

**THE VALUE OF COUNSELLING IN
A SCHOOL FOR CHILDREN WITH COMPLEX NEEDS**

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Abstract

Background to the study

Reports have indicated that young people with learning difficulties are at greater risk of developing mental health problems; yet there is very little provision for this client group and a lack of understanding of what might be appropriate. This study evaluates counselling in a school for students with complex needs. The project seeks to understand the effects of humanistic counselling for young people with learning difficulties from the students', teachers', teaching assistants' and counsellor's perspectives.

Method

The study is a mixed methods intervention study using both qualitative and quantitative measures. Thirty students were referred for counselling by the staff at the school. Fifteen were selected for the first year intervention; the other fifteen acted as a comparison group for the first year, and then were given counselling for the second year. The counselling provided was evaluated using data of four kinds: the counsellor's notes of sessions; the students' self-concept at four times; their opinion of the value of counselling; the staff responses to the student's functioning in the classroom at four times; the students' responses to the Piers-Harris 2 questionnaire.

Results

Results indicate that many of the students in this project did benefit from humanistic counselling. Staff in the school identified benefits to over half of the students and reported that the students' behaviour, communication, concentration in class, and general levels of happiness improved. Data from the students and counsellor support these results. The students' were able to lessen their secondary handicap, improve communication, increase their level of autonomy and manage everyday life events more effectively.

Conclusion

The study demonstrated that participants benefited from the intervention; that counselling met a significant need among students; that additional support for school staff and parents was desirable; and that counselling of this kind should be much more widely available.

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Chapter One

Introduction

1.0 Introduction

The purpose of this report is to present the findings of an extended research project on counselling with young people with learning difficulties. This chapter will offer a general introduction to the project. It will be followed by a further nine chapters: literature review; methodology; four chapters of findings; a discussion of the findings; a discussion of difficulties encountered and the conclusion.

2.0 Background to the study

This section will identify the context of the research and the rationale for the development of the research project.

2.1 Context and research goals

My personal experience of being a parent of a child with learning difficulties generated impetus for this study. As his mother I learned that people with learning disabilities were disadvantaged and oppressed. I found that there were many inequalities for my son. In terms of medical provision, for example, he was refused treatment for his hearing loss for three years because he had Down Syndrome. As far as his educational provision was concerned there were many difficulties over the years starting from reception. He was refused access to the classroom for certain periods of the day as the teacher felt the subject being covered was not appropriate for our son; this was despite being allocated a full time welfare assistant. During these periods my son was sent home from school. Additionally, in his reception year he was not allowed to stay at school for the lunch time period as the staff felt he was too short and would not be able to select his meal. These difficulties continued. In social terms I found evidence of discrimination; for example, people who had been friends with me previously now avoided me. Through these experiences and those of many friends who also have children with learning difficulties, I began to observe the impact of discrimination on people with learning difficulties and their families. For many years I became active fighting for an inclusive community. I trained with the disability rights movement as a disability equality trainer and worked in schools and other statutory services using Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope (PATH) and Circles of Friendship. However, I felt these initiatives were not sufficient and further support needed to be offered directly to young people with learning

difficulties. I approached a special school and discussed my views with the head teacher. He was in agreement with me and also observed how many of his students had poor self-esteem after what was considered their failure in a mainstream school (Bovair, 1993).

Since my son was born I had trained as a counsellor, I had been working in mainstream schools and was experienced in working with young people. It was clear to me that children with learning difficulties needed counselling. Through my mainstream counselling contact I was able to identify a funder and approached a Head Teacher in a special school. With his support I then established a counselling service in the school to support the emotional needs of young people. The immense needs of the students, far greater than my initial anticipation, soon became apparent.

In my work I was convinced of the benefits of the counselling service. However, I began to wonder what the students' views were and also those of staff members. I began to read around the subject and was surprised to find very little literature about counselling young people with learning difficulties in schools. Furthermore, no work had been done on the young people's views of counselling.

More recently there has been literature available identifying the lack of provision into meeting the emotional needs of young people with learning difficulties (Meltzer & Gatwood, 2000, Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2003, Pattison, 2006). It has also been recognised that young people with learning difficulties may be at greater risk of developing mental health problems (Meltzer & Gatwood, 2000). However, despite this knowledge the growth of counselling in schools for children with learning difficulties in the UK is minimal in comparison to counselling for the rest of the population (Flitton & Buckroyd, 2002) (Appendix 13). If counselling in schools for children with learning difficulties is to develop, then a model for access to counselling and its subsequent effects have to be thoroughly researched. The findings of my Masters study exploring the effects of a fourteen-week person-centred counselling intervention, created the momentum to evaluate counselling in schools for children with learning difficulties (Flitton & Buckroyd, 2002) (Appendix 13). Furthermore, a successful application for a grant to support

the project from The Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund (Appendix 4) affirmed wider acceptance of the need for the work.

The aim of the study is to evaluate a counselling service for children who attend a school for children with moderate learning difficulties. The objectives of the study are:

1. To review critically literature on counselling children with learning difficulties.
2. To evaluate the effects of a humanistic counselling service for children with learning difficulties in a school for children with complex needs, from the students' perspective on three aspects of their own functioning: self-concept, independence and autonomy, and general well being.
3. To evaluate the effects of the counselling from the teachers' and teaching assistants' perspective on three aspects of the students' functioning: self-concept, independence and autonomy, and educational achievement.
4. To evaluate the effects of the counselling from the counsellor's perspective.

The project took place in a London Borough school for children with moderate learning difficulties (which was recently re-designated as a school for children with complex needs). The school caters for children from the ages of four to sixteen, who have a range of social, emotional and learning difficulties. The school's intake is representative of a school for children with complex needs. Eighty-one students are registered at the school, fifty-six male and twenty-five female students.

Thirty students between the ages of ten and sixteen, who attend the school, and twelve staff members, participated in the project. The age range of the students in the project was pre-determined by the funding body's requirements. There were twenty boys and ten girls in the project, reflecting the ratio of boys to girls in the school. The imbalance of male to female students in a special school is a recognised issue (German, 2003).

The participants' ethnicity included Asian, Black African, Black Caribbean, French, Greek Cypriot, Italian, Kurdish, Somali, Turkish, White English and White Irish.

The students had a range of social, emotional and learning difficulties, including specific diagnoses such as Down Syndrome, Asperger Syndrome, Autistic Spectrum Disorder, learning difficulties and global developmental delay.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

1.0 Introduction

This study, *The value of counselling in a school for children with complex needs*, covers a number of disciplines and requires a broad look at the available literature. Counselling children and young people with a learning difficulty is a fairly new and uncharted area in terms of documented research, particularly in terms of offering school based counselling. I intend to separate the components of this study by first offering a definition of the terminology. Then I will present an overview of the literature for counselling disabled people, including psychoanalytical psychotherapy, the medical and social models of disability and humanistic therapy. I will briefly look at the art therapy literature, with specific emphasis on the person centred approach. This is followed by a review of the literature on counselling young people in schools, with a focus on young people with a learning difficulty. I will explore the literature for measuring self-concept, with particular reference to young people with a learning difficulty. I will identify the gap in the literature and how my research intends to address that gap.

2.0 Terminology

It would be helpful to first clarify the term, 'learning disability'. In the current literature the terms 'learning disability' and 'learning difficulty' are frequently interchanged and recently the term 'complex needs' has been introduced. However, amongst many professionals it is understood that learning disability describes someone functioning cognitively at a low level, and who has an organic impairment; a person who has an IQ score of 69 or less (Beail, 1995). The term learning difficulty is more commonly used to describe a person with a specific learning disorder, such as, dyslexia and those whose impairment is more environmentally caused. The addition of the term 'complex needs' has yet to be adequately defined in any literature, but in the educational environment it appears to describe a range of children with and without an organic impairment and also to include those with a specific learning disorder.

I have discussed the use of terminology with a disabled person and activist for the disability rights movement. Micheline Mason (michelinemason.com) informs me that the term 'disabled person' is the term preferred by the disability movement because it

sets out to separate the impairment, meaning the physical or intellectual impairment, from living in an environment that discriminates against people with impairments. She further advises this is used as a collective term, and people with intellectual impairments prefer to use the term 'people with learning difficulties'. Therefore, as I wish to respect and adopt the preferred terminology of the people with whom I work, I will use the term 'disabled person' as a collective phrase and 'people with learning difficulties' to incorporate all children and young people who have difficulty learning and functioning in the community, regardless of the origin of the problem.

3.0 History of attitudes to disabled people

In this section I will offer a brief history of attitudes to people with a learning difficulty in England. Identifying the historical attitudes towards people with learning difficulties will offer a basis for understanding the development of the medical and social models of disability, which inform the changing attitudes in the development of therapeutic services for people with learning difficulties.

3.1 Pre Industrial Age

It appears that until the development of industrialisation in the late 18th century, people with learning difficulties may have been inconspicuous, but were integrated within the social fabric. Despite hostile comments from important religious figures such as St Augustine of Hippo (AD 354-430) and Martin Luther (1483–1546) it seems that there was a degree of tolerance and inclusion (Barnes, et al. 2002, Richardson, 2005, Mencap, 2007).

3.2 Industrialisation

With the coming of the industrial revolution a major shift occurred in the relationships between masters and servants. The emphasis on productivity and industrial processes meant that people with learning difficulties were seen as less valuable.

The Poor Law (Home Office [HO] 1834), led to the building of asylums, jails and houses of correction, (Richardson, 2005) and the first stages of segregation, forcing people who could not meet the demands of the new legislation into them.

Asylums were originally intended as places of refuge. They were built in idyllic settings, and were meant to offer respite for people who were unable to care for themselves and living in squalor. However, they quickly became overcrowded and conditions deteriorated. They came to be known as places where cruel and inhumane routines were enforced. People admitted to asylums began to be seen as dangerous and in need of restraint. They were considered a drain on society and at risk of infecting the general population. Segregation came to be seen as necessary and desirable (Scull, 1979, Bredberg, 1999, Slater, 2004, Richardson, 2005, Mencap, 2007).

3.3 Eugenics movement

Industrialisation had begun to devalue disabled people because they were seen as unproductive. The eugenics movement compounded the segregation begun earlier, by further devaluing disabled people because they were seen as incapable of being educated or included in society.

It was believed that having a learning difficulty was a genetic inheritance, and such people should be institutionalised and prevented from breeding. These ideas led to the introduction of the Mental Deficiency Act (Department of Health [DH] 1913). The Act created four categories: 'feeble minded', 'idiots', 'imbeciles' and 'moral defectives', all of whom were to be confined to institutions. The 'feeble minded' were deemed a menace to society, but worthy of an education. 'Idiots' and 'imbeciles' were considered the most dangerous and not worthy of an education. People defined as 'moral defectives', including unmarried mothers and any person deemed 'undesirable', were admitted to institutions. A person's admission to an institution was assessed periodically, but once admitted a person was rarely released. The more able worked in the institutions to maintain the facilities and look after the less able (Scull, 1979, Slater, 2004, Richardson, 2005).

In order to ensure that those in institutions could not reproduce, the eugenicists pursued a sterilization agenda from the late 1920s. However, their arguments did not lead to sterilisation programs at this time, because it was considered that sterilisation without consent would be in breach of the Offences Against the Person Act (HO, 1861). By the 1930s their influence had increased, so that sterilisation of a person

with a learning difficulty with consent was authorised. The eugenicists had more successes elsewhere. Nazi Germany enforced compulsory sterilisation for all people with a learning difficulty, and there were further reports of disabled people (amongst others deemed to be unfit for society) being condemned to death. Additionally, there were reports that America was enforcing sterilisation for all people 'unfit to breed'. By the 1950s, compulsory sterilisation had returned to the agenda in the UK, and it was agreed that people who were deemed unfit to care for their offspring should be sterilised (Scull, 1979, Bredberg, 1999, Clarke, 1983, Slater, 2004, Richardson, 2005).

3.4 Medical Model of disability

In the late 1930s, systems were developed for assessing people's mental capacity via the application of an IQ test. People who scored below 69 (Beail, 1995) were labelled 'mentally defective' and ineducable. These people remained in institutions. However, in 1946 the National Health Service was formed and saw the development of the medical model of disability. Institutions were now renamed 'hospitals'. People who were admitted into these long stay hospitals were still required to be segregated from the rest of the community, but the emphasis had shifted from people who were dangerous, to people requiring treatment (Slater, 2004, Mencap, 2007). This implied the individual was at fault and in need of fixing to become 'normal'. Services were offered at these fixed locations in the hope that the in-patients, when receiving treatment, would become more able and/or more acceptable to the general public, and less of a drain on society. People admitted to these institutions were still considered to be 'less than whole', so, therefore, not able to fulfil a valuable role in society (Barnes & Mercer, 2003, Richardson, 2005). The term 'mentally handicapped' was now introduced.

The Mental Health Act (DH, 1959) created a distinction between mental illness and learning difficulty. It further provoked thought as to whether all people currently institutionalised need to be there (Mencap, 2007). In the early 1970s, reports were appearing in the newspapers about the appalling standards of care in long stay hospitals, and the need for people with a mental illness or learning difficulty to be cared for in the community.

3.5 Normalisation

Following the 1959 Mental Health Act and the reported scandals of long stay hospitals, media and public pressure began to influence policy. Slowly it began to be believed that disabled people had the right to live 'normal' lives in their community. The 1970 Education Act ensured that all children, regardless of IQ, received an education. This shifted the emphasis from training to educating, which enabled people to change their thinking about people with a learning difficulty. By 1980 the theory of normalisation had influenced the way society saw people with learning difficulties. It was now acknowledged that disabled people had rights, and were entitled to choices and to express opinions. It was also acknowledged that institutionalising disabled people was not only wrong, but created barriers to social inclusion (O'Brian & Tyne, 1981, Bredberg, 1999, Slater, 2004, Mencap, 2007). By 1990 the implementation of The National Health Service and Community Care Act recognised the rights of a disabled person to have a say and be an equal member of the community, and receive support where needed (O'Brian & Tyne, 1981, Slater, 2004, Richardson, 2005).

3.6 Social Model of disability

The shift in thinking brought about by the theory of normalisation created an upsurge in pressure groups from the disability rights movement, as well as from parents of disabled children, which led to the formulation of the social model of disability (Rieser & Mason, 1990, Barnes, et al. 2002, Barnes & Mercer, 2003, Richardson, 2005). Currently, these movements have challenged, and are still challenging, charity led beliefs that disabled people need sympathy and are incompetent. These pressure groups promote the view that it is not the impairment that prevents a person from having a full and meaningful life, but society that oppresses an individual.

The social model seeks to empower individuals, and to bring about a change in attitude that will promote pride and self-assurance (Swain et al. 2003). Many disabled people demand a new social policy that hands back the power to the disabled person to produce and control their own services. In parts of America, Canada and New Zealand this is a widely adopted attitude and policy. People with impairments are offered a financial package, where they have complete control of who they employ to provide support and which services they require to enable them to have the same opportunities as their non disabled peers (Forest & Pierpoint, 1994).

4.0 Therapeutic services

The implication of the social model approach for counselling is that counsellors need to understand that any emotional problems in people with learning difficulties may not be directly related to their impairment, but rather to the disabling environment (Oliver, 1995, Williams & Heslop, 2005). The social model is more in line with the philosophy of the person centred approach originated by Carl Rogers, although Rogers himself, believed that people with learning difficulties did not have the cognitive ability to benefit from person centred therapy (Roger, 1957, Sinason, 1992, 2002a, Jukes & Aldridge, 2006). To date, very few health professionals have been willing to challenge this assumption.

Despite Rogers' views, Jukes and Aldridge (2006) identify a recent interest in the person centred approach with people with learning difficulties. The person centred approach is based on a theory of empowerment. It suggests that each individual has within them the capacity to strive towards self-actualisation, in the presence of the core conditions.

Williams and Heslop (2005) argue by contrast that psychoanalytical psychotherapy is steeped in the medical model. Much of the writing from the psychoanalytical perspective implies the disabled person is at 'fault'. The difficulties a disabled person faces are because of their impairment (Swain et al. 2003). Most psychoanalytic authors describe a parent's need, and the client's need, to accept disability as a process close to bereavement. What is lost is the imagined perfect child who does not need to be fixed. They claim that the birth of a disabled child is, therefore, a tragedy, and parents and individuals need to mourn their loss and adjust to the impairment.

5.0 Psychoanalytical psychotherapy

Galton (2002) suggests much of the therapeutic work with disabled people in this country has developed from the work of Neville Symington. Symington set up the first clinic at the Tavistock for people who were 'subnormal' in 1979. He challenged the idea that people who were handicapped could not benefit from psychotherapy. He also raised the issue of the therapist's counter transference when working with people with learning difficulties and thought there was significant unconscious prejudice. He became aware how therapists acted differently when they worked with disabled

clients, despite a deep commitment to working in this field. He describes, for example, how therapists may dress; they may unconsciously decide to dress down when working with disabled people. He also describes how therapists greeted their clients with learning difficulties at the clinic by going to meet them rather than allowing the usual process of the receptionist showing them the way. He describes this act as contemptuous of the client. He believes that therapists acted in this way because at some deep level the disabled client stirred within them their handicapped self and this was too unbearable. If, however, therapists were in touch with their own impairment they would be able to contain such uncomfortable feelings and would not need to act in such a manner. Contempt for the client creates the cycle of disdain-pity, which in turn restricts any further development. These insights enabled the development of the work at Symington's clinic.

Valerie Sinason, as a trainee child psychotherapist, then joined Symington. Sinason had developed an interest in working with people with learning difficulties from her experience in childhood. Her father was a leading educator in this field; her contribution was to apply the benefits of psychotherapy to patients with learning difficulties. Sinason further developed Symington's work, took over the clinic at the Tavistock in 1985 and renamed it the 'mental handicap workshop'.

Sinason (1975, 1986, 1992, 2002a, Sinason & Hollins, 2000, Sinason et al. 2003) made her work public, not only to show that people with learning difficulties have emotional intelligence and can benefit from psychoanalytic psychotherapy, but also to evidence the emotional, physical and sexual abuse that these people were/are receiving. In 1992 she published, *Mental Handicap and the Human Condition: New approaches from the Tavistock*, describing work from the Tavistock Clinic, which has been described as a landmark in published literature for learning disability (Galton, 2002).

One of Sinason's major insights concerns the fear, anxiety and contempt, which may be aroused in us by people with learning difficulties. She (Sinason, 1992) indicates that the terms to describe people with learning difficulties frequently change and suggests this is a process of *euphemism*. She believes, as Symington does, that to look at disability is to look at something difficult and challenging. As a society we

frequently change the terminology to make it more acceptable. She gives an extensive description of the terminology and rationalises her use of the term 'mental handicap'. Sinason also explores how we use words like 'idiot' and 'stupid' 'backward' etc with little regard for their true meaning, to humiliate others. She argues that our own damaged self, and our inability to feel comfortable with not knowing everything, makes us disdain less able people. She believes that to pretend we are more knowledgeable than we are is, in itself, handicapping and that the experience of fear, or inadequacy when we do not understand, is something all therapists may encounter when working with clients with learning difficulties.

Waitman & Conboy-Hill (1992) agree with Sinason and suggest that 'learning difficulty' or 'special needs' may over simplify the impairment, and that 'learning disability' defines the problems, but excludes other developmental and emotional problems. On the other hand 'retardation' evokes a feeling of institutions and 'mental handicap' carries old negative connotations. They believe that there are no simple answers for what term to use, but that individuals should examine their own motivation for the term they decide upon. However, Sinason continued to use mental handicap until recently, believing that it offers a clearer description of the impairment to the individual, regardless of the accepted terminology of 'people with learning difficulties'.

Sinason has used the example of terminology to illustrate her point that society feels uncomfortable with cognitive impairment and repeatedly seeks to replace names and terms that have become unacceptable because of their association with people that we, as a culture, find it difficult to accept. However, although Sinason makes an important point in the context of terminology it is necessary to be aware that terms used fifteen years ago are no longer acceptable and are, in some cases, libellous. New laws, driven by the disabled community, have brought about these changes. Whilst some practitioners may continue to defend their use of certain terminology as not bowing to political correctness, I believe it is important as a therapist to use the terminology that the client group embraces.

Sinason describes an additional process she defines as *secondary handicap*. A primary impairment is one that is organic, chromosomal or as a result of brain injury.

However, she considers that a person with an organic impairment will create a secondary handicap as a defence against trauma. A secondary handicap develops when a person presents a more severe disability than the original impairment to protect him or herself from further pain or hurt. She advocates addressing the secondary handicap and removing the emotional block that is further impeding the self, to enable the person to function. Additionally, she suggests that many people with learning difficulties will use a vacant smile to present a 'stupid' persona to meet the expectations of others and to camouflage and avoid real hurt.

Sinason (1992) has made an enormous contribution to the welfare of learning disabled people by her courageous recognition of the trauma and abuse that people with a learning disability suffer. This mistreatment has been hidden and ignored for many years, but Sinason has enabled it to be seen and increasingly challenged. She has also contributed to understanding of the effects of trauma on a person with a learning difficulty. She implies much of the trauma is due to the abuse, including sexual abuse, which people with learning difficulties receive.

A central theme in Sinason's writing is her belief that all parents of child with a learning difficulty regret the loss of the hoped for 'normal child' and need to go through a process of mourning before the real baby can be accepted. She uses the theory of Bion (1967) to understand difficulties in mother and baby bonding and the possibility of the start of a false self. On the birth of a disabled child the parents may have to face a great deal of disappointment and have to make an enormous amount of adjustment. Sinason offers a lovely description of the baby looking into the mother's eyes to discover if they are lovable or wanted. When the mother is unable to offer this mirror, the child internalises that they are not good or lovable (Sinason, 1992: 276). Sinason & Hollins (2000) suggest, as Symington had proposed earlier, that the parent of a disabled child is not able to offer this mirror of unconditional love; the parent needs to go through a process similar to that of bereavement. This view is shared by Ditchfield (1992) who believes the parent needs to mourn the loss of their 'normal' child to enable them to move forward and adapt to meeting the demands of their disabled child. Sinason & Hollins (2000) continues to assert that if a parent does not go through the bereavement process, the parent and child bonding will be affected and an insecure attachment pattern in the disabled child will be created.

This widely accepted view is based firmly in the medical model. The viewpoint that sees a disabled person as not whole, and a drain on society, creates the notion that a parent needs to mourn the loss of their 'normal' child. I have personal experience of how this model affects attitudes to disability. My experiences of giving birth to a disabled child were horrific. I was kept in the delivery room for many hours whilst waiting for the paediatrician, with no explanation. When I was finally told, I was asked to hold my baby (this was believed to reduce the possibilities of rejection). I was not directly told about his impairment, just asked if I had noticed his 'oriental type features' and was constantly told, 'We are very sorry'. I was placed in a side ward; the team of medical staff that had cared for me during my pregnancy were unable to make any eye contact or conversation with me. The atmosphere was one of shame and pity. My experience in the hospital was not of celebration of a birth, but a message that perhaps I could learn to accept this burden that God had bestowed on me.

The alternative social model has a different vision of how society might respond to difference and disability. Without a doubt a family needs to adjust to the demands and needs of the disabled child. Nevertheless the social model envisages that as society evolves and we welcome the diversity within disability, the belief in the need to mourn the loss that the birth of a disabled child represents, will be challenged and eradicated. A social model of disability argues that with this change of viewpoint the birth of any child will be a cause of celebration, regardless of its needs.

Wilkins (1992) expands on the psychoanalytical view of the impact a child with a learning disability has on a family from the perspective of the effect on siblings and argues a case for the role of family therapy. He describes much of the stress and difficulty of having a disabled sibling, but again, basing his ideas on a medical model, sees only the negative aspects of this dynamic. He suggests that a sibling who participates in a caring role will become emotionally detached. He claims that when the adolescents continue to care for their disabled sibling, little time can be given to normal social activities, thus hindering their development. The able bodied sibling then becomes resentful.

Wilkins' view is challenged by Russell et al. (2003), from the perspective of a social model, who suggest that studies exploring the self-concept of siblings of disabled children show that they compare favourably with their peers. Russell's paper does explore some of the negative aspects for siblings of disabled children. It suggests that siblings may feel embarrassed at the extra attention the family receives or isolated in periods of family crisis. They also explore the possibility of siblings becoming resentful of their disabled brother/sister. However, they suggest this can be overcome by allowing siblings to express their feelings. The paper continues by exploring some positive aspects; they suggest that siblings of disabled children are often more tolerant and insightful. They suggest that siblings are more aware of society's prejudice and its consequences, and are generally very proud of their disabled sibling's accomplishments. Finally, they suggest that siblings of disabled children learn very good negotiation skills and have learnt to be strong and to develop a good sense of humour under stress. These skills and coping strategies are something they learn from their parents, as the parents have had to fight for the rights of their disabled child. Siblings become very good advocates for disadvantaged people, not from guilt, but from understanding and compassion.

These two papers illustrate vividly how the medical model origins of the psychoanalytical view focus on the negative consequence of disability for siblings, while the social model can identify difficulties, but can also identify ways in which disability can have positive and desirable impact on siblings. A further key theme for Sinason is the need for the disabled person to come to terms with their impairment. This view is supported by Szivos & Griffiths (1992) and Bates (1992) who suggests that individuals may have grown up feeling they are loved, but the disability is hated, so they will try and deny parts of themselves. They see the 'label' that society has given them as a stigma and something negative that society would rather hide and discount. The authors describe a group process where they enable disabled people to express and resolve such feelings. Mason (1990) uses similar observations, but comes to different conclusions because she uses the social model. She believes that a splitting may occur and the disabled person may hate their impairment, but it is the disabling society that is at fault, not the pathology of the individual.

Sinason (1992) concludes that not all people with a learning difficulty require therapy, as of course some people with a learning difficulty are in a better emotional state than non-disabled people. However, in her experience, many of her patients are multiply traumatised. She believes that society will have evolved when the cases presented to her are more about the usual emotional problems that life evokes, rather than more specific cases of trauma. However, this view is not shared by Bates (1992) who recognises that people with learning difficulties also experience 'normative' emotional problems. Bates' view represents a shift in thinking within the psychoanalytical world.

6.0 Humanistic Approaches

As previously stated Rogers believed that people with a learning disability could not benefit from psychotherapy (Rogers, 1957). Until recently professionals have not challenged this view. However, Jukes & Aldridge (2006) identify a recent interest in the person centred approach with people with learning difficulties. Ommanney & Symes (2000) claim that the person centred approach contains at its core an anti-discriminatory position that is most suited to disabled people. This belief has influenced service providers and has been extended from therapeutic work to work in general with people with learning difficulties. Pörtner (2003) describes developing an institution utilising humanistic philosophy. She claims that this approach is more respectful, a view which is supported by Aldridge (2006) who examines the role of nursing with people with learning difficulties and how the social model of disability and the person centred approach have changed the way they think about this client group and have influenced this service. He states, 'We now provide a service to people'.

The impact of developing a person centred service for disabled people is influencing and encouraging therapists to utilise this model within the therapeutic world. There are number of authors who have begun to explore the relevance of humanistic ideas for the establishment of counselling for young people with learning difficulties. Fennell and Jones (1998) explore the issues for counselling people with learning difficulties. They begin from the social model and acknowledge that disabled clients may have been subject to a devaluing and oppressive experience in society. Ommanney & Symes (2000) agree with this view and believe that most of the emotional problems

experienced by their disabled clients do not stem from their impairment, but from the disabling environment. It is cautioned that counsellors should be able to see past the label and not assume that the impairment is the source of their clients' difficulties (Swain et al. 2003, Williams & Heslop, 2005). Fennell & Jones (1998) also acknowledge that young people with a learning difficulty may have been over-protected and therefore emotionally suppressed. They will need to explore the impact of their impairment, in the context of a disabling society, upon their sense of self.

A number of authors have recognised that people with learning difficulties may have had more than usually difficult experience and therefore are in particular need of counselling. Moulster (1998) and Fennell & Jones (1998) claim that disabled people have the same emotional needs as anybody else and therefore, require the same access to counselling. They discuss some of the difficulties in enabling counselling with people with learning difficulties and advocate different media to overcome speech and language difficulties (an aspect to be reviewed later). They believe that many disabled people benefit from experiencing the core conditions; the experience of being properly listened to is in itself empowering. However, Ommaney & Symes (2000) caution that because most of us have grown up in a segregated society, our ability to offer unconditional positive regard will be limited. We need to acknowledge our inability to truly understand the life experiences of some of our clients.

Sinason's work has been largely concerned with identifying how learning disabled people have been mistreated and in suggesting that parents have a large share of the responsibility of this situation. Hawkins (2002) is more concerned to identify how the social environment is all too often abusive. She reports, via a case history, her process and interest in the person centred approach with disabled people. Her experience of working as a classroom assistant in a school and observing how people did not listen to individuals had a profound effect on her personal and professional development. She discusses the behavioural approach used with individuals as the result of support and advice given by school psychologists. She believed that much of this work was 'counterproductive and wrong' (Hawkins, 2002:2). Although at this stage she had no training to ground her strong sentiments, she discovered, by trying to listen to individuals, that much of the bad behaviour was the result of the young people trying

to find a way to communicate, albeit inappropriately. The environment had failed to listen empathically to the students.

Sinason's work has largely been conducted in a clinical environment Hawkins attempts to apply the social model to the wider social environment. She demonstrates the absence of empathic listening in a school environment with the story of 'Danny'. Danny was a student in the school who needed to have dental work done. His behaviour created a challenging problem for staff because they did not understand he was in pain. If the school had tried to listen to Danny and investigated all possibilities before initiating a behavioural programme, Danny's challenging behaviour would not have been an ongoing problem. Hawkins proposes a shift in perception from challenging behaviour, to challenging needs. She believes that challenging behaviour communicates something and it is our job to understand this communication. Hawkins believes that it is most helpful to understand not only the communication, but also to understand what the person is gaining by such behaviour.

She suggests that behavioural programmes have traditionally relied on eliminating certain behaviours that are deemed appalling by others, without any consideration of the meaning of the behaviour. She believes that if the meaning is understood, then change will naturally occur. Hawkins suggests involving the individual in the process. She proposes that rather than organising a professionals' meeting to set out a programme to eliminate offensive behaviours, professionals and the individual should meet to explore what the person is trying to communicate and try and understand what is being gained from the behaviour, and how that need could be met in a different way.

An approach such of that of Hawkins can be extremely powerful. Fennell and Jones (1998) and Ommanney & Symes (2000) report witnessing an increase in their clients' self-esteem; however, Fennell and Jones (1998) warn that the warmth shown in empathy may be too overwhelming for a person with learning difficulties and have a dis-empowering effect. Empathy may be puzzling, confusing or otherwise difficult for someone whose history has been markedly lacking in empathic relationships.

7.0 Art Therapy

*The symbol strikes its roots in the most secret depths of the soul;
Language skims over the surface of the understanding like a soft
Breeze... Words make the infinite finite; symbols carry the mind
beyond the finite world of becoming into the realm of infinite being.
J.J.Bachofen in A.Juddith 1996:304*

Art is one medium that can address the dilemma of overcoming inherent speech and language difficulties that have been identified previously (Sinason, 1992, Fennell & Jones, 1998, Ommaney & Symes, 2000, Flitton & Buckroyd, 2002, 2005). Art therapy is a discipline in its own right, however I am suggesting it can be used as an adjunct to counselling. There has been extensive writing on the use of art therapy with children and disabled people. There is also extensive writing on the theory of drawing development and drawing tests. I will start with a brief overview of the history of art therapy and then continue with the development of drawing tests, placing this in context with the development of art therapy with children. I will review the literature in relation to art therapy with disabled children.

7.1 History of art therapy

Interest in art as therapy was developed in the late 1800s by European psychologists such as Tardieu (1872), Simon (1876) and Lombroso (1895) (Malchiodi, 1998b). They believed that drawings represented the inner state of a person and could aid diagnosis, assessment and treatment of the mentally ill. As the use of art developed from work with mentally ill patients, most of whom were institutionalised, it became entrenched in the medical model and was informed by psychoanalytic theory (Malchiodi 1998a) with the result that the interpretation of artwork became the work of the expert and took little account of the perspective of the patient.

Psychoanalytic theory was initially shaped around the work of Freud. He believed in the importance of symbols and that an image was a vehicle for the patients to access suppressed memories and explore inner conflict (Malchiodi 1998b). Jung was also interested in the psychological aspect of artwork and expanded on the use of imagery; he actively encouraged his patients to draw their dreams etc. Jung ascribed meaning to symbols that was based on his understanding of archetypes. Jung (1956) agreed with Freud that people could access suppressed aspects of the self through art and could use art as a way of self-healing.

The development of art therapy with adults, who were mentally ill, provoked interest in the use of art with children. This initially took the form of studying children's artwork and linking it to the child's internal psychological state. In 1926 Goodenough expanded this concept and used drawings to measure the child's intellectual level. She devised a drawing test, which is commonly known as the 'draw a man test' (DAM). Although this was originally devised to measure a child's intelligence it became clear that it also illustrated aspects of a child's personality.

In 1948 Bucks developed another drawing test; the 'House Tree Person' (HTP). It is believed that a child will free associate around each object i.e., the house being family, the tree being environment, and the person being self. Machover (1949) furthered the work of HTP by creating a scoring system. In 1968 Koppitz further developed the scoring system by offering thirty characteristics of drawings that may indicate emotional conflict. Whilst Malchiodi (1998b) suggests that Koppitz was interested in what the image meant to the child, in humanistic terms there was little concern for the autonomy of the child. The psychoanalytic influence and tradition of interpretation remain strong.

More recently Leibowitz (1999) proposed a self-psychological approach to interpreting projective drawings, basing his theory on that of Kohut (1971). He suggests that drawings are a representation of aspects of the self and experiences provided by the self-object. The self-object is believed to be people, things or situations that are used to maintain the self. This approach is still based on interpretation of the child's artwork, and has little concern for the child's perspective.

7.2 Art Therapy with children with learning difficulties

Malchiodi (1998b) advocates an approach to art that closely resembles the person centred approach. She wishes to understand and consider the context of the young person's artwork and points out a failure to do so could lead to a misinterpretation of the child's world. Rees (1998) suggests that analytical art therapy has been very influential in the way art has been used with disabled people, but feels we are in a social climate that demands a more humanistic approach. She points to the lack of training in a humanistic approach to art therapy. She claims that there is no evidence of humanistic art therapy with disabled people.

Dalley (1984) has written extensively on using art as therapy in her book *Art as Therapy*. She suggests that, at the time of writing, art therapy was a fairly new discipline and there was a lack of understanding of its theory and aims. She draws links between art and therapy, and describes art as a means of expressing oneself and therapy as a process of bringing about self-change. Art is a more concrete expression than words, and can give insight into oneself and be a valuable asset in the process of therapeutic change. Dalley (Case & Dalley, 1990) describes the application of art therapy with children. She and other authors suggest art can reduce children's difficulties in expressing themselves verbally (Dalley, 1984, Gray, 1985, Silverstone, 1993, Tipple, 1994, Malchiodi, 1998b, Rees, 1998).

Most art therapists believe that art therapy has a specific role in meeting the emotional needs of children with learning difficulties (Dalley, 1984, Gray, 1985, Silverstone, 1993, Tipple, 1994, Malchiodi, 1998b, Rees, 1998). However, there is debate about the degree to which learning disabled young people can use art therapy and about the role of the therapist. Rabiger (1998) suggests that while there is significant gain for children with severe learning difficulties (S.L.D) from engaging in art, as it can be a means of expressing conflict and fears for children with no verbal communication, she considers that art therapy may be inappropriate for some children with S.L.D. The therapist she believes should gain some knowledge of the intellectual and developmental level the child has attained before offering art as therapy.

Interestingly this reservation had been previously addressed by Gray (1985). She presents a case study and demonstrates how a disabled person has the ability to use art therapeutically to address and resolve inner conflict. She suggests that the therapist needs to trust the disabled client's own abilities to make connections. She believes a person with a learning difficulty may not have the sophistication of language to depict their understanding of the archetype, but would rely on a different way of showing their understanding. This view is supported by Tipple (1994) who also argues that interpretation should be kept to a minimum and to allow meaning to emerge and further describes interpretation as a dialogue between client and therapist.

Art therapy is clearly a powerful means of working with children with learning difficulties but the values of an analytical approach are clearly different to those that

propose a humanistic approach. The humanistic view that has been used in this project is primarily concerned with enabling the young person to discover and express his or her own responses as a means of developing the self. Analytical views are more concerned about identifying pathology. A humanistic approach recognises the fragility of the emerging self of the learning disabled child and seeks to give space for its articulation. Interpretation as used by analytical art therapist runs the risk of pre-empting this delicate process.

8.0 Counselling in schools

In this section I will discuss therapy in the educational setting of schools. I will use the literature already reviewed, expanding some views and bringing them into the context of school counselling. I will also explore other authors who have contributed to school counselling and place them in the context of working with children with a learning difficulty.

8.1 Current debate

There is an ongoing debate on the importance and usefulness of counselling in schools. Hamblin (1974) explores similarities in the roles of a teacher and counsellor. He suggests that both teacher and counsellor have the emotional well being of the individual at heart, although he considers that there is little understanding of the role of a school counsellor among teachers. He illustrates this by quoting a statement made by an experienced teacher: 'counselling is necessary but counsellors are not' (Hamblin, 1974:2). In many respects that debate has not moved any great distance since 1974. McLaughlin (1993) believes that as a society we should not regress and compartmentalise roles by developing 'school counsellors', but support teachers to incorporate counselling in their roles. Whilst I agree with McLaughlin that teachers need to develop their counselling skills, and the importance of this skill in their roles, her argument is limited by the lack of understanding of the school counsellor's role as identified by Hamblin (1974).

Barwick's (2000) view is similar to that of Hamblin (1974). He believes that there are three levels to counselling in schools. A teaching member of staff, offering counselling skills, could offer the first two levels, but the third level is more intensive

and is offered by a specialist school counsellor. He claims there are several advantages to offering a specialist counselling service in schools.

- A counsellor does not have any other role in the school i.e. disciplinary role. The student knows they can come to talk to an independent person in complete confidentiality and does not need to interact with this adult in another way.
- The counsellor does not have to fulfil another role so is free to offer the appropriate therapeutic conditions and build a unique relationship conducive to self-change.
- School counsellors have undergone specific training to hold and facilitate a person through the process of self-change.
- A requirement of the counselling profession is the appropriate level of clinical supervision. This supervision enables the counsellor to work ethically and effectively.
- The counsellor can offer support to staff in understanding children's behaviour and meeting their needs.

New legislation in the form of the Children Act (Department for Education and Skills [DfES], 2004) and the green paper Every Child Matters (DfES, 2003) supports the potential benefit of counselling. This has evoked an intense, renewed interest in the role of the school counsellor, because greater emphasis has now been placed on the emotional welfare of young people. LEAs now have a legal obligation to safeguard and promote the welfare of young people (Jenkins, 2006). This obligation is widely defined as not just to do with child protection, but also an aspect of health and safety. LEAs must therefore address bullying, drug and alcohol use, emotional and behavioural difficulties, school truancy and school phobia. One of the concerns identified in the Children Act (DfES, 2004) was to ensure that interventions are provided for young people before they hit crisis point (Pattison, 2006b).

Jenkins (2006) suggests that 71 percent of schools now provide some form of counselling service of which 41 percent is a specialist service provided by an external counsellor. Pattison (2006a) however believes, despite recommendations that school counselling should be part of an educational provision, that this is not the case. She

reports that in 2004, in the North of England, fewer than half the schools that she contacted reported having a school counselling service.

Pattison (2006a) explores the inclusion of young people with a learning difficulty within the mainstream school counselling service. She suggests that, as a society, when we learn to value diversity, inclusion will automatically follow. However, despite current backing for inclusive counselling (e.g. Disability Discrimination Act 1995, United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Disabled Persons 1975, United Nations Standard Rules in the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities 1993, Council for Disabled Children 1994, Special Educational Needs and Disability Discrimination Act 2001) as a society, it is evident that, we have not yet learnt to value diversity. In her research she suggests that 62 percent of counsellors interviewed never offered counselling to young people with learning difficulties, and only 3 percent offered counselling to this client group frequently. She points out that this leaves many practitioners open to criticism from the disability rights movement, and in fact, possibly in breach of human rights legislation.

Not only is counselling practice in mainstream schools non-inclusive, there has been little development of counselling provision in special schools. Flitton and Buckroyd (2002) suggest that counselling in special schools has traditionally relied on the class teacher using counselling skills. The staff, unless professionally trained in counselling and psychotherapy, may lack the necessary skills to offer the most appropriate therapeutic support and may only be functioning at the first two levels, as defined by Barwick (2000).

The lack of interest in developing counselling in special schools, and for young people with a learning difficulty in mainstream schools is probably representative of the lack of equality for disabled people. Many professionals still believe that people with a learning difficulty cannot benefit from counselling and this attitude creates a further obstacle in developing counselling for disabled children (Moulster, 1998). This view may now be challenged by a surge of reports that advocate the development of training in disability awareness and equality of service for people with a learning difficulty, with particular reference to meeting the mental health needs of this client group (Carpenter, 2002, Morgan, 2003, Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2003).

Pattison's (2006a) article supports the view that there is a lack of equality for disabled people and identifies possible barriers, which were reported by practitioners, to developing an inclusive counselling service for young people. Three categories of barriers were defined; lack of awareness of the needs of young people with a learning difficulty; lack of knowledge and experience in meeting the needs of disabled young people; and lack of awareness of wider issues related to disability.

As described earlier, until 1970 people with a learning difficulty were institutionalised and offered no formal education. Following the 1970 Education Act (Handicapped Children) the education authorities took responsibility for the education of disabled children. This was a landmark for this group of people and saw a transition from 'training' to 'special education' (Warnock, 1978). In the last ten to fifteen years we have seen a growing disability rights movement among disabled people themselves (Reiser & Mason, 1990). Disabled people have challenged their oppression and are demanding equality. More recently we have seen legislation, Special Educational Needs and Disability Discrimination Act (DfES, 2001), which has recognised the rights of disabled people, and will lead to a more inclusive society. As we recognise the rights of disabled people, and understand that children with a learning difficulty have the same emotional needs as any other child, we need to explore more inclusive ways of practising, and understand the most appropriate ways of working with disabled children and adolescents in schools. The focus on working in clinic settings by analytic practitioners has meant that they have not so far attempted to extend their work into the community.

Mallon (1987) suggests the best way to work with children with special needs is the person centred approach. She believes this is most appropriate because person centred theory is most compatible with a school setting. If we believe that the school environment strives to nurture young people, and seeks to enable students to develop autonomy and independence, then we can understand how person centred theory is most compatible with a school ethos. Person centred theory is about the belief that each person has within them an ability to grow and self-actualise. Rogers (1967) believed that under the right conditions people would have the freedom to learn and would reach their full potential.

Flitton and Buckroyd (2002) demonstrated in a pilot study that students who attended a school for children with moderate learning difficulties could make use of and benefit from person centred counselling. Hawkins (2002) demonstrates via several case studies the value of person centred approaches with disabled people. Flitton and Buckroyd (2005, Flitton et al. 2006) also demonstrate, via a single case study and group work, the benefit and value of working therapeutically with this client group, but there is still a very little documented research about the person centred approach with children and adolescents with learning difficulties.

8.2 Access to counselling

Another issue that needs to be addressed is the accessibility of counselling to disabled children/young people. Many young people lack the verbal skills to ask for any kind of therapy, and, to date, relied on the parent/carer or professional person involved with the disabled person to refer the person for counselling. Such a referral would at this point almost certainly be to a psychoanalytical service with all the implications of pathology and a medical model that that implies. It seems a more sensible idea, to have the counselling available where the young person is most likely to be. Children and adolescents spend a significant amount of time in school; it seems the most suitable environment for making counselling available to the young disabled person. Counselling in a school environment has the capacity to improve the child's mental health, and also their education (Morgan, 2003). This view was endorsed by recommendations made in the green paper 'Every Child Matters' (DfES, 2003). The report suggests that schools need to develop an 'Extended Service'. The report recommends that a multidisciplinary service should be based in schools; not only to educate, but also to meet the mental health needs of our children and young people.

Flitton and Buckroyd (2002) describe how people with a learning difficulty have traditionally been offered behavioural therapy in special schools. This view has been further reported by several more recent enquiries (Carpenter, 2002, Morgan, 2003, Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2003). Hawkins (2002) suggests that staff members in special schools are becoming increasingly disappointed with this approach. The behavioural approach has little interest in exploring the meaning or origins of the child's behaviour and seeks mainly to alter it. Downs (1999) suggests it is now a widely accepted view that a young person's challenging behaviour is a form of

communication, and the task is to understand this communication. Downs (1999) supports the teacher in utilising empathic listening skills to understand the communication of a young person with learning difficulties. For some students all that is required may be for the teacher to use counselling skills as described by Barwick (2000). However, it may require a more specialised input, alongside that of the teacher, to facilitate the self-awareness of a person with learning difficulties.

9.0 Self-concept as a means of measuring the effects of counselling

One issue in evaluating the counselling for children and young people in schools delivered in this study was how to measure the benefit of the therapeutic input. Alongside qualitative measures it seemed desirable use a quantitative measure. It seemed appropriate in the context of humanistic therapy to seek the child's own subjective view of any changes. One possibility was to use an instrument to measure self-concept, to understand any difference in functioning. This section will offer a person centred definition of self-concept; an overview of the literature in measuring self-concept in the context of measuring the self-concept of children with learning difficulties; and an evaluation of different contributions to the field of measuring self-concept with children with learning difficulties.

9.1 Person centred definition of self-concept

The person centred theory of self-concept has been described as a structured set of self-perceptions that can be brought into self-awareness (Merry, 1995). Self-perception is developed through a lifetime of experiences of how we interact with the world, and things and people in it. In essence it is not a static set of constructs, but a number of concepts that evolve over time. Rogers (1967) believed that influences in our childhood experience directly affect our construct of self. We learn during childhood which behaviours are desired or valued by our caregivers, and which are not. The value (or in Rogers' terms 'regard') which is placed on any behaviour can be positive or not (in Rogers' terms 'unconditional' or 'conditional'). Those behaviours met with unconditional regard will be allowed, and those met with conditional regard will be hidden or distorted. For example, if I have experienced conditional regard in relation to expressing the emotion of fear, my sense of self-worth will be based on not expressing this emotion. Rogers described this process as the development of

conditions of worth; in this example an element of my self-construct would be that I do not show fear.

Rogers (1967) further suggested a second element of the self: an ideal self. Using the previous example I may construct the ideal self that I am not afraid of anything. If I were then exposed to a situation in which I felt frightened, for example, seeing a spider, I would not be able to express fear appropriately. My expression of fear might be denied or distorted. Because the expression of fear would be felt to be incongruent with my self-concept, my feelings and behaviour would not match. The result might be that I feel at dis-ease with my self.

Person centred theory believes (Rogers, 1967) that the self has the inherent ability to develop towards wholeness or 'self-actualisation'. For this process to be facilitated three conditions need to be present; unconditional positive regard, congruence and empathy. In the presence of such conditions the self has the ability to reconstruct the self-concept, despite earlier experience, thus affecting the way we behave in the world and develop and sustain relationships. The provision of such conditions is the heart of person centred counselling.

9.2 Measuring self-concept

Changes in self-concept, as indicated above, are central to the theory of person centred psychotherapy. Rogers himself was interested in devising a way of measuring them. He (Rogers, 1967) describes an instrument called a 'Q sort', which was devised by Stephenson (1953) and was modified for the study of the self. This instrument was based on 100 descriptions of the self that the client was asked to sort, then resort into statements that represent his/her self-perception. Although useful, the Q sort is not susceptible to the kind of statistical analysis or validation that is required for quantitative measures.

Since the early fifties a great deal of other work has been carried out in this area. Wylie (1974) gives an early account of different instruments that are used to measure self-concept. At that point in the evolution of instruments, the main problem was the lack of validity and re-test reliability studies. More recently Byrne (1996) gives an up to date review of different instruments used across the age range and population

which includes re-test reliability and validity scores. She also clarifies the relationship between self-esteem and self-concept by establishing that researchers generally agree that the terms self-concept and self-esteem represent different components of the self. It is now accepted that self-concept characterises a wider definition of the construct of the self which includes cognitive, emotional and behavioural features, whereas self-esteem is a partial component of the wider construct of self.

Byrne suggests that there are two main theoretical domains in measuring self-concept: one-dimensional and multi-dimensional. The one-dimensional model is based on the proposition that general self-concept is measured by evaluating different facets of the self that overlap, each bearing equal weight. The scores are then added to yield an overall representation of the self. The multidimensional model is based on the proposition that unless each factor of the construct of self is understood, an accurate picture of the self cannot be provided.

Measuring the self-concept of children/adolescents is a complicated procedure as the construct of the self is still being developed, and in any case 'self-concept' is arguably easier to define and discuss than it is to measure. Byrne (1996) suggests that as the child matures and develops, self-description skills expand, so that measurements of self-concept are both more possible and more sophisticated. As a result more instruments have been developed for the pre-adolescent than for the pre-school and younger age group. However, Byrne (1996) states, 'Out of the twenty-nine pre-adolescent self-concept instruments reviewed only six were considered to be worthy' (Byrne, 1996:85). Some of these six instruments were specific to either academic or physical self-concept, so not suitable for my purpose, which was to evaluate self-concept more broadly. Some of these instruments were designed for age ranges that were unsuitable for my purposes.

The Piers Harris Children's Self-concept Scale (Piers & Harris, 1984) is cited as being the most frequently used and highly recommended instrument for pre-adolescent tests (Marsh & Holmes 1990). It was also more suitable for the age range and reading ability of my participants. The instrument was initially designed by Piers in the early 1960s and published in 1963. The intention of the instrument was to provide a self-report assessment of a child or an adolescent's self-concept. It is designed for use with

children from the ages of seven to eighteen, with the recommendation of a reading grade of level two (This corresponds to a reading ability appropriate to year 2 as measured in the UK). The author defines self-concept as, 'A relatively stable set of attitudes reflecting both description and evaluation of one's own behaviour and attitudes' (Piers & Harris, 1984:2).

The instrument was devised as a one-dimensional measure of self-concept, but clearly has a multidimensional construction and permits the identification and analysis of sub-scores. It consists of an eighty item self-report questionnaire prompting yes/no answers. The instrument is extremely user friendly for the administrator, with a built-in auto score sheet that requires little to no training in psychometric testing. It provides a total (TOT) score, which reflects the participant's general self-concept, a one-dimensional score. Additionally, it offers six domain scales, which assess specific areas of the structure of the self; behavioural (BEH), intellectual and school status (INT), physical appearance and attributes (PHY), anxiety (ANX), popularity (POP) and happiness and satisfaction (HAP). The instrument includes two validity scales; the inconsistent responding (INC) and a response bias (RES). Previous reports for reliability range from .96 to .42 with a re-test interval of three to four weeks to four months.

Byrne (1996) commented that the instrument had not been revised or revamped for some time and perhaps more recently developed instruments might challenge its status. However, the instrument has recently been revised and is now called the Piers-Harris 2 (Piers & Herzberg, 2002). The authors report three significant changes: firstly, it now contains new nationally representative standard data that offer a better reflection of the population in terms of ethnicity etc. It has also been reduced to a sixty item self-report questionnaire. In the domain scales Behaviour has been renamed behavioural adjustment (BEH) and anxiety, freedom of anxiety (FRE). The final change has been the addition of a computerised administration and scoring system. The validity scales remain the same, however as the instrument has only recently been revamped, there are to date no current validity or re-test reliability reports.

9.2.1 Measuring the self-concept of children and adolescents with learning difficulties

Measuring the self-concept of children/adolescents with learning difficulties adds another factor to what is already a complicated subject and led me to examine self-concept measures for various groups within that population. 'Learning difficulty', as previously stated, is a term that can cover a wide range of conditions including 'slow learner', 'learning impeded by emotional factors' and 'developmentally delayed'. Harter (1990b) defines children with a 'learning difficulty' as children 'within the normal range of intelligence who have specific deficits in the area of information processing, reading, writing and the manipulation of symbols' (307). Chapman (1988) suggests that in the studies reviewed learning difficulty is defined as having an average IQ but underachieving in school. This definition is supported by Montgomery (1994) and Kloomk & Cosden (1994) who define learning difficulty within the context of their study as children integrated in the main classroom, but who received special education for at least a few hours a week. The variance within the range is immense and will affect the choice of instrument to measure self-concept. However, this description corresponds best to what in the UK is called 'learning difficulties', but describes only part of the population of the children/adolescents in my study.

Very few instruments have been developed for use with this population and more research is needed on those that have been developed to make them more usable. Researchers used instruments that were based on the 'normal' population. Renick and Harter (1988) suggest that children with learning difficulties (according to their definition) need an instrument which is more discriminating than the domains previously identified (e.g. by Piers-Harris). A distinction needs to be made for measuring self-concept between general intellectual ability and the perceived competence of the child in relation to specific tasks e.g. reading, writing. In their view a child with learning difficulties may consider himself clever or able even though he has difficulties with specific tasks. In light of this discovery Renick and Harter (1988) developed the SPPC (Self Perception Profile for Children; Harter 1985) to incorporate the further domains specifically for use with this client group. Byrne (1996) suggests that the instrument is promising, yet needs further research to ascertain fully its psychometric reliability.

Begley and Lewis (1998) have researched several different instruments for measuring the self-concept of children with Down syndrome. Some of the difficulties they report with this specific group could be correlated with other children labelled 'learning disabled' but perhaps would not come into the group 'within the normal intelligence range' described by Harter (1990b). Begley and Lewis (1998) conclude the most appropriate way of measuring the self-concept of this specific group is a projective technique and the Pictorial Scale of Perceived Competence and Social Acceptance (Harter & Pike 1984). However, perceived competence is only one component of self-concept, and therefore is a measure that is less suitable for my purposes. Furthermore there are considerable complications with analysing the data and the validation of a projective technique. Vernon (1963) and Eysenck (1959) and more recently Marshall and Rossman (1995) believe that the instrument leads to a subjective interpretation of the images which is a process which is very hard to standardise and does not provide the quantitative data which we were seeking. Additionally, they consider that there seems to be a poor rationale for the scoring system. The Pictorial Scale has been judged to be a validated test but Begley and Lewis (1998) suggest that further validation and re test reliability should be conducted before use.

10.0 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed a wide range of literature relevant to the project. It begins with an account of the history of the education of disabled people. The Education Act (1970) enforced the first movement from long-term hospital provision to ensuring all children received an education regardless of their IQ (Mencap, 2007). By the 1990's, with the implementation of the National Health Service and Community Care Act, disabled people were now recognised as equals, and laws were put into place to ensure they received support to access services where needed (Richardson, 2005). This has been a very recent development and we are only just beginning to see the implications for services and changes in attitudes towards disabled people.

The chapter continues with an account of the development of therapeutic approaches to learning difficulties. Sinason has contributed vastly towards developing changes of attitudes towards disabled people. Furthermore, she was one of the first to challenge Freud and Rogers on their views that disabled people could not benefit from counselling and psychotherapy (Sinason, 1992). However, much of her writing and

that of other psychoanalytical authors is heavily influenced by the medical model and sees the disabled person as at 'fault'. The chapter describes how advocates of the medical model claim that both parent and disabled child need to mourn the loss of the able child and come to terms with the impairment. There is no recognition of the effect of a disabling society.

The chapter goes on to describe how other approaches to learning disability have developed. Since the implementations of the Disability and Discrimination Act (1995) we have seen an upsurge in pressure groups from the disability rights movement. These groups have challenged service providers who are steeped in the medical model and have demanded that the social model should influence our understanding and development of services. This has created the development of humanistic services across the board for disabled people. In the therapeutic world this has meant we have had to challenge our preconceptions of disabled people and acknowledge that we have little understanding of the life experiences of people who have until recently been segregated from the mainstream population. Additionally, counsellors need to understand that any emotional problems in people with learning difficulties may not be directly related to their impairment, but rather to the disabling environment (Oliver, 1995, Williams & Heslop, 2005).

The chapter continues with a historical overview of art as therapy. It discusses the development of art therapy with children with learning difficulties. This section concludes with a discussion of the use of interpretation and two debates with authors who advocate that in the current social climate, a humanistic approach should be adopted with this client group.

The chapter continues to describe the literature, which shows that society is changing and we are learning to embrace diversity and develop inclusive communities. It is becoming clearer that disabled children have the same emotional needs as any other person. Despite this knowledge there is a lack of equality in service provision in meeting the mental health needs of this client group (Carpenter, 2002, Morgan, 2003, Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2003 Pattison, 2006a). More recently legislation in the form of the Children's Act (2004) and the green paper Every Child Matters (2003) stress the benefits of developing a school counselling service. This service should

address the lack of equality for disabled people in receiving support in their mental health needs; although, Pattison (2006a) advises us otherwise. However, the development of both person-centred approaches, school and special school counselling, is still in its early stages of development.

The chapter concludes with an account of the varied literature on quantitative measures of measuring self-concept and the difficulties of finding an appropriate measure for the population in this project.

It appears from the literature that there is a gap in researching the views on counselling provision for children/young people with learning difficulties. Connors & Stalker (2003) suggest that the views of disabled children are rarely sought and views offered to date, are from professionals and parents perspectives. This study intends to bridge this gap by evaluating the work with this client group, to understand from the students', staff and counsellor's perspective, what use students made of receiving counselling from a school based provision.

Chapter Three

Methodology

1.0 Introduction

In this chapter I will explore the methodologies that I employed in the study inquiring whether students who attend a school for children with complex needs can make use of individual humanistic counselling in a school setting. I will reiterate and discuss the values underpinning the research goals and identify the research methods used. I will identify and discuss the ethical issues. I will describe the process of recruitment; the consent process and offer a table of students' characteristics. I will offer a table demonstrating the overview of the research design for this project. I will describe the methods of data collection and the two different theoretical approaches to the qualitative data analysis I employed in carrying out the study. Finally I will report on the retention and losses that occurred in the project and conclude with a summary of the chapter.

2.0 Research design

This section will identify the theoretical approach and describe the structure and methods used in the project.

2.1 Identifying the values underpinning the research goals

Some time was spent finding a methodological approach that was compatible with the research goals (Chapter One), which are:

1. To evaluate the effects of a humanistic counselling service for children with learning difficulties in a school for children with complex needs from the students' perspective on three aspects of their own functioning: Self-Concept, independence and autonomy and general well-being.
2. To evaluate the effects of the counselling from the teachers' and teaching assistants' perspective on three aspects of the students' functioning: Self-Concept, independence and autonomy and educational achievement.
3. To evaluate the effects of the counselling from the counsellor's perspective.

This piece of research is a before and after outcome study using a comparison group and employing a mixed methods methodology.

Researching the impact and effect of counselling is a complex task. Historically psychoanalysis has reported its findings via case studies, these providing a rich source of discussion of the issues relating to clients (or, as they would be termed, patients). However, by current research standards there are deficiencies in this method of researching therapy. In the first place it has not been the practice to ask the patients for their permission; it is now an absolute requirement of therapeutic research to ask for informed consent from any research participant. Secondly, these studies have been carried out without reference to formal research methodology. There is rarely disclosure of how the data was collected, still less any indication of how it was analysed. Thirdly, these case studies have depended on the therapist's sole account of the patient and the therapy. There is usually no attempt at triangulation, such as might be provided by the patient herself or by a significant other. Indeed psychoanalytic practitioners have fiercely defended the need to protect the relationship between therapist and patient from all intrusion.

However, despite these objections there has come to be renewed interest in case study methodology. A number of authors (McLeod, 1999, Gillham, 2000, Elliott, 2002, Yin, 2003, Stiles, 2007) have sought to develop case study research. Case studies of individuals, groups or organisations offer opportunities to capture the holistic process of an intervention. They involve gathering evidence from different sources; documentation may include records and notes of meetings, newspaper articles and other relevant documentation; archival records which include organisational records, maps, charts and diaries; interviews, which are the principal source of case study information gathering; direct observation, gathering notes from visits to the place where the study is taking place i.e. classroom, playground; participation observation where information is gathered by being involved with the person being studied. Finally, physical artefacts such as photographs, pictures and video of the studied area/person are used (Yin, 2003). Yin argues if the methodologies are followed systematically they are rigorous and ethically sound, and have a place in practitioner research, and establish a difference between clinical case studies and case study research. The different methods and development of methods discussed by Yin, are all designed and created for use in the mainstream population. An equivalent system for evaluating case study research with people with learning difficulties has yet to be established.

This study has evolved a method of case study research, which treats the whole group of students as a case study and collects data on the group from the students themselves, their teachers and TAs and the counsellor using a variety of methods. The study seeks to understand how the students utilised a counselling intervention and to understand this from the subjective experience of the students, staff involved with the student and the counsellor (myself). A case study as a research tool requires evidence to be gathered from several different sources. In my project it involved five different sources: documentation, interviews, direct observation, participant observation and physical artefacts (Yin, 2003). The first was documentation; for my project this meant records kept at the school regarding a student, which included minutes of meetings and annual reviews. The second source was interviews with the students by the researcher interviewer. The third source, direct observation data, was gained by the interviewer visiting the site and observing the students, and by my own observations of the students' interactions at play and lunch times. The fourth set of evidence came from detailed notes taken from the counselling sessions and transcripts of the sessions. The final set of evidence came from physical artefacts; the students were asked to draw a picture to represent themselves during their interviews.

This case study approach also addressed, to some extent, the power imbalance between the adult researcher and the child/adolescent participant. The approach required and valued the individual student's opinion of him/herself. It focused on what the student and staff members were saying which enabled me to understand the meaning of what was going on. This in turn validated and respected the student's right to be heard, as it would incorporate data from the counsellor and the clients.

Because the field of research in counselling for people with learning disabilities is so underdeveloped, I decided to complement the qualitative data with two methods of collecting quantitative data. My intention was to strengthen and validate the findings further. I wanted to use a validated questionnaire on self-concept to supplement the findings from the case study. CORE has yet to design an instrument for use with young people with learning difficulties, so I looked for an instrument that would be most suitable for this client group. The chosen instrument was Piers Harris 2, described in chapter two 9.2 and further described in this chapter 7.2.1. Secondly, because I wanted to investigate whether counselling had an effect that could not be

ascribed to ordinary maturation I also included a comparison group to enable this to be explored.

Finally, to triangulate the findings, data was gathered from interviews with staff working with the pupils. I decided that because the teachers and teaching assistants had regular contact with the young people, they would be in a position to offer a unique and comprehensive description of the young person's emotional welfare and their development (further described in 7.3.1).

My judgement was that the combination of these data collection methods would enable the three research questions to be answered. The first question was addressed via semi structured interviews with the students; pictures drawn by the students; students completion of the Piers-Harris questionnaire and the interviewer's observations of the students during the interviews and around the school. The second questionnaire was addressed via semi-structured interviews with the teachers and TAs. The data from the comparison group was also used to indicate whether the student from the intervention group had made more progress. The third question was addressed via the records of the counselling sessions; records of the students' kept at the school and my own observations of the students' interactions at the school. Additionally, I made use of the comparison group data to underpin my views of the students' progress.

3.0 Ethics

This section will identify and discuss the ethical issues and the procedure adopted to safeguard the participants in the project.

3.1 Ethical concerns

There are a number of ethical issues in this research. The first is the difficulty of obtaining informed consent from children/adolescents with learning difficulties. If a child is under sixteen years of age, as all participants were, under the Children Act 1989 they are allowed to give consent to treatment if it can be shown that they have sufficient understanding and intelligence to comprehend what is proposed (Select Committee on Medical ethics, (DH, 1991), in Grieg & Taylor, 1999). This also

ensures that their rights, as defined by the UN convention (Convention of the Rights of the Child, 1991) are protected:

The UN convention on the rights of the child, as ratified by the UK government in 1991, provides a framework addressing rights relating to children's need for care, protection and adequate provision, but also has an important clause on children's right to participation (article 12) (Morrow 1999).

The right to participation needs to be balanced with the protection of the child. This ethical issue was addressed by seeking consent from the Head Teacher, who acts *in loco parentis* for the students while they are at school. Additionally, consent was sought from the parents, prior to the child being informed about the project.

A further concern was the anonymity of the participants. Allowing the students to choose their own pseudonym went some way to addressing this concern (see further discussion 5.3)

It was planned that there would be two groups of participants both selected at the beginning of the study. One group would form the intervention group in the first year and the other the comparison group. The comparison group would become the intervention group in the second year. This strategy is well known in health service research where the control group is usually described as a waiting list group. An additional ethical issue was the identification and selection of students for the different groups. The implication of this strategy was that one group of students would be seen in the first year of the project and the other group in the second year. However, that meant that students who had been identified as being in need of counselling, were then required to wait a further year for any support. To address this concern the school prioritised the students in order of need. Additionally, it was agreed by the school that if a student from the waiting list group became unduly distressed a referral would be made to another resource/agency to ensure that the student's emotional needs were being met.

3.2 Ethical approval

Prior to receiving ethical approval from the University of Hertfordshire Ethics Committee, I contacted the Head Teacher of the proposed school to discuss my plans

for the project with him. After several discussions he agreed in principle to the project taking place in his school. I then formulated the plans and submitted my proposal for the project to the Ethics Committee for approval. Once I had received approval from the University of Hertfordshire Ethics Committee, I contacted the Head Teacher again to begin the study.

4.0 Consent procedures

This section will identify and discuss the process of gaining the consent of the Head Teacher, parents and students.

4.1 Head Teacher's consent

The Head Teacher of a school acts as the 'gatekeeper' to ensure the welfare of individual students. It was therefore necessary to gain his consent for the project to go ahead in the school. I outlined the project in writing and asked him to sign an agreement (Appendix 5). Discussions then took place with the staff at the school who were asked to select thirty students to participate. This will be discussed further in section 6.0. When the students had been identified it was agreed that I could contact the respective parents.

4.2 Parental consent

A letter was formulated, sent to the Head Teacher for approval, and then sent out to the parents, informing them about the project. It offered them an opportunity to meet with me to discuss any concerns they might have, or, if they preferred to meet with the Head Teacher. Finally it requested that they sign a form to agree formally for their child to participate in the project (Appendix 6).

4.3 Students' consent

When staff had identified the students and parental consent had been received, I requested that the school place the students into two groups; intervention group or comparison group (This will be discussed further in section 6.0). When the students were placed into their respective groups, the research interviewer and I met with both groups to inform them about the project and of their right to withdraw at any time, and to gain their informed consent. The interviewer joined me on these occasions so she could start to build rapport with the prospective participants.

Within the groups, we met the students in small groups of five, to reduce any anxiety or conflict between the students in the comparison and the intervention groups, and to introduce the project to them. We used the term 'project' to describe the whole programme, as this is a familiar term to schoolchildren (Morrow, 1999). We informed the children that it was going to be written up in something like a magazine for people such as teachers. We then opened the session for discussion, and encouraged the students to ask questions about the project and how it was going to be carried out and written up.

The students appeared keen and were happy about me writing up our work for publication. It was impossible to gauge how far they really understood the implications of publication, but we were satisfied that most knew what a magazine was and could understand that we were proposing to tell their story for an audience. The vast majority of students had great fun in choosing a research pseudonym, whilst to others this was confusing. Some did not understand why their identity had to be protected. In fact some students commented, 'If people are going to hear my story why can't they know it is me?' This was an interesting comment because, had they been adults, they could indeed have chosen to have their story published under their own name. This interchange reveals the complexity of obtaining informed consent from young people with learning difficulties. Two students stated that they didn't want to be part of the project and were clear about their reasons. Both were clear that they did not want to have counselling. So, although it was impossible to know what they thought counselling was going to be, it was necessary to respect their decision. However, one student later changed his mind and requested to be put back in the project in the second year.

5.0 Selection and Participants

The students were not randomly recruited; staff members were requested to select thirty students whom they felt would benefit from counselling. They were then prioritised into two groups, each group containing fifteen students. The students who were identified, by the staff, as being in urgent need of counselling were placed in group one. The remaining students were placed in group two, the comparison group.

The groups were not matched in terms of age, ability, disability or social and emotional difficulty; however, they were generally representative of students attending a school for children with complex needs.

Group one received counselling in the first academic year and group two initially became the comparison group for the first year of the project, and then received counselling in the second year.

5.1 Table of Characteristics

This section offers a table of characteristics for both groups of students and states the retention and losses for each group.

5.2 Year one intervention group

Thirteen students remained in the project from a possible fifteen, in the first year intervention group.

Table one: group one members' characteristics.

Students' pseudonyms	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Learning difficulty
AA	15	Male	Black Caribbean	Moderate learning difficulties
Angela	11	Female	White English	Down syndrome Severe speech and language delay Conductive hearing loss
Bee	15	Female	White English	General learning difficulties Speech and language disorder
Billy	11	Male	White English	Learning difficulties and extreme anxiety
Chanel	15	Female	French Caribbean	Moderate learning difficulties
Grant	15	Male	White English	Moderate learning difficulties, dyslexic
Grinch	14	Male	White English	Moderate learning difficulties Emotional difficulties

Harry Potter	11	Male	Other Black	Global development delay Emotional difficulties Speech and language delay
Joel	13	Male	White English	Moderate learning difficulties Emotional difficulties
Kemi	11	Female	Asian/Asian British Indian	Moderate learning difficulties, spatial awareness, speech and language delay
Wayne	10	Male	Other Mixed background	Global development delay Speech and language delay
Pryce	12	Male	Mixed white and black Caribbean	General learning difficulties Language difficulties Attention and concentration difficulties
Tatra	13	Female	White English	Moderate learning difficulties Speech and language delay

AA, Bee and Chanel were selected for case studies in the main text (Chapters five, six and seven and the remaining case studies can be found in the appendices).

5.3 Second year intervention group (comparison group)

Ten students remained in the project from a possible fifteen, in the second year intervention group.

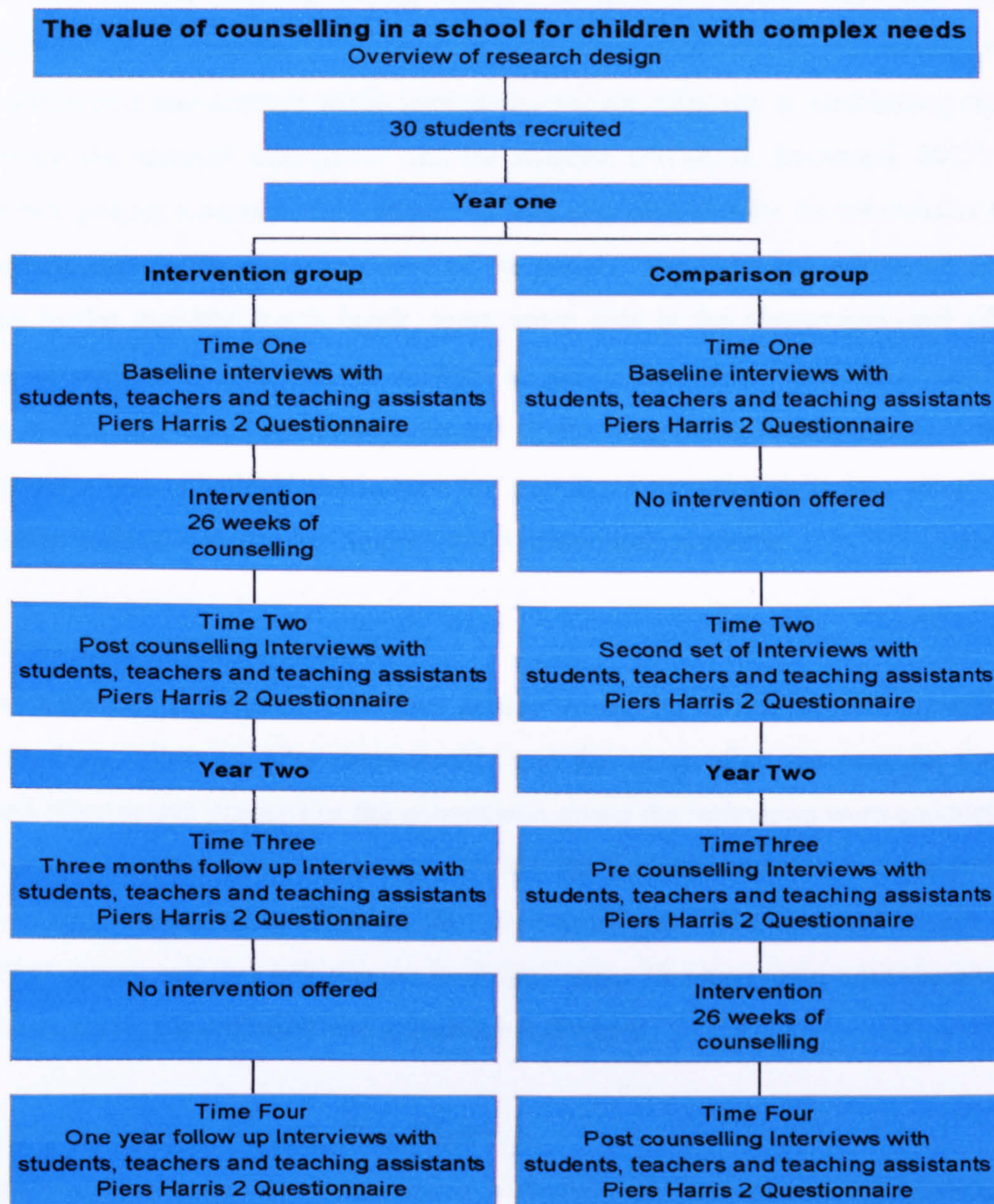
Table Two: group two members' characteristics.

Students' pseudonyms	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Learning difficulty
David	10	Male	British /Italian	Moderate learning difficulties Emotional difficulties Speech and language disorder
Eminem	15	Male	White English	Moderate learning difficulties Speech and language disorder

Emma	12	Female	Turkish	Moderate learning difficulties Speech and language delay
Fred	14	Male	White English	Global development delay Emotional difficulties
Gareth	11	Male	White English	Moderate learning difficulties Visually impaired Minor conductive hearing loss
Hannah	12	Female	Somalian	Moderate learning difficulties Right side hemiplegia
Harry	14	Male	British /Italian	Asperger Syndrome
JP	15	Male	White English	Moderate learning difficulties Emotional difficulties Attention and concentration difficulties
Sonya	15	Female	White English	Moderate learning difficulties
Spiderman	12	Male	White English	Moderate learning difficulties

Harry, JP and Sonya were selected for discussion in the main text (Chapters five, six and seven) the remaining case studies can be found in the appendices.

6.0 Diagram showing the overall research design



The above diagram offers an overall picture of the research design for this project.

7.0 Data collection from the students' perspective

This section will offer a description of the procedure that was carried out to gather the data from the students in the project.

7.1 Meeting with the interviewer

An independent person conducted the interviews with the students to minimise the possibility of the students feeling obliged to give a positive response. This is established good practice in researching counselling interventions. However, one of the difficulties encountered in the pilot study was the difficulty in establishing rapport between the research interviewer and the students (Flitton & Buckroyd, 2002). For this new project a considerable amount of time was allocated for the interviewer to be available prior to the commencement of the project. She came into school for weekly visits in the students' lunch break, spent some time in the playground, and offered drop in sessions in order for the students to get to know her. This was arranged for five weeks prior to the commencement of the interviews. When the first set of interviews was completed the interviewer continued to make visits into school on a monthly basis to maintain her rapport with the identified students.

7.2 Interviews with the students

The interviews were planned in four phases in the life of the project: pre-and-post counselling; follow up after three months and follow up after one year, for the first year's intervention group. For the comparison group the interviews were conducted at the same times, but acted as a comparison for the first year and then as a pre-and-post counselling intervention evaluation for the second year. The interviews were beset with problems, which I will discuss in chapter nine. The interviews with the students had two parts, a quantitative and a qualitative element.

7.2.1 Quantitative element: Piers Harris 2

Qualitative data collected via interviews with staff and students was supplemented by a quantitative measure as another way of enabling students to express themselves. The Piers-Harris 2 provides a total (TOT) score, which reflects the participant's general self-concept, a one-dimensional score. Additionally, it offers six domain scales, which assess specific areas of the structure of the self; behavioural adjustment (BEH), intellectual and school status (INT), physical appearance and attributes (PHY), freedom from anxiety (FREE), popularity (POP) and happiness and satisfaction (HAP). The instrument includes two validity scales; the inconsistent responding (INC) and a response bias (RES) (Appendix 9).

The validated questionnaire was intended to provide another opportunity for communication for students with limited speech skills. It was administered by an independent person, a research interviewer, at the same four times: pre and post intervention and at three month and one year follow up. The research interviewer met with the students individually and supported them by reading the questionnaire to them when necessary (Appendix 9). Difficulties with this measure are discussed in chapter nine.

7.2.2 Qualitative element: interviews with the students

Little research has been done to understand the perspective on counselling, or indeed on anything else, of students with learning difficulties (Connors & Stalker, 2003). The interviews were conducted to gain an understanding of the students' feelings about themselves; their views of the experience of counselling and the effect of counselling on how they felt about themselves.

Because I was aware that some students had difficulties with expressive language, a projective technique was used as an adjunct to verbal discussion to overcome inherent speech and language difficulties (Tipple, 1994). The students were asked to draw something that they felt represented themselves. The interviewer proceeded to facilitate the students' understanding of their image, using a person centred approach. This approach was devised by Silverstone (1993) and applies person centred theory to art therapy. This means that the facilitator is not projecting preconceived ideas about the image on to the individual but seeking to discover their understanding of the meaning of their artwork (Appendix 8).

In the second interview the facilitator followed the same procedure, but asked additional questions. She had the first image available for the student to view after their completion of the artwork. The interviewer compared the images and reported back some of the students' comments on their first image. She explored whether the students' felt they had changed and tried to discover how they felt they had changed and why.

It was evident from listening to the transcripts and reports from the interviewer that this had not been as successful as hoped. The problems led to a change in methodology for the second year's interviews.

7.2.3 Changes made to the interview technique

Because of the lack of sufficient data gathered by using an art technique, I was forced to reconsider how I could ascertain the students' perspective. It was decided to expand the interview to incorporate play. The idea came from the counselling sessions where when the students were busy playing or drawing, they become more relaxed and were able to express how they felt about themselves. This was discussed at some length with the research interviewer and we agreed that this seemed the most appropriate way forward.

The final two sets of interviews, time three and time four, were carried out at the pre-arranged times and art material was made available to the students. Additionally, there was a selection of toys: miniature animals, dolls, dolls house, puppets, bricks, cars, sand and a selection of board games. On these occasions the students were invited to play during the interview using the material made available to them. In the play the students were asked questions about how they felt about themselves, their experiences of counselling and any changes they had become aware of.

8.0 Data collection from the staff members' perspective

This section will offer a description of the procedure that was carried out in gathering the data from the staff members in the project.

8.1 Interviews with the staff

I believed that it was essential that I gain some experience in conducting research interviews and that this would be less problematic with the adult participants in the project, because as adults they were less likely to feel coerced, and had not had a counselling relationship with me, so it was agreed that I would conduct the interviews with the staff.

The Head Teacher had given consent for the study to happen at his school, thus agreeing for his staff to participate in the study. However, I decided to meet the staff

beforehand and inform them about the project and try to gain their support for participation in the study.

8.1.1 Qualitative element: interviews with the teachers and teaching assistants

The interviews with the teachers and teaching assistants were designed to offer an additional perspective on what use students who attend a school for children with complex needs made of individual humanistic counselling in the school setting, thus creating triangulation (Bell, 1999).

There were six teachers and six teaching assistants involved in the project. Each member of staff was identified by their role, either as the class teacher (for primary department) or form tutor (for secondary department) for each of the participants, or as the teaching assistant (TA) assigned to each class. The interviews were carried out individually on four occasions; pre and post intervention, at three months and at one year follow up. These were the same times as other data collection.

The interviews were semi-structured; this method of interviewing presents a more flexible approach than a structured interview and allows for some narrative material to emerge (Sanders & Liptrot, 1994). To create continuity with the themes of other data collected, the structure of the interviews was based around Piers Harris 2 categories of self-concept. The staff members were asked to comment on their students' behaviour, intellect, physical appearance, level of anxiety, popularity and level of happiness (Appendix 10). The interviews lasted for approximately thirty minutes for each student depending on the adults' way of expressing themselves. Some, particularly teaching staff, were concise; TAs took a little longer.

9.0 Procedure for data collection from the counsellor's perspective

This section will offer a description of the procedure that was carried out in gathering the data from the counsellor's perspective.

9.1 Counselling intervention

As previously described, the students were placed into two groups. The first group was the intervention group and was selected by the school by priority of need. The

second group was initially the comparison group but received counselling in the second year of the project.

Each student was offered twenty-six weeks of individual humanistic counselling. The sessions were for forty-five minutes, once a week, during the term time, over an academic year. The counselling took place in a designated room that remained solely for my use, so as to offer some continuity for the students. The counselling room was fairly well equipped and had a variety of art materials, games, puppets, teen magazines, toys, a sand tray, books and music available for the students' use. My way of being with the students was humanistic although I drew upon other theoretical views to help me understand individual clients.

With the students' agreement, the sessions were audio recorded to aid accurate recollection of the counselling process. Some students were unhappy for the sessions to be recorded so I wrote detailed notes at the conclusion of the weekly sessions.

10.0 Data analyses

In this section I will discuss the different methodological approaches and procedure I used in analysing the data from the students', staff members and counsellor's perspective and from reports from the interviewer.

10.1 Piers-Harris 2

The Piers-Harris 2 questionnaire is designed with an auto score sheet. I compiled the scores for the global self-concept and the specific domains and with support from a statistician, entered the data on SPSS for analysis.

10.2 Interviews with the students: A grounded theory approach to analysis

Grounded theory is a qualitative research approach that was developed by two sociologists, Glaser and Strauss (1967), who wanted to find new ways to understand social meanings and to have the theory 'grounded' in the data rather than meaning being imposed onto the data (McLeod, 2001). It is not a methodology that tests hypotheses, but identifies themes emerging from the data, enabling the researcher to understand the meaning of an interaction, situation, or event to the participant. This

method starts with the desire to understand something. The data collected from interviews is read and re-read to gain a feel for the text. At this point significant pieces of information are identified. The data collected from one set of interviews is compared with that from other interviews. At this stage, codes are identified and created. The identified codes can then be further sorted into themes. The naturally occurring themes are the data used for writing up the analysis.

The lack of research on the client group with which this study took place meant that there are as yet no researched conclusions about how therapy can best be conducted. Grounded theory allowed for the emergence of meaning from the students' own responses. In addition, the use of grounded theory for the analysis of the counsellor's notes permitted the emergence of a range of themes, illustrating the needs and pre-occupations of the clients.

The students' interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. On receipt of the transcriptions I read them several times to familiarise myself with the text. The next step was to identify and extract significant aspects of the data. I was looking for meaningful expressions of what the children said about themselves. I re-read the text to ensure I had not missed any important statements nor had highlighted statements that were not really significant. This procedure was carried out for each set of interviews allowing me to compare comments made from each set of interviews.

Having identified meaningful communications in the text, I focused on the indigenous category (Sanders & Liptrot, 1994). I was mindful not to project my interpretations on what the student said, wrote or drew and allowed the meanings to emerge. I re-read the highlighted text to ensure I had not misinterpreted the meaning of the statements. The statements were sorted into codes; I then sorted the codes into different themes. I rechecked the data to see if the themes overlapped or could be further separated, on some occasions changing the title of the theme to better reflect the statements. These themes were discussed with my supervisor to reduce the risk of bias. The themes then allowed me to formulate the discussion presented in chapter six.

10.3 Reports from the interviewer

Because the students in the study had difficulties with communication which presented many difficulties for interviewing, the interviewer kept detailed notes from her interviews and offered observations of her interactions with them and their general way of being. The interviewer believed this would be helpful as she felt that some interactions could not be recorded and would be lost. When I read the reports from the interviewer I was able to cross match these with the transcripts of the students interviews to check for consistency of statements. I was able to identify significant moments in the text. This data was sorted into codes; I then sorted the codes into themes. Once the themes were identified I was able to cross match this with the themes, which had been generated by the data from the interviews with the students.

10.4 Interviews with staff: A thematic analysis approach to analysis

Thematic analysis is another method for analysing qualitative data (Boyatzis, 1998). The data is collected through interviews, with specific questions in mind. Because the researcher is looking for answers to specific questions the initial codes are predetermined, whereas in grounded theory they emerge from the data itself. In this element of the project, I wanted to understand the staff views of the students' emotional well-being and functioning, but I also wanted to them to formulate their responses in accordance with the domains identified by Piers-Harris (Piers & Herzberg, 2002). This strategy was adopted as a way of comparing the staff and student's responses to questions about developments in the student's self-concept. This structure also offered a way of encouraging staff to think about how change might be identified.

The staff interviews had also been audio recorded and transcribed. On receipt of the transcriptions I again read them several times to familiarise myself with the text. The codes were predetermined by the questions asked in the interviews about the descriptions of the students' domains of the self. These were self-esteem, behaviour, schoolwork, physical appearance, popularity, and levels of happiness and levels of anxiety. I identified comments made in relation to the predetermined codes in the text for each set of interviews. I then cut and pasted these comments on to a separate file for each individual student, identifying which set of interviews they had come from. I then sorted the codes into themes: 'improvements' 'no improvements' and

'regression'. At this point I reread the codes and checked I had not misinterpreted the comments made about the students and rechecked I had placed them into the correct theme. Once the themes had been identified I could evaluate the degree of improvements made by students. (Chapter 4, section 3.0 and 5.0)

10.5 Record of the sessions: A grounded theory approach

The counselling sessions were audio recorded and detailed notes were written after each counselling session. This data was analysed using grounded theory as the interviews with the students. As I had carried out the counselling intervention I was already extremely familiar with the data. However, I read my clinical case notes and identified significant sessions. I then listened to the recordings of the sessions to ensure my notes were an accurate reflection of the process I had recorded. I then identified meaningful communications within the sessions and created codes. I then sorted the codes into themes. The themes allowed me to formulate my discussion of the presented data in chapters five, six, seven and eight.

10.6 Data synthesis

Having analysed all the data I then wrote up the outcome for each individual student incorporating the analysed data from the student interviews, interviewer's reports, staff interviews and case studies (Chapter five, six and seven). Each student illustrates a particular struggle and the case studies focus on the central themes.

11.0 Retention and losses

Due to the nature of the setting for the project i.e. a school, it was likely that we would lose some students from the project. In the first year we lost three students because two students moved house and one student was permanently excluded. Regrettably, parents gave little to no notice of their children leaving the school and there was an unsatisfactory ending with all three students. Because two students left in the earlier part of the school year, it was decided to move two students from the comparison group into the intervention group. However, the third student left half way through the school year and little could be done about this.

In the second year, we lost a further four students due to students moving home and leaving the school. The 'lost' students were from both counselling and comparison

groups and it was decided that we could not replace the students at this stage of the project. In total I retained thirteen students in the first year's intervention group and ten students in the comparison group. A total of seven students were lost between both groups.

12.0 Conclusion

The chapter begins by reiterating the project's research goals. It continues by identifying the project as primarily an outcome study, case study and discusses the range of methods of data collection both qualitative and quantitative.

The chapter continues with a discussion of the ethical concerns in carrying out this project with young people with learning difficulties in a school with complex needs. It identifies the procedure that was undertaken to gain ethical approval and consent from the Head Teacher, parents and students in the project. It continues with a description of the process of selection of the participants and how and why the students were separated into two groups. A table of characteristics for each group is presented. A diagram of the research design is presented to enable the reader to understand the process of data collection.

The chapter then offers a detailed description of the process of data collection, starting with the introduction of the research interviewer. It continues with a discussion of both the quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection used. The quantitative method incorporated a validated instrument to measure the self-concept and the qualitative method included semi structured interviews. There is a discussion of the difficulties of obtaining the views of the young people in the project, which led to a change in the interview technique.

The chapter continues with a discussion of the data collection from the staff members. In total there were twelve members of staff involved in the project and the interviews were structured around the categories defined in the Piers-Harris 2 self-concept instrument to create continuity.

The chapter continues with a detailed discussion of the methods of data analysis. The Piers Harris 2 instrument was an auto score questionnaire, which was then entered

onto a computerised statistical programme for analysis. The interviews with students and staff were analysed from different theoretical approaches to address the particular goal of each of the interviews. It continues with a description of how the data from the counsellor was analysed and how the reports from the research interviewer were incorporated in the final write up. It concludes with a report of the retention and losses experienced over the life of the project.

Chapter Four

Findings

Part A

1.0 Introduction

This chapter will report, in table format, the findings from the study. I will quantify the themes from the staff, students', and counsellor's perspective, to illustrate numerically the results across the two years, and present this in a table. Finally, I will report the findings from the Piers- Harris 2 Self-Concept Instrument, and discuss the findings.

2.0 Summary of findings from staff perspective: Year one

The following tables provide a summary of the results of the whole project. Results of staff interviews for all students are summarised on the basis of verbatim recordings. The data summarised for students has been derived from the process of interviewing and from the verbatim records of counselling sessions. The results from the counsellor have been derived from analysis of the verbatim records of the counselling sessions. The Piers Harris 2 results are derived from the questionnaires completed by the students.

2.1 Summary of findings from staff perspective: Year one

Table three: Findings from staff perspective; year one

Group	Improvements	No improvements	Regression
Group one, Intervention	9	3	1
Group two, Comparison	0	8	2

The results presented in the table above demonstrate that of the thirteen students who were given counselling in the first year of the project nine were thought by the staff to have made improvements. Three were thought by the staff to have made no improvement and one student was thought to have regressed. In contrast it will be seen that the students from the comparison group made no improvements during the first year of the project. The students from the comparison group had not received counselling yet.

2.2 Summary of findings from staff perspective: Year two

Table four: Findings from staff perspective; year two

Group	Improvements	No improvements	Regression
Group one: Follow up	9	3	1
Group two: Intervention	4	5	1

The results presented in the table above demonstrate that out of the thirteen students who received counselling in the first year of the project nine were thought by staff to have maintained their improvements at one year follow up. Three were thought by staff to still have made no improvements and one student had still regressed. In contrast it will be seen that once the students from the comparison group had received counselling, four were thought by staff to have made some improvements. Five were thought by staff to have made no improvements and one student had regressed.

2.3 Summary of staff opinions on changes in students.

At the end of year two of the project the staff members identified that of twenty-three students who had completed the project thirteen had benefited from counselling (57%). They considered that those students' behaviour, communication, and concentration in class, and general levels of happiness improved.

3.0 Summary of findings from students' perspective: Year one and two

Table five: findings from students' perspective

Opinion or reaction	Number of students
Did not like or benefit from counselling	2
No opinion stated	4
Expressed or displayed positive effects	17

The table above summarises the students' view of their counselling. It will be seen that a large majority seventeen out of twenty three students (74%) considered that they had benefited from counselling. Some students were able to verbalise their views

directly and some were indirect. One student had very limited cognitive and language skills and in this project I could only interpret her views. Two students felt strongly, they did not like counselling and it did not help them. One student was unwilling to voice anything in an interview, which mirrored his silent counselling work, and again means that that his silence needed to be interpreted. Finally, two students were not able to identify any changes or benefits.

4.0 Summary of positive expressions

Table six: summary of students' expressions

Positive expression	Number of students
Calmer	6
Happier	13
Improved behaviour	6
Improved communication	11
Improved confidence	9
Improved concentration	6
Improved relationships	5
Improved schoolwork	7
Maturity	6
Trust	8

The table above is a quantification of most frequently expressed comments during the interviews describing the positive effects of the intervention, as given by the seventeen students who expressed positive gain. It will be seen that thirteen of the seventeen felt happier and eleven of the thirteen felt that their level of communication had improved. The range of positive effects suggests benefits throughout the students' lives.

5.0 Summary of findings from counsellor's perspective: Year one and two

The results summarised above are derived from my analysis of the counselling sessions for all students. I have summarised my findings into the categories of

benefits from receiving counselling. From my perspective twelve of the thirteen students and all ten of the students from the second year benefited from counselling. The particular area of functioning in which the students benefited are discussed in more detail in the discussion chapter.

Table seven: findings from the counsellor’s perspective

Group	Benefited from counselling	No benefits from counselling
Group one	12	1
Group two	10	0

6.0 Piers-Harris Instrument

The Piers-Harris 2 Instrument is a questionnaire designed with an auto score sheet. I compiled the scores for the global self-concept and the specific domains and with support from a statistician, entered the data on SPSS for analysis. I have been advised that there are insufficient numbers involved in the project to demonstrate statistically whether there were benefits from receiving counselling. The results also indicate that the scores fluctuate considerably and the instrument is not reliable for this client group, and so consequently there is no meaningful way of interpreting the results. The following tables (8,9,10,11,12,13 &14) offer a summary report for global self-concept and for each of the domains.

Table eight: Global self-concept

Group		Global Self-concept 1	Global Self-concept 2	Global Self-concept 3	Global Self-concept 4
Control	Mean	49.83	54.91	53.90	55.30
	N	12	11	10	10
	Std.				
	Deviation	5.654	10.492	12.261	10.318
Intervention	Mean	44.43	46.17	46.92	52.67
	N	14	12	13	12
	Std.				
	Deviation	6.836	5.967	7.182	8.835

Table eight offers a summary for the global self-concept for both control and intervention group at four points of data collection. The table shows a slight increase in global self-concept 5.47 for group two and 8.24 for group one from point one to point four data collection. However, the increase is insufficient to demonstrate statistically any benefits from receiving counselling.

Table nine: Domain of behaviour

Group		Behaviour 1	Behaviour 2	Behaviour 3	Behaviour 4
Control	Mean	47.67	50.82	52.30	53.60
	N	12	11	10	10
	Std.				
	Deviation	7.560	8.750	11.729	8.501
Intervention	Mean	47.43	48.33	51.23	50.33
	N	14	12	13	12
	Std.				
	Deviation	8.055	8.606	8.126	10.360

Table nine offers a summary of the data for the domain of behaviour for both control and intervention group over the four points of data collection. The data indicates again there was a small increase to the scores 5.93 for group two and 2.9 for group one from point one to point four of the data collection.

Table ten: Domain of Intellect and school status

Group		Intellect 1	Intellect 2	Intellect 3	Intellect 4
Control	Mean	53.33	57.36	55.60	55.20
	N	12	11	10	10
	Std. Deviation	6.344	6.757	7.183	8.728
Intervention	Mean	45.21	45.25	45.85	49.58
	N	14	12	13	12
	Std. Deviation	5.366	4.731	7.267	5.600

Table ten offers a summary of the data for the domain of intellect and school status. The data indicates again there was a small increase to the scores, 1.87 for group two and 4.37 for group one from point one to point four of the data collection.

Table eleven: Domain of physical appearance

Group		Physical appearance 1	Physical appearance 2	Physical appearance 3	Physical appearance 4
Control	Mean	55.92	54.91	54.10	58.30
	N	12	11	10	10
	Std. Deviation	6.403	7.905	7.564	8.407
Intervention	Mean	46.64	48.75	44.31	48.42
	N	14	12	13	12
	Std. Deviation	8.500	7.288	7.825	5.452

Table eleven offers a summary of the data for the domain of physical appearance. The data indicates again there was a small increase to the scores, 2.38 for group two and 1.78 for group one from point one to point four of the data collection.

Table twelve: Domain of freedom from anxiety

Group		Freedom	Freedom	Freedom	Freedom
		from anxiety	from anxiety	from anxiety	from anxiety
		1	2	3	4
Control	Mean	47.67	48.82	48.80	49.70
	N	12	11	10	10
	Std. Deviation	8.489	9.847	13.139	11.814
Intervention	Mean	45.00	46.67	49.69	50.92
	N	14	12	13	12
	Std. Deviation	7.504	7.114	10.379	12.303

Table twelve offers a summary of the data for the domain of freedom from anxiety. The data indicates again there was a small increase to the scores, 2.03 from group two and 5.92 from group one from point one to point four of the data collection.

Table thirteen: Domain of popularity

Group		Popularity	Popularity	Popularity	Popularity
		1	2	3	4
Control	Mean	48.25	50.55	49.70	53.80
	N	12	11	10	10
	Std. Deviation	6.982	7.607	7.804	8.377
Intervention	Mean	44.57	49.33	48.00	51.17
	N	14	12	13	12
	Std. Deviation	9.087	8.316	8.756	10.089

Table thirteen offers a summary of the data for the domain of popularity. The data indicates again there was a small increase to the scores, 5.55 from group two and 6.6 from group one from point one to point four of the data collection.

Table fourteen: Domain of happiness and satisfaction

Group		Happiness 1	Happiness 1	Happiness 3	Happiness 4
Control	Mean	50.00	49.91	51.10	48.80
	N	12	11	10	10
	Std. Deviation	4.862	5.683	7.370	7.685
Intervention	Mean	45.00	46.00	48.00	50.17
	N	14	12	13	12
	Std. Deviation	10.525	6.223	8.307	8.419

Table fourteen offers a summary of the data for the domain of happiness and satisfaction. The data indicates again there was a small decrease (1.2) to the scores from point one to point four of the data collection for the control group and a small increase (5.17) for the Intervention group.

7.0 Conclusion

The staff members were able to observe a positive benefit from receiving counselling in over half (57%) of the students in the project, whereas 74% of the students were able to report positive gain from receiving counselling. The students' reports of positive gain were closer to the counsellor's view that observed 95% of students benefited from receiving counselling. A higher result from the counsellor's perspective may be because her benchmark for improvement differed from that of staff members. With regard to the results from the Piers Harris 2 instrument it can be clearly seen from the tables that it is not a suitable instrument to be used with such a complex client group. This matter is discussed further in the discussion chapter (chapter nine). This research has shown a gap that requires a further research study in order to develop an instrument suitable for this client group.

Chapter Five

Findings

Part B

1.0 Introduction

In this chapter I will report two case studies, offering one example from each group, which fell into the category of making improvements. Additional case studies can be found in appendix one, to support the data provided in the main text. Each case study will include reports from the counsellor's, students', teachers' and teaching assistants' perspective. I will finish with a conclusion of the main points from each case study.

2.0 Case study one: Dealing with trauma and rejection

Bee was the older of two children; she was diagnosed with moderate learning difficulties and a speech and language delay. Bee's parents were divorced and she lived with her father whilst her brother lived with their mother. Bee's father died on her seventh birthday; her mother did not feel able to take care of Bee and she was placed into foster care. Two of these placements had broken down and she was now living with her third foster family. Bee was fourteen when we met for the project.

2.1 Pre counselling interviews with tutor and teaching assistant (TA)

Bee was referred to the project because staff members were concerned about her general behaviour. Her tutor and TA were aware of Bee's difficult background and reported she had low self-esteem. She was self-harming; using a compass or a broken ruler to scratch her arms and chest, leaving light scratches. The staff members could not understand why she was suddenly self harming, distressed, moody and difficult to talk to. The staff considered that the poor and silly behaviour was due to no self-awareness, and an inability to identify with her feelings. They blamed her emotional illiteracy for her inability to communicate with them.

There were further concerns about her physical appearance and personal hygiene, which impeded her inclusion within the class. Her TA commented, 'She gets teased a lot', and 'Her clothes are often dirty'. The other students complained about her body odour and would say, 'I will not sit on that chair because she has sat on it and she has the lurgee'. They also observed that she always carried a large bag with her, but that most of the content was not required in school. They reported that they had tried to address this with her, but to no avail.

Her tutor and TA agreed she had difficulty focusing in class and, 'was easily distracted'. They believed that she was working below her ability and did not care. Her tutor noted that she was very nervous; particularly when someone new came into the room and that her behaviour would rapidly deteriorate.

2.2 Pre counseling interview with student

Unfortunately the tape recording of Bee's interview was unintelligible so I had to rely on the interviewer's report. Bee used a black piece of paper, which she said meant 'mischief' and 'getting up to bad things'. She drew a boy in white, who was very small 'because he was a boy' and white was anger. She said the boy was like boys in her neighbourhood and then continued to talk about her father. She reported that her father used to get drunk and was abusive to her, but her mother was worse, so she chose to live with her father. She said he had cancer and died. She said she felt 'sad' but added, 'It is what happened and I just have to get on with life'. She went on to say that on the day of the interview it would have been her father's birthday, but she was not going to the cemetery to take him flowers. Bee was not able to expand on this, but it may have been a demonstration of her anger towards her father. Bee reported hurting her mother when she visited her and said, 'I just can't stand it', but was not able or willing to go into any further details.

2.3 The process in the sessions

Prior to meeting Bee for the commencement of counselling for the project, a professional conflict emerged. A child psychotherapist from the child and family guidance centre, who also sat on the Looked After Child Team (LAC) for social services, was concerned that Bee would be receiving counselling. This therapist believed that a child like Bee, with learning difficulties, could not make use of counselling. The therapist asserted that counselling would damage Bee because she did not have the capacity to reflect on her past and resolve inner conflict. I strongly disagreed with the therapist and having prior knowledge of Bee, I felt she was more than able to access and benefit from counselling. My discussions with the therapist over an extended period of time became very heated and resulted in the therapist refusing to talk to me. The therapist then contacted the LAC team within social services. Bee's allocated social worker became very hostile towards me and was angry that I did not seek consent, from her, for Bee to be part of my project. I was

informed by the foster carers that they were also given a difficult time for signing Bee's consent form and instructed that they did not have the authority to do this. At this point the Head Teacher of the school became involved and supported me and the foster parents in our decision to involve Bee in the project and for her to receive counselling. From this point on I was refused access to any further team meetings conducted by social services to discuss Bee's welfare. It was very unfortunate that this situation was able to influence the arrangements for Bee's care.

As I had worked with Bee for a short time in the past, when her second foster placement collapsed, we were starting on a slightly different footing as we had already established a working relationship. In our first session for the project I reflected on our previous work and what I knew about her. I also told her I had been informed that she had recently been harming herself with a compass and wondered why she was hurting herself. Bee said she had a lot of hurt inside and wanted to get it out but did not know how. We agreed that this should be the focus for our work.

Bee told me that her natural mother had recently accused her of theft and damaging furniture. She was very angry with her mother and said, 'I don't want to see her again'. Her relationship with her mother was turbulent; at times she could be caring and maternal towards Bee, but at other times would be neglectful, dismissive and emotionally absent. When Bee felt she was being rejected, her behaviour deteriorated. Her mother appeared to be unaware that her negative actions were a trigger to Bee's poor behaviour. She found Bee's behaviour difficult to deal with, which caused her to further withdraw from Bee, which in turn created further deterioration in Bee's behaviour.

Bee found the accusations from her mother very difficult to hear, which then resulted in her refusing to see her mother. She would not acknowledge or own any of her mother's accusations about her poor behaviour. I wondered if there was any truth to the accusations. I wondered if she was angry about her mother's inability to be there for her, and whether, in order to obtain some emotional response from her mother, positive or negative, she had resorted to theft and destruction. The love and attention she had once received was no longer forthcoming; it seemed possible that the theft was a symbolic way of taking what she needed (Damaging the furniture might have

been Bee's way of letting her mother know she felt 'damaged' and she was hurting inside).

Bee also reported feeling angry with her brother, but struggled to explain why. When I asked her if she was cross because he was at home with her mother and she was in care, she said no and continued to say her brother was horrible to her, 'He does lots of naughty things and then blames me'. Bee felt that nobody ever believed her and within her birth family, her mother always believed her brother.

To make matters worse, Bee also reported that her foster family had taken on another child, whom she disliked. The additional foster child in the family seemed to threaten Bee's place and security, at a time when Bee was feeling very vulnerable. Bee may have felt that the emotional support and love she was receiving from her foster parents would now be placed at risk by the new arrival. In her experience with her birth mother, emotional support was only given to one child.

I encouraged Bee to express her anger and let her know anger was a normal emotion, but also explained that some of the behaviour that goes with it may not be acceptable. I explained to Bee that when people hurt themselves it is because they are hurting or angry inside. I told her we needed to find a safe way of letting that hurt and anger out. I tried to validate her emotions, but at the same time worked on enabling her to find a safe outlet for her pain. I modelled to Bee a way of expressing emotions. I encouraged her to draw a picture of something that was making her feel upset. We then placed the picture on the wall and threw play dough at it. At the same time we shouted, screamed and swore at the image. It seemed from her reaction that she really enjoyed this exercise, and we talked about how she could use this concept in other ways at home. I suggested to her that she could draw when she was feeling upset or she could hit, scream or shout at her pillow. Bee appeared happy with this proposal and frequently reported using this strategy. She not only let me know she was able to transfer a skill to outside the session, but also alerted me to any difficulties she was having in-between sessions, so I could support her through them. This activity brought an end to the self-harming, at that time.

Bee had experienced a great deal of loss, which had resulted in her becoming a very needy and vulnerable young person. Her life was such a mess that I suspected that it would require extensive work, using a variety of skills, to help her start to make sense of her life and repair the damage. Bee's request at the beginning was to enable her 'to get all the hurt out'. Whilst the 'angry wall' was an immediate, safe way of letting the hurt out, I was aware we needed to explore the core of the problem. When we started to talk about the hurt, Bee was overcome by her feelings, so I felt I needed to direct her to a more tolerable way of exploring her 'hurt'.

She made use of the miniature animals; she projected herself on to a toy snake and retold her story of being hurt and separated from her mother and living with her father: *Snake became very angry because the father went away and snake was left alone. Snake was very sad but could not say it was sad so started being naughty. Nobody understood the snake. Snake went to live at several places but was not happy or settled. Everybody told snake off and nobody really cared for snake, thus snake felt very alone and rejected. Finally snake found a home that was not 'perfect' but would be 'good enough'. Snake was frightened that the others in this new home would be scared of snake and would not love it. Somebody else came to live at snake's house and they were horrible to snake; they took things and were rude to snake. Snake was really frightened; it did not know how to deal with this and wanted to cry but could not.*

This scenario was played through several times, over many weeks but there was never any resolution to the situation. Occasionally Bee would go into the first person and tell me about the events surrounding her father's death. When she had told all she could bear for that session she would go back into the third person. From a number of sessions I understood the following account.

Bee reported that on the eve of her seventh birthday her father had been very poorly, but would not go into hospital because he wanted to be there for his little girl. She said that night he slept on the sofa and she stayed beside him on the floor. When she woke up in the morning she said, 'Daddy, it's my birthday' but her dad did not move. He was very cold and stiff and she started crying. She said she saw her card and present on the side but could not open it; she did not know what to do. She said she

knew how to use the phone and called for an ambulance. She said she told them it was her birthday and her dad would not move. Bee said the ambulance came quickly and a policeman. She said she recognised the ambulance man; he was a neighbour and a friend of her dad's. He said she was a brave girl and looked after her. Bee reported refusing to go with the policeman, but stayed with the ambulance man until her Nan came to get her. Her mum did not want her. She could not open her presents because she did not feel happy.

In the sessions I was aware Bee was becoming particularly attached to the snake. I was also aware that the science teacher, who Bee was particularly fond of, had a snake in the classroom. However, this teacher had recently left the school and had taken the snake with her. Bee started to ask if she could look after the toy snake in-between our sessions. At first I was unsure how to respond to her request. On one level the snake had become part of her projected self and another level it represented a loss and she could not bear another loss in her life. With the latter in mind I agreed to her taking the snake home on the understanding that she brought it back each week. I said how lucky the snake was to have someone like Bee to look after it. Bee reported back each week on the snake's behaviour. The snake began to misbehave and she believed the snake needed to be punished. The snake had to remain in its box to be safe, but lots of holes were placed in the box so it could breathe.

Three months into the work I was aware that Bee had stopped bringing the snake into the session and would only talk about it. She made up lots of reasons why the snake could not come into the session. I discussed this element with my supervisor. I was concerned that the snake seemed more than a transitional object it had become a self-object and she could not risk losing it. The fear of losing the snake was making her very anxious; I wondered whether if I gave her the snake, it might ease her anxieties. I was also aware we were coming close to our first break, for the Christmas holidays. I said to Bee that since she was doing such a wonderful job of looking after snake, she might be able to keep it. Bee was very excited at this prospect but was concerned that snake should come in and say goodbye because, 'It isn't nice just to go'. I agreed and said it was hard when people leave our life and we haven't had a chance to say goodbye. Bee then commented that she was aware of the holidays and wanted to know if she could have a party in the session at the end of term. I talked about the

difficulties of a break and whether she felt she needed something extra to help her through the break. The last session of term I brought in the requested food and drink, I was aware that Bee ate as if she was starving and couldn't get enough. I felt as if she had to consume everything because it had to sustain her through the holidays.

In the new term Bee was fairly quiet to start with. She reported that she had spent Christmas with her natural mother and had been bought a colouring book. I thought this seemed an inappropriate present for a fourteen year old. Her grandmother had brought her a manicure set with an assortment of nail varnishes. Bee gave me these and said she wanted me to look after them because she was worried she would use the scissors to hurt herself and she wanted to sniff the varnish and the varnish remover. I talked about how difficult the holiday must have been for her and the inappropriateness of her gifts. We went on to discuss the progress she had made in asking for the help and holding she knew she needed. Bee was pleased that I acknowledged her development and responsibility in asking for help. I in turn agreed to place her presents in my cupboard where she could access them if she wanted to.

Bee was concerned about her approaching birthday in March due to her memories of her father's death on that date. We talked about her father and what it was like to have found him dead on her birthday. We also discussed what her father was really like and I wondered how she would be spending her birthday if her father were alive. Bee said her dad was a nice man and loved her. She was sure he would give her a present that she would like or could use and they would go out somewhere special. I said to Bee how difficult it was to be besieged with painful memories at a time that was meant to be special and happy. I believe that Bee had idealised her father and was not able to reflect on the negative aspects of her relationship with him on this occasion. She asked if we could celebrate her birthday like we had Christmas. I commented that she seemed very worried about this event and wanted it agreed in advance. Bee said she wanted to know something nice was going to happen. We agreed that I would bring in a cake and a drink and we would have a tea party to celebrate her birthday.

At the time of her birthday, as agreed, we had a tea party. Again I noticed Bee devoured the food as if she was starving. In the session we spent a short time reflecting on the anniversary of her father's death, but I swiftly moved on to

celebrating her special day. We each made a card. I suggested she make herself a card and draw something she would like to give herself on the front. At first Bee thought this was bizarre, and why would she want to give herself something. But I noticed as she engaged in the art activity she took great pleasure in giving herself lots of sparkle and glitter. I also made her a card that she was able to take with her.

Shortly after her birthday Bee reported that the snake had shed its skin. She took some time explaining to me her understanding of this event. I could not help but think of the symbolic meaning. I said I had noticed that, like the snake, she had also changed. I was aware she had stopped hurting herself; she had her hair cut; her skin looked clearer and she seemed more at peace with herself. Bee smiled and said she was ready to have her Christmas presents back.

Bee regressed slightly towards the end of the work; I was aware she was becoming anxious about the ending. We reflected on this and I noticed Bee was able to be open and honest and could articulate her feelings. On our last session, again we had a tea party to mark the end of our work. The snake joined us and I was able to say goodbye. Bee reported the snake had grown and it now needed a new box. This seemed to reflect how she had grown and was ready to move on.

2.4 Analysis of the sessions

Bee was aware of her difficulties, which she demonstrated by saying, 'I have hurt inside', but felt overwhelmed by the depth of her emotions, adding, 'I do not know how to get it out'. Bee demonstrated she knew what the problem was, but was asking for help to deal with it. She needed to be helped to find an endurable way of exploring her life and safe ways of expressing her hurt.

Bee was particularly responsive to the angry wall; this exercise seemed to meet her need by offering a safe outlet for her hurt, but also validated her feelings. She was aware it would not be acceptable to do this exercise at home, so we looked at alternative acceptable outlets.

Bee found the use of the miniature animals a safe way to explore and re tell her story. The snake became the focal object representing both her and loss. The possibility of

losing something else was too great and she needed to take care of the snake. I believe this was also her way of saying she wanted and needed to take care of herself. Bee was able to continue with the metaphor of the snake by talking about how the snake was naughty and misbehaved. The box seemed to reflect her need and request to be held and contained, but this needed to be done appropriately hence the holes in the box; she had to be able to breathe.

Bee fluctuated between speaking in the third and first person. I noticed that she was willing to talk about past events in the first person, but was unable to manage current events, so always talked about them metaphorically. When she was feeling held and contained she was able to further explore the dynamics between her and her foster sister, her intense jealousy and her fear that this could not be resolved.

She was very anxious about any break in the therapeutic work. I demonstrated to her I understood this by providing sustenance for the forthcoming breaks. This in turn enabled her to seek support and understanding for future breaks and important dates in the year.

Bee found the Christmas holidays challenging, particularly the interactions with her mother. However, on this occasion she did not return to self-harm, but asked me to look after her 'dangerous gifts'. This seemed to reflect her growing ability to ask for help and to let people know she was hurting. Bee took responsibility for getting the help she required and equally was able to let me know when she returned to a place where she felt safe enough to have her things back.

At the conclusion of the work Bee demonstrated her knowledge of the work by stating the snake had shed its skin and had grown and now needed a new box. This seemed symbolic of her growth and signalled that she now required an expansion of the pre-existing boundaries, while maintaining an established support structure.

2.5 Post counselling interviews with the tutor and TA

At the conclusion of the work, her form tutor and TA were interviewed again. Her tutor said, 'I think she's really, really improved this year. I think her self-esteem amongst her peers has been really good, so there's been a definite improvement there'. He also thought her behaviour had improved, 'Again it's a great improvement;

her behaviour in school is really good'. He observed that she was trying harder in her schoolwork, 'She can stay on task better from what she was before. She was distracted easily by the others earlier in the year but now she seems to be focussed on trying to learn and to do stuff in school'. He thought her general appearance had improved, 'She used to have fairly dirty clothes and stuff like that but it seems to be better'. He observed, 'She's generally quite happy most of the time now', but believed, 'She is still shy around people she doesn't know. If someone new came into the class she's generally fairly quiet or she laughs a fair bit when she gets nervous and sometimes that attracts more attention to her which makes her more nervous, which makes her laugh more. But she's working at it. She's trying to improve that'. He added, 'She's definitely improved her standing amongst her peers in the school, in the classroom and the school. There were all sorts of problems with her at the start of the year. I think we spoke about bullying by the other kids, mentally and physically, but I think that's all stopped now she's grown up. She doesn't engage in any negative and silly behaviour which takes a lot of the limelight off her, so I would say she would be increasing her network of friends in the school now'.

Her TA also felt she had noticed improvements, 'I think she's more confident in class now that this name calling about the lurgee and people not wanting to sit on the same chair that she's sat on, has finished; Yes I think she's got more confidence. I think she's grown up. She seems to have matured'. Her TA also observed, 'She is able to recognise when things upset her now. She does now say she's upset, can she have a word.... In the beginning part of the year, there were lots of reports that she was digging herself with the compass. That is not happening any more'. However, her TA felt she was still a 'sad' person and only reported she had 'one close friend'. She believed her behaviour depended on her mood and, 'it can still be quite silly'. She reported Bee was, 'Now quite enthusiastic about her schoolwork but still gives up easily'. She felt there was an improvement to her physical appearance but believed it was still unsatisfactory.

2.6 Post counselling interview with the student

When Bee was re-interviewed she reported that the counselling had helped her express her feelings, but seemed pre-occupied with her foster carer's absence. Her foster dad had gone to France to work on a holiday home and had not been in contact.

Bee talked about her foster mum being worried. Whilst Bee was in this heightened state of anxiety she was not able to reflect on anything else.

2.7 Follow up interviews with the tutor and TA

In the follow up interviews (year two) with her form tutor and TA, they both felt she had returned to school from the summer holidays a 'new person'. However, she regressed quickly. It later transpired her Nan and foster Nan had died. She requested to see me; I offered her a short space of counselling to support her through her latest bereavements.

In the final interviews her form tutor believed her self-esteem had improved, although she felt her behaviour could be 'quite wacky'. Her TA felt there were improvements and had observed, 'There isn't any nastiness,' of late. Her tutor and TA both felt there were improvements to her appearance, 'She can hold herself quite well now. But underneath it all she is still very vulnerable and young'. They added, 'She's lost weight and is carrying herself in a different way. Around school she's not so clumpy with walking, and oh yes, the bag, the bag is still nice and full'. They thought, 'She's a sad person but funnily enough there has been an improvement, even with the grief that happened earlier in the year'.

2.8 Follow up interview with student

Bee reported that it had helped having someone to talk to. She felt it helped her sort out her problems and stated, 'This was done together'. She liked the fact that counselling was confidential; she said, 'It was private' and she trusted I would not tell anyone. However, she also said, 'I want a blind at the door so people can't see in' and she didn't like to hear other people outside because that meant they could hear her.

She said she used to scratch herself because she was angry. She remembered an activity we did together which helped her with her anger, 'She told me to, if you um, you see; she told me to, draw a picture about my brother. We used to chuck play dough at the wall. And also she said, "If you're angry just get a pillow and scream, like that"'. Bee reported still using art, the angry wall and her pillow as a punch bag to help her when she was upset or angry. She said she used to 'get worried' but that has 'disappeared' now.

Bee felt she had matured, lost weight and had her hair cut. She said, 'I found it difficult when my Nan died and it was hard to come to school and do my work. It helped when I talked to Beverley about it'. Bee felt learning to talk about her feelings with me enabled her to talk to other people. Bee believed, 'We are best friends'. She reported that she was sad about leaving school and was going to miss working with me.

2.9 Conclusion

When I first interviewed Bee's TA and form tutor I was struck by the paralysing fear of the hopelessness, surrounding her. Everybody recognised the traumatic events in her life, but it felt as if no one could go there with her because it was too painful. It seemed that because nobody could change the events in her life and make things better for her, they became disabled by their own emotions. This was in turn projected on to Bee, which led to a misconception that she was emotionally illiterate. Whilst the teachers may have believed this, my experience of her was different. I believed she knew and was able to identify her emotions, but was overwhelmed by them and did not know what to do with such strong feelings. I also believed she knew the staff at the school could not hold and contain her unmanageable feelings and acted accordingly.

The school observed a dramatic difference in Bee after counselling; she stopped self-harming and was more able to ask for help when she needed it. Her behaviour in school had improved and so did her standing amongst her peers. The name calling and 'bullying' had stopped with the improvement to her personal hygiene and physical appearance. There was a notable improvement to her concentration and attitude to her schoolwork.

In the second year of the project, staff members reported concerns about Bee due to a further two bereavements in her family. Her behaviour had begun to deteriorate and her tutor reported that she had become immature and lacked focus in lessons. However, Bee was able to ask for some support in this period and her tutor and TA felt she was able to bounce back.

Bee had experienced a great deal of loss in her life and demonstrated an anxious attachment pattern. She felt disabled by the depth of her emotions and did not know what to do with the pain she was feeling. The angry wall offered some relief and enabled her to know she had the right to have feelings and to express them.

Bee needed to find a safe and manageable way to tell and explore her story. Working symbolically enabled her to meet this need. In the work she demonstrated her capacity to understand her emotional world. She learned to talk about and manage her strong feelings, to ask for what she needed and made some development towards self-soothing. She used the therapeutic relationship to go some way towards developing a secure attachment pattern. She demonstrated her knowledge of the changes in herself in the story of the snake shedding the old skin. The need for a new larger box for the snake demonstrated her readiness to have her boundaries extended. Bee managed the ending quite appropriately; she was able to articulate that she was worried, but was not overwhelmed and was still able to function appropriately.

3.0 Case study two: Coming to terms with a facial deformity

Sonya was placed in the second group, which acted as the comparison group, and she received counselling in the second year of the project. Her case study represents findings from the data that indicate that she made improvements after receiving counselling. Sonya was the younger of two children and lived with both parents. It was reported her mother had a serious health condition and her father was the primary carer. Sonya was diagnosed with a moderate learning difficulty and had a cleft palate. This condition had left her with a significant facial deformity. Sonya was fourteen when she was referred to the project because she appeared very shy and had little self-esteem.

3.1 Comparison interviews with the tutor and teaching assistant (TA)

In the first set of interviews her current form tutor and TA were interviewed. They were both concerned that she had very low self-esteem. Her TA said, 'I think she is very self-conscious about her facial disfigurement'. Her tutor and TA said that her behaviour was very good, but were concerned how she interacted with her peers. Her tutor said, 'She is very shy and will always talk very quietly and with her head stooped'. Her TA agreed and said, 'She always has her hair covering her face'. Her

tutor believed apart from her self-consciousness about her facial appearance she was well presented, although her TA said that there could be some improvements to her personal hygiene.

3.2 Comparison interviews with the student

The interviewer reported similar observations to those of staff members that she walked with her head hanging low and using her hair as a shield. The interviewer reported that she appeared very sensitive and lonely.

In her interview Sonya drew a picture of herself with her mouth open and reported she was saying hello. She also said, 'My mouth is smiling'. She coloured her dress red and said, 'It reminds me of the paper on the wall at home'. She drew a tree and used the same red for the trunk, but was not able to comment about this. She drew large blocks of blue lines, which represented the sky; again she did not comment about this. She continued to draw a house. The house appeared to be empty; there was nothing at the windows. She drew a door that was blank apart from a small cross.

Sonya continued with her story about the house. She said that someone had put a bomb in the house and the house was burnt down. The girl went to get help from a neighbour. The neighbour would not help her and told her to go away. The girl then went to the other neighbours and they did help her. They called the fireman and he came round to put out the fire. The girl was hurt from the fire and she had blood over her face and legs; she was taken to hospital. Sonya said nobody else was in the house because the girl's family had gone away, so she was placed into foster care because she had nowhere to live. The girl was frightened about living in care because she thought that her carers would not like or understand her. Sonya also reported that the girl would miss her brother and her parents.

Sonya continued to tell the interviewer the girl is very sad because her parents do not talk to the girl and she is lonely. She reported that the girl does not have friends at school because they are unkind to her, but she does have one friend that she can talk to. She said the other children are unkind to her; the girl is smiling, but she really feels upset.

3.3 Second interviews with the tutor and TA

There was a considerable difference in opinion about Sonya between her tutor and TA at the end of the first year (during which she had been in the comparison group). Her tutor believed he had seen a noticeable change in Sonya; he thought she had become more confident. Her TA said, 'She has good days and bad days. I think she gets very worried what people think of her'. Her tutor said, 'She is quite confident in speaking now and not just sitting in the corner and not saying too much. I've seen a huge improvement with her over the year'. Her tutor thought she was more part of the group now, whereas her TA believed she was still isolated and only had two or three friends. Her TA continued to believe she was still very self-conscious about her facial appearance and commented, '[She] walks with her head stooped and her hair covering her face'.

3.4 Second interviews with the student

The interviewer reported that Sonya was happy to attend her interview but seemed overly compliant. She observed that Sonya's head was still bowed to cover her face and that she waited for the interviewer to say something and was not able to initiate anything. The interviewer believed that Sonya did not know what to draw and became uncomfortable and said that she found a way to state this via the girl in the drawing.

Sonya drew a person who she said was very lonely and did not know what to do. The person was drawn in black with long black hair. The girl had no hands and had four legs. She was not able to reflect on this. The girl was trying to smile but could not; she was sad because nobody would talk to her. In fact it was a boy who would not talk to her. The girl used to go out with this boy but now they have finished. The girl was very upset but the boy did not know how sad the girl was. The girl wanted the boy to say sorry and would have forgiven him but did not feel able to say this to the boy. The girl then drew an easel, and on the easel a picture of a boat which was going to Paris. The girl thought Paris would be a beautiful place and she would be able to get away from it all.

3.5 Pre counselling interviews with the tutor and TA

In the second year of the project Sonya's new form tutor and TA were interviewed prior to her receiving counselling. Her tutor and TA echoed many of the concerns

from previous year's staff members, in particular those of the last TA. It was suggested that the main area of concern was her low self-esteem and self-consciousness about her facial appearance. They both believed that her lack of confidence inhibited her development socially and prevented her from achieving her full potential. Her tutor said, 'She has very low self-esteem and is not very confident in the group'. She believed that Sonya did not have many friends and found it difficult to stand up for herself. They both believed her schoolwork was good and that she was able to stay on task with very little support. Her tutor and TA reported no concerns regarding her personal hygiene. They both believed that she was fairly compliant and that it would have been an improvement if she had been able to say no once in a while. Over the period of interviews, so far, staff and the interviewer had not reported any substantial changes in her.

3.6 Pre counselling interviews with the student

The interviewer reported again that Sonya seemed very quiet, shy and overly compliant, although the interviewer commented that when they were walking to the room she looked at the interviewer and smiled. This was the first time the interviewer could recall this. The interviewer reported that Sonya was aware this was her last year at school and appeared anxious about leaving. Sonya said that she had friends at school that she thought supported her, but she did not like Fridays and school holidays because she had no one to talk to. She reported that she found it very difficult when people commented on her face and called her disabled.

She reported that she felt it would be strange having counselling. She had thought about it and would really like some help with her anger. She continued to say that she does not like it when people are rude to her about her face and size. When this happens she gets sad inside and angry and does not know what to do with her feelings. She said she could not talk to her parents about it and she certainly could not tell her friends in case they laughed at her. Sonya was also worried that if she told her friends someone else might overhear and make fun of her.

3.7 The process in the sessions

For the first week of counselling Sonya was absent from school so did not attend her session. The following week when I met her from her class, I noticed she was very

quiet and walked stooped with her hair hanging over her face. When we reached the room she seemed nervous and became very giggly. I noticed throughout the work when she became nervous or anxious she would giggle a lot.

Sonya required me to initiate the conversation. I went through the agreement about confidentiality and asked her if she had any questions or wanted to tell me anything. Sonya then demonstrated a different side of herself; she became fairly clear and articulate. She told me of the repeated bullying from one student in her class. She informed me that the student lied and everybody thought they were friends. She said when this other student was leaving school she was so relieved, but staff were worried she would miss her so-called friend. Sonya thought that her teacher did not want to understand the truth. She said she was happier now this student had left the school. This change in her seemed to have been reflected in the observations of her changed confidence by her tutor at the end of the first year, although her tutor was unaware of the reasons for the change.

Sonya continued to tell me that people stared at her and were rude about her face. She said that she tries hard not to let it get to her, but sometimes it really hurts and she gets very upset. She said, 'This is the way God made me and that's it'. She said she would like surgery to correct her nose; she would like a nose like other people, but knew she would have to wait until she was older for surgery. Sonya was able to report some of the positive characteristics of her personality. She thought she was caring, a good friend and made people laugh.

Sonya said she wanted to find ways to manage the teasing from other people and wanted to manage her anger better. I did not feel that she had an anger management problem in the sense of outburst, but clearly there was an inner rage that she wanted to release. I also noticed she became avoidant when we briefly touched on her facial appearance. I sensed that she had been told, 'That is the way you are, so get on with it'. She presented as someone who would make light of a situation or mask her pain with a joke. I was also aware her tutors and TAs had reported none of these strategies.

The next time we met Sonya reported her sadness about people staring at her or asking things about her nose. She said that other people outside of school teased her

and she felt very upset. She was not able to say where she put all that anger and believed she managed it by laughing at them. However, she thought this strategy did not always work for her. I introduced some role-play into our work. I suggested that she would be somebody that looked slightly different and I would be a rude stranger and stare and say horrible things. At certain points we 'froze' the play and we thought of ways to say something and express our feelings. When we had done this I noticed Sonya was very able to stand up for her self and have a go at me for being rude. I also noticed Sonya's voice became different; it was very powerful. Then we swapped the roles over and Sonya became the rude person. Sonya found this role very difficult and giggled a lot. At the end we debriefed and discussed what it was like experiencing the two roles. Sonya reported it felt good saying things back to other people, but found it harder to be the unkind person.

As we approached the Christmas holidays we spent some time talking about how she was going to spend this time. I noticed she spoke freely and fondly of her father but never mentioned her mother. When I reflected this to Sonya she said, 'Oh, mum is fine', and diverted the conversation. She thought that when she had cosmetic surgery then her life would be complete as she was not unhappy in any other area. She expressed some concern about going into hospital. I had expected this to be fear of the operation or all the medical staff, however this was not the case. Sonya's fear was about meeting other children on the ward. She was anxious about how they would react to her and fearful of the other children's possible comments. In my ignorance I had made an assumption Sonya would be on a ward with other children with similar needs and she would not face such cruelty. I was unclear whether my assumptions were accurate or not, but it was evident, regardless of the type of ward she would be on, she was frightened of others' reaction to her.

Sonya continued to tell me about the operation she had had as a baby. She said that she looks back at the photos of her prior to her operation and it scares her. She also said that her brother had told her he was scared of her and would not look at her. Sonya was not able to say what her parents' reaction was to her facial deformities at birth. I wondered if she dared not entertain thoughts of disgust and fear from two people who were supposed to love her unconditionally.

In the New Year Sonya brought in some photos of herself when she was a baby pre and post operation. It appeared that before the holidays Sonya had tested me out, but now felt safe enough to show how she really looked prior to her first operation. She spoke about her brother and how she could understand why he must have been frightened. She reported it was OK that he felt like that and that she now has a good relationship with him.

At this point I was very aware of my own feelings. I felt overwhelmed by my inadequacies. The situation was horrible; I had not met a young girl with severe deformities from a cleft palate. I could not change this fact nor could I prevent other people from being cruel. The only thing I could do was to sit with her in that pain. At times that pain felt very uncomfortable and I was aware that she could not stay with it either. I felt she was very compassionate and forgave family members, particularly the brother. Inside I wanted to scream at her brother and say, 'How dare you!' I approached this with Sonya, but she was unable to entertain such thoughts. I wondered whether this was my reaction or whether I was picking up on some countertransference.

I suggested that we use the puppets and we revisited the role-play of people staring and being cruel. I noticed that Sonya really enjoyed finding her voice and expressing the unmentionable, daring to put cruel things into words, this time round.

I suggested to her that we could make up a book all about her and perhaps she could bring in some more photos of her throughout her childhood up to the present day. I wanted to make a book to offer us an opportunity to talk in more depth about the feelings of ages and stages in her life but also as a way of building her self esteem. We started by entering three things she would like to achieve in our work together.

- 1) To speak with a louder voice
- 2) To speak to friends
- 3) To help others

I was surprised at the third aim because I believed that this was something she probably already did very efficiently.

Periodically we revisited these aims and discussed where she felt she was in achieving her goals. I also placed several sheets of achievement stars in her book. Each week I asked her what she believed she had achieved and was proud of and she marked this with a star. She brought in a selection of photos for us to copy and place in her 'scrap book'. She talked further about being born the way she was. She commented that she had not been able to talk to anybody about the way she felt before. She said that when she had tried to talk to her mum and dad they became upset. She said her mum would cry and her dad would try and make things better by making her laugh. She said she did not like to upset her parents so would never talk about how she felt.

We were approaching another break in our counselling because of Sonya going on work experience. She had chosen to work with children and was attending an interview later in the week. We spent some time practising interviews and thinking about what questions she would like to ask at her interview. I also asked her how she would deal with questions from the children about her face. I noticed that she was becoming more confident and comfortable with answering these questions. She said that she would say that this was the way she was born and she did not like it either, but there was nothing she could do about it.

Sonya reported her interview went well which she recorded on her achievement page. We continued with her 'scrapbook' looking at difference and similarity. Sonya was able to identify her difference was her facial appearance. She said it was not good because others would not like to have a nose like her, but on the other hand it would be good because they would then know what it felt like. Sonya struggled to look beyond her deformities and with a lot of prompting she was able to discover some similarities. I noticed that she seemed quite surprised that she was actually very similar to others when she got past her obvious difference. I felt the exercise was quite powerful for her.

I began to notice a difference in Sonya when she was walking around the school. She was no longer stooping as much. This was also observed and commented upon by staff at the school. Additionally, Sonya reported that she was beginning to speak more clearly and her English teacher had praised her for this.

When Sonya returned from work experience and the half term school break she informed me of a visit to her dentist. I decided to use this opportunity to comment upon her mouth, which was the most deformed part of her face. Sonya was not able to hear my enquiry and talked instead about the procedure for repairing her nose. She also commented upon her stature (she was fairly small, but not unusually so) and that people kept teasing her about her size, which is something else she finds very difficult. We continued in role-play to experience feelings regarding such hurtful comments and practising ways to respond to them. Additionally, we identified where the hurt was in her body and practised ways of letting this out. I noticed when we were utilising role-play in our work Sonya was able to demonstrate how insightful she was about her body and feelings. I also noticed she was becoming far more assertive and articulate in role-play.

The following week Sonya had her hair cut. It was now very short and completely off her face. I commented how wonderful she looked and she said that she felt she was changing, but was not able to say how. She told me of a forthcoming hospital appointment. She seemed anxious and excited. She believed that a lot rested on this appointment and she would discover when they would be doing her operation. She asked if we could use the session to practice asking the surgeon questions. I noticed this was the first time she was able to request something in our work.

The following week Sonya was very distressed when I came to collect her. I had made an assumption that this was about her hospital appointment. It turned out, as Sonya was becoming more confident, the school had encouraged her to start travelling independently, as opposed to using school transport. While I agreed that Sonya was more than capable of such independence, I was very angry that I had not been consulted because Sonya required support in this transition and might then have avoided what did happen. She had reported that travelling to school on the 'red bus' had excited her. This much independence is regarded as a milestone in a special school and gives status. But Sonya had not prepared herself for the cruelty of our society. She reported that she was stared at and called names like 'freak' and heard comments like, 'I would not go out if I looked like that'. Sonya was devastated and cried bitterly.

While this was a very difficult experience and could have been better planned, the experience enabled us to really connect to the pain of her difference. When we had exhausted her emotions, I suggested that she might like to ask her friends for some support. She identified one person in school that she could trust and asked if she could come into the session. We discussed her expectations of how the friend might help and how she would manage if the friend did not comply. I agreed and went and asked the student to join us. I informed the student that Sonya was very upset by something that had happened and would like her support. The student agreed to come to Sonya's session and said she would try and help her. Sonya was able to tell the student what had happened and how she felt. She was then able to ask the student if she would be there for her and if:

- 1) She would ask after her
- 2) Could suggest any way of dealing with other people's hurtful comments
- 3) Make her laugh.

I was aware that Sonya had moved further towards her aims, but more importantly had taken a risk to trust and open up to somebody outside the therapeutic space.

Later Sonya also informed me about her trip to the hospital. She reported feeling more confident and was able to ask questions, but was disappointed because the doctors said they could not operate until she had stopped growing. The doctor indicated this would be around her eighteenth birthday. Sonya was hoping that when she started college, at 16, that she would have had a 'new nose' and this would have meant a fresh start. The reality was she was going to have to start college with her deformities and face the onslaught of people staring and asking questions in an environment that was very different to the supportive and protective ambience of a special school. She said nobody, including her father, allowed her a space to express her anger and disappointment. She said in fact nobody ever acknowledged how she was feeling. We spent some time in role-play, aimed at enabling her to tell the doctors and her father how she was feeling, and expressing her anger at their avoidance of her pain.

Sonya continued to ask me about why she had been born this way. She believed if God really cared, he would not make people like this, so she was becoming despondent about her religion. She was also becoming frustrated with her father's comment, 'That is the way God made you'. Until now she had not felt able to

question this comment and had accepted it was a *fait accompli*. I said I did not understand either how a God could do this to anybody, and that she had every reason to be angry. I also said I understood that God had nothing to do with it and it was a fluke of nature, one of those things that could not be explained. It happened when she was developing in her mother's womb. It was nobody's fault, not hers or her mothers. She said that her mother had said the same thing to her, but she was still angry that it had happened. I asked whether she was angry with her mother; she was not able to answer. I wondered if this was why her mother never featured in our work. Did she blame her mother for her deformities? We spent some time working with the mirror looking at her features.

Towards the conclusion of the therapy and in preparation for our ending and the completion of her schooling, we talked about her future. On our last session revisiting her 'scrapbook', we looked at our work together and Sonya was able to identify the changes she had made. She felt pleased with her self that she had attained her three goals and said she felt it had really helped her to have someone to talk to.

3.8 Analysis of the sessions

Initially Sonya presented as staff had described her. She had low self-esteem, her head hung low. She wore her hair to shield her disfigurement and she became very giggly when nervous. However, she allowed me to see a glimpse of her true self when I enquired what she wanted. As her demeanour changed, she became articulate and assertive. Sonya was aware that people could not tolerate her pain, as the staff members' inability to see that she was being bullied demonstrated. I was able to show her that I too found the pain of her reality was great, but I was willing to stay with her. As she experienced my willingness and ability to stay with her pain, she trusted me to further explore her world.

Sonya was clear what she wanted to achieve from counselling. She knew that ignoring others was not working any longer. She found her voice through role-play. Utilising this skill not only enabled Sonya to find her voice, but it enabled her to identify her feelings and practise expressing them. Early on in the work she gave me a snapshot of the dynamics in her family life. It appeared that her mother was emotionally and physically absent for her and her father, whilst caring, appeared to be avoidant.

Sonya was very aware of other people's response to her. I thought of Sinason's reflections on Bion's idea: that when a baby looks into its mother's eyes it sees whether it is truly lovable. I could not help but think that Sonya's parents were probably not able to offer this positive mirror. Perhaps they offered a mirror of disgust and rejection. This was certainly how she seemed to feel about herself; she was not worthy or lovable. Sonya now feared other people's response because it continued to be negative and deepened her hurt. This manifested in her anxieties about going into hospital; it was not the fear of the surgery she had to endure, but people's reactions to her. When she had explored the concept of other people's fear and reaction to her, she took a brave step and explored this concept about her family's reaction to her, starting with her brother. I believe she was not ready to address her parents' attitude.

As Sonya continued to connect with her experiences the pain became very intense. I was aware that I wanted to move away from it, but knew that I could not. I continued to introduce activities into the session not only to address the pain in bite size pieces, but to also offer her some strategies in her life. In supervision I discussed additional ways I could do this with her. I introduced her 'scrapbook' so we could continue to talk about her life via the photos, but also to develop her self-esteem. I believe Sonya understood that the photographs would enable us to talk about the hurt, so used her goals to focus on positive achievements. I did not understand this as avoidance, but as Sonya's need for balance in her life.

She was able to tell me about the difficulty she had in talking to her parents about her feelings and her skill at protecting them. She knew this skill was damaging her and was able to articulate how talking to somebody was helping her.

Exploring the concept that everybody had differences and similarities was new to Sonya. She was only too aware of her differences and had never considered that she was similar to others. She found this exercise quite powerful and it enabled her to connect to others in a way that had previously been blocked.

As we continued to explore her issues in role-play and acknowledged her success in her achievement stars, she became more confident. This new emerging self was

reflected by her new haircut; for the first time she revealed her face for others to see, and also removed her shield against others. The school noticed this new found confidence and misinterpreted it. Sonya agreed to relinquish school transport and discover independent travel. Unfortunately this was not thoroughly planned or executed and Sonya's self esteem took a knock; but on the other hand the experience enabled us to connect with her pain at a much deeper level. She was then able to take the first step of reaching out to another person. This action was met with the desired effect and was the start of a new way of communicating for Sonya.

She spent some time exploring her visits to the hospital via role-play. She discovered that she did not have to be a silent victim of the medical world, but could actively take part in discussions about herself. As she became more active in this process, she also identified and articulated other people's denial of her feelings. This led her to examine her parents' attitude towards her. She now wanted people to acknowledge her feelings and allow her to express her anger. She wanted to re-affirm what her mother had said to her about her birth defects and whilst she was not able to express her feelings I sensed she was moving to a place of peace with her mother. Towards the end of the work I returned to the concept of Bion's mirror, this time thinking not of her mother's reflection, but of her own. I wanted to enable her to look into her own eyes and reach a place where she could love herself. Our ending saw a return to role-play to prepare her for college. We also revisited the changes that she had achieved in the counselling work.

3.9 Post counselling interviews with the tutor and TA

When her tutor and TA were re-interviewed, they were able to comment on many changes with Sonya. Her tutor said, 'She is becoming more assertive and actually standing up more for herself; she's come a long way'. Her TA also recognised her improvements, 'Well, Sonya, when she was on work experience, was amazing because there was all these young children and Sonya in charge. And they were all by Sonya. They [the manager] actually said, I mean it was verbal, "Oh", she said, "She's better than some of the staff I pay"'. The staff believed that Sonya continued to behave appropriately. Her TA commented on an incident that occurred outside in the playground; she believed this was a huge positive step for Sonya, 'I couldn't believe it, you know, that she restrained Karishma. Apparently she held her arms'.

They both agreed her schoolwork continued to be good. Her tutor said, 'She's a real worker. She's a joy really. Give her the work and she does it'. Her tutor noticed that, 'Yes, you know as far as work goes and things and she is actually talking more, whereas before she wouldn't give any ideas. She found it quite difficult to talk in front of people'. Her TA agreed with this. She said, 'I think her self-confidence and ability to talk to people and hold a conversation is really improved'. The most significant changes seemed to be around her self-confidence. Her tutor said, 'Yes she is a different person. It's amazing the difference'. Her TA agreed but said, 'I think she's sad about her facial appearance. Um, she will come and tell me now if they are being unkind, she tells us what's going on. And I think she can be very easily hurt, verbally and physically'. The fact that Sonya was telling staff at the school, her tutor saw as an improvement. Her tutor said there were not many changes to her popularity, 'Yes she's what I call very social on that level, but she will only have a few, probably very close, friends who she feels really comfortable with'. Her TA agreed and added, 'She tends, she keeps herself to herself. She doesn't seem to have that many friends, but then there aren't that many girls in the school'. Her tutor commented on her self-awareness which was the first time I had had this reported, 'She's very aware of her appearance and different things and that's quite hard to grow up with and acknowledge.

3.10 Post counselling interviews with the student

The interviewer reported that Sonya was again happy to attend her interview, reported many changes and believed there was a noticeable difference.

In her interview Sonya said that she had really enjoyed working with me and felt that it had helped her because she was able to talk to me about her problems. She said, 'She [the counsellor] was really there for me and listened to me'. Sonya said she had been nervous at first but had got to know me and was able to talk to me. She commented that she used to have her head down and now she did not do that any more. She had had her haircut and was not going to look down any more. She acknowledged this had been difficult at first but I had helped her through it. She said I had offered her a chance to talk through it and together we had found strategies to deal with other people's comments.

Her conclusion was, 'I feel more confident'. She was now able to travel on the red bus, which had been difficult at first, but acknowledged that I had helped her do it. She felt other people had noticed that she had changed, in particular that she was now able to talk in class. She believed that learning to talk to me enabled her to talk to other people, particularly her friends and her teachers.

She told the interviewer, that the work in counselling had been very good, it had helped her. She reflected on her difficulties in ending with me and on leaving school but said, 'I am now confident enough and ready to move on'.

3.11 Summary

The improvements her tutor observed in the first year of the project seemed to have reflected the release Sonya experienced when the bullying from a particular student ended. In the second year the tutor and TA observed further and bigger changes in Sonya. The improvements were based around her self-awareness and self-confidence. The tutor and TA reported improvements to her ability to communicate with others, her communicating in class and her standing up for herself. These developments were also reported from the wider staff.

Sonya was also aware of her development. She noticed an improvement in her confidence. She now perceived herself as worthy of friendship. She believed she was doing better in her schoolwork and had now found her voice. Receiving counselling appeared to help her see that she might still cry about her difficulties, but she could now survive them. This was reflected in her final comment that she was now ready and confident to move on.

3.12 Conclusion

Sonya was a bright, sensitive and a self-aware young person. However, it appeared that she had not been able to explore or express her pain about her birth defects because of other people's inability to manage their pain. This had led her to an inability to express herself at all. She may have also had a mirror of disgust and fear reflected to her in her early days. This powerful early message along with a continued negative response from people, led her to a place of inner conflict. She came to believe she was worthless and unlovable. She had little understanding that she had a

right to her thoughts and feelings. But her true self knew she was a wonderful lovable person with rights. I believe she needed support to work through her inner conflict and reach a place of self worth.

The counselling had several goals:

- 1) To address her low self esteem and enable her to love herself
- 2) To enable her to explore and express her hurt and anger
- 3) To enable her to move from a place of passivity and actively become involved in her own life decisions
- 4) To enable her to trust and ask for help

My judgement was that Sonya had found the use of role-play particularly safe and helpful in finding her voice. She was able to explore her hurt, initially from people outside of the family then from her brother and finally her parents. She was able to reach a place of resolution about her birth defects. She discovered she had a right to have feelings and as importantly to express them.

4.0 Conclusion to the chapter

The two reported case studies demonstrate the extent of the needs of young people in a special school, which are often overlooked. Each young person was able to engage with and benefit from receiving counselling. This was demonstrated, not only by the process in the sessions, but was substantiated by reports from the staff members and the students themselves. The case studies also demonstrate the diversity of skills that need to be utilised and the need for the therapist to be flexible in the methods used when working with this client group.

Chapter Six

Findings

Part C

1.0 Introduction

In this chapter I will report two case studies, offering one example from each of the first and second year groups of those who fell into the category of making no improvements (additional case studies can be found I appendix two, to support the data provided in the main text). Each case study will include reports from the counsellor, student's teacher and teaching assistant's perspective. I will conclude the chapter with a summary of the key points from the two case studies.

2.0 Case study One: Finding her identity and accepting her disability.

Chanel was fourteen when we met for the project. She was the older of two children. She lived with both parents and reported that religion was a very important part of her life. Chanel's heritage was black African but her family came from France and she was born in England. Chanel had been diagnosed with moderate learning difficulties and had joined the school in year nine after a difficult time in a mainstream school.

2.1 Pre counselling interviews with tutor and teaching assistant (TA)

Chanel was referred to the project because of her behaviour. She was reported to be very 'stropky' and would not own her actions. When her form tutor and TA were interviewed they thought, 'There are two aspects of Chanel; either very good or very bad; she hasn't integrated the two'. Her teacher thought she could be very helpful and supportive to some of the less able students in the class, but also could be very rude. Her TA reported she had outbursts and used very 'bad language'. They felt she was not willing to own her behaviour. Her tutor felt, 'She demonstrates abusive and vindictive type behaviour'. Her schoolwork was acceptable but it was reported, 'She would rather be doing her own thing'. Her tutor and TA believed she was not happy about going to a special school and liked to deny this aspect of her life.

2.2 Pre counselling interviews with the student

Chanel uses two names, her birth name at home and an 'English' version at school. The interviewer reported she seemed very anxious and was uncomfortable with the interview being audio recorded. She wanted to hear her voice and to check if it sounded 'acceptable'. The interviewer reported stopping the tape and playing it back to her frequently.

Chanel described herself as 'shy in school'. She said, 'I am a good singer and dancer' and whilst hiding this in school, was content to show 'my mum and dad and all my family'. However, she commented that she was not as good as her sister. She said she liked writing songs; she had written one about her and a boy. She said, 'I told my mum about it, but mum was not happy. Then I said that my mum will always be my mum, but no one can come between us; that's what the song's about'. Chanel was unhappy that her mother would not permit her to have a boyfriend. Her mum said, 'You do your schoolwork first'. Chanel had denied having a boyfriend. Chanel's ambition was to be a famous singer, but she doubted her ability to attain this. She believed her sister had the ability to attain this. She also talked about a cousin skilled at football and hoped he would succeed. Chanel reflected on what being famous meant to her; to her famous meant doing what she wanted. However, she was unsure about fame due to media intrusion, 'I don't like people getting in my business too much'.

During the interview Chanel drew a house. The interviewer commented she was anxious about it and did not want people to see it because it was a 'baby's drawing' and 'people will laugh at me'. She described the house as having blue and pink in it. Blue made her think of the seaside and were happy thoughts, being in the sun and warm. Chanel did not comment on the green or brown. She said she was looking out of the window, although she had not drawn or represented this and it was winter and Christmas time. She made no comment about the significance of winter and Christmas for her. Pink was her favourite colour: 'I look good in pink'. The number seventeen was a 'good' age; she was looking forward to being seventeen because 'I will get a good job'. She talked about America, which appeared to represent freedom and acceptance.

2.3 The process in the sessions

In our first session Chanel shared with me her two names. She wanted a name that sounded 'normal' and to fit in, so she chose the name she is known by in school. I asked her what she liked to be called. Initially she chose her chosen name and later in the work she fluctuated between her birth and chosen name. She continued to tell me she was going to France for the Christmas holidays to stay with family; she was

looking forward to this. Reflecting on the house she drew with a Christmas theme I was wondering if she had been looking forward to this event for some time.

Chanel told me she had a boyfriend and she emphasised that her mother was not to know. She explained that her mother did not approve of boyfriends. She believed her mother put importance on a good education and felt that relationships should not happen until she had left school. Chanel then told me if she had children they would not be allowed boyfriends either. I reflected this discrepancy to her but she responded, 'Oh well, that is the way it is'.

Chanel told me she had no friends and found going to a special school difficult. She said that she felt different to the other girls in her class and was lonely. She wanted to do some drawing, but claimed to be unable to do so. She then drew eight stars. Eight was her special number; she was eight years old when her mother bought her a bracelet.

There were a lot of contradictions in what Chanel was saying. She appeared very defensive when I attempted to bring one of these discrepancies to her attention, so I decided to wait for a later date. I was concerned about the report of her parents' emphasis on education and wondered what it meant for Chanel to attend a special school. I wondered if the alleged parental view on education was part of the reason she was having difficulty accepting her learning difficulties.

During the next few sessions she continued to talk about her boyfriend and we also explored her passion for dance. Chanel demonstrated different moves and taught me some routines. She reported feeling embarrassed but her body language demonstrated the opposite. She went on to discuss her embarrassment about her school. She claimed not like to wear her school uniform because of the logo. She said if others saw this they would know she went to a special school and they would think she was disabled. This for her was being thick, stupid and different. I tried to explore her feelings about attending a special school and linked it to her parents' view of a 'good' education. Chanel was very loyal to her parents and would not entertain the thought that she might never be able to attain her parents' expectation of achieving 'mainstream' qualifications.

On returning from the Christmas holidays Chanel presented a change in her behaviour. She would look out of the window and refused to engage. However at the end of the session she asked me to question her, as she did not like the silence. I talked to her about her difficulties with the silence, but she did not respond. I said I thought she wanted me to try and find out what was upsetting her. I also thought that if I did not get the questions right it would be my fault which would release her from any negative thoughts as these could be projected on to me. Chanel was angry at my comments and said, 'Just ask me questions'. I did and eventually hit on the right question! It turned out that she had finished with her boyfriend and was very upset.

Chanel's difficulty in conversing with me continued for the rest of our work. Each week she would demand that I ask her questions but reacted negatively at any attempt to reflect on what was happening. Chanel was resisting taking any responsibility for her actions. I tried to explore this with her, but each time she blocked my endeavours.

Around the midway point in our work Chanel became very 'moody'. She complained that I was not asking her questions, but refused to answer when I did. I reflected this back to her, but she became angry. I pressed her about her difficulties and tried to empathise with her pain and feeling of helplessness. This seemed to be so raw she found it difficult to hear and became abusive. From this session onwards she continued to be abusive however, she made no attempt to miss any sessions. I offered her praise for her attendance and recognised she was finding it very difficult, eliciting a moody or abusive reply. If she had been abusive in the session she would later come and find me to apologise. I let her know that I understood that she was using the abuse as a shield to hide her distress. Chanel said she did want help but could not engage in the room. This was to expand to the point that sessions in the room became unproductive however she would hunt me down in the corridor to engage me in long conversations about how she was feeling. I tried to address this with her but she would not engage.

Chanel asked if I could bring in some magazines to the room as she felt this would help her to feel at ease. I obtained a selection of teen magazines, but she never seemed satisfied with the selection. I was aware the images were predominately white and mentioned this to her; this caused her to engage. She started to discuss her ethnicity,

the perceptions and discrimination that went with it. Chanel mentioned positive black role models, and that her favourite music was R&B. Apparently, this was something her mother also disapproved of. She demanded that I find her magazines, which reflected her taste in music and ethnic diversity. This proved problematic when presented with suitable magazines she enjoyed looking at them and was able to identify with the people in the magazines. However, she became more challenging, as she felt inferior to the people in the magazines. When the images were 'white' she was able to rubbish them, as she could avoid identifying with them. However, she could not do this when the images were black. From this point on she started to engage in sessions, but continued to be abusive.

Chanel informed me she had a new boyfriend and that in going to visit him she had been late home. Her mother was angry and had grounded her for a week. She appeared to have an appropriate teenage response in that she could not see what she had done wrong and thought her mother was unreasonable. I enquired if her mother knew where she was and it was clear Chanel had still not told her mother about her boyfriend. She repeated her mother's understanding that girls should not have boyfriends until they are eighteen and again claimed that she would say the same to her children, but felt it was different for her. Chanel refused to explore this or address her feelings and beliefs around relationships.

The following week she informed me she had been late back again and her mother had locked her out. Feeling scared she had returned to her boyfriend's house. She reported feeling uncomfortable staying there and angry with her mother. Whilst I was aware she was going through a fairly typical rebellious stage I was concerned for her safety. The child protection officer at the school was informed of this event. Chanel was actively deceiving her parents to engage with this relationship. However, in order to do so she had to travel a considerable distance by bus. I explored this with her and found she was unable to read a bus timetable or tell the time.

This problem was to escalate. Once more returning late home from her boyfriends her father shouted and hit her. Chanel phoned the police and reported her father. Her parents informed the police that Chanel told lies and that she had been brain damaged at birth. The school were contacted and asked for further information. I was informed

the school responded she had not been brain damaged at birth but did have learning difficulties and was struggling to gain some independence at home. No further police action was taken and Chanel was grounded for a longer period of time.

Chanel found the whole situation very difficult. On the one hand she was very angry with her parents because of their actions whilst remaining fiercely loyal and defensive of them. She was hurt by what they had done and said, yet emphasised she would treat her own offspring the same. She often repeated she was praying for help to make her different and to be a good girl. Some time after the incidents she was able to say she knew what she did was wrong and that her parents had only behaved that way because they cared about her. This was the only time she had accepted any responsibility for her own actions.

Chanel found the ending very difficult. Towards the final sessions she was so angry she said, 'You will never see this face again'. Following this event she came and found me. She brought me a photo of her that had been taken professionally. She was very proud of how she looked. I reflected how different she looked and wondered if I could copy it so we could place it in her book (something we had been making to build self-esteem). She said, 'You are a slow learner, don't you get it? I am not working with you again'. I said I was aware we were coming to an end and this was difficult for her, but that it would be good if we could work through it. Her response was more abuse. However, she did attend her last few sessions. She was continually angry and would not talk to me and complained I had nothing to offer her.

I asked her how she wanted to spend her last session but she refused any suggestions of ways we could end. I decided to accept this, which was met with great anger in our last session. Chanel was very hurt that I had not provided any drinks or biscuits. I reflected that she had rejected any suggestions from me and this was her choice. She remained silent throughout the session and left without saying goodbye. She came back later in the day and said she was sorry and said she was upset. We spent some time talking about how difficult it was for her. Again as we touched on this hurt she became defensive and rude. She rubbished the work, demanded that I asked no questions and then shouted at me because I was not saying anything. Chanel finally left, snatching a handful of sequins and said goodbye.

2.4 Analysis of the sessions

I believe that Chanel felt like damaged goods i.e. not good enough, and did not fit in. I wondered if her parents had difficulties accepting her learning difficulties. She could not manage life at a mainstream school and let her parents down. She was very different to her female peers in the special school and failed to develop any friendships. This coupled with the attendance in a special school reinforced her poor self-image. She had started to explore her self-identity around black music and boyfriends; this was not met with approval from her mother. The need to fit in and be normal was so strong for her she could not even use her birth name, as this was too 'different' and she did not feel 'special' enough to use it. Chanel felt nobody understood her; this was represented in her drawing in her first interview, the windows at the top of the house and the omission of windows at the bottom. She could see out but nobody could see in.

Her age appropriate behaviour of wanting a boyfriend was problematic. When she went to visit him she was not able to work out the bus timetable or tell the time. She was too proud to ask for help from her boyfriend in fear that he would laugh and reject her. She could not ask others in case they thought her thick or stupid. As she was deceiving her parents as to her location and her boyfriend she had nobody else to turn to. She had locked herself in a self-sabotaging behaviour pattern. This action had left her neither seen nor heard and she found herself being punished. Her anger about her parents' response and her feeling of not being understood made her take action to get some help from an authority figure. This again backfired; she did not get the help she needed and she heard her parents say she had been 'brain damaged', which is not true.

Chanel seemed locked into her belief that things were right or wrong and there was no middle ground. This seemed to echo what her teachers' thought of her; she was either good or bad and could not integrate the two. I wondered if this was because her self and self-concept were two very different things. I believe it was due to her parents' desires and expectations. There was too much disparity between what her parents' value and Chanel's ability to deliver. I believe Chanel could not explore the disparity between her self and self-concept because it was too painful.

The ending felt like another rejection. We had made some inroads into building her self-esteem but did not have sufficient time to consolidate these gains. Because of her low self-esteem she struggled with asking for what she needed. The consequence of not having her needs met or understood was anger. Chanel could not face this anger because she did not have the resources to manage her feelings. I believed she did not dare to let herself feel the loss, hurt or pain. She required more time to work on managing her extreme feelings. During the period I worked with her only once was she able to own the consequences to her actions.

2.5 Post counselling interviews with the tutor and TA

At the conclusion of counselling her tutor said, 'She's matured up a fair bit over the year. A lot of the giggling and silly behaviour has been removed and from her day-to-day life obviously there's still the odd time when she thinks she deserves a better deal than what she gets. But generally she's getting there'. He added, 'When she's in a huff she can be quite rude. Her language is quite bad. Again, "You're picking on me. You hate me," all that sort of stuff. Once you go through that cycle and understand that's why what happened, then she's remorseful and apologises. So it's just going through that cycle'. Her TA believed 'We generally get the nice calm Chanel now, but occasionally get an outburst'.

Her TA believed, 'She takes more care of her out of school clothes than uniform', which seemed to reflect her continued difficulty in accepting her 'special needs'. Although her TA also said, 'She is one that is aware she is in special but those comments I haven't heard recently'. Her tutor believed, 'She is quite popular in the class for her appearance; she's quite a smart girl'. He felt, 'She can hold a conversation and can manipulate people within the group'. He also said, 'If she's in a happy mood she's an easy person to get along with. As the year's gone on, those [bad] moods have become less and less. So when you do see them they seem to be apparently full on but it's just because you haven't seen one for such a while that then you see one all of a sudden'. Her TA said, 'She can now think about her actions and will say she knows it was hurtful, but couldn't stop herself'.

2.6 Post counseling interviews with the student

At the conclusion Chanel was not available to be re-interviewed. A series of interviews was booked for her, but she did not attend any of them. Eventually the researcher had to accept that she was unable to interview her.

2.7 Follow up interviews with the tutor

Her new form tutor and TA were interviewed in the following academic year. They were still concerned about her poor self esteem which was still linked to being in a special school but felt, 'On the whole she's quite good. But she's quite manipulative. She needs to feel in control. She's a real control freak in some ways because if she isn't in total control in what she wants, she can be quite troublesome'. Additionally, they both felt she 'doesn't take responsibility for her actions'. Her tutor said, 'I'm not sure really how popular she really is. I think she would like to think she is, but she imposes herself and this is because of the controlling aspect and if she's thrown too many of her little unkind remarks quietly in their ears, she is then, I think, quite surprised or hurt when people don't want to talk to her. She can't understand that part of it'.

Her TA had drawn links to her moods and her monthly cycle, 'She obviously has terrible period pains and she's really like a Jekyll and Hyde and that's when the nasty Chanel comes out'. Both Tutor and TA were concerned that she did not take responsibility for her actions. Her TA said, 'Today she's just walked out, so no, she doesn't take responsibility for her actions'. Her tutor believed, 'No, she's a long way from accepting any consequences really'. They both agreed she was smart and clean and took care of her physical appearance. They both felt that her schoolwork was acceptable and that she worked hard.

In the final interview her tutor believed she had continued to make improvements. She said, 'She is better than I think she was in September. You know, she has calmed down. I don't seem to follow her round the school quite so much as she's growing up'. But she was concerned, 'Part of Chanel's problem is her lack of understanding of the situations. She still sees things in a very narrow way and she can't acknowledge that she could be wrong; she finds that very difficult. She is starting to apologise after her outbursts, but she still can't see that what she does is very destructive'. But she

believed, 'She can be very good and she can actually be very helpful and she can be quite perceptive and help people, but you are always aware that she's trying to manipulate people'. In terms of taking responsibility for her actions her tutor said, 'She can't accept responsibility, in the sense, to be able to use it properly. If she doesn't like anything she doesn't seem to think twice about being very rude and very aggressive. But the other sense is, if you want somebody to take on the responsibility and she's feeling good, she's really good at doing things'. Her TA agreed and added, 'She will say, "Don't want to do this work" and she'll do it her way and yet she's very moral. She's very religious; she gets in this fever pitch and she can't. It's because I think she thinks she's doing it for the good'. On the other hand, he commented, 'She's very much a typical teenager with, you know, doing her hair and wanting to go out and do different things and she will rebel. I mean one of the problems that started was because she came back very late to school from going out. And she was absolutely incensed with the dinner ladies for not saving her dinner when she was an hour late. And she couldn't see that they were right to do that. "They've eaten my dinner". "No they haven't. They've given it to other people. You weren't here"'.

Her tutor believed she had maintained her level of schoolwork, 'She works actually quite hard. I mean she takes, she wants to do well'. But her TA thought, 'She's capable but she'd rather not do it. She'd rather do her own thing than. So she huffs and puffs a bit. I mean in the afternoon she's virtually asleep'. They both agreed she had maintained her physical appearance 'Yes, always nice, well turned out'. Her tutor believed she might be sad in school, 'She is, because she doesn't mix with anyone, only adults, but I don't think she is at home. I think she has her life outside home. I think she feels there's a stigma here, coming here and that's it. I'm sure she can't be extremely happy in school but having said that, when you see her animated, she's lit up'. But her TA felt, 'Yeah she's come on. She's improved and is more part of the group and if we are sort of having a laugh in a group, if one of them does get excited, she can bring it back'.

2.8 Follow up interviews with the student

Despite not having attended the post-counselling interview Chanel did come to the follow up interviews. She reported in her third interview, 'I have not changed'. She felt she had learned nothing and was very angry that I had not answered her questions.

She said, 'Do you know what though, that's the thing about me. Yeah, I would help someone if there were any problem. I would give them my advice; you just be careful what. Some people just don't give it to me, advice. That's all I want'. She added, 'I did not like the silences' and 'She [the counsellor] should have told me what to do'. Chanel thought I should have 'brought in more magazines', 'played more music' and provided 'drinks and biscuits'. She commented that some of the magazines I provided were full of white people and she thought white rappers were 'crap'. She wanted more about her own black identity. She said she would like to work with me again, as long as I provided the above! Chanel talked to the interviewer about her boyfriend and how she felt different when she was with him.

In her final interview she still believed she was the same, 'Well to me it is, to other people I might have changed, but it still seem the same to me. Still the same, nothing has changed. That's the way I see it'. Although she was able to identify that, 'I'm working, I dunno, I'm working on my temper', Chanel thought that she had not worked on her temper in counselling. 'No one's gonna help me, 'cos I do it by myself, I think. I know that's not right, but that's all right'. She said, 'I have to go outside for a while, just a ten minute walk, then I come back and calm down'. Chanel at first struggled to identify what was making her angry. She said, 'My temper'; later she said, 'I don't like it when people say things I don't like'.

Chanel thought counselling was not helpful and was still angry with me for not advising her on what to do. She said she could not talk to me because she was angry and just wanted to look at good magazines and I did not give these to her. She was struggled to remain in the interview and was becoming cross with the interviewer. At one point she said, 'Oh you can give me good advice, yeah, I want to listen to you'. The interviewer reported that when she collected Chanel from her class, she appeared to be a 'new person', but when they reached the room all she gave her was 'attitude'. The interviewer wondered if her identity was a big issue for her and felt perhaps we could not understand her as we were white, and she would not allow a white person to see her vulnerability.

2.9 Summary

After Chanel's counselling, her form tutor believed she had matured and some of the silly and giggly behaviour had disappeared. Her TA believed that she was not hearing her dislike of special school so frequently. They both believed that she had fewer moods and her outbursts were definitely less frequent; although when she did have them they were 'full on'. They both believed she had maintained her physical appearance and her schoolwork was still acceptable.

In the second year her tutor and TA reported some regression with Chanel. They were making statements similar to the first staff interviews. The general concerns were about her behaviour, attitude, level of rudeness and inability to accept responsibility for her actions. There appeared to be some movement towards the end of the year. Her tutor reported that she was able to apologise, but still had frequent outbursts. Her teacher and TA reported she could be helpful although there was an undertone of manipulation. On the positive side they reported that Chanel appeared more part of the group and was observed being able to calm things down in a group discussion.

2.10 Conclusion

Whilst the staff members at the school were able to identify some improvements to her self-concept, I have placed Chanel in the 'no improvement' category. I have chosen to do this because whilst I accept the observations of staff about my work with her, I believe she was avoidant of the core difficulty and any real improvement would not be achieved until she felt safe enough to address these difficulties.

I believe Chanel's experience in life has led her to believe she is rubbish and no good at anything. She desperately wants to be free to be herself, but also wants the approval of her parents while being spoon fed solutions to her problems. These goals are so conflicted she is left feeling angry, frustrated and disappointed. I believe Chanel feels nobody sees the real her, and whilst this may be true of her family I think she will not allow others to see her either, for fear of their response; she could not take any further hurt and disappointment.

Chanel started to explore her identity through music and images. This would have been a fairly normal activity in a 'mainstream' environment. However, when this was

met with disapproval from her mother she did not have the support of her peers to withstand such criticism and the exercise only emphasised her pain. I believe Chanel did value the work with me and appreciated my ability to stay with her through some very challenging outbursts. The counselling went some way towards building her self-esteem and feeling a closer to her true self, which in turn helped her to feel a little more 'acceptable'.

The ending highlighted her struggle because she could not ask for anything in her ending session. She needed to remain strong and to show herself she did not need any help. But lack of response to her unspoken need angered her because she had begun to trust that I could see the true Chanel. Her requests in the final interview for more magazines, food and drink were a symbolic request for further intervention and support.

3.0 Case study two: Addressing fears about growing up

Harry's case study represents findings from the data that indicate that he had made no improvements. Harry was the younger of two children and lived at home with both parents. His brother was quite a bit older than him and now lived away from the family home. Harry had regular overnight visits with his brother. He had been born in England but his heritage was Italian. He had been diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome, and was fifteen when we met for the project. He was referred to the project because of his behaviour. He was placed in the second group, so received counselling in the second year of the project.

3.1 Comparison interviews with the tutor and teaching assistant (TA)

In the first set of interviews, which acted as a comparison for the first group, his tutor said, 'Well, I sometimes think Harry is quite, you know, doesn't feel too badly about himself'. When asked about his behaviour, his TA thought, 'Depends, but he can be so loud and up in the air and active. He kind of swings from that to then the sort of collapsing, almost manic, mania to a manic depressive kind of thing'. His tutor agreed with this, but also thought he was trying to take some responsibility for his behaviour, 'I think he tries to. I think he can't control himself but I think he does try to'. When he was asked about his schoolwork his tutor commented, 'He's bright. He's got interests. He's a reasonable reader, good memory for things he's interested in. He

can do really good work sometimes, so I think sometimes my job with Harry is to function as a super-ego, to telling him that, “You can do better and I’m not going to let you not do better”. I think he does need that’. His TA thought he was able to stay on task occasionally. ‘It depends too’, she said, ‘It depends on the, in some lessons he’s worked really well, independently well. Other times it depends what’s going on around him and I think on the work too’.

His tutor commented, ‘He has got a very jovial part, which he shows that lots of times. But I think he does feel sad but he doesn’t show that side’. His TA agreed. She said, ‘He’s always got a smile on his face’. His tutor thought he was not shy, ‘I think he can be quite confident about coming up and speaking. In fact, in class he’ll be putting his hand up and speaking out’. His tutor thought he was not particularly popular, ‘I think he might be seen as a bit weird by the other pupils because of his calling out and his hyperactivity. I think they, in the class, they will say that about him and they use that as a way of taunting him. His TA agreed and added, ‘He does get bullied. He’s a bit of a singled out. He can get singled out and today he’s got red socks on today and a student made fun of him for that and then another student joined in. I mean, I think because of his hyperactivity and his loud voice that it gets on people’s nerves, it really does and then they will start picking on him and telling him to shut up’. When asked whether he was easy to get along with, his tutor concluded, ‘Yes I think so. Certainly I think, as a teacher in the class, he can be annoying in the class when he starts doing things, either talking out loudly or doing this kind of thing [tapping noise] which is just so irritating. But if I met him in somebody’s home I think I would he was a really nice boy.

3.2 Comparison interviews with the student

The interviewer reported that Harry seemed quite anxious about attending his interview, but disclosed that he did not like his class and was relieved to be out. He told the interviewer he wanted to be in year eight, but would not expand on this. In his interview he drew a picture of his mum, dad, brother and friend and at the end put himself in. The interviewer reported he took great care to draw his friend correctly and said he needed constant reassurance it was acceptable. He drew his mother with a smiley face and his father with a sad face. He said this was because it was how they

were. He said he got on with his brother and enjoyed going to see him, but sometimes his brother got tired. When his brother got tired he became cross and shouted at him.

3.3 Second interview with the tutor and TA

When his form tutor and TA were re-interviewed no improvements were commented upon apart from his behaviour. His tutor commented about his self-esteem, 'I think he doesn't feel good about himself. He tells me that too, sometimes'. His TA added, 'You'd think Harry's self-esteem is good, but it's not. If you really look and work with him it is very, very low'. When asked about his behaviour, his tutor said, 'Well I know he's taking Respiridon, or something. Is that it? It's an anti psychotic drug that's supposed to calm down his moods. I can see the effects of it. I mean it is having more of an effect on him at school so he's calmer, but in the afternoon, he'll be high every afternoon because he has to take the drug again and it takes a while for it to work'. However his TA disagreed, 'It's really hard because I've been trying to work very closely with Harry, because he's on medication at the moment and we thought the medication would help settle him down and I feel it's not actually settling him down. He is still very, very loud. And I think the last five or six weeks he seems to, he does retaliate a lot. You know, quite often I say, "You can't do that." He gets really, really angry and he'll look at me and he'll "Shsh!" and just walk away and he never used to do that'.

His tutor continued to believe his schoolwork was good, 'Good, I mean he does good written work. He's, a bright boy; he's, I'd say, he's probably the ablest boy in the class right now, this is without maybe being pushed or having extra work'. His TA thought he only worked under threats, 'But I think once you've actually threatened him, say, "Right. Outside if you don't stop. You're to come in and do this work. If this doesn't happen you're going to see [teacher] because it's not fair on the rest of the class. You're making a lot of noise. We're doing this work or finish the work, and you can go on the computer"'.

It was considered he was still not very popular. 'I think he's a bit of a loner', his teacher said. 'I mean he's part of the class and he does join in with the class and I don't know if he's got, like, a special friend, like a best friend'. His TA added, 'He doesn't have a lot of friends where he lives and one or two friends in school that he

did have obviously don't want to socialise with him because the group, one was saying, because they don't understand his problem in his behaviour'.

3.4 Second interview with the student

The interviewer reported Harry was happier to attend this interview. In his interview he drew a picture of his mum and dad. The interviewer reported when he was talking about his dad he became very sad. He said his father worked hard. The interviewer noticed he had tears in his eyes and needed to leave the room. When he returned the interviewer reported he went to great lengths to convince her he had not been crying. He said his eyes became watery because he was really focused in his work. As the interview continued he was not able to face the interviewer; he turned his back on her because he was feeling so sad. He was able to divert the conversation and discussed the merits of his artwork. He said his picture was rubbish and other people would laugh at him. He said he was looking forward to working with me after the summer holidays.

3.5 Pre counselling interviews with the tutor and TA

His tutor agreed he tried hard in his schoolwork. 'He loves maths. He's a very good counter and he tries hard in all of his classes'. His TA agreed, but said she noticed his obsessive behaviour manifesting itself. 'If he's made a mistake on a piece of paper or he doesn't like the pen's writing he keeps on and on and on until you give him another piece of paper or he has another pen. And I think that's part and parcel of Asperger's'. His tutor thought he could stay on task, 'Pretty much, unless someone's winding him up in class, of which there are a couple that find him fairly easy to wind-up'. His tutor thought he was popular, 'Yeah, everyone knows Harry'. His TA agreed. Neither member of staff thought he was bullied, although his TA commented, 'He has his tablet that he has to take in the afternoon. They mock him about that, but he takes that with a pinch of salt'.

3.6 Pre counselling interviews with the student

The interviewer reported that Harry seemed anxious and was not happy to attend his interview. She reported he would not talk about his image and appeared unhappy and disconnected from himself. When he drew his image he was not satisfied with it and screwed it up and asked the interviewer to put it in the bin. Unfortunately, I could not

tell from the transcripts what the drawing was. Whilst he was drawing the interviewer commented that he marked the table and became very distressed and apologised profusely. The interviewer reported he would not stay for long so the interview was very short and unsuccessful.

3.7 The process in the sessions

Harry was an irregular attainer due to absences from school. This was aggravated by his inability to remember when his sessions were. When he did attend his counselling sessions his mood varied from withdrawn to boisterous. He did however demonstrate his struggle with endings of each session and constantly challenged boundaries in relation to this. Harry reacted badly to any changes in routines and became very angry if he felt he had not received just praise for his hard work. A combination of these factors resulted in him not fully engaging in the work until midway through the intervention, when he eventually felt safe to explore his inner conflict.

Harry was finding personal, health and sex education (P.H.S.E) very difficult, and was storming out of class frequently. The class teacher said they were addressing puberty and general growing up. I was asked if I could address this with him. This became our focus for the rest of the work. Harry was able to tell me he did not like what was happening to his body, he did not want to become a man. The body was rude and he could not hear about or look at any changes. He was deeply distressed when I raised this with him and became very tearful. Over the next few weeks I took great care to go at his pace, but also not to collude with him and made sure I addressed his fears. Over several sessions we explored his life. It transpired he had developed an in depth fear of aging. In his experience his life had been a down hill path since the age of seven. When he was seven years old, he felt accepted and surrounded by friends and life had been good. Now days he was lonely and isolated. This was compounded by the actions of his father. His father stated he would soon be a man and would have to go out to work. However, as portrayed in the earlier picture his father's example was that being a man and working hard made you sad. As a cure to the isolation he felt I asked if he would like to join any clubs. He said he would, but he was frightened that people would be horrible to him. It turned out this had been his experience in his neighbourhood as he grew older and his difference became more obvious. After further discussions with him and his mother I was able to find an

appropriate inclusive youth club. Initially he was very scared about this, but I supported him to express his anxieties and he joined the club.

To heighten his fear of maturing it became apparent the school were addressing the one-day college placements for his year. He took on a depressed persona and it became clear he was struggling to hold things together. In his sessions he expressed his worried about the changes.

Towards the end of the work I had to approach endings. It was evident we had not reached a point where it was appropriate to end so I offered to continue working with him beyond the project. Harry said he wanted to, because he felt I was helping him.

3.8 Analysis of the sessions

Harry seemed resistant to working with me in the beginning. I believe this demonstrated a trait very often associated with his medical diagnosis. He was anxious about change and required life to be consistent. In the first session he was able to let me know he knew he was different, but had a desire to be 'normal'. He had to have a folder, which was the same colour as the others. In his play he also showed me he had little concept of cause and effect. I was not sure if this was also part of his condition or partly because he had never had to face the consequences of his actions. I wondered if his parents excused him and blamed his behaviour on his disability.

Harry appeared worried about his ability and indicated he was experiencing the world as unpredictable and unsafe. This manifested in his need to trace his images and to be able to show the world he could achieve as well. He was struggling with his self-concept. He was experiencing himself as one person, but felt the world required something else. He was pushing himself so hard that he was setting himself up to fail. It was apparent from his comments that he felt there was an expectation on him from home to grow up and hold down a job. Were they having difficulty accepting who he was? Were they concerned he was reaching the end of his schooling but could see he was not the same as their other son? Perhaps they were worried about his future. I often sensed this was never addressed at home and only the positive was discussed. Harry presented himself with a smile and never spoke about the negative, but it seeped out in his behaviour.

I believed this unspoken fear was mounting up inside and perhaps he was also carrying his parents' fear. He knew his body was developing and he had no control over it. His development really scared him; his learning at school compounded this. He was not able to express his fears openly because he did not really understand why he was so scared. His teachers become cross and worried about him which I believe furthered his anxieties. Life was making little sense to him, but he knew he was not happy.

When I addressed this topic with him he became very distressed. I demonstrated I understood this and would go at a pace that he could manage. I showed him that I would not be deterred from the subject and also I would not be overwhelmed by it. I tried to show him together we would make sense of his problems. As we did, he told me that his experience had been of the usual childhood fun, but then life had changed. He associated this with growing up, and to him growing up was frightening, lonely and made him feel very sad. He had no friends or fun in his life. I took a more proactive response and actively engaged him in a youth club. I believed talking about his lack of fun in his life would be ineffective. I also knew he did not have the skills to find or contact a youth club himself. His experience of youth club was positive and this allowed me to help him through some darker moments at school.

3.9 Post counselling interviews with the tutor and TA

When his form tutor and TA were re-interviewed they were quite concerned. His tutor said, 'I believe he has regressed. I would consider over the past six months he's started to go back down. In a sense of his ability to engage in classroom activities he just won't and chooses not to go to class quite a bit of the time. Again, it could be something someone's said that upsets him, or something that's happened at some point. It's very hard to find out what's happened. He almost, well he just walks around the school and won't engage. He walks alone and he doesn't talk or anything like that at all'. Their main concern and observation was, 'I just find that he won't take acceptance of his growing up. He wants to stay as a little child. He's not prepared to take the responsibilities that come with growing up, so, and doing work and being responsible and that sort of thing'. His TA agreed and added, 'He can be very, very good. But my personal um, feelings for him is he doesn't want to be with year ten. He doesn't want to be with that class. He doesn't want to leave school. He's frightened

because it's getting nearer and nearer the time, so he's playing with all the younger children. He can be good but he can be atrocious. He starts kicking about and screaming and shouting and he just wanders of through the school. And you let him go for a few minutes and then you're following him, hoping he'll come back. And he never does'. His tutor thought he was very scared of growing up. She added, 'He doesn't want to go up to the next level and become a young adult and he's not prepared to accept anything that happens or anything around him, so he mixes with younger peers. He has disengaged from the rest of the tutor group of his age because he wants to associate with a lot of year 7s and year 6s. He plays with them and plays those sorts of games in the playground that those kids would play and really likes it'.

3.10 Post counselling interviews with the student

The interviewer again had difficulties interviewing Harry. He only stayed for a short time and was unwilling to say much. It appeared he was having a bad day with two other students in his class. He was preoccupied with this and would not think about much else. He said that he knows he is wrong when he acts out, but the two students really upset him and he just gets very angry. He said he does not have a problem with his anger at home it was just at school. When he had had time to express his anger about his peers, he was able to answer a few questions about the work with me. Harry said, 'She helped me calm down'. He said he was feeling, 'A lot happier actually' since working with me. He said his teachers had noticed he had changed and they thought he had become sadder. He said it had helped him make friends. He continued to tell the interviewer that he did not get angry or upset it was just energy. He said that when he has energy, he has tears and it is the sweat coming out of his eyes. He then asked if he could leave and go back to class.

3.11 Summary

In the first year when Harry was in the comparison group his tutor and TA noticed no changes and he continued to display inappropriate behaviour. His tutor thought he calmed with his medication but his TA disagreed. They both felt he would put on a smiley face but this was masking how he truly felt.

In the second year after receiving counselling, his tutor and TA thought he had regressed. I have chosen to place him in the category of no improvements because I believe he had not regressed but was more able to be congruent and express how he was feeling. I also believe that the comments made in the final interview were no different to observations from the previous years tutor. I would agree he was a very troubled young man and very frightened of growing up. But he now had the confidence to express this verbally rather than hide it and just act out.

3.12 Conclusion

Harry was struggling with his identity. He knew he was different from some of the other students in his class but wanted to be the same. He was very frightened of growing up and had never been allowed to express this, or supported to understand his fears. I believe he thought he was a disappointment to his family and a failure in life. He presented with a smile on his face and would always say 'I am fine'. Yet his body language and behaviour told us different. I believe the school were aware of this predicament, but at the same time were not willing to hold his fears. He probably knew this, so continued with the smiley, jovial person. When he had learned it was okay to express his fears and to portray what he was really feeling, it was met with great distress from the school. Whilst I appreciate he was in a vulnerable position and still needed further support to continue on his journey, I thought the school were not able to see that he was at the beginning of his journey.

He was able to let people know what we all suspected; that he was afraid to grow up, which I believe was a huge step forward. I did not see this as a regression, but as a positive step forward. He had owned his powerful and scary feelings. Before, he had been avoiding them because he felt if he got in touch with them they would have overwhelmed him. The next step was to make some changes in his life by accepting his disability and to see that life, as an adult could be fun. However, I was aware that in his final interview he reverted and disowned his feelings and blamed anger and tears on energy and sweat.

4.0 Conclusion of the chapter

The two case studies demonstrate the complexities of the internal lives of young people with learning difficulties. It also demonstrates the impact of parental difficulties in accepting their young people and the effects of the wider community.

The staff members were able to observe some improvements with Chanel, but I strongly felt that these were not internalised enough to claim that any lasting benefits were gained from receiving counselling. Alternatively Harry made some huge improvements in exploring his internal world, but this was seen as regression. I believe these case studies demonstrate that some students with learning difficulties require a considerable amount of time to work through some complex situations.

Chapter Seven

Findings

Part D

1.0 Introduction

In this chapter I will report two case studies, offering one example from each group, which fell into the category of regression. In the final set of interviews staff members only identified two students regressing, so there are no additional case studies in this category in the appendices. Each case study will include reports from the counsellor, students' teacher and teaching assistant's perspectives. I will conclude with a summary of the chapter.

2.0 Case study one: The boy who found a new family

AA was fifteen when we met for the project; he was the youngest of three children.

He was born in England of Black Caribbean heritage. He was diagnosed with moderate learning difficulties. His father died several years ago, a fact he constantly denied. Following his father's death, his mother became physically abusive and he was removed from the family home and placed in foster care, with a white family. AA was referred to the project because staff at the school had noticed deterioration in his behaviour over the last year. Staff members were concerned that he appeared very unhappy in his foster placement. He was placed in the first year counselling intervention group.

2.1 Pre counselling interviews with the tutor and teaching assistant (TA)

AA's tutor and TA believed he had low self-esteem, but put on a façade of a confident young man. His poor behaviour appeared to manifest mainly when he was feeling threatened. His TA said he could not manage direct conflict; she reported difficulties when she had to challenge his actions. His tutor agreed with this comment and added he was also known to steal; again it was reported he became very aggressive if anyone tried to address this with him and would say, 'You are only picking on me because I am black'. Both tutor and TA noticed that when he was guilty of something he would not make any eye contact. It was reported he frequently got into fights. His TA thought that they were generally not his fights; he had stepped in thinking he would stand up for a friend, but it would have been more helpful if he had obtained adult support. Both tutor and TA felt his schoolwork was quite good when they could get him focused. He had become very difficult to settle within the classroom and was constantly walking out. His tutor believed, 'He chooses what and when he does

things', which he thought was unacceptable. His TA said, 'He's set in his mind and when he's made up his mind he's not going to do anything, then that's it'. His tutor reported in the interview that whilst, 'He was clean and tidy he was rarely in school uniform'. His tutor and TA believed he was very unhappy and demonstrated this via his behaviour.

2.2 Pre counselling interview with the student

When AA was interviewed the interviewer reported, 'He was very enthusiastic' and seemed happy to attend the interview. He drew two pictures, the first picture of an 'angry man' sitting at on a park bench. The man was poor and had no money so was 'eating waste food'. There was a bottle of water thrown at the man that 'went all over the place'. The water mixed with the food and covered the man so the man was 'obliterated'. When the interviewer asked about the man, AA said he was still there and drew a blue outline of where the person had been. He then drew a second picture on black paper; using pastels he covered the paper in a layer of white then blue. Each time he collected the surplus chalk and placed it in piles on the table. He drew a rainbow on the bottom right hand side corner of the paper. He asked the interviewer what colours he was allowed to use for a rainbow. He then drew another rainbow in the sky. He said he liked the sky and remembered looking at the sky when he was young in hope of seeing a star. He only wanted to see one star, a large white one. He said he liked looking at the stars it made him feel happy.

From his image we could assume he was feeling angry about being abandoned, that everybody's rubbish had been thrown at him and that he was losing himself. He was 'poor', emotionally. He was not being fed (emotionally), but he was still there, he still existed underneath all the 'crap'. He continued to hope that things would turn out OK. He commented several times on the mess the pastels had made and was concerned who would clean it up. The interviewer sensed that whilst he commented on and was concerned about the mess, it was not the mess per se but the fact he could not control the mess, which bothered him, as well as wondering who would help him sort it out.

2.3 The process in the session

Initially AA seemed at ease and made use of the sand tray, making castles but unwilling to discuss them. I commented on how strong the castles seemed to be. He

looked at me then smashed them down. I reflected whilst I thought they looked strong, in fact they could easily be destroyed. He made no comment.

Occasionally he would play with the cars, especially with the police car. The theme with the cars was lots of chaos and violence. The police and air ambulance arrived on the scene to sort out the mess. The 'bad' person was told off but not removed from the game and the hurt person/car was removed from the scene and taken to a 'safe' place. At the end of this session AA tried to take a car from the room without asking me; he placed a small toy car up his sleeve. When I commented about the toy car up his sleeve he denied it was there and started to become aggressive. As staff had reported, he would not make eye contact. His state of arousal was quick to escalate and he could not manage the direct conflict. An agreement was reached that he could borrow the toy car.

On his return from the school holidays AA returned the car and reported he had been to Nigeria. He seemed quite different in his way of being; he was talkative and quite upbeat. He spoke convincingly about his fear of flying, visiting Nigeria for the first time and also visiting his father's grave. This was the first time he had acknowledged his father's death. He continued to say that he was no longer living with his mother and explained that his mother had physically abused him. This was also the first time he had directly told me about the abuse. He told me his foster family prepared a party for him when he returned from Nigeria and how wonderful this was. I felt very suspicious of what was being said, but stayed with his elaborate story.

Without compromising the confidentiality of the relationship, I tentatively made some enquiries at school to see if his story was true. Unfortunately, it was fantasy; he had spent Christmas and Boxing Day with his mother, but did not stay overnight. The school also informed me there had been deterioration in AA's behaviour and a professionals' meeting had been called. AA had taken a huge step in disclosing so much information; he needed to create a fantasy because the truth was too horrible to bear. In discussion with my supervisor it was agreed that AA would probably be feeling very vulnerable and it was best to hold the information regarding Nigeria but to address the reports on his behaviour.

In the following session AA continued discussing his fictional trip to Nigeria. He repeated he was very frightened of flying but it was not that bad after all. He said he went to Nigeria with his mother and brothers and went to stay with his mother's family. They took him to see his father's grave. He was very sad when he spoke about this but felt happy to have seen where his father was. He expanded about his mother abusing him and his confusion as to why she would hit him. He told me that he does take things from other people and he does this because 'other people get things he doesn't'. I stayed with his story exploring the different emotions and offering empathy for his tragic loss of his father; not only his physical death but losing his father's body to a country that he could not get to. Entwined in this loss seemed to be his loss of his mother since she was no longer emotionally present for AA. He knew she was no longer emotionally there for him and he was not getting what he needed so he took what he needed in a 'material' sense from others. As he was talking to me we were looking out of the window (which was on the second floor of the school building). He said, 'I wouldn't want to jump out'. This seemed to be his way of telling me how very sad he was and perhaps at times felt suicidal, but in fact that he did not want to die. He was holding on to his hope for the rainbow and his 'one white star'.

I believed AA had taken a huge risk dropping his façade and allowing me to see his pain and true vulnerability. I knew I had to give meaning to his form of communication, his story of Nigeria. I had to stay with the pain of his loss and abandonment, but I also needed to address the challenging behaviour at school and his very real risk of being excluded. The following week I reported to AA that staff members were concerned about his behaviour and it seemed to be getting worse. I reflected that he had spoken of his loss, the abuse and inappropriate foster placement. I asked him how I could support him through all this. In hindsight this may not have been the best approach; AA found the direct approach from me too challenging and refused to stay for his session.

The following week I attended a professional meeting and discovered that his social worker, a male with whom he had built a good relationship, was leaving and AA had recently been told. Additionally, AA was refusing to stay with his foster family saying, 'They are only looking after me for the money'. He was taking himself to stay with his 'Godfather', who was not approved by social services. His Godfather was a

single man who had two children of a similar age to AA and was happy to take in AA. He continued to live with his Godfather, despite an increased journey to school each day, against the wishes of social services.

The school had spoken to AA about his behaviour and explained he was at serious risk of being excluded. The Head Teacher explained to him he understood what he might be going through, but he could assault people. I was informed that AA broke down into tears and sobbed for some time. He asked not to be excluded and said he was trying. The school agreed to give him another chance.

Over the following weeks AA refused to return for counselling. I went to find him at his agreed time, but would not attend. While offering him empathy I was mindful not to coerce him. I assured him the sessions were still available to him. I discussed my concerns with my supervisor and we agreed that I should try and sit in the classroom with AA for the duration of his session. AA was able to tolerate this, appearing pleased that I was there despite the fact he needed to put me down in front of his peers. At the end of each lesson when I left he would make an abusive comment. If he saw me in the corridor he would comment, 'Suppose you will be in my class next week', which felt more like a question. This continued until the end of the scheduled counselling sessions. He made no attempt to reengage and we did not have an appropriate closure to our work.

2.4 Analysis of the sessions

I knew little about the AA's life prior to his father's death, but since his death AA's experience had been of abandonment, rejection and physical abuse. It appeared he had no time to grieve for the loss of his father because he had to carry his mother's grief, which she seemed to take out on him.

I thought it was an interesting decision for AA to request I collect him from class. This seemed to reflect his need to keep up his façade in front of his peers. Generally they would taunt him when I walked into the room and he would respond by either, 'Oh poor me. Feel sorry for me. Why does this woman keep bothering me?' or 'Ha Ha. I get out of class and you have to do your work', responses. On another level my fetching him seemed to meet his need to be wanted.

In the work AA found the sand tray a safe way to 'join' with me. Whilst he would not reflect on his sand tray work, the castles were him showing me how strong he had to be, but that in fact he was feeling quite fragile, like the man in his drawing in his first interview. The castles may also have represented how his life had been good but was now shattered. He kept trying to build it up, but it kept falling down. There appeared to be no resolution. When I demonstrated I understood the meaning of his communications, he began to feel safe to further explore different ways of communicating and showing me his story. His use of the cars showed me the chaos that was in his life; the prominent use of the police car seemed to be his way of letting me know that his mother was facing charges of assault.

AA was not able to ask directly for what he needed, but knew he needed a transitional object to survive the forthcoming break. Again, when I demonstrated I understood the meaning of his communication, he was able to be honest and his needs were partly met. On return from the Christmas break he felt safe enough to tell me how he was hurting. He told me all about the loss of his father, the pain of not attending his funeral; the pain of not being able to visit his grave; the desire to see his grave and connect with his true identity and culture; the violence he experienced from his mother. At first he presented this to me in an upbeat manner, the only way he could disclose his sorrow. But as I showed I could tolerate such depths of sorrow, he returned to the subject. It appeared he had created a fantasy of a party from his foster carers because he could not tolerate the pain of them not wanting him either.

Just as AA was starting to address these many and complex issues he was subject to further trauma. He made an attachment to his social worker, who was leaving the borough and this seemed finally to be too much for AA.

His behaviour deteriorated resulting in physical violence to fellow students and staff members. I believe that this further loss at a point when he was beginning to engage in the therapeutic process was more than he could take. Threatened with permanent exclusion from the school he undertook a commitment to alter his behaviour. AA was an honourable young man and would try to keep his word. He was aware that making himself emotionally vulnerable in counselling would not allow him to do this. In cutting counselling and treating the counsellor with derision he was able to maintain a

shield in the school to protect himself from exclusion. He was however in need of support and appreciated the counsellor not adding to his loss. Realising he would never feel wanted and secure with his mother or in the foster home he took matters into his own hands. In desperation and a creative leap AA turned to the only male role model he had left. His Godfather was prepared to offer him shelter and took him in. AA demonstrated his commitment to his education by travelling a great distance to school each day.

2.5 Post counselling interviews with the tutor and TA

At the conclusion of counselling his form tutor and TA were re-interviewed. Generally they believed his behaviour had deteriorated. His tutor said, 'AA has had a fairly tough year with a lot of outside influences, a lot that we haven't got control over in school and that really has reflected on his behaviour and his attitude'. 'He seems to be on own time and he chooses what he wants to do and when he wants to do it.' 'He is not wearing uniform, saying that people are racist just because they're picking on him because he's not doing the right thing. It's a shame 'cos AA is a good kid, deep down but he's got so many things going on in his life, at the moment, it's really tough for him to find any way forward'.

His tutor reported, 'There has been physical violence, abuse. There's been a few incidents involving staff this year and there have been quite a few of him hitting students. He's had a few days off; he's been excluded a few times during the year for abusing other kids physically and mentally and stuff like that'. His TA believed, 'He is not taking any responsibility for what he's doing. He's getting more and more aggressive in his conversations with peers. You know when he loses it, because you can see it in his face and he just doesn't know what he's doing and I think that is a very dangerous thing. Afterwards he normally breaks down and starts crying and that sort of thing. I just think that sometimes he doesn't realise what he's doing'. Both tutor and TA agreed he was a good person, but this was 'locked inside'. They felt that he couldn't be trusted. 'As a person, I wouldn't leave him alone in the room by himself and I certainly wouldn't leave anything of value around. It's unfortunate to say, but proven track record that you need to make sure things is safely away'.

Within their reports there was also an awareness of his home situation, which seemed to have deteriorated further. He was very unhappy in his foster placement. He felt he was not wanted or cared for. He had removed himself and was living with his 'Godfather'. This placement had not been approved by social services and was creating further problems for him. His tutor concluded with, 'I just really hope that he sorts, or the people in his life sort out, what he's doing, what's happening to him because if it doesn't then he's going to blow his stack soon. And when he does, someone is going to get hurt'.

2.6 Post counselling interview with the student

When AA was re-interviewed, the interviewer reported he seemed very 'sad' and 'hollow'. The interviewer sensed that he did not want any help, which reflected how things were in his life; he had to do things on his own. In the interview he again drew a picture of an angry person. He used blue pastels to draw a person on a large black sheet. The person had bad teeth because they had eaten too much sugar. He was very disappointed because the person had had £100 stolen from him. He told a story of going to the police, the police listening to him and finding the person who robbed him and returning the money. AA said that he felt something had been stolen from him, but would not elaborate on this. He also said that working with the counsellor was 'crap'. He preferred to go to his lessons.

2.7 Follow up interviews with the tutor and TA

In the following year his new form tutor and TA were interviewed to see if any changes had been made. It was reported that he was now living permanently with his Godfather and was having contact with his two brothers. His tutor reported, 'His whole persona's really actually changed, even the way he walks, and he looks calm. His face doesn't look that grey pinched look any more. He looks quite happy and actually being with his Godfather has given him the identity he needed'. His TA reported that, 'He still sometimes has outbursts, but he's learning how to control it'. He was also now wearing school uniform and they generally felt, 'He's part of the group more; he isn't trying to dominate because he's feeling secure. As you can see, now he's more chilled out really'.

His tutor concluded, 'I think he has grown into a nice young man. He still has problems but he's learning how to cope with them. Or he's actually putting them more into context within his life so he knows how to control things more. So he's no longer being overwhelmed by his problems'.

2.8 Follow up interview with the student

AA reported that he felt he had changed. 'I've grown tall; I know where I want to be in life'. He felt happier with his friends and now enjoyed being with them. He reported they 'hug me' now. When he was asked about counselling he said, 'I was happy to come to start with but then I became uncomfortable'. He would not or could not say why he was uncomfortable. He also said 'Counselling was boring, there were babyish games to play with'.

2.9 Conclusion

AA was placed in the first year counselling group. In this year, all parties thought AA had regressed. It was reported he could not manage being challenged by staff. When he was challenged his state of arousal escalated very quickly and his behaviour became very disruptive. Over the year he had become far more aggressive with peers and this extended to several physical outbursts with male staff members. In my experience such outbursts would have led to permanent exclusion in many schools, however, this school recognised the difficulties he was facing and held him under some very challenging circumstances. His schoolwork had deteriorated in the first year. I believe this young man was going through such a difficult time he could not possibly sit still, concentrate and take in any further information. His tutor and TA said his physical appearance had regressed because he was not in school uniform. He had left his uniform at his foster home and refused to go back and collect it whilst social services were debating the suitability of his chosen dwelling.

He described himself as an angry person who was dealing with everybody else's 'rubbish' and in this he was losing himself and perhaps he was not being seen. Although he seemed anxious that he could not contain all the mess, he had hoped that things would get better. I believe his behaviour was saying several things:

- 1) I will fight to survive

- 2) I will keep 'fighting' until someone understands the meaning of my communication
- 3) I cannot manage the depth of my own emotions

I believe it would have been a negative response if he had modified his behaviour. It would have said he was surrendering and had given up any hope of survival. When somebody confirmed they understood the meaning of his behaviour, he demonstrated great maturity and found what he needed, a supportive adult, his Godfather. When he had established the security of a consistent adult in his home life, he addressed the third meaning of his behaviour, by refusing to attend counselling. AA was going through such a difficult time he could not possibly attend counselling, allow himself to connect to his emotions and process what was happening in his life and at the same time alter his behaviour. I believe this would have been a tall order for most adults let alone an adolescent with learning difficulties. I hope the support of the school and mine, helped him to keep hoping, looking for that 'one white star', which he seemed to have partially found in his Godfather.

In his second interview he was still angry, I wonder if the 'bad teeth because of too much sugar' represented he had become 'bad' because he had too many 'bad' things going on in his life. He reported something had been stolen from him and this time he had been heard and was helped. I wondered if the white person stealing the money from him represented feeling robbed of his culture when he was placed in a white foster family. I thought his story of the police listening to him and 'knocking on each door until they found the person who robbed him', symbolised several things:

- 1) The police prosecuting his mother for assaulting him
- 2) An authority figure understanding his communication and helping him
- 3) His search for his Godfather
- 4) When his Godfather took him in he was given back the thing that was stolen, love and an emotional presence.

Whilst counselling did not appear to help him directly it was fantastic to see that he never gave up hope and determination to go where he felt wanted and loved. When he reached this place, living with his Godfather, he changed and flourished under his care. When his placement had been agreed, it was observed he was back in school

uniform. His form tutor commented he looked happier and at ease with himself. He was participating with his peers and very much part of the class. His schoolwork had improved and staff generally felt that he had matured and was learning to cope with the difficulties life had thrown him. He himself reported he was happier and was pleased people had noticed the changes. He was not able to talk about his experience with me, as his counsellor. He was only able to say it was 'crap' and he preferred being in class. In his final interview he seemed to be able to state the obvious, that he liked counselling to start with, but then it became difficult and he could not stay with it.

AA was nominated for an award from the Mayor for turning his life around. I am pleased to say he won this and was very proud of attending a ceremony to receive the award. He commented, 'It feels really good that people have noticed I've changed'. When he returned to school the following year for a visit, he gave me a big hug and said he was pleased to see me. At the time I was with another distressed student acting out. AA said, 'I remember being like that. I was a real pain in the arse wasn't I'. I smiled and said, 'No, you were really hurting, but I am so pleased for you that you were able to work through such difficult times and are now achieving against all odds'. AA thanked me and said he was now happy.

In terms of measurement for the project, on the face of it AA did not benefit from counselling and staff thought he generally regressed in the year he received counselling. But from the follow up interviews and comments from his returned visit to school, AA demonstrated he had worked through some very difficult experiences and had definitely turned his life around. The presence of his Godfather in his life was pivotal to his developments, but I believe counselling made some contribution to this process. This case study shows the complications of illustrating and measuring the impact of counselling on young people with complex needs.

3.0 Case study two: The boy with the unspeakable secret

JP was the youngest of three children and appeared to live at home with his mother. It was unclear whether his father was around, as mum and JP were very cautious in answering this question. His older two sisters were now living with partners. One of his sisters had a four-year-old daughter and was expecting her second child during the

life of the project. JP was diagnosed with a learning difficulty; he was fourteen when we met for the project. He was referred because he was displaying immature behaviour and the staff members at the school were generally concerned about his demeanour. The school placed him in the second group, which acted as the comparison group, and JP received counselling in the second year of the project.

3.1 Comparison interviews with the tutor and teaching assistant (TA)

In the first set of interviews his current form tutor and TA were interviewed. His tutor said he was generally immature and appeared to have low self-esteem. His TA commented, 'He likes to think he's confident but really he isn't'. His tutor said his behaviour could be challenging and his TA agreed and said, 'He is quite childish and is often shouting out'. They both said, 'He is often drumming on the desk and other antics to annoy the teacher'. Neither his tutor nor TA could recall him getting into fights. They reported he appeared popular and got on with his peer group. His schoolwork was reported to be quite good when he was in a good mood. When he was on form he could stay on task and achieve a good standard, but when he was in a difficult mood he would be rude and abusive to staff and distract the rest of the class. His tutor believed he did not take any responsibility for his actions. There were also concerns about his physical appearance, particularly with his personal hygiene. His TA reported, 'He often appears sad. He likes to have a cuddle in the playground'.

3.2 Comparison interviews with the student

The interviewer reported JP appeared happy to be part of the project and willing to attend his interview. However, the interviewer believed that when he started drawing he became anxious. It was as if he was going to reveal something that he did not want seen. The interviewer said, during his image making he kept putting the pen down as if he was finished and wanted to leave, but then picked a pen up again and continued. In his interview he started to draw a girl. He reported the girl had a funny body, with one eye, a carrot for a nose and a happy mouth. He drew a bogey on the nose and spiky hair. The girl wore a skirt and trousers. JP drew a heart outside of the body; he did this by dots then joined it up. He said, 'The heart should be inside the body'. He then drew an arrow through the heart and said, 'It broke my heart'. He continued with a stick that went through the girl's legs and had blood on it.

When the interviewer was enquiring about his image, he became very defensive and was not able to relate to any of his image. As his anxieties increased he transformed the girl into a witch. He made her “really ugly” and gave her green hair. The witch was more powerful than the girl and he reflected that the stick was hurting the girl and she was silly for putting it there. It appeared nobody was going to help the girl or remove the stick. The witch had a black cat that he drew in brown; he said brown reminded him of a bruise. The witch was good at spells. At first the witch made a rabbit and then the witch put a spell on the interviewer. The interviewer was turned into a frog and JP squashed the frog flat. He said he wanted the interviewer to disappear. At the end of the interview he drew some fireworks that he was going to light up and said that after the explosion there would be a sunset and this was a good thing.

3.3 Second interviews with the tutor and TA

His tutor and TA were quite concerned about JP. His tutor said, ‘JP has regressed. He seems to be, this is probably the worst one out of the whole list, and he seems to be regressing in age, as he’s getting older. He seems to be becoming less and less mature instead of becoming more and more mature. I don’t know. He definitely needs some counselling or something. It’s almost as if you’re trying to discipline him for something and he shuts down. He almost becomes a baby, makes little whistles and noises’. His TA said his behaviour was, ‘Bad, very childish and it’s masking some of how he feels about himself’. His tutor thought, ‘He doesn’t take any responsibility for his actions, and goes back into very baby talk and behaviour’. When his tutor tried to address his poor behaviour she reported, ‘He runs out of the room, bangs on the window, runs up and down the window trying to get people’s attention and stuff like that. It’s getting worse’. His tutor also said, ‘It’s just like he now takes days off because he knows he’s got detentions and stuff like that, so he doesn’t come in and face the situation’. His TA agreed with this statement and added, ‘This action is supported at home’. His tutor believed, ‘His schoolwork is suffering immensely because of his behaviour in school. He becomes very silly if there’s something that he doesn’t want to do. So then he gets up and walks out. When you try to talk to him he’s just doesn’t want to acknowledge you or acknowledge the problems that he’s created. So he is a handful’. His TA believed his schoolwork, ‘Can be good

depending on behaviour. He can stay on task if he is enjoying the lesson if not he will be disruptive and he gives up easily’.

His tutor noticed a change in his popularity, ‘With his peers, it’s becoming difficult. It could be a sentence or a word or something that would set him off and then he will just go into that whole spiel about it, about being a little kid and making noises and yelling and all the sort of stuff’. His TA felt there was no change, ‘Yes, he appears quite popular and has a girlfriend. But he can be a bit touchy and feely and the other boys don’t like that’. There were still concerns regarding his personal hygiene, ‘Some students tease him over his hygiene. If there is a smell in class he would be blamed’. It was reported he found this difficult and would walk out of the classroom.

His tutor and TA reported that his behaviour really deteriorated after the birth of his niece. They thought there might be some rivalry for his mother’s affection. The staff reported that they had met mum to discuss their concerns for JP and this only created further unease. Mum reported that she was anxious about JP’s behaviour. Mum said that she was still sharing a bed with her son and he had difficulty sleeping through the night. When JP joined his mother for a discussion it was observed that JP was sitting on mum’s lap and fondling her breasts, despite being fourteen; mum seemed oblivious to his actions. His tutor said that when he made a comment JP acted like a child, banging on windows etc and mum was not able to address this with him.

3.4 Second interviews with the student

The interviewer again reported her concerns regarding JP. The interviewer said that he appeared very anxious. JP drew a witch again with lots of bogies, represented by green splodges from the nose. The interviewer had to look at the witch sideways because then she could appreciate her very large nose! The witch initially had green buckteeth; later he drew them gold. She also had gold shoes. JP reported the witch was naughty. As the interviewer and JP were talking, he drew the witch’s nose bigger because the witch lied. He then gave the witch measles; she was a sick person. To make matters worse she had to eat her bogies so she was really sick. JP said he did not like the witch, again repeating she was naughty. He drew a gold line around the witch and he said, ‘gold was horrible’. He then used red. Red was the blood that was all

over the witch because she killed JP and he was now a ghost. JP would not stay in the interview any longer and walked out.

3.5 Pre counselling interviews with the tutor and TA

In the second year of the project JP was to receive counselling and his form tutor and TA were interviewed. The concerns they reported echoed these of last year's tutor and TA. It was generally reported his behaviour was of great concern. He appeared to be very babyish and continued to 'bang on desks' and walked out of class. His tutor believed there was a further deterioration in his personal hygiene, which was becoming a problem with his peers. His TA said again that his schoolwork could be good, but was dependent on his mood and behaviour, which was regressing quickly. Both tutor and TA agreed that he was unable or unwilling to take any responsibility for his behaviour. They agreed with last year's staff that he would not come into school if he knew he had done something wrong the previous day. His tutor reported being in contact with JP's mother, but again echoed concerns about her ability to manage JP and the family dynamics.

3.6 Pre counselling interviews with the student

The interviewer reported that when she walked from his classroom to the interview room he kept hiding and playing games with her. The interviewer and I had decided to introduce play into our interview technique (see chapter three) and the interviewer reported that this bewildered JP. The interviewer said that he was unwilling to answer any questions or really settle into any play. He seemed quite 'manic' and she believed that this behaviour obliterated any feelings of sadness, which crept in during his moments of silence and stillness. The interviewer also reported that he seemed anxious; this was his last year at school and he kept saying that he had been here since year four. But in the same breath that he said that he was going to laugh when he left. She wondered if he felt the opposite, he would actually be crying inside. The interviewer observed his play seemed quite uncontrollable and whilst she allowed him freedom in the room, she had to intervene when he was throwing a ball around. She said that JP appeared quite relieved that someone had taken 'control'. He ended the interview quite abruptly and said he was finished and left the room.

3.7 The process in the sessions

We had a very difficult start to our therapeutic work. JP was absent from school on most days. When we eventually met I noticed that he was dirty in appearance with a strong body odour. His behaviour mimicked that of a toddler. When sessions finally started he had trouble staying within the boundaries. On numerous occasions he attempted to hit me with objects. His struggle with boundaries continued throughout the work. When he eventually settled into the work, he chose art as a medium, drawing sexually explicit pictures, yet refusing to discuss them. This was followed by him attempting to steal something from the room. When he was caught and confronted, it led to an escalation of his challenging behaviour.

During one of his long absences from school I was contacted by his tutor and was informed that social services were concerned. Apparently social service had two issues: one that his sister was not parenting her children appropriately; the other that JP might have been behaving inappropriately towards his niece. The new baby had been in hospital because she required heart surgery, but social services said she appeared neglected. In addition her four-year-old sister was discovered naked in a bedroom with JP. JP had become defensive when questioned and stressed he was just changing his niece. Social services suspected that JP was sexually offending and enquired if we had any information. I discussed this with my supervisor. At this point whilst I suspected social services could be accurate I had no evidence. We decided that puppet work should be used in future sessions.

On his return to school JP presented as a young toddler; he was very noisy and silly in his behaviour. He started by trying to hurt me with the throwing of the ball, but this time it had some mocking element to it. I reflected, again, that he wanted me to know how much he was hurting; but his behaviour also felt different to me. He could not acknowledge my comments and started to bang on the table. It felt as if he was trying to drown me out or at least drown his thoughts out.

He then noticed the puppets. He called one puppet the Dumb Ass and used a drumbeater to attach to the puppet to represent a penis. He then got a girl puppet and said to the girl, 'Suck my dick'. He put the penis in the girl puppet and said he was raping the girl and then threw her away. Another male puppet came into the game and

he told Dumb Ass off. Dumb Ass beat up the other puppet and threw him across the room. A second older male puppet came and the same happened. When JP had finished his story I offered a narrative of what happened. JP was very quiet and he left the session without challenging me.

The following week JP was late for his session and I had to go and find him. He said he was busy working and would not see me today. I commented that I was pleased he was busy working, but it was time for him to see me and he could continue with his work after. JP reluctantly agreed to come to his session. I was aware that JP had told a story last week that might have confirmed the fears of social services and he might have been worried about seeing me again. When JP entered the counselling room he was very aggressive which I Channelled musically. JP pounded on the drums, seemingly releasing a great deal of tension.

Unfortunately the following week there was another change of day and time imposed by me. This, understandably, made JP very angry and he continued playing with the ball against the wall trying to hit me. He then directed himself to the puppets and picked Dumb Ass up. Dumb Ass could not catch the ball and was stupid. I tried to offer some reflection, but this was prevented and he threw the puppets to the other side of the room. JP took himself under the chairs and pretended to be asleep; he then got up and said he was sleep walking. He told me to pretend I was not able to find him. I sensed that he was trying to tell me something, but I was unsure what this was. I commented that I observed a young person who was confused, hurting and frightened. I said that I thought he felt he was walking in some nightmare and nobody, not even I could help him. I said I wanted to help by understanding his world and to find a way together to sort out the problem. JP said I was wrong and stupid. Towards the end of the session JP became a 'monster' and stood up with the chair on his head. He created an incredible mess in the room, refusing to tidy up. I wondered if this was a metaphor for his belief he had become a monster and created a mess and could not clean it up. He said he wanted to go my home and eat me.

We were now approaching another break in the school calendar. The work so far, had been very disrupted, either by JP's absences or school events and I felt frustrated by the forthcoming school holiday because I was just beginning to get somewhere. In

the session prior to our break, JP used the sand, initiating a game of hide and seek. He commented that I was stupid and would not be able to find the objects he had hidden and seemed frustrated that I was able to find the hidden parts.

After the holidays JP was again absent from school and we did not meet for several weeks. In his absence I was informed that another student had commented that JP had been round to his house and was behaving weirdly. The student said he kept 'humping his dog and silly things like that'.

When JP returned to school and attended his session, he arrived early and hid under the chairs. I commented about him hiding from things when he felt frightened. He said he was stuck and could not get out. I used this to narrate what was actually happening, but also to reflect at a symbolic level that he was stuck and frightened and could not escape his actions. After this session I was further informed of another incident where he had been left in charge of two young children. These were the children of his mother's friend. The children alleged that he masturbated in front of them. The mother of the children was reported to be furious and was taking the matter to the police. I had already voiced my concerns to the child protection officer at the school and was asked to put them in writing.

I informed JP what I had been told and I had to make a written report about him. I emphasised that I wanted to help him and it felt like he had got himself into a very difficult place and did not know how to get out. JP was not able to hear my comments and became very distressed. He refused to stay for the rest of his session. Following this session JP was again absent from school. I was aware that we were approaching the end of our work, but that also he was approaching the end of his schooling.

It was reported when he returned to school that he only attended for the day he was to work with me; his tutor was convinced it was because he wanted to work with me. Prior to the session JP was apparently very distraught and I was requested to come and talk to him. As I approached the room he said he was not going to talk to me. I said that was fine, I would do the talking. I offered a summary of what I thought was going on in his life and his struggle with it. I said I was aware he could not manage school at the moment and thought he had only come in because he wanted to see me,

but was finding the wait too long. When the session began I remarked I thought he wanted to tell me something that he was finding difficult and I wondered if I could help him or he could find another way of telling me. He mocked my attempts to encourage him to confide in me. I told him that I believed he was scared and I could only make a guess why. I said if he wanted me to help him he had to trust me and find a way to tell me what was happening in his life. He said he was not going to talk to me. I said whatever was going on in his life was really scary and he was finding it hard to talk about it. I drew links to him leaving school and the end of the project and he knew he was running out of time here. He chose to play snakes and ladders and wanted to sit very close to me. I had the sense that he wanted to have close physical contact and perhaps consume me, as he had previously stated. Unfortunately JP was absent from school thereafter and did not attend his remaining sessions.

3.8 Analysis of the sessions

There was a difficult start to the therapeutic work because of JP's absences. This theme continued throughout the work not only with his erratic school attendance, but also with changes because of school events and school holidays. Initially JP wanted to play hide and seek; I wondered if he was exploring whether I would be willing to find the true JP and whether I was good at finding a hidden self. There appeared to be very few boundaries in his life, which became clear in the therapeutic work early on. JP continued to challenge my boundaries, but seemed relieved that I was able to offer him some containment. At times I believed he was goading me into a fight; he wanted me to confront him. I believed this was a familiar pattern to him and there was some safety in the familiarity. However, I tried to show him a different way of being. Whilst I did not directly confront him, I held on to the boundaries and tried to offer some empathy for his dilemmas. I believe JP appreciated this experience. This was reflected in his desire to eat me, as I was juicy. I appeared to have something good to offer and he wanted to devour it.

When JP felt safe in the work, he took a brave step in disclosing an event through puppetry. However, his bravery was quickly overtaken by fear. Following this disclosure he withdrew from the work and was very angry with himself. He was not helped by the continued changes to his session that were imposed by the school for various reasons. Towards the end of the work his behaviour had deteriorated and I

was receiving reports about his behaviour outside of school. In our last session I gave way to this anxiety and reported my concern about the time running out in a desperate hope that he would open up. Unfortunately this had the opposite effect. He was not able to attend any more sessions and we did not have an appropriate ending.

3.9 Post counselling interviews with the tutor and TA

JP's tutor believed he had low self-esteem and said, 'He is capable of having quite mature concepts, which is very much at odds to how he is the majority of the time'. His tutor said, 'Um, I actually think we're going backwards. I don't think really, much has improved from last year at all. I thought that maybe we were moving along, but no, no. He is very much into self-denial on manipulating around him so that he doesn't have to do things'. He continued, 'Um, he's very aggressive at home. We occasionally see that aggression here but he tends to be, "Well I'm not doing it". Um, and he just point blank refuses'. She also said, 'Occasionally he will put in quite a mature conversation and you'll think, where on earth has this come from today, which makes you realise that there is a side to him, which is clever'. His TA said, 'I can't get him to work but when he does work he's very capable. He just wants to play; he just wants to do his own thing, but we don't see too much of him'. However, his TA had noticed, 'Um, he's stopped the silly noises'. His tutor agreed, 'His schoolwork, when he's focused, he can contribute and can work really well. He hasn't achieved a great deal because he hasn't finished the amount of work he should have done. He's actually capable of getting the highest grades in the class'.

JP's tutor believed his physical appearance had regressed, 'He's very scruffy and dirty; he, his clothes are either too big or too small. His hair sometimes looks, I don't know, as if he's never combed it. He's a mess and smelly sometimes. He actually looks a physical mess as well as an emotional mess'. His TA agreed and added, 'His nails are filthy'. His tutor noticed that he was less popular, 'He has become quite isolated'. And the TA added, 'He is just out of it'. His tutor reflected on his increased school absences and said, 'I do not know what is going on at home but it has not helped him get to school'. Both tutor and TA reported feeling very concerned about JP. His tutor said, 'He has a very kind and caring side but I am fearful he could do some very wicked things that he would know was wrong'.

3.10 Post counselling interviews with the student

The interviewer tried to interview JP over several weeks and eventually found a day when he was in school and could ask him to attend his final interview. She reported JP was insistent that his interview was not recorded; he portrayed a hard person who did not care about a thing, but she was left with a very different feeling. JP found it difficult to comment on his experience of counselling, which did not surprise me, and could not reflect on any changes within himself. He spent the time in his interview making paper aeroplanes and flying them around the room. The interviewer ended by stating, 'He really felt to me like the most lost, needy little boy who is absolutely unable to ask for what he desperately needs. I really worry about him'.

3.11 Summary

There was a steady deterioration in JP's general behaviour, physical appearance, schoolwork, level of happiness and popularity over the course of the counselling project. Both tutors and TA noticed this steady decline and they were very worried about him. His tutor believed whilst he rubbished the work with me he also valued the time. They noticed in his erratic school attendance he was selecting the days and was more present on the day that he would receive counselling than not. At the end of the work his tutor was convinced he only came into school to work with me. However, it appears that the counselling did not prevent any further regression. There were many worrying reports from outside of school about JP's behaviour, many of which were not addressed. I agree with staff and the interviewer, JP was a very frightened and needy little boy.

3.12 Conclusion

I was already concerned about JP having read the transcripts of the interviews and having been briefed on previous incidents. This concern increased once I had started to work with him. JP was a very capable young person and I felt his disability was a defence against trauma. I was concerned about the relationship he had with his mother and wondered where his father featured in this. I believe that JP had not separated appropriately from his mother and did not see himself as a separate entity. This was demonstrated by his continued sleeping in her bed and her acceptance of this. When JP reached puberty he was thrown into confusion. His mother needed to help him separate and make sense of his developing sexuality appropriately. On the birth of the

new baby, the second grandchild, JP believed his position was threatened and that he had a rival for his mother's affection. In his jealous state of mind and confusion of his developing sexuality, he then preyed on his niece and neighbour's children. I believe JP knew he had done wrong and did not know how to deal with the mess he had created. He started to trust me and tell me his story. Was the Dumb Ass a reflection of how he saw himself because he knew his actions were wrong? Or was Dumb Ass a reflection of how other people saw him and he had come to believe this of himself? When JP had disclosed such events he was very scared and withdrew. The forthcoming ending, not only of his sessions but also of his schooling, compounded this fear. JP could not face his actions and I agree with all involved, he was a very scared and confused young man. Because of my concerns I offered JP further work outside of school or to refer him to another agency, but he refused to take this up. My concerns were raised with social services and I can only hope JP receives the care and help he so desperately needs.

4.0 Conclusion to the chapter

Again the two reported case studies demonstrate the complexities of the lives of young people with learning difficulties. Staff members were not able to observe any benefits to the students when they received counselling, and in fact they noticed deterioration by both students. The counsellor was in agreement with the staff members' judgement and observations. However, I believe that counselling did enable both students to begin to explore their internal lives, but for very different reasons both students had such complex experiences counselling was not sufficient or appropriate at the present time.

Chapter Eight

Discussion

Part A

1.0 Introduction

This chapter will revisit the context of the research and the rationale for the development of the research project. I will then identify what use the students made of receiving individual humanistic counselling in a special school setting. I will identify the themes, discuss the findings and relate them to the data presented in chapters five, six and seven.

2.0 Context

Nationally it has been recognised that disabled young people might be at risk of developing mental health problems (Carpenter, 2002). Counselling might be one way of supporting young people in developing and maintaining positive mental health and enabling students to function more appropriately (Jenkins, 2006). However, the growth of counselling in schools for children who have learning difficulties is minimal in comparison to what is available to non-disabled children (Flitton & Buckroyd, 2002, Pattison, 2006a). If counselling in schools for children with learning difficulties is to develop, then a model for access to counselling and its subsequent effects has to be thoroughly researched.

The aim of the study was to identify and understand this question: What use can students with a learning difficulty who attend a school for children with complex needs make of individual humanistic counselling in the school setting?

3.0 Discussion of themes

This section will discuss the themes that arose from the data across the spectrum of the client work irrespective of whether the student improved or not whilst receiving counselling. The data shows very clearly the need for counselling in the client group and their ability to engage with it. The discussion will identify, via the themes, what use they made of receiving individual humanistic counselling and will be specific in relation to the six case studies presented in chapter five, but the themes were consistent with all students and the remaining case studies (appendices 1 & 2) which support the findings discussed in this chapter.

3.1 Related themes across all three categories

The themes that arose from the interview data are discussed in this chapter. They were consistent across all three categories of 'Improvements', 'No Improvements' and 'Regression'. The themes reflected aspects of the young people's lives, which they needed to address. They appeared to have no other forum to explore and find ways to manage or overcome the issues they raised and/or addressed in their counselling sessions.

3.2 Home situation

I will now discuss the issues raised by most of the students, via interviews and transcripts of sessions, in relating experiences that were neglectful and in some cases abusive. Within this I will reflect on their home environment. Literature available informs us of the impact on family life when a child with a disability is born. Some authors report the parent's need to mourn the loss of the able child and reach a point of acceptance in order to develop a healthy relationship (Sinason, 1992, Ditchfield, 1992, Wilkins 1992). Others (Bovair, 1994, Russell et al. 2003, Reyes-Simpson, 2004) report the need to be adaptable and flexible in meeting the demands placed upon the family with a disabled child. Some report the impact of a disabling society and how that impedes the parent child relationship (Mason, 1990, Jupp, 1992, Fenell & Jones, 1998). All of these authors agree having a disabled child places extraordinary demands on the parents and some parents may not be able to manage these challenges well.

Sinason (1992) suggests when a parent, usually the mother, is unable to offer a mirror of love it can affect the secure attachment pattern (Bion, 1967, Bowlby, 1979). Mason (1990) understands the problem to be the impact of the disabling society rather than the parents' pathology. Regardless of the origin of the dilemma Kakogianni (2004) illustrates these problems in a case study of a client with a history of abuse and neglect and describes the effects this has on her development. Difficulties of these kinds were common among the students in the project. And it was plain that many had parents who may have had their own difficulties but were also struggling with the management of the learning disabled child.

Each of them came from very difficult home lives and a wide variety of circumstances. Some lived with natural parents, but others were looked after by a single parent, a guardian, or were in foster care. When the parents of the students in the project had divorced or separated, the student often had no contact with one parent. Some of the students in foster care were satisfied with the arrangement, while others were deeply disturbed by it. Some children in foster care seemed to be disturbed by access from the natural parent. One of the findings of the research was that children living with both natural parents seemed as distressed as those in a single parent situation. The children's difficulties did not seem to derive from unconventional family systems. Students from traditional family units showed the same degree of difficulty as those for example, with single parent support. This fact may support the contention that the child's learning difficulty was a major factor in poor parenting skills.

Bee disclosed that from an early age she had endured an abusive father, but decided in the aftermath of her parents' divorce to live with her father because he appeared to be the 'better' option. She was well aware that her mother had been unable to love and care for her because of her learning disability. Even after the death of Bee's father, her mother was not able to meet her daughter's needs or care for her. This led to further trauma because Bee was placed in foster care. Two of the placements broke down within a short period of time. However, her third placement was providing Bee with an acceptable level of care although Bee continued to test the boundaries. She was struggling to make an attachment with her foster family but having experienced a continued pattern of loss she continually expected the breakdown of this situation. While struggling to come to terms with this environment, social services required her to continue to have visits with her natural mother. The visits compounded her difficulties because she had to encounter on a weekly basis a mother who was not able to hear or tolerate her daughter. In attachment terms the mother and daughter relationship had failed (Bowlby 1979).

The theme of the mother who cannot make an appropriate attachment was also an important for Sonya. She had a birth defect, which her mother seemed unable to accept. In Sonya's life both parents remained together but it was her father who was more prominent in her life. Her mother seemed to have relinquished all responsibility

for raising her daughter because of her aversion to the child. Sonya spoke infrequently about her mother. On the occasions when her mother was mentioned, she said that her mother got very upset when she spoke about her deformity. She did not like to see her mother upset so would not talk to her about it. It appeared her father was supportive and more emotionally available for his daughter, but he also seemed unable to accept his daughter's disfigurement (Sinason, 1992).

A case similar to that of Kakogianni (2004) appeared in AA's life story. AA had experienced, to the best of my knowledge, a fairly ordinary upbringing until the death of his father. His father's death appeared to be the catalyst for a series of unfortunate events. It appeared that his mother became distraught in her grief and was offered no support in her mourning. This grief was turned against AA who may have been blamed for her husband's death because of his disability. His mother not only became emotionally absent, but also became physically abusive to him. AA was eventually removed from his family home. He experienced the loss of his father, the loss of his mother's presence, literally and emotionally and now the loss of his home. It was no wonder that he became very distraught.

JP also experienced a mother who was unable to form an appropriate attachment. It appeared that she had not separated appropriately from him and continued to baby him. In this state she was able to maintain the illusion that her son was an eternal child, by failing to engage with the challenges presented to her as her disabled child developed into adulthood (Sinason, 1992). Yet JP was developing physically and had reached puberty. Because his mother could not manage his disability appropriately he was unable to develop emotionally and sexually.

Chanel's life story on the surface appeared to demonstrate that she had experienced a slightly more functional home life. However, I would suggest that her mother had not come to terms with her daughter's disability (Sinason, 1992, Wilkins, 1992). The first four students I have discussed seemed to have experienced an extreme amount of deprivation at home; Chanel by contrast lived in a loving and supportive environment. But both parents had very strong religious views and a rigid moral code of conduct, which did not enable Chanel's development. The mother had instilled her standards in relation to education and achievement and had not accepted they were not within her

daughter's ability. This made her daughter feel like a failure and non-acceptable, but her parents were not able to recognise this. The mother appeared to avoid this painful difference by withdrawing emotionally from her child and it appeared from Chanel's perspective that she cared for her in the physical sense, but failed to meet or understand her emotionally. Her siblings were able to circumnavigate their parent's views and morals. Due to her disability Chanel was unable to avoid continued conflict every time she struggled for autonomy.

A similar picture emerged with Harry; he seemed to come from a functional and loving environment, but had experienced similar difficulties to Chanel because his parents did not accept his disability. His mother seemed very anxious about her son's disposition yet was emotionally unavailable to him. Because she was unable to face the pain of his disability, she had closed down. I was unsure where the father stood. As his mother withdrew from him or her own feelings, Harry became more withdrawn to the point that he was isolated in his room. This experience had left him feeling terrified of growing up because growing up was sad and lonely.

3.3 Need for attention

I believe many of the students, because of their home situations and relationships with their primary care giver, had difficulties in forming secure attachment patterns (Bowlby, 1979, Sinason 1992, Ditchfield, 1992, Sinason & Hollins, 2000, Emanuel, 2004, Kakogianni 2004). This manifested in many ways, one being a high level of need for attention. Schore (1997, 1997a, 1997b, 2000, 2001, 2002) and Sunderland (2006) have demonstrated convincingly that a history of poor attachment leaves people without appropriate methods of self-soothing and a consequent acute need to use other means to regulate their emotions. In addition poor attachment history leads to a mistrust of others and anxiety about whether people can be trusted. This difficulty is compounded where communication problems make relationships even more complicated. The students were not able to articulate their needs and so their need for attention manifested itself in challenging or inappropriate behaviour (Hawkins 2002, Flitton & Buckroyd, 2002, Flitton et al. 2006).

Bee would try to interact with others, but her fear of rejection made her extremely anxious so she would become very 'silly'. Her foster carers reported that she would often take things, hide them and then deny that she had done this. In the school environment it was reported that she was often 'silly' and became the focus of attention, albeit the wrong type of attention. The work that she did in her counselling enabled her to become more trustful and find more appropriate ways of self-soothing.

Sonya's need for attention was around needing to talk about her intolerable difference, which her parents had been unable to soothe. In her struggle for survival she had become self-sufficient and had closed off to life; this was apparent from her bowed head and hair falling over her face. Her experience in counselling of acceptance and a place in which her feelings could be discussed provided her with a means to self-soothe and develop more trusting relationships.

Conversely, AA demanded attention and was generally acknowledged to be 'in your face'. He seemed typical of somebody who had once received attention and was now deprived of it. He knew what he had lost and was demanding it back. Although he was unable to use the counselling he was able to find an appropriate attachment figure in the form of his godfather. This experience of acceptance and safety had a dramatic effect on his behaviour.

JP was also crying out for attention. However he was different to AA because he had no idea what was missing in his life, but knew something was really wrong. He had no idea what he needed or even how to start to repair the damage. He was in such a place of distress he felt hopeless. Unfortunately, the effect of the inability of his parents to attach appropriately and embrace him with his disability had been so severe that he was unable to use the counselling to learn to make better attachments and to become more able to trust and self-soothe.

Chanel equally needed and wanted attention, but seemed not to know what to do with it when she received it. Chanel's life had been rigid and she was not afforded the freedom to learn. Additionally, she felt unaccepted for who she was. The conflict between her self and self-concept led her to feeling angry. Because this conflict was not dealt with, she found herself struggling to regulate her emotions and became

verbally abusive at school, blaming most situations on people being racist towards her. Again, the damage she has suffered was too severe for her to be able to use the counselling to find a better way of managing.

Harry was also in a place of despair; his life had been quite 'ordinary' to begin with, but as his disability became more evident and the difference was not dealt with, he began to feel rejected. His parents again were not able to face the pain of his difference and withdrew emotionally from him. Harry was not acting out, but was demonstrating signs of being depressed. From his view point his life looked bleak and there was a sense that he just could not continue. He was desperately seeking someone to understand his communication and offer him the support and attention he required. In counselling he used the opportunity to begin to articulate his distress although much further development was needed for him to be able to learn to trust and self-soothe.

3.4 Communication

It was evident, via interviews and transcripts of sessions, that the students in this project had needs above and beyond the average person. Since the students struggled with expressing themselves appropriately it resulted in them communicating via their behaviour (Hawkins, 2002, Flitton & Buckroyd 2002, Flitton & Buckroyd 2005, Flitton et al. 2006). The students were able to use the therapeutic relationship in varying degrees to help them bring into awareness their need for attention and to communicate this more effectively and appropriately.

Children need to communicate their distress to an adult who can receive their communications and reflect back in an acceptable format (Bion, 1962). The students in this project had experienced a primary care giver who could not receive and appropriately reflect back their communications; this was extended to other significant adults in their lives, their teachers. Ommanney & Symes (2000) suggests that when an institution can offer no resolution to pain it will deny it. It seemed that staff members became overwhelmed by the extent of the students' need and often defended themselves against the pain by ignoring their communications. Because the teachers did not understand them, the students communicated in other forms, generally via their behaviour.

Bee was overwhelmed by the adverse events in her life and yet was actively denied a therapeutic response. She had reached such a point of despair that she was easing her pain by harming herself. The response from different professionals was that it could further traumatise Bee if a counsellor were to offer a therapeutic intervention by accompanying her into her pain and facilitating her recovery. In the school environment staff members were aware of her communications at some level. They knew that her life had been very traumatic, but as interviews with them revealed, also believed they could do nothing to change such events. Because this experience of powerlessness was so painful, they seemed to project their inability to hold such emotions on to Bee and assessed her as emotionally illiterate (Chapter five, section 2.1.). I believe Bee understood that nobody could bear her level of distress, which in turn created further distress that resulted in the self-harming. However, when I met her, I was able to demonstrate I could and would hold and contain her emotions. Bee responded well and from previous communications with me, trusted me to do this.

As Bee learned to communicate effectively with me and felt less overwhelmed by her life, she was able to transfer this growth outside the therapeutic space. It was observed that she was more able to ask for help when she needed it; she was able to tell staff when she was feeling upset rather than misbehave. It was also reported that she was communicating better with her peers. She had established a good friend in the class and was no longer the focus of ridicule.

Sonya presented differently in the sense she was not acting out or self-harming, but she communicated via the handicapped smile (Sinason, 1992). This smile masked a deep well of unhappiness. The staff understood this pain, but could not change her appearance or prevent cruel staring or insensitive comments. Additionally, they were not prepared to address these feelings. Like her parents the staff had avoided the subject of facial disfigurement and the emotions attached to it. Sonya had learnt to survive as the 'good girl' and had been taught to accept her lot and disguise her hurt. She had no understanding that she had a right to express her feelings. Additionally, she had no expectation that anyone would contain such intolerable feelings.

In the first year of the project, Sonya was being bullied at school. This appeared to go unnoticed. When the bullying ceased because her tormentor left the school, her tutor

had picked up that she was different but had no idea why the changes had come about. This situation only seemed to endorse others inability to notice her suffering. Sonya needed to find a means of communication that she felt safe to use to explore the depths of her feelings; she chose role-play. The role-play enabled her to project her feelings on to a character to tell her story but it also helped her embody a new way of interacting with people. Sonya understood this concept and continued to use the role-play to explore ways of expressing herself at her medical appointments. Previously she believed herself to be a victim of a cruel God and that she was subservient to the medical professionals. She did not understand she had a right to ask questions and request surgery. Sonya learned in the counselling sessions to drop the handicapped smile, face her difference and assert herself. It was observed as her confidence grew, her physical appearance changed. She was not walking around stooped. She had her hair cut so it was now off her face. Additionally, it was observed by staff that she had become more confident and her communication improved with staff and peers. The improvement could also be judged by the fact that this once lonely and invisible child developed a close friendship in the class with another student.

Chanel equally struggled with communicating her feelings. Chanel had experienced life in a family with very firm and strict rules. The family also seemed to have a strong moral code and great value was placed on academic achievement. This value did not appear to accommodate a person with a learning difficulty and left Chanel at odds with her true self. Her distress manifested in verbally aggressive behaviour. Her general response was that people were being racist to her. A racist is someone who does not accept or tolerate a cultural difference. I believe Chanel was trying to communicate that her parents did not accept her learning difference; she could not attain what her parents prized, therefore could not accept herself. Even though I understood her communications, Chanel was not able to address the root of her difficulty, so was not able to advance and improve her communication.

AA was screaming out communication, albeit in a very inappropriate manner. He was stealing, and physically and verbally abusive to staff and peers. AA was one of the most able and articulate students at the school and staff appeared to approach his dilemma differently. They did understand his communication and held him through a very challenging period. However, the school was not in a position to affect or meet

his needs. This was the responsibility of social services who seemed unwilling to understand his communications. AA was very resourceful and continued to act out because he wanted someone to understand him. I believe he knew the staff and I cared for him, but we were powerless to make the changes that he required. During the course of the intervention he was able to go out and find a suitable adult role model for his life who was able to act as guardian for him. When this need was met, he was able to settle down and turn his communication around. He reached a point in his life where he was able to articulate life events.

Harry's tutor seemed to understand his communications. This might have been because she was also a trained psychotherapist. She was able to identify his depression and had a pretty good idea as to the cause of it. Unfortunately, she did not remain in the school for long. Harry appeared to be overwhelmed with his emotions. However, for the most part he was able to maintain his charade and present the school with a happy jovial face, although underneath this mask was fear and despair (Sinason, 1992).

Harry could not maintain the façade of the happy smile in certain situations. He could not tolerate listening to the topic of physical and emotional development and became very distressed and had no ability to self soothe. The school could not see a way of resolving this situation so, as suggested by Ommanney & Symes (2000) they ignored his level of distress and demanded that he attended these lessons without a plan or means to deliver the information to him in a way he could accept or access. In counselling Harry was able to communicate his fears and they were reflected back to him in a manageable form. He was beginning to express his distress rather than present a false self. Although he was walking out of certain lessons he was also able to articulate why. I discussed this situation frequently with the staff members to try and gain their necessary support, but it seemed that they considered a movement from his false self to his true self as deterioration, not a step in the right direction.

JP's behaviour was also indicating that all was not well in his life. The staff at the school on one level did understand his communication although were overwhelmed with the level of his need and were not able to reflect back a mirror of containment (Bion, 1962). JP started to find a safe way in the counselling session to communicate

and tell his story via puppets, but did not reach a point where he could work through his difficulties.

3.5 Trust

As previously discussed the history of poor attachment leaves the young person with difficulties trusting others (Schore, 2001, Sunderland, 2006). The establishment of trust is vital to successful counselling; however gaining the trust of children with learning difficulties is a difficult and lengthy process (Flitton & Buckroyd, 2002, Flitton & Buckroyd, 2005, Flitton et al. 2006).

The issue of trust presented itself throughout the work with all the students. Some articulated this directly, while others did so indirectly. I had to show the students that I trusted them; that they had the capacity to explore their inner worlds and would survive such intense work. I in turn had to earn the trust of the students so they were sure that I would keep the work private and within the agreed parameters and also that I would be able to withstand their experiences. It appeared the students were very suspicious of adults stating that what they said would be confidential. It took many sessions for some of the students to feel safe enough and that counselling really was a safe and confidential (to the project) space to talk about how they felt. They had to be sure that when examining their inner conflicts, I could be trusted to deliver the support they required.

Bee had an extraordinarily difficult life; adults' response to her was to avoid the pain because they could not contain it and did not trust her to have the capacity to manage her sorrow, as is plain to see from the results (Chapter Five) When I gained her trust and offered her support and containment, she had the capacity to manage her sorrow. Bee told me that she knew the work was 'private' and she trusted me to keep it that way. She informed the interviewer during the first interview that she had engaged in a therapeutic process in the school environment in the past and the confidentiality agreement had been breached, making her initially nervous of therapy. Bee also commented about the suitability of the room. She felt uncomfortable with the window in the door and felt there should have been a blind to aid privacy. The second room that I was allocated for counselling was placed close to another room, which the

technician used. Bee commented that she did not like it when she could hear other people outside because that meant they could hear her. She felt this was an intrusion into her privacy.

Sonya's facial disfiguration caused people to avoid the subject of difference under the pretence of not wanting to hurt her. Sonya was a 'normal' person with the same feelings as the rest of us. She was really hurting and angry at how her body was made and was very concerned about meeting new people because of their reaction to her. Not only was she expected to hold her own sorrow, but she was also expected to hold other people's discomfort. Sonya needed to trust that I was able to go with her and tolerate the depths of her feelings. I needed to show Sonya that I trusted her to have the capacity to survive expressing her feelings.

Harry was a very confused young man who was terrified of change. His fears of change were blamed on his disability and no one was prepared to offer a containment of his fears. When I addressed the crux of his problems he became distraught. After an extended period of time we were able to establish a trust relationship in that I was able to let him know I could handle his distressed condition and would not be deterred by it. We established a pace within his comfort zone that allowed Harry to trust me and we slowly explored his difficulties. I trusted Harry that he could manage to look at what was vexing him. Unfortunately, the school did not demonstrate as much faith in his abilities, which impeded some of his development.

Once AA started to trust me he divulged what I came to understand as a protective fantasy that he had constructed to make the death of his father more palatable. In the fantasy he portrayed himself experiencing the love of an extended family and the cultural atmosphere he so craved. Whilst the reality of his life was quite the opposite, he trusted me with what were in fact his heart's desires and for the first time openly acknowledged that his father had died. This was a defining moment for AA. He found he could no longer go on with the pretence that he was happy in his foster placement and started to rebel against it.

My work with JP was very haphazard in terms of continuity of attendance. Once trust was established, he took a huge step; he decided to use puppetry as the medium for

his story. This story, as you will recall, is the Dumb Ass putting a stick in between the little girl's legs and making her bleed. JP must have trusted me in order to be able to tell me this story, but he must also have known that the story could not rest with me. He may have trusted me but he had no reason to trust those who might become involved, the police and social services. They had certainly not demonstrated to him that they were trust worthy. His solution to this dilemma was to withdraw from the sessions.

Gaining Chanel's trust involved allowing her the freedom to unleash her pent up rage without consequence. Initially this caused her confusion, as her violent and abusive outbursts had all previously been met with punishments, while I just let her blow herself out. This helped establish the confidentiality of the counsellor client relationship and allowed her to disclose her problems and begin to show some development in trusting herself.

3.6 Autonomy

The issue of developing trust merged with the next theme of developing autonomy. Developing into a fully functioning person is central to the humanistic philosophy (Rogers, 1967, Merry, 1995). Developing as an emotionally, fully functioning person involves trusting our own internal value system rather than relying on others' judgements. It is also about being open and being able to enter and maintain friendships, not being pre-occupied with self, and being flexible in our attitudes (Rogers, 1967, Merry, 1995). However, many of the students have had very difficult life experiences. They had then found people's reaction to their pain and sorrow was avoidance disguised as supposed caring protection. This protection once subject to being analysed by the recipient during counselling, was exposed as a sham. I believe it was to protect the individual and gave a very damaging message to students that they could not be trusted and they did not have the capacity to self-actualise and to be autonomous.

All six of the students who have been discussed had been subject to situations, which seemed to protect them but in fact undermined their development into autonomous human beings. AA suffered the death of his father only to become the subject of

physical abuse from his mother and then was removed into care. Bee had elected to live with her father despite the fact he was physically abusive to her, when her parents separated. He died on the eve of her seventh birthday. She was rejected by her mother and was placed into care. Chanel had a learning difficulty that was in conflict with her parents' aspirations. Their control of her and refusal to allow her freedom undermined her progress towards independence. Harry's disability created a difficulty particularly in managing change. His parents were not able to confront and manage this difference, so he was condemned to complete isolation and so his development was stunted. JP had not separated from his mother and consequently could not make appropriate development as an independent person. Sonya's birth defects were met with fear and disgust, so she also was condemned to isolation and could not develop into young adulthood.

Within these experiences all six students had been denied the right to express themselves. More importantly they had not been offered opportunities to learn for themselves and develop any level of autonomy. The power to determine their own ability and capacity was removed which prevented them from developing into autonomous beings. The students were not fully functioning people. They were as a whole defensive and were functioning from other's values and judgements. They could not enter into or maintain friendships because they were preoccupied with their own needs and developments. This isolation caused the majority of the students to be victims of bullying or to some extent bullies themselves. Finally, they placed no weight on their own thoughts and feelings.

AA stood out as being different from the other students. He showed a rapid acceleration towards autonomy once somebody had allowed him to voice his inner desires. Once out in the open, he trusted that he knew what he needed and was determined to have this need met regardless of the consequences of his actions. In my experience this was a rare capacity for a child in a special school. He now felt supported enough to stand up against social services and seek what he required. Once set on this course of action, he traced a safe appropriate adult who could provide continued support, love and engage in the cultural needs he required to progress. AA proved to all involved that he knew himself best of all.

3.7 Managing ordinary life events

Most of the students indicated via interviews and transcripts of sessions that on top of normal life experiences they had been subject to extraordinary and enormously stressful situations that would have adversely affected anyone, let alone someone with their disabilities. Because of their difficulties, poor attachment patterns and life stories, it was clear that most did not have the resources to discover strategies to manage the life events that others would view as ordinary (Flitton & Buckroyd, 2002, 2005, Flitton et al. 2006).

Adolescence is known to be a volatile stage of development. The body is undergoing many changes and hormones are flooding the body. Part of this developmental stage is to separate further from our parents' ideas and values, and learn to discover ourselves (Barnes, 1995, Cole et al. 2005). It is also the age when people learn further independence by going out on their own to socialise. Adolescents develop peer relationships and identify with different groups. Unfortunately, people with learning difficulties are thwarted at this developmental stage because of the difficulties of developing independence (Dee, 2003). Disabled adolescents rely extensively on adult carers to provide the logistics in order to create even minor peer group interaction. Due to this reliance and the lack of freedom, each of these events becomes an isolated occurrence. The learning disabled adolescent is unable to orchestrate a gathering of the peer group at each of the events that they attend in order to build a circle of support and friendship.

Each of the students discussed in this thesis suffered from these restrictions. Chanel relied upon her sister's circle of friendship. In this wider circle she met a boyfriend and was determined to meet him independently. However, because of her deception of her parents she was not able to ask for their assistance. Additionally, with her feelings of inferiority, she could not turn to her sister and ask for the help she required to maintain this normal teenage interaction. The relationship ended and she became very distressed, but had no peer support that would understand and support her through her dilemma.

Harry had been ridiculed and rejected by the neighbourhood peer group, so rather than trying to find appropriate clubs for him to attend and establish a new peer group, his

parents, in attempts to protect him, confined him to home and events within the family unit. Harry was going through the emotions of a developing adolescent, but had no person of his own age range that he could identify with. He felt isolated from his peers in the neighbourhood, but also different from the students in his class. He felt very lonely, outcast and was becoming depressed.

Sonya was also prevented from going out in the community because her parents wanted to protect her from further distress and cruelty. It would have been more helpful to offer her strategies to survive such interactions or to talk about her experiences, rather than confine her to home. A conversation with concise accurate answers to Sonya's questions could have enabled her to cope.

Part of adolescent development is sexual development. For many disabled students this is a taboo subject. It is as if parents deny this aspect of their development because of the difficulties that emerge with sex. A part of sexual emergence is developing intimate relationships. Chanel had reached this stage of development and was able to mix with people outside of the school environment. However, this reality did not fit into her family's culture or values and she was offered no support in managing intimate relationships. Even more importantly, there was no circle of support for her when the romance turned sour.

Some students project the confusion in the emergence of the sexual self into inappropriate actions. JP was in some type of sexually abusive relationship, whether as the victim or abuser or both was never fully disclosed.

Coping with bereavement is another life experience; most of the students in this project had experienced loss from bereavement. Some had experienced a literal death, others a symbolic death. Most students indicated that parents were unwilling to discuss the experience of death with them. The emotions surrounding death might be linked to unresolved feelings about the death of their 'able' child (Bates, 1992, Wilkins, 1992). Because such feelings have not been resolved, parents are unable to address this emotive subject with their disabled child. Often the parents' inability to address such a subject is projected onto the child in a guise of protection.

Additionally, for a child with learning difficulties, the frequent response is 'well they won't understand, so we won't go there' (Carpenter, 2002).

3.8 Disability

It is evident, and not surprisingly, from the interview data and transcripts of sessions, that disability or the failure to acknowledge and address the limitations of impairments, was a recurring theme. There are varying attitudes to the idea of addressing disability with a disabled person. Some believe that a person's impairment needs to be addressed and the disabled person needs to mourn the loss of their 'able self' to reach a point of self acceptance (Bates, 1992, Ditchfield, 1992, Sinason, 1992, Szivous & Griffiths, 1992, Waitman & Conboy-Hill, 1992, Wilkins, 1992). Others see this as discriminatory and believe disability needs to be understood in the light of an oppressive society (Oliver, 1995, Ommaney & Symes, 2000, Flitton & Buckroyd, 2002, 2005, Hawkins, 2002, Williams & Heslop 2005). Whichever stance you take the lack of acknowledgement of difference is a fact that underpins much of the students' inability to manage daily life.

Sinason (2002a) suggests that looking at disability is looking at difference. This difference is painful so it is avoided. Avoiding such difference limits our ability to be fully functioning within our own capacity. Sinason (1992) describes disability in three categories, although she believes these often overlap. The first is a secondary handicap; this is when the person exacerbates the organic impairment in order to make others happy with them. The case of Harry illustrates this secondary handicap. Harry presented with a typical smile. He needed his outer world to be happy with him. His parents could not accept or acknowledge his difference. He had been kept in an infantile state so he could avoid growing up. In this avoidance nobody had to face the complexity of emotions connected to growing up with a disability, but this strategy exacerbated his difficulty in dealing with change.

The second category suggested by Sinason is an opportunist handicap; this is when a person has a severe disturbance and it merges with the organic impairment. JP seemed to fit into this category and the third; the handicap which is a defence against trauma. He presented as a young man who was either being abused or had severe separation issues. He was not able to face the pain of such experiences so created a person that

was not functioning at his true ability. He appeared to be an able and capable young man and I wondered whether his abusive experience had actually created his disability.

The third category, the handicap that is a defence against trauma, was a consistent theme in the work. AA had several traumatic experiences created by emotional and environmental abuse. These experiences created a blockage in his ability to learn and function in the community. Bee created a persona as a consequence of trauma and neglect that was incongruent with herself. She presented as an emotionally illiterate student and had little academic ability. She created a façade of stupidity. Her façade numbed and protected her from remembering traumatic experiences of loss and rejection. Chanel also experienced emotional and environmental abuse. This created a disability in itself because it prevented her from functioning to her full capacity. Sonya experienced her physical disability as traumatic. She saw the disgust not only in her mother's eyes, but also in the general public. My interpretation of this is that she was lost in the pain of her feelings and felt unlovable. In her defence against such experiences she presented with a happy smile and had disconnected from her inner world.

Although the categories are useful, Sinason discusses the disabled person only in terms of their disability. The data from the study shows that this approach addresses only a part, and sometimes a small part of the needs of this client group.

3.9 The need to address effective parenting

The issues of disability created the next theme. The project was set up to see how the students made use of individual counselling. However, it became apparent that the lives of the young people were greatly affected by their parents. This on some level was not unexpected; parents are very influential in our experience and critical to our existence. However, because the project was working only with the students, it was not designed to support parents in effective parenting.

The impact of disability on family life seemed in many cases problematic (Mason, 1990, Ditchfield, 2002, Wilkins, 2002, Sinason & Hollins 2000, Kakogianni, 2004,

Flitton & Buckroyd, 2005). For all, and I include my own personal experience, the initial stage is a shock. But this shock and the difference in disability need to be expressed and experienced. If support is not offered to parents to then it can lead to denial. The denial can lead to further traumatic experiences for both parent and child.

It appeared from the students, that some parents had not been able to deal with the difference and move to a place of acceptance. Harry's parents learnt of his disability in his nursery years, but in time his difference became evident and this was not dealt with on an emotional level. Chanel's parents appeared to value something she could never be. When Chanel then requested that an authority figure help her, the request was received with her parents' comments 'she was brain damaged at birth', a fact that was incorrect and denied them the opportunity to address the real problem. Bee's mother was able to care for her son but not her learning disabled daughter. AA's mother projected her hurt on to him rather than on to his able bodied brothers.

3.10 Staff overload

The final theme that emerged through the interview data was the effect of the students' needs on the staff. This seemed to have two consequences: the first was the staff members' inability to hold and contain the pain; the second consequence was their inability to use their understanding to develop effective behaviour management.

Kyriacou (1987) and Brownell et al. (1997) acknowledge that the emotional needs of the students and their families place great demands on the staff. These demands are rarely acknowledged in schools; the teaching profession has a culture of having to be seen as coping and effective in their work. Additionally, teachers are regularly inspected on their teaching ability and classroom management. Within this culture there is the denial of the right to discuss the difficulties they are encountering and to access support. This was the situation in the school in which the project was conducted. There was no emotional holding or forum for letting off steam other than the staff room environment (Griffiths, 2001, Dingwall, 2008, personal communications). This resulted in either personal conflict between staff members or the isolation of the 'emotional one'. Many staff reported during the course of their interviews with me that to express such difficulties might be seen as a weakness and would be frowned upon. Such denial seems to parallel a process that parents

experience with their children. The data suggests the denial of such feelings creates further trauma in the lives of our learning disabled children.

In the interviews with staff members it also became apparent that some staff had difficulty and had not been trained, in responding appropriately. In the work with Bee, the two tutors and TAs knew that she had experienced an extraordinary amount of loss and understood the impact this would have had on her from an intellectual perspective. However, they were unable to use this understanding to offer appropriate behaviour management.

A similar picture formed with Sonya. Her two tutors and TAs were not able to acknowledge the pain of her disfigurement with her. The subject of her difference was avoided and hence the pain of her suffering. This also manifested in her being bullied. Her tutor and TA were not able to see a particular student was giving her a hard time and take appropriate measures to protect her, but just accepted that a smile meant she was happy. When the other student involved left the school and the bullying ceased, Sonya's tutor observed a difference but was unwilling to explore the reason for it.

In one interview a TA disclosed she had had a terrible year with a particular student and was feeling very stressed by her behaviour. She spoke very unfavourably about the student and in fact had nothing positive to say about her. I spent a considerable amount of time listening to the TA, enabling her to off-load the events surrounding this student. Then in an act of fate, I discovered that I had not turned the microphone on and had to re-interview the TA the following week. The TA informed me that something miraculous had happened in the week. She said the student had changed and they were now getting along well together and suddenly gave me lots of positive observations about the student. I know that the student did not change in that week, but believe that the TA was able to see the child from a new perspective now she had an opportunity to disclose her stress.

It became apparent during the interviews that other staff members were very irritated by some of the students' behaviour. A teacher described a student as a prima donna and clearly did not like this element of her persona. The teacher was not able to see that this was the student's defence against her feeling of insecurity. The teacher

maintained her view that the student needed to know she was nothing special rather than the opposite; she needed to feel loved and special. Teachers knew intellectually that Harry was having difficulty managing change and they knew this was part of his organic disability. They also believed his parents had difficulty accepting his difference and this was denied and not dealt with. However, they could not link that understanding with strategies to meet his needs. Their insistence that he attended a lesson that he was in no fit mental state to join, is an example of them putting teaching before the students' welfare.

The inescapable conclusion of this evidence is that staff needed far more training in working with this student group and far more supervision and support that they were given. Just as parents might usefully be included in any future research project with this client group so also might staff be included. The benefits of a counselling perspective would then be maximised to the child's community of significant adults. However, the evidence from this project suggests that both parents and staff could benefit enormously from further support and training whether or not a counselling project was being conducted in the school.

4.0 Conclusion

The chapter begins by reiterating the identified mental health needs of young people with learning difficulties and the lack of provision in meeting those needs. It continues by restating the aims of the project, which was to understand what use young people with learning difficulties could make of receiving a humanistic counselling service.

The chapter continues by discussing what use the young people did make of counselling by identifying the themes that arose from the data from the interviews with the staff, students and transcripts of the counselling sessions. The themes are discussed in some detail with reference to current literature, which supports the identified themes: home situation; need for attention; communication; trust; autonomy; managing ordinary life events; disability; the need to support effective parenting and staff overload.

Chapter Nine

Discussion Part B

Difficulties Encountered

1.0 Introduction

This chapter will identify and discuss the problems encountered conducting the research with staff members and students in a school for children with complex needs. Research in the area of counselling for children with learning difficulties in schools is its infancy; there is an urgent need for more of it to be carried out. However, this pioneering piece of research has met with more than ordinary difficulties. The complications in researching this client group within a school context were vast and complex. The knowledge gained from this project about how to conduct the research is very substantial and one of the major findings of the project. This knowledge is essential reading for any researcher or practitioner setting up a study or counselling service in a school for children with complex needs. As such it has been written as a separate chapter to allow space for the difficulties to be explored in detail and to provide an accessible focus for this information.

2.0 Difficulties encountered with staff

This section will identify the problems encountered interviewing teaching and non-teaching staff in a school. The difficulties interviewing the staff at the school were plentiful and multifaceted. I will discuss the problems and place them in the context of the impact this had on the research project.

2.1 School setting

The first problem encountered that was the catalyst for further problems, was the way in which agreement was reached for the research project to take place in the school. The Head Teacher was very enthusiastic and supported the work and my eagerness to carry out the research for a groundbreaking piece of work. However, I discovered in time that this had not been a democratic decision. The staff had little understanding that their Head Teacher had agreed that I should interview them in their administration time. Additionally, the Head Teacher had agreed to the students being released from their lessons to be interviewed and then to receive counselling. Not much discussion had been undertaken with staff and therefore I needed to try and get the staff on board. I organised a meeting with the whole school so I could introduce the project and gain their support. Additionally, I spent a considerable amount of time with staff in the staff room and generally meeting individuals to further gain their support. The staff appeared generally supportive of the research and felt that the

students would benefit from counselling and were happy for the students to be released from class for this purpose. However, they were not so enthusiastic about their non-contact time being taken for interviews. Some members of staff expressed their annoyance that they had been committed to being interviewed without being asked and others were 'passive aggressive'. However, under the direction of the Head Teacher they agreed to participate in the project, though clearly this agreement was under duress.

With the agreement from the staff, students and parents the project went ahead, but as the way the project had been agreed upon within the school set the tone and underpinned some of the further difficulties encountered in carrying out the research aspect of the project within the school.

An additional problem encountered in the school setting was initially outside the school's control. There had been a particularly brutal and offensive crime committed over the summer holidays prior to the commencement of the project. Two young girls had been abducted and murdered by a school employee. This led to an outcry from the general public. The education authorities responded to this horror by insisting that all adults working with children and adolescents obtained a criminal records bureau clearance. The demand on this bureau was immense which led to a backlog of cases. This then affected schools because they were not allowed to admit any personnel until they had received clearance. In a special school the changeover of staff is often quite rapid and the school also has a large number of non-teaching staff. In the school where I was conducting the project many new staff were being employed and were not able to start until they received clearance. This led to a decision to close the school for the first few weeks of term, which in turn affected the start of the project. The school closure was an isolated incident and came about as a result of a very sad event. However, the issues of school closure and school events, which affected my project, continued which I will discuss in the next section.

2.2 Lack of staff support for the project

A careful timetable was arranged and agreed with all staff for their interviews. For the students' interviews, I met with the deputy Head Teacher and we discussed the participants and the time I needed for their interviews. We looked at the teaching

timetable and drew up a schedule for the interviews. I insisted that the schedule went out for consultation and asked for staff agreement to the schedule. After the consultation period we made a few minor amendments and agreed a timetable. I believed this was the best way of achieving a degree of contentment with the staff. I also felt happy I had tried to meet their demands.

However, despite these precautions interviewing became a serious problem. During the first set of interviews I was not able to meet a single one of the staff at the pre-agreed date and time; the staff had to cover other classes, sick leave, school activities and unforeseen circumstances. I went back to the deputy Head Teacher and discussed my frustration with the situation. She appeared surprised and stated she did not know what had gone wrong and a new schedule was agreed. This was not put out for consultation. The following week I attempted to interview the staff again. Unfortunately, I found similar situations where staff members were now covering for other teachers or the member of staff denied knowing that they were to meet with me. It felt very much like it was intentional sabotage and I was not sure if it came from the deputy head or the general staff. I decided to go to the Head Teacher and discuss my concerns with him and seek his support.

The Head Teacher was dismayed to hear of my problems with his staff and he assured me he would address it in his staff meeting. I also decided that I could not leave it to the school to arrange my interviews and after another timetable was made up, I went round to each individual member and agreed the time and date. I then wrote them a memo confirming our agreement. Over the life of the project the difficulties of meeting with staff to interview them decreased except for one member of staff. This person did not attend one interview at the pre agreed time and date despite arranging times directly with her. Additionally, there were occasions when she insisted that I interview her with a student present. The teacher believed if she spoke in code and did not name other students that it would be ethically acceptable. In retrospect I should not have allowed myself to be manipulated in this way; only now is it evident how much more preparation and negotiation should have been undertaken in the school before the project began.

2.3 Resources

Another difficulty I experienced in interviewing the staff was the lack of resources, mainly around room availability and audio recording equipment. I frequently experienced myself interviewing, in the corridor. Whilst a room had been set aside for my use it frequently was not available. Additionally because of the delay and difficulties in meeting with staff I often found my time for interviewing staff now clashed with the schedule for my interviewer to interview students. However, this affected the teaching assistants and seemed to be symbolic of how they felt they were treated at the school; they were not important and their needs did not matter.

The audio recorder was also an issue. I was fortunate to find funding for the research project, so was able to purchase an efficient audio recorder. Because I was not conducting the student interviews, careful planning had occurred to ensure that the interviews with staff and students did not clash, so the interviewer and I did not compete for the room and use of the recorder. Because of the difficulties with staff in attending their interviews, there were clashes. The room situation I have already discussed, but it also meant that I could not use the equipment I needed. I was able to borrow a recorder, but it was of inferior quality and some recordings were difficult to transcribe.

2.4 Staff changes

Another difficulty I experienced was staff turnover. This was particularly relevant to teaching assistants. The nature of working in a school with children with complex needs is at its best very demanding. I believe that people come into working with this client group for different reasons. Some believe that smaller classes will be less stressful and easier to manage. Others would like to make a difference to the lives of these young people. Some of these reasons may be unrealistic and many people are not prepared for the demands that will be placed upon them. This then creates a situation where staff members leave during the school term. I was unfortunate to hit a period where the school was experiencing many changes, which created a high turnover of staff. This affected my project because after I completed the first set of interviews I discovered a member of staff was leaving and could not re-interview her. Certain classes were without a permanent teacher or teaching assistant and a supply teacher was taking the class, which again meant I was not able to interview the same

member of staff. This situation was outside the school's control but did have an impact upon my research.

2.5 Knowledge of students' emotional well being

I decided to include the perspective of the teachers and teaching assistants on the progress of the students to triangulate the findings. I anticipated that staff working with the students would have a good working knowledge of the students' emotional well being. However I was dismayed to discover that most of the staff had limited knowledge of their student's needs. For some, this was understandable because they were new to the school and it would have been unrealistic to expect them to know their students. Others, who had been at the school for several years, demonstrated very little understanding of their emotional needs.

Most staff, teaching and non-teaching were able to identify the behaviours of the students, yet they demonstrated little understanding of the reasons for their behaviour. The students' behaviour was described in terms of the impact it had on their classroom management and/or as a symptom of the student's disability. Students were described as an annoyance, and needing counselling to eradicate such difficult behaviour, or requiring pity because of their disability. There was little hope that counselling or anything could be done to help the student.

2.6 Staff expression

One of the more startling aspects of this research was highlighted during the interviews with certain members of staff. The questions they were asked were constructed in short and easily understood sentences (appendix 10). It rapidly became apparent that some of the staff answered the questions haphazardly. It might have been that the interviews highlighted the lack of knowledge and insight the staff had about their students. I suspect that staff felt uncomfortable that this was being observed and rather than just stating the obvious, they floundered their way through the interviews. If this was the case, then this is another example that supports Sinason's (1992) view that to pretend to be more knowledgeable than we are, is in itself handicapping.

In defence of the staff, they were under considerable stress and under this pressure may not have been able to convey their understanding of the students because they were pre-occupied with their own needs i.e. classroom management and meeting the national curriculum. Under this pressure the accuracy and fluency of their communications may have been affected. In order to communicate this and highlight one of the problems encountered in this research I have included some of the answers verbatim.

3.0 Interviewing students

This section will identify the problems encountered interviewing the students at the school. I will discuss these difficulties and place them in the context of the impact this had upon researching this client group. The difficulties that occurred interviewing the students at the school were again numerous and multifaceted.

3.1 Resources

The main concern regarding the resources was about room availability. At the onset of the project the Head Teacher had made available a room that was now commonly referred to as the 'counselling room'. However, prior to my work at the school it had been used as a meeting room and on days that I was not there still functioned as such. It appeared some members of staff elected to forget about its now designated use and demanded use of it throughout the research element of the project. Interestingly enough this was not an issue when the counselling intervention began, but only in relation to interviewing. The room on these occasions was solely for my use.

The interviewer also experienced many difficulties with rooms. She was asked to work in many unsuitable locations. These rooms often offered very little privacy and the interviews were often interrupted by phone calls, members of staff walking in and out of the room or other students peering in. Some of the rooms offered very little space for art material to be used and generally were not conducive to creating a good atmosphere for interviewing students, let alone student with learning difficulties. This was an ongoing problem throughout the life of the project and again when I complained I was met with surprise. When the Head Teacher again became involved, the room was offered for my exclusive use, but as previously stated, this often clashed with my need to interview staff.

3.2 Student availability

The difficulties experienced in relation to students' availability were again multifaceted. Firstly, there was a delay in meeting students due to school closure, as described in 2.1. The next delay was in gaining parental consent. All letters were sent out to parents via the Royal Mail and I enclosed an S.A.E. for their reply. However, office staff informed me that it was a known fact at the school that very few parents responded to school letters. In fact very few responded. I spent a lot of time trying to contact parents by phone and asking for their consent for their child to participate in the project. I did not have one rejection of their child's involvement, but I received comments such as, 'Oh yes I keep meaning to return this', or 'I have not received a letter'. Eventually, two weeks later, after a lot of prompting all thirty consent forms were returned signed.

Another difficulty was school absences. Again it is well understood at the school that there are problems with the students' school attendance. Sometimes this is the result of illness and hospital appointments. Other reasons are more complex and seem to be a reflection of the environment that the child lives in. There were also absences directly created by the school. Class teachers had arranged 'special events' that students had to attend, or school trips. Again staff neglected to inform me of these events so I could not prepare for them.

This led to another problem. A timetable had been agreed with staff and they knew which lessons each child would not be attending. When students were not available I requested that the interviewer ask for the next child on the list, so as not to waste her time and my limited funding for her employment. This proved to be very challenging. For some of the students, change is very difficult. The students had been prepared for the interviews at a set time and could not manage the unpredictability of a change of time so could not be interviewed on that occasion. Others did not want to leave a favourite lesson. Sometimes it was not the student that was the problem, it was the member of staff who refused to allow the student to leave the class, as it was not the agreed time.

My final difficulty was the effect on the project of students leaving the school. Because of the nature of the school there is often a considerable change in the school

roll during an academic year. Many students join the school because they are excluded from mainstream schools throughout the school year. Additionally the requirements to include as many students as possible in mainstream schools meant that the school often set up an integration programme for a particular student, which led to the child attending the mainstream school full time. In addition to this, the school have the usual retention difficulties and losses due to families moving home. It may be the great demands placed on the family unit with a disabled child, contribute to family breakdown, which may lead to divorce. In turn this may mean the child has to move home and leave their school. In this project over the two years I lost seven students due to families moving, for a combination of the reasons stated above.

3.3 Confidentiality

The students were all assured of the confidentiality of the project and were requested to choose their own pseudonym to protect their identity. With the knowledge that I had insisted that their identity was protected and had offered the space to enable them to voice their disagreement or concern, I was surprised to discover some of the problems about confidentiality that still arose. Some students found it very difficult to have their interviews recorded. Some students, even those who had protested about having a pseudonym, were concerned that other people might listen to what they had said and did not trust the steps that had been put into place to safeguard them. The usual experience of the students was that adults talked about them freely, without respecting confidentiality and on this occasion were not surprisingly, mistrustful. The interviewer was respectful of the students' wishes and worked with them to reassure them or to interview them without recording and wrote the interview up in detail after the event.

3.4 Communication

The students at the school have a range of impairments, some of which directly affect their ability to communicate appropriately and/or effectively. Some students have reasonable receptive language, which means they are able to understand the spoken word, but might have difficulties in expressive language. This affects the students' ability to articulate their thought and feelings. Some students have a combination of the two, or varied ability within their receptive and expressive language ability.

I was aware of this difficulty when I commenced the project, but my belief was that students did communicate and it was our job to understand their communication. My dilemma was to understand the student's viewpoint, which they struggled to articulate. This proved to be very challenging with some students. The ability of the students in the school and those who participated in the project was quite diverse. At one end of the scale students did not have a language delay or disorder and with a little support and encouragement were able to articulate their thoughts easily. At the other end of the scale were students who had poor receptive language and very little expressive language. At this end of the scale we were not able to ascertain directly the students' viewpoint, but we were able to interpret communications. This was always reflected back for confirmation that I/we had understood communications correctly.

3.5 Limitations of the art exercise

I had incorporated the use of art therapy in the design of the interview to overcome inherent speech and language difficulties (Case & Dalley, 1990, Tipple 1994). Art is a more concrete expression than words and can give insight into oneself and be a valuable asset in the process of self-change (Dalley, 1984). I knew that a person may project aspects of the self, needs and emotions on to an image (Kline, 1993). The students in the first and second interview were requested to draw something that represented them and then the interviewer facilitated this image using a person centred approach. I requested that the facilitator use this approach because I wanted to promote conditions that permit a lessening of the power imbalance and enhance respect for the students' autonomy. However, this was not as successful as I hoped.

For some the process of making the image provided a catalyst for them to express and explore aspects of themselves. Others were preoccupied by their inability to draw or by other events in their lives and they were unable to use image making as a form of communication. I discussed this situation with the interviewer and after briefly looking at the transcripts of the interviews it was evident that insufficient data was being obtained from this style of interviewing. The students were confused by the interview questions and some were not able to make links between their images and their lives. It was decided to open the interview up and use a wider selection of materials as an adjunct to direct discussion. Some students continued to use art as a way of communicating; others were able to use toys and within their play were able to

communicate their thought and feelings. Several students required no other form of support to express their views and were able to communicate directly with the interviewer.

3.6 Emotional demand on the student

Another difficulty with interviewing the students was the emotional demand I felt I was placing on them. I was asking the students to become emotionally literate and overcome inherent speech and language disorders as well as articulating aspects of their inner world. Many of the students experience an exceptional amount of deprivation in their home life and I was asking them to be able to express their needs in a manner different to how they normally communicated at school. Some of the students were overwhelmed with their story and struggled to function healthily without the pressure to communicate their story. Others seemed to welcome the opportunity to be listened to, but demanded a great deal of support to help them through this period.

4.0 Piers-Harris 2

This section will identify and discuss the difficulties I encountered using the self-report questionnaire to understand how students who attend a school for children with complex needs feel about themselves.

4.1 Reliability of the PH2

The intention behind using a self-concept instrument was to identify any difference in functioning from the student's perspective before and after the counselling intervention. Identifying an instrument suitable for use in a school with such a diverse population was problematic (See, Buckroyd & Flitton 2004). It was hoped that this would be the most suitable of the instruments currently available. However, it proved to be unsuitable for use with this population. The results indicate that the scores seem to change randomly and the instrument is not reliable for this client group.

4.2 Terminology

Most of the students were able to understand the questionnaire although some required that the questions were read to them. Some students found the terminology

too American and did not identify with its use. For example 'I am dumb' is not a phrase that we use in England and certainly not within a special school environment. Additionally, students wanted clarification of questions such as, 'I am smart', I explained this could mean several things and in fact it scored across different domains of self-concept. But students rightly believed that perhaps they were not 'smart' academically but dressed 'smart', so would answer differently for each concept.

4.3 Exaggeration

Another interesting observation was the students' ability to know what the right answer was and the resultant exaggeration of their scores, for example 'I am a good reader'. Students who were unable to read the question for themselves frequently ticked positively for this, believing they could read well.

4.4 Accessibility

Two students in the project were not able to access the instrument at all. The students had poor receptive language and could not understand the majority of questions. I believed it was abusive to continue to ask them to use the instrument and withdrew it from their interviews.

5.0 Conclusion

Some of the difficulties researching this client group were anticipated, such as the difficulties overcoming speech and language difficulties. However, there were many more challenges in researching young people with learning difficulties in a school setting. As far as the staff members were concerned there were issues of resources, general lack of knowledge of students, and perhaps even sabotage. The issues of sabotage have been previously explored by Batmanghelidjh (2004), not in terms of researching with young people, but in setting up a therapeutic provision in schools. She suggests that staff in schools are resistant to any therapeutic provision and will sabotage these attempts because of jealousy and rivalry, a fear that therapy is rewarding bad behaviour, and the fear that the therapist can read the staff members' mind.

The collective difficulties in gathering data in researching children and young people with learning difficulties in a school made the process and the project very challenging. However, this piece of research has contributed to understanding the

difficulties in researching this client group. All of them would need to be taken into consideration for future work.

These difficulties led to the need to re-formulate the analyses. The overall focus of the study was on an evaluation of the value of counselling for the students who participated in the intervention. The original intention was to evaluate change in terms of self-concept. The Piers-Harris 2, the projective exercise and the questionnaires for the staff, were all carried out with the measurement and evaluation of change in self-concept in mind. However, the many difficulties in carrying out the project described in this chapter meant that this focus could not be sustained. The Piers-Harris 2 produced results which could not be meaningfully interpreted; the projective test carried out by the students, proved too difficult for many; the quality of the staff responses made evaluation in changes in self-concept in the students from their data impossible.

For these reasons, the very large amount of data collected by the study needed to be interpreted using not self-concept, but another mode of evaluation. Examination of the various elements of the data suggests that 'improvement' would be a useful measure. This measure was broad enough to include a wide range of changes identified by students, staff and counsellor. Changes in functioning in the classroom, relationships, mood, general well being and self-awareness could all be included within the concept of 'improvement'. As previous chapters have indicated, the opinions of staff members, students and counsellor, varied as to the effects of counselling. The results of the six indicative cases reported were not unanimously agreed. Where there is disagreement this has been discussed. The remainder of the case histories reported in the appendices have similarly have been grouped according to the staff evaluation.

Chapter Ten

Conclusion

1.0 Introduction

This research project has contributed to knowledge far beyond the scope of the original question. However, this groundbreaking piece of work has been fraught with complications. In my final chapter I will identify the contribution to knowledge made and the ways in which the research project can inform future research projects with this client group, so that at least some of the difficulties may be anticipated and overcome.

The central purpose of this research was to explore whether students in our special school could benefit from one to one humanistic counselling. The findings demonstrate that there is clearly a capacity to use counselling in this client group. This chapter will enumerate in detail the implications of this central finding. The data from the staff demonstrate that 57% of the students made some improvements and the data from the students' demonstrate that 74% of the students felt they benefited from receiving counselling. The data from the counsellor demonstrate that 95% of the students benefitted from receiving counselling.

I will describe the findings of the original research questions under the following headings:

- The value of the therapeutic work and the students capacity to engage with and benefit from it, from the point of view of staff, students' and counsellor
- The demonstrable needs of the client group
- The difficulties of working therapeutically with this client group
- The needs of staff members
- The complications in researching in the context of a school for children with learning difficulties
- The need for the interviewer to have experience of the client group
- The need for the students to have experience of the interviewer
- The limitations of the research
- The problems in using formal research instruments
- The need for as wide as possible a range of strategies for carrying out interviews

Finally I will identify the ways in which this project can inform practice with this client group.

- Counselling needs to be available
- The counsellor needs a wide range of strategies for the work
- Appropriate resources need to be available within the school
- Collaboration with the staff members needs to be established
- Work with staff members needs to be undertaken in parallel
- Work with the parents needs to be undertaken in parallel

2.0 Identifying the contribution to knowledge and ways in which this research project can inform future research projects with this client group

In this section I will identify the contribution to knowledge made by this research project and ways in which the research project can inform future projects with this client group.

2.1 The major finding of the project; the value of the therapeutic work and the students' capacity to engage with and benefit from it

The original research question (chapter 1) sought to evaluate whether a humanistic counselling service in a school for children with complex needs improved the functioning of the students from the point of view of students, staff and counsellor. This knowledge supports findings from Bates (1992) who suggests that people with learning difficulties have difficulty coming to terms with their disability and the stigma society places on them and need counselling as a result; Sinason (1992) who pioneered psychoanalytical psychotherapy for disabled people and has demonstrated greatly that disabled people have the capacity to engage with and benefit from therapy; Fennell & Jones (1998) who advocate a person centred counselling approach with disabled people and report an increase in self esteem when learning disabled clients experience the core conditions; Ommaney & Symes (2000) who advocate a person centred approach to counselling for people with learning disabilities and stress the importance of seeing past a person's label and understanding the impact of a disabling society. My own earlier work (Flitton & Buckroyd, 2002, Flitton & Buckroyd 2005 and Flitton et al. 2006) also demonstrates via case studies, the process

of therapeutic work with this client group and how that the young people with learning difficulties benefited from counselling.

The interview data demonstrates that staff members identified that over half the students benefited from counselling. They considered that the students' behaviour, communication, and concentration in class, and general levels of happiness improved. The students, via interviews and transcripts of sessions, reported feeling happier and calmer. They noticed that they felt more confident and believed their relationships with peers and adults had improved. In addition the students recognised that there was an improvement to their behaviour and concentration in class, which resulted in an improvement to their schoolwork. The students also commented, via interviews, that they felt they could communicate their needs more appropriately. Most students commented on the importance of being with an adult whom they could trust. The counsellor's analysis of transcripts of sessions supported these claims. The data also demonstrated the students were able to lessen their secondary handicap, increase their level of autonomy and manage every day life events more effectively.

2.2 The demonstrable needs of the client group

The interview data demonstrates the overwhelming need for counselling for this client group. This was clear from the young people's reports of their home situations. In addition many of them had a great need for attention from a concerned and trustworthy adult and a need for their communication to be understood. They also had a more than ordinary need for help in the development of autonomy. The issues arising from their disability had without exception been left unresolved and often unmentioned. In addition, like any young person, they needed support in managing ordinary life events.

This data supports findings from The National Statistics of Mental Health Needs of Children in Great Britain (2000) The National Inquiry into meeting the Mental Health Needs of Children and Adolescents with Learning Difficulties (2002) and the Royal College of Psychiatrists (2003). These reports all suggest that young people with learning difficulties are at greater risk of developing mental health needs and that, to date, many young people with learning difficulties are excluded from mainstream services including counselling services.

2.3 The difficulties of working therapeutically with this client group

The data from the interviews with the students and transcripts from the counselling sessions demonstrate the need for particular skills and strategies for working with this client group. Students did not sit down talk one to one for the sessions; a wide range of materials (toys, art materials, sand tray, puppets and teen magazines) were used. The counsellor and the interviewer both had to be ready to vary their approach. The counsellor in particular found herself building interactions with the client in all of the many ways that they presented themselves (for example, silent, hyperactive, running away, refusing to leave, violent and aggressive behaviour). This requirement for versatility is supported by the literature. Counselling with young people is generally recognised to require differences in technique and approach to counselling from that with adults (Geldard & Geldard, 1997).

They suggest that counsellors working with children need a variety of interactive approaches. However, young people with learning difficulties present further particular problems for the counsellor. One difficulty may be in understanding their communication. In this project I compensated for students' difficulties in articulating their thoughts and feelings in words by strategies such as using toys, art material, sand trays, puppets, role play and games and working with these media as metaphors. Sinason (1992) suggests that the therapist needs to rely on the countertransference to understand the therapeutic work, but Fennell & Jones (1998) advocate a humanistic approach rather than relying on counter transference. They suggest that the counsellor needs to find ways to overcome inherent speech and language difficulties. In my earlier work (Flitton & Buckroyd, 2002, 2005 and Flitton et al. 2006) I report these difficulties, but also demonstrate ways in which the counsellor can address the difficulties in communication. Pattison (2006a) also reports the need for the inclusive counsellor to incorporate a variety of tools and approaches to overcome difficulties in communication.

The data from the counselling sessions demonstrates the lack of continuity created by students' absence. It is known that students with learning difficulties tend to be frequently absent from school for a variety of reasons. Their absences are disruptive to the therapeutic process. The counsellor needs to make time for addressing the impact of these absences on the both the young person and the counselling itself. The

counsellor needs to bear in mind many absences are likely to be involuntary since the students have very little control over their own lives.

2.4 The needs of staff members

The interview data have indicated that staff members were overwhelmed with the needs of students and suggests they would have benefited from some additional support. There have been many reports about the stress levels and working environment of teachers and the effect this had had on their personal welfare and professional standards (Kyriacou, 1987, Brownell et al. 1997, TES, 2007). During the research I noticed teachers and their assistants often failed to translate their understanding into every day interactions with students. Teachers would benefit from being encouraged to use what they know to support the students better and also would benefit themselves from greater expertise in managing the students.

Teacher training for special needs students has not been strengthened in recent years. In fact training in special educational needs is not compulsory in their initial instruction and requires the newly qualified teacher to gain instruction and skills on the job or to access post qualifying courses (Mittler, 1992, Asthana & Hinsliff, 2006, Smith, 2006). Data from this study demonstrates that this policy is unhelpful.

2.5 The complications in researching in the context of a school for children with complex needs

As part two of the Discussion, Chapter Nine describes, there were many complications in researching in this setting. The data from the study consolidate what we know from Batmanghelidjh (2004) that hostility to a therapeutic project is to be expected and needs to be managed from the outset. Despite conducting detailed literature searches on this issue and inquiring from other researchers in this field I have been unable to identify any literature which describes these issues. Yet the immense impact the difficulties had on conducting this project suggest that further research in this area is urgently needed.

2.5.1 The interviewer needs to have experience of the client group

A special school environment is very different from mainstream. The difficulties in interviewing this client group became apparent in the pilot study (Flitton & Buckroyd

2002). Therefore, careful consideration was given to employing the right person and allowing for a period of adjustment in this study. Whilst the interviewer was a highly competent counsellor, her integration into the special needs environment required a longer period of adjustment than anticipated. Despite our efforts she did not have the degree of confidence that would have facilitated obtaining responses from the participants. Whilst I have been unable to find any literature that addresses this dilemma, the findings of Pattison (2006) indicate that counsellors are reluctant to include young people with learning difficulties in their practice for several reasons, one being the lack of expertise in working with this client group. This is a new area of knowledge that is important to consider for anyone participating in future research with this client group. The interviewer must be experienced with working with young people with learning difficulties or considerable time needs to be allocated to the interviewer in getting to know this client group.

2.5.2 The students need to have experience of the interviewer

Seeking the views of people with learning difficulties is a new phenomenon (Connors & Stalker, 2003). There is little research on the pitfalls. This research will contribute to the understanding of the many obstacles in seeking the views of this client group. One of the important factors that became apparent was the need for the students to be familiar with the interviewer. While students in a mainstream environment would have little difficulty in being interviewed and expressing themselves to somebody with whom they were not familiar, this became a major challenge within the special needs environment. Within the research group the majority of students had issues with change and needed to get to know and accept new faces before they were able to communicate with them. As I had identified this problem in previous research (Flitton & Buckroyd, 2002) I had hoped that bringing the interviewer into the school premises on regular occasions before the research intervention took place, would overcome this barrier. However, the amount of time that it took most of the students to become familiar and safe with the interviewer was underestimated to the point that it was not until the third and fourth interviews that the students appeared comfortable in her presence.

2.5.3 The range of strategies for carrying out interviews needs to be as wide as possible

As previously stated, obtaining the views of young people with learning difficulties is new territory. In anticipation of the problem of overcoming inherent speech and language difficulties we looked at the available literature used to address this dilemma in counselling and psychotherapy. Much of the literature points to the use of art with this client group for this very reason (Gray, 1985, Tipple, 1994, Fennell & Jones, 1998, Rees, 1998, Ommaney & Symes, 2000, Flitton & Buckroyd, 2002). However, it was evident from the limitations of the art exercise that when interviewing young people with learning difficulties many different tools need to be utilised in order for the young person to express themselves sufficiently. Therefore, this research will allow future researchers to understand the need to incorporate a variety of toys and art material to express themselves through metaphor when seeking the views of young people with learning difficulties. Although, art is an established medium for communication with this client group, researchers and interviewers have to be aware that with young people with more complex needs, art does have restrictions that an expanded range of tools could overcome.

2.6 Formal research instruments are problematic

As research with disabled people develops appropriate instruments will be necessary to offer appropriate responses. Our wish to use such an instrument was frustrated by the lack of such an instrument, as previously described in the discussion. At present there is not a suitable instrument to use with students who have complex needs and we feel that these difficulties will arise with any formal instrument. This implies that research with this client group will depend on qualitative responses and that the eliciting of responses needs to respect the child's disability. However, this knowledge may contribute to designing an instrument suitable for this client group.

This problem may be overcome by the further development of CORE (Mellor-Clark et al. 1999). CORE is an instrument that has been developed in Britain and is widely used in evaluating clinical services. There are continued attempts to adapt the CORE instrument for people with learning difficulties, but to date this has not been finalised (Davies, 2008, personal communications).

2.7 The limitations of the research

The number of students who were required to participate in this project, thirty students, was based on a power calculation in conjunction with the use of the quantitative measure, Piers Harris 2. Unfortunately, due to the drop out of the students the numbers required were not sustained. Therefore, there were insufficient students in the project to demonstrate, statistically, any benefits from receiving counselling.

The first group of students were interviewed as a follow up on two occasions, a three-month and one-year interval. The second set of students was not interviewed to ascertain if they maintained any developments as a result of receiving counselling. A longer follow up period would have been desirable to establish whether the students from both sets of groups were able to maintain the developments as a result of receiving counselling.

In this project the researcher and counsellor was the same person. It could be argued that because of this I had a vested interest in positive results and the findings could be biased. In view of this the results have been written in a broad spectrum, positive and negatives are openly exposed as a blue print for future research. It would be desirable in future research projects for the researcher and counsellor to be independent.

3.0 Identifying ways in which this project can inform practice with this client group

In my final section I will report the identified ways in which the research project can inform future practice in counselling young people with learning difficulties.

3.1 Counselling needs to be available

Findings from the national inquiry into meeting the mental health needs of young people with learning difficulties (2002) and a report from the Royal College of Psychiatrists (2003) identify there is a gap in counselling with this client group and a need for it to develop. It is reported less than half of CAMHS services are accessible to children and adolescents with learning difficulties and to develop an inclusive service has become a key factor (Pote & Goodban, 2007). This project can support the introduction of additional strategies and modalities for the work. More recently a care pathway plan has been produced in supporting CAMHS and other professionals in

developing these services. The care pathway plan identifies the lack of knowledge and expertise in meeting the mental health needs of children and young people with learning difficulties and suggests further training for staff (Pote & Goodban, 2007). Another factor identified is that the emotional care of this client group needs to be individually tailored and should include access to humanistic approaches. However, traditionally CAMHS has only offered child psychotherapy to young people and the analytical model has dominated this approach (Pote & Goodban, 2007). This project can be of use for training purposes.

Another factor that has been identified in recent documents is the need to move the counselling work from a clinical setting and to work with young people in schools and their homes (Pote & Goodban, 2007). This view seems to have been taken in a response to the Children's Act (2004) and the green paper Every Child Matters (2003) that suggest schools should offer and extend service and house a multi disciplinary team in meeting the emotional welfare of its students. This project demonstrates the value of having a counselling service available in a special school.

The complications of delivering a counselling service in a special school have been identified and should inform future projects and assist the development of an extended school service. There would appear to be an opportunity for CAMHS to overcome three major problems. Whilst it offers a good child psychotherapy service; traditionally that training has not incorporated a humanistic approach, yet this project demonstrates that a humanistic approach based on a social model of disability has a great deal to offer. Secondly CAMHS extensive waiting list could be aided by a CAMHS led input of child and adolescent counselling services placed within schools. Working in partnership with school-based counsellors would allow high-risk vulnerable young people to be fast tracked to the appropriate services. Thirdly, CAMHS has only just established for people with learning disabled young people, which is located in a clinic setting. A service in schools would make counselling much more accessible to the client group.

3.2 The counsellor needs a wide range of strategies for the work

Pote & Goodban (2007) suggests that children with learning difficulties should be seen as children first. Professionals should recognise that they already possess base

skill levels about child development and communicating with children; these skills form an excellent basis for working with children with learning difficulties, although, further training would of course be desirable to provide them with some understanding of disability awareness and addressing specific needs of this client group. Professionals will need to enhance their non-verbal communication skills in order to make their work accessible to this client group. The anxieties expressed by professionals seems to support the findings of Pattison (2006) who explores the barriers that prevent counsellors including young people with learning difficulties into their practice. One of the skills she identifies is the need to have a creative and flexible approach to working with this client group. These findings confirms the views of other authors such as Tipple (1994), Fennell & Jones (1998), Ommaney & Symes (2000), Flitton & Buckroyd, 2002, Flitton & Buckroyd, 2005 and Flitton et al. 2006, who all suggest art and other creative ways need to be adopted to enable young people with learning difficulties to express themselves.

This research project consolidates these findings. It demonstrates that for any therapeutic work to be effective with young people with learning difficulties the counsellor needs to encompass a creative way of being with the student and needs to adopt many different strategies to enable the young person to communicate. The counsellor needs to show the young person they have understood the meaning of the communication. This project also demonstrates via the case studies the process by which this happens.

3.3 Appropriate resources need to be available within the school

Many of the students commented about the room, particularly in the second year of the project. This room did not offer privacy. The students were quick to articulate this and reported in their interviews the importance of a safe and private room. The difficulties with the accommodation tend to be common in school settings and need to be addressed in the course of setting up a service. Placing importance on the right room and right location is sending an essential message to the students in not only valuing the role counselling has in supporting the students' mental health, but also taking seriously the role a school has in promoting and education of mental health. A room should be offered that offers privacy and away from the main hub of the school (McGinnis & Jenkins, 2006). It should be light and airy, but not having windows that

face on to the playground and corridors. The door should have a blind if a glass panel is fitted. The room should be of sufficient size to enable the counsellor to incorporate different means of communication.

3.4 Collaboration with staff members needs to be established

For schools to embrace the idea of promoting mental health it is essential that an alliance with staff members is established and mental health becomes part of the school ethos and a whole school approach is taken (Hornby & Atkinson, 2003, Finney, 2006). It has been identified that counselling has a role to play in supporting a young person's mental health and schools should develop this service (Every Child Matters, 2003, Finney, 2006, Pattison, 2006). Additionally, CAMHS are developing an outreach project and in some regions are now going into schools to work therapeutically with students. However, the successful introduction and maintenance of a counselling service for young people in this environment will depend crucially on the counsellor having established an alliance with the staff members (Batmanghelidjh, 2004). Time needs to be given to this fundamental issue well before any counselling begins, since, as we experienced, staff members have the power to influence whether the service can run successfully. This project has shown that without total staff support the outcome for counsellor, young person and the school in general is limited. The project further shows that the ethos for counselling in schools must be led and supported at all interior management levels in order for the staff to feel comfortable. Once the criteria of school management and teacher support are in place the groundwork for effective results has been prepared.

3.5 Work with staff members needs to be undertaken in parallel

The establishment of a counselling service in a school implies a concern for the emotional welfare of the students. This concern needs to be present throughout the school not only in the counselling room. Running a counselling service in a hostile or indifferent environment will be impossible. Staff members in a special school setting have a particularly difficult task. The research project identified some of the difficulties staff experienced in meeting the needs of their students and the impact this had on the effectiveness of the service. The staff members' willingness to enable counselling for the students will be greatly increased if they too participate in some counselling provision. We recommend that at the very least a support group for staff

should be offered and facilitated by the counsellor, which in turn also demonstrates the importance of the staff members' emotional well being.

3.6 Work with the parents needs to be undertaken in parallel

The project identified a gap in support for parents of children with learning difficulties. It appears that many of the parents in this project may also have varying degrees of learning difficulties. McGaw (2000) reports that in a study in the United States of America 50% of children whose parents had some form of learning difficulty were abused or neglected, a further 25% end up in care. Despite this knowledge of vulnerability little support is offered and there is a lack of specialist training for those who work with this client group.

The project in which we were engaged demonstrated repeatedly that parents had little insight into their children's emotional worlds. The incongruence between what the students experienced from the counsellor and what they experienced in their home environment was often acute. McGuire & McGuire (2000) identify that there is a gap in the literature in making therapeutic interventions accessible to parents and advocate an approach to meet this need. Although their approach is addressing the mainstream population their ideas could be incorporated and adapted effectively in order to meet the needs of parents with learning difficulties (McGaw, 2000). The project with the students would have been enhanced by collaboration and engagement with at least some of the parents. We propose that a counselling service should offer parallel support for parents and focus on the enhancement of their parenting skills.

3.7 Need for further research

It has been identified that one way that the mental health needs of young people could be addressed and supported is for the development of a school counselling service (Every Child Matters, 2003, Children's Act, 2004, Jenkins, 2006, Pattison, 2006). Jenkins (2006) reports that 71 percent of schools now provide a counselling service. However, Pattison (2006) informs us that this service is not inclusive which supports findings from the national inquiry into meeting the mental health needs of young people with learning difficulties (2002) and the Royal College of Psychiatrists (2003). This research strengthens the view that a school based counselling service is essential by demonstrating the needs of these young people. Additionally, it has created the

first step in identifying many obstacles in researching this client group in a school context. However, further research now needs to be carried out to further explore the views of young people with learning difficulties, their parents and staff members of the school in relation to the benefits of receiving counselling. I hope that future researchers can benefit from understanding the achievements as well as the limitations of this project and continue its work.

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Appendices

Appendix

One

**Supporting Case Studies From
Group One And Two
That Fell In The Category Of
Improvements**

1.0 Introduction

In this appendix I will report the remaining case studies, to support the data from the main report, from both groups of students, which fell into the category of making improvements. Each case study includes reports from the counsellor, students, teacher and teaching assistant's perspective.

I will start with group one, which includes Angela, Grant, Grinch, Harry Potter, Joel, Pryce, Tatra and Wayne. Group two consists of: Emma, Fred and Hannah.

2.0 Group one: An introduction to Angela

Angela, who has Downs Syndrome and a severe speech and language delay, she was ten years old when we met for the project. She was an only child living with her mother, and had no contact with her father.

2.1 Pre - interviews with the form tutor and Teaching Assistant (TA)

Angela was referred to the project because of her behaviour at school. It was generally known that most staff found her difficult because of her challenging behaviour and their difficulties in understanding her speech. Nobody would voice a dislike towards her but when her name was mentioned it was normally followed with a raised eyebrow or a sigh. In the interview her tutor and TA found it difficult to judge her self-esteem but recognised she responded well to 'Genuine warmth and affection'. Her teacher described her behaviour in the classroom as, 'Very good until she has had enough but around school she can be difficult. Changes are difficult for her. She won't do something if she doesn't want to'. Her teacher felt they had to be careful how they talked to her and felt she, 'Requires coaxing in a specific way'. They reported she was a 'runner' and they had to be vigilant to her whereabouts. They felt she was not easy to get along with as her moods could change very quickly. Both teacher and TA felt she had 'limited understanding,' so was not able to take responsibility for her actions. Her teacher believed it was difficult to judge her schoolwork: 'Her work is at her level. She likes a getting a star and praise'. Both teacher and TA agreed that, 'Her speech was difficult to understand'. Her TA reported that she was aware of her physical appearance and would, 'Wash her hands if they were dirty'. They thought she was a happy child but did not seem to require

friendships. 'She is quite self-contained; she likes her own company. She becomes self-absorbed'.

2.2 Pre-interview with the student

The interviewer reported that she also found it difficult to understand Angela and to gain Angela's view of herself. The interviewer reported that Angela was reluctant to attend her interview on her own, and requested a familiar person to accompany her. The person who accompanied her was her previous class TA who had spent some time with Angela and had built a very good relationship with her. Watching them, I believe that there was genuine mutual trust and love. The interviewer reported feeling apprehensive because she could not understand Angela, and also because of her unpredictable behaviour. In her interview she drew a picture of her mother and herself with a smiley face. Angela told the interviewer that she was worried about her mother because she had hurt her thumb.

2.3 The process in the sessions

In the first session Angela was very cross and upset when I went to collect her. She was sitting on her own, in a corridor, crying. I sat with her there for some time. I was careful not to try to coax her to go where I wanted her to. I believed nobody really took the time to listen to Angela, and her experience to date had been of people trying to cajole her to places. It was difficult to understand all of Angela's speech, but what I did understand was she had got into a fight with a student from her class who kept calling her 'naughty'. She had also been hit on the head by a ball in the playground. I tried to offer her empathy, to show her that I could see she was very upset, and she had been physically and emotionally hurt. When Angela was ready she said, 'Go now'. We went and got a wet tissue to put on her head where there was a small red mark from being hit by the ball. As we walked up to the counselling room, Angela continued to tell me about her 'hurt'. She was clearly very cross because she shouted a lot. I did not understand most of what she shouted. We only had a short time in the counselling room, and at the end of the session I became a little anxious about how I was going to get her out of the room and back to class. When I approached the subject of time, I could see that she was becoming angry. I knew that she would become very obstinate and locked into this behaviour pattern. Therefore, I decided that on this

occasion I would [also] have to manipulate the situation in order to get her out. I briefly mentioned the end of time, and talked about seeing her next week, along with the usual spiel, and then asked her to help me return an item to a teacher. Angela was very compliant, and after returning the item went happily back to class. I was left feeling overwhelmed by finding this distressed young girl alone in the corridor. The reality of this young girl's life was one of difference, and the difference was painful to acknowledge. I was aware that I wanted to change things for her, to 'fix her' so that she could be understood by others. The reality was that I could not, and I knew I needed to stay with the painful awareness that being ignored, misunderstood and hurt was horrible. I was also disappointed in myself because I had been manipulative in ending the session. I struggled to know how I could balance holding the boundaries. There had been only a short time before I had to see my next client. I did not want to feed into the game of coaxing, but rather allow her to find her voice and do things in her own time. I knew I needed to find something to help me offer and support her through keeping the boundaries, without manipulation.

I decided it would be most helpful to arrange a meeting with her mother to see if I could gain any other information that would help me to understand Angela's world. Unfortunately, I did not gain any insight into ways to manage Angela, but I discovered that her mother was very distressed and exhausted by trying to meet her daughter's needs. When Angela refused to do something it appeared that they became locked into a verbal fight, from which neither would back down. Her mother reported having to bribe her with sweets or her favourite video to get her to do something. She was not ready to be open to suggestions of alternative ways of being, and was clearly overwhelmed by her own emotional needs.

Her mother also informed me that she had two dogs, one of which was very sick and would have to be put down. She believed that Angela knew something was wrong and would struggle to understand what was happening. It was agreed that she would send some photos of the dogs into school so that I could focus the work on the dog's imminent death. I could see her mother was very upset about the dog and I wondered if Angela was not only sad about her dog but could also sense her mother's sadness and was equally concerned and confused about this.

I spent the next few sessions talking to Angela about 'King' (her dog) being poorly and dying, and about her mother being upset. Angela drew many pictures of King and her mother. Whilst I struggled to understand some of what she was saying, I noticed that she became very sad when we talked about dying. I relied heavily on my countertransference to understand our work.

I reflected to her the feelings I had and what I observed with her, trusting her to let me know if I was on the wrong track. When I reflected my thoughts and feelings about King and her mother she would say "Yes" and occasionally "Good girl". I understood this to mean that I was getting it right; I was beginning to understand her world.

I found the ending of our sessions very challenging. Angela did not want to leave and refused to move. As previously stated, I wanted to create a different way of being with her so I tried preparing Angela by placing a sticker on the hands of the clock, so she knew when it was time for her to go back to class. I also used this time to offer lots of empathy and tried to understand how difficult it was for her to live in a world where people were always trying to get her to do things, but never listening to her. At times it felt as if we were preparing for the ending at the beginning of the sessions. I was aware that the warmth and empathy I was demonstrating to Angela might have been fuelling her difficulties and reluctance to leave the session. After all, why leave a room when someone is desperately trying to understand you, and you can do what you want (within reason), to return to a place of coldness and demands?

Angela generally liked to take the toy phone with her at the end of the session. I think I initially agreed to this because it was a relief not to have to battle to get her out of the room. I wondered if this was her way of taking control of the situation. It was agreed that her TA would return the phone later in the day when Angela had forgotten about it. I reluctantly agreed to this arrangement but was angry with myself, as I knew that Angela would not have forgotten about the phone, and she would have little ability to challenge the situation. However, it appeared to work until several weeks later when Angela became distressed and wanted to keep the phone. The TA came to speak to me and was very apologetic, but said that she could not get the phone from her and she just kept repeating, "Beverley". I reassured her TA that this was ok, while wondering what Angela was trying to tell me/us. Her TA believed she was just

stubborn and wanted to play with it, but whilst accepting that this could be part of the picture, I thought there might have been a communication I was missing. I decided to discuss this further in supervision.

The work with Angela felt different to some of the work with the students at the school. Many of the children communicated through symbolic play, but could offer some verbal interaction as well. Because of Angela's difficulties with intelligible speech I had to offer my interpretation of her communications, and I had to trust her to let me know if I was on the right track. Therefore, in the following session I told Angela that I understood that she missed me, and wanted to talk to me and the phone seemed to be a way for her to manage this. I suggested that she could look after the phone, but bring it back each week. Angela agreed and seemed delighted that someone finally understood her! She did bring the phone back each week, making it very clear that she was going to take it away with her again. I believed that this demonstrated that Angela not only understood what I had said, but was pleased that I understood her communication. She had asserted herself, letting me know that she still missed me and wanted to communicate with me.

In sessions where we played different games, Angela liked to play Snap but had very little concept of the game and was unable to match pairs. She also liked to play snakes and ladders, but again had little concept of numbers and counting. At times I felt myself moving to an educator's mode, wanting to show her how to count the dots on the dice and count the spaces. I was aware of becoming frustrated, and at times bored by her low level of play but managed to stay with my feelings, wondering if she often felt bored and frustrated by others. I recalled my supervisor saying to me, 'There is no such thing as boredom. It was anger spread thin'. Was Angela communicating with me that she was angry with others? Was this why her behaviour was so challenging? I was aware I found this difficult to reflect back to her. How could I tell her I was bored and frustrated with trying to play games that she could not play? I wanted to protect her from any further hurt, but at the same time I knew that this was an important piece of communication. I chose to make comments in a less congruent manner and said, 'Sometimes I get angry with other people when I do not understand what to do, and I wonder if you do'. This continued for several weeks and when I reflected my feelings Angela generally laughed at me. I was left feeling confused and wondered if I

understood her communication or had got it completely wrong. Holding such uncertainty was another different and challenging aspect of my work with Angela.

By session fifteen I noticed that Angela was changing. She was becoming directive and seemed to enjoy being in charge. I also noticed that she had moved from playing cards and board games to using art-based activities, generally either play dough or paper and pens. In these activities Angela was directive. I was also aware that I was beginning to understand more of her communications and when I got things right at the first attempt I usually got "Good girl" or "Well done". The play dough was generally used to make food and drinks; Angela took great pleasure in making me my favourite foods. She allowed me to make her some of her favourite dishes and we had great fun pretending to eat our accomplishments. When Angela drew it was normally a picture of her mother, and as she drew she would tell other people off because they were being naughty or had got it wrong. Sometimes she became very animated and praised people for their work.

I was also aware at this point of our work that it became less of a challenge to get Angela to leave at the end of our sessions. I noticed towards the end of the session that she would point out the hands on the clock and was happy to leave at the appropriate time. She seemed to be telling me that she understood that there were limits to her time with me and she could now accept this situation.

Around session eighteen the school reported an unfortunate event. Angela had escaped unnoticed from the school, and had made it some distance before she was found. Her mother was understandably distressed and purchased a wrist strap for her, instructing the school that she was to wear it at all times. The school was not comfortable with this concept, but Angela's escape had caused a huge reaction, and there was concern about what could have happened. Staff agreed to use the wrist strap. I was concerned about their response, noticing a lot of tension in the school. I believe Angela was treated inappropriately.

On our next session I went to collect Angela from her class as I usually did. The strap was placed on her wrist, and she was handed over to me. I was aware that I was feeling angry, and did not feel comfortable using a wrist strap with an eleven-year-old

girl. I refused to use it and took it off her wrist. This was met with great concern from staff. I said that I understood her mother's wishes, and the concerns of the school, but I would take responsibility for Angela's safety. After all, I was only going to walk with her to my room and I would be with her on her return to her classroom. I knew that all major doors to the outside were magnetically locked, so I felt confident that this was a safe decision. I did feel a little anxious about the "what if" scenario. As we were walking to my room, I was wondering whose anxieties these were – the staff members, Angela's or mine. I thought that if they were not hers, and I was picking up the anxieties of the staff, then I could be sure she would be doing the same, so as we were walking to the room I told her what I knew of the incident, my feelings about the wrist strap, and the importance of her being safe. She listened intently and made no attempt to run. It was good to hear that this event led to a staff discussion, resulting in a school policy that no child should wear a wrist strap. It was agreed, for Angela's safety, that a member of staff should always know of her whereabouts and this responsibility should be rotated.

Unfortunately Angela was not able to verbalise to me what happened on the day she ran out. She also did not seem to want to address the scenario in symbolic play. We never knew if anything had upset her, or why or how she got out of school, but it did seem to be our problem and not hers!

In the sessions, Angela continued to borrow the phone and returned it each week until, towards the end of the work, when she decided she did not need it any more. I wondered if this was her way of letting me know that she knew the work was coming to an end, and was preparing herself for this separation. In preparing for the ending, I allowed Angela to choose of how she would like to mark the end of the work. I did this for all clients, but I gave Angela a choice because I was concerned that I might not understand what she was saying to me. The choice I made was based on things she liked doing in the sessions. Angela chose a cake, and on the last session I prepared a tea party with a cake and juice. She was very excited when she saw the cake and found it hard to believe that it was for her. She sat at the table staring at the cake, talking to imaginary people telling them to wait as the party was for her. She spent the whole session in this way, not able to take a piece of the cake or drink any juice. I sat beside her, watching what she was doing. She appeared stunned by her gift. At the

end I reflected what had happened, and offered empathy to her experience of receiving a cake. I told her that the cake was for her and she could take it home. She was shaking with excitement and kept repeating "It's mine" and "Beverley for me". After this session her mother contacted me and thanked me for the cake, which they had enjoyed eating together.

2.4 Process analysis

In the first session I was struck by the strong countertransference, a feeling of abandonment and hopelessness. Prior to the session Angela was sitting alone crying, with no expectation that anyone would want to understand, or care what was happening to her. It seemed that because she was difficult to understand and her behaviour was challenging, nobody took the time to understand her world. When I took the time to sit with her she was able, to some extent, to explain what had happened. She indicated when she was ready to move and appeared to appreciate me being with her. I believe that this set the foundation for her to experience being in a relationship in a different way, which led to another challenge in the work. Angela was a very stubborn young lady. Was this just part of her personality, or did it develop from her experience of non-acceptance? She found ending the session and leaving the room difficult, and moreover, I found getting Angela to leave the room difficult. After all why should she leave? She was being accepted, and was having fun, and it did not make sense for her to want to go. Initially I found this very hard. I was struggling to think of subtle ways to manipulate her to leave, while at the same time wanting to stay with her feelings of not wanting to leave. A compromise was found and we found a way for me to hold my boundaries and keep to a time frame, while staying with her feelings.

Meeting her mother was a great idea and led me to another process. I discovered that her mother was stressed and overwhelmed with trying to meet her daughter's needs. The themes of stubbornness and manipulation were not only encountered within the school environment. Her father was not mentioned, and it was made clear that this was a taboo subject. I sensed that there was a lot of sadness not just relating to the loss of the dog, but also around the absence of her father, and the level of need within the family.

Speaking to Angela's mother enabled me to put some focus in our work. It helped me to explore the difficult and emotive subject of death. She used art to communicate her feelings for King and her experience of loss. Because she was not able to verbally communicate about her artwork, I had to trust Angela's psyche to understand her own art work (Gray, 1985).

When a person has little intelligible speech it is important to work with the counter-transference in order to understand the work and move it forward. However, in this case this may not have been achieved, so Angela tried a more overt way of communicating, i.e. taking the phone from the room. I believe it is important to look at a person's behaviour and to try to understand the meaning of their communication. At some level I was preoccupied with the time it took to get Angela out of the room and the arrival of my next client. Not having to cajole Angela to leave at the end of the session met my need, but prevented me from exploring what Angela was communicating. Clearly the phone acted as a transitional object, but the taking of the phone may also have been her way of communicating to me that not only did she understand that I was somebody she could talk to, but she wanted to talk to me and missed me between sessions.

As we spoke about her need for the phone, and death, I demonstrated to Angela that I understood her communications. She was then able to trust me, and the direction of our work changed. She used 'games' in the work to enable me to experience how angry and frustrated she felt in her daily interactions. This was a powerful experience for me, one in which I struggled to be congruent. However, as I was able to show her that I understood her communications, and could hold such powerful feelings, she was able to move to a place where she could be in control. Her directive manner seemed different to her stubborn interactions where she just refused to do things. This time she was at ease and demonstrated pleasure and happiness.

I was aware that Angela was developing more autonomy around the time of her attempt to escape, directing me in activities and taking responsibility for the ending. This is interesting in itself, but whilst I was aware of the seriousness of the event, I tried to convey to her and the school that one mistake did not warrant such drastic measures. I tried to show her that it was important that she was safe, that people cared

about her and that I trusted her not to run off. When I took this risk, staff at the school returned to rational thinking and could see it was inappropriate to place a wrist strap on a young person. More appropriate measures were then put into place.

Angela required some direction for her final ending session; I did not believe that she had the skills to ask for what she wanted, but at the same time I was aware that I needed to do something different in the last session to make it clear that this was the end. It was a very emotional event. Angela was 'stunned' by the gift she had been given. The joy of receiving a cake overwhelmed her. She was not able to touch or eat the cake, and kept repeating 'It's mine'.

2.5 Post-interviews with the tutor and TA

Angela's teacher reported improvements in her behaviour, 'She has made huge steps but it all falls apart in an unstructured environment'. Her teacher believed she was now taking responsibility for her actions, 'She will now come back from her strops and apologise, and fully understand what she has done wrong'. He felt there was an improvement in her schoolwork, 'Her speech has come on a lot. She understands instructions and has made good progress academically'. It was reported she could now, 'Sit beautifully for up to 45 minutes with good looking and listening'. She had made some developments socially and now, 'Likes to be part of the group'. When I first interviewed her TA, there was a problem with the tape recorder, and I needed to re-interview her. She commented that she had had a dreadful year with Angela, who would not do a thing for her and was a very difficult and challenging young person. The TA thought that there were no improvements in any area. I spent the interview listening, and offering empathy to such difficult experiences. However, when I re-interviewed her, she stated, 'I do not know what happened since our last talk but she has changed completely. She has become more co-operative, she is working hard she is a changed person'. The TA believed that the other students were aware of these changes because they were more willing to be with her.

2.6 Post-interview with the student

At the end Angela was re-interviewed. The interviewer reported that she felt more at ease with her and decided that she would not have a translator present this time. Again it was difficult to gain Angela's views of the work or her understanding of any

changes. The interviewer reported that she seemed very strong in her views, and she sensed that she was not going to do something she did not want to. Angela wanted to draw a picture using the gold pen, but was having difficulty taking the top off the pen. The interviewer said she stood back because she sensed that others would always help and take over and she wanted to allow her space, trusting that she would ask if she needed help. Unfortunately she broke the pen and the ink splashed over her picture. The interviewer reported that she was upset by this and did not want to continue. She said she was going back to class.

2.7 Follow up interviews with tutor and TA

At the end of the project Angela transferred to the secondary department. Initially her Tutor and TA reported that this created many problems, and Angela regressed, but by the end of the year she regained any lost ground. They both felt that they could not make a comment on self-esteem, but felt her confidence had increased. Her TA reported that she 'Still wanders', but 'Generally she goes back to base'. By this they meant that she returned to her form room. Her tutor said that her 'Vocabulary has improved tremendously. Tremendously, I mean every day she will come out with something new, something different that she's not said before'. Academically staff noticed an improvement, 'She can give me the sounds of the letters, she can recognise, let's say for example the folders, she can pick up on the first letter and she knows whose they are and she can give them out'. But, 'Writing is absolutely a non-starter, because she just scribbles on the page and that's her writing'.

She had sustained her gains in concentration, 'She can sit for quite a long time on something, and she is very determined that if she has started something she's going to finish it'. Her TA believed that she had some awareness of her appearance. 'Usually quite tidy, um, she likes to tuck things in and have her belt done up properly, and if it's twisted it needs to be put right'. Both tutor and TA reported that she still remains popular, but she struggles with understanding her own strength and the implications of this when she cuddles someone or pats them on the back.

2.8 Follow up interviews with the student

The interviewer reported that Angela appeared happy to join her, but was not able to answer any direct questions. She asked Angela to draw a picture, hoping that she

might have been able to understand something about her experience of counselling. This was unsuccessful, but they had a wonderful time playing. Then Angela saw the phone and took it and ran. The interviewer reported that Angela became very cross with her and the chase continued around the school. I wondered if Angela was not able to make herself understood, and taking the phone might have been her way of communicating her sadness about the loss of working with me, or a desire to communicate with me. The interviewer reported noticing changes in Angela, mainly in asserting herself. She said, 'She has become her own person, and we all know what Angela will do and what she won't'. In the final interview she noticed further changes in Angela. Once again she was not able to answer direct questions but they continued playing. The interviewer believed that she was more able to play with her, and seemed more empathic to her needs. She reported times when they did not understand each other, and Angela was sensitive and caring and tried to help her. This was something that had not happened before. Also, at the end, the interviewer reported that she gave her a hug when she left, and said that she sensed Angela had a great peacefulness about her again, which was something she had not sensed before.

2.9 Conclusion

For Angela finding a way to communicate with someone, apart from her mother, led to improved communication at school. This in turn led to an improvement in her social skills, popularity, behaviour and confidence. The gains she made whilst receiving counselling initially took a step back when she transferred to the secondary department, but she regained this progress by the end of the year.

I was particularly struck by the second interview with Angela's TA. I was aware that she had had a very difficult year and had no one to offload such experiences. When she was given an opportunity to be listened to, suddenly there were reports of a transformed Angela. I am sure that Angela did not transform, but the TA felt less stressed and was able to see Angela in a different light.

In my first meeting with Angela, I was overwhelmed by the neediness of this young girl. I also felt plagued by her lack of expectations of people, and the hopelessness of her life. I frequently struggled with wanting to 'fix' her, and make things better for her, but had to hold such powerful feelings and prevent myself from encroaching on

her own capacity for self development. Working with her demonstrated the importance of utilising countertransference to understand the work and to move the client forward. When I demonstrated to her that I was willing to try to understand her communications, she trusted me to further explore her world. I fell short of her expectations on one occasion early on in the work, because I was too wrapped up in my own fear and needs. Angela again trusted me and was patient. I wonder if the day she rebelled about the phone being taken from her was her intuitive knowledge that I was ready to look at what she was trying to tell me. Thankfully this paid off, and I was able to separate myself from my own needs and attend to her communications. This then allowed us to move the work forward.

The incident regarding her escape from school seemed timely. I wonder if it had anything to do with her feeling more autonomous and wanting to venture out. Sadly, this was an inappropriate way of expressing such states of independence and led to further restrictions. In hindsight, it might have been advantageous to explore the meaning of independence with her.

Angela demonstrated that her receptive language was greater than her spoken language. She trusted the counsellor to understand her communications and was able to make use of the counselling sessions. However the work might have been more productive if I had taken a more holistic approach, by working with her mother and the staff at the school.

3.0 Group one: An introduction to Grant

Grant was fifteen when we met for the project. He was the only child from his mother's first marriage and had a stepbrother by his mother's current partner. Grant lived with his mother but had regular contact with his father. He was diagnosed with a moderate learning difficulty and dyslexia.

Grant was referred to the project because staff believed he had low self-esteem and was very self-conscious about the size of his ears. Grant was placed in the first group, so received counselling in the first year of the project.

3.1 Pre-interviews with form tutor and class teaching assistant (TA)

I interviewed his current form tutor and TA. His tutor thought, 'He has low self esteem,' adding 'He gets a really hard time about his ears'. His TA disagreed. She thought his self-esteem was 'Good'. His behaviour was described as 'pretty good' although his tutor said, 'He talks too much,' and thought he did not really take responsibility for his actions. His TA agreed, saying, 'He's one of these children who thinks he is right and doesn't see others can have their own ideas'. His schoolwork was described as 'OK', though his TA added that he finds reading very difficult. They both believed that he struggled to stay on task and gave up easily. There were no concerns over his physical appearance, and both tutor and TA thought he was generally happy and very popular.

3.2 Pre-interview with student

The interviewer reported that Grant seemed really happy about being interviewed. He said that he wanted to be recorded because then he might be believed. The interviewer said he talked without pausing for breath, and it was difficult to get a word in.

In his interview he drew a large yellow car. He was not interested in talking about the car but told his life story to the interviewer. He said his parents had separated and his mother had remarried. He did not like his stepfather and stepbrothers. His stepfather was horrible to him and he thought he did not like him. He said that when his mother was out it got really bad, but when she was at home it was slightly better. He spoke about his stepbrothers, and said the older one was a bully and was always trying to hurt him. He said they did not get on and wondered why he had to put up with this. He lived in a block of flats and his real father lived two floors down. He was able to visit his father whenever he wanted and had a regular prearranged day at the weekends. He said he got on with his dad really well and missed him.

3.3 The process in the session

Grant was happy to join me and stated, 'When you used to pick up other people I always prayed it would be my turn and now it is'. I said I was touched by his comments and wondered why he had never come to speak to me. He said he did not realise he could ask to see me. I explained I was sorry to hear he did not know he

could have requested counselling and I was pleased we now had the opportunity to work together.

I noticed that Grant was very uninterested in the things in the room and just wanted to talk. I felt he was like a coiled up spring that just needed to offload to someone who was interested. At the end of the first session he said that he wanted to make his own way up to me because he was not a baby, and he could also take himself back to class. I noticed he walked out with a skip and a jump.

Over the sessions I noticed that the work with Grant was different. He did not require another medium to help him to talk and it was as if he had waited too long and needed to get everything out before he ran out of time. I also noticed that he found leaving the sessions difficult, and would ask 'Can I have another five minutes?' Before I had a chance to answer, he would say, 'No I can't. Your time is up'. We laughed about this and spoke about how he wanted more, knowing at the same time that I would not offer a longer session. Each time I reassured him that I would be available the following week.

In the work he first explored his family relationships. He was very upset with his parents' break up. He questioned whether he and his learning difficulties were the cause. I sensed that he knew he was not but just wanted to hear it from someone else. Grant was very angry about his mother's behaviour. He said his mother's new husband used to be his father's best friend. He could not believe his mother was seeing him behind his father's back. He was very defensive of his father, who he felt had been the injured party. He said he would like to live with his father but knew he could not look after him permanently; he was not able to say why. Grant spoke about his stepfather and related stories of unfair treatment. He said he was particularly unkind to him when his mother was away. We talked through a particular case where he was asked to do some housework but his stepbrothers were excused. I asked him if he was able to talk to his stepfather or mother about this. He felt he could not talk to his stepfather, but perhaps could talk to his mother, though he was cautious of upsetting her.

We talked through different scenarios as and when they happened and I noticed he was beginning to become more at ease with himself and the family dynamics. At this point he requested that we did something in the session. He wanted to do some painting, and designed a large England flag, which was topical at the time as it was the World Cup. As we were making the flag, he spoke about different girls. He was experiencing age appropriate feelings and was exploring relationships. He told me about a girl that he liked, and how they had started touching on the bus. He said he felt embarrassed, but wanted to know if it was normal to want to touch a girl. I enquired how old the girl was and whether it was something they both wanted to do. I also emphasised the need for privacy and suggested that the bus was not the best place. This led to a conversation about safe sex. Grant was very articulate, and concerned about getting things right. He said he was nervous about having sex for the first time, and would not rush the girl, but it was something they both wanted to do. I reiterated the importance of sex being part of a loving relationship, and intercourse being something you did in private.

I noticed that in the period of making the flag, he slowed down in his talking, and requested that I put the radio on. He would sing along to songs and just seemed very much at ease with himself.

In the closing session of our work he was able to articulate some changes in himself. He said he was sad the counselling had ended, but that he did not feel sad in himself anymore, and thanked me for being there for him.

3.4 Analysis of the sessions

When I first met Grant he seemed passive and did not have the confidence to request the help he knew he needed. He had so much to say, and it was as if he had to say it all at once. I believed he was mourning the loss of his parents' marriage and the break up of his family home. Whilst he knew deep down that it was not his fault, he still blamed himself and needed confirmation that it was not his fault.

He spoke about his mother, and I believe he was very angry with her and found it difficult to forgive her. I think he felt guilty for his thoughts, and they were eating away at him. When he was able to voice them it was as if they were not so potent after

all. I think because he was so angry with his mother, he could see no good in his stepfather. I thought that at some level Grant thought that if his mother knew how horrible his stepfather was she would leave him and go back to his father. On the other hand, however, he knew this was not the case, and just needed to express his feelings. I believe that when he reached a place of inner peace and accepted the situation he was able to move on and discuss typical teenage anguish. Towards the end of the work he became far more relaxed, not speaking as much or as fast. He had the radio on and just seemed content.

3.5 Post-interviews with the form tutor and TA

When I re-interviewed his form tutor and TA they felt they had noticed some improvements. His tutor said, 'I think it is improving. I think he's learnt the art now of if he makes fun of his own ears nobody else will do it. I've noticed this time he's already got that in before anyone else can do it to him, and so he's taken the sting away'. His tutor and TA felt his behaviour was pretty good and his tutor noticed, 'He's aware he talks too much and he'll actually say, "Oh I'm doing it aren't I?" So that's quite endearing really'. He also thought that Grant had started to take responsibility for his actions. 'Yes; as I say, I think he's grown up on the fact that he does realise or he does sometimes and he finds it very hard to stop talking and it's just rubbish and he knows he's digging a hole for himself'. His TA agreed but felt he still needed an adult to support him.

His tutor noticed an improvement in his ability to stay on task. 'Better than he used to, yes I think he does. I think he's sort of growing up a great deal and he acknowledges he has problems but at the same time I feel he's doing quite well to overcome things'. His TA supported this, saying, 'Stays on task, knuckles down to his work'. His tutor noticed, 'I feel that he's beginning to hold his own a lot more and it's not something that is bullying. Bullying that, I think we should interfere with'. His TA also supported this view.

It was generally thought that he was popular within his peer group. 'I would say he would be a leader. He's on the Student Guild, the Student Council so he enjoys that; he enjoys being in control of a group and a situation. His tutor thought, 'He's just

more self-aware of what he's saying and what he's talking about now. He's still not perfect but I think he's more aware of, and adjusting to conversation not only with his peers but also with the teachers'.

3.6 Post-interview with the student

The interviewer reported Grant was very happy, 'He jumped for joy,' when she collected him for his interview.

In his interview he was asked to draw a person. He said, 'I am not very good at drawing, but I'll do my best'. As he was drawing the interviewer asked him some questions. He said counselling was 'Good' and added 'All my problems really I had in me I explained it all to her and stuff like that so it was good. Some bits were a little too difficult for me but I got through it in the end. Hmm. It was all right. I suppose the things what were difficult for me I let it out. I let it out, told Beverley and I felt a lot better inside me that I told someone'.

He continued to talk, telling the interviewer what he wanted to do when he was older and where he wanted to live. He described a house that was very imaginative and had lots of security to ensure he was safe.

3.7 Follow up interviews with form tutor and TA

His new tutor and TA were interviewed on two occasions at the beginning and at the end of the school year. This set of interviews acted as the follow up.

His tutor and TA felt he continued to have good self-esteem. He continued to talk a lot, but they had noticed that this continued to improve. 'He still talks a lot, a lot of jabbering really but it isn't quite as bad as it used to be'. Both tutor and TA continued to believe his schoolwork was good, and his tutor said, 'Yes, so in some ways he now has become quite focused as to what he thinks he's going to enjoy.

He works well. He has got dyslexia, and that is a problem for some of his writing but he does the work on the whole'. His TA commented, 'You put the work in front of him and he will get on with it to the best of his ability. He knows he's dyslexic. He knows what he needs help with and he'll ask for help'.

Physical appearance was never reported to be an issue, but his tutor had now noticed that he was becoming more conscious of his looks and wore his hair differently. His tutor and TA thought he appeared far happier, and seemed more settled in his class. His tutor said, 'He's really one of the fellows in the class, and because he's so much smaller than the others it could have become a problem for him I think. He doesn't care. I mean there used to be a time when they used to be quite cruel about the size of his ears'. His TA added, 'He's happy in his environment and his home and he's got his own sense of humour and he can laugh at himself and he can take the jokes'.

3.8 Follow up interview with student

The interviewer reported that Grant continued to be happy to be interviewed. She noticed that he had grown over the holidays and during the final school year. He seemed happy about leaving school and was looking forward to moving on.

In Grant's follow up interviews he was consistent in what he said. The paramount thing for him was to experience someone who was really interested in him and whom he could trust. He said several times, 'I think to myself, if I tell Beverley something and she said 'No', she won't tell anyone and if I tell Beverly something, yeah, she might tell someone about me. She said she didn't and I at first I couldn't, I didn't know how to trust her because going through my life, when I been through my life, yeah, since I was born, I been like telling people and they, I've asked them if they can trust me and they can trust me but can I trust them? Like, saying something about something and seeing if they won't say anything. They couldn't do that and I got a bit uptight about it, but I didn't realise that Beverley kept it a secret all the way through and I didn't realise that that's how good Beverley was with secrets. But then I got to know her a little bit more as I was going through the days with her and then I thought to myself, 'No, I think I can trust her because she, I've had her words to me so I think it's time to trust her', and I trusted her, yeah, and it worked, so I was pleased with that one'. He continued to say 'I can trust my mum and dad, my brothers, sort of, and my friends, sort of, but the most I could trust was actually Beverley'.

He said he felt different, 'I feel good because I letted all that out and I had that all inside me and now I've let it out to someone who I can trust now, yeah. I feel better but now I felt better because before I couldn't hold all the stuff I had in me. I couldn't hold it I couldn't put anymore things in me because I wouldn't be able to hold it

because it would be too much, but now I let some bits out I got room for other stuff'. He said he was not feeling sad anymore, 'I mean I'm not sad because I was sad when I said all the things to her, but I think what did I say and everything like that, I can't trust her and everything like that and I didn't know her but then after I got to know her I'm thinking I can't believe that she's going to hold that and everything and I'm still pleased that she's holding it inside her and she's not letting it out. I've never met someone like Beverley who can trust, who can trust'. He believed 'She got me to say stuff to her, um, what I've never said to anyone else before. Um. It's quite amazing and letting all my things out. I found some confidence'.

There were two things he thought needed improvements

- 1) A fan in the room, 'Because it was damn hot in the room'.
- 2) A sign on the door, 'Do not disturb', to prevent intrusions.

3.9 Summary

Grant's form tutor and TA were able to observe many changes in him after receiving counselling. He was able to maintain this improvement, and continue to develop in these areas in the following year. His tutor thought he had matured. It was reported that while he still liked to talk, he was actually talking less and was becoming aware of the inappropriateness of talking in lesson time. Staff thought he was more at ease with himself and able to laugh at himself. His TA thought he was not upset about leaving school in the way some of the others were, which seemed to demonstrate his growing maturity.

3.10 Conclusion

Grant was a young man who had endured a break up of a relationship in silence. He struggled with thinking it was his fault, yet knowing it was not. The issue of trust was immense for Grant. I wonder if this was because he thought that if his mother had broken his father's trust, then all women were untrustworthy. Perhaps he had taken this wider and felt he could not trust anyone. He described his difficulties in learning to trust, and his surprise when he did. He clearly expressed the relief he felt when he was able to 'let it all out' in this process and in his words he was then able 'to let more in'. This was visible in school, when he was first described and observed by the

interviewer and myself as a person who did not draw breath when he talked. But when he was enabled to pour it out, he gained more control, and was able to stay silent. Grant also trusted me enough to talk about, possibly uncomfortable subject, sex. He did not want to hurt anyone, but wanted to get it right. At the same time, he seemed caring and sensitive to both the girls, and to his needs.

I believe the ending of the work was, for us both, sad and joyful at the same time. I was sad that the work was coming to a close, because he was wonderful to work with, and joyful because he was ready to move on and clearly demonstrated he was now at ease with himself.

4.0 Group one: An introduction to Grinch

Grinch was fourteen when we met for the project. He was the youngest of eight children and lived with his mother and uncle. His father had recently died. Grinch was diagnosed with Moderate Learning Difficulties (M.L.D.)

4.1 Pre-counselling interviews with the form tutor and teaching assistant (TA)

When his form tutor and TA were interviewed it became clear that they were very concerned about him. He was referred to the project because he appeared depressed. His tutor said, 'There is some kind of sense of himself but I think he's very depressed'. His tutor was also concerned, suggesting that, 'He talked about suicide'. She said, 'He doesn't act out the way other kids do, because he's too depressed for that. He slouches around, sits on his own, mumbles but he doesn't work. I don't think he's really capable of doing any work at the moment'; 'You're not aware of his presence because he's just so on his own and he doesn't work and I think everybody accepts that as far as I can tell'. In addition, his TA reported concerns over his personal hygiene, 'He's dirty, his hair is dirty, his clothes don't look as if he's cared for them. I think there's been days when he's been quite smelly'. Both tutor and TA believed that he isolated himself from his peers. His tutor said, 'I don't think he's got real friends,' didn't believe he was being bullied. 'If somebody does say something about Grinch he will maybe give them a bit of a mouthful back, but I think he's so spaced out a lot of the time'.

4.2 Pre-interviews with the student

When Grinch was interviewed he drew his favourite cat. He said, 'Her tail is down because she's broken it and she can't lift up her tail no more because it's broken in three places'. He said his cat's tail was white, but he had drawn it brown, 'Because that's what colour it gets when it's dirty'. He seemed concerned that she got so dirty and did not like being cleaned. 'You always have to wash it, her tail. If she gets too wet and dirty you have to wash her, then dry her off, but she don't like when she gets all wet; she hates that'. The colour brown also made him think about his cousin, who appeared to be sleeping around 'A lot of the Albanians are brown because of my cousin. I'm talking about all the Albanians over King's Park she slept with. All the Albanians over Kings Park in a month. She slept with all of them, in a month'.

This led him to talk about his half-sister, who had a child at fifteen. Both mother and child were taken into care. He then reported that he had two other siblings who had been taken into care, and said he 'Never liked Social Services in the first place because they took my family away'. He also felt his own security was under threat. 'They may take me away from my mum. If they take me away, they're going to take Vicky away from mum, because I know how Social Services work. I have had thirteen years of experience with Social Services. I know social services like the back of my hand'.

He then touched on the loss of his father indirectly, by telling a story about his father's first wife. 'Janet thought first when my dad died that she was going to get left something by him but she come unstuck. See because by the time that she rung up the hospital and asked him, "what have you left me?" He went, "fuck all". My dad was like that. He did not have any time for his other kids, 'cept Vicky and me'. Vicky and Grinch were the two children their father had by his second wife.

Grinch appeared, to me, to be preoccupied and overwhelmed with the loss of his father, and with the affect of his home environment. These were themes that continued in the counselling sessions.

4.3 The process in the sessions

I met Grinch from his classroom, as I do for most clients on their first session. Grinch was happy to leave the classroom and come to the counselling room. He appeared to be at ease with me, but was unable to offer me any eye contact. He spoke very favourably about his cat, that had just had kittens. He had become very attached to one of the kittens and named it 'Tabbles'. He informed me that he was not allowed to keep the kitten and was anxious about having to let her go. Over the next few weeks his attendance was erratic, because he wasn't attending school regularly. When he did attend the sessions he was able to report that he had 'Found a way to block the pain', by ignoring, and cutting himself off from others. I was concerned about his strategy and wanted to help him to express the pain rather than suppress it. I directed him towards other means of expression such as cutting paper and utilising the 'angry wall'. During these activities he began to talk about his father. He told me that his father was diabetic, and several years ago had lost his leg. He had told Grinch that he lost his leg for him. Grinch received this as if it were his fault that his father had only one leg, and he was carrying a lot of guilt. When he continued to talk about his father's death, it became clear that the family were struggling with the bereavement process and a lot of anger was directed at the hospital staff, 'It was all their fault'. Grinch indicated that he did not have any support from home to help him through the grieving process. Additionally, he had the imminent threat of the loss of his kitten. In consultation with my supervisor, I decided to offer the activity of making a 'kitten' in the session. I brought in a ready-made kit for sewing a kitten cuddly toy. Whilst I had reservations about this activity for a fourteen-year-old boy, I decided to let go of my assumptions and trust that he would accept the activity if he wanted to, or would let me know it was inappropriate. Grinch readily accepted the activity.

For the remaining sessions, Grinch made his kitten, becoming very focused while sewing. When I tried to offer advice on how to match pattern pieces and sew them together, he was quick to prevent me from intruding. He also used the time to teach me how to do the sewing. Whilst making his kitten he was able to talk about his life. He described the many losses he had experienced, from family members to animals. He talked about his diverse family, their needs, and outside agencies. In these weeks I became aware that his school attendance was improving, as was his appearance. He had his haircut and it was regularly clean. He no longer smelt of urine.

Grinch found it very difficult as we prepared for the ending, but was able to articulate how sad he felt; again he was experiencing this as another loss. In the final session he chose to make two boats out of play dough; Grinch sank my boat, saying, 'Yours is not as strong as mine'.

4.4 Analysis of the process

Grinch was very articulate and demonstrated a good level of emotional intelligence. I believed he was very loyal, and fiercely protective of his family, and did not trust outside agencies. In the initial stages of the work I had to earn his trust, which appeared to be gained when he started attending school more regularly, at least for the day when he knew he was going to see me. When Grinch told me that he had found a way to survive the pain, I needed to help him to see how clever he had been in finding a strategy. However, the strategy did not seem to be working for him at that moment. My view was that he needed to be able to experience the pain alongside somebody, where he felt contained and the person would not be overwhelmed, as he was, by the intensity of his grief.

The making of the kitten was intended to provide a catalyst for Grinch to explore and express himself. Whilst making the toy he did not need to give constant eye contact, which freed him to work at a deeper level than he could have borne with direct dialogue. The activity might have also enabled Grinch to develop the kitten as a 'self object' (Kohut & Wolf, 1978).

The ending could have felt fairly abusive, compounding his loss and grief. For this reason, some time was spent preparing Grinch for the ending, enabling him to experience loss in a contained and safe manner. He was able to articulate how counselling had helped him. He was aware that he felt sad about the ending, but this sadness did not disable him. My interpretation of the making of the boats and the sinking of my boat was his need to let me know he was now strong, and ready to move on.

4.5 Post-counselling interviews with his form tutor and TA

At the conclusion of the counselling, his form tutor and TA were re-interviewed. His tutor reported, 'I really do think his self-esteem has improved over the year; he is getting a lot better. He doesn't say anything like he's tired all the time as what he was before', and, 'He smiles a bit more than he used to. He doesn't seem depressed'. His tutor and TA also noticed an improvement in his physical appearance. His tutor said, 'Well he got his hair cut in the spring, which was a big surprise, and he looked really nice. He certainly doesn't stand out as looking unkempt the way he did before'. His TA reported, 'I think he's cleaner. I think there was a period of time when he smelt, a pretty bad state, and I think his clothes are cleaner. He does seem, I'd say, happier'.

His form tutor and TA noticed an improvement in his attendance. They reported that he became more engaged with his peers and with staff and was no longer showing signs of being depressed. His TA said, 'I think he's really enjoyed school this year, and I think it's shown with his outlook and his attendance because at the start of the year his attendance was really bad and it's improved immensely over the year'. His tutor added, 'His schoolwork is a lot better now. He's kind of active, he's actually willing to get in there and do some work and listen, as opposed to before when you'd say something and he'd automatically go on the defensive and say, "that's not right because.....'.'. His tutor noticed, 'He's been communicating with the other students, and having good conversations with staff'. His TA agreed adding, 'He's become a fairly strong person within the group and people pretty much leave him alone as such now, as opposed to before when they used to find it quite easy to pick on him'. His TA had even observed him trying to mediate and 'calm others down'.

4.6 Post-counselling Interviews with the student

When Grinch was re-interviewed, he was quite specific about how he felt. He commented, 'I've changed', and 'I've grown up', and he reflected that 'I used to be nervous and not confident'. He commented that he had had his hair cut. He also believed, 'I'm not losing it as much now'. He had more friends, wanted to help others and wanted to do well in school. He stated, 'The counselling was good while it lasted. The counsellor was good at her job; she helped me grieve for my father, get on with

my work and play with my friends'. I felt it was a little sad to hear that he believed that nobody had noticed he had changed, particularly not his mother.

4.7 Follow up interviews with the tutor and TA

His new form tutor and TA were interviewed. His form tutor said, 'His behaviour is getting a lot better. He doesn't say anything like he's tired all the time as what he was before'. His TA agreed, adding, 'I think he's on quite a high at the moment. He's actually coming to school regularly'. Both Tutor and TA believed that he was continuing to take responsibility for his actions. His TA offered me a little anecdote, 'The class were actually having a bad time one day and I was looking after a young girl, one of teacher's here little girl, for a little while and he swore and I was upset because of this and he turned round in tutorial and actually said, "It was my fault because I used the F word'.

His tutor commented on his schoolwork. 'He seems to be a lot more in control in what he's doing and more regular at school and willing to help not just give advice. He's actually willing to get in there and do some work and listen as opposed to before when you'd say something and he'd automatically go on the defensive'.

His tutor and TA believed that he continued to make progress in his physical appearance. They reported that he used to smell and look a bit grubby last year but it is now a lot better. His tutor added, 'I can't quite remember, but he's had a haircut, he even got his hair cut fairly short and his appearance is quite good. He doesn't wear school uniform very often, but we're slowly getting closer, like a white T-shirt'.

His tutor believed he had made good improvements in his communication with staff and peers. He said, 'Like I said before, I really enjoy Grinch as a student this year, just from the conversations that we're having and his willingness to come in and talk about what he's been up to and that sort of thing.

4.8 Follow up interviews with the student

Grinch reported that he found it difficult to come to terms with the death of his father and counselling helped him do this. He said, 'I used to be nervous and not very

confident. That has now changed'. He said that he now felt happy with who he was, and people would either like him or they would not. He believed this was not his problem and he did not feel he should change to suit others.

Grinch said that he was not aware that other people thought he had changed, but commented, 'It is the way I feel about myself that matters'.

He thought I was good at my job, and helped him to get over his father's death and move on. He said, 'It was good while it lasted' but also believed he did not need to see me anymore because he felt OK about himself.

4.9 Conclusion

Grinch appeared to have benefited from receiving counselling. His form tutors and TAs were able to identify changes, emotionally and in his physical appearance. His school attendance improved and it was noticed that he seemed much happier. It was also reported that he was more able to communicate with his peers and staff. While there was not a dramatic improvement in his schoolwork, it was reported that he was more willing to contribute to class discussion.

Grinch was able to identify how he had changed while receiving counselling. I believe he had experienced a great deal of loss in his life and his family life seemed chaotic and dysfunctional. The statement Grinch made in his second interview that, 'Nobody has noticed I've changed, not even my mum, seemed to highlight the busyness of the family and how he experienced himself as invisible and his mother as emotionally absent. However, he appeared to remain loyal to his family whilst going through the process of grieving and self-actualising in the counselling work. In his final interview he demonstrated that he had moved on from this, by saying it did not matter what others thought. It mattered how he felt about himself.

During the process of counselling, Grinch was able to enter into the bereavement process and grieve for his father. As his mental health improved, it had a knock on affect on his functioning in school. He was attending school regularly and was able to communicate and interact with others. He still was not able to work in all lessons but it was reported that he was now actively engaged in class discussions. Grinch was

able to maintain these developments into the second year of the project after ceasing counselling.

5.0 Group one: An introduction to Harry Potter

Harry Potter was an only child and lived with his grandmother and aunt. His parents had separated, and his father did not wish to have any contact with his son. His mother had custody, but unfortunately she died when he was five years old. He was diagnosed as having a moderate learning difficulty, and had an Autistic Spectrum Disorder, and a speech and language delay. He was eleven years old when we met for the project.

Harry Potter was referred to the project because of his high level of anxiety, which was preventing him from participating in school life. He was placed in the first group, so he received counselling in the first year of the project.

5.1 Pre-interviews with form tutor and teaching assistant (TA)

At the start of the project Harry Potter was in the primary department of the school, so his class teacher was interviewed. Unfortunately there was a constant change of staff for the teaching assistant, so I was not able to gain a TA perspective.

Harry Potter's teacher said his self-esteem was quite low. She described him as very quiet, and unable to sit in the circle at circle time. His behaviour was described as, 'Good, but could be very giggly'. His schoolwork was average for the class. He was described as a 'loner', and did not really seem to have any friends. His teacher's main concern seemed to be his response to sound. She said he was very frightened of any loud sounds and found the dining hall very stressful, and would often not go in. He became very anxious in many situations, and it took a lot to calm him down. She also said there were issues about him touching; he liked to look in people's mouths and to touch their tongue.

5.2 Pre-interview with student

The interviewer reported that Harry Potter seemed very preoccupied and anxious in the interview. She said he seemed to want to make a mess, and also wanted to ask questions about the broken window, but would not answer questions about his picture. In his interview he made a picture with splodges of sparkly glue. He said they were the 'jewels'. He commented that the jewels were messy, and he was not allowed to be messy at home. If he was, he had to go to his room. He drew a boy without any arms and when the interviewer commented, he added them in. At the bottom of the boy was water, and in the water the jewels would be washed. The interviewer was not able to ascertain the significance of the themes of making a mess, the boy with no arms, the water, and the washing of the jewels.

5.3 The process in the session

Prior to working with Harry Potter, I was informed about his history. I was told that he had found his mother dead in bed. She had been dead for a few hours. Eventually he phoned the emergency services, and his aunt and grandmother were contacted. The exact details were difficult to ascertain, because the grandmother became very distressed and did not like to talk about it. I was told that he stayed with his mother's body, until the ambulance personnel arrived.

His grandmother reported that his behaviour was very challenging at home, and she was finding this difficult. She allowed him to participate in the project, but was cautious about saying too much about him, or seeking professional help, because she feared he would be taken into care. Despite several attempts, I was not able to get her to come into school to meet me.

In our first session Harry Potter seemed very anxious. He did not like having the tape recorder on, and hid behind the screen divider in the room. He kept pulling me to join him, and I felt he was very invasive of my space. He was constantly trying to touch my mouth. It did not matter how I responded, he just blocked out my voice and continued along his path of action.

Behind the screen he was looking at some stones. He particularly liked a 'golden stone', and I was reminded of the jewels in his picture. He said he wanted to throw the

stones, but then told himself, 'No', because he might break something. I agreed to turn the tape recorder off, and he then felt able to sit in the main part of the room. He started to explore some toys, but did not like the toy telephone because it spoke. He sought reassurance, and sat closer to me.

In the sessions, he demonstrated obsessive behaviour, talking about cartoon characters, and telling me he could only watch them for a little while. He seemed to be revisiting the conversation at home, which suggested he was not happy with the time restrictions placed on his television viewing.

Harry Potter seemed very anxious and fearful. Much of this fear and apprehension was projected around the mouth. He continually wanted to touch my mouth I told him that I did not want him to touch my mouth, and told him about personal space, and the need to protect another person's personal space. He could not accept this, and challenged me about touching my mouth. I was concerned that perhaps when his mother died her mouth might have looked strange. I did not know how she died; perhaps she swallowed her tongue or choked. I did not know what or how, but he was definitely very fixated and fearful of mouths. In discussion with my supervisor, I agreed that he could look into my mouth, but he was not allowed to touch. He accepted this, but was very anxious.

By the eighth week he wanted to have the blinds closed and pulled his chair very close to mine, holding my hand throughout the session. He was obsessed with looking at my mouth. Each week he told me he could not touch, just look. Each time he looked into my mouth, he seemed satisfied, but only for a few minutes, and he repeatedly asked to look in my mouth about every five minutes. I tried to direct this obsession to a puppet, which had a working tongue. He was not satisfied with the puppet, and ignored my attempts to divert his attention from my mouth.

I was very concerned about Harry Potter, and felt he was extremely traumatised by his mother's death. I expressed my concern to a member of staff, who replied that she felt his obsession with mouths was a symptom of his disability, and had not thought that it could have been from trauma. I said I was unsure, and it could be both, but I wanted to refer him for an assessment at the local CAMHS.

While I was waiting for the referral I continued to have support from my supervisor, and tried to address his obsession with mouths and tongues. My supervisor suggested that I bring in a mirror, in order to look at our tongues together. I could comment on the colours, shape etc. My supervisor thought I needed to help him see that tongues were no longer a source of fear, and our tongues were not threatening. She also suggested that I bring in two lollipops, which might help us talk about tongues. Unfortunately, Harry Potter became deeply distressed by the mirror. His anxiety levels escalated sharply, and he was not able to calm himself down. I put the mirror away, and commented on what had happened. He calmed down, and said how frightened he was. I said that looking at tongues was very frightening for him, and I noticed that he needed to see mine to make sure it was okay, but didn't want to look at it in the mirror. He kept repeating how scared he was. I reassured him that I did not want him to be scared; he was safe and the mirror had gone away. He remained very close to me, and held my hand for the remainder of the session. The following week I thought I would try the lollipops. I did not bring in a mirror, but thought he might let me lick the lollipop and he see a different colour on my tongue. This was also met with great distress. Harry Potter was able to say that he was frightened and that he did not like my tongue to change colour. He was not as anxious as the previous week, and I thought he trusted me to put away the lollipop and to understand his fear.

In the next few sessions, I decided not to direct the work, and simply sat with him. We talked about his game console, and the games he liked playing. We continued this for several weeks.

Towards the end of the work, in week twenty-two, Harry Potter initiated some drawings, and drew faces. I took this as a cue to discuss his fears, and I asked him about the faces and what colour and shape their tongues were. He told me that tongues were red. I asked him if tongues were ever another colour, and he replied, 'White, then your dead'. He would not allow me to go any further with this in that session, and changed the subject. I believed he had taken a big step, and was beginning to feel reassured enough by my presence to be willing to start exploring his fears. The following week, I returned to the subject of the faces, and we spoke further about white tongues. I asked him what colour his mother's tongue was when he found her, and he said it was white. I said he must have been very frightened. He told me he

phoned 999, and the man came and took her away, dead, gone. I empathised with him, and said how sorry I was to hear that his mother had died, that he should not have been the person to find her, and what a brave boy he had been. I reassured him that his tongue and mine were not white, and we were fine. He accepted this but continued to ask to look at my tongue.

I was aware that we were coming to the end of our work, and I needed to approach this with him. Harry Potter was not able to hear what I was saying. I empathised with him, and said I wanted to know if he would go and see someone a bit like me, who might be able to offer him some different support. I told him I needed to see his grandmother and his aunt to discuss this. He was not happy about me seeing his family. He became very forceful, and tried to push his fingers into my mouth. I commented on his anxiety, and tried to reassure him that he would be okay.

In the final session, he sat very close to me holding my hand, and told me about his game console. He was not able to talk about finishing, and he needed to look in my mouth before he left.

5.4 Analysis of the sessions

When I first met Harry Potter, he was able to let me know he was very anxious. I tried to show him that I understood this, and we found a way to help him be more at ease in the room by turning off the tape recorder. I believe he understood that I was there to help him, and would try my best to understand him. He responded well to my response to his fears, and this enabled him to move to the crux of his difficulties, the mouth.

I struggled to find a way to help him explore his trauma. I found a puppet with a working mouth, but I feel this was not realistic or human enough for him to make the lateral link, so I tried a more direct approach. This was too direct and painful for him. He was not able to look at his own reflection, and I was not, and still not sure why he could not look at my reflection, but he was clearly in a state of panic and I needed to abandon this approach. Then I tried the lollipop, but this idea that a tongue could change colour was just as distressing for him.

Again I tried to let him know that I understood this, and at the same time I believe I let him know that I knew where the problem was, and that we would, at some stage, need to return to it. However I backed off and waited for direction from him. He let me know when he felt safe enough to start to explore his fears again, and was able to tell me that the fear of tongues was related to his mother's death.

At this point, I felt more confident that I was on the right track, and his difficulties seemed, to me, to be Posttraumatic Stress. His fear of loud noises was consistent with this diagnosis, and I thought it would be more helpful to get the appropriate support for him. When I approached this with him he was able to let me know that this idea made him very anxious, by trying to force his fingers in my mouth. Unfortunately, I was not able to understand why he was so worried about me talking to his grandmother. I wondered if he knew that his grandmother had also been traumatised by her daughter's death, and had not started the grieving process.

5.5 Post-interviews with the form tutor and TA

Harry Potter's teacher was interviewed again at the conclusion of the counselling intervention. She still described his self-esteem as 'Low'. She was not able to report on many changes in him, except that he seemed to be joining in more in class. She told me, 'Harry Potter goes into the hall more regularly now and he managed to attend the Christmas nativity play. He was not able to participate, but to come into the hall and sit with the other students was a breakthrough for him'. She noticed that he was calmer, but she was still very concerned and commented, 'He seems a very sad case'.

5.6 Post-interview with the student

The interviewer reported that Harry Potter seemed quite happy to attend his interview, but she felt he was quite disconnected. She wondered if he had Aspergers Syndrome, and thought she had observed some traits of this disorder. It did not matter what she asked him, he continued with what he wanted to say, and blocked any other topic of conversation. He refused to have the tape recorder on, and commented that he did not like to hear his voice. He would not be consoled that he did not have to listen to it, and insisted that the recorder was turned off. In the interview, he drew a wizard, some toast, a duck, a banana and a window. He would not talk about any of his pictures. He

wanted to ask the interviewer about baby animals, and wanted to know how they were born and why they were wet.

When they left the room to return to his class, he told her he did not like being black and thought being white would be better.

5.7 Follow up interviews with form tutor and TA

In the second year of the project, Harry Potter transferred to the secondary department of the school. His form tutor and TA were interviewed. His tutor had concerns to the previous year's teacher, and said, 'I don't really see him as having much faith in himself, or self-esteem. I don't think he's got the mentality to understand'. She went on, 'There is something very peculiar about him. He does not seem to connect to his emotions'. His TA agreed that his self-esteem was low, but when I asked her about his behaviour she said, 'It's actually very good, but it's quite funny, this week I have noticed a little mischievous streak emerging'. They both thought he could be obsessive, and was a bit 'robotic' in his actions. His schoolwork was described as being good, particularly his reading. His tutor described him as a 'Walking time bomb' and was afraid he would eventually explode.

It was reported that Harry Potter was still able to join his peers in the dining hall, and was now able to go into assembly. The inappropriate touching continued to be an issue, and he had little concept of personal space.

5.8 Follow up interview with student

The interviewer reported that Harry Potter chatted to her on the way to the interview room. As he entered he said, 'I don't want the tape, it frightens me, don't put it on', so the interview continued without being recorded. He appeared very, very anxious, and held her hand constantly. He wanted to play a game of Frustration, and the interviewer reported that he nearly hit the ceiling when it jumped at the end. He asked to play it again however, so long as the interviewer held his hand.

He told her that he liked working with me, he felt safe and he trusted me. He thought he could talk to me about anything.

5.9 Summary

The school continued to be very concerned about Harry Potter. Members of staff were only able to notice small changes. He seemed calmer, and was able to go into an environment he would not previously tolerate. However, this level of calmness was not maintained into his second year after he ceased counselling, though he did continue to go into the hall.

5.10 Conclusion

I believe Harry Potter was a traumatised young man. I was not able to meet his family, so did not know where they were in the grieving process, or what help had been offered to Harry Potter on the death of his mother. I tried to refer him for a more specialist input, but his aunt and grandmother blocked the attempt.

I believe Harry Potter was able to gain some reassurance from my presence. The closing of the blinds seemed to be symbolic of the room containing his fears. I believe he understood that I knew what the problem was, and he knew I was trying to help him. He found my most direct attempt too challenging, but when I demonstrated that I understood this, he was able to let me know when he was ready to explore his fears, albeit in small, manageable pieces. Unfortunately the ending was too soon, and I did not offer any further work, because I was trying to find specialist help for him.

6.0 Group one: An introduction to Joel

Joel was thirteen when we met for the project. He was the second of four children, and lived with both parents. Joel was diagnosed as having Moderate Learning Difficulties (M.L.D.)

6.1 Pre-counselling Interviews with the form tutor and teaching assistant (TA)

When his form tutor and TA were interviewed prior to counselling, their general concerns seemed to be about Joel's behaviour. His tutor described him as, 'Physical, he is aggressive and he doesn't stop at the one punch or the one kick, he will fly'. He added, however, 'On the whole I think that he feels very remorseful and he just shuts down because he knows he's done badly, and he chews it over and is torturing himself with his guilt'. His TA added, 'The family behaviour is similar, and there are

elements of that male role model at home'. Both tutor and TA thought that made it more difficult for him to address his behaviour in school.

His tutor said, 'He needed the boundaries laying for him, and so on, and he's gone over them once or twice, not because he wanted to. I think that he's a very misunderstood boy who is trying his absolute best to control his anger. He's walking away; he's trying not to get involved but just can't always do it'. This behaviour seems to have led to exclusions, and

his tutor was concerned about finding the right strategy for him. 'I think with a different approach, we can make him feel a lot better about himself and make him feel happier. I mean, he's been expelled once and excluded this half term. I can see that becoming a regular pattern'. His TA also commented, 'He has low self-esteem, very low I would say'.

His tutor said that he was able to stay on task, and described his schoolwork as 'OK'. His TA believed he was better at practical activities. 'Academically he's not so confident. He's quite quick, he's motivated and he works well. He can remember things, but he has learning problems in the sense that he is a poor reader, a very poor reader and he does give up easily'. She reported that he was clean and well turned out, but was not very popular in the class. 'He's got a couple of friends in the class and he wouldn't dream of making friends with the others in the group'. His tutor thought he found it difficult to make friends. 'He's quite a surly boy sometimes and I don't think, he's not very warm and doesn't engage people in conversation other than confrontational stuff'.

6.2 Pre-counselling interviews with the student

Unfortunately the first interview was not recorded, due to a mistake by the interviewer. However, she wrote extensive notes on the interview. When she entered his classroom, his behaviour was overt, sighing with relief that it wasn't his turn. She felt, 'He protested too much,' and wondered what this was about, sensing that he was eager to be the one that was chosen and was disappointed that he was not. When it was his turn, he protested fiercely, and she sensed that he had to put on a show of bravado for fear that people would discover the real him. In the interview he was

sullen, and offered little in the way of words. She felt that he was terrified of his feelings, fearing that if he revealed his true self, he would not be able to survive.

In the interview he was asked to draw something to represent himself, and meticulously drew a rocket, in white, taking great care not to go outside the lines. The rocket was supported with a stand, which he represented using black pastels. This was done with equal care. Joel was not able to talk about this image, and the interviewer's final comment was that she was struck by the neediness of this young man.

6.3 The process in the sessions

The school held reading groups first thing in the morning, and used the counselling room for one of these groups. Joel was in the group that used the counselling room, so was already present, sitting and waiting for me to set up the room. In the first session, he was very quiet, though he did manage to tell me he had three sisters, and he liked football, and supported Manchester United. He engaged in a short game of blow football and then played two games of Jenga. Each time the Jenga blocks fell he tried to catch them, and became increasingly uncomfortable. I sensed he was very frightened and was almost running from himself.

The following week I bought in 'Football Monopoly', and he attempted to play the game but offered no eye contact and no verbal interaction. I became very aware that I was trying to please him, and think of ways to engage him in the session. I discussed this in supervision, and the supervisor agreed that there was an element of collusion, and that Joel needed to see that I was not afraid of his vulnerability. My supervisor suggested that I should have the games we had previously used, and others, readily available but I should allow him to take the lead. The following session, I welcomed him, and said that the things in the room were for him to use if he wanted to. He remained still and silent. After ten minutes I commented on this, and said that if he did not want to talk that was fine and when he did want to talk or play I would be ready. I felt as though I had backed myself into a corner, so the challenge was to stay steadfast.

The remaining sessions were in silence. After session eight, the TA reported to me that Joel had been bragging to his mates that he was having a good time in

counselling, and there was so much to play with in the room, and generally trying to wind others up. She commented that I must have got through to him, and she was pleased to hear Joel was engaging in the work. I did not disclose or destroy Joel's reports, but thanked the TA for telling me this.

When I saw Joel in the corridor and around the school he often asked, whether it was his turn yet. I informed Joel when his turn was, and always said I was looking forward to seeing him. This was generally followed by a 'Yeah whatever' attitude.

Joel continued to be silent in the room; he generally turned his chair away from me and sat motionless. Occasionally he would bring in a ball and throw this at the wall. I commented on his actions. By week fourteen his attitude changed, and when I saw him in the corridor he would make a comment like, 'I hate that woman'. In the session he became very fidgety. I mentioned this to him, and added that I was not sure if he wanted to sit in silence, or didn't know how to use the time or the things in the room. I enquired whether he needed anything from me to help him. This again was met with silence. I generally commented on the silence, and repeated that was OK to be silent, but I was ready to listen if he wanted to talk.

The silence was becoming difficult to manage, and was discussed in supervision. The supervisor encouraged me to stay steadfast, showing Joel that I was prepared to wait and that he was worth waiting for. I spent the time in silence alternating between visualising a white light and sending him love and protection, and thinking of my 'to do' lists to prevent me trying to manipulate him into action!

Unfortunately, on week sixteen, Joel was absent from school due to a fight with another pupil. The staff reported that Joel had managed to walk away from a student (which was almost unheard of), and sought assistance from staff, who praised him for his actions. When his father arrived to collect him from school however, he was very angry with Joel for not fighting back, and gave him a good telling off. This scenario offered us another insight into Joel's experience at home. It must have been very confusing for him to receive such conflicting messages. When he returned to school the following week I said that I had missed him, and commented on what had happened and how confusing it must have been for him to have such different

responses from adults. When I also praised him for his actions, Joel did not respond verbally, but sat very still.

I had been informed that his TA was going to leave school the following term, and the class were going to be told that morning. When Joel came into the session, I sensed a different energy about him. I commented about his TA leaving, and he shrugged his shoulders in response while sitting in silence. This was the first time he had made any movement in response to what I had said.

Toward the end of the work, I was preparing Joel for the ending. He found it very difficult to attend the sessions, and usually left the room with his reading group, looking at me and smiling. I had also been informed that the mother was experiencing matrimonial problems, and was thinking of leaving her husband.

I felt it was important to let Joel know he was worth pursuing, as I was aware that the ending was compounding his feeling of loss and rejection. Therefore, after setting up the room, I went to collect him from his class. This was met with a torrent of abuse, but I noticed that as I accepted his refusal, and told him that I would stay with him for the remainder of his session, and if he should change his mind he just needed to let me know, he normally smiled, but never changed his mind.

The ending was unsatisfactory, and I was concerned about his state of mind, sensing that he must be feeling scared and confused. His false self was so strong that it seemed his only way of surviving was to defend his true self.

6. 4 Process analysis

Initially in the work, Joel managed to show me his vulnerability in the game of Jenga, which I believe was too painful for him. I believe I picked up on this, and colluded with him, going to great lengths to find something to engage him, and setting things up so he did not have to take any responsibility for himself. When this came into my awareness through supervision, I set out to address his vulnerability and his very strong false self.

This set us on a voyage of intense emotions. Joel had to maintain a great deal of control, probably because he felt his life was so out of control. The control manifested itself through his silences in the sessions, and I believe he could not let this guard down or he might collapse. He was not able to express himself verbally, so I relied on my countertransference to understand the work, and help me move things forward.

In his silence I experienced great anger. At this stage I was receiving reports that he was telling staff and peers he was having a great time in counselling, and I believe he needed to maintain a façade. I also wondered if he was worried that I might reveal his true self to staff, and he needed to learn to trust me, something he found hard to do. At one stage I felt overwhelmed with tears (metaphorically). This stage seemed to coincide with his need to search me out between sessions, to check that I would still be there. I was then able to move to a place of peace, and wondered if Joel was able to reach this himself. I noticed that he became fairly abusive in front of his peers. I felt he needed to keep up his macho image with his peers, trusting that I would be able to understand this.

I was able to put into words some of the difficulties Joel faced with the contradiction between home and school, and between his self and false self. As the work came to an end, he needed to reject me. He needed to maintain control because he was scared that he had to let go of somebody who was able to be steadfast, and travel with him into self-discovery. I believe, however, that there was unspoken acceptance of my attendance in his class, even though he had to maintain his image in front of his peers.

6.5 Post-counselling interviews with the form tutor and TA

When Joel's form tutor and TA were interviewed again, they reported that Joel had made significant improvements in his self-esteem and communication. 'I think Joel's self-esteem has come on massively this year. I really do'. His tutor believed that he had moved from being a 'Silent crier and shutting down' to 'Talking much more frequently and openly about issues which have come up through the day. He will talk about them and he will share them. Okay he may not take responsibility immediately, but you know he's communicating. I think it's massively important for him. I'm really pleased with him about that. I think he's done really well'.

They had not noticed many changes in other areas. He was still unpopular, and struggled to let down his defence. His tutor and TA agreed, 'He's trying to live up to his Dad in my eyes'. After a school trip, however, his tutor reported, 'I think that one of the nicest things I've seen from Joel is that he's able to share with other children. Things like when we went to Southend a couple of weeks ago, he took one of the autistic boys off, because this particular autistic boy wasn't going on any rides and didn't want to. He wanted to genuinely help and take him on a ride so he could enjoy himself. And I thought that was just such a nice thing for him to do and I didn't see that earlier in the year'. This appears to indicate that he had let his shield down, allowing people to witness his more sensitive and caring side.

6.6 Post-counselling interviews with the student

At the conclusion of the first year of work, after he had received counselling, Joel refused to attend the interview. Initially, whilst challenging the interviewer, he told her he was in his favourite lesson. She accepted this, and agreed another date and time with him. At the agreed time, he reluctantly came out of class, but refused to attend the interview. The interviewer firstly tried to empathise with him, and then chose to challenge him, asking why he was scared of talking to her. Joel became very red faced and furious. It was a shame the interviewers gamble did not pay off. We can only make interpretations from the work, and reports from the staff, but cannot understand things from his perspective.

6.7 Follow up interviews with the form tutor, TA and Joel

Unfortunately in the following year, Joel's parents separated and he was removed from the school, so interviews with the staff, and Joel, could not be carried out to ascertain if he continued to make any improvements, or sustained the improvements to his self-esteem and communication.

6.8 Conclusion

Joel appeared to make some movement from his false self to his real self. His form tutor was able to report positive changes in his ability to communicate, and his behaviour. This had not developed far enough to influence his peer relationships, but

the act of kindness and sensitivity he displayed on a school trip was something that had not been observed before.

What he appeared to gain from counselling was some inner strength and peace. I can only hope that his experience with me allowed him to make some journey in understanding and accepting his real self, and that in time he will feel more able to allow this to come to the fore.

7.0 Group one: An introduction to Pryce

Pryce was an only child, aged eleven, living with his mother. He had regular contact with his father, who had remarried and had recently had a baby by his second wife. Pryce was diagnosed with moderate learning difficulties, and had attended a mainstream school until the end of his primary education. He joined the school at the end of year six. He was referred to the project because of his outbursts of extreme anger, and was placed in the first group, receiving counselling in the first year of the project.

7.1 Pre-interviews with form tutor and class teaching assistant (TA)

Pryce transferred to the secondary department at the start of the project, so his form tutor and TA were interviewed. His tutor said, 'He hasn't really got that much self-esteem', and his TA agreed. Their main concern was his behaviour, both commenting that he flew off the handle quickly. He would throw chairs, storm out and bash things. He tutor reported that when he got in this state, he would say, 'I'm going to kill everybody. I hate everybody. I'm going to burn the school down'. On the previous Friday he flew into a rage saying, 'I'm going to commit suicide and I'm going to burn the school down'. He frequently had to be restrained for his own safety, and fought with other students, rarely taking any responsibility for his actions.

Concerns were also expressed about his schoolwork, and his tutor said, 'Schoolwork. Intellectual, this is all a no, no, really. He does very, very little schoolwork'. His physical appearance was said to be clean, but his TA commented, 'He leaves his stuff all over the place, and his shoes are always undone'. Both TA and tutor thought he might be sad, his tutor saying, 'He always has a very serious face'. His tutor also

suggested that he was not popular, and added 'He's not really; he couldn't really care less about the rest of the group to the extent that whether they were there or not wouldn't really make much difference to him'. He would not eat any food in the dining hall and brought a packed lunch, which seemed quite inadequate, and would eat this in the corridor or playground.

7.2 Pre-interview with student

The interviewer reported that Pryce was happy to attend his interview. He seemed very serious, and concentrated a great deal on his artwork. She said he answered questions with a great deal of thought.

In the interview, he drew a face and eyes. He was not happy with this image, so turned the paper over and started again, drawing a person, using a gold pen on brown paper. It was difficult to make out the person, and I wonder if Pryce felt invisible. He said that the gold pen showed that the man was rich, but he was sad and unhappy. The eyes indicated that the man was thoughtful, and with his ears, he could hear all the horrible things he had said to his two sons, which made them run away. His wife had also died. He said the man was going to die because he had lung cancer. His neighbours were going to take all his money, and he was going to have to live in a dustbin before he died. Pryce was quick to add that he was very different to the person he drew, because he had everything he needed.

7.3 The process in the session

We had a slow start to our work because Pryce was absent from school for quite sometime, apparently suffering from scabies. On week six I finally met Pryce, and was struck by how serious he was, looking as if he had the world on his shoulders. He looked around the room, and picked up two cars he liked. He told me that he liked fast, expensive cars, but would not want them because they pollute the environment too much. He told me that he disliked smoking and drugs, and although there was a lot of drug use and drinking in his neighbourhood, he would never do anything like that. At the end of the session he asked me to escort him back to class, and to collect him each week.

The following week Pryce was absent from school again. I spoke to the Deputy Head, requesting his absences be investigated by the school nurse and the Education Welfare Officer. His absences from school were frequent, and I believe they had an impact on the work.

When Pryce returned to school, he was very serious. In the session he told me that he was robbed when he was at home on his own. He explained that the person who robbed him was a friend of his mother, who asked if he could have a drink. He said that he let the man in and went to get his drink, and when he came back the man had left, and had taken some things. I expressed my concern, and said how brave he had been. I enquired if he was often at home alone. He became protective of his mother, and told me he was old enough. Then he told me that he was alone from when he returned home from school until his mother got home from work. In addition, he said that she would go out at night after she had put him to bed. He quickly added that this was 'cool', because he could get up and watch the television or play, and said he liked it this way because he could have fun when his mother was out. In this session, he also told me he had no packed lunch, and I discovered that he had to make up his own lunch, because his mother had left for work by the time his school bus arrived. That morning he had been late getting up, and did not have time to make himself anything. I said I would arrange for him to have a school meal, but he said he would not eat school food. I expressed my concern, but he tried to reassure me that he would manage until he went home. I was left feeling very worried, and was tempted to go and buy him some food, but decided to hold on to my maternal instincts and monitor what he was telling me.

The following week he told me that he had been silly when he got home from school. He made himself some food and went out to play, but left his house keys indoors, and so could not get back in. He had to wait for his mother to come home, and she was late because she went for a drink with her friends. He said it was very dark and cold. When I started to enquire about the event, he became defensive saying it was his fault. He should have remembered his keys, and did not want me to tell anyone. I agreed that he should have remembered his keys, but pointed out that he should not be in a position where he was forced to do so at his age. I told him I was very worried, and would need to report it to the school.

I spoke to the Child Protection Officer (CPO) at the school, and told her what had happened. She agreed with me Pryce was a child at risk, or in need, and made a referral to Social Services. I was later informed that no further action was going to be taken because of his age, and he was not deemed to be at risk.

By week twelve I noticed that Pryce was becoming more playful in the sessions. When I came to collect him, he would hide from me and giggle. I turned this into a game of Hide and Seek. When we reached the room, he would talk about how he would improve society. He would make his neighbourhood very safe, and would take away all weapons. On week fourteen, he started to play with me in the session, choosing to play cards, and telling me about his week, or further plans to improve the world.

Towards the end of the work, Pryce was very angry when he came into his session. He said he had wanted the new PS2, and his mum had bought it for him, but had used his money. He was so angry; he would not play the console. He felt he had been cheated, and something had been stolen from him. He sat on the chair, literally tying himself in knots. I suggested to him that he should speak to his mother, and explain to her how he felt. We practised this in the session. The following week, he told me that he had spoken to his mother, who said that she had been teasing him, and had, in fact, paid for the PS2 with her money. He was relieved, and began to play with his new game. I was unsure if he was angry because his mother had taken some money from him, and whether this for him, a familiar scenario. Or perhaps he had been promised something, and felt cheated. I believed it was a very strong response, and was not able to discover its cause.

The ending was very difficult. In some respects, it felt as if we had not got going, because he was away for so many of his sessions. In his last session, he said he did not want to leave, and wanted to stay with me. I suggested that we could continue working in the following year if he wanted, and he said he would think about it. As I had not had an opportunity to ask him what he wanted to do in his final session, I offered him a Kit Kat. He was unsure if he could accept this. He wanted to be sure it was sealed, and he needed to check the date, in case I was offering him something stale. When he felt I was not going to trick him, he took and ate the kit-Kat. I noticed he devoured it quickly.

7.5 Analysis of the sessions

Pryce had a lot of absences, attending only sixteen of a possible twenty-six sessions. His absences limited what could be achieved in the therapeutic work. In his first session he was able to let me know that he felt his desires were out of reach, and he had consoled himself that they were not so desirable after all. The themes of wanting something extravagant, mixed with damage to the environment, continued in our work. It was as if he had had to grow up before his years, and was not allowed to be a child, frivolous or naughty.

He started to trust me, and was able to share with me some very worrying experiences. When he thought his mother would be in trouble, he tried to retract his statements and was eager to take the blame. I tried to reassure him, while expressing my concern, saying that I thought his mother might need some support, because I understood that mothers had to work. Unfortunately, other professionals did not share my concerns, and did not believe he was in danger or in need.

Pryce continued to let me know how awful his neighbourhood was, and how he would like to change things for the better. As I was able to listen to him, he became more relaxed and appeared more light hearted. This was demonstrated when he began to play at the start of the session, making me try to find him, and then became able to play with me in the session. This was a very significant step, and marked a turning point for Pryce.

In our last session, he was able to take some food from me, albeit cautiously, which was unheard of before. Unfortunately the ending was premature but I was able to offer him a continuation of the counselling if he so chose.

7.6 Post-interviews with the form tutor and TA

When his tutor was re-interviewed, she commented, 'He has changed for the better this year. I mean, he still fights, but you can get him out of it quicker. When he first came, he was a quite closed little boy. There was always a frown on his face, and he'd be moving, and the lips would be, and to be perfectly honest with you he looked as if he was permanently munching something, because moving, twitching his nose

and so on and that's not quite as bad now. I only find that he does that if something has happened, in the sense that he's either come into school and something's happened at home, and I can usually tell as soon as he comes in for registration what mood he's in. And he shows his moods quite well. We get a lot more laughter out of him, we get a lot more smiles out of him and he will now spontaneously start a conversation, whereas before you had to draw him out. "Here miss, did you hear?" He gives the overall impression that he's far more relaxed than he was at the beginning of the year. I think he feels quite, you know he feels safe'. It was also reported that he had made a friend in his class. He had said to his tutor and TA, 'He says, "I don't like myself. When I'm angry, I don't like myself. I don't like being angry. It's like my good side says I shouldn't fight but my bad side is stronger and it makes me do it". His TA echoed the improvements, adding that she had noticed he was beginning to approach her for help. 'Say he's hurt his finger, with a little bit of coaxing he will show me, and he did actually let me put, they're like cold flannel, on a cut the other day that he wouldn't probably have let me do before'.

7.7 Post-interview with the student

The interviewer reported that when she went to get Pryce, he was scuffing his shoes and looked unwilling to join her. When they reached the room, he was more able to offer eye contact, and occasionally smiled. It was a very challenging interview, because interruptions from things outside her control, and she believed this prevented him from relaxing and being able to openly discuss his image. When he was drawing, he informed her that if he rushed, his work was not good, and he needed to take his time. He thought his work was bad, but when he took a second look, he changed his mind and decided it was not so bad after all. He talked about his picture, and commented on the eyes. He said he could look into people's eyes, and know if they were going to trick him or not.

7.8 Follow up interviews with form tutor and TA

In the following year his new tutor and TA were interviewed. Both tutor and TA made observations similar to those of the previous year. His tutor thought he was a complex child. 'I think he has a low self-esteem at times but then other times he has a high self esteem and can be quite bossy to other people. Then he likes to be on his own as well. I don't know, he's very difficult'. It was reported that he was in class more

often, but still chose whether he wanted to work or not. His outbursts were becoming less frequent but occasionally he still had to be restrained. His TA commented, 'We've had a good start he's maintained; he's really managing his behaviour. Well, he hasn't had as many outbursts, you know, of kicking, punching'. His tutor added, 'He's also grown up a lot and he's taking responsibility for his actions a lot more, and saying, 'Sorry' after he calms down and he's saying, 'I know I did the wrong thing', which is a big improvement for him'.

His tutor noticed that he had stopped carrying all his belongings around school and leaving them in different places, which was seen as an improvement. She was still concerned about how little attention he received at home, and said, 'I think he craves conversation, adult attention, so in a way that's quite sad that he is craving that'. He had maintained his friendship with a particular student, and his tutor commented, 'The student was away twice last week, and I noticed that Pryce was actually playing soccer on the field with the other boys. He was actually playing. It was the first time I'd seen him, because his friend wasn't there. I've never seen him actually out and playing and he actually looked as if he was having fun too.'

7.9 Follow up interview with student

The interviewer reported that she had to go to great lengths to interview him on both follow-ups. On the first occasion, he pretended to be asleep, and on the second, he denied knowing anything about the project. When he was interviewed, he was clear that he was a solitary person and preferred things that way. He talked about playing on his own at home, and also about playing on his play station. He said he had had horrible experiences when he was at his old school and people were unkind to him. They hit him, and swore at him, but it was different at this school. He felt that I had helped him talk about his issues, and manage his temper. He felt he had improved in his schoolwork, but was disappointed that none of the staff had praised him for his achievements. He spoke fondly of his mother, and said he could not tolerate anyone 'bad mouthing' her. He was willing to stand up for her, even if this meant fighting. He finally spoke about having a project that would make him very rich, and he would buy things for his school, so the students had more space and things to play with.

7.10 Summary

Pryce was a child with low self-esteem and very challenging behaviour. After receiving counselling, his form tutor from the first year said he was beginning to manage his behaviour. His tutor and TA also noticed an improvement in his ability to communicate with adults, and he was more open and willing to discuss his problems. His schoolwork was still slow, but he was choosing to work in some lessons. He had made a friend and seemed a lot happier in himself. In the second year, it was reported that he was able to sustain this friendship, and was also playing with some other students. He continued to try and manage his behaviour, and was not having as many challenging outbursts. In the second year he continued to be happier, and at times had even been mischievous.

7.11 Conclusion

The work with Pryce was sabotaged, to some extent, by his school absences. However, he was able to join with me, and trusted me to share some of his life experiences. It appeared that he was left alone for large quantities of time, and had to become resourceful in meeting his own needs, which he did admirably. The down side to this was that he found it hard to interact with others, and was weighed down with a sense of responsibility. Some of the events had placed Pryce, in my mind, at risk, and he was clearly upset by them. Once again, he demonstrated his passionate protection of his mother and took all the blame.

I believe he had become a very resourceful young man and was able to use even the few sessions we had to help him feel better about himself. This may have led, or contributed to, the improvements that his form tutors and TAs noticed.

8.0 Group one: An introduction to Tatra

Tatra was an only child. Her parents were divorced and her mother had a new partner with whom they lived. I was informed that her natural father had been physically abusive to Tatra and she was not allowed any contact with him. She was diagnosed with a moderate learning difficulty, and a speech and language delay. She was twelve years old when we met for the project.

Tatra was referred to the project because staff thought she had low self-esteem. She was placed in the first group, so she received counselling in the first year of the project.

8.1 Pre-interviews with form tutor and class teaching assistant (TA)

Unfortunately, because of changes of staff, I was not able to gain the views of the TA for the class. Therefore, only the form tutor was interviewed. He was generally concerned about Tatra's low self-image. 'I feel she has got quite low self-esteem. Her self-concept is that she is very, egocentric, I guess is the phrase. She's aware of her appearance and she knows what she looks like and she communicates extremely badly'. He thought, 'She does know when she's done wrong. She can fib'. He described her behaviour as quite silly at times, adding, 'She's got a screech that goes right through you, and sometimes her communication is hard to understand because the way she speaks is very fast and hurried and not distinct'. He felt she had difficulty regulating her emotions. 'She gets very, very excitable. Very excitable especially if somebody else is excited'. Her tutor thought she was quite popular but noticed, 'She seems to fall out over the smallest thing. She has tiny, tiny minor things on her finger she'll bring to you and say, "what's happened to me". There is nothing there.

She just wants a bit of attention. I feel she just needs a big cuddle really'. Regarding her schoolwork her tutor thought, 'She is very keen at working hard and she's not slow in doing schoolwork. She's quick actually, quite keen to get on, quite well motivated. She can stay on task for ten minutes at a time unless something gets in the way, which is more interesting, and then it will be hard to get her back onto task. And she can remember what she learns'. Her tutor thought she seemed sad, and noticed, 'She's quite sad when she's talking about pets, animals that they've had and lost. It's like you're almost crying yourself sometimes'.

8.2 Pre-interview with student

The interviewer reported that she had made a mistake with the tape recorder so the interview was not taped. She wrote detailed notes after her interview. She said that Tatra seemed happy to attend her interview and talked in the metaphor the whole time. Tatra seemed to be taking care of the interviewer, and was cautious about her speech because she wanted to be understood. She drew a dog and talked about it. Her

dog seemed to be the only one who understood Tatra and she confided in her. She was also able to comfort her dog, which was scared when her mother went into hospital. When the interviewer tried to bridge it back to her, Tatra said she wasn't scared but her dog was.

8.3 The process in the session

I met Tatra from her classroom and she seemed happy to join me for our sessions. Her speech as previously described, was fast and at times incomprehensible. I also noticed that she became very excited and could not regulate her emotions. She flitted from toy to toy and was not able to settle to play with anything.

Tatra asked me to collect her from her class each week and escort her back to her class. I was aware that I was quite exhausted at the end of our first session. I felt that Tatra consumed a great deal of energy and was not at peace within her body. I felt that she lived in this heightened state of emotions, and it was as if she was not able to sit and breathe. Her hurried speech seemed to mirror her body language, and her movements were quick, impulsive and rigid. This seemed to be a presented theme, along with dramatising her life. I wondered if she felt that I would not be interested in her if she did not have a sad story to tell, but the truth was she did have a very sad story.

As Tatra told me about her natural father, her account was mixed with feelings of abandonment and anger with him. She told me a story about him hurting her; by burning her with his cigarette. Perhaps picking up on my disbelief, she wanted me to see the scars that were on her torso. I explained my sorrow for such an experience, particularly from someone who was meant to love her unconditionally and protect her. She then diverted the conversation and it became very positive. She had a fantasy that a man would come and take her from her family and would be everything a father should be. He would live in a large house and she would live happily ever after. Tatra did not want to discuss her father again for some time. However, around the time of her birthday, her father was again presented in the work, and she became very anxious. She said her father was coming to see her, expressing sheer delight mixed with fear. She told me he was going to buy her a fantastic present, but it was a surprise so she did not know what it would be. She also said she was worried that he

might hurt her again. I decided to try and check this information at school without compromising confidentiality. The head teacher decided to speak to Tatra's mother, who confirmed that her father had been physically abusive to Tatra, and that he was not allowed to have any visitations with her. She was aware that her daughter sometimes wanted to see him, particularly around the time of her birthday.

After her birthday, I spoke about the sadness of the reality of who her father was, and her desire that he would be something different. I said I was aware that her father was not allowed to see her and that this was for her own safety. Tatra was not able to speak with me about this, but listened carefully.

About half way through the work, after session eleven I noticed Tatra was changing in her way of being. She had stopped telling me sob stories and dramatising any cut or graze and became more relaxed in the session. She started to explore the items in the room, and played with the masks of a lion and an elephant. She was the lion and I was the elephant. The lion was a cub, and was scared, and could not roar. It had a very timid voice. Over the weeks the lion grew big and strong, and was able to roar and frighten the elephant away.

Several weeks later Tatra again changed her mode of play. She wanted to work with the sand tray, and the lion featured again. Each week a daddy was buried. The lion had to go and find the daddy, but he never could. The lion was sad about this and tried to tell his mother. His mother was never interested and walked away. Then another person came into Lion's life and wanted to know about the daddy. Lion was very sad, but was able to tell this person about the daddy. One day Lion was looking for mummy, but she had gone, and Lion was very angry. Tatra introduced the puppets, which were all very angry and worried about Lion. There was lots of screaming and throwing of objects. The person who listened to Lion had to comfort her. Tatra was very tearful and did not request that I cuddle her, but I had to hold the toy that perhaps represented me. The following week the story continued. This time Lion knew his mummy and daddy were dead and she wanted to bury them. She divided the sand in the tray, but connected it by a wall so Lion could go and visit the graves. She informed me that Lion had nobody to look after her now and had to ask if this person would take her in. I was aware that she might be asking me if I would I take her in. I

had to answer her carefully so as not to reject her, while demonstrating that I understood her sorrow and predicament. I told her that although the person would love to look after Lion, she was not able to, but would help Lion find a place where she felt safe and happy. She was not able to tell me that she was angry, but the other puppets came back into play and were very angry with the person, who empathised with them, and knew how cross they were. She asked if they would help her find somewhere safe for Lion because she really cared about Lion. This was reluctantly agreed, and the puppets agreed to take Lion in. Occasionally we returned to the burial site to say 'hello' to Lion's parents, but Lion now felt happy.

On our ending session Tatra requested a cake. She told me she was not allowed certain foods and wanted to be sure that I understood this. She was precise in what she wanted and trusted me to deliver.

8.4 Analysis of the sessions

Tatra seemed a very sad young lady and had had a very difficult experience in her life. I believe she had not attached appropriately to her mother and this made her feel she was unlovable. She presented as someone who had to make her stories impressive in order to warrant any attention. At the same time, when she received attention, she was fearful that she would lose it again. I wondered how her mother had responded to her when her father burned her. I also wondered if this was the only time that her mother became emotionally present and so Tatra believed that things had to be drastic for people to be interested.

Tatra was quick to tell me at the beginning where her difficulties began. Her story of her father abusing her was difficult to comprehend and she needed to be sure that I believed her. When I demonstrated that I did, and expressed my sorrow, this appeared too painful for her and she immediately fantasised about her father. Around the time of her birthday she revisited this difficult experience, and was able to let me know that she was besieged by conflicting feelings. The reality that her father would not be there for her, and was not what a father should be, was overwhelming so she blocked it with a fantasy of what he was going to give her. This was at odds with her fear of what might happen if she ever saw him again. When I showed that I understood her pain and contradictory thoughts, she was able to listen but not verbalise her feelings.

This led her to act out what she thought was happening within. She told the story of growing and feeling stronger via the masks. She was then able to explore her life via the sand tray. The lion was brought into the story. She was able to let me know that she was very sad about her father, and that her mother would never listen to her. Then a person, perhaps me, came into her life and listened to her, and understood how sad she was. It appeared that she experienced her mother moving, emotionally, away from her. She was not able to say she was angry but used the puppets, another part of herself, to portray this anger. The puppets were caring and worried about Lion. I wonder if the puppets also acted as the self-object, showing that she was beginning to internalise her ability to self-soothe.

Tatra moved to a place where she was able to accept that her parents would not be emotionally available to her, and she portrayed this in their burial. However, whilst she had separated from them, she left a bridge open so that she could continue trying to reach them. Tatra then requested that I took care of her. I believe she meant this literally, although she knew it would not be possible. She was angry that I would not take her in, and was able to show this and to see that I could tolerate her anger. She was then able to develop her ability to self-soothe by the puppets taking care of her. In the ending session she was able to ask for something she wanted, and trusted that I would provide for her needs.

8.5 Post interviews with the form tutor and TA

Her tutor thought she had matured over the year and had become more confident. He also said, 'I think again she's made good progress with her academic stuff'. However, he was still concerned about her home life. 'Her self-esteem. I'm worried about Tatra. She's full of life. She's got so much to contribute, so much to say, but I feel that every time she tries to do something that's valuable (and she constantly shows me work and little gifts of cards or pieces of paper she's drawn something on), she always seems to be knocked down at home, or pushed out at home, which suppresses her self-esteem but she's constantly trying to rise up'. He saw a little improvement in her behaviour. He said, 'Generally good, but if something goes against what she wants to do she finds it hard to accept some things. She comes round eventually but she has a little tantrum, or you know, a strop, then within two or

three minutes she'll come back. She might have thrown a chair but she'll come back and she'll say sorry and it'll be okay for the vast majority of times'. He thought Tatra was still attention-seeking. 'She does like to attract attention, as well. She's somewhat of a hypochondriac as well. I've seen her come and show me a tiny little speck of something where she's "Sir, it's bleeding." And you look at it and you can barely see anything. You think, Tatra there's nothing there. "But it hurts." He continued to believe she was popular, 'She's got friends here in different groups. She's like doesn't stick to the same class for her friends. She has friends who are older children and younger children. She doesn't care'. But he was concerned that her popularity was because she was being 'flirty' with the boys. 'There is some inappropriate behaviour, which has increased her popularity, which is again a worry'. He added, 'It's a little bit too much intimacy with some of the boys'. This was not viewed as an age-appropriate development, and he thought she should correct her advances towards the boys.

8.6 Post-interview with the student

The interviewer reported that, again, Tatra was happy to attend the interview. She said she appeared less compliant, and had previously appeared to have accepted her lot. On this occasion, however, she seemed to be certain of what she wanted and was determined to get it. Again, she spent some time talking about her dog, and about her excitement for her forthcoming holiday. She reported that she was going to the Isle of Wight and her dog was going with her. She wanted to make a card for her dog. It had to be something special and she took some time making it. While she was making the card, she needed to do a lot of cutting, and wanted the interviewer to hold the sheet while she cut. She told the interviewer that she was shaking, and wondered if she did not trust her. The interviewer reported she was not shaking, but perhaps Tatra was telling her that other people did not trust her. She seemed to need to make a lot of mess. The interviewer thought she wanted to prolong her time and was not going to be rushed. Apparently she did not take her 'special' present for her dog with her.

Tatra was not able to articulate what she gained from counselling but said she felt the sessions were OK and she had fun playing with me.

8.7 Follow-up interviews with form tutor and TA

In the following year again I was only able to ascertain the views of the form tutor, who said of her self-esteem, 'I would imagine at school its good'. He was also concerned about her home life, and echoed similar concerns to last year's tutor about her ability to regulate her emotions. 'She gets very excited and I actually sometimes I can't understand her. She talks very fast and then she also, with Tatra, instead of going to the point, she goes into a lot of detail, which is not necessary'. He her behaviour had continued to improve. 'I think it's really improved because I can remember when I first started here she would really have tantrums.

Now you don't see that any more'.

Her tutor agreed that her schoolwork was good but was concerned about her parents' expectations, 'She really does try hard and I think there is pressure at home for her to do well'. He had continued to notice that her physical appearance was good, but also that when she got very excited she had a tendency to wet herself. He said she would get very embarrassed and would try to hide it. He also commented, 'I think generally she seems happy enough; she's eager to tell you what she's done at the weekend and tell you about her animals'. He noticed that if something had happened, she would become sad about her father, and he thought it was a way of getting sympathy.

He thought she had changed and had sustained her improvements. 'I would say all for the better. I've noticed she has become much calmer and she hasn't thrown her tantrum trips. And, er, yeah she's, now I've noticed her speech is much better, because initially I thought it was difficult and now once she's calm you can understand her'.

8.8 Follow-up interview with student

The interviewer reported again that on both occasions Tatra was happy to be interviewed. Each time she seemed more assertive and directive in her interviews. She said that Tatra was playing with the play dough and telling her what she should do. She also spoke about her dog a great deal and continued to speak about having her dog to confide in. She was more able to articulate her experience of receiving counselling. Tatra said, 'I feel calmer now'. She also thought she was more able to control her emotions and was feeling happier. She commented, 'I can trust her' and,

'She won't tell anybody what you say'. She said that when she came to the school she had behaviour problems and she could not talk to her mother. She felt that when she was working with me it helped her to talk to her mother. However, this had deteriorated since she had stopped working with me and she said, 'My mum says go and talk to Beverley'. She was able to say she was sad that she had finished working with me and wanted to work with me again.

8.9 Summary

In the first year I believe Tatra's tutor described her accurately as a young lady who could not regulate her emotions and felt unlovable. She just needed a cuddle. Her tutor reported that she seemed calmer after counselling and her behaviour was gradually improving. It was reported she still had 'strops' but would come back within a few minutes and apologise. In the second year, her tutor was able to support these views, and he also noticed that she was able to sustain these improvements and, in fact, developed them. She still was a lot calmer, her speech was more intelligible, and the tantrums had stopped.

8.10 Conclusion

Tatra was a young lady who presented with an attachment disorder. She had experienced traumatic events with her natural father and a mother who appeared to be emotionally absent. Tatra seemed to have journeyed through her disappointment and anger at her life experiences, reaching a point of acceptance. She was able to get in touch with her own ability to self-soothe. She could see that her ability to regulate her emotions had improved, and her tutors observed this too. As she was more able to manage her emotions, her tantrums reduced and then ceased. Her speech also became more intelligible.

9.0 Group one: An introduction to Wayne

Wayne was an only child and lived with both parents. He was diagnosed with a moderate learning difficulty, and a speech and language delay. He was ten years old when we met for the project.

Wayne was referred to the project because his tutor thought he had low self-esteem. He was placed in the first group, so received counselling in the first year of the project.

9.1 Pre-interviews with form tutor and class teaching assistant (TA)

At the beginning of the project Wayne was in the primary department, therefore his class teacher and TA were interviewed. His teacher thought Wayne was, 'Very introverted, needs a lot of reassurance. He always needs a hug in the morning. He is very anxious'. His TA agreed and added, 'He is very timid'. About his conduct, his tutor said, 'Behaviour is fine but gets drawn into things and can't move away from a situation'. His tutor thought he did not take responsibility for his actions. 'No he doesn't. He sees himself as the victim. He can't see, for example, when he stares at others, that winds them up and he gets a certain response'. Regarding his schoolwork his tutor thought, 'He's very lazy and lethargic, last to complete a task'. His TA agreed but added, 'It could be good'. He was described by both teacher and TA as very shy and nervous. They also said he seemed afraid of most things and turned the 'Water works on quickly'. His Teacher thought, 'He's a bit of a loner', but his TA noticed, 'He mixes in. Every now and then you will be aware of his presence'.

9.2 Pre-interview with student

The interviewer reported that Wayne was very nervous, and appeared anxious about attending his interview. She commented that he was very quiet, and it was difficult to get him to express anything verbally.

In his interview he drew a very small person, and then quickly drew a circle around it. He drew the circle many times. He said, 'The bubble was to keep him safe and to stop bullies hurting him'. The interviewer reported that he then moved to the pastels and noticed they were more effective. She said that he continued to draw circles around this person in a hypnotic state, saying that he needed more protection than he first thought. Of the colours he used, he said red and orange were 'ok colours', but that yellow was a special kind of protection. No explanation was offered.

9.3 The process in the session

On our first session Wayne seemed very anxious as previously described by staff. I offered him a folder to store his work. He drew a person on the front and drew many circles around the person. He repeated what he told the interviewer, that the boy had to have protection. I asked him if he needed protection, and he agreed, saying that he was bullied and unhappy. He was not willing to divulge the names of his bullies, but clearly was feeling intimidated and stressed at school. He looked around the room and was drawn to the dolls' house. He took great care looking at the house and wanted to be sure that the furniture was all in the right place. He placed the grandmother in the shower, and put three other people, two adults and a child, in the lounge watching T.V.

At the end of the session Wayne asked me if I would escort him back to class and collect him each week. I agreed to this

In the early part of the work he requested the tape recorder to be turned on, and would then ask to listen to his voice. He did not like the sound of his voice; it was too quiet and he would ask me to turn the tape recorder off. I noticed that there was a pattern developing. Towards the end of the session he became anxious and started looking out of the window. I asked him what he was looking for. He said he wanted to see if his bus was at school. I asked him if he was worried that people might forget he was with me and would go without him. He did not answer. I reassured him that he would be back in class for the ending tutorial, and would be able to go on the bus. They would not forget him.

After he returned from the Christmas school holidays I noticed that he seemed more relaxed with me in the sessions. However, I also noticed that he still was not able to initiate anything and needed permission to pick up a toy. He played with the dolls house for a short time but said he did not like the noise the dolls made against the wooden house. He preferred silence. He went back to his folder and looked at the pastels. He said he could not use the pastels because he would get dirty and his mother would be cross. He would not be consoled or accept any offers of an apron to cover his school uniform. He used the pens and continued to draw bubbles around his image on the front of his folder.

On week eleven, Wayne initiated a game with the puppets. He talked very quietly and I struggled to hear what he was saying. He played this game over several weeks. The themes were fighting, and getting stronger, and standing up for yourself. The main character, which appeared to represent him, found it hard to fight the other toys and puppets. He was very sad and although he wanted to run away, he did not, staying with the fear. One week, some turtles were introduced to the game. The turtles seemed, to me to be, nasty creatures. I commented upon this, but Wayne was not able to reflect on their persona. The turtles sucked out the brains of the penguin, which apparently was a good thing because penguin had to go and get some help. He went to the doctor and the doctor gave him a new brain. When penguin received the new brain he was able to stand up for himself and was no longer scared of the other animals. Penguin then found himself in a position to help others. Wayne directed a story in which I was afraid of the other animals and was being beaten up. Penguin came and told me not to be afraid because help was at hand. He told me I had to ask for Spiderman and he would support me. This I did, (as instructed) and was amazed that people would help me and I was now safe.

At about the same time as the sessions with the puppets, I was informed about Wayne's reluctance to attend the school camp. I used the sessions to explore what this was about. He seemed very anxious about separating from his mother. We spent a short time each week imagining what the camp would be like, the sleeping arrangements, food, activities etc. I encouraged him to express his hopes and fears for the trip. We also made up a book about the camp; the school gave me some pictures and information so I could help him to become familiar with the place. We also addressed his separation from his mother. We looked at his fears. He was worried that he would miss his mother and that nobody would like him or help him. We looked at strategies to help him if this was the case. We also looked at his hopes, which were that, he would have a fantastic time and would enjoy the different activities. I wondered if he was also carrying something for his mother and could not be seen as having a good time, although I was not able to verbalise this with him.

On our closing session he had returned from the school trip and he reported having a fantastic time. He was very articulate and informed me about all of his new

adventures. He commented that sometimes he felt scared but went for it anyway. I expressed my pleasure that he had gone and had had such a successful experience.

9.4 Analysis of the sessions

Wayne presented, as described, as a very timid anxious child. In the beginning the sessions were torturous for me. I wanted to wade in and gee him up. I had a strong countertransference of frustration and it took a lot of self-control to sit with him in the sessions. In his first session he was able to offer me a snapshot of home life. It seemed very controlling and orderly. There seemed to be no space for fun, noise or mess. I believed Wayne was oppressed and had to behave in a certain way. He had succumbed to such control and no longer had anything left of himself. He needed a lot of protection, which was represented, by his bubble. I wondered if the bullies were his parents but he was too loyal to them to state this.

He seemed anxious at the end of the school day and in hindsight I wondered if what worried him was not being left behind, but rather what he was going to face when he got home.

I believe the support I offered, in allowing him to explore his hopes and fears for the school trip, contributed to his confidence in attending the trip and also to its success.

The play with the puppets seemed to relate his story of helplessness, and inability to stand up for himself, and allowed him to assert his views. I wondered if the incident with the turtles sucking the penguin's brains out was his way of telling me that he felt he was dead and had no brain. Someone, a doctor, came along to help him. This doctor gave him a chance of a new life, a new way of being in his final story. He was able to let me know that he knew what he had received from counselling. Help was out there; all he had to do was believe and ask.

9.5 Post-interviews with the form tutor and TA

After Wayne had received counselling, his class teacher and TA were re-interviewed. His teacher thought his self-esteem was, 'Coming up gradually'. Both teacher and TA said they noticed a great difference on a school trip. They reported that he did not want to go but when he eventually joined them they were surprised at his confidence

and willingness to try the activities. His teacher said, 'He has not stopped talking about it.'

His teacher thought his behaviour was 'Okay' but he noticed that, 'He is covertly naughty. He pulls the strings behind the scenes'. He noticed an improvement in Wayne's ability, but he still lacked self-confidence. 'He is a lot more able than he thinks he is. He still needs reassurance and his organisational skills are poor, but he is now a good writer'. His TA agreed, adding, 'He can now stay on task but needs somebody to get him going'.

He was still described as looking frail and timid. His TA thought that his mother smothered him. It was believed that he was still not taking responsibility for his actions, but his teacher noticed, 'You can talk to him now about his interactions with others without the waterworks'. It was also noticed, particularly after the school camp, that he was now mixing better with others and did not appear to be on the periphery of things.

9.6 Post-interview with the student

The interviewer reported that Wayne was still anxious when he attended his second interview. He only stayed for a short period and would not converse willingly on his image.

In his interview he drew a boy with a gun. He said he would not colour it in, 'Because it would take too much time'. The interviewer asked him if he was missing something, and he said, 'no'. She asked him about last year's picture and he said that he drew a bubble around the boy to keep him safe. He felt that the bubble worked, and it stopped the bullies picking on him. The interviewer asked him if the gun was there to keep him safe. He answered that only the bubble would keep him safe. She tried to enquire further but he said it was only a picture and he wanted to leave.

9.7 Follow up interviews with form tutor and TA

In the following interviews Wayne transferred to the secondary department in the school. Therefore, his form tutor and TA were interviewed.

They both echoed the observations of last year's staff. He was described as very shy and introverted. His tutor noticed that he liked to have a cuddle at the end of the day,

or needed to sit very close to her. She was concerned about what he was returning home to. Throughout the year the tutor was able to reaffirm some of the progress Wayne had made. Not only had he sustained his improvements but there were developments on these gains. His tutor said, 'Well I can mention the improvement in his self-esteem. I think it's very, very incremental. It's very small, still, it is improving'. His TA added, 'He has improved. He has come out of himself a bit more'.

His TA told me, 'We had the lady playing the accordion on French day and I said "Come on then let's get up and dance" and that was it, he was up and he was dancing by himself, he would not have done that before'.

His tutor noticed, 'I think that the positive thing from this year is that he's starting to actually interject and say that he doesn't like things'. She continued, 'He's able to explain what his feelings are a little better. He can express that he's not happy with this particular person or what they did'. His TA noticed, 'He'd put his hand up and say "what about me?" So he's beginning to ask and put himself forward'.

His schoolwork was viewed as progressing steadily enough.

9.8 Follow-up interview with student

On his third interview the interviewer commented that he seemed a hundred years old when walking through the corridor. However, when he reached the room, he changed. She described him as more confident and forthcoming. He was actually playing with her as opposed to the silent child he had been. He wanted to show the interviewer how to do things and appeared relaxed and happy. He offered very little about himself verbally but demonstrated his improvements by his way of interacting.

This continued into his final interview. It was reported that he was more confident and had become assertive. He requested at times that the tape was stopped, so that he could listen to his voice he then asked for it to be turned back on. He was able to say that he thought I had helped him realise he was smart and he believed his friends thought he was more fun now. He said he liked being in secondary school and thought that I had helped him with this transition. He commented that he thought he had

changed, and was more grown up, but was disappointed that the staff had not commented on this to him.

The interviewer reported that on his first interview she thought that if she had pushed things he would crumble. On his final interview, although he was still small, there was something more solid about him and she could pursue questions with him.

9.9 Summary

At the conclusion of Wayne's counselling, his teacher and TA said they could see small improvements in his self-esteem. They reported that he was now able to stay on task with his schoolwork, although he still needed support to get started. The main area they commented on was his participation in the school trip. They were sure he would not attend and were pleasantly surprised when he did. Their astonishment continued when he was able to demonstrate his newfound confidence in trying out the activities. He was also reported to be socialising more. These improvements were not only sustained, but also built upon in his second year. His tutor thought he was interacting more with other students and was very pleased that he would now request things and express his point of view.

9.10 Conclusion

Wayne was a very anxious and oppressed individual. He had reached a point in his life where he felt lifeless, and this was noted in his physical appearance. He seemed to be carrying the world on his shoulders. He knew he needed protection and his bubble of protection was very large and thick. He had no knowledge or skills about how to help himself, other than to shut down. He did not like himself and could not even tolerate hearing his weak voice on the tape recorder. I was not sure whether the root of his problem was at home or at school. In the counselling work he was able to explore different strategies, particularly on the school trip. However, I believe he was able to make the link to the wider effect and use of these skills. It would have been helpful to find out how he was now interacting at home.

Wayne was able to let me know that he was frightened and did not know how to help himself. As I gave him strategies however, he grew stronger and was able to ask for what he wanted, and found the confidence to try new things. His newfound

confidence was demonstrated in the school environment and in his interviews. Sadly, he did not think his teachers had noticed.

10.0 Group two: An introduction to Emma

Emma the youngest of three children, lived with both parents, and was eleven when we met for the project. She was diagnosed with a general learning difficulty. Emma joined the school in year six, having previously attended a mainstream school. She is Turkish, and English is her second language. It was reported that her father encouraged the use of English at home, but her mother could not speak any English. This has meant that Emma has been requested to do most of the translating between home and school.

Emma was referred to the project because of immature behaviour in class. She was placed in the second group of the project, which acted as the comparison group, so she received counselling in the second year.

10.1 Comparison interviews with the form tutor and teaching assistant (TA)

Emma's form tutor and TA for the current year were interviewed. It became clear that her tutor found very irritating, and I believe she was not generally liked. Her tutor said, 'She likes to think she is confident but I think it is a show'. She continued, 'We're very sort of a bit, sort of, "Ooh, I'm here and I think quite a lot of myself and I think I'm quite pretty and a little bit prima donna-ish"'. Her TA felt her behaviour was a mask; she said, 'I think underneath she is shy'. Her tutor said of her behaviour in school, 'She has this inappropriate behaviour and so on, and it annoys me when she goes into her, "Yes miss. Sorry miss." Miss prim and proper and, "I know I've been a naughty girl and I'm very sorry", but really I'm thinking I couldn't care less what you're saying to me'. Her TA said, 'She can be very giggly in class, and it is difficult to get her to focus'.

Her tutor and TA both said that her schoolwork was fine, her tutor adding 'It is quite average'. They both thought she appeared to be quite happy, and their main concern was her silly behaviour. I wondered whether this was more of a problem to her tutor than a problem per se.

10.2 Comparison interviews with the student

The interviewer commented that Emma presented as very girly and cute. Her favourite colour was pink. She became perturbed when using the pastels because of the mess, and had to wash her hands twice. The interviewer believed that Emma's true self was well hidden, and that she used her cuteness to defuse other problems.

In her interview she drew a picture of herself. She used 'girly' colours, because she liked them. She drew her hair longer than it actually was, because she wanted long hair. She said that the girl in the picture might be saying, 'I want a cuddle', but when the interviewer tried to work with this, she diverted her attention.

10.3 Second interview with the form tutor and TA

When her tutor and TA were re interviewed, they could not report any positive changes, and, in fact, her tutor felt the way she presented herself had deteriorated. Her tutor said, 'Emma is like a two people. Very meek and demure and "Yes Miss, and no Miss, and three bags full Miss" with me. Very silly and inappropriate behaviour. In most lessons, she'll shout out'. Her TA agreed that her behaviour could be, 'Very silly and she does shout out'. Her tutor seemed very irritated with her, commenting, Emma thinks, "I'm something special". She does. It's very, very obvious when they can come in their own clothes. She'll have these high sandals on and this sort of lame, top a bit like another student to a certain extent'. Her tutor also said, 'I think she's choosing not to eat much, but her mother did say about her eating. The couple of times I've been on dinner duty she'll have left virtually a whole dinner. And she'll just have picked a little bit of it. She eats other things. She'll have snacky stuff and rubbish food'. Both tutor and TA believed there was in change to her schoolwork, her TA adding, 'Her schoolwork is the same. She dreams a lot in class'. Her tutor said, 'Schoolwork is average. For her, not sort of, nothing brilliant. She's not particularly neat or anything like that. It's more sort of writing-wise it's not brilliant'. She still appeared to be quite happy, but her tutor commented, 'She laughs at people quite a lot. She will laugh inappropriately sometimes, and it gives you the impression it's sort of a sardonic, sarcastic way she's doing it'. Her TA described her as 'Easy to get along with', but her tutor said, 'She's quite a manipulative little lady. She knows how she is supposed to react in certain situations, and so she does it, but, as you said, it feels as if she's sticking two fingers up at you'. She added, 'She's got slightly worse with her prima donna act over the year, 'cos I think she's realised it works, and she

doesn't seem to be able to control her behaviour in class, but she can control her behaviour, 'cos whenever she sees me she stops and that's it, and it's sort of, "Yes miss, no miss, three bags full miss"".

10.4 Second interview with the student

Emma was happy to be interviewed again. She seemed happy, but also shy and anxious that she might lose her friends. In her interview, she drew three girls and placed them in a heart. She said that the girls were her two friends and herself. She loved her friends and was happy. Then she drew another heart and placed three boys in it. She said she was worried that her friends would go off with the boys, and she would miss them. She said, 'I do not like boys, and do not want to play with them'.

10.5 Pre-counselling interviews with the form tutor and TA

Emma received counselling when she entered year eight, and the current form tutor and TA were interviewed prior to the commencement of counselling. Her tutor said, 'Her self-esteem is fine,' whereas her TA felt it was, 'Quite low, she has a real front'. Of her behaviour, her tutor said, 'It's not very good. She tends to go off in little daydreams a lot, and she gets out of her seat, and she makes noises. She sort of yells things out that are irrelevant. It will have no relation to what you're doing. Just cannot concentrate at all, and cannot sit down'. Her TA agreed, and said, 'I have been a little concerned with Emma's behaviour. She is quite a dynamic child, in the sense that she can actually create a lot of situations, and as she pulls away, and she doesn't realise that she has actually instigated something. She does like to tell tales which causes quite a lot of problems with the classroom. She's come in; she's fidgety, moving around and very, very loud'. Her tutor said her schoolwork was OK and added, 'Her concentration level lasts ten seconds to two minutes, so she will just daydream, and she will start writing something, and she'll come back to work, but she generally finishes all the work. It just takes a while sometimes'. Her TA agreed, and commented, 'We have noticed that she, we could be working, and the next thing you turn around, she's off her seat elsewhere and playing with somebody's hair and giving them a hug'. Both TA and tutor agreed that her physical appearance was fine. Her tutor said, 'I wouldn't say she's a really happy person. She's in a bit of a mood, more a preoccupied mood, like something may have happened'. Her TA thought she

appeared happy, but felt she was a bit nervous. She said, 'Yes, she needs reassurance and she wants to be the focus of attention of what's going on there, and I don't know if it's to do with being nervous'.

10.6 Pre-counselling interviews with the student

The interviewer commented that Emma seemed timid and shy until they reached the room. She was amazed by the different toys and games available, and lost herself in playing, finding it difficult to leave at the end of the interview.

Emma was playing, she said she was looking forward to starting counselling, and thought she would be able to talk about her friends, and some of the boys. She spoke about when she started at the school, saying, 'I don't make friends easily'. She continued with a story about her first day, when her teacher said, 'Here this is your friend. You going to be with them. 'I said, I think I said, "yes". Or I think I said, "Hello" and laughed. And then Khadra and Mandy, they walked away. I was like, "what have I did to them," I was thinking, and I cried a little bit, and Miss saw me and she said to me, "why are you crying?" I said, "They walked away from me". The teacher said, "Why?" I said, "I don't know they just walked". Then they saw me crying, and they straight runned quick and said, "we your friends" but we're like sisters. I was like, "Oh". Um. "She said, 'Why did you come to this school? It's not my fault, it's because my maths down so I have to come to this school. And she goes, "Oh". Then she goes, "Why your levels down". I said, "I don't know why", 'cos I can't, cos I can't read it. I don't know but my level always comes down'.

Emma seemed anxious about her friendship, and I wondered why she was recalling memories of starting at the school now. I wondered what was happening for her.

10.7 Counselling process

We had a slow start to the work, as Emma and I were absent for several weeks. When we did meet, she seemed eager to please and presented as a 'good girl'. I believed that she felt uncomfortable with self-direction, and appeared to need permission to do things. She noticed the pens in the room, and told me she used to have pens like that when she was in her old school. She told a story of someone stealing from her.

After our first session, when Emma saw me she went through a ritual, either in the corridor or at the beginning of a session, where she would bump hips with me. I believe this was like an act of endearment, and something sacred only shared between us.

Emma told me about a word she used in class, 'Gologaloo', which did not mean anything. As we explored the word, we discovered that she used it when she felt embarrassed, and did not know what to do. I praised her for finding a way to communicate, but shared my dismay that this was not understood correctly in class. She said her teachers got cross with her when she said it. We discovered that what she was really trying to say was, 'Help, I need some attention', but did not feel confident enough to ask for what she needed. I wondered if she was also trying to tell me that she felt uncomfortable, and needed something extra from me. I believed that when she used her word this time, it was not met with frustration, but was explored to understand the hidden meaning. Whilst she said she was not feeling needy, I still believed she felt lost, and did not know how to use the time. She was unable to articulate this.

To support Emma in her need for structure in the session, I suggested we could make up a book all about her. Emma was happy to do this activity, and appeared relieved not to have to direct the session. We started the book with things she liked and disliked, looking through typical teen magazines for images to represent her likes and dislikes. As she was engrossed in the activity, I noticed that she became more relaxed and open in her conversation. She told me that she thought no one ever believed her, and she was never listened to. We discussed what it was like speaking to me, and she seemed amazed to find an adult who was interested in her.

Emma commented on some images where girls were wearing cropped tops, baring their midriffs, or very short skirts. She said she felt embarrassed, because it was wrong to wear this sort of clothing. Her mother would be very cross if she wore clothes like that. I sensed that there was a conflict between pleasing her mother, and wearing clothes that were socially acceptable by her peer group. I wondered where she stood, and commented on it, but she said, 'No', and that she would not wear clothes like that.

As we continued with the sessions, we worked on her book in order to build Emma's self-esteem. I became aware that there was an element of jealousy between her and her friend, with whom I was also working. I believe they were in competition for my attention, and Emma needed to know that I liked her. I wondered if she had experienced adults in her life, who could not divide their attention. Perhaps the attention she received was in short supply, and inconsistent. As she told her stories, I noticed that they became more embellished, and I believed that she felt she had to have a difficult scenario to win my affection more than her friends. I wonder if this was also something she experienced in everyday life.

After the school holiday break, she no longer wanted to work on her book, but to play cards. I was aware that when we played 'Snap' she would cheat, and look at her card before placing it on the table. I reflected this to her, and she denied it. Over a couple of weeks, she continued to play cards and continued to cheat, but I noticed she was beginning to acknowledge what she was doing. Eventually we reached a point when she was able to voice this. She was then able to be open, and to look at her cards face up before placing them on the table. Emma felt she needed to do this, because if she did not she would never win. She said she could not recall the numbers quickly enough. I explained that I understood, and had noticed that it took a while before she could trust me to tell me about her difficulty. Emma said she thought I might have been cross with her, so I asked her if other people got cross with her. She said 'Yes'. We talked about her difficulties, and how hard it was for her to have to pretend that she could play in the same way as others. In fact, she just needed different rules to be able to play the game. She smiled, and we continued to play.

As the work continued I noticed that Emma was arriving early, wanting to see and hear what her friend was doing with me. She also found it difficult to leave, frequently saying, 'I want to break the clock and stay here'. The competitive theme continued until towards the end of the work, when she had fallen out with her friend and was no longer interested in what she was doing.

In the run up to the end of our work, Emma told me about someone whom she described as being a sister, was visiting from Turkey. Her sister was going to be married in this country, and would then be allowed to live here. Emma seemed very

excited about the wedding, but also very confused about who the girl was. I was unclear whether it was a family friend or a natural sister. In between Emma telling me about the wedding arrangements, I approached the subject of endings. She found this difficult, and dismissed my attempts to address it. Unfortunately we did not have an appropriate ending, because Emma was not at school for the last three weeks of term

10.8 Analysis of the sessions

I believe Emma felt a little lost, initially, in the work. She found the absence of structure overwhelming, and was not used to self-direction. When she noticed the pens, I wondered if she was trying to make a connection with me. I also wondered if she was telling me that she had lost something, perhaps herself, and did not know how to get it back. The story about the loss of her pens also seemed to be about being invisible, and not being believed. I wondered if this is how she experienced her life.

Quite early on in the work, Emma gave me the word that she used when feeling uncomfortable. On one level I believe she was trying to tell me that she felt uncomfortable, and wanted me to tell her how to use the time, but I also wondered if she was testing me out. Was I genuine, or would she also irritate me? I tried to offer her an activity that would cover several areas.

- a) Offer some structure in the session so she felt secure.
- b) An activity to build self-esteem.
- c) To explore areas of her self.

When we were doing the activity, I learned that Emma was confused and had inner conflict. From outside influences, she understood how a young girl of her age should look and dress and this differed from her mother's views. Her mother seemed very dominant, and there was no room for discussion on the matter. I wondered if her mother was trying to keep her young, because she did not want her to grow up. This could have been because of her vulnerability, as well as having to face further dilemmas associated with puberty and maturity.

When we were playing 'Snap', it became clear that Emma found it difficult to accept her limitations. I wondered if her family were having difficulty accepting her learning difficulties, which made it hard for her to accept herself. In this denial of her true self she was left floundering, and unable to live life to her full potential. I think this presented itself in the card game; she needed to cheat because the rules were too hard

for her to access or to succeed in the game. Emma was unable to articulate her difficulties, and appeared unaware that she could ask for help or request different rules to enable her to play. I also wondered if there was an element of safety in winning and I believe she needed to feel safe.

Emma became very competitive for my attention. It was difficult for her to deal with the knowledge that I was also working with one of her friends. She was not able to voice this. I believe that Emma presented more elaborate stories because she felt she was not interesting enough to sustain my attention. The ending was difficult. I believe Emma had reached a point where she was beginning to feel safe, and was becoming more at ease with who she was. She could not entertain the thought of finishing counselling, nor was she able to ask for more. She filled her time with something exciting and big, and then could not attend her last few sessions.

10.9 Post counselling interviews with his form tutor and TA

Emma's tutor and TA noticed improvements in some areas of Emma's persona after she had received counselling. Her tutor said, 'I think her self-esteem is improving. She does have a low self-esteem. Her Mum's commented that it has improved. She's now able to go to the shop on her own and buy some milk, whereas before she'd be behind her Mum hiding'. Her TA added, 'I think she seems fine. Her self-esteem is fine'. Her tutor said that her behaviour had not improved. 'It hasn't improved at all this year, I don't think. She's still very silly in class. She screams a lot, she's always laughing. She can't control her behaviour very well. She's never naughty. It is naughty in a way, because she distracts people a lot as she's quite loud, but she's never doing anything bad, not bad, bad sort of thing, it's just silly behaviour and it hasn't improved'. Her TA said, 'She fidgets all the time. Again, her behaviour can be really silly behaviour; I wouldn't say it's bad behaviour. You know like sometimes, she can get really, really silly with her behaviour. She's not even aware that she's doing it. She could just get up and go and hit one of the boys'. She added, 'She used to come up with this silly saying. She's not doing that any more'.

Her tutor noticed an improvement in her schoolwork, and said, 'Her schoolwork's fine. Her writing's got a lot quicker this year I think; she seems to finish things first

sometimes. She puts her hands up and answers questions quite a bit, which is really good. Her writing is improving, she's not doodling on her paper as much as she used to'. Her TA agreed, and said, 'She wants to read more and her schoolwork's good'. Her tutor felt there was an improvement in her ability to stay on task. 'Yes, generally she can'. Her TA commented, 'When she's not fidgeting. Um, I think she can, yeah'. They both believed that she had maintained her good physical appearance. Her tutor had become aware that Emma seemed nervous, and commented, 'She gets quite nervous, but she masks that with her silly behaviour. She must have been a very nervous and shy child, and she's come here, and she's come out of her shell a lot, so I do think she likes it, she's got friends'.

Her TA also commented, 'She has been much better. She is really trying to manage her behaviour. I know she gets silly sometimes, and she sort of regrets that, you know. I think she's really come a long way, taking responsibility for what she might have done, and how to deal with it'.

10.10 Post-counselling interviews with the student

The interviewer said Emma seemed happy to be interviewed again, and did not seem so shy and timid on this occasion. Emma seemed a little preoccupied with lost keys, and told a story about her mother losing the house keys. When she was able to get her focused, Emma said she believed counselling helped her voice her thoughts and feelings.

In the interview, Emma chose not to draw or play. She was a little upset with another student who, she felt, always got away with things. She also felt that a certain teacher did not like her, and she was treated unfairly. Emma said, 'I feel more confident now', but she also said she felt, 'Nobody has noticed'. She commented, 'My schoolwork is better now'. She would have liked a certificate to show she had changed, but had not received one.

10.11 Summary

Emma appeared particularly good at masking her insecurity. For some reason, her difficulties appeared to irritate her tutor in the first year of the project. The tutor did not like Emma, and I believe she knew this. She viewed Emma's behaviour as

negative, which I am sure it was, but the tutor was not willing to explore the reasons behind such behaviour.

In the second year, her tutor and TA noticed improvements in her self-esteem, schoolwork and her ability to concentrate and stay on task. However, they did not report any changes in her behaviour. Emma thought she had changed after receiving counselling. She said she felt more confident and happy, and there was an improvement in her work.

10.12 Conclusion

Emma presented as a very insecure young person, hiding behind a mask of silly and giggly behaviour. She needed constant reassurance to help her to learn to trust herself. The staff did not seem to understand her behaviour, and I believe this fuelled her inappropriate conduct. In the sessions she was very different. I am aware that this was partly because she was having one-to-one attention, but I also believed that she felt seen and heard. Emma had begun to make a journey towards self-acceptance. She started to trust herself, and towards the end of the work would offer her view more freely. As with many of the young people at this school, the level of need is so great that it takes time to build trust, and to reach the point where the work can begin. I believe the ending was too soon, and Emma found this too challenging. She was not able to articulate this.

11.0 Group two: An introduction to Fred

Fred was the third of four children and he lived with both parents. He was diagnosed with a general learning difficulty and was fourteen when we met for the project.

He was referred to the project because staff at the school believed he had low self-esteem, and his behaviour around school could be challenging. He was placed in the second group, which acted as a comparison group, and he received counselling in the second year of the project.

11.1 Comparison interviews with the form tutor and teaching assistant (TA)

His current form tutor and TA were interviewed. His tutor said, 'Fred's self esteem is very poor'. His TA said, 'He likes to think he is hard but he is not really'. His tutor was concerned about his behaviour 'His behaviour is very challenging and

aggressive'. His TA said, 'He is always storming out of class and he is over the fence and out of school'. Apparently when he escaped from school, he rarely returned of his own accord. Both tutor and TA said that he was constantly getting into fights. His tutor thought, 'Fred is easily led and is often picked on'. His TA agreed with this and added, 'He seems to be popular but I wonder if they are true friends. I don't think he is an easy person to get along with'. His tutor said, 'He does not take any responsibility for his actions'.

His tutor believed that his schoolwork could be good when he stayed in class and focused. His TA commented, 'He struggles, and he will never put up his hand and ask for help'. Both tutor and TA thought there were no issues regarding his physical appearance. His tutor said, 'He is always clean and well presented'.

11.2 Comparison interviews with the student

The interviewer reported that when she first went to collect Fred from his class he was furious with her and refused to leave the class. He was almost in tears with fury. She re-arranged the time of his interview so that it was at a time convenient to him. On the second attempt, the interviewer reported that he was still very angry, but attended his interview.

In his interview he drew a cartoon character that could fly. The interviewer reported that for about ten seconds he became softer, but he quickly reverted to his furious self. The interview was very short because he would not talk about his character, and repeatedly said, 'I don't want to be here anymore'. He said, 'My friends forced me to take part in the project'. The interviewer told him that she would let me know, and that I would discuss this with him. I did go and talk to him, and he appeared uncertain as to whether he wanted to withdraw from the project. I suggested that as he was not going to work with me until the following year, we could wait and see how he felt later in the year. He agreed to this.

11.3 Second interview with the form tutor and TA

When his form tutor and TA were re-interviewed the tutor said, 'I think Fred's self-esteem has improved this year. However, his TA said, 'His self-esteem has been rock bottom. Where we thought he was doing really well, it's hasn't, it's gone down'. His

tutor thought his behaviour had deteriorated. 'He is very aggressive, challenging me, being defiant, that's the kind of behaviour'. His TA agreed but said, 'Behaviour, I mean I wouldn't say his behaviour has got really, really appalling, but he's not doing half of what he used to do. I mean he used to storm out of the classroom. He'd be over the fence. You can actually control that now but he still gets very angry'. His TA also said 'He's only walked out I would say maybe three or four times. Twice he's gone over the fence but he's come back'.

His tutor believed there were no significant improvements in his schoolwork, although his TA believed there was an improvement in his reading. His TA also said, 'He still hates asking for help'. His tutor felt he could be very helpful and caring, but believed he was going through a bad phase and had little positive to say about him.

11.4 Second interview with the student

The interviewer reported that the others in the class ribbed Fred when she went to collect him. The other students were saying, 'Oh you are going with your girlfriend?' The interviewer said Fred was very angry and again repeated, 'I don't want to be in your stupid project'. Once he left the class, however, he seemed a different person. She reported that he changed; the softness that she had witnessed previously was visible for longer periods. The interviewer thought he had to project a false self to fit in and he struggled with this conflict.

In the interview he stayed for much longer. He drew a person, who he said was a friend in another year group. He appeared to respect this friend, and he showed great care in drawing his image. He said that this boy had lots of friends and was strong, strong at fighting. He also drew a blue sky and black clouds. He said, 'When the sky is blue I can go out and play, but when it's with black clouds it means it is going to rain and I'm not allowed out'.

11.5 Pre-counselling interviews with the form tutor and TA

Prior to receiving counselling, Fred's new form tutor and TA were interviewed. His tutor said, 'Fred probably thinks that he is a lot tougher than he is. He's got a bit of a walk and a bit of an attitude but he picks and chooses whom he uses attitude on. He

obviously finds the less able kids more to his liking to bully them and that's when to use physical force on those kids'. She continued, 'He gets himself into a situation where he has nowhere to go, in the sense that he'll start bullying, and this person will turn around and bully him back and then he'll find himself in unfamiliar water and that's when he'll break down and start crying or get upset'. His TA said, 'He's very immature. He likes to be popular in the class. If he's not, he shows off. And he'll even take himself out of class, because he's embarrassed himself, maybe, with his actions'. His tutor agreed with the staff last year and believed he did not take any responsibility for his actions. 'No, if he can get out of it, he will, he'll try to'.

His tutor also agreed with staff from last year, that his schoolwork could be good. She said, 'I think he tries hard and it's getting better'. His TA commented, 'He's not as good as what he gives everyone the impression that he is. He doesn't want people to realise he's not as good'.

Both tutor and TA agreed that there were no concerns with Fred's physical appearance. His tutor said, 'The main area of concern is his ability to manage his anger. He doesn't really understand the concept of talking to people. He will use his fists'.

11.6 Pre-counselling interviews with the student

The interviewer reported again that Fred was quite aggressive when he attended his interview saying, 'Dunno' and, 'Don't want to do anything', so she reported that they just chatted. In the light conversation, he started to melt and, looking around to play with something, he came upon Jenga. Whilst playing Jenga, he let his guard down and was gentle and kind. Then he changed. She said he wanted to hurt her, and pretended to throw balls at her. She thought he was a real Jekyll and Hyde character.

During the interview, whilst Fred was playing Jenga, he told the interviewer that he fights with his brother. He also said that some of the children in his class call him 'egghead' and that really 'pisses him off'. He said he was looking forward to working with me and was pleased he was seeing me this year as, 'If it was last year it would have been finished'.

11.7 Counselling process

When I collected Fred from his classroom he wanted some reassurance that he was not the only person from his class working with me. I told him he knew he was not, as he had met the other students in the project. He seemed comfortable with this, and came with me happily. When we reached the room, he wanted to play Jenga, and told me how good he was at this game. When the bricks fell down he said, 'It is a woman's job to clear up', sitting back and refusing to move. I commented on how silly I was that we had not stated the rules, and how confusing it was when we did not know what was expected of us. I agreed to pick up the bricks, as I had not discussed the rules with him, but stated that we had to agree the rules of the game before we played again. He said that he should not have to tidy because he was a man. I said I did not agree with that rule, but suggested that whomever the bricks fell on should tidy up. He said that sounded fair, so, having agreed the rules, we continued to play. Fred went to great lengths to make the bricks fall on me. I was not sure if this was so that I had to pick them up, or if it was because he did not feel safe if he was not winning.

At the end of the session he asked if he could make his own way to me in future, and said, 'I will see you next week'.

The themes of cheating and aggression towards women continued, and he was very dominant and mocking of me in the sessions. The following week he wanted to play pinball football. He said that I would not be able to play this game because I was a woman, and it was a man's sport. As we played, he cheated continuously, and made it impossible for me to play. When I reflected on the scenario, he became bored and wanted to play Tiddlywinks. I noticed that he was very skilled at this game, but continued to cheat. I reflected this to him. He told me he played the game with his father, who cheats. He said his father puts the disks up his sleeve and drops them in the pot when he is not looking. This offered me another insight into how he experiences things at home, and enabled me to see why he always needed to be alert and on guard.

In one session we were playing a ball game and he introduced different rules. Each time you failed to catch the ball, the other person could instruct you to do something.

Whilst he accepted that I also could introduce something, I was aware that his rules became very aggressive and created a scenario in which it was impossible for me to be able to catch the ball. I told him how hard I was finding the game, and that it was becoming impossible for me to play. He continued to mock me and tell me I was useless because I was a woman. This game continued for what felt like many weeks.

In week nine he moved the game to Hide and Seek. Again he was introducing rules, but I noticed that the rules were becoming more equal. I also noticed that he was becoming less aggressive. However, the following week he was very aggressive, and almost pushed me in the session. I said I noticed that he seemed different and wondered what was wrong. He said his older sister had been hitting him, and he had had enough. He hit the wall, because it was unacceptable to hit women, and his hand was hurting him. We discussed how difficult this was for him, but he found my empathy difficult to sit with and quickly wanted to move into another game.

In week thirteen he wanted to play a guessing game, which require me to close my eyes. I told him that I felt nervous closing my eyes, and did not feel able to trust him. He spent a long time mocking me, and taunted me with things he could do, like dropping a spider on me, running out of the room or taking something. I again tried to be congruent and voiced how hard it was for me to say how I was feeling when he teased me in response. Again this was met with a level of mocking, but I believed he was really shocked and amazed with my honesty.

In week fifteen he moved to more creative play. He wanted to use papier-mâché to make a model of his cap, and used the remainder of the time in creating this model. As we were making the cap, the theme of aggression towards me continued, and he was spouting out orders to me, particularly about cleaning up. When we first started making his model he would only do this when wearing disposable gloves. I noticed that I was instructed to do the more messy jobs. This was always met with mocking that it was women's work to get dirty. However I noticed that he watched me intently and I sensed he desperately wanted to join in.

Over the weeks when we were making the cap, he became more able to join in, and one week I was aware he did not request any gloves. He reached a stage where he was

able to mix the paint, albeit with instructions that I had to do something so that I could not watch him. I commented that he seemed more at ease, but I had noticed that he still did not like being observed, and needed me to be busy. He laughed and said I was stupid. Initially he designed his cap with a pattern similar to his real cap, but towards the end of the work he changed this to something different.

Whilst he was making his cap, he also told me more about his life at home. He said that his brother was always hitting him and laughed at him. He said that he hated his brother and was pleased he was moving out soon. I was aware that it was a huge step for Fred to share something of himself, and I was also aware that he would not allow me to connect him to his feelings.

On our last session he told me that his brother had moved out and he now had his own bedroom. He said he felt happier and was very proud of his cap.

11.8 Analysis of the sessions

In the beginning a theme that ran through the work was aggression, particularly towards women. I was not sure if this was an attitude he had gained from home and whether such an attitude made it difficult for him to accept his feminine side. On occasions he allowed me, and the school, to see this aspect of himself. But I think gentleness and caring were not qualities valued at home, so he was cross with this aspect of his personality and could not accept himself. Therefore, he had to project this aggression on to me. I also wondered if there was an element of anger with his sister. She was allowed to taunt and beat him, and he was not allowed to respond because 'Boys do not hit girls'.

I believe Fred was mocked and had a difficult time at home. I was also aware that he was mocked and manipulated at school. I believe, he projected this mockery on to me. As I was able to hold and contain his experience of being ridiculed, he became stronger and was able to demonstrate this by allowing more equality in the rules. I believe that as Fred moved to greater acceptance of himself, he was able to move to another level of therapeutic work. He created something. Initially Fred was not able to get dirty, he was not able to let me see his vulnerability, so continued to order me around. As he became more comfortable with his mess, I noticed that he was able to

play, but could not tolerate me watching him. As he played, he was able to speak about his difficulties at home, but was not able to drop all his bravado and verbalise his feelings in the session. However, he was able to let me know when things had settled at home, and he was more at peace with himself. I believe this was represented by the change of design in the cap.

11.9 Post-counselling interviews with his form tutor and TA

After Fred had received counselling, his form tutor and TA were re-interviewed. His tutor said, 'I think it's improving. I think the violence that he portrays to show his masculinity towards other people is starting to decrease a little bit. He doesn't need to pretend to be such a strong person to gain the respect of the other kids, so I think that's part of his maturity and his growing up'. His TA also noticed an improvement in his behaviour. 'It's a lot better than when I first started working with him. He was actually storming out of the class all the time and having little sort of strops. He's not doing it as much now, and he is coming back on his own accord and that's brilliant. You can see maturity in there'. His tutor agreed; she said, 'He still has lapses and he still sometimes creates that image that, you know, he's a big tough boy and is going to punch somebody and stuff like this, but physically he's been pretty good. Like I say, he fell off the bandwagon a couple of times, you know, it's boys will be boys, play fights turn into something more serious'.

His tutor reported seeing an improvement in Fred's ability to stay on task, which had a knock on effect on his schoolwork. 'Pretty good, I think. I think he's been working quite hard to ensure good results. His reports were pretty good'. His TA believed that his circle of friends still had a negative affect on his ability to concentrate, and said, 'He's distracted because of his little group of friends'.

His tutor believed that he was more able to communicate. She said, 'It's definitely a lot better than what it used to be, where he wouldn't approach you at all and would just completely block anything you tried to talk to him about'. His TA now believed he was taking responsibility for his actions.

His tutor said, 'I think he's come out of his shell a little bit more, but in an initial situation if we were to walk into a room with a room full of people, I think he would be very shy'.

His tutor and TA still thought his physical appearance was good. However, his TA noticed, 'He has taken a bit more pride in himself'. Both tutor and TA felt he was an easy person to get along with. His tutor said 'I think he's had a steady year. I think he's going to be fine next year if he continues to work on his anger management'. His TA said, 'His behaviour has changed for the better', and she noticed, 'He is very caring with animals, he loves animals'.

11.10 Post-counselling interviews with the student

The interviewer reported that he was 'delightful'. She did not have a struggle with him, and he joined her happily, though he answered questions monosyllabically. He stayed in the room for over an hour, and was relaxed and engrossed in his play. She felt that he trusted the room, and was more able to be himself, no longer having to keep up the 'cool' image. He used the sand tray, and was able to ask for water when he became annoyed that the sand was too dry for sandcastles. He spent some time talking about getting the balance right. After making several castles, he asked the interviewer to close her eyes so that he could surprise her, which she did. He made her a fish, and he seemed pleased that she was impressed with her gift.

While he was playing with the sand, he said he had noticed that he had changed. 'I know I've grown up a lot because I used to be always being stupid in school and that, but I'm not so much now. I used to muck around, but now it's like, yeah, I concentrate'.

He was asked to expand on this, and said, 'Yeah, like I used to have a right temper on me, but I still got a little bit of a temper, but it's took it away quite a bit actually. Just talking about it so it takes it away, but, yeah, um, because before I wouldn't even stop and talk, but um, I'd go mad. Yeah, sometimes they wind me up; I just walk away or they come back, and if they annoyed me to some extent I would probably have whacked 'em, but it's not worth it any more'.

When the interviewer asked him if he liked working with me, and whether there was anything I could have done better, he said, 'No, she's really like nice, and she likes to listen to people and that, so, yeah. Everyone would like her if she went to different

schools'. The interviewer asked him if he would recommend counselling, and he said, 'Yeah, don't miss out on that'.

11.11 Summary

In the first year, Fred's form tutor and TA had different opinions about him, but agreed that there were no real changes in his presenting issue of inappropriate behaviour. Fred also struggled with being interviewed, and with participating in the project. In the second year, after receiving counselling, it was reported that Fred seemed more mature. He was less aggressive, and more able to be himself, and he had dropped, to some extent, the false image of bravado. His behaviour around school had improved, and he was now able to stay in class more often. When he did walk out, he came back of his own accord, and was able to take responsibility for his actions. This had an affect on his schoolwork. His form tutor and TA felt that he had now become more verbally communicative rather than physical. He had also allowed others to see his more gentle and caring side.

11.12 Conclusion

At the beginning, Fred found it difficult to take part in the project. He was struggling to find a balance between values at home, expectations at school, and his true self. However, in the final interview when he was talking about the balance of water and sand, it seemed that he was saying he had found a balance in himself. I believe that he had learned when to portray his 'cool' image, and when he could be himself.

I believe that, Fred, to some extent, was able move to a place where he could accept himself. He had created a new image, which was represented in the cap, of which he was proud. He also demonstrated his new way of being in the final interview, where he was able to stay for a longer period of time, and to communicate more efficiently, verbally. He stated very clearly that he felt counselling had helped him, and he would recommend others not to turn down an opportunity for this style of help.

12.0 Group two: An introduction to Hannah

Hannah was twelve when we met for the project, the oldest of six children living at home with both parents. She was from Somalia and English was her second language. She was diagnosed with a moderate learning difficulty and a right side hemiplegia.

Hannah was referred to the project because she had low self-esteem. She was placed in the second group, which acted as the comparison group, and she received counselling in the second year of the project.

12.1 Comparison interviews with the form tutor and teaching assistant (TA)

Hannah transferred to the secondary department at the commencement of the project, therefore, her form tutor and TA were interviewed. Her tutor said, 'Her self esteem is a bit low'. Her TA agreed and thought that, 'It was linked to her physical disability'. Her behaviour was described as 'Excellent' by both tutor and TA. Her tutor thought her schoolwork was 'Good' although her TA thought she, 'Day dreamed and tended to copy a lot'. Her tutor said there were no concerns regarding her physical appearance, 'She's usually well presented, a pretty little thing, I think. She's usually very tidy, very'. Her TA said, 'Hair's always very good. But I think, clothing wise, it always seems a little bit not as clean as maybe she could be'. Her tutor and TA described her as a happy child and she appeared to be quite popular. The main concern from the staff perspective seemed to be with her physical difficulties, and her acceptance of this.

12.2 Comparison interviews with the student

The interviewer reported that Hannah seemed happy to attend her interview. She chose to draw a picture of 'Britney Spears' and took a lot of care, using many colours. She said she would not stay to discuss her image.

In her interview Hannah commented that she liked drawing and she sketched at home. She liked to design clothes. She preferred using pencil because she could rub it out if she made a mistake. She told the interviewer that her drawing was a picture of a girl with eye makeup on, and it transformed into a singer, Britney Spears. She did not have any of her records or pictures of her. Hannah said she did not like drawing pictures of herself and diverted the conversation. She ended the interview abruptly so she could join her peers at playtime.

12.3 Second interview with the form tutor and TA

When her form tutor and TA were re-interviewed, they thought little had changed. Her tutor said, 'I think her self-esteem is a little bit controlled by her physical

disabilities sometimes but she has a go, she tries things and she tries to not let her disability get in the way. She'll do things. She's a little bit fragile with confidence'. However, her TA thought, 'She is more willing to do her exercises now'. Her tutor thought there was no change to her behaviour although her TA said, 'She's not unruly or anything like that. She'll be quite quiet but she will have her moments'. There was another difference of opinion regarding her schoolwork. Her tutor said, 'She can stay on task the whole lesson and she can get it finished. She's concentrating. She's very rarely distracted into something else or if there's a piece of work set she'll be sitting there doing it and she'll get on with it'. And her TA said, 'You might think she's getting on with the work but really she's not and she's quite often not listening, and she's sitting there quite quietly. That's what I've noticed. I think because she's so quiet we get the false impression that she is taking it all in. She does get rather upset if she's not doing what she wants to be doing. So if you've kind of left her on her own for a little bit, and maybe an opportunity left for her there, then she will come round to doing it but she needs to be left for a little while to think about it'. Her tutor thought, 'I wouldn't say she's overly happy but no I wouldn't say she's sad. She does let things get her down. Sometimes she becomes emotional. Both tutor and TA agreed that she was a bit shy and her tutor said 'She does sometimes demonstrate that she's afraid of things, but usually with a bit of talking around she can do it. I mean sometimes with her OT (occupational therapy) she hasn't wanted to do it. "Oh I don't want to do that. Oh no, no, no. I don't want to do that." But it's a bit difficult to understand or see if she's afraid or just being a bit, I don't want to do it'.

Whilst her TA thought her attitude towards her physiotherapy had improved, they both felt that her physical disability was still affecting her self-confidence.

12.4 Second interview with the student

The interviewer reported that Hannah said she could not remember her, or being interviewed before. She said she took a while to warm to her. The interviewer thought she was a private person and liked to 'suss' people out. Hannah was reluctant to draw but covered the paper in pastel colours. On several occasions she said, 'I don't like the mess', but she continued to use the pastels as a medium as opposed to the pencils, which she used last time. She said the colours reminded her of her friends, and of

feeling dreamy. Her friends seemed very important to her. Again Hannah ended the interview abruptly

12.5 Pre-counselling interviews with the form tutor and TA

When Hannah moved into year eight she was to receive counselling. Before she began counselling, I interviewed her current form tutor and TA. Her tutor agreed with last year's staff. 'I think she has a low self-esteem and it's got to do with her physical abilities'. Her TA also agreed, 'She's quite low in her self-esteem'. They both agreed that her behaviour was good. Her tutor said, 'She's got very good behaviour. She's probably one of the best-behaved students in the class'. This was supported by her TA. Her tutor said of her schoolwork, 'She finds it quite hard to write, obviously, because of her hand. She's not too bad, but just takes quite a long time to do it. She's probably of average ability in that class'. Her TA disagreed with last years TA, saying, 'She's very much in the classroom, focused, looking at the teacher'. Both tutor and TA thought she appeared to be a happy person. They agreed with last year's assessment in terms of her shyness. Her tutor said, 'She probably is quite shy, yeah. She's soft spoken so doesn't say that much, and I guess self-conscious with her appearance with her hands and everything, 'cos her hand's, yeh, a little bit nervous because when you ask her a question, if she doesn't know the answer she does look a bit nervous sometimes as if she knows she doesn't know and doesn't want to say she doesn't know or is scared that she's going to get in trouble, which she wouldn't, but you know how kids are sometimes'. Her TA disagreed with some of this, commenting, 'She's not shown any signs of nervousness'. Her tutor felt her physical appearance was good, although her TA questioned her personal hygiene.

12.6 Pre-counselling interviews with the student

The interviewer reported that Hannah was happy to come to her interview on this occasion, though she seemed to be unnerved by not having the direction of the art exercise, and having the freedom to choose. Hannah was not able to articulate this but spent some time trying to frighten the interviewer. This started when she asked the interviewer what she was frightened of. The interviewer, because of a past experience, was not congruent but answered her. Hannah went and found a toy animal and tried to frighten the interviewer. As this did not work, Hannah tried another ploy. After

playing a game of pinball football she asked, 'What would happen if I put this in my mouth?' The interviewer said the obvious, and then Hannah proceeded to pretend to place the ball in her mouth. I sensed that Hannah was trying to provoke fear, or project her fear onto the interviewer, but unfortunately this was not addressed, perhaps because this was not the appropriate place and time.

Hannah continued by using the play dough and was firing lots of questions at the interviewer. It seemed that Hannah had to be in control.

12.7 Counselling process

Hannah seemed appropriately cautious when I met her from class. She told me that other students said it was 'cool' to work with me, but I sensed she was still suspicious of this view. She did not explore the room physically, but looked around. She commented that there were a lot of different toys and asked if I had brought them. She told me about her large family, and not liking having so many younger brothers and sisters. She asked me if I would collect her from class, as she did not want to make her own way to me.

As the sessions continued I noticed that Hannah was very guarded. She was a natural at observing and quick to pick up on my emotional needs. I felt I needed to be aware of this, and that Hannah would be able to tell if I was being congruent. Early on this was tested out and it allowed us to move forward. She was asking about certain pop groups of which I had no knowledge. She mocked me and asked if I did not watch television. I was aware that her tutor had told me that her parents had only recently purchased a television, so for a long time she might have felt excluded from conversations with her peers because she had not watched certain popular programs. I used this to talk about what it felt like for me not knowing what she was talking about and feeling left out. Hannah was not able to own her part but she listened intently. Another situation occurred where she was struggling to remove the top of a pen. I did not intrude, and waited for her to ask for my assistance. When she did, I also, genuinely, struggled to get the top off. This again allowed me to voice a feeling, which I suspected would have been hers. Hannah could not acknowledge her own feelings but she explored how I was feeling. I believe she felt surprised at my openness and comforted that I understood how she might be feeling.

On session five, Hannah came into the session wearing her headdress. I commented on how different she looked and wondered why she was wearing her headwear. For the first time I felt she was less guarded and answered me honestly. She said, 'My hair is messy'.

I was aware that Hannah said most things in the positive. I believed she could not speak about anything negative. I wondered if this was because her life in Somalia was so awful that she felt she should be grateful that things were so much better for her now. I was also aware that, culturally, she was expected to take on the role of the caregiver, and keep the home. She would not be able to question this, and so had to get on with things. I felt that she did not feel she had a right to express herself, or that her views held any weight. I sensed that her life felt bleak, but she had to put on a happy face.

In session nine Hannah appeared different, and she became more assertive. She wanted to use the pastels but was concerned about getting dirty. I tried to explore what this was about but she would not go with me. I suggested she could use a sheet of cloth, which I had in the room, to protect her clothing. She was very happy with this and spent several weeks using the pastels. She would not talk about her drawing but I noticed that she almost got lost in her artwork. I also noticed that she became more adventurous and explored different ways of using the pastels and blending colours.

After many weeks of playing with art, Hannah initiated another form of play in her game. She wanted to play Hide and Seek. We played this over the remainder of our time. Hannah became very mischievous and would try to trick me about where she was hiding the object. I sensed that she had never been allowed to play like this before and appeared to relax and allowed herself to be real.

I was also aware that this was beginning to be transferred outside the room. On one occasion, as I was walking through the corridor, she placed something on my head and laughed. It did not have a nasty feel to it, and she felt safe enough to be 'naughty' with me. I also observed that that she was beginning to 'fool' around with her friends and had become more 'light-hearted'.

Hannah found the build up to the end of our work very difficult. I noticed that she started to withdraw from me and would constantly ask to use the toilet. I felt as if she needed to abandon me before I abandoned her.

12.8 Analysis of the sessions

Hannah appeared to be very self-contained. She was extremely good at responding to, and meeting, other people's needs but appeared not to be aware that she had a right to have and express her own feelings. I was aware this was partly cultural, and contrary to my western cultural belief in equality for women.

I believe that in the work she explored her own feelings through me. She was not able to voice what she was experiencing, but explored my voice. I was very careful to use the countertransference, expressing only what I felt was hers. At each step I watched her response carefully, and asked her what she might feel if she was in this situation. Each time she could not answer, but encouraged me to continue, so I believed I was on the right track. I believe she felt held and contained through this experience. As I showed her that her feelings were manageable, she was able to internalise aspects of the experience.

When she was able to internalise enough and felt stronger, she was able to move forward and discover play. Again, Hannah was voiceless, but moved to a position where she was able to make a lot of mess and revel in it. She moved reasonably quickly from this position to another way of communicating, and was then able to play with me. Hannah became mischievous and light-hearted, and enjoyed the playful interactions. As her confidence grew she was able to take this outside the room, and was able to continue her play with me in the corridor.

The ending was very difficult. Hannah could not voice her distress at ending, but enabled me to understand this by her constant visits to the toilet.

12.9 Post-counselling interviews with his form tutor and TA

After receiving counselling Hannah's form tutor and TA were re-interviewed. They both felt that she still had low self-esteem. However her tutor noticed that she seemed

to be communicating more about her home life. 'She is having a lot of fights with her brother at the moment. There she's coming out of her shell, she's talking back to him more, they're fighting more and she's obviously getting scratched a bit but she's asserting herself more where she'd normally just sit back and not say anything'. She added, 'She doesn't seem to get a lot of freedom at home. She tends to be left with the kids a lot, which, I feel, isn't going to help with her self esteem. She often says 'My parents did this and I stayed to look after my brothers' or 'I couldn't go out until I'd done this and that'. It seems like she's given a lot of responsibilities at home, which is good in a way, but she needs to be going out to play. The other day she said she wanted to go out and play but she had to do something first so when she got out everyone had gone so she couldn't play. So there's not a lot for her to do where she lives, so she gets a bit bored. I am a little concerned that the balance isn't quite right, a little bit too much responsibility and not enough play'. Her tutor also said, 'Lately she's been a bit more noisy. You actually have to tell her off sometimes. It's a positive, yes, definitely a positive thing'. Her TA noticed, 'She's talked about things that have happened to her at home where she has to work really, really hard and look after little siblings and she doesn't like that'. Her tutor noticed that her approach to her schoolwork was different. 'She does find school work difficult, so in the past she copied to get past that, but now she's doing it by herself she does get a lot wrong'. She added, 'She's a little bit slow at writing but she participates in everything. Her confidence is building up'. However her TA did not completely agree, saying, 'Where she finds things difficult, she doesn't often put her hand up. She can't actually ask for what she needs'. Her tutor noticed she had become more confident in class participation. 'She participates in all the class productions with no problems, so she always gives it a go'. Her TA agreed that she was becoming more confident, but she said recently, 'She's been fine, she's been fine about her arm but somebody had said something about her arm being bent. She took it really personally, she sobbed her eyes out'. This was the first time that her tutor or TA had commented that Hannah allowed her hurt to be visible.

12.10 Post-counselling interviews with the student

The interviewer reported that Hannah seemed far more relaxed. She was less wary and more willingly to play and have fun. The interviewer reported that she was still tricking her and playing jokes but it had a different feel, not of fear and intimidation,

but of playfulness and fun. This was the first time the interviewer had experienced her like this.

I noticed that in the interview she continued with a game she had played in the counselling sessions, Hide and Seek. As Hannah was playing, she was able to tell the interviewer that she felt she had changed. She said that her parents and her teachers had not noticed any change, but her friends had. Hannah said, 'My friends think I'm more interesting'. Hannah also felt she had become more confident and would have a go at things. She said, 'I feel happier'.

12.11 Summary

In the first year Hannah's tutor and TA were not able to see any improvements. She was described as a happy child and her behaviour was excellent. In the second year, her tutor and TA echoed this description. But after counselling she started behaving differently and her tutor was able to acknowledge this, and see it as a positive thing. Her tutor and TA noticed, as I did, that she became a little mischievous and lighter hearted. Her tutor also commented that she was now more communicative. Hannah was able to tell staff how she experienced things at home. This seemed to show that she was becoming more open and more at ease with her own feelings.

12.12 Conclusion

Hannah was a bright young girl who appeared to have had to grow up before her years. I believed she had missed out on playing and felt heavy and burdened by her responsibilities. She seemed to experience her feelings as unmanageable, and could not allow herself to get in touch with them. However she was finely tuned to others' emotional needs. In the work she found a way to express her feelings through projection. She was able to internalise some strength and reached a point where she was able to express some of her life experiences to staff at the school. She found a way to play and explored making a 'mess'. This led her to be more light-hearted and more able to interact directly with me. I believe that she was aware that she had become mischievous, as she said her friends found her more interesting.

We never addressed the issue of her physical deformity. I was not sure if this was other people's issue or whether I perhaps I colluded with her and avoided the obvious.

Appendix

Two

**Supporting Case Studies From
Group One And Two
That Fell In The Category Of**

No Improvements

1.0 Introduction

In this appendix I will report the remaining case studies, to support the data from the main report, from both groups of students, which fell into the category of making no improvements. Each case study includes reports from the counsellor, students, teacher and teaching assistant's perspective.

I will start with group one, which includes Billy and Kemi, Kemi has been reported separately, as a published article see appendix? Group two consists of: David, Eminem, Gareth and Spiderman.

2.0 Group one: An introduction to Billy

Billy, the eldest of four children, was eleven when we met for the project. A fifth child was born near the end of our work. He lived with his mother, and he had constant contact with his father, who seemed at times, to be living back at the family home. Billy was diagnosed with learning difficulties and severe anxiety, and Billy was referred to the project because of his behaviour around school, and his poor school attendance.

2.1 Pre-interviews with his form tutor and teaching assistant (TA)

I interviewed Billy's form tutor and TA, who both felt he had low self-esteem, and presented as a boy with 'street cred'. They felt he was very rude, commenting, 'He has said that his Mum says to him, if he doesn't want to do it, he doesn't have to, and he applies that concept to the rest of his life'. They reported that his schoolwork was poor, and felt he was aware that he couldn't read and had already given up. They stated, 'He walks out of class frequently and spends most of his time in the corridor'. They described him as clean and smart, but he never wore school uniform.

2.2 Pre-interview with the student

Billy was interviewed, but refused to talk with the tape recorder on, so the interviewer made comprehensive notes. The interviewer reported that he wanted to play jokes all the time and seemed anxious. He drew a small person with pink sticky-out hair like a wig, or a pop star. The face was pink and the eyes yellow, and the nose was omitted. The mouth was yellow and oval shaped. The body was a yellow box, and the yellow legs were coloured in green. Billy described the yellow as like the 'sun,' and the green

as 'wet'. He drew grey lines over the drawing, representing rain. He wanted to draw another picture, but the interview was coming to an end. He rubbed out the picture and drew a box around it, saying he was 'dead'. He drew a firework beside it with purple, blue, red and yellow around the edges, and filled the centre with black. He then obliterated most of the colours so they became dull. The interviewer felt that this represented a feeling that his spontaneity had to be wiped out, or masked. He continued to put splodges of sparkle (glitter glue) on the paper, saying that he felt happier, because as long as there was sparkle, the real Billy couldn't be hidden. He wrote his real name on the paper and then rubbed it out, saying that only we, and his Mum, would know it was him.

2.3 The process in the sessions

In the first session Billy, was very angry with me. He did not want to leave his lesson because it was his favourite. He eventually agreed to leave, and we discussed the difficulty of missing his favourite lesson. I agreed to move his session to his requested time, and he was happy with this arrangement. He requested that I did not collect him from class, and said he would make his own way to me. I agreed, with the proviso that if he did not turn up within five minutes of the start of his session, I would go and find him. He did manage to get himself to his sessions and seemed elated to be missing his 'worst' lesson. As in his interviews, he was not happy about the tape recorder being on; in some sessions he challenged this, and in others he accepted the session being recorded.

Billy's school attendance was erratic, which contributed to the difficulties in establishing a good therapeutic relationship and developing the work. On week nine, he was very upset with something that had happened in school, and was wandering in the corridors. He refused to come into his session. I spent some time in the corridor with him, and eventually said that I would wait in the room, and he could choose if he wanted to see me. If he did not come to the session I would see him next week. Billy did not attend the session, and was absent from school for another few weeks.

On week eleven he seemed very different. He did not seem to be testing me, and openly talked about a letter another student had written about sex, and how his form tutor had 'gone mad'. He appeared worried about his teacher's response, and was

angry with the student for writing about sex. I wondered if he was sounding me out about my response to sex, and whether I was safe enough for him to talk about it.

The following session he kept hitting himself, and saying, with the tape recorder on, 'Miss, stop it,' 'Stop, you're hurting me'. When I reflected back to him what he was doing, he laughed and said 'Only joking, Miss wasn't hitting me'. He started asking about my family, whether I had children etc. I asked him why he wanted to know, and tried to explore the 'what if' scenario. He was not happy about this. When I asked him questions, he diverted the conversation.

Billy often challenged me in the corridor, telling me he was coming to see me and he did not care if it was not his turn. He would often walk into another student's session, arguing that it was his time, and asking why another student was with me.

As the sessions continued there was a definite sexual theme. He would often ask about my sexual experience, and tell me about different sexual aids. He started to walk into my personal space, trying to touch my face in a sexually provocative way. When I brought this to his attention he would say he was only joking, and dismiss the conversation.

On one occasion he noticed that there were balls on a flat roof, which could be accessed from the room where we worked. At the end of the session, and unbeknown to me, he asked the head teacher if he could go out and collect the balls. I checked this information, and supported his attempt to collect the balls. Billy found walking out onto the roof too challenging. This was the first time he allowed me to witness his true vulnerability and fear, and he was not able to go out and collect the balls.

Billy found the build up to the end of the work very difficult. He became more challenging and refused to discuss endings. I asked him how he would like to mark the end of the work, and he asked me to bring some food in for a party. However, he was not able to eat the food I provided, or take it with him. On our last session, Billy said, 'I will see you next week'.

2.4 Process analysis

In the first session we appeared to have established a good rapport. Billy experienced being heard, and I showed I trusted him, while agreeing a safety net if he could not

manage the responsibility of remembering his session. However, his attendance at the sessions was poor, because of his poor school attendance.

He was very hurt by something that happened in school early on in the work, and was not able to come to his session. I believe he could not face the pain of his hurt. In the sessions I noticed that he was very guarded and played tricks most of the time. I wondered if he was being bullied, or set up. There was something very cunning about his behaviour. I also noticed that he was very changeable, and I was never sure if he was being serious or joking. He continued with his tricks in the sessions by pretending I was hurting him, and I was aware on these occasions that he wanted the tape recorder on. It seemed he was either trying to tell me he was hurting or being hurt. Billy found it very difficult to be in the room; he would not sit for any period of time and always seemed restless.

He became very jealous of my time and did not want to share me. He became challenging to other students, and frequently challenged me in the corridor.

The focus then shifted, and the sessions developed a strong sexual theme, where Billy seemed to be exploring my reaction to sex and to what he had to say. As he began to feel safe with me, he allowed himself to drop his guard and allowed me to see his vulnerability through his fear of getting the balls, and his desire to be brave enough. I also wondered if he was trying to tell me he wanted to tell me something, but did not have the 'balls' to do it.

The ending felt very premature. Billy did not have time to feel safe enough to tell his story, though I often felt he got close before backing away. He was not able to eat the food I provided on the last session. Perhaps this was because he could not take what I had to offer, or perhaps he could not take what I had to offer knowing he would get no more. I was left feeling very concerned and believed he was a frightened and confused young man.

2.5 Post-counselling with his form tutor and TA

After counselling, Billy's form tutor and TA were re-interviewed. They were not able to report many changes, and both felt he still had low self-esteem. They felt he was still quite rude, and commented, 'He knows right and wrong but it seems to me that he

can't help, if something's going wrong he can't help it, he'll be involved in it'. His tutor believed, 'He's got more involved in scrapes this year, possibly because he's in secondary so he's more with the older boys'. His TA believed, however, 'He is able to mainly cool down a bit more, a bit more open to discussion. You know he will throw himself on the floor, and I had to give him a couple of minutes and I'll gradually move in. He's a little bit more open now'.

Both agreed that his schoolwork hadn't improved. 'Hasn't got the academic ability, knows it and uses other strategies to avoid doing anything about it. He's got slightly better at staying in lessons, 'cos last year he was forever in the corridor and I think we get him to more lessons now, or at least he's in the classroom a bit more than what he was last year'. They had witnessed his caring side, but felt there was often an ulterior motive to such acts of kindness. The main area of improvement was that his attendance had improved, and tutor and Ta commented, 'His behaviour is much better than what it used to be. Obviously he's not running out of the lessons like he used to'.

2.6 Post-counselling interview with the student

Once again, Billy would not allow the interview to be taped. The interviewer said he was fine on the journey to the room, but something happened when she turned on the tape recorder, and he refused to speak. He would only mouth words, so the interviewer suggested he was invisible, and perhaps that was why she couldn't hear him. He would not work with this, instead drawing a person who had been shot through the eye and was dead. He would make no comment on his drawing.

2.7 Follow up interviews with the form tutor and TA

His current form tutor and TA were interviewed to gain their view of Billy. They felt he had low self-esteem, and reported, 'He's very loud as kids come into the classroom, needs everyone to be looking at him, and will just make noises or just so people laugh at him, and I really don't think the other kids find him that funny'. His tutor described his schoolwork as, 'Poor. He can't sit still long enough to do it. When he does sit still and does his work it's not poor, it's quite good. He finds it hard to copy, right. He gets words mixed up and puts things in the wrong spot'. His TA was in agreement saying, 'He doesn't really care. He gives up easily. He doesn't have; his concentration span is very small that you can say something to him and five

minutes later he doesn't actually remember what you told him'. His tutor reported, 'He's very vocal in telling me that he hasn't done anything. A lot of the time he just ignores you or he'll yowl and then he'll huff after he's yowled. And if he's really angry he'll just leave the room and he'll come back a few minutes later. If you said anything to him, he'd leave again, he'd have another outburst, so it's quite distracting for the rest of the class'.

In the final interview his tutor and TA reported that Billy was engaged in a 'Start Right' programme outside school, and they had noticed a great improvement in his concentration. However, this was not sustained for long. His tutor said, 'He's got really good at his writing, but He still doesn't know what he's writing'. His attendance had initially deteriorated, and then improved. 'He had a really bad start to the year. He wasn't coming to school a lot, then he started coming after Christmas and he's hardly had a day off since'. His tutor felt he did not take any responsibility for his actions. 'If you ask him to do that, he just says, 'No' and wanders off and does what he pleases. He usually denies everything he does'. They both said, 'He gets nervous tics with his eyes. When you're around and you confront him about something, his eyes start up straightaway'. However, these were no longer reports of him getting into fights, and his TA said, 'I think everyone generally likes him. He's quite funny, he's a bit of a joker and he likes to be a clown sometimes. He's a bit bossy though, and I think people find that a bit hard to play with at times'.

2.8 Follow up interview with the student

In the third interview Billy again was chatty with the interviewer until they reached the room, at which point he refused to have the tape recorder on. The interviewer commented, 'He was very wary'. He said to her 'There are eyes in the microphone, watching me all the time'. The interviewer did not question him, and accepted his request to have the recorder turned off. He spent some time using the Play Dough, throwing it up in the air and lying to her about how he was making different shapes. Then he said he had seen posters in the swimming pool about breast cancer, and had also seen a programme on the TV about women who wanted to reduce the size of their breasts. He asked the interviewer what she would do. He went on to say that smoking was bad, and asked her some personal questions. Did she have a boyfriend, husband or children? What was her husband's name? Did he smoke? Would he force

her to smoke and shove a cigarette down her throat, and what would she do about it if he did? He added that he probably wouldn't do that if he were a nice man. The interviewer experienced a strong physical reaction to this, and tried to talk further about smoking but he refused to co-operate.

Billy got out a board game to play with the interviewer. He cheated throughout the game and somehow he seemed so wary and careful, that although she acknowledged some of the cheating, she felt it important not to pursue it. She believed he was a very needy lad, and decided that he needed to feel he had got the better of someone.

In the final interview Billy was angry with the interviewer and would only communicate with her in sign language. She did not know what he was saying. I wondered if he was trying to communicate that he felt that nobody could hear him, and he was afraid that after this last interview there would be nobody left to hear him. He eventually asked to play with the sand and the interviewer was able to sit down beside him. When she asked him what it was like working with Beverley he said, 'Wicked, and if I have the chance to work with Beverley again I'd really like to. I was able to play with anything and talk to Beverley about anything'. He noticed that he had been much better in class, and said, 'I haven't been so bored' and 'I used to walk out of lessons, but I don't do that now'. Teachers had noticed, too, as had his father. He seemed proud of the way his work had improved. When he was asked what had particularly helped him, he said, 'I don't need to talk about my family. My Mum's fine, but it was about school only'. Following this statement, Billy said he was leaving and proceeded to leave the room, returning a few seconds later. He asked the interviewer about her family, and told her that there were five in his family plus his parents. He said it was OK being the oldest and then changed the subject. When he left the room at the end of the interview he asked the interviewer when she was going to see me. He then said, 'Will you tell Beverley that I want to work with her?'

The interviewer expressed the view that she had seen a lad who was very confused and didn't know what he wanted. She said, 'He desperately needed to be contained and made to feel safe'. Her gut feeling was that he was quite terrified; things going on around him that made him feel very unsafe.

2.9 Summary

The teachers and TA felt that Billy had not changed a great deal, but they were able to identify changes in his behaviour. In particular, his ability to stay in class this was sustained into the second year. There was a definite improvement in his school attendance. Although it dipped a bit at the beginning of the second year, but he hardly had a day off after the Christmas break. His teachers and TA believed he had calmed down considerably, and was more open to discussion. They agreed that there was no improvement in his academic work, and whilst he was now in class he was still not able to concentrate.

2.10 Conclusion

It was difficult to work with Billy, initially, because of his poor school attendance. He was very guarded and cunning in his behaviour, and not really able to tell his story. I believe he became close, but then backed away. He was very mistrustful of adults, and he really needed a longer period of time, with regular attendance, to build a therapeutic relationship that was good enough for him to feel safe to tell his story. I was left feeling very concerned for Billy, though I was pleased to hear reports of improvements to some areas of his self-concept, that were maintained in the second year.

3.0 Group two: An introduction to David

David was the older of two children and lived at home with both parents, who were Italian, though David was born in England. He was diagnosed with a general learning difficulty, and was ten years old when we met for the project.

David was referred to the project because he appeared very nervous and anxious, and staff at the school were concerned that his anxieties affected his ability to concentrate in class and to learn. The school placed him in the second group, which acted as the comparison group, and he received counselling in the second year of the project.

3.1 Comparison interviews with the form tutor and teaching assistant (TA)

During the first set of interviews David was in the primary department of the school so his class teacher and TA were interviewed. His class teacher thought he had, 'Very low self-esteem', which he thought was because, 'He has a lot of pressure from home

to be normal'. He also thought that David's parents did not accept their son's learning difficulties, and pressurised him into achieving unrealistic attainments. His TA thought, 'His behaviour is good; he does not like to be naughty'. His teacher agreed with this, but commented, 'He has difficulty reading social signals'. It was believed this affected his development within his peer group. His teacher said, 'Other children get annoyed with him'. His TA agreed, adding, 'He doesn't understand what others want of him or how to engage with his peers'. They both observed that he always seemed to be on the periphery, and thus never got into any fights or disagreements.

His schoolwork was average, and his teacher thought, 'He tries hard but needs help to stay on task'. His TA added, 'He needs constant encouragement to participate in class activities'. His teacher said, 'His physical appearance is fine. He is always neat and tidy, but I have noticed a strong smell of urine around him'. His TA also commented about this.

They both believed that he seemed very anxious and unhappy, his teacher commenting, 'He is actually quite sad, and a confused boy no understanding of social skills. When he talks he gets very excited and his hands go ten to the dozen'.

3.2 Comparison interviews with the student

David was happy to attend his interview, and he appeared very eager to please. The interviewer felt that he could only present a happy and smiley self, and wondered what was happening to his darker side.

David drew a tower in green and brown. While he was drawing, he talked to the interviewer, and told her about his brother who had broken something. He wanted her to know it was not him. He continued to talk to the interviewer telling her that he liked playing board games at home, and he was good at them. He said there was a lady in the tower, and drew her in green. He was not able to comment on the colour he used. The lady was having a party, and other people were coming in to dance. They all appeared happy, and were having a good time. He drew a 'father' in black, and would not comment on the father or the colour he used. Then he drew some hearts in red and black. Again he was unwilling to comment on his drawings.

3.3 Second interview with the form tutor and TA

His teacher said there had been very little change in his self-esteem. 'His self-esteem is still quite low. He is a very nervous boy and does not understand social skills'. He added, 'The pressure of going to mainstream seems to have eased off'. His TA commented that, 'His self esteem has improved slightly since he joined sea cadets', and felt there was still a lot of pressure from home for David to attend a mainstream school. His teacher observed no change in his behaviour. 'He can be good but still cannot pick up on the appropriateness of his actions'. His TA said, 'He giggles constantly'. His teacher agreed with this observation, but felt the giggles were a mask for nervousness. They both agreed on David's level of anxiety, and his TA commented, 'When he gets nervous he wets himself, and does not seem to be aware of this, and will need to be told to go and change'.

His teacher said there were improvements in his schoolwork, 'He has become an independent writer, but still has difficulty processing information'. His TA said, 'There are no changes in his schoolwork. He still needs constant support to stay on task, or he daydreams'. Neither saw any changes in his popularity. His TA said, 'He is a loner. He wanders around the playground aimlessly'. His Teacher added, 'He laughs at others when they are being told off, and they think he is laughing at them, which really annoys them'. He had tried to explain this to David, but he did not understand what he was doing wrong.

3.4 Second interview with the student

The interviewer commented that David again presented as happy go lucky, but also eager to please. He seemed to avoid his darker side and she wondered why. He chose the colour green again, saying it was his favourite colour, but he was not able to expand on this.

In the interview David drew a bike, which was the same as his brother's, and it was important that he could go fast. He said he had lots of friends at home, but they were different to him. 'They are Turkish and I am Italian'. He said, 'I like to race my friends on my bike'. He drew some bouncy balls and some sweets he bought from the shop.

David told the interviewer that he had watched a scary DVD at home, and described the film of Zombies eating people. When she enquired what it was like watching a scary film, he said, 'It was OK. I am not a baby anymore'. However, the interviewer thought there was an unspoken sense that he was really scared, but had to force himself to watch these to meet the approval of someone else.

3.5 Pre counselling interviews with the form tutor and TA

In the second year of the project, David transferred to the secondary department. In this set of interviews his form tutor and TA were interviewed. His form tutor said, 'He's not full of self-esteem. He's quiet, but he sort of has a rather nonsensical giggle most of the time, and always has a broad grin on his face, but I think it's sort of like an armour that he wears'. His TA agreed saying, 'It's quite low. He's a very happy child, but he lacks in confidence'. Of his behaviour, his tutor said, 'Usually it can be quite good, but mainly because he's miles away. He finds it very difficult to focus, and very difficult to keep his attention on anything for any length of time'. This was supported by his TA. 'He's very well behaved, but every now and then he seems to go into this funny, silly behaviour; he goes into a giggling mode. He's quite a strange little boy, actually. He tends to go off in a little world of his own I think'.

His tutor described his schoolwork as, 'Quite low'. She said, 'Sometimes he is completely away with the fairies. Other times he may appear to be doing that, but he is actually listening. He has to be constantly reminded that, "You need to get back on to task." It's not a case of he gives up easily. He runs out of steam'. However, his TA believed his schoolwork to be, 'Very good, yeah. I think he's quite academic', but she agreed, 'He goes off every now and again. He needs to be brought back. I think he's very dreamy'. She added, 'Anyway he likes to carry on with it. He doesn't give up easily'. They both agreed with last year's staff, that he seemed to be on the periphery of things and did not really join in. They agreed that he seemed very shy and nervous. His tutor said, 'He doesn't talk to you spontaneously in class situation, where sort of asking him for something the big grin will come on his face and he'll be quiet'. His TA agreed, and added, 'He's always like jolly and smiling but there seems to be something going on that is bothering him. I think he might have a lot of pressure in his home. He doesn't want to take it home and he, actually, the art teacher said,

“Oh why don’t you take something home?” And David said, “Oh dad will tear it up.” So I think he might be put down a lot at home’.

3.6 Pre counselling interviews with the student

David was happy to be interviewed again, and seemed eager to please. According to the interviewer, he was looking forward to working with me and he reflected on working with me in the past. This seemed at odds with how he normally talks because he will not normally reflect, but talks only about the here and now.

David chose not to draw in this interview. At the beginning he told the interviewer about his transfer to the secondary department. He appeared happy with the changes, and liked moving from class to class, as well as enjoying the different lessons. In this interview the materials available were more varied and having toys available might have been a prompt for him to reflect on his previous work with me. He seemed keen to start counselling, and could only remember positive things and his experience of playing with the toys.

3.7 Counselling process

In our first session, David seemed very pleased to be joining me. He reflected on our previous work together, and commented that he was happy to be working with me again. I noticed that as he was talking, his face remained emotionless but his hands became very excited and he rubbed them together. He looked around the room, pointing out what he wanted to play with, and what he could see was new. He wanted to play with the dolls’ house, and to play monsters. I had to play the monster, using a dinosaur, and the monster came and ate the other dolls up. As we played I noticed that he became very over excited, and found it difficult to regulate his emotions.

Each week David would start with a board game, and quickly move onto the dolls’ house. This game continued over many weeks and on occasions it changed slightly. The dolls were in bed, and the monster came into the room and ate the dolls. At other times, the dolls hid in the cupboard but the monster always found the dolls and ate them. I always had to play the monster, and despite my attempts to get him to take on this role, he would not budge. He became very excited when he played this game, and his hands became very active. I experienced a strong countertransference of arousal, but it was not pleasant. It felt hysterical and frightening.

I noticed that David found it difficult to leave the room at the end of the sessions. He would constantly try to challenge me, but eventually, reluctantly, accepted that his session was over. At the same time he sought reassurance that I would be available the following week.

As the weeks continued, the game with the dolls and dolls' house became more controlled. He began to choose a specific number of dolls, but not the same ones every week. There was always one monster, a toy dinosaur. The game also changed slightly. The dinosaur was only to eat one doll, and then to eat the furniture. I noticed that as this happened; David was very still and watched me intently. He only became aroused when the doll was being eaten.

On week nine he expanded his play, he using the puppets to act out Little Red Riding Hood, with the addition of a character called Lucy. I played Lucy, and took the role of narrator. This swiftly moved to a game with the soldiers and cars. The toys were dived into 'good guys' and 'bad guys'. The games involved a lot of fighting, with no way to sort out the fights. In this session a 'bad guy' went inside the 'good guy'; a small car went inside a truck. I noticed that David's body language changed, and he almost shuddered. Lucy (girl puppet) reflected on this. David looked at me intently, and asked me if I was watching. I had a conversation with Lucy, and said I knew that David wanted me to see that a bad toy had gone inside the good toy, and how horrible this was. After I reflected this, David could not stay with the game and wanted to tidy away.

In the following session, we returned to the dolls' house. David wanted to try the role of the monster. I noticed that he found this very difficult, and had to tidy the house first and make everything orderly. After the monster ate the dolls, David said he did not like the game, and wanted to sort out the mess. He tried this role for a couple of sessions, each time finishing the game quickly. In one session, he brought in a policeman to help the dolls, because the policeman knew there were bad people around. The policeman did help, and protected the dolls for several weeks. However three weeks later, this changed. The policeman tricked the dolls in pretending he was good, while, in fact, he was there to help the monster.

Following this session, David did not want to play with the toys anymore. He said that the fighting had stopped, and it was all over now. He chose to listen to the radio, and used the session in silence for a couple of weeks. I was aware that this coincided with a break enforced by the school holidays.

On our return from the school break, David returned to his play, this time using Play Dough. The theme remained the same, however, with 'good guys' and 'bad guys' fighting, and the 'bad guy' eating the 'good guy'. We each had Play Dough. I had the bad 'snakes', and he had the good ones. Each time the 'bad guys' entered into the 'good guys' body, I decided to make a comment, asking if he liked the 'bad guys' coming into his body. He appeared surprised that he had a choice in this situation. He did not answer me, but asked if he could carry on playing.

The following week we continued with the game, but this time he started saying, 'No', and 'Go away', telling me how horrible it was when the 'bad guy' came into his body. Over the next few weeks he continued playing this game, and he seemed to be practising saying, 'No'. As the 'snakes' said, 'No', he added more Play Dough to the good snakes, and told me they were getting stronger.

As we were coming to the end of our work, I reflected this to David. He found it hard to hear, and shut out my reflections. I commented on his behaviour, and asked if he was finding it difficult to think of finishing; and perhaps he had more to tell me. He asked if it was his choice. I explained to him that the project was coming to an end, but I could arrange for us to continue working in September. He said he wanted to, but then became very sad, so I asked him what was wrong. He told me that he would not be at this school in September, as he was moving house and would be leaving the school.

3.8 Analysis of the sessions

David was very anxious when we first met, and needed reassurance of my presence. Was I going away, or would I be there for him? He knew what story he had to tell, and how he wanted to tell it. In the initial session, he told me that a very scary monster was consuming him. In subsequent sessions, David appeared anxious and could not start with his story. He needed to build up to the story and so engaged in

other games until he felt safe enough to face his fears. The game had no resolution, and continued over and over again. I wondered if he was not only letting me know that he could not resolve this matter on his own, but was also testing whether I could hear his story. I believe that when he felt safe with me, and trusted me to hear his story; he was able to make it less general and more specific, with only four dolls and one monster. This developed into using only one doll, with furniture being eaten.

David introduced an authority figure into his play, a policeman. I wondered if this was telling me two things:

- 1) There was someone he thought he could trust, but could not.
- 2) Professionals appeared to want to help, but they could not.

As a break approached, David wanted to move away from his story. I believe that listening to the music also drowned out his thoughts and feelings. I believe that the break was very difficult for him, and he needed to prepare himself for my absence by disengaging from the work. I also wondered if the break felt abusive to David. Was this represented by the authority figure first helping, and then joining in the abuse?

On return from the break, the themes continued with a different medium. When I asked David if he liked his body being entered, this seemed to enable him to make a shift. He started to say, 'No', expressing his dislike for the game. I believe he was telling me that he was learning to say, 'No', and was becoming stronger and this was reflected in the snakes becoming bigger.

The ending felt very abusive. I did not believe David had reached the point of telling his entire story. He certainly had not reached a point of resolution. However, further work was prevented by an action outside our control, i.e. the family move.

3.9 Post-counselling interviews with his form tutor and TA

His tutor and TA could not report any significant changes for David. His tutor said, 'Very low self-esteem. I think hardly any confidence at all, and I think that's why he's so obsessive. His head is in the clouds most of the time'. Commenting on his behaviour, his TA said, 'Very good. Um, always. He's a little bit like a sheep, though, you know, follows along a little bit like a sheep. He'll join in and not realise what the situation is. He doesn't realise; he doesn't read situations very well. He's not pre-empting situations or reading body language'. His tutor agreed that his behaviour was

good, and thought that he did not really join in. She said, 'Socially, there's no behaviour. He will be standing on the sidelines. He'll be watching, clutching his book and his glasses. He'll be watching'.

With regards to his schoolwork, they could not report any improvements. His tutor said 'He's not able to retain. He is like a sieve, it goes in and comes out'. She added that David could not stay on task. 'His eyes will wander. He'll do his work but his eyes will wander, and he's sort of looking at what's going on around him, then he's forgotten what he's doing. Then he'll look back down as if to say, 'Oh, did I do that?' You know, but there again it does depend on what he's doing. If he's drawing, he'll stay on task absolutely, and keep his eyes on it you know. If he's writing, then it's a bit sort of, I'll write a word then I'll look up and I'll look around'. His TA said, 'He goes into, um, his little dream world. He just needs to be reminded all the time to stay on task, really'.

His tutor believed that his physical appearance had not changed. 'He is usually quite smart, yeah, usually OK. He's usually quite clean and, um, very obsessive with things'. However his TA saw an improvement. 'He is not wetting himself anymore'. There were no changes in his popularity. His tutor said, 'Hasn't really got many friends. He doesn't know really how to make friends'. His TA commented, 'He worries tremendously. I don't think he is very happy. Yeah, I would think he could be a lot happier. I wouldn't say he's, well, he always strikes me as, you know, the boy on the edge who's never quite into anything'.

The final comments from his tutor were, 'There were no real changes. He does not giggle as much, but it is still a problem'. His TA agreed, saying, 'No, I don't think David's changed very much really. I think he is the same. Maybe he might be a little bit more confident in class from the beginning of the year.

3.10 Post-counselling interviews with the student

The interviewer reported that David seemed a very confused young boy. He was able to reflect on the work with me, but this was clouded by the threat of an imminent move. He commented, 'I liked talking to her about my nightmares, it really helped me', but as he spoke about this, a wave of anxiety washed over him. He followed this

up by talking about his family moving home. He said this as if he was conditioned to be happy, and to consider it a good thing, but his body language was wrought with fear and anguish.

David chose to play as he was being interviewed. The transcript indicated that he appeared to be very anxious. He described the work with me, but talked mainly about his move. He said, 'It is up to my Dad' He talked about how he liked the school, but would be moving to a better school, a mainstream school. Then he went back to talking about the counselling work. He said that receiving counselling, 'Helped me to work harder in class'. He believed, 'My teachers have noticed, but nobody else'. He added, 'I have changed', but was not able to say how.

3.11 Summary

The staff could not comment on any changes in David. All four agreed that he was a very nervous and anxious young boy. His anxieties prevented him from functioning in his classroom, or mixing with his peers. Whilst staff were aware that he was very anxious and nervous, they never seemed to question the reasons for this. David did not feel safe to express his thoughts and feelings, and always presented himself with a false smile. After receiving counselling, his form tutor and TA reported that he seemed a little less giggly, but the changes were not substantial.

3.12 Conclusion

David was clearly very anxious. He knew that he had a story to tell and trusted me enough to tell me his story. I was not clear if David was telling me that he was actually being sexually abused. Perhaps he felt disempowered by others, and experienced them as trying to take over his thoughts and feelings. This was expressed to me through the themes of being eaten by a powerful figure, and bad people entering his body. Whichever scenario it was, I believed that David did not realise he had a right to say, 'No', or to say that he had a different opinion.

When I asked the pivotal question of whether he minded, this seemed to help him to discover his own voice. As he practised having a voice, he was able to let me know that he was getting stronger. Unfortunately the ending felt, to me, very premature. I was unable to discover which scenario was real, and to help him consolidate any

changes. I believed that the family move was yet another situation where he had no control over his life. However, this time he was able to tell me this, and we were able to talk about not being able to continue working. I noticed that he was able to do this in the first person, and not through metaphor. David was able to stay with the pain that, as a child he could be very disempowered by adults, and could not alter some events. At the same time, however, I believe he was beginning to learn that, regardless of the outcome, he had a right to his own thoughts and feelings, and to express them.

4.0 Group two: An introduction to Eminem

Eminem was an only child and was fourteen when we met for the project. His parents were separated; he lived with his mother and had infrequent visits with his father. Eminem was diagnosed with a specific learning difficulty and a speech and language disorder.

Eminem was referred to the project because of his behaviour around the school. Staff believed he was very immature and challenging, and would not take any responsibility for his actions. The school placed him in the second group, which acted as the comparison group, and he received counselling in the second year of the project.

4.1 Comparison interviews with the form tutor and teaching assistant (TA)

Eminem's tutor and TA were interviewed, and it became clear that they were very irritated by his behaviour. His tutor said, 'He has very low self-esteem, and his behaviour is very poor'. His TA agreed, and said, 'He just keeps walking out of class'. His tutor added, 'He does not take any responsibility for his actions. He will say he is sorry, and thinks that will put it right'. His schoolwork was reported to be poor, and his TA said, 'He cannot concentrate in class'. There were further concerns about his physical appearance. His TA said, 'He is a big lad, not only tall but he has put on a lot of weight'. His tutor agreed, and said, 'He gets teased a bit about his size'. They both felt he was unhappy, but was also unwilling to help himself, in terms of changing his behaviour.

4.2 Comparison interviews with the student

The interviewer reported that when she went to collect Eminem from class, he had been sent out because he was winding others up. She found him in the hall in a distressed state, punching the floor. He was happy to go with her, and seemed almost relieved. He wanted to draw 'rude' pictures, but rubbed out anything he drew because they were bad. He told her about a conversation with his Dad. Apparently his father had introduced him to some 'adult' magazines showing him images of heterosexual and homosexual men and women. He said he had felt very confused, and wanted to know more. The interviewer believed he was very confused and obsessed with sex.

4.3 Second interview with the form tutor and TA

His tutor and TA said that things had not really changed in most areas. They both thought he still had low self-esteem, and his behaviour was a real concern. His tutor commented, 'He is getting into fights more, and, again, I see that as progression, I really do, because he has been bullied so much and this past week or so I've seen him standing up a bit for himself'. His TA did not believe he had improved, and said, 'His behaviour has changed, I would say. Definitely. He's more defensive now, more, to try and reason with him now is more difficult. Where you could say, "You can't do that, that's unacceptable behaviour." Well, now he challenges that'.

His tutor said that his ability to stay in class had deteriorated. His TA agreed, and said, 'I need to threaten him with his mum being phoned to get any action'. They both felt he was not very popular, probably because he appeared more immature than the rest of the class.

4.4 Second interview with the student

The interviewer reported that Eminem did not want to draw an image but to doodle, and his doodling was of a sexual nature. He was very pre-occupied with sex, would not talk about anything else. He was concerned about the confidentiality of the interviews and the counselling work.

4.5 Pre-counselling interviews with the form tutor and TA

His new form tutor and TA shared the same concerns as last year's staff. His tutor said, 'He is very much influenced by the music that's around. Rap music, that sort of

thing, so Gangster music and all that sort of stuff so. At the moment, he is struggling to come to terms with what's real and what's not real. He's listening to the music, and interpreting or copying what's being said, but doesn't understand the meaning of the words. His behaviour in school, at the moment, is terrible. He's not on task. He's behaving very babyish. His behaviour, just general behaviour within the school is terrible. I'm spending a lot of my time with him trying to sort out his behaviour inside class and in the playground'. His TA said, 'He is very, very, very immature. He doesn't understand, he can't remember what you've just told him. And he forgets, you know, he will say, "Have I been good? Have I been good?" And it's gone in one ear and out the other'.

His tutor was concerned about his schoolwork, saying, 'It's just not really happening. He's really struggling. He can't even spell his surname. So he's in year ten, so that's our concern. But the trouble is his attitude won't allow him to move on. He's a tough one'. His TA said, 'He doesn't like schoolwork, in my mind he just doesn't like it. He finds it very, very difficult. He struggles with most things'.

His tutor commented, 'I think he's living in an unrealistic world at the moment. I don't think he really knows where he is with this influencing from video clips and stuff like that. Wants to be a basketball player, but doesn't want to do PE because he's too lazy. He's a real lazy person and trying to get out of whatever he can'. His TA believed he was not very popular, and said, 'No. His social skills, yeah and 'cos he's so babyish he's very babyish and he gets on the other peer's nerves because he is such a baby'. Both tutor and TA found him difficult to get along with, and they both found him frustrating and irritating.

4.6 Pre-counselling interviews with the student

Eminem would only speak to the interviewer via a toy telephone. He told her about some animals, which engaged in all out war, with a great deal of killing. At one point she enquired if the animals were dead, but was told they were resting. While he was playing, he seemed very absorbed and unaware of her presence. While the animals rested, he again asked questions about sexual things, from condom styles, makes, colours and flavours to sexual aids. The interviewer believed that he had been

exposed to some inappropriate material, such as pornographic or inappropriate films. He appeared very anxious, and kept asking about the confidentiality of the project.

4.7 Counselling process

In the first session, Eminem seemed relaxed and happy to join me. At the start of the session, he got out the animals and started a fight between a lion and a gorilla. This seemed non-directional, and he swiftly moved into talking about sex. He drew some images of male and female sexual organs, and asked me if I got embarrassed looking at them. I asked him if it embarrassed him, to which he replied it didn't, and he liked looking at body parts. It made him feel good. I suggested that he was at an age where this was appropriate, but should be done in private. He said he liked looking at sexual images and watched pornography on television. I reiterated that this was age appropriate, pornographic films were for adults, not young people. He said he did not care, he liked watching them, and I was not to tell anyone.

The sessions continued to have a sexual theme. In one session he used the dolls to act out sexual activity. He became very agitated, and started throwing the dolls around the room. He was shouting and screaming, and became very aroused and unable to regulate his emotions. After this session, a technician reported his concerns to staff as he had overheard what happened. He was concerned for my safety, and felt that the sexual talk was inappropriate and that I should have stopped Eminem. He said, 'If he were my child, I would have knocked his block off'. I thanked him for his concern, emphasising that the counselling work was private, and if he overheard something it was not for staff room gossip. At the same time I stressed the importance of an individual feeling safe enough to work with whatever was going on for them. Whilst I had the support of the Head Teacher, I was aware that the walls were very thin, and I become increasingly conscious of outside activity, and careful of what was said.

Eminem was slightly more subdued in the session following the outburst, but continued to ask about sex. He told me about a film he had watched, and asked about boys being able to choose a woman with whom to have sex. I said it sounded like prostitution. He disagreed, saying that boys had the right to have sex with whoever they wanted. I said I disagreed. This led us into a conversation where I told him that I had been informed he was harassing several girls at school. He said that he liked

certain girls, and thought he should be allowed to touch them. I explained that this was unacceptable, and tried to link that to his experience. I asked him if he thought people were allowed to touch him. He replied that this was different, and of course people could not touch a boy, but boys could touch girls. I expressed my concern and he asked me if I was cross with him. I said I was not cross, but was unhappy about what he said, and he said he was sorry. I replied that I felt he said he was sorry, because he did not like people to be upset with him, and that, in fact, he was not sorry for his thoughts, and really did not care. He agreed that he did not like people to be cross with him, and also that he did not care.

This conversation helped us to look at his behaviour, and for a short time, moved us away from sex. Eminem had no idea of what was appropriate, and appeared to have little understanding of cause and effect. In the session we used role-play to look at ways to interact with girls, how to get to know them, and how to ask them out. We also looked at ways to identify whether someone was being a friend or not. I used the idea of a 'wise self'. In each scenario, I asked him to speak to his wise self, and discover what he/she would say to him. We then looked at the opposite extreme, which he called this his 'naughty' self. We discovered that he normally listened to his naughty self. We examined when it was appropriate to do this, and when it was appropriate to listen to his wise self, trying to find a balance between the two. He seemed quite articulate, and able to understand the concept I was sharing with him, but from reports in school he seemed unable to transfer this knowledge outside the sessions.

Unfortunately, things began to deteriorate. I had been given reports that his behaviour was worsening, and he also told me three things that concerned me. He had bought some cannabis from someone in the neighbourhood. He had phoned to arrange a call girl, and he was watching pornographic material on the internet.

I told him I was very concerned and needed to speak to the Head Teacher. He was not happy, but I left him no choice. The Head Teacher thought I should speak to his mother, to ascertain whether what he told me was true. It turned out to be true. The 'cannabis' was in fact basil, and she had spoken to the parents of the boy who sold him the herb. The call girl was requested, and when she turned up Eminem refused to

give her money, so she left. Later, a man phoned the house demanding money. Eminem's mother said she returned the call, explaining that her son had learning difficulties. She was also aware that he was using the Internet inappropriately, and had put a block on it. She said she was not concerned. She felt she had dealt with the issues, and needed to take no further action. I continued to express my concern, saying that I felt Eminem needed help, and I wanted to make a referral to his GP. This was met with disapproval, and his mother reiterated that she had dealt with the matter appropriately. I discussed this situation with the Head Teacher and we decided to ask his mother to come in for a meeting. It was also decided that the school would work to address Eminem's sexual behaviour, through more explicit sex education.

Following the meeting with Eminem's mother, a referral was made via his GP to CAMHS for a further assessment.

I told Eminem about the referral at the end of our work together. I explained that we were not cross with him, but as he was going to leave school soon, and the work with me was coming to an end, we all felt that it was important that he had further support to help him address and work through his behaviour.

4.8 Analysis of the sessions

Eminem seemed very preoccupied with sex. I believe this was partly age-appropriate, but it also was confused by access to inappropriate material. At the beginning, I believed that Eminem was testing out my responses to sexual themes. It felt abusive, which was confirmed later by his thoughts and feelings about women. Eminem had been developed a belief that women were a mere product for men to use as they wanted. I do not know where this concept originated, but I wondered if it was his father's view.

When Eminem was able to really submerge himself in his anger, and his thoughts about sex, it was overheard, which left me feeling cautious about the work. I am sure this had some impact, because he was also more subdued after this session. His feelings about women, however, were acted out in the school as well as in the session. He had been touching girls inappropriately, and would not accept that this behaviour was wrong. I could not decide if this might have come from a film that he had

watched, and had perhaps not understood fully. He did not understand that his actions were wrong, and he seemed to believe that he could have whatever he wanted. I wondered if this came from his childhood, and whether he was ever denied something he wanted.

In an attempt to help him to look at his behaviour, I used the concept of the wise self, trying to get him to explore different ways of responding to situations. Whilst he seemed able to understand this concept, he found it difficult to transfer this skill outside the sessions. At this point in the work, I was told of other serious actions. Buying the 'weed', not only demonstrated his need to fit into an image that he saw as 'cool', but also showed his vulnerability. He could not recognise herbs, and parted with a large amount of money for a cheap kitchen ingredient. His desire to experience sex led him to phone for a call girl. Again, he had little understanding of cost, or of the inappropriateness and danger of such actions. Finally accessing pornographic material on the Internet not only fuelled his distorted view of sex, but also left him open to being abused.

Unfortunately, I believe, his mother did not act in a helpful way. Not only was she in denial of the seriousness of her son's behaviour, but she also excused him, and did not make him face the consequences of his actions. This situation enabled me to see where his inability to take responsibility for his actions originated.

The ending was unsatisfactory, but I felt happy that a referral had been made, and hoped that Eminem would receive the help I felt he desperately needed.

4.9 Post-counselling interviews with his form tutor and TA

Eminem's tutor and TA were unable to comment on any change in Eminem, and they were both very concerned about his behaviour. His tutor said, 'Poor. Poor. Again, no responsibility for what he does, he just doesn't understand what he's doing. There's an aspect of the young child type behaviours; the giggling, the continual calling out that you'd expect young kids to be doing in class and that sort of thing, and there's also the more extensive type behaviours where the attitudes and language, and what he's picked up from watching T.V. and that sort of thing. An example is, yesterday at sports day he was under a tree and a ball was kicked towards him, a football, and he proceeded to use some profanities that were quite rude to this child, and this child got

quite upset, and then he couldn't understand why this child wanted to hit him'. There were still concerns regarding his schoolwork. His TA said, 'If he's on task he can, he can do very neat writing. He's very good at reading, but he doesn't concentrate to take any of the information in'. His tutor believed he was not very popular, but felt he appeared happy, saying, 'I think he's quite a happy boy. But he seems happy to be making other kids laugh at him, as opposed to creating a fun environment in which everyone can communicate and be happy'. His TA said, 'He is the class clown'.

4.10 Post-counselling interviews with the student

The interviewer found Eminem less challenging in this interview. Once again, he would only talk to her via a toy telephone, or when lying over the table with his head covered. He made pennies out of brown Play Dough, placing them between pieces of green Play Dough. He asked her about 'wanking,' and wanted to know why his penis grew when he thought about sex, then flopped and shrank afterwards. During the rest of the interview, he tried to ask her about her sexual experiences, and she said that he seemed a very confused young man. She still wondered if he was being exposed to some inappropriate material, and was not mature enough to understand what he was seeing.

4.11 Summary

Eminem was a very confused and vulnerable young man, and the school was very concerned about his inappropriate behaviour, which continued into the second year, and did not improve with counselling. He continued to refuse to take responsibility for his actions, and appeared very immature.

4.12 Conclusion

On the surface, Eminem did not benefit from receiving counselling. I believe counselling enabled me to discover the root of his problem, and the cause of his behaviour. He had never learned to take responsibility for his actions. His mother had always excused his behaviour, blaming it on his learning difficulty. I believe Eminem understood this, and continued to excuse himself because he was 'disabled'.

Eminem felt at odds with his body. He had the body of a man, he was tall and people had unrealistic expectations of him. At the same time he was emotionally and

developmentally very young. I wonder if his father found this difficult to understand, and exposed him to inappropriate sexual material in order to make him grow up. I think Eminem was very confused, because his body was responding physically in an inappropriate way, but developmentally he did not understand. I wondered if he was also frightened by the power of his emerging sexuality. He had gained an abusive attitude towards women, and saw them as they're for his pleasure. I do not know where he gained this attitude. It might have been from his father, but it might also have developed from his inability to understand cause and affect.

I was very concerned that not only was Eminem a very vulnerable young man who could easily be abused, but he might also be capable of abusing, particularly with his attitude that he had the right to take women when he wanted. I felt it was important to set something up so that he would continue to have some counselling, and his mental health needs could be addressed.

5.0 Group two: An introduction to Gareth

Gareth was the third out of four children and lived at home with both parents. He was diagnosed with a general learning difficulty and he was ten years old when we met for the project. Both of Gareth's parents also had a learning difficulty and had attended Durants school.

Gareth was referred to the project because he appeared to have low self-esteem, and his parents reported that his behaviour was unmanageable at home. This, however, was different from his behaviour at school. The school placed him in the second group, which acted as the comparison group, and Gareth received counselling in the second year of the project.

5.1 Comparison interviews with the form tutor and teaching assistant (TA)

In the first year of the project Gareth was in the primary department so, his class teacher and TA were interviewed. His teacher said his self-esteem was 'Good in some areas and he is tuned into other people'. His TA said his self-esteem seemed, 'Quite good'. When I asked them about his behaviour, his teacher said, 'Brilliant in class, a little more difficult in unstructured time'. His TA agreed; 'Behaviour is good at school. He is a very helpful boy'. His teacher and TA believed that he did not often

get into fights, and seemed to take responsibility for his actions. His teacher's main concern was low self-esteem in relation to his schoolwork, and said, 'He is a typical M.L.D. child that has failed in mainstream and doesn't see himself as a learner'. It was reported that he tried hard with his work, and could stay on task. He was also concerned that Gareth seemed nervous about being away from home. 'He cried every night on a school trip'.

He said he was a popular boy in the class and appeared to be a born leader. His TA agreed, and also said he seemed sensitive to others needs.

5.2 Comparison interviews with the student

The interviewer reported that Gareth came with her happily and seemed quite compliant, though she felt that his compliance was mixed with anxieties. He needed to know what he was doing and when. He found it difficult to concentrate and was anxious about getting his hands dirty.

In the interview he drew a person. He wanted to draw it on black paper, because black was dark and that seemed nice to him, because he could go to sleep. He said, 'It is hard to draw a person'. He was unsure whether the person on the dark paper could be seen, and I wondered if he felt invisible. The person he drew was friendly, and said, 'Hello'. He explained that the room was like a hospital. I wondered if he was saying that he knew this was a place where people would help him, or helped they would help him.

5.3 Second interview with the form tutor and TA

Gareth's teacher continued to observe appropriate behaviour at school, saying, 'In school, brilliant, although he can be a bit of a wind up. However, his parents report the opposite at home. He swears and chucks things around'. His TA agreed, and thought this was linked to his parents' expectations. 'Behaviour is good at school. Very helpful boy, but bad behaviour at home. I think this is linked to too high expectations'. His teacher believed his problems continued to be linked to his low academic self, and said, 'He is conscientious but finds it difficult he is aware of his appearance of work'. His TA thought his schoolwork was, 'Brilliant and he can stay on task'.

His teacher thought, 'Seems happy at school, but there is clearly something he is anxious about at home'. He also noticed that, 'He gets upset when I am cross'. His TA said, 'He is a very emotional boy, vulnerable boy, he comes into school upset in the morning'.

His teacher noticed, 'He is not unpopular, but there are a few students that are at each others throats'. This seemed different this time. However, his TA said 'He is friendly with everyone'.

5.4 Second interview with the student

The interviewer reported that Gareth seemed very anxious in the interview, and could not concentrate. She wondered if he felt he had to perform, but did not know what was expected of him.

In the interview he drew a picture of a girl running on stones and through red grass. Red made him think of a chair, which was something you sit on to relax. He then talked about the different colours and how he thought of fruit; he liked fruit.

The conversation changed, prompted by a yellow door that he drew. He seemed to be talking about his school trip to Minorca, and how difficult he found staying away from home. He liked some of the activities during the day, especially going shopping and buying something for his mother.

5.5 Pre-counselling interviews with the form tutor and TA

In the second year of the project Gareth transferred to the secondary department of the school. His new form tutor and TA were interviewed. His tutor said, 'I wouldn't say his self-esteem is very high', although his TA said, 'I think he's okay. He's quite proud of himself'. Of his behaviour, his tutor said, 'He has got very volatile behaviour patterns and tantrums, which they see at home. Whatever happens at home, he carries that in his mind all day. So I think he's one of those children who know that what he's done at home isn't perhaps right and he thinks about it'. His TA commented, 'He can be really, really well behaved, but then he tends to every now and then go off in this silly mode'. His tutor agreed with last year's reports that he seemed responsible, but also felt that he did not really take responsibility for his actions, 'Because I don't think he really understands it, in the sense that, well, he hit me so I hit him'.

His tutor thought Gareth schoolwork was, 'Quite good, actually. He does try quite hard. He does some good pictures, good pencil control', whereas his TA thought, 'His work will be very slapdash'. His tutor, commenting on his physical appearance, saying, 'Well, it goes from clean in the morning to absolutely filthy dirty and covered all over, and shirt hanging out in the afternoon, and he's a typical boy in that, so, well, I think he wears his lunch sometimes. He will slop things, and obviously when he's drinking it slurps down his front'. His TA thought he did not start off clean. 'He tends to sometimes come in quite dirty, his shirts and things'. His TA thought he was a happy person, but his tutor disagreed. She said she also noticed that he seemed to get frightened quickly. 'He was crying first day he came back to the secondary department, and didn't want to come in because he didn't know anyone'. Indeed, that morning there had been a phone call from his mother, saying that he had been threatened by some other students in school, and he didn't want to come in'. His TA agreed that he sometimes seemed anxious. 'Sometimes he brings something in with him. He's always talking about his family as well. Maybe it just upsets him if he gets told off by his parents or something'. His TA thought he was quite popular within his peer group, whereas his tutor thought 'He tends to stick with the older boys, rather than with his peer group'. She added, 'He's friendly but the only thing is, he does tell tales'.

5.6 Pre-counselling interviews with the student

The interviewer said Gareth was more reluctant to attend this interview, because he was enjoying a specific lesson. He did not draw, but sat and spoke to her. He told her that interviewer he liked the secondary department, but if they were naughty, they had to miss playtime, and he did not like that. He said that his Dad had a garage, where they salvage abandoned vehicles and cycles, and he helps his Dad. He said that he got paid hundreds of pounds, and they had three hundred cars. Whilst this seemed like fantasy, the interviewer also thought that he knew a lot about spray-painting and engines. Gareth thought that he would be leaving school the following year, because his parents thought he would be better served by working in the garage. She asked him if he wanted to leave school, and he said, 'No'. He also spoke about finding a body in the woods, and said that his mother was concerned about what he had seen. He claimed that the police were happy with him and gave him, a taxed motorbike. He said that his neighbour had been the killer.

5.7 Counselling process

Gareth was absent from school for the first session, so we did not meet until the following week. When I met Gareth he seemed happy to join me, and somewhat compliant to join me. I noticed in the session that he lacked any curiosity about the things in the room. However, he spotted 'Tidily Winks', and said he knew how to play it. He became more relaxed when he was using a familiar game. I noticed that he was rather smelly and dirty.

As the work continued, I was a little confused about how to direct the sessions. Gareth seemed quite articulate, and was able to talk about his brother and the difficulties his brother had with a school phobia. He asked me why he was referred to the project, and I said that it was because I was told that he was naughty at home. I thought I might be able to help him, so that he could be happier at home. He said that he used to be naughty, but his mummy stopped his pocket money, so now he is good. I said I was pleased that he was now being good, and perhaps we could just play and get to know each other. He agreed to this.

I noticed that he was slow to start the session, but found it hard to leave at the end, asking if he could play just one more game. He seemed to have little understanding of boundaries, and it appeared that he had learned that if he kept asking, he would eventually get his own way.

On one occasion I saw Gareth outside school. He was at the cinema with his father, and although he spoke to me, he did not introduce me to his father. I chose not to intrude. In the following session, he was quick to raise this encounter, telling me that he was at the cinema because it was a treat for being good. He said he had cleaned his bedroom, and his father was happy with him. He had not wanted to tell his Dad who I was, and wondered whom I was with. I explained that it was my children, and that I wondered if he would have liked to say, 'Hello, to them, and how he felt about seeing me with my own children. He said it was OK, but he did not want to meet them. I wondered if he was a bit cross to see that I had a family. He appeared confused to find that I did not live at the school!

In discussion with my supervisor, I decided to focus the work on enabling him to identify and express his feelings. We did some work sheets and followed this up with role-play. Gareth found it very hard to identify different emotions, and even harder to express his emotions, particularly sad feelings.

As we continued, I noticed that at the beginning of the sessions he would initiate a game of 'Hide and Seek', running ahead of me, and hiding in the room. As I entered the room, I would say something like, 'I wonder where Gareth is. He is so good at hiding, but I want to find him'. He would giggle, and I would search around the room, getting it wrong, but eventually finding him. When I found him I would express my relief, and said he was good at hiding, but I knew that if I tried hard I would find him. He would reply, 'You got it wrong sometimes, Miss, but you did find me'. Towards the end of the work, he still ran ahead and hid from me, but would jump out as I walked in, saying, 'Here I am Miss'. I also noticed that his play was becoming more untidy and he was beginning to use more space in the room. However, along with that he would become rather tired, refusing to clean up at the end. I wondered if this was something he did at home. I commented on this, and he said that his mummy cleans up. I explained that I did not mind how much mess he made, and I enjoyed playing with him, but we had to tidy up together or we would not be able to have the toys out. He found this difficult, and challenged me for several weeks, but I was aware towards the end that he started to clean up spontaneously and did not seem so sleepy.

The ending was not appropriate; unfortunately Gareth was away for the last few weeks of the project. He also missed the ending party I gave for all the students who had participated.

5.8 Analysis of the sessions

I believe that Gareth was unsure, initially, how to use the sessions. He did not know what to expect, and needed to know why he was sent to me. I wondered if he thought he was being punished, and needed to show me he was a 'good' boy. I experienced a countertransference of confusion and annoyance. What else was required of me? I sensed Gareth's ambivalence. He did not understand what to do, but at the same time, did not want to leave the sessions. He responded well when given some direction, and appeared to feel safer with some knowledge of what to expect in the sessions. The

exercise of looking at, and expressing, emotions was difficult for Gareth but he soon learned that counselling was not about punishment. It was, rather, to help him to express himself, and to learn that that was acceptable.

Our chance meeting outside school seemed to be confusing for him. This showed me that in an unpredictable situation he became anxious. Should he introduce me to his Dad? Should he say 'Hello' to my family? How was I going to respond, and would I tell his Dad anything he wanted kept private? He seemed relieved that I moved on quickly but showed more curiosity in the following session in an environment where he was beginning to find some predictability, with someone whose response would feel safe.

Having spent some time offering him direction, he was then able to initiate a game, 'Hide and Seek'. I believe he knew that I was trying to tell him that I was searching for the real him, and he was letting me know that I got it wrong sometimes. He knew that I would not give up, and would keep going. When he changed the game I wondered if he was telling me that I had found him, or he had found himself.

Gareth's play became more expansive, and he appeared less preoccupied with pleasing me. However, he then allowed me to see another problem, which he experienced at home. If he was tired, he did not have to tidy up. I knew from his cinema trip that he was rewarded for tidying up, but I wondered if his parents' response was inconsistent and sometimes he got away with it. He did not like having to participate in cleaning up, but again responded quickly to the rules when he knew they were not going to be flexible. The ending was unfortunate, and although we had time to prepare for an earlier ending, I thought it cut our work short.

5.9 Post-counselling interviews with his form tutor and TA

When Gareth's tutor and TA were re-interviewed, his tutor felt there was no change in his self-esteem. 'A bit fragile, bit fragile, um, not got much self-confidence'. His TA now said that his self-esteem was, 'Pretty low'. There were no reports of any changes in his behaviour at home or school. 'At school he is very polite. He gets himself into scrapes sometimes at break times. Winding up with the boys, he will quite readily succumb and "Yes I'm sorry miss, no I shouldn't have done that", and all the rest of

it. Apparently at home he throws things down the stairs, he rants and he raves, and all the rest of it, and we get, I get, messages in to tell him off because he misbehaved at home'. His TA agreed but added, 'Very good in school, although he can be quite sly'. There were also no changes to his physical appearance. 'Sometimes he will come into school filthy dirty, and he will have the same top on for about three or four days running'. His tutor said, 'I think he has a very unhappy home life. He doesn't strike me as a happy child'. His TA commented, 'He's a happy child, but I don't think he's happy. He's worked out how to give you the smiles'.

5.10 Post-counselling interviews with the student

The interviewer reported that she had a very challenging time with Gareth. She said she had not placed any boundaries in the room, and had not previously needed to. She reported that he was very different; he came in like a whirlwind, and owned the room straight away. She believed he felt safe in the room. He was not able to articulate any changes other than that he used to be bad, but now he was good, and Beverley was his good friend. He seemed very excited, and wondered if this was his way of telling her what he experienced in counselling. He initially thought that he would be doing work such as reading etc, but in fact he had fun and played. She said he was a bit sad counselling had come to an end.

In the interview he began by playing cards. Then he asked to make a rose, which transformed into an aeroplane. He showed the interviewer how it could fly, and sang, 'I'm flying through the air'.

5.11 Summary

The class teacher/form tutor and TAs over the two years were not able to notice any changes in Gareth, even after he had received counselling. They were consistent in their views that he had low self-esteem, and that his behaviour in school was not a problem. However, they continued to receive reports from his parents that his behaviour at home was very difficult. In the first year, his teacher and TA felt his physical appearance seemed fine, but in the second year they seemed less happy with his dirty clothing.

5.14 Conclusion

Gareth appeared to be a child who was eager to please, and to be seen as helpful. He was observant of others, and I received reports that he was also very caring. I believe he was confused when he first met me, because he did not understand why he had been referred to me, as he thought he had been good. When I told him I knew about his behaviour at home, he was quick to tell me that this had now changed. I do not think he could bear to have anybody think badly of him. When I suggested we just play, he seemed more relaxed, but still anxious because he did not know how to be, he had no script. When I offered him direction, he seemed less anxious and began to realise that I would react in a predictable manner, and that it was OK just to explore with me.

I believe Gareth made some movements towards discovering his real self, but was not able to relinquish the scripts he had adopted outside the therapeutic space. I wondered if the root of the problem lay with his home environment. I believe that for Gareth to relinquish old patterns, the family needed support to understand the roles they all played and why. The parents also needed support to help them learn how to be consistent in their parenting skills.

6.0 Group two: An introduction to Spiderman

Spiderman was the second of three children and lived with both parents. He was diagnosed with a general learning difficulty, and was twelve when he was referred to the project because of his low self-esteem. He was placed in the second group, which acted as the comparison group. He received counselling in the second year of the project.

6.1 Comparison interviews with the form tutor and teaching assistant (TA)

In the first year of the project, Spiderman was in year eight. Unfortunately there was a change over of TAs and I was not able to gain the views of the TA for this year group. His tutor felt he had low self-esteem, and commented, 'He just doesn't seem to have the same inner strength that he thinks the other person has'. His behaviour was described as fluctuating, depending on whom he was with, and was largely influenced by one other student. His tutor said, 'He has a superiority aspect about him where he feels that the others aren't as good as him'. He added that he does not take

responsibility for his actions. 'He actually does a mute act when you question him or you challenge him about his behaviour'. Spiderman's schoolwork was described as being, 'Quite good', and he was seen as being 'Competitive'. Of his physical appearance, his tutor said, 'He's usually quite well turned out'. However, he did not feel he was overly happy and said, 'His social skills lack a bit'.

6.2 Comparison interviews with the student

The interviewer reported that Spiderman seemed quite happy to attend his interview. She said he seemed intent on doing what he wanted and drew a ghost house. He covered the top part of the house in white and reported that this was the mist. He surrounded the house in red and said it was blood. He said that anybody who entered the house was lost forever. The only way you could go in and be safe was to have the magic password. In the house there were two green eyes, which could see everything. He covered the house in black and said that it could not be seen, but he drew over where the windows and doors would have been. The interviewer felt there was something sinister and quite scary about his drawing and wondered what was going on in his life.

6.3 Second interview with the form tutor and TA

As previously stated I was unable to interview the same TA for the year group so did not ascertain a TA's view. His tutor was not able to comment on many changes. He said, 'The thing that I've noticed more and more is a spiteful aspect to his comments sometimes. This one-upmanship I think has always annoyed me. I noticed it initially but it's really getting on my nerves now and I feel that it's got worse'. He added, 'His spiteful side tends to isolate him more and more because he gets entrenched in this behaviour, and the way he comments to people. We've talked about it a lot around the table in tutorial times and people have complained about it within the group. But he's always been steadfast, really, in the way that he's defended himself and he draws the shutters down and says. "Right I'm not listening anymore. I've got no more to say on this"'. His tutor was also able to find something affirmative. 'In terms of other more positive behaviour I think his work has come on in leaps and bounds. I think he's actually doing very well, making good progress across the curriculum, so something's right'.

6.4 Second interview with the student

When the interviewer went to collect Spiderman, she said that another student ridiculed him. She noticed that he managed this and was quite firm about what he wanted to do. He drew some cartoon characters and told the interviewer that he had made some books with these characters in at home. He drew his characters with green eyes and this time he was able to say that the green meant they were getting some magical power. Spiderman told a story about his cartoon characters. He talked about them fighting and how the good characters teamed together and fought the 'baddies' together. The baddies were trying to kill people on earth and the good people were fighting for survival. The interviewer did not reflect this back to him or ask if he felt he was fighting for survival. Spiderman took great care and attention to detail in creating his images.

6.5 Pre-counselling interviews with the form tutor and TA

In year nine a new TA was assigned to the class, and I was able to interview her on both occasions. In this set of interviews, his tutor and TA believed he had good self-esteem. His tutor said, 'I think he is like the leader within the group', adding, 'His behaviour, it can be very good but there again he can be very loud. He can be very loud and he can be very moany as well if he doesn't get what he wants. I think maybe a bit of a control freak'. His TA commented, 'Can be rather attention seeking but generally not too bad. He was picking on another student quite a bit at the beginning of term but since we've had words about it that seems to have settled down'. Both tutor and TA thought his schoolwork was average.

His present tutor agreed with last years tutor and said, 'He won't answer. Even if you say look, for instance, the last time I had to call him back I wanted him to say, "Look sorry," but he wouldn't do it because I was saying, "When you can think of a word to say then we can move on," but he wouldn't'.

His TA and tutor agreed that he continued to be quite popular, but this was questioned as to whether it was more intimidation than popularity.

6.6 Pre-counselling interviews with the student

The interviewer said Spiderman seemed unhappy to attend his interview, and was again ridiculed by another student. Previously he had been able to manage this, and walked away, but this time it seemed to have affected him. The interviewer wondered if he was anxious about working with me and having to withstand the constant mockery of another student. He was aggressive in the interview and would not really engage with the interviewer.

6.7 Counselling process

Spiderman was absent from school on our first session. Absences continued throughout the work, mostly because of different activities and guest speakers arranged by the school, meaning that Spiderman had to miss his sessions.

When I met him the week after the missed session, he was very defensive and nervous about working with me. He sat in the room with his coat zipped up, holding his bag. I found it difficult to reassure him and to make him feel at ease. He seemed fairly stubborn, and I thought that he had decided he did not want to work with me and was not going to like it. On the other hand however, he had agreed to do this, and was honourable, so he would keep his word.

The following week Spiderman was able to tell me about his card collection. When I demonstrated some interest he brought the cards out to show me. This was the first time he seemed to start to relax. He also told me about his holiday in Blackpool and the rides he went on. When I shared with him my fear of roller coasters, his stories became more embellished and he seemed to take great pleasure in knowing that I was frightened of these and he was not. I was remembering how the staff had described him, and I was experiencing his sadistic pleasure. However, I understood this as a very frightened young man, having to project this onto someone else.

Quite early on in the work it was his Birthday. The classes generally had a party for students' celebrating their birthdays, and Spiderman invited me to his. I was that aware this was an unusual request, as most students did not invite me. It felt particularly curious coming from him because he seemed so closed. What did he want me to witness? With the latter in mind, I attended his party. I was amazed to find a

very socially skilled young man. He was very much the host and made sure everyone had some drink and food. He allowed me to see his sensitive and caring side, and when he felt in control his level of confidence and ease at being with people increased. In the session he would not talk about his party and reverted back to his usual closed way.

The sessions continued with us playing cards. He went to great lengths to tell me the rules. I used this opportunity to build on his self-esteem and praised him for his knowledge and memory skills. I also commented on his patience in trying to teach me the game. While we were playing the game, he was also able to tell me about his father. He was very fond of his father and seemed to share a great deal with him. He talked favourably of shared hobbies, quad biking, and football. Occasionally when he talked about his father he dropped in something about his brother and this had a nasty undertone. I wondered if Spiderman was nervous of losing his father's affection and there seemed to be some sibling rivalry.

On one occasion I met Spiderman in the corridor and he told me he had to go to detention, about which he was not happy. I expressed my sympathy and said we would talk about it in his session. To my surprise in his session when I raised this with him, a 'stony face', as described by staff, met me. Spiderman would not talk about his detention or why he was given one. I expressed my surprise and pointed out that he had told me in the corridor, so I assumed he wanted to talk about it. He was dismissive and remained closed for the remainder of the session.

The following week I was waiting for him outside his classroom, and he was unaware of my presence. He was being very loud, and a typical teenager. When he realised I was there, he looked a little embarrassed that I had seen yet another side to him. His friends taunted him, but he appeared not to be fazed and handled it appropriately. During the session he told me about his drawings, and showed me some that he had in his bag. I was impressed, and asked him if he had traced them. He was insulted at my question, and was able to say so. He then had to prove himself by drawing them in front of me.

He continued drawing his cartoon characters over the remainder of our work. I noticed that he became more relaxed as he drew, and he actually reached a stage where he could take his coat off. He told me about the drawing competitions he organised in his neighbourhood, and how he could not join in because he was so good. Instead he judged them. He spent some time showing me how to draw the images and again enabled me to see his softer self.

Just over midway in the work, his teacher called me in when I went to collect him. He informed me that Spiderman had been very unkind to another student and would not talk about it, and asked me to raise it with him. When we reached the room I told him what I had been asked to do. I made it clear to him that I was not cross or angry with him, and that I was aware that he normally shut down and was unwilling to talk about things he had done. To my surprise, he told me what he had done in class. He said he had called a girl 'Jackie Chan' after a film because it was like her name. Whilst he was able to voice the incident, he was unwilling to see that this was hurtful and saw no harm in what he had done. I reflected this to him, at the same time praising him for being able to tell me about the incident.

The ending was not ideal. We had missed a number of sessions because of different school events, holidays and illness. The final few sessions were also cancelled for one reason or another. Because I had not been previously informed of any events I was not able to build this into the work and we did not have a closing session.

6.8 Analysis of the sessions

Spiderman seemed a very frightened young man. As I thought about his first image of the ghost house, and people who entered it getting lost, I thought that it might be that he was lost inside himself. The red blood surrounding him might have been expressing his hurt. Then he covered the house in black. He had learned to cover and hide from himself, but the doors and windows were made visible in the hope that someone would come looking.

He could not manage his fear, so had to project this onto someone else. I believed this projection was normally met with hostility and criticism. I tried to show him that I would not judge him, but wanted to understand him. I believe he understood this, and

although he was not able to voice things about himself, he wanted me to see that there was a different side to him. He trusted that I would understand, hence the invitation to his party.

I believe he was beginning to feel safe and reached out to me in the corridor, but when I followed this up, he did not feel able to face himself, withdrawing to a familiar strategy. He quickly regained his footing with me, and allowed me to see another part of his experience. He told me about, and showed me his drawings. When I questioned him, he was insulted and had to show me his ability. This allowed me to see that he felt he was not believed and had to prove himself. This led us to a place where his caring side could emerge again as he showed me that he had great patience, and tried to teach me how to draw. As he became stronger in himself, he was able to manage a conflict and to tell me about an event in class, although he was not able to take any responsibility for his actions.

The work was thwarted by so many interruptions that I felt, at times, as if we never really got going or had a chance. I wonder what the parallel process was? The ending was unsatisfactory.

6.9 Post-counselling interviews with his form tutor and TA

The tutor and TA did not notice any changes in Spiderman. His tutor echoed the same concerns as last year, saying, 'I have noticed, which I really don't like, he really tries to put down members of the class. He will try and put them down'. His TA commented, 'He seems to take pleasure in um, I know it sounds awful but he does, he seems to take pleasure in other students' inability to do things'. Similar comments were made about his standard of schoolwork, and his popularity. His tutor commented, 'He actually, he is quite bright. He is, I suppose, can be quite focussed. I would say he enjoys school. I would generally have thought he enjoys school'. His tutor's main criticism, referring to something that had not changed was, 'He's still picking on the weaker members of the class and it can be kind of hurtful'. His TA added, 'There's a very caring side to Spiderman. A very helpful, caring side, but also there's a very wicked and cruel side'.

6.10 Post-counselling interviews with the student

As before, Spiderman was not happy to be interviewed. The interviewer spent some time talking to him about football, about which he is passionate, to help him relax. This helped to some extent, as the interviewer was able to gain some of his views. Spiderman was able to say that he felt he had changed. He felt happier and could concentrate more in class. He said, 'I could talk to her about anything', and 'she helped me problem solve'. He said he would have liked more acknowledgment from his teachers. He wanted a 'well done' and was disappointed not to receive it.

6.11 Summary

In the first year of the project, Spiderman's tutor felt that his behaviour had not improved. In fact, he felt it had regressed, and he was becoming more spiteful to others. However, he felt that Spiderman's schoolwork had come on in 'leaps and bounds', which pleased him.

In the second year his tutor and TA echoed the same concerns they had in the first year, and felt that after receiving counselling he had not changed and was still very spiteful to his peers.

6.12 Conclusion

I believe Spiderman was a frightened young man, who could not bear the depth of his fear, so had to project it to others. I believe he felt inadequate and useless, so other people's difficulties annoyed him greatly and he could not tolerate such powerful feelings. I think the work was sabotaged, albeit unintentionally, and we were never given a chance to make real progress. I was not able to find the magic password that would enable me to go inside without being lost. However, I feel that he knew I tried and I hope his experience with me was enough to have sown a seed. In the future he might return to counselling and endure the quest for the password.

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Appendix

Three

Collaborating Establishment: Consent Letter



**University of
Hertfordshire**

Hatfield Campus
College Lane
Hatfield Herts
AL10 9AB
UK

Switchboard 01707 284000
Minicom 01707 284000
Fax 01707 284115

Vice-Chancellor
Professor Neil K Buxton

**Keith Bovair
Durants School
4 Pitfield Way
Enfield
Middlesex**

I am aware of Beverley Flitton's project to evaluate during the academic years, 2002-2004, a person centred counselling intervention and I understand what the project entails.

I have agreed to identify thirty pupils between the ages of ten and seventeen who I deem my benefit from counselling.

I am aware that interviews and the intervention will be tape-recorded, transcribed and artwork photographed.

I understand that all materials will be confidential to the research team.

I understand that the results will be published, but the anonymity of the pupils will be protected.

I give my consent for Beverley Flitton to undertake this project at this school.

Signed Keith Bovair Date 8/7/02



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thesis.

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the spine.

Some images distorted

Appendix

Four

**Sponsoring Establishment:
Letter of Confirmation From The
Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial
Fund**

Diana

THE WORK CONTINUES

Dr Julia Buckroyd
Principal Lecturer in Counselling
University of Hertfordshire
Centre for Community Research
College Lane
Hatfield
Hertfordshire
AL10 9AB

5th December 2001

Dear Dr Buckroyd,

UR No: 4028/1800

OFFER OF GRANT

I am pleased to inform you that the Trustees of The Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund have agreed to offer your organisation a grant of £61,650 over three years. This grant will fund an evaluation of the effects of a person centred counselling intervention for children who have a learning disability.

You should find enclosed the following:

- Another copy of this offer letter with two copies of our Standard Terms and Conditions attached
- Bank details form
- Payment request schedule
- Confirmation of Project Details form
- For your information, a full list of grants awarded in this round
- Communications Guidelines

UNIQUE REFERENCE NUMBER

Each application has its own unique reference number. Yours is 4028/1800. Please use this number on all correspondence with the Fund. If you do not, payments could be delayed.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF OFFER

The grant is subject to your organisation's agreement to our Standard Conditions, details of which are attached. Please read these carefully paying particular attention

Trustees: Lady Sarah McCorquodale (President), Christopher Spence MBE (Chair), Andrew Hind (Treasurer), Tahira Anshawan, Douglas Board,
The Rt. Hon. Lord E. Cairns CVO, CBE, Michael Gibbins LVO, Anthony Julius, Jenny McAleese, Roger Singleton BSc, Caroline Whitfield
Chief Executive: Andrew Purkis

The Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund

to the salary expenditure section which refers to posts funded through the grant. They are not imposed to make it more difficult for you to get the grant money but so that the Fund can ensure that the money is distributed in a way that is consistent with its grant making priorities.

STANDARD CONDITIONS

The offer of grant is also made on condition that you:

- Submit an amended budget for the project in line with the revised amount of the grant offer
- Submit written evaluation and evidence from the pilot project which supports the need for this model of working within a school context
- Submit an evaluation strategy and framework to measure the longer-term impact and benefit for young people of this model.

PUBLICISING THE GRANT

Please refer to Section 6 of the Standard Terms and Conditions and to the enclosed sheet from our Communications and Media Team.

ACCEPTING THE OFFER

If you accept the offer of a grant and agree to abide by our terms and conditions, one copy of this letter complete with Terms and Conditions attached should be signed by the Chair, Vice-Chair or Treasurer of your organisation and returned, along with evidence that the person signing is authorised to accept the offer of grant on behalf of your Organisation, the Bank Details form and the Confirmation of Project Details form duly completed, to us within four weeks from the date of this letter. If your organisation is incorporated under the Companies Act, the signature of a director or the Company Secretary is required on this letter. They should be authorised for the purpose.

It is important that you do not detach the Terms and Conditions from the copy of the letter to return to us. Taken together, they are a record of the agreement between us.

HOW TO CLAIM YOUR GRANT PAYMENTS

You can claim payments once you have formally accepted our offer, met all the terms and conditions, and are ready to start using the money. You can show us this by completing the Confirmation of Project Details form.

You should return the following documents to Feria Henry your Grants Officer by Friday 18th January 2002.

- One copy of this offer letter with one signed copy of our Standard Terms and Conditions attached
- Completed Bank Details form

- Completed Payment Request Schedule
- Completed Confirmation of Project Details form
- *Original* bank statement of the account into which the grant will be paid
- Evidence that the person signing the copy of our Standard Terms and Conditions is authorised to accept the offer of grant on behalf of your organisation. This could be, for example:
 - a letterhead signed by at least two other officers stating that the individual is authorised to accept the offer;
 - an excerpt from the minutes of a Trustee/Directors meeting giving the individual authority to accept;
 - part of the rules/constitution which shows that the signatory has the delegated responsibility to accept such an offer.

Please write your URN on the top right hand corner of each of these documents.

YOUR CONTACT

Fiona Henry is the Grants Officer responsible for your project, who can be contacted at this office on the phone number at the bottom of this letter.

We wish you every success with your project and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Purkis

**Dr Andrew Purkis
Chief Executive**

UFN: 4028/1800
University of Hertfordshire

I am authorised on behalf of the organisation named above to accept the above offer of grant on the Terms and Conditions stated.

Name: _____ Position in _____
Organisation

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Please note: no material change to the Project or its implementation in accordance with the details in the application form (as may be varied by these terms and conditions and by any Special Conditions) may be made without the prior consent in writing of the Fund).

Appendix

Five

School Information Sheet

Keith Bovair
Durants School
4 Pitfield Way
Enfield Middx.

Dear Keith Bovair,

I would like to take this opportunity to inform you further details of my proposed research study in which you have kindly agreed to allow your staff and pupils to participate. As you are aware I am currently studying towards a PhD at the University of Hertfordshire for which a research project must be completed.

I ask that you select thirty students between the ages of ten and sixteen, whom you feel might benefit from counselling. The intervention will take place in two phases, each with fifteen students and in two successive academic years. Each group of fifteen students will be offered a one academic year, forty-minute session of individual person centred counselling.

I initially intend to offer two meetings. The first meeting will be to introduce the project, research assistant and myself and to gain their informed consent. The second meeting will be one to one interviews to assess the student's self-concept. In addition to the structured interviews I will be using a projective technique to assess the students self-concept.

At the conclusion of the academic year the research assistant and will interview all the students again to establish their perspective of any benefits gained from the counselling intervention. THIS process will be repeated in the second academic year for the remaining fifteen students.

Prior to the commencement of the counselling intervention I will need to interview members of staff to establish their perspective of the students self-concept. Additionally, I will interview staff at the conclusion of the counselling intervention to establish their perception of any changes in the student.

This project is fundamental to substantiate fully the findings of the pilot study completed at your school. This project is an innovative piece of work and I hope will lead to the expansion of counselling in schools for learning disabled children nationally. This study is funded by The Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund.

Regards

Beverley Flitton
M.A. Counselling Inquiry, Dip. Counselling, Dip. P.C.A.T.

Appendix

Six

Parent/Carers Information Sheet And Consent Form

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I have been working in this school for four years supporting particular children. As part of my studies for a PhD I will be investigating the levels of self-confidence in children/adolescents and the effects they, and their class teacher see from any given support offered. This study will assist me in supporting other pupils in day-to-day life. All participants will be offered confidentiality and the anonymity of the school and individual will be protected at all times. If you give your consent for your child to participate in this project please could you sign the consent form below and return to school as soon as possible.

If you require further information or have any concerns you can contact me via the school or speak to Mr.Bovair.

Regards,

Beverley Flitton, MA. Counselling Inquiry, Dip. Counselling, Cert. Person Centred Art Therapy.

I am aware of Beverley Flitton's project taking place at Durants school.

I give my consent for my son/daughter ----- to take part in the project.

Signed ----- Date -----

Appendix

Seven

Students' Information Prompt Sheet

INFORMATION GIVEN TO CHILDREN/ADOLESCENTS

In order for the children to understand what they are consenting to the following points will be given to them with the appropriate language to their own developmental stage (see appendix 7b).

- ❖ I will be conducting a project that will look at your feelings and views.
- ❖ The project will examine your self-concept, by using a projective technique.
- ❖ The project will ascertain your views of your development.
- ❖ There are no right or wrong answers.
- ❖ It will provide an opportunity for you to examine personal issues.
- ❖ You may gain personal benefit
- ❖ This will be your opportunity to let other academics know how you feel anonymously.
- ❖ The project will be written up in a report and published.
- ❖ The anonymity of the school and child will be protected
- ❖ Adults will learn more about children's views in a special school.
- ❖ The report may help other children like you receive a counselling service.
- ❖ Despite extensive research I have been unable to locate any previous outcome research in this field.
- ❖ We will meet individually, so I can try and understand more about you.
- ❖ We will meet for a fifty-minute session once a week for twelve weeks.
- ❖ Art materials will be available for you to use.

- ❖ Sessions will be taped and transcribed for use in the report and will remain confidential.
- ❖ Consent will be sort for Artwork to be photographed and I will provide a folder for your work to be stored in.
- ❖ You can take your artwork with you at the end of the project.
- ❖ Tapes, artwork and photographed artwork will be stored in a locked cabinet.
- ❖ You have the right to withdraw from this project at any stage.
- ❖ Withdrawal from the project will not inhibit the continuation of the counselling service or a re-referral.
- ❖ At the end of twelve weeks an independent research assistant will interview you.
- ❖ I will report back to you on my findings.
- ❖ The project will be confidential to the research team, which consists of my academic supervisor, supervisor, transcriber, research assistant and myself. Parents and class teacher will not be informed.
- ❖ If it became apparent that counselling in excess of the project perimeters is required you will receive priority for in-school counselling or be referred to child and family guidance.
- ❖ No child can participate in the project unless it is clear they understand what they are consenting to and their rights within that consent.
- ❖ I will ask each child/adolescent at the end, what do they now understand they are participating in?

APPENDIX 7b

Information given to children/adolescents

I have endeavoured to make this child friendly language, however I may need to break this down further. I will tell them this in bite size pieces and constantly ask what they understand by this and does that sound O.K.

- ❖ I will be doing a project that will look at your feelings and views.
- ❖ The project will look at the way you see yourself, by using artwork.
- ❖ The project wants your views of yourself.
- ❖ There are no right or wrong answers.
- ❖ It will give you a chance to look at any problems/worries you may have.
- ❖ You may find ways to sort your worries out.
- ❖ This will be your chance to let other people, like me, know how you feel. They will not know your name.
- ❖ The project will be written up in a report and put into something like a magazine.
- ❖ No one will know your name or the school.
- ❖ Adults will learn more about children's views in a special school.
- ❖ The report may help other children like you get some support.
- ❖ Despite all my reading I have been unable to find any other project like this.
- ❖ We will meet on our own, so I can try and understand more about you.
- ❖ We will meet for a fifty-minute session once a week for twelve weeks (I will show them this on a clock).
- ❖ I will bring in some pens, pencils, paint and paper for you to use.

- ❖ I will record what you say to help me remember; these tapes will be listened to then written up for use in the report. But nobody will no your names.
- ❖ I will want to take photos of your artwork, will this be o.k.
- ❖ I will give you a folder for your work to be kept in.
- ❖ You can take your folder and artwork with you at the end of the project.
- ❖ Tapes, artwork and photographs will be stored in a locked cupboard.
- ❖ You can say no to this project at any time.
- ❖ If you want to stop being part of the project you can still get support.
- ❖ At the end of twelve weeks another person will come in to talk to you and will be asking you questions about you.
- ❖ I will come back and speak to you and check that I have understood what you have said to me.
- ❖ The project will be private; I will only talk and show my work to my supervisor (this is a person who checks that my work is o.k.), the person who will help me write the tapes up and the other person who comes in to talk to you. Parents and class teacher will not told.
- ❖ If you and I agree that it would be best for you to carry on with some support at the end of twelve weeks I will put you at the top of the waiting list or I will see if someone else can see you.

Appendix

Eight

Students' Interview Prompt Sheet

Pre amble

This protocol will be used as a prompt for the research interviewer and not seen by the children/adolescents. The research interviewer will remind the children there is no wrong or right answer, but it is their opportunity to tell us all about themselves.

The students will be invited to close their eyes and allow and imagine to appear that would best represent themselves. When they are ready to make visible on paper this image with the materials on the table.

The research interviewer will work with the image to draw out information about the student in accordance to Silverstone (1993)

Second and final set of Interviews include:

- 1) Did you like working with Beverley
- 2) How do you feel about not working with Beverley this year
- 3) If you had a choice would you continue
- 4) If we started this again would you like to be in the first or second year
- 5) Have people been different with you/ have you been different with others
- 6) How do you feel you have been with other people

Appendix

Nine

Piers- Harris 2 Instrument

Piers- Harris 2

1 My class mates make fun of me	Yes	No
2 I am a happy person	Yes	No
3 It is hard for me to make friends	Yes	No
4 I am often sad	Yes	No
5 I am smart	Yes	No
6 I am shy	Yes	No
7 I get nervous when the teacher calls on me	Yes	No
8 My looks bother me	Yes	No
9 I am a leader in games and sport	Yes	No
10 I get worried when we have tests in school	Yes	No
11 I am unpopular	Yes	No
12 I am well behaved in school	Yes	No
13 It is usually my fault when something goes wrong	Yes	No
14 I cause trouble to my family	Yes	No
15 I am strong	Yes	No
16 I am an important member of my family	Yes	No
17 I give up easily	Yes	No
18 I am good at my schoolwork	Yes	No
19 I do many bad things	Yes	No
20 I behave badly at home	Yes	No
21 I am slow in finishing my schoolwork	Yes	No
22 I am an important member of my class	Yes	No
23 I am nervous	Yes	No
24 I can give a good report in front of the class	Yes	No
25 In school I am a dreamer	Yes	No
26 My friends like my ideas	Yes	No
27 I often get into trouble	Yes	No
28 I am lucky	Yes	No
29 I worry a lot	Yes	No
30 My parent expect too much of me	Yes	No
31 I like being the way I am	Yes	No

32 I feel left out of things	Yes	No
33 I have nice hair	Yes	No
34 I often volunteer in school	Yes	No
35 I wish I were different	Yes	No
36 I hate school	Yes	No
37 I am among the last to be chosen for games and sports	Yes	No
38 I am often mean to other people	Yes	No
39 My classmates in school think I have good ideas	Yes	No
40 I am unhappy	Yes	No
41 I have many friends	Yes	No
42 I am cheerful	Yes	No
43 I am dumb about most things	Yes	No
44 I am good looking	Yes	No
45 I get into lots of fights	Yes	No
46 I am popular with boys	Yes	No
47 People pick on me	Yes	No
48 My family is disappointed in me	Yes	No
49 I have a pleasant face	Yes	No
50 When I grow up I will be an important person	Yes	No
51 In games and sports I watch instead of play	Yes	No
52 I forget what I learn	Yes	No
53 I am easy to get a long with	Yes	No
54 I am popular with girls	Yes	No
55 I am a good reader	Yes	No
56 I am often afraid	Yes	No
57 I am different from other people	Yes	No
58 I think bad thoughts	Yes	No
59 I cry easily	Yes	No
60 I am a good person	Yes	No

Appendix

Ten

Staff Interview Prompt Sheet

Interviews for staff

Questions to think about from your perspective and how you think the student may view themselves

1) General self concept/self-esteem

2) Behaviour:

- a) Behaviour in school
- b) Behaviour in class
- c) Do they often get into fights
- d) Do they blame themselves if something goes wrong
- e) Do they take responsibility for their actions

3) Intellectual:

- a) Good at school work
- b) Slow in doing school work
- c) Can stay on task
- d) Remember what they learn
- e) Confident when called upon by teacher
- f) Do they give up easily

4) Physical appearance:

- a) Take care of their appearance
- b) They like the way they look
- c) Confident in their peer group

5) Anxiety:

- d) Are they often sad
- e) Are they shy/nervous
- f) Are they afraid
- g) Do they cry easily
- h) Are they proud of their school/do they like their school

6) Popularity:

- a) Do they have many friends in peer group/not in peer group
- b) Are they popular with girls/boys
- c) Do they make friends easily
- d) Are they active members of class/school
- e) Are they popular in games and sports
- f) Do they get picked on

7) Happiness:

- a) Are they happy/cheerful
- b) Do they think they are lucky
- c) Do they wish they were different
- d) Are they easy to get along with
- e) Are they a good person

**Finally anything else that you would like to say about the person
Thank you for taking the time to think about these questions**

Appendix

Eleven

Example Of Interview Transcript With Students

I = Interviewer. S = Student

I: Do you like to talk while you draw? Or do you like to keep it nice and quiet and concentrate?

S: Uh-uhm. Done.

I: You're done? Okay. Could you tell me about your picture? You've used which colour?

S: Wait I'm not done yet.

I: You're not done yet, okay. It's okay, we've got, you can wash if you need to later.

(Rattling noise again)

I: Oh! What are you doing?

S: Hmm?

I: Nothing. Do you like this colour?

S: I do. Do you like that colour?

I: Yes. I wonder what happened.

I: What colour would you call that?

S: Pinkish.

I: Pinkish. Hmm. Do you like a pinkish colour?

S: No.

I: You don't like it. What does it make you think of when you see it?

S: Boys.

I: It makes you think of boys? And you don't like

Boys.

I: Pink?

S: I just use it.

I: You just use it and pink makes you think of boys? Can you tell me how?

S: I don't know.

I: But it's a colour that you don't like?

S: I do like it but it's just it makes a mess.

I: It makes a mess?

(Sighs)

I: Tell me what you've been doing here? You look exhausted. Tell me about your picture?

S: I don't know.

I: You don't know. Well you've said that this was a pinky colour

S: Oh I get it on my clothes!

I: It will brush off. Do you want me to just brush it for you?

S: Yes.

I: Yeh. Okay.

S: Can I hear it now?

I: When we've finished. Can you tell me about this colour up here?

S: Blue.

I: And what do you think of that colour?

S: It's the sky.

I: It's the sky and you've made it a blue sky.

S: And a pink one.

I: And a pink sky. And tell me what you think about when you think of blue?

S: It looks like you're in a dream.

I: It looks like you're in a dream?

S: Ummm.

I: What kind of a dream?

S: I do not know. I don't know. (Whispers) Yes.

I: Is it when you say a dream, would it be a, is it a nice dream?

S: Nice dream, yeh.

I: Nice dream, what would be a nice dream?

S: I don't know. It will be with your friends.

I: It will be with your friends?

S: Yeh.

I: What would you be doing with your friends?

S: Hanging around.

I: Hanging around?

S: Yep.

I: Where would you be hanging around?

S: On our own.

I: You'd be hanging around on your own. What do you do when you are hanging around on your own?

S: We just talk.

I: Talk? What about?

S: About friendship and stuff.

I: So that's a

S: Oh can I draw one for the class?

I: Yeh if you'd like to.

S: Actually I pick that one.

I: I need to keep this here for Beverly.

Appendix

Twelve

Example Of Interview Transcript With Staff

I= Interviewer. T= Member of staff

I: So looking at Bee, self-esteem how do you feel that is?

T: I think she's really, really improved this year, I think. Her self-esteem amongst her peers and teachers has been really good, so there's been a definite improvement there.

I: Okay that's nice to hear. Her behaviour in school, what's that like?

T: Really good. Again it's a great improvement with maturity so.

I: And is she taking any responsibility for her actions?

T: I think she's removed the action now so there doesn't have to be any responsibility taken. A lot of that behaviour is not there any more so she doesn't need to be disciplined or anything like that, I'd say. So she's removed the character now so there's now no temptation there so it's good.

I: That's nice to hear. And her schoolwork what's that like?

T: From what I've seen she's been trying really hard. I don't know academically how she's been going but from her reports and stuff like that she's been trying really hard.

I: Okay lovely. Is she one that can stay on task?

T: She's getting better from what she was before. She was distracted easily by the others earlier in the year but now she seems to be focussed on trying to learn and to do stuff in school.

I: That sounds good. And her general appearance what's that like?

T: A lot better. She used to have fairly dirty clothes and stuff like that but seems to be, I think she, her carers may have changed. I'm not sure if they've changed or not. But I think they've worked really hard with her, appearance wise. She's got a job now and she's getting some cash.

I: Okay, popularity, do you think she's a popular girl?

T: She's definitely improved her standing amongst her peers in the school, in the classroom and the school. There was all sorts of problems with her at the start of the year. I think we spoke about bullying by the other kids, mentally and physically but I think that's all stopped now she's grown up. She doesn't engage in any negative and silly behaviour which takes a lot of the limelight off her so. Yeh I would say she would be increasing her network of friends in the school now.

I: Okay lovely. Do you think that she's a sad person?

T: She's generally quite happy most of the time. I think it's only if something's upset her that she's normally a little bit down but generally speaking she's pretty happy. She's always willing to help and got a smile and stuff like that.

I: Is she shy?

T: Around people she doesn't know, yes. Yep, if someone new came into the class she's generally fairly quiet or she laughs a fair bit when she gets nervous and sometimes that attracts more attention to her which makes her more nervous, which makes her laugh more.

Appendix

Thirteen

Published Work

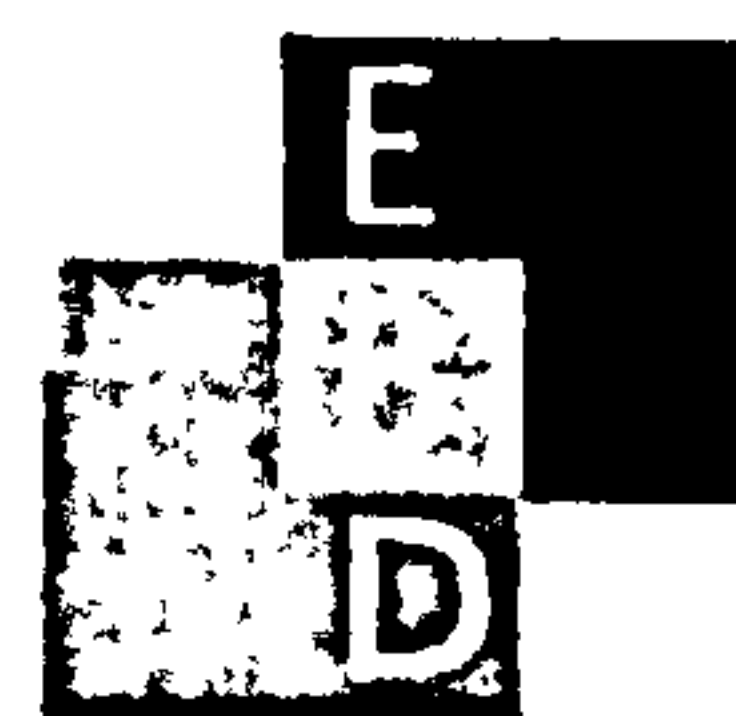
**Flitton & Buckroyd
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ARTICLE

Exploring the effects of a 14 week person-centred counselling intervention with learning disabled children

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ABSTRACT This study evaluates the effects of a person-centred counselling intervention on the learning disabled child's self-concept. The participants are children who attend a London borough school for moderate learning difficulties. The study is qualitative and incorporates two parts: (1) practitioner research via a 14 week person-centred counselling intervention; (2) exploration of teachers' views of the child's self-concept via a pre- and post-intervention questionnaire. The study used person-centred art therapy as an adjunct to counselling. A projective technique was used to measure the child's self-concept. Three out of four child participants indicated an improved self-concept. However, only one out of four teachers' questionnaires indicated a positive movement within the child. This article explores the difficulties encountered as well as highlighting positive paths, and supposes that the results support carrying out this research project over an extended period and with a larger research group.

KEYWORDS

counselling;
emotional and
behavioural
difficulties;
learning
disability;
self-
actualizing;
self-concept

People with a learning disability have had limited options, which include therapeutic choices, in comparison to the rest of the population. Although there is a growing interest in counselling people who have a learning disability, this has not developed as quickly as the expansion in other counselling fields (Beail, 1995). Nevertheless, access to counselling services should improve as the principle of equal access to services is addressed (Moulster, 1998). This study is concerned with the provision of counselling

for children with a moderate learning disability and the evaluation of its effects on the child's self-concept.

Society has been indoctrinated with the 'medical model' and has few expectations of people with impairments. Some people hold the view that a young person with a learning disability cannot make use of counselling (Ommanney and Symes, 2000). Yet, children with a learning disability have the same emotional needs as any other child (Male and Thompson, 1985). Children of all abilities encounter many distressing experiences and may need support through transition.

As a society, we are not always willing to recognize disabled children's feelings. Painful and angry feelings may be denied and impede the young person in expressing them (Ommanney and Symes, 2000). Sinason (1992, p. 31) identifies the 'handicapped smile' of a child or adolescent 'numbed with grief'. When feelings are not recognized a young person may demonstrate hurt or pain by 'acting out' which in turn may affect the child's ability to learn.

The provision of counselling in a school for children with moderate learning difficulties has traditionally relied on the class teacher using counselling skills (Bovair and McLaughlin, 1993; Mallon, 1987). McLaughlin (1999) argued that in the complex society in which we grow up, the role of the counsellor should not be compartmentalized but should be incorporated in the role of the class teacher. Barwick (2000) has more recently suggested that there are three 'levels' of counselling: immediate, intermediate and intensive. The first two can be seen as the class teacher utilizing 'counselling skills'; the third implies a specialist or 'clinical school counsellor'. The role of the school counsellor should therefore be developed, and the counsellor should be seen not as an attachment to the school but as an intrinsic aspect of it. He argues that for those children whose development is held back owing to emotional issues, a 'safe' and 'holding' place should be available for a child to explore such issues. This should be part of the educational context; additionally the counsellor can contribute to the understanding of the complexities within the classroom. This study is interested in the effect of counselling by a specialist in the school context on the self-concept of children with moderate learning difficulties.

The intervention was carried out using person-centred verbal counselling and art therapy. When counselling children with a learning disability, Mallon (1987) stresses the importance of using the Rogerian method of verbal counselling. The person-centred counsellor believes that an individual has within them a 'self-actualizing tendency'. This process of self-actualization is a process of reaching autonomy. Rogers (1967) implies that to facilitate the 'self-actualizing' process the appropriate ambience is required. He considered this ambience to be provided by the 'core

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conditions': empathy, acceptance and genuineness. In order to facilitate a therapeutic change it is essential for the counsellor to be able to offer these conditions to the client.

Finding ways to overcome communication difficulties is one of the complications of counselling this client group. For this reason I have used art as an adjunct to this study. The use of this medium as an auxiliary to verbal counselling for people with a learning disability can reduce the clients' anxieties about trying to express themselves. To some extent it can help overcome inherent speech and language problems, and can lead to spontaneous expression (Fennell and Jones, 1998; Tipple, 1994).

Research (Gray, 1985) has already shown that adults with a learning disability can benefit from one-to-one art therapy and can have the capacity for emotional growth. The use of art therapy in this context equally applies to children with a learning disability. It has also been shown that children can benefit from the use of art therapy regardless of their difficulties, because art therapy offers a non-verbal way of working. In being creative the child finds spontaneous ways to express the unmentionable (Dalley, 1994; Silverstone, 1997). However, Rabiger (1998) claims that for some children with severe learning difficulties, psychoanalytical art therapy is inappropriate and can be deemed disrespectful. For this reason my study used person-centred art therapy. This method of using art promotes the ideal conditions to permit a reduction of the power imbalance and respects the child's autonomy.

Learning disability does not preclude the possession of emotional intelligence (Sinason, 1992). Furthermore, there is clear evidence that people with a learning disability can engage in psychoanalytical psychotherapy and art therapy (Beall, 1995; Fennell and Jones, 1998; Gray, 1985; Lewis, 1995; McGuire and Tynan, 1992; Rabiger, 1998; Rawson and Cassidy, 1995; Rees, 1998; Sinason, 1992; Symington, 1981; Tipple, 1994). Unfortunately, there is little documented research with regard to the person-centred approach and the use of person-centred art therapy. Furthermore, there is scarcely any literature that is documented from the perspective of the learning disabled child/adolescent.

This study represents a new approach. The study explores the outcome of a 14 week person-centred counselling intervention using person-centred art therapy as an adjunct. The study evaluates the counselling and its effects from the perspective of the child with a learning disability and their class teacher. It was anticipated that the child would be able to demonstrate progress in self-actualization and that this development would be confirmed by the class teacher.

Methodology

This study is a piece of qualitative research. It consists of two parts:

- 1 practitioner research via an evaluated intervention study
- 2 investigation of teachers' opinions of the child's self-concept via a pre- and post-intervention questionnaire.

Participants are children from a school for moderate learning difficulties. The headteacher selected participants whom he thought might benefit from counselling. In addition, each child's class teacher or form tutor participated in the research.

To find a model of measuring the learning disabled child's self-concept that remains respectful of the child is problematic. To measure a change in a person that reflects the actualizing tendency of the organismic self is in itself a complicated procedure. Rogers defined a seven-stage process of counselling as follows:

I An unwillingness to communicate self; feelings and personal meanings are not recognised or owned. An emotional block.

II Expression begins to flow; problems are expressed as external to self. Contradictions may be expressed but with little recognition of them as contradictions. The beginnings of exploring the individual's attitudes.

III There is a growing awareness of denied elements of self. Feelings are explored as shameful and bad parts of self.

IV There is a loosening of the way experience is constructed. There is a realisation of concern about contradictions and incongruence between experiences and self. An altered perception of self in a changed frame of reference.

V Feelings are expressed freely and are close to being fully experienced. There is ownership of feelings and a desire to be the real me. Movement from the self-concept to self.

VI The incongruence between experience and awareness is vividly experienced as it disappeared to congruence. The client feels cut loose from his previously stabilised framework.

VII There is a growing and continuing sense of acceptant ownership of these changing feelings, a basic trust in one's own process. Feelings are experienced with immediacy and richness of detail both in and out of the therapeutic relationship. (1967, p. 132)

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Ethical considerations

In research with children in a school based environment, rigorous conditions have to be fulfilled by the researcher to ensure ethical consent is obtained to protect the child and the integrity of the research.

Historically children have had a restricted voice in society (Grieg and Taylor, 1999). More recently society has begun to recognize the rights of a child, and these rights have been endorsed in legislation, e.g. the UK Children Act 1989 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1991. This legislation has empowered children in giving them the right to consent to treatment. This is subject to ensuring the child has sufficient understanding and intelligence to comprehend what is expected of them (Select Committee on Medical Ethics, 1994).

Although this legislation respects the child's autonomous rights in society there are perceived difficulties when it comes to obtaining informed consent from the learning disabled child. Can a learning disabled child be autonomous? Autonomy as defined by the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (Onions, 1983) is 'the right to self-government, personal freedom, 1803'. The researcher believes on the basis of her own experience that a learning disabled child has the capacity to self-govern, and consequently to be allowed personal freedom even though they may need support to access this capacity. For this reason I sought the children's consent.

Consent process

Because this research is innovative I will describe the consent process in some detail. My first intentions were to conduct the research with the informed consent of the headteacher, who acts *in loco parentis*, and of the individual children. However, a concern of the University of Hertfordshire Ethics Committee was that parental consent should be sought. Parental consent was therefore gained prior to obtaining verbal consent from the children.

The research counsellor met with the children as a group to inform them about the project and their right to withdraw at any time, and to gain their informed consent. Initially the researcher introduced herself and explained to the children that she was conducting a project. The term 'project' was used as this is familiar to schoolchildren (Morrow, 1999). She informed the children that the purpose of the study was for her to be able to learn all about them. The project was their opportunity to express their views. It was emphasized that there were no wrong or right answers. The children were told part of the project involved 14 weeks of counselling. It was explained to them that their views would be written up in a report and

this might help other children like them to receive counselling. In addition it might be helpful for adults working with learning disabled children to understand them better. An explanation was given as to what the project entailed; this included confidentiality, anonymity and their right to withdraw from the project.

Several children expressed concern regarding anonymity. They felt that if it was important for their views to be heard, then they should be identified. It was implied that for the researcher to protect their identity was to deny part of them. This point of view was given much thought. The researcher wanted to respect the views of the child, yet had the responsibility as an adult to protect the child. It was agreed with the children, as a compromise, that they could choose their own pseudonyms.

Procedure

Once consent was given the children were interviewed individually; a semi-structured interview was used in order to allow for some narrative material to emerge. This method is non-invasive and non-confrontational and went some way to addressing the power imbalance between adult and child (Morrow, 1999).

To evaluate something in its essence is to compare information (Sanders and Liptrot, 1994). In order to have information to compare about the children's self-concept, a baseline was created in the initial interview. The most appropriate way of assessing the self-concept of a child with a learning disability is by using a projective technique (Begley and Lewis, 1998). The children were invited to visualize an animal or object that they felt represented them. They were then asked to make visual on paper their image, using any art materials available (Silverstone, 1997). The children had a selection of paint, crayons, pencils, pens and pastels. With the child's agreement, the interview was taped and the artwork photographed. During the same week each child's class teacher was given a questionnaire with open and closed questions to complete. The questionnaire addressed detailed areas of the child's self-concept and the teacher's perceptions of the child.

Each child then commenced a 14 week counselling intervention. One of the difficulties in the school setting was managing the school holidays, in-service training and other interruptions. It was anticipated that this might be particularly disruptive to the therapeutic process owing to the nature of this client group. Because of the long break it was decided that a midway interview would be conducted. At the conclusion of the intervention the children were all interviewed using a semi-structured format and were offered the same exercise in imaging. In addition the child's class teacher was given a second identical questionnaire to complete.

Results

The researcher's intention was to take the children's descriptions of their images and accounts of themselves as accurate representations of their world. The researcher endeavoured to avoid projecting her interpretation on what they said, wrote or drew. This is central to the core values of the person-centred art therapy philosophy (Silverstone, 1997). The researcher has incorporated her reflections in the discussions and has aimed to differentiate her reflections from the children's views of themselves. All names and identifying features have been changed to protect the identity of the children.

Terry

Terry is a 12-year-old girl. The first image that she produced was a gorilla. She described the gorilla as having 'big fangs and lashes out'. Lashing out is something she does when she gets 'bad tempered'. Terry felt she was really more like a monkey but sees herself as a gorilla and wants to be like one. This is a clear demonstration of her incongruence with her self and self-concept. She feels the need to self-actualize her self-concept, the gorilla, thus moving her further away from her self, the monkey.

Terry's parents are divorced and she does not have any contact with her father. The gorilla was seen as blue, which represents the memories of time spent with her father. For her, this meant happiness with lots of cuddles and sad times. When her father bought her a monkey she named it 'Cuddles', as a happy memory of the time spent with him. Unfortunately, when the toy monkey was recently lost it added further to her emotional turmoil.

Terry also related her feelings to the film *Mighty Joe Young*. The film featured a gorilla that was different from other gorillas owing to its size. He was taken into captivity and removed from familiar territory. Eventually somebody who really cared for him rescued him. He returned to the wild to be free and reunited with his family. Terry longs to be reunited with her father: she identified with the hurt the gorilla experienced from the actions of others.

Terry's behaviour by her own account was difficult and she openly talked about getting into trouble. She liked to smash windows and saw this as fun but on the other hand viewed it as unacceptable behaviour. Her conflict was clear. On one hand there was a sense of not wanting to get into trouble but on the other a desire to. This was a demonstration of her incongruent state of being, and a cry for help.

It appeared that underneath this behaviour was a deep sense of loss and grief. Terry found the loss of her father difficult to manage. This manifested itself in the counselling sessions initially in the joining process. There was

a deep sense of 'push-pull' with her wanting and not wanting to come to her sessions. Terry manipulated staff at the school in actuating this procedure. This was difficult for the counsellor to manage as certain staff were not comfortable with the process of counselling and did not understand it. They would respond to Terry's conflict and support her in not attending sessions. Her locating me and reassuring herself that I would be there for her the following week generally followed this.

Out of the possible 14 sessions Terry attended eight, missing the others because of illness or resistance to the therapeutic process. However, by session 12 something had moved within Terry. The conflict had ceased and she was able to use her time in the session. It was also clear that she was aware of the ending and was able to articulate how difficult this was for her.

Terry's final image was a monkey. This for her meant 'fun, nice and cuddly'. She used a gold pen; the colour for her meant 'treasure'. It appeared Terry had made some movement towards her true self, although ambivalence remained. Terry reported that she did like herself but did not know why, and conversely reported she didn't feel good about herself. It seemed Terry was at stage III of the seven-stage process of counselling. Terry was becoming more aware of herself and described her feelings as bad parts of herself.

George

George is an 11-year-old boy. George's first image was a gorilla, this for him meant strong. He felt he was like this animal and wanted to be like the animal. He also related this to a wrestler, Hulk Holgan, and an actor, Arnold Schwarzenegger. His images for him represented something positive, strong and with muscle.

Although George stated he felt he was good at drawing he was unable to draw his image, as it was 'too hard'. He used a pencil and made a few markings on the paper to represent the beginnings of a gorilla. He had a belief in the positive connotations of a person with muscles and strength. He continually repeated the word 'strong' to encapsulate the meaning of muscular, strength and goodness as ideals. These ideals may have been derived from his conditions of worth. However, his true self may be something quite different. Perhaps this was revealed by not being able to draw his image.

George discussed his love of animals. He spoke of his anger and sadness about them getting hurt or becoming homeless. George became defensive of his sadness and sensitivity, perhaps fearing I might mock him.

Even though he felt it was difficult to be in the room with the door shut, demonstrating a fear of a confined space, George attended 13 out of

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the possible 14 sessions. His sessions were challenging. George spent considerable time in the sessions working behind a screen, not wanting to reveal himself fully for fear of my reaction to him. In the sessions he was offered acceptance and empathy. At first he found this difficult to manage, and so ridiculed the work. In session 8 there was a movement that allowed George to work with me; he no longer needed the screen to hide behind. In the same session George closed the door to the room, but dismissed my reflection on this.

George's final image was of himself. He felt the paint he used was brown, when in fact it was grey (for me). George did not want to work with this image. Although he did not want to work with the image the contrast from the initial representation was astounding. George had used different media in his two images. For the second image he used paint rather than a pencil, which for me reflected a greater presence of self. He had utilized all the space on the paper; that again reflects a greater sense of self than his image when he only drew part of the image in a small section of the paper. The choice of media, image and process of creating the piece of work seemed to reflect the changes observed in the counselling work with George. It appeared that George had reached stage II of the seven-stage process of counselling. He was beginning to explore freely but still seeing any problems as external to self.

Samantha

Samantha is a 6-year-old girl. Samantha was unable to image an animal; she drew her father and her mother. Samantha thought her mother would laugh at her images. It was difficult to get a sense of where she was and how she viewed herself. Her interview was filled with contradictions, with apparent difficulty in separating happy and sad emotions.

Samantha attended nine out of the 14 sessions. There was a deep sense of her being out of control and of a life that seemed very chaotic. This manifested itself by her choosing when she would come to the sessions and when she wouldn't. It became clear that she found it difficult to have a change of activity. If she was entrenched in the class activity at the time of her appointment, she became hysterical and didn't want to leave the class to attend her session. However, it was reported that when the class activity was finished she then wanted to see the counsellor. Unfortunately her time had passed and the counsellor was unavailable for her. The research counsellor recognized that many learning disabled children have to endure different levels of intrusions in their lives and consequently may have little sense of boundaries. Perhaps Samantha was asserting herself, and taking some control in her life. The research counsellor responded to these events by endeavouring to offer a safe and holding place to work through this powerful projection.

Samantha's final image was using blue paint on blue paper. Blue is not her favourite colour but what she wanted to use on that day. Samantha wanted the paper folded in half 'gently'. Samantha would not work with the image on this occasion. Perhaps the action of folding her painting in half was her illustration of her resistance to disclosure and maintaining control. Samantha seemed to still be in stage I of the seven-stage process of counselling; she was unwilling at some level to communicate self.

Blue on blue was invisible. The folding in half created a butterfly image. Did she not want the counsellor to see her inner beauty? Perhaps she felt that neither the counsellor nor others saw her true self. It may be this was her demonstration of her struggle with her self and self-concept.

Tom

Tom is a 12-year-old boy whose first image was a snake. For him, a snake was interesting, colourful; it stood out and people took notice of it. However, he would like to be like a horse, 'something with legs that runs', 'happy and nice'. Furthermore, he would like to be like the actor Eddie Murphy. Tom recalled a film he watched recently where Eddie Murphy played a character who became invisible. Tom would like to be invisible; for him Eddie Murphy is fun. Tom seemed to be addressing a conflict between the wish to be seen and the wish to be invisible. For him, to be seen meant also to be judged.

Tom attended 12 sessions of a possible 14. There seemed to be a different emphasis in the work with Tom. It appeared that his basic needs were being met by his home situation (Maslow, 1968). Unlike the other clients he knew how to self-soothe. He had developed enough of sense of self to fall back on in times of stress and the focus of our work seemed to be to enhance, strengthen and develop his creativity and sense of self. In the counselling sessions Tom was able to own and express feelings; it appeared that Tom fluctuated between stages III and IV of the seven-stage process of counselling.

Tom's final image was a treasure chest; this for him had a very expensive Egyptian mask on the front. And the chest was filled with 'treasure, just treasure'. This image perhaps indicates his sense of containing something valuable within himself, which also may need to be kept secret.

In this project there were two teachers involved. They were given an identical questionnaire to fill out before and after interventions. It appeared, on the whole, that the staff did not identify the changes in self-concept that the individual children demonstrated and the counsellor witnessed. This might be because of the measurement used for assessing the child's self-concept. The questionnaire might have been inadequate or used insufficient categories. Possibly another way of recording the teacher's views may

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have been more productive. One teacher reported back difficulties using this questionnaire. He felt that the child involved did not fit easily into the categories because of the nature of her disability and developmental stage. On the other hand it may be that the teachers involved had high expectations of a counselling intervention and required more substantial gains. However, out of the four questionnaires, one questionnaire indicated a positive movement in seven out of 10 areas. The other three indicated on the whole a negative movement.

Discussion

The timescale open to this particular project may not have allowed the children to make as much progress as would be possible for them. The researcher feels that the process of learning with learning disabled children is likely to be protracted and it may be inevitable that the process of self-actualization will be slower. Even though the researcher sensed and witnessed observable changes evident within individuals, some of the children lack the sophistication of language to say what they felt happened.

Furthermore, equating this with the teacher's perspective is even more complicated. The dynamics between teacher and pupil need to be taken into account and also the teacher's expectations of gains within counselling.

In this study staff at the school were used as research participants. It seems likely that richer data would have been obtained by enlisting the staff as research collaborators. This would have involved them much more in the project from the beginning and enhanced the contribution they were able to make.

The evidence in this project suggests that despite the children's learning difficulties this client group was able to access this style of intervention and benefit from it. On the whole, it became clear that the development of the children who participated in this project was being held back by emotional issues and they were able to utilize the 'safe' and 'holding' place to explore their emotional dilemmas. It became apparent from the evidence gathered that this process allowed them a degree of self-actualization leading to an improved self-concept.

As has already been indicated, work of this kind is not without its difficulties and ethical dilemmas. A particular ethical problem arose. The researcher carried out the initial interview. The research assistant then offered a mid-term interview using the same format. During these interviews it became apparent that the participants, the children, were uncomfortable talking to a stranger and the interviews were abandoned. In fact prior to the research assistant meeting with the children, one of the original five participants dropped out. My understanding was he dropped out

because his sense of self was so fragile that meeting with a stranger was too arduous. The children's reaction to the research assistant (who was highly qualified and very experienced) was something that had not been anticipated. The research required a further final interview to be conducted by the same research assistant. This left the researcher with an ethical dilemma in relation to the welfare of the children. The researcher now had the choice of collecting the data herself or abandoning the research element of the project. The researcher felt to abandon this element would have been more unethical than collecting the data herself. This was put to the children who agreed to this course of action. Furthermore, the children explicitly stated their reluctance to work with the research assistant again. The children themselves were committed to the project and proud to be part of it. Therefore, the researcher conducted the final interview.

It is clear that the children felt the meeting with a stranger was intrusive. Such vulnerable children need time to build a relationship with a person before disclosing anything of themselves. It would appear for a research assistant to be accepted by the children that the assistant would have needed to be introduced at the commencement of the project. In addition the research assistant would have needed to meet with the participants prior to the interviews so they could become acquainted.

The final interview also caused problems. The researcher had been advised to separate the roles of counsellor and researcher and had not intended to conduct the final interview. However, the difficulties in using a stranger meant that the researcher found herself filling both roles. She emphasized the difference in these roles to the children in preparation for the interview. The children were told that she would be meeting them and would be asking them to do a specific task, like she had in their initial meeting. The children were told there were no wrong or right answers. The importance was for them to answer honestly and openly; this was their opportunity to let others know about themselves.

Whilst the explanation had been clear to the children and they had all agreed, it became clear that the children found this experience very confusing. George articulated 'why was I different', 'what was my real name'. On the whole, the children cooperated by producing the required image yet refrained from working with this with any profundity.

It may be this action was a direct demonstration of their sense of self. They felt strong enough about themselves to express concern of their experience with me in the two roles. On the other hand their reaction may reflect one of the difficulties of working with this client group.

This project has highlighted many difficulties not only in researching this client group but in offering counselling to such children. Counselling and researching with learning disabled children is in its infancy; the

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researcher hopes this article will create discussion. The researcher believes the way forward would be to build upon this project and explore the effect of person-centred counselling with this client group over a longer period of time.

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Appendix

Fourteen

Published Work

**Buckroyd & Flitton
2004**



Emotional and
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The measurement of self-concept in children with complex needs

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ABSTRACT This article offers a brief definition of self-concept and explores the difficulties of finding an instrument to measure the self-concept of young people who have complex needs. The article focuses on the use of the Piers–Harris 2 instrument, exploring its strengths and weaknesses for this client group.

KEYWORDS
complex needs;
counselling;
Piers–Harris;
self-concept

Introduction

The authors of this article are currently engaged in carrying out a programme of research into the efficacy of person-centred counselling for children with complex needs. The research has been funded by The Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund. As the research has progressed from a pilot (Flitton and Buckroyd, 2002) to a main study, it has been thought useful to find quantitative ways of measuring change in self-concept in the children concerned which will augment the qualitative results derived from child, therapist teacher and teaching assistant reports on the process. Deciding on a relevant measure has been complex, particularly in relation to the specific problems of our client group. Since other colleagues and researchers may have similar needs for a quantitative measure which can be used to chart development, the process of deciding on a measure and the problems associated with the various possibilities have been presented here.

Person-centred definitions of self-concept

Because the research project is concerned with the efficacy of person-centred counselling, the consideration of self-concept started from

person-centred theories. The person-centred theory of self-concept has been described as a structured set of self-perceptions that can be brought into self-awareness (Merry, 1995). Self-perception is developed through a lifetime of experiences of how we interact with the world and things and people in it. In essence it is not a static set of constructs but a number of concepts which evolve over time. Rogers (1967) believed that the influences in our childhood experience directly affect our construct of self. We learn during childhood which behaviours are desired or valued by our caregivers and which are not. The value (or in Rogers's terms, 'regard') which is placed on any behaviour can be positive or not (in Rogers's terms, 'unconditional' or 'conditional'). Those behaviours met with unconditional regard will be allowed and those met with conditional regard will be hidden or distorted. For example, if I have experienced conditional regard in relation to expressing the emotion of fear, my sense of self-worth will be based on not expressing this emotion. Rogers described this process as the development of conditions of worth; in this example an element of my self-construct would be that I do not show fear.

Rogers (1967) further suggested a second element of the self: an ideal self. Using the previous example I may construct the ideal self that I am not afraid of anything. If I were then exposed to a situation in which I felt frightened, for example seeing a spider, I would not be able to express fear appropriately. My expression of fear might be denied or distorted. Because the expression of fear would be felt to be incongruent with my self-concept, my feelings and behaviour would not match. The result might be that I feel at dis-ease with my self.

Person-centred theory believes (Rogers, 1967) that the self has the inherent ability to develop towards wholeness or 'self-actualization'. For this process to be facilitated, three conditions need to be present: unconditional positive regard, congruence and empathy. In the presence of such conditions the self has the ability to reconstruct the self-concept, despite earlier experience, thus affecting the way we behave in the world and develop and sustain relationships. The provision of such conditions is the heart of person-centred counselling. The research project to which this discussion relates aims to test the efficacy of person-centred counselling by measuring the changes which may be brought about as the result of a counselling intervention, in terms of changes in self-concept.

Measuring self-concept

Changes in self-concept, as indicated above, are central to the theory of person-centred psychotherapy. Rogers himself was interested in measuring these changes. He describes (Rogers, 1967) an instrument called a Q-sort,

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self-concept more broadly. Some were designed for age ranges that were unsuitable for our purposes: we needed for our study to use an instrument that was suitable for pre-adolescents and adolescents. Finally, some required a reading age which was more advanced than was suitable for our participants.

The one instrument of these six that was more suitable for the age range and reading ability of our participants was the Piers–Harris Children’s Self Concept Scale (Piers and Harris, 1984). This was initially designed by Piers and Harris in the early 1960s and published in 1963. The intention of the instrument was to provide a self-report assessment of a child or an adolescent’s self-concept. It is designed for use with children from the ages of 7 to 18, with the recommendation of a reading grade of level 2. (This corresponds to a reading ability appropriate to year 2 as measured in the UK.) The authors define self-concept as ‘a relatively stable set of attitudes reflecting both description and evaluation of one’s own behaviour and attitudes’ (Piers et al., 2002, p. 3).

This instrument has been widely adopted and is cited as being the most frequently used and highly recommended instrument for pre-adolescent tests (Marsh and Holmes, 1990). One of the reasons for our interest in it was that it has been widely used in the UK for mainstream populations, so that data derived from it are in a form familiar and comprehensible to those working in this area and comparable with other data.

The instrument was devised as a one-dimensional measure of self-concept but clearly has a multidimensional construction and permits of the identification and analysis of subscores. It consists of an 80-item self-report questionnaire prompting yes/no answers. The instrument is extremely user friendly for the administrator with a built-in auto score sheet that requires little to no former training in psychometric testing. It provides a total (TOT) score, which reflects the participant’s general self-concept, a one-dimensional score. Additionally, it offers six domain scales, which assess specific areas of the structure of the self: behavioural (BEH), intellectual and school status (INT), physical appearance and attributes (PHY), anxiety (ANX), popularity (POP) and happiness and satisfaction (HAP). The instrument includes two validity scales: the inconsistent responding (INC) and a response bias (RES). Previous reports for reliability range from 0.96 to 0.42 with a retest interval of 3–4 weeks to 4 months.

Byrne (1996) commented that the instrument had not been revised or revamped for some time and perhaps more recently developed instruments might challenge its status. However, the instrument has recently been revised and is now called the Piers–Harris 2 (Piers et al., 2002). The authors report three significant changes. First, it now contains new nationally representative standard data that offer a better reflection of the population

reliability scores for the new instrument, we decided that we should ourselves carry out a test-retest reliability test with our participants to ascertain whether it would be suitable for use with this client group.

Thirty young people took part from a school for children with complex needs, in the year groups 5/6, 7 and 9 (age range 9-15). The instrument was implemented in a group situation, divided into smaller groups to enable an adult to read the questions to the young people with reading difficulties. The test was then repeated in the identical format with an 8 week interval.

The timing of the test-retest reliability test was not optimal. Because of the launch of the revised edition of the instrument a delay occurred in its availability. It was then necessary to carry out the test before and after the school summer break. We were aware that the many changes in routine and experiences with a holiday of this duration might create more change in students than would normally be expected over a period of 8 weeks, but we decided that it was our only opportunity to carry out the test.

The authors of the Piers-Harris 2 state the instrument is suitable for implementation in an individual or group format. It became clear, however, that a group format was not ideal for this client group. One of the difficulties discovered was the conferring over answers and the issue of the acceptability of an answer within the peer group. We were aware of this possibility and were careful to say to the participants that there were no wrong or right answers. We also stressed that it was important that they should answer according to their own feelings and perceptions. These instructions were repeated throughout the test. In addition discussions were initiated in the group to emphasize that the students' answers would not affect their acceptance within the peer group. Nevertheless, despite these efforts, it is likely that some youngsters' answers were distorted by peer pressure. Administration of the test to individuals would have been very much more time consuming but might have produced different results. Nevertheless even individual administration might have been affected by students giving what they felt was the right answer rather than an answer of their own.

Another difficulty we experienced in administering the test was the language of the test. Because the questionnaire is American it contains terminology different to our own. Some young people found this difficult to understand or accept: for example, 'dumb' is not a term used in our schools. In addition some questions, e.g. 'Am I smart?', fitted into two domains, intellectual and physical appearance. The question is scored in both domains, but permits of only one answer, because this is primarily a one-dimensional scale. This ambiguity caused confusion among participants.

Staff who implemented the instrument also noticed that certain pupils

were answering according to what they felt was required, or with the 'right' answer. We believe that exaggeration (as they call it) is common amongst children, as is the wish to excel. The authors of the Piers-Harris 2 seem to be aware of this possibility and suggest the TOT score may be inflated as a result. They warn that a score of 66T and above should be interpreted with caution.

Our feeling about these exaggerations is that they may be an expression of the 'ideal self'. Our thought is that such a child may be able to relinquish these distortions as a result of counselling, and in this case the self-concept score might go down but would be more authentic.

The results of the test-retest were not what we were hoping for. We had hoped for something closer to 0.7. The test-retest reliability was 0.538 based on Pearson's correlation. The implication is that a student will have to make considerable change – 7 points or more with an intervention group of 13 students – before it will be demonstrated using the Piers-Harris 2. There may be a number of reasons for this poor reliability score. One factor may have been, as previously suggested, that the retest interval was not optimal.

We believe the results in the test-retest reliability go some way to strengthen the argument of Byrne (1996) that research and the availability of appropriate instruments for measuring the self-concept of this client group are deficient. The results of the test-retest reliability also confirm our view that there is no single instrument suitable for general use in a school where the children have such diverse needs. However, although not ideal, we believe that the Piers-Harris 2 will go some way to revealing how this client group perceive themselves in general terms and in specific areas of their self-concept, and will have some use in measuring changes as a result of a counselling intervention.

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Appendix

Fifteen

Published Work

**Flitton & Buckroyd
2005**

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Counselling children and young people who attend a school for children with complex needs: A Case Study

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Abstract

We report the findings of a case study exploring the views of the student, teacher, teaching assistant and counsellor who participated in a project to evaluate counselling with young people who attend a school for children with complex needs in the UK. The student was offered twenty six weeks of humanistic counselling. The student, teacher and teaching assistant were interviewed pre and post counselling using a semi structured format. They were asked about the student's development in the seven areas of self concept which are named in the quantitative scale Piers Harris 2, which was used elsewhere in the project. Data was also gathered from the notes and transcripts of the counselling sessions. The case study describes an approach to the use of language and the counselling process with a student with complex needs. Staff were not able to report any significant changes in the student, yet the student reported a change in herself and an awareness of the process in the counselling relationship and the counsellor identified improvements in communication, self awareness and self confidence.

Keywords: *Case study, children, complex needs, emotional difficulties, emotional intelligence, learning difficulties, school counselling.*

Introduction

The provision of counselling for learning disabled young people is new and very limited (Worrall-Davies et al., 2004) yet a report of the committee of inquiry into meeting the mental health needs of young people with learning disabilities (2002) suggests that learning disabled children are at greater risk of developing mental health issues. The committee suggest the lack of provision and support for learning disabled young people needs to be addressed (Carpenter et al., 2002). Counselling is one way to support learning disabled young people in their mental health and a school may be a good place to offer this service because of its accessibility. However, there is little known about the effects of counselling with learning disabled young people in a school environment (Carpenter et al., 2002). If a counselling service is to develop then a model for access and the effects of counselling have to be thoroughly researched and presented (Carpenter et al., 2002).

Counselling is now widely available in schools in the UK for the general population, yet a comparable service in special schools has yet to be established. The general response to a young person with a learning disability who is presenting a mental health issue is 'no response' (Carpenter et al., 2002, p. 60) Counselling in a special school in many respects is no different to counselling in any other school, although the counsellor needs to be aware their client group raises different issues for the counsellor. We do not have an integrated education system in the UK at present; this segregation means that many counsellors have not worked with learning disabled people (Mason, 1990). This lack of experience may lead to misconceptions and stereotyping which may hinder the therapeutic relationship. Working with disability is also accepting difference, a difference that can be painful (Sinason, 1992; Ommaney & Symes, 2000; Flitton & Buckroyd, 2002).

One challenge of working with students with complex needs is finding respectful

What does this study explore?

- Counselling with a learning disabled student in a school

ways to overcome communication difficulties, including age appropriate toys and games for the room. The counselling requires a lateral creative space in order to generate a place where counsellor and client can communicate. Children and young people with communication difficulties may not be able to express themselves verbally. Other ways have to be found to enable children and young people to communicate.

The project

The authors of this paper are carrying out a research project which is evaluating humanistic counselling for young people who attend a school for children with complex needs. The project took place in the UK in a London Borough school where the students have a range of social, emotional and learning difficulties. The students were offered twenty six weeks of humanistic counselling; the sessions were for forty-five minutes once a week during term time over an academic year. Various aspects of the project are reported elsewhere (Flitton & Buckroyd, 2002; Buckroyd & Flitton, 2004; Flitton & Buckroyd, 2005). The project seeks to understand the effects of a humanistic counselling intervention from the students', teachers', teaching assistants' and counsellor's perspective.

Participants

Thirty students between the ages of ten and sixteen were selected by the school, who it was thought might benefit from counselling. The school prioritised the students into two groups. Fifteen received counselling in the first year and the remaining fifteen initially became the comparison group and received counselling from the same counsellor in the second year. There were twenty boys and ten girls in the project. The ratio of boys and girls in the project is a reflection of the disproportionate number of boys attending the school. The students' ethnicity included Asian, Black African,

Black Caribbean, French, Greek Cypriot, Italian, Kurdish, Somalian, Turkish, White English and White Irish. The students had a range of social, emotional and learning difficulties including specific diagnoses such as Down's syndrome, Aspergers syndrome, Autistic Spectrum Disorder, learning difficulties and global developmental delay. Each student's class teacher or form tutor and their teaching assistant participated in the project.

Methodology

In the project we explored a methodological approach that was compatible with the research goals. The research project had two elements

1. A quantitative element: we used a validated instrument to measure the self concept of children and adolescents, the Piers Harris 2 (2002).
2. A qualitative element: semi structured interviews with students, teachers and teaching assistants.

The self concept measure and interviews were implemented on four occasions, pre, post, three month and at one year follow up to the counselling intervention. The counsellor carried out the interviews with the staff but an independent person was employed to interview the students and to implement the questionnaire. Initial results of those measures are reported elsewhere. This paper seeks to address the particular issues of communication encountered and the results of the counselling with one student. We have chosen a case study format to report this material.

Clinical case studies, especially in the psycho-analytical tradition, have been criticised for (Yin, 1989; Sanders & Liptrot, 1994; McLeod, 1999; Gillham, 2000; Yin, 2003)

1. Failure to seek consent or ethical approval
2. Practitioner bias; data is compiled from retrospective notes alone
3. Lack of adequate data collection methods; data collection is begun after counselling begins or is written up retrospectively.

Case studies as a research method are more rigorously conducted; in this project

'This paper seeks to address the particular issues of communication encountered and the results of the counselling with one student'

1. consent from the participants, parents and the school was obtained prior to the study
2. Ethical approval was also gained prior to the study
3. Notes from the counselling sessions were supplemented by the recorded sessions, which reduced recollection bias. This data was in turn supplemented with interviews with the students and with the staff.

Case study has the advantage that it can show how the work has been conducted at greater length and in more detail. It can also highlight, as in this example, particular aspects of the work (Yin, 2003). This case study reports the findings from the interviews with one student, teacher, teaching assistant and the counsellor. Names and some of the details have been changed to protect identities. It describes an approach to the use of language and the counselling process with young people with complex needs. The data was examined and significant moments identified; these moments are categorised by the development in style of communication. The changes identified are described with some theoretical exploration. Different theoretical approaches have been called upon to understand the client although the counsellor's way of being with the client was humanistic.

The process in the sessions

Kemi was eleven years old when we met for the project. She was born in England but her heritage is Asian; she is the youngest of three children and lives with both parents. Kemi does not have a specific diagnosis but has a global development delay and has difficulties with spatial awareness.

Kemi was referred to the project because of her immature behaviour; staff at the school described her as, 'almost like two children': 'When she's in the lesson she's quite focused and she knows what she's doing and she can get on with it by herself, but outside the classroom she's absolutely scatty, doesn't know what day of the week it is, doesn't even know what planet she's on half the time'. Staff found her 'quite physical' and unable to take responsibility for herself, 'she denies everything'. She was 'unkempt' and was frequently not in school uniform because

she was dressed in 'what her sisters gave her to wear'. Staff felt she was 'obviously not mature enough to decide for herself what she's got to put on, and gets given the first thing by her sister and she'll put that on'. Staff believed she 'didn't seem to be afraid of anything', but 'would whinge constantly with tears'. When the staff were interviewed about her it became clear that they were quite irritated by her behaviour and felt that she should receive counselling to rectify her behaviour.

Kemi found it difficult to express herself directly to the interviewer but told a vivid story of a 'helicopter flying around, pecking and pulling at people'. Kemi's story continued with a snake which seemed to represent her self and a scary monster that she said was 'like her mum and dad'. In her story nobody listened to the snake; people were there, a brother and a sister but the snake was ignored. The snake was scared of the monster but it wanted to eat the monster (this never happened). The story ended by the helicopter crashing and a very clear The End.

I met Kemi from her class, as I frequently do for most clients on their first session. Kemi was happy to leave the classroom and come to the counselling room, a desire to please that resonated in sessions. Kemi demonstrated little curiosity about who the counsellor was or what counselling is about and showed no interest in the things in the room. She presented, as described by staff, as 'airy fairy' and eager to please, yet there was an angry undertone to her voice.

In the first session the counsellor presented Kemi with a folder where she could store her work and said she could draw or write on her folder so we could identify it as hers. She wrote both our names on the folder and then drew pictures on the back: a sun, moon and stars. She drew a solid black line around the pictures and said 'my mother would be pleased with the picture'. Kemi was preoccupied with meeting her mother's needs and I wondered whether the line represented some containment.

At the end of the first session Kemi found it difficult to leave the room. She became very childlike and said she hadn't noticed the things in the room and she wanted to look at them now. The counsellor acknowledged her difficulty in

'Kemi's difficulty in leaving the counselling room seemed to be her way of communicating her insecurities, feelings of abandonment and the lack of consistent boundaries in her life'

leaving the room and reassured her things would be there next week for her to explore. Kemi's difficulty in leaving the counselling room seemed to be her way of communicating her insecurities, feelings of abandonment and the lack of consistent boundaries in her life.

Initially Kemi used different art materials in the room. She particularly liked using the pastels and the paints; she became engrossed in her art work and appeared to revel in the 'mess'. She did not want any dialogue around her art work but was happy 'playing' in the presence of a 'maternal figure' (Winnicott, 1974). In this state, she frequently became relaxed but unfortunately knocked things over. She would immediately clean things up and comment on how pleased her mother would be that she 'cleaned up so well'. She appeared anxious that the counsellor might be cross with her and wanted to make everything 'perfect'. The counsellor also wondered if there was some underlying aggression to her actions. As she placed her art work in her folder she, would again comment how pleased her mother would be.

During the early stages of the work the counsellor remained consistent and interested in what she was doing but not intrusive in her play. The way Kemi used the art materials indicated that her creative play had been limited. Her anxiety about making a mess demonstrated that she had experienced unpredictable responses and her defence was to reduce any threatening reaction to her by trying to make everything 'perfect'. I also wondered if Kemi was becoming skilled in meeting her mother's emotional needs and was trying to make her mother happy by tidying up and making 'pretty pictures'. Kemi was also testing out the counsellor's reaction; was the counsellor safe enough to explore further feelings, could she hold 'intolerable' feelings?

So far Kemi had used very little speech and had not engaged with the counsellor directly. However, on week fourteen Kemi began to communicate very differently; she informed the counsellor that her parents were on holiday in India. She said she was staying with foster carers and she was very distressed and angry at the absence of her parents. In the session the counsellor stayed with Kemi's sense of abandonment and worked with the anger. The counsellor decided to check this information out at

school, without compromising the confidentiality of the relationship. Her parents had not gone away and she was not with carers. The counsellor decided in consultation with her supervisor not to challenge Kemi but to use her story to further understand the work. Creating the story of her parent's absence was apparently her only way of communicating her sense of abandonment. Kemi was also testing out the counsellor; would she believe her story? The counsellor's sense was that the school would quickly correct the facts and not hear the underlying message. Kemi believed her feelings were intolerable and nobody could hear them.

Following this incident Kemi initiated role play into her sessions. The relationship with the counsellor had become 'safe' and the counsellor had understood her communication and could contain some 'big' feelings, so Kemi was becoming braver and more creative in her expression. Kemi brought some paper into the session and left it on the table. The counsellor enquired about what she had brought in and asked if she could look at it. The paper contained notes and drawings that she had written to the counsellor indicating how much she liked the counsellor and missed her in-between sessions. Kemi was not able to tell the counsellor directly what had happened but communicated by the means of role play. Kemi was the mother and the counsellor was her, 'Mother' (Kemi) was very angry with 'Kemi' (the counsellor) because 'Kemi' had been writing notes to Beverley (Counsellor). This scenario could be understood on several levels, Kemi seemed to be talking about the mother's jealousy of Kemi's relationship with the counsellor. Kemi was also demonstrating to the counsellor her anger with her mother.

The counsellor was then asked to play the role of the 'grumpy father'. He didn't listen to anybody and shouted at them and always told them what to do; another insight into how she experienced things at home. Kemi found it difficult to impart information by face to face dialogue; she often became confused and muddled in what she was saying, but she had found a creative way to communicate and trusted the counsellor to hold and contain these powerful communications of a jealous and possessive but neglectful mother and an angry controlling father.

'The relationship with the counsellor had become 'safe' and the counsellor had understood her communication and could contain some 'big' feelings, so Kemi was becoming braver and more creative in her expression'

The work continued using role play, both counsellor and Kemi taking active parts, but directed by Kemi. The themes of hurt, punishment, surviving and forgiveness were acted out over the next few weeks. The room was always divided into two, each of us having our own 'home'. We were both women and each had a baby. In one particular session it transpired that my 'husband' killed my 'baby' although the 'killing' was never acted out. In the session my husband had to go to prison. Once my husband had been removed from the home, and Kemi felt we were safe, she accompanied me to the hospital with my 'dead' baby. She was sure the baby was dead because there was blood on its back. There was no hope at the hospital as the doctors and nurses could not do anything to help the 'dead' baby. Kemi suggested I take the baby home and make it some breakfast. When I made the food this made the baby come back to life. Kemi was pleased that I was able to bring my baby back to life and returned to her own home. She then phoned me and invited me over for dinner. She said I was to phone the prison and ask for my husband to be released as it was all a mistake. The counsellor reflected how scared baby and the women felt and Kemi said she would make some special biscuits to make us feel better. This was the first time she was able to give to the counsellor and indicated the development of her empathy. From using art material alone for thirteen sessions, she moved in less than ten sessions to not only describing her emotional environment to actively working on her responses and moving towards forgiveness and gratitude. In session twenty-one we were preparing for a break for the Easter holidays. Kemi was very angry with the counsellor because she had not bought her an Easter egg. Kemi knew what she needed and was becoming skilled in finding ways of getting the counsellor to help her create it. She used the session to turn it into her birthday and we made her a card and a pretend cake and had a birthday party.

In the run up to the ending Kemi became very tactile, wanting to hold the counsellor's hand and kiss her. Kemi was aware that her time with the counsellor was coming to an end and anxious about the separation. The counsellor felt as if Kemi needed to consume her; at times this felt overwhelming. Kemi would

alternate in the session from being loving and tactile to angry and aggressive. The counsellor tried to contain these feelings; she put boundaries around the physical contact by allowing Kemi to hold her hand or give her a hug but no kissing. At the same time the counsellor reflected back verbally the difficulties of ending. The counsellor facilitated and held her anger enabling her to know it was ok to be angry and find appropriate ways to express this.

On our last session Kemi was clearly upset at the ending and wanted to sit very close to the counsellor holding her hand. The counsellor allowed Kemi to sit with her and held her hand whilst reflecting what was happening. Kemi returned to a final role play to communicate her understanding of the therapeutic work. Kemi requested we acted out sleeping beauty; the counsellor had to play the prince that rescued sleeping beauty (Kemi) from her deep slumber.

At the conclusion of the counselling staff were re-interviewed; generally staff were not able to comment on any improvements to her behaviour and still felt she was very scatty. However, they had observed her physical appearance had improved and she had stopped making 'growling noises' and 'didn't frown as much'. Kemi was also re-interviewed but whilst she found it difficult to answer direct questions from the interviewer there was a noticeable development in her communication. She reported finding some magic beans but was rushed and no longer had the time to plant them. She said she 'felt different' and it was 'good' working with the counsellor but she also 'felt sad, sometimes'. She felt that having counselling helped her with her friends and some of her school work. Kemi reported that she 'missed working with the counsellor' and was angry with the counsellor for no longer being available to her.

Process analysis

Kemi's experience in her life had been of emotional deprivation and non acceptance. Kemi could not trust the school environment to accept the reality of her home environment and her feelings about it. So rather than show her hurt, anger and disappointment she presented as 'scatty'. Her behaviour may be irritating

'From using art material alone for thirteen sessions, she moved in less than ten sessions to not only describing her emotional environment to actively working on her responses and moving towards forgiveness and gratitude'

What does this study tell us?

- Learning disabled students may need methods of communication other than verbal
- The attachment to the counsellor is a vital part of the process

to staff but is not dangerous or challenging.

In the work the counsellor and Kemi found a way to communicate through the use of art and projective play. Initially Kemi explored the relationship with the counsellor through art; testing out whether the counsellor was interested in her and able to stay with her. This seemed to reflect the process of Kemi building a secure attachment to the counsellor. Kemi gradually became braver and explored other creative ways of communicating. Initially she told a story to express her feelings of abandonment. When the counsellor demonstrated she could hear this and understood her communication, Kemi trusted the counsellor to further explore her environment. She continued to use role play to reveal the problems and find ways to resolve issues. She brought in her drawings from home to show the counsellor and utilised role play to offer another insight into how she experienced life at home.

'As Kemi continued to use role play she was able to show the counsellor how she experienced her life and how she really felt'

As Kemi continued to use role play she was able to show the counsellor how she experienced her life and how she really felt. In the story where the baby was killed and the father went to prison Kemi seemed to be communicating that she experiences father figures as violent and dangerous. Mother figures are dominated by father figures to such an extent that they are rendered powerless. In seeking help from professionals her experience seems to have been that they are unable or unwilling to help her; this has left her with a feeling of hopelessness. Kemi was communicating her deep hurt by the blood on the baby's back; the dying baby indicated she felt herself dying within. When the counsellor returned home with the baby and made the baby some food, which brought it back to life, this appeared to represent her acknowledgement of what the counsellor was offering and her ability to receive it. Towards the end of this story the counsellor was instructed to phone the

prison and ask for her husband's release which seemed to demonstrate her forgiveness.

At the break for the Easter holidays her anger with the counsellor for not buying her an Easter egg seemed to reflect her need for a transitional object for the forthcoming break. Kemi was able to communicate her need for something concrete and special to sustain her over the break by creating a birthday celebration. Her need for a transitional object seemed to be met by having a birthday card, made by the counsellor, to take with her.

Kemi found the ending premature and difficult to manage, yet she was able to sum up the work quite beautifully in her chosen way to communicate, the fairy tale. In her interview she was clear that she had been given something (the beans) and had awoken from her slumber (sleeping beauty). However, it appeared she felt that although she had awoken there was not enough time to allow these beans to grow and was angry because of this.

Staff were only able to comment on minor changes within Kemi. The lack of awareness among staff of any improvements with Kemi's behaviour may reflect that Kemi still felt the school environment could not tolerate her real self and needed to maintain the 'scatty' behaviour to feel safe. Additionally, as Kemi said, there was not sufficient time for her to consolidate the changes and development in her self-awareness. The counsellor's view was that significant growth had taken place which would manifest in due course.

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Appendix

Sixteen

Published Work

**Flitton, Buckroyd & Vasilliou
2006**

Developing social and emotional fluency: an evaluation of a therapeutic group for girls who attend a school for students with complex needs

Beverley Flitton, Julia Buckroyd and Maria Vassiliou

Beverley Flitton is a PhD student at the University of Hertfordshire, where Julia Buckroyd is Professor of Counselling, and Maria Vassiliou is employed at Durants School, Enfield, as a nursery nurse. In this article, they describe the process of setting up and running a therapeutic group for girls in a school for students with learning difficulties and complex needs in London, England. Six girls, from years 9 and 10, aged 14 to 15, participated in the group. They were offered 23 weeks of group work. The six girls, their teachers and their teaching assistants were interviewed before and after the series of sessions using a semi-structured schedule. These interviews formed a core part of an evaluation of the impact of the therapeutic group and data were also gathered from notes taken in the group sessions. This article describes the issues presented by the girls and their development in the group. Staff reported significant changes in two of the students and noticeable changes in the remaining four. The girls reported an awareness of changes in themselves and Beverley Flitton, Julia Buckroyd and Maria Vassiliou, reflecting on the girls' emotional problems and social development, suggest that they were able to transfer skills gained in the group into other situations.

Key words: emotional problems, social development, learning difficulties, therapy, girls, evaluation research.

Introduction

Many mainstream schools have developed an emotional literacy programme in their curriculum, which has had a noticeable effect on students' self-awareness and peer relationships. However, little has been reported about the effects of such an intervention in a special school. A pilot project (Lee & Wright, 2001) was implemented in a school in London which was then designated for children with moderate learning difficulties but which has recently been re-designated as a school for students with complex needs. The project, while small and offered only over a short period of time, reported benefits to the students, particularly in terms of their listening skills and consideration of their peers. Because of the success of the pilot group, the same

school has now established an emotional literacy programme as part of the curriculum. Additionally, the school has an established therapeutic service providing art therapy, counselling, dance movement therapy and music therapy.

The request for a girls group arose as an extension of the emotional literacy programme and as an aspect of the therapeutic support offered at the school. All these initiatives are designed to address the social and emotional factors that can impair children's learning. As girls are in a minority at the school, it was believed that a space should be developed to enable the girls to express their concerns and build some mutual support. To establish if there would be any benefits in having a girls group, a pilot group was implemented in the academic year 2002–2003 (German, 2003). This was considered to be a success, but the evaluation was limited to the views of students and senior members of staff. Both students and staff reported positive results from the group. As a result of its success, it was recommended that another girls group should be set up as part of the emotional literacy curriculum. This article reports the findings of an evaluation of the girls group set up in the academic year 2004–2005. The girls group was co-facilitated by the school counsellor and a member of staff, who was a counsellor trainee.

Participants

The project took place in a special school in a London Borough. The students at the school have a range of social, emotional and learning difficulties. The school, originally catering for children with moderate learning difficulties, has recently been re-designated as a school for students with complex needs. The upper part of the school still provides for students with moderate learning difficulties but the lower part of the school now admits students with complex needs. The students in this project were from the upper part of the school. Therefore, the girls were typical of students who historically would have been described as students with moderate learning difficulties. In discussion with the senior management team, six girls were identified to take part in the project: three girls from year nine and three girls from year ten. One girl from year ten left the school before the commencement of the group. However, another girl joined the school in the second week of the group and it was decided to invite this student to join the group. The characteristics of the students involved are reported in Table 1.

Table 1: Group members' characteristics

Student's name	Age	Ethnicity	Nature of need
Tiara	15	English	MLD, speech and language difficulties
Rachel	15	Turkish/Cypriot	MLD, motor delay, speech and language delay
Kylie	15	English	MLD, poor fine and gross motor co-ordination, speech and language delay
Emma	14	Asian/ British Indian	MLD, speech and language delay
Ayan	14	Somalian	MLD, right side hemiplegia
Sarah	14	Turkish	MLD, speech and language delay

Note: MLD denotes moderate learning difficulties

There was no procedure within the school to obtain ethical approval for the study. When a project takes place as part of the curriculum, it is accepted that the school takes responsibility to ensure the safety and appropriateness of the delivered curriculum. However, we felt it was necessary to obtain consent from the girls. We met students individually and informed them about the group and about our intention of writing up the work. We opened this up for discussion and enabled them to ask questions about the group or how it was going to be written up. We informed the girls they had the right to withdraw at any time. Our hope was that we had given them sufficient understanding to ensure that their consent was informed consent. We asked the girls to choose fictitious names to protect their identities; they appeared to have fun choosing their pseudonyms, which have been used in this report.

Methods

When the girls had given their informed consent, we arranged another time to meet for us to interview them to ascertain their views about the group. The girls were interviewed pre- and post-group work. Both interviews were semi-structured; this method is more flexible and allows for some narrative material to emerge. The questions posed were slightly different on each occasion. The girls were asked pre-group work:

- Did they feel they needed a separate space to be heard and why?
- Did they have any worries or concerns?
- What would they like to gain from being part of a girls group?

Post-group work the girls were asked:

- Did they enjoy the group and why?
- Did the group help them, and if so how?
- What did they not like about the group?
- What changes could we make to make the group better?

It was agreed that we should interview the girls' form tutor and teaching assistant both pre- and post-group work in order to understand their views and offer a wider

perspective of the effect of the group work. Again the interviews were semi-structured. The staff were asked pre-group work:

- Why they felt there was a need for a girls group?
- What they felt the issues were for the girls?
- Whether they had any specific concerns or worries for individuals, and what these were?

Post-group work the staff were asked:

- Did they feel the girls benefited from the group, and if so how?
- Did they notice any changes in the girls, and if so what?
- Were specific worries and concerns resolved?
- Did they believe another group should be set up, and if so why?

The information we gathered from the pre-group interviews with the girls and staff enabled us to become a little clearer about the needs of the group and develop our aims. The aims of the group that emerged were:

- To enable the girls to be part of a therapeutic group.
- To support the girls to modify their need for instant gratification.
- To support the girls to become more emotionally literate.
- To enable the girls to express themselves appropriately.
- To enable the girls to understand some of their patterns of behaviour and the effects on others.
- To support the girls in finding different ways of interacting.

Our evaluation of the impact of the therapeutic group also made use of notes taken in the group sessions themselves.

Theoretical background

The approach used in the group was integrative in that it drew from a number of different traditions within the field of psychotherapy. It may be helpful to define a number of terms used.

A key concept was that of 'attachment patterns', originally developed by Bowlby (1979). Bowlby demonstrated that the capacity to form rewarding relationships depends upon the development of secure attachment to the principal caregiver. Unsatisfactory or inappropriate care-giving can result in attachment behaviour (termed ambivalent, avoidant and disorganised) which later creates problems within relationships. Our hope was to use the group to modify poor attachment patterns.

A second major concept was that of 'presenting issues' (Jacobs, 1988). This concept suggests that the problem or behaviour that is immediately apparent may not be the issue which needs attention. This proved an especially useful approach to understanding, challenging behaviour.

The concept of 'self esteem' is common to many psychotherapeutic approaches but central to the work of Kohut (Mollon, 2001). Kohut believed that optimal functioning depends on an appropriate estimation of one's own capacities and qualities. He thought that the development of this strength was dependent on appropriate feedback from caregivers and the internalisation of these messages in the child. This process has often not been satisfactorily accomplished among pupils with special educational needs and learning difficulties. Our group process was designed to improve this part of the girls' development. The process of giving feedback we called 'positive strokes' (Berne, 1966).

Another important concept was that of 'transitional objects'. Winnicott (1974) noticed, from his paediatric work, that small children often find an object, such as a piece of cloth or a soft toy, which seems to symbolise security and safety. This object is often used to soothe the child in the absence of the caregiver (for example, when going to sleep or facing a new situation). Winnicott felt that these objects helped children to manage feelings of insecurity at a point in their transition between complete dependence and relative independence, hence the term 'transitional objects'. Our students were, in developmental terms, relatively immature and found a transitional object useful to help them to manage their feelings when the group leaders could not attend to them immediately or directly.

The term 'basic interactions' is drawn from child development literature (Beckett, 2005) and refers to the fundamental skills required for interactions with others, including listening and turn taking. We felt that further development of these skills was essential for enhancing the functioning of the students not only in the group but also in the school.

Group structure

The group began in the second half of the autumn term in 2004. The students were offered 23 sessions. We met for 45 minutes once a week at a regular scheduled time in the school timetable. Each session consisted of:

- a check-in activity, to allow the students to feel more comfortable and to be present in the group;
- an activity to address presenting issues;
- refreshments to replenish the students, offer another form of nurturing, provide a time for reflecting about the group process and prepare the girls for returning to the classroom;
- a closing exercise, to offer 'positive strokes'.

Group process

Staff believed that, as girls were in a minority in the school, it was important to offer them a space where they could explore 'girls' issues'. They also thought that the girls might feel less intimidated in a segregated group and be more willing to contribute their views, feelings and issues about growing up. They felt that the girls would benefit from attention to assertiveness, emotional awareness,

relationships, social skills and personal hygiene. The girls unanimously agreed that they felt that they needed a girls group because there were too many boys in their class and because they did not get a chance to have a say. They wanted to be able to 'have fun', 'talk about boys', discuss 'growing up' and anything else that they could think of at the time.

In the first session the students discussed and agreed their own group rules. These were:

- listen to others;
- respect each other;
- no hitting and kicking;
- confidentiality;
- taking turns.

Joining activity

One of our first activities was aimed at enabling the girls to express something about themselves and how they felt in groups in a 'safe' way. We also hoped the activity would enable us to get a clearer picture of their needs. We asked the girls to draw something that represented themselves and place it on a large sheet of paper, which represented the group. We noticed Ayan was very observant but would not say much about herself. She placed herself on the periphery of the group. Sarah copied one of the facilitators' drawings and placed herself near this facilitator. Kylie used the same colour pen as the other facilitator and again was very reluctant to disclose anything of herself. Rachel reported an abusive situation at home (which was reported to the child protection officer at the school) and placed herself on the edge of the group. Tiara needed reassurance from the facilitators that her drawing and where she placed herself was acceptable. Emma was the last to talk about her image and was cross about being last and said people forgot her.

This activity offered us a snapshot of how the girls felt about themselves. The presenting issues were themes that resonated throughout the work. Ayan appeared self-contained and self-reliant; she was more comfortable observing and was very skilled at reading and responding to others' emotional needs. She placed no weight on her own opinions and feelings and we wondered if she felt that she was not entitled to have an opinion. Sarah appeared to have very low self-esteem; she could not even represent herself on paper. She needed to be very close to the facilitators and required a great deal of attention and reassurance. Kylie was able to draw herself but needed to do this in the same colour as one of the facilitators. Her reluctance to share much about herself also indicated that she believed she was not acceptable to others. Rachel struggled with expressing herself; she took a long time to verbalise her thoughts and feelings. We believe Rachel had responded to others' frustration with her by becoming quiet and placing herself on the outside. Tiara demanded a great deal of attention and reassurance; she appeared to have little ability to regulate her own emotions and was unable to read or respond to others. Emma put herself on the outside of the group but did not want to accept this position; she was angry but did not know how to manage or express her anger.

Creating a safe space

The needs of the group were immense. The girls presented different attachment patterns and generally poor self-esteem. The girls presented a mixture of both avoidant and ambivalent attachment patterns (Howe, Brandon, Hinings & Schofield, 1999). Ayan and Rachel presented with avoidant patterns. They were difficult to engage on an emotional level and relied greatly on themselves. They were very good at reading the emotional needs of others but found it difficult to have their own emotional needs met. The other girls presented with ambivalent patterns. They were anxious about their lovability and self-worth and were preoccupied about whether they would be interesting enough to sustain attention. The other characteristic presented was their inability to regulate their emotions. In order to give and be part of a group you need to have a fairly strong sense of self. The girls clearly did not have a strong sense of self and therefore had difficulties giving and receiving in the group. Tiara, Sarah, Kylie and Emma in particular became very competitive for our time and attention. Rachel and Ayan appeared to be more passive and withdrew within the sessions. In discussion with our supervisor, we brought in some clear boundaries and structure to support the girls. During the check-in the girls found it difficult to listen to each other and their attention span was limited so we introduced a timer. This served several purposes:

- to offer a visual element to support their needs;
- to limit their time and offer containment;
- to ensure they all had equal time;
- to offer a neutral object on which to project negative feeling in a 'safe' way.

Early on we had our first absence, Tiara asked the facilitators why we had put an extra chair out. We informed her that we had placed a chair for each member of the group. We explained that the empty chair would represent and remind us of the absent member, as she was still part of the group. At first, Tiara was not convinced and felt this was stupid. We spent some time as a group discussing this aspect. We finally agreed a chair should be left for the absent person. When Emma returned the following week we told her about the group discussion and agreement and asked her for her view. Emma was pleased we had not forgotten her and agreed that it was a good idea for a chair to be left out for whoever was absent.

In the fourth week we were amazed by the intensity of what the girls were presenting. We felt the girls were competing for 'sob' stories that would create a response from us. We examined the dynamics carefully in supervision. We believed there were several issues going on:

- the girls were competing for our attention;
- the confined space was adding to the overwhelming feelings.

Finding an appropriate room in a school is not an easy task. We were working in a confined space that was not ideal; we decided it would be in the best interests of the group to find

another room. We discussed this with the girls and presented them with the dining hall, which was very large. The girls agreed to try it out and again we made some more rules to make the new room feel safe:

- we would try and ignore any person or noise outside;
- the curtains would be drawn to offer more privacy;
- we would divide the room and work in one part of the room;
- we would not run around in the hall.

In retrospect it was a good idea to move to the hall. It felt less intense and we were better able to contain the feelings. We also had the added benefit of extra space which enabled us to be more creative with activities.

Developing listening skills and turn taking

During the sessions we noticed the girls were struggling to 'be' in the group. Sarah was sabotaging whatever went on by talking over the others or through generally 'silly' behaviour. Tiara could not hold her attention on anything and continuously needed one to one attention. Kylie was becoming cross with Sarah and Tiara but was unwilling to express herself directly, so would tut and huff. Emma had taken the role of the group 'clown' to defuse any tension. Rachel and Ayan responded by withdrawing. We needed to find ways to support the girls to express themselves and to learn to listen to each other, so this became our focus in planning activities. We noticed when playing 'following the leader' type games, Kylie and Tiara very much enjoyed being the leader but found it difficult to follow others. Sarah also enjoyed leading and, while she did not like being the follower, we were surprised that she could follow instructions when she appeared not to be listening or when she had been talking while the instructions were being given. Emma relished being in the leader role but was equally happy following. Rachel and Ayan found it difficult to lead and were happier to follow. As the group progressed, we noticed a difference in all of the girls' ability to take turns and in their enjoyment of the activity.

We continued for several weeks working on listening and turn taking while addressing different issues the girls presented, which were generally about relationships. We supported the girls to become aware of their behaviours but we noticed, as the girls were becoming more aware of their patterns of behaviour, that they were becoming very anxious. Sarah's behaviour was deteriorating and she constantly sabotaged group activity. Tiara was becoming fretful; Emma became angry and spiteful toward the other girls; and Kylie was getting angry and projecting this onto the other girls and the facilitators. The demand on the facilitators was immense and at times it felt overwhelming. It felt as if the only positives were with Ayan and Rachel, who were now very vocal in the group, which at times also felt demanding. Not only did we need support and holding from supervision in this difficult part of the group process but we wanted to support the girls to relinquish old patterns. We agreed that we needed to provide a prop to support them in this transition. We introduced a 'fuzzy' box. We said we

were aware that some of them felt that they needed our attention and found it difficult when they had to wait. We suggested that they could take a piece of material or toy from the box when they were feeling they were a little more 'in need'. The contents of the box therefore acted as transitional objects. We agreed as a group that the need expressed through these objects would not be discussed until the end of the session. In general, the students have welcomed this idea and taken ownership of this by naming our resource the 'relaxation' box. This also reflected the students' understanding of the idea around the use of the box.

Addressing loss and breaks in the therapeutic work

As we approached the Christmas school holidays, we felt that the group was beginning to form but that the girls were concerned about the forthcoming break. As all breaks are disruptive to the therapeutic process, we wanted to think about an activity that would address this issue. We decided we would all draw a gift for each other (Silverstone, 1997). A sheet of A4 card was provided for each member of the group. This was divided into eight squares and we each drew a gift that we thought the person might need. We felt that this sheet might act as a transitional object during the forthcoming break. Sarah appeared more settled and was enthusiastic about giving and receiving a gift. Kylie was quiet in the group and sat outside the circle; we sensed the ending seemed very difficult for her and supported her to talk about the break. Emma became very excited and wanted to tell people immediately what she wanted to give them. Other people in the group found this irritating and wanted her to wait until the end. This was reflected back to the group. Tiara found it very difficult to receive some of her gifts, in particular from Emma. Emma was very unhappy that Tiara did not want her gift but was able to articulate this appropriately. Ayan found the exercise challenging, saying: *'I cannot draw'*. We noticed that her apparent lack of artistic confidence did not detract from the attention to detail in the items she gave to others and we wondered if her resistance to the activity arose because receiving gifts was too difficult for her. We also noticed she was the only girl who did not take her 'gifts' with her at the end of the session.

On returning from the Christmas break, as expected, the group had regressed and was fairly disruptive. The girls found it hard to listen to each other and each reported a story of loss. We wondered if this loss was also their way of communicating their sense of loss about the break. We noticed Tiara found it extremely difficult to 'be' in the room. Kylie and Sarah were becoming very cross with her; Rachel and Ayan had switched off and Emma was trying to make people laugh. The tension was running high and the group was fractious. We tried to facilitate what was happening in the group but the girls were reluctant to express their views so we separated them into pairs. We believed this would be a safer way to explore what they thought was happening in the group, how they felt and what they would like to say. The girls responded well to this. They were able to identify what was happening and express themselves in pairs but they were reluctant to report back in the whole group.

Learning to express thoughts and feelings

Having spent a considerable amount of time supporting the girls to listen and take turns, we decided to shift the focus to supporting the girls in expressing themselves. We introduced role play to develop these skills. The facilitators invited the girls to tell a story of a typical situation in the playground. The facilitators then took the main roles and acted out the story. The girls were invited to 'freeze' us and suggest an alternative way of dealing or reacting to the situation. We also encouraged the girls to say what they thought the feelings would be without being rude or aggressive. The use of role play was very powerful and the girls demonstrated their understanding by creating their own play and finding different ways to communicate.

Continuing with the focus on expressing themselves, we introduced the 'tree' exercise (Geldard & Geldard, 1997). The exercise looks at a tree and its roots; the roots represent what you hide from people and the branches what you show people. The facilitators modelled this exercise to show the girls that they also had parts that they hid and other parts that they were comfortable to show. They shared with the girls how difficult it was to show their hidden parts; this enabled the girls to talk about their own hidden and visible selves.

Over the next few weeks we continued with the theme of hidden and visible parts of ourselves. We asked the girls to make a mask that represented their hidden self. This was clearly too direct and challenging for them, so we suggested a two sided mask, one side showing what they wanted people to see and the other side the aspect they liked to keep hidden. We worked with the masks through role play and introduced some music and movement. As expected, most of the girls were able to show their happy sides, but found it difficult to reveal what they did not like people to see, which appeared to be their anger. Kylie and Tiara found it difficult to show their anger, but with support were able to express and experience being angry, when wearing a mask. Sarah and Emma were not able to draw what they did not like people to see but, with support, were able to act this out in role play. Initially, Ayan and Rachel were not able to draw or act out what they did not want people to see but, as the group progressed, they were able to show their anger.

Further development of self disclosure

As the group continued, the girls were becoming more confident with exploring and expressing themselves and had made some considerable movement in listening and turn taking. Different issues around relationships were emerging, some directly related to their families and some to do with boys. We introduced some puppetry to explore further difficult aspects in relationships. We asked the girls to work in pairs. We noticed that the puppets gave the girls the freedom to tell their story and to try out different ways of being. The girls were happy to tell their story to the main group and we noticed they were very good at listening to the stories. Ayan was the only girl who found it difficult to present to the group but was happy to work in pairs.

At both the half term and Easter break we organised a closing activity around a piece of ribbon. Each member was able to hold the ribbon and to talk about what they liked or disliked about the group and about what they were going to miss or not miss about the group. We divided the ribbon into eight so that each member of the group could have a piece. The ribbon again acted as a transitional object to support the students over the breaks. At the Easter break, Kylie organised a song for the girls to perform and then a group hug. This appeared to demonstrate the girls' development of empathy and the beginnings of being able to give, not just receive.

We were aware that the students were very skilled at getting attention and had devised different inappropriate strategies to meet this need. As we were asking the students to relinquish old patterns, we were trying to offer other things, as stated above, to support them in this transition. However, we also wanted to teach them more appropriate interactions; one aspect of this was how to give. We introduced the idea of 'positive strokes' (Berne, 1966). The idea here is to learn both to be able to give something positive and also to receive something positive. We built this into our closing routine. The students were asked to think of something that they liked about the person sitting to their right or left and the receiver was simply asked to say 'thank you'. The students initially found it difficult to identify a quality and would just say '*they are a good friend*' but towards the end they were able to define a quality. The students also found it hard to receive positive comments but, as the time went on, they became more comfortable and eagerly anticipated their stroke.

Moving towards closure

On the last but one session, we were able to take the girls out for lunch to celebrate all their hard work. We invited the two deputy heads to join us to share something of the group. Going out allowed us another opportunity to work on their personal hygiene. It also allowed an opportunity to extend the skills they had learned in the group in an unfamiliar setting. The girls were very excited and anxious about the meal. We noticed that, in this state of anxiety, Tiara fell back to old patterns, became very demanding and wanted one to one attention. Sarah was also very anxious and manifested some silly behaviour. A different aspect of Kylie was revealed; she became very nervous around the male waiters and required a lot of support. Rachel maintained her self-confidence and demanded her time to be heard and to eat. Emma revelled in her outing and was not going to let anyone spoil her enjoyment of her lunch. Unfortunately, Ayan was not able to join us because of a dental appointment.

The last session was an emotional one. The girls spent time talking about the highs and lows of the group. For our ending we made a group mandala. The girls freely painted aspects of the group they wanted to represent. These paintings seemed to focus on love, acceptance and friendship. It was wonderful to witness the girls working together. Unfortunately, Sarah found the session a little

overwhelming and started to sabotage others' paintings. This was reflected back, but there was insufficient time effectively to process what she had done and why. The girls had organised their own song and dance to perform to us to say 'thank you' and 'goodbye'.

Interviews with staff

At the conclusion of the group, the staff and girls were re-interviewed. Staff felt they had seen an improvement in the girls and believed the group was beneficial. They found it difficult to report changes in Kylie, as she was new to the school, but felt the girls group might have contributed to her settling into the school so quickly. It was reported that Tiara had become calmer and was more able to self-soothe. Rachel had become more vocal and seemed happier. Both teacher and teaching assistant felt Ayan had become far more confident and happier with herself; she was more willing to participate in activities. There were also reports of '*improvement in her personal hygiene*' and, while staff felt she was still '*moody*' she '*could be talked around far easier and quicker*'. The form tutor was not able to report such significant changes with Sarah and Emma but the teaching assistant had noticed that Sarah appeared '*less sensitive*', was '*not so sulky*' and was able to '*laugh at things and join in more*'. It was also noticed that, while she was still giggly, she was able to respond to '*a look*' and calm herself down. Staff had noticed that she was beginning to think her actions through before responding. One teaching assistant felt Emma was '*more tolerant of other people*' and was also able '*to be talked around easier and quicker*'. Additionally one teaching assistant noticed on the school trip that Emma did not whinge or whine. Generally staff felt there was a '*little more togetherness*' with the girls and they had become '*more sociable*'. Staff witnessed an incident where the girls were able to resolve a dispute between themselves without adult support and in a mature way, although staff felt the girls still found it difficult to find appropriate ways to respond to boys.

Interviews with students

Rachel reported that she '*enjoyed the group*'. She said: '*I felt shy in the beginning*' but '*it helped me talk more and I was able to tell the girls to be quiet*'. She also said she liked it when people said '*nice things about me*'. The only negative thing she said was '*sometimes the group was noisy*'.

Kylie felt: '*It helped me settle into a new school*'. She said: '*It was good having adults to talk to*'. She reported feeling '*safe*' to talk about her feelings but felt '*sad*' sometimes hearing what others had to say. She liked being given support to '*tell about my own feelings*' and '*other people not talking for me*'.

Tiara felt the group helped her '*feel calmer*' and '*more confident*'. Tiara said: '*It helped me with my anger*' and she believed she could now '*talk this through with other people*'. She said: '*I find it difficult sometimes being quiet and waiting my turn but I felt the relaxation box helped with this*'. Tiara reported: '*I now use a cuddly toy at home when I feel angry, anxious or upset*'.

Sarah said: *'the group was fun'* and: *'It helped me become more confident and find ways to sort out any problems I had'*. She also thought it helped her talk to the girls outside the group.

Ayan reported enjoying the group and said: it helped her talk about things she was worried about. She also felt the group helped her sort out any problems she had.

Emma said she thought the group was *'fun'* and she liked doing the mask and saying things that she would not normally say to people. She thought the girls became more supportive in and out of the group and helped her with sad feelings. Emma said she did not like it when Sarah talked over people. She also reported really enjoying the meal out and wanted to continue with the group. She said she felt sad and missed talking to the facilitators.

Discussion

The group was challenging to facilitate; the needs of each student were immense and most of the girls demanded instant gratification. At times the facilitators felt overwhelmed by the level of need and were grateful for the support offered in supervision. It was essential to have sufficient time to plan and prepare for the sessions and to have regular supervision which offered the facilitators a space to process the sessions and develop their understanding of the group dynamics and the needs of individuals. At times it was difficult to focus on the group process because of what was being presented and as each girl demanded the time to be heard it provoked others into some challenging behaviour. We were aware that this was partly to do with their emotional need but also reflective of their learning difficulties. The girls' attention span was very short and they required visual aids and a variety of multi-sensory play activities to support their learning and developmental needs.

Because of the girls' learning difficulties and our knowledge of their limited attention span, we allowed 45 minutes for the group. In hindsight, this was far too short. For many reasons, the girls were not always punctual in arriving at the sessions; this was difficult to manage. Secondly, we needed additional time to allow for the cleaning up after any art-based activities. As this was sometimes time consuming, we felt we had insufficient time to process the session fully. We believe it would have been better to run the session for one and a half hours. This would have had further implications for the part of the day in which the group could meet and the availability of rooms.

Initially, the girls competed with their 'sob' stories and might have been better contained by a more directive approach. The facilitators tried to respond to individual needs as well as to group needs but this proved very challenging and a boundary had to be put into place in order for any group activity to be carried out. Additionally, the girls responded appropriately when they were directed to the 'relaxation box' and towards focused activities as opposed to the more non-directive part of the session – the 'circle time' activity.

Another difficulty we faced was having insufficient time to liaise with staff. We offered a mid-way report to staff, identifying the students' emotional needs, their patterns of behaviour and our attempts to address these patterns. The report was welcomed and a teacher commented that it helped him understand the girls more and gave him ideas on how to manage certain attention-seeking behaviours in the classroom. We believe it would have been beneficial to have had regular meetings with staff to discuss the group so that the staff could have supported the work the group was addressing. However, it was encouraging that staff identified changes in the girls and to hear that the girls were able to transfer some skills outside of the group to the classroom. There were positive reports of the girls' confidence, behaviour and social skills, although one needs to take into account other factors that may have affected the perceived benefits to the girls, such as the emotional literacy programme, personal, social and health education lessons, school outings and general maturation. The group was not followed up so there was no way of knowing whether the girls were able to sustain any developments. It may be helpful for a future study to follow up the work to see if the impact of the work was maintained.

Conclusion

The girls we worked with demonstrated differing attachment behaviours and generally had low self-esteem. They found it difficult to be in and to be part of a group. This allowed us to experience some of the challenges that are presented to the class teacher. The girls required structure and direction in the session in order to feel safe and contained. This had to be balanced with the knowledge that they also required a space to reflect and process what was happening in the group. This balance was often very tricky and we were conscious of trying to get this right. The girls need for instant gratification was so great that this could not be met by the facilitators alone; a concrete object was required to support their emotional needs. The use of a transitional object proved successful in terms of managing school holidays, which each student appeared to experience as a loss.

Both staff and the students reported benefits from the group and we appeared to have achieved, to some extent, some of the aims of the group:

- We enabled the girls to be part of a therapeutic group.
- We supported the girls to bring to awareness their need for instant gratification and found a way to meet this need. It was also reported that one student was able to make use of this strategy outside of the group.
- We supported the girls to understand, to some extent, their internal world.
- We supported the girls to express themselves appropriately.
- We supported the girls to understand their behaviour and its effects on others. Most of the girls had some awareness of how they were behaving but understanding how their behaviour affected others needed further work to consolidate this skill.

- We supported the girls in finding different ways of interacting. We believe this was achieved and was highlighted by staff observing that the girls were able to discuss and sort out differences without adult intervention.

The main focus of our work was around some basic interactions, bringing to awareness the girls' behaviour patterns and offering different strategies to achieve their ends. Because the basic interaction represented by listening, taking turns and expressing oneself appropriately is essential to every day living, we believe a therapeutic group would be beneficial to most students who attend a school for children with complex needs. However, a wider study would be needed to support

these initial findings and a follow-up would be required to see if the participants were able to sustain any improvements.

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