment Relationships and Behaviour in Schools Conference*, chaired by Morag Gunion, Head of Curriculum, Learning and Teaching of Glasgow City Council, 14th June 2012.
- Presentation to Association of Support for Learning Officers National Conference, alongside HMIe and Scottish Government, 28th September 2012.
- Presentation at Scottish Pre-school Play Association Annual conference, *The Earlier the Better: Improving children's life chances through early intervention,* National Early Years Conference, Glasgow Royal Concert Hall, Thursday 4 October 2012.
- Meeting with Directorate of Perth and Kinross Council, 30th January 2013.
- Presentation at international conference in Des Moines, USA, *Cognitively guided instruction in Scotland: a story in three acts*, 11th July 2013.
- Learning together about making choices' project. Understanding attachment and developing relationships in primary schools. Paper presented at the Contemporary Childhood Conference, *Scotland's Children: Possible Futures*? University of Strathclyde, 6th September 2014.
- Publication of paper for the Scottish Attachment in Action newsletter, Issue 7, June 2014.
- Meeting with South Lanarkshire Council Psychological Services about possible collaboration, 1st July 2014.
- Meeting with CELCIS (Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland) staff regarding possible collaboration, November 2014.
- National Nurture Network Conference Coatbridge, *The Role of Nurture in Closing the Attainment Gap*, 12th February 2016.

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Appendix 1

Advisory Group Membership

Over the period September 2011 – October 2014 the Advisory Group comprised the following:

Jim Barr - Glasgow Social Work
Donna Bell- Head of Early Years – Scottish Government
John Butcher – Head of Inclusion, Glasgow City Council
Michelle Cassidy - The Place to Be
Linda deCaesteker – Director of Public Health – Glasgow
Heather Douglas – Head of Early Years, Glasgow City Council
Ben Farrugia – CELCIS (Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland)
Kenneth Ferguson- Director, The Robertson Trust
Edwina Grant – Chair of Scottish Attachment in Action
Dr Aileen Kennedy - University of Strathclyde
Elizabeth King, Principal Educational Psychologist for South Lanarkshire Council, also Scottish Attachment in Action.
Lea Mann – Early Years, Scottish Government
Karen McCluskey - Co-director Scottish Violence Reduction Unit
Karen McCormack – Early Years, Glasgow City Council
Uzma Rehman- Public Health Board
Claire Stevens – Getting it Right for Every Child, Scottish Government
Lynn Townsend – GIRFEC team, Scottish Government
Headteacher – participating school
Headteacher, participating school
Depute Headteacher - participating school
Depute Headteacher - participating school