

Service Users' Experiences of Multi-Agency Practice in Children's Social Care: The Common Assessment Framework

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the agency and experience of children, young people, and their parents, participating in multi-agency assessment in a children's services early intervention process. The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) was introduced as a national pilot and widely adopted in England in the past decade. Research has examined the professional practice and systemic factors around the implementation of the CAF, but there is very little investigation of service users' experiences that considers the agency and perspectives of service users as partners in the process of early help. This qualitative study was accomplished in one local authority site in the midlands of England, where 12 families, including 7 young people and 16 carers, were interviewed. To explore service users' experiences of multi-agency working, semi-structured interview schedules and free drawn charts and graphs of CAF activity were employed. In order to make sense of service users' agency and participation in this setting, a methodological approach informed by actor-network theory and Foucauldian governmentality, was adopted. The empirical findings of the research demonstrated the relative exclusion of children and young people from the main elements of the CAF process. This lack of active participation is analysed as a response to the prevailing model of childhood as an incompetent and vulnerable stage of 'becoming adult'. The participation of adults in the CAF was found to engage a more active human agency, although a diverse range of experiences was found. Parents, who responded to a perceived 'bad

parent' critique from practitioners, assembled a heterogeneous set of actors, including discourse, knowledge from service user sources, and personal skills in working with different organisations, in order to construct an active service users' identity. The thesis concludes with reflection on service users' agency and participation and makes some policy recommendations and suggestions for further research.

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Introduction

The idea for this research was in part born of my personal experience of children and families social work. Working as a social worker since 1987, I took eight years out from fieldwork whilst caring for my family. Returning in 2008 to a busy duty team in a city in the midlands of England, I noticed some significant changes. The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) was for me one such innovation, representing a profound change. The CAF was introduced in 2003 as a non-statutory multi-agency process engaging children with 'additional needs' at a threshold level set below that of 'children in need' in children's social care. The category of additional needs represents children who have been assessed as having needs not being met through universal non-targeted services, such as mainstream education and health. Children in need are defined by the Children's Act 1989 as children up to and including the age of 18 years, who are deemed unlikely to achieve, or maintain, a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision of more specialised assessment and support from the local authority. The local authority has a duty to assess such children's needs and provide appropriate services to support the meeting of those needs. The assessment of children with additional needs is therefore in the realm of early intervention, or less statutory forms of assessment and service provision.

As a duty social worker in a busy urban children's social care department I was often advised by colleagues and managers to pass non urgent safeguarding referrals back to health visitors and teachers for them to initiate a CAF.

Sometimes I was advised to send distraught parents to ask their child's teacher to institute a CAF. I was uncomfortable, but also curious, as to how these practitioners and parents managed this business, especially as quite often they were none too pleased at what they appeared to feel was a fob off from children's social care. At the time I wondered how best to make sense of the changes I perceived. Should these concerns be dealt with by those who are already working with young people and their families, and would that not mean less stigma, and free up social workers to help those children and their families, whose problems were that much more serious? But then again, what if parents did not want their children's school prying into the details of their personal problems, and sharing them with colleagues. Most of the other social workers seemed to approve these new arrangements, and reasoned that it was time other practitioners took more responsibility for assisting children and young people, who were not in immediate safeguarding danger.

I undertook an MA in research methods, and for my dissertation project interviewed practitioners engaged with the CAF. They were generally positive about the CAF, at least in principle, but there were complaints about where the threshold between children in need and children with additional needs was drawn. Children's social care maintained these thresholds rigorously, and some experienced health visitors felt patronised during telephone conversations with duty social workers, where they felt their concerns were not given full credence.

I wondered what service user families made of the CAF and what it was like for them working with multiple agencies? I began to realise that agencies in the third sector seemed to have undergone a huge expansion, and some of the families I

visited or spoke to were involved with several at the same time. What was it like being a service user in this changed landscape? Was CAF different in the way it engaged service users, as it was for many practitioners? I decided to pursue the CAF questions in PhD research and explore the experiences of service users in multi-agency settings.

In the remainder of this introduction, I explain briefly what the CAF is and what contribution to knowledge this thesis makes. The research questions will be stated here, and discussed further in the methodology chapter (Chapter 3). I will also outline the structure of the thesis, before beginning the literature review, and exploring the social policy behind the CAF in chapter 1.

The aim of the study is to examine service users' experiences of the CAF in one particular research site. This allows sociological themes and questions concerning the participation of service users in multi-agency practice more generally to be considered. In order to engage with this topic the thesis examines literature, not only around the CAF itself, but also around social policy, the human agency of service users, and ideas around participation in forums with professionals and practitioners. In so doing, the thesis explores the relationship between human agency and professional discourses and practices. Discourse throughout the thesis is employed as a Foucauldian reference to statements or structures, including linguistic or narrative constructions, but referencing bounded areas of functional social knowledge expressing social relationships, knowledge or guiding truths. In this sense discursive formations provide guiding principles of practice specific to that time and space of their use (McHoul and Wendy, 1993) .

In inquiring into service users' human agency, I engage with the questions around the dilemmas of structure and agency, which have always been a part of social work for me since training in the 1980s. How much free will and agency do any of us really have in our daily lives, and when we deal with governmental agencies or voluntary organisations, to what extent is the real issue one of power residing in structural factors beyond our control and influence? While anti-oppressive practice may be informed by macro structural analysis of social relationships, on the doorstep or the living room couch, where I was working, people also seemed to be unique individuals making choices and decisions every day of their lives. I was interested in exploring those everyday practices and concerns that constitute service userhood. This is why, in chapter 2 in particular, I explore actor network theory and the theoretical concept of assemblages. This theoretical approach seeks to show us ways to think about how we may be small moving parts in a larger social system, but equally, we construct and maintain that unstable system every day of our lives, relying on routines and practices, the bits of paper, and even common ideas, such as what children are like, which seem to take on their own agency and make up our world large and small. I also explore ideas of governance and social work's role in managing the population of children and their families according to a national programme of social policy and legislation.

The CAF involves both parents and children, and another theme of the thesis is therefore the nature of childhood, and the ways in which sense is made of the personal agency of children and young people, both in social work practice and in the wider domain of social policy. This concerns questions about not only how children are included and excluded, as I

show in this research into the CAF, but also how children respond to the CAF, and what choices they may have in exercising their own agency. The division between parents and practitioners is only one fault line in the CAF process. There is another between young people and adults, and intergenerational relationships are explored in terms of powerful discourses that influence the spaces and places of childhood.

0:1 The Common Assessment Framework

The Common Assessment Framework, introduced in 2003 by the then New Labour government, is known in practice as the CAF. This is how I will refer to it throughout the thesis, not only for brevity, but because in my experience of doing the research, as in my previous experience in the field of social work practice, this has always been how it was referred to by both practitioners and service users. The CAF is a framework or a process for multi-agency and holistic assessing of children and young person's needs and circumstances, but it is also a way of working, which was ostensibly designed to engage practitioners and service users actively in making plans to meet those needs. Working in partnership, with consent and taking account of young people's views as well as that of their parents. CAF is not an alternative to child protection processes, and operates where practitioners identify a lower threshold of need than a risk of *significant harm*, a threshold criteria set by the Children's Act 1989 for child protection interventions. The CAF, in principle at least, purports to be a wholly consensual child centred process, as the following government guidance explains:

You cannot undertake a CAF unless the child or young person and/or their parent or carer agrees. The approach to securing consent should be transparent and respect the individual. Consent should not be secured through coercion or inferred from a lack of response to a request for consent. (CWDC, 2009c: 39)

As the research for this thesis shows, consent is a complex issue and difficult to pin down or isolate as free choice. As I intimated in earlier remarks, assessed thresholds between levels of need may be contested, and are maintained by gatekeepers in children's social care. Some of the families in this study had been above and below that threshold; between children in need and children with additional needs, and as I show, came to share an appreciation of its significance with practitioners. By critically assessing the social relations inherent in the state surveillance of children and families, and the challenges for parents and children in developing a powerful and effective agency, this thesis will show that policy rhetoric around service user participation is deeply problematic. The central argument around partnership is that the obstacles to service users' agency, particularly that of children and young people, require an assemblage of considerable personal skills, strengths and attributes, to allow an assertive participation in CAF. In the case of young people who are often isolated socially any attempts to engage them meaningfully in participation were under-resourced and effectively left them excluded by practitioners and parents.

The CAF process, as I explain in greater detail below, comprises a short list of elements: a holistic common assessment codified in a universal form; a multi-agency forum

or team around the child (TAC), consisting of a child or young person, and their parents; a lead professional, who will coordinate the assessment and the process; and as many agencies as child, parent and lead professional think are necessary to carry out an effective action plan.

0:2 The Research

The original research conducted for this thesis is a qualitative study, which engaged 12 families in multiple interviews. Seven young people were interviewed once and parents were interviewed twice where possible, giving a total of 27 interviews. I made a choice at an early stage not to involve practitioners' views, as I did not want to become engaged in an assessment of the professional practice perspective. I wanted rather to explore the stories, the making sense, and the practices around CAF, purely from the service users' perspectives. With the exception of one, interviews were conducted in the family home, and children were interviewed on their own. The experience of interviewing the families was for the most part a fascinating and life affirming experience. I am grateful to the adults and young people, who offered their time, and I was rewarded with stories, which would at times make me sad, but more often demonstrated the determination and resilience of families, who learned to assert themselves and explore both their strengths and their vulnerabilities. I was not disappointed in looking for data on human agency and service users. As I show in the findings and analysis chapters (chapters 5 to 8), I found a range of experiences and responses to the demands of CAF, and rich data for critical analysis.

0:3 The contribution of the research

The research in this thesis provides original insights into service users' experiences of multi-agency services to children and families with additional needs. I set out to consider whether the CAF process asked, demanded or produced, a particular kind of service users' role, and how that was experienced and responded to by service users themselves. The research questions do not ask whether the process produced valuable outcomes, measured against official goals and targets for children and young people and their families. As will be shown in chapter 1, there is a lack of research into the experiences of service users involved in the CAF process and multi-agency services more generally. For the most part, existing research offers insights into practice issues and organisational issues, relating to this innovation in practice introduced in 2003. In this research literature on CAF, the role for service users participating with practitioners taking part in multi-agency forums is not central.

In addition, this thesis explores some wider questions around how to think about human agency itself and adopts a sociological approach to this topic, bringing possibilities for reconceptualising an active service users' role. Assembling assertive human agency forms a critical assessment of partnership rhetoric for some parents. The realities of moral challenge some service users faced from agencies at CAF meetings undermined their self-assessment as good parents. The relationship between children and young people and the CAF is likewise explored in terms of their participation, and the evidence here demonstrates how far there is to go in seeking to engage young people's creativity and agency in multi-agency settings. The significance of place and spaces, which

inscribe discourses around forms of childhood, and ways of knowing and being, are recognised by young people and adults at a fundamental level. I show how parents and practitioners may collude to keep children and young people in their place as developing and incompetent, or 'becoming' adults, rather than competent human beings, and serve to inhibit their potential contribution to multi-agency processes and decisions about their lives.

0:4 Research Questions

The research questions are discussed fully in chapter 3, but I introduce them here in order to prepare the reader for the literature review chapters. As can be seen, they are determined by a concern with aspects of service users' agency and participation with practitioners in the multi-agency domain that constitutes the CAF.

1. How do children, young people and their parents experience multi-agency assessment practices?
2. What understandings are generated in the process of multi-agency assessment?
3. The CAF assessment involves professionals going beyond their specialism to prepare a holistic assessment of children's needs. How do children and parents, as service users, perceive and respond to this extension of traditional professional roles and boundaries?
4. From a service user perspective, how are relationships between professionals and service users established and maintained?

0:5 The structure of the thesis

Chapter 1 explores the social policy environment of the CAF and begins with the New Labour era from 1997, including the introduction of the CAF process and the Every Child Matters programme for children and young people. Here the concern over children's futures and the 'social investment state' is discussed. This is in the context of new corporate approaches to safeguarding and intervention in the lives of children and young people. A summary of the current context for family support services considers the discourses around troubled families, and the austerity of recent years. This chapter also reviews the existing research into the CAF and multi-agency working, drawing attention to the lack of research into either the experiences of service users, or more outcomes based evaluation that deals effectively with the methodological difficulties in this area.

Chapter 2 discusses CAF as a form of governmentality, and refers to the work of Michel Foucault and Nikolas Rose in thinking through the role of power, and institutional attempts to govern populations, through discourses around the individual as a modern self-governing subject. This chapter considers the agency of individuals not as wholly structurally constrained, but as implicated in their own governance through continually evolving strategies of governmentality. The social policy focus on childhood and the surveillance of children is explored as a feature of modernity and I discuss the ambivalence towards the agency of children. The future role of children as social and economic subjects dominated scientific thinking, from biology through to psychology and sociology, during most of the twentieth century, and led to a later concern with children's rights globally, but also to a new

interest in children's agency. The tensions that have surfaced around controlling and safeguarding children's futurity, and recognising their competencies and participation as citizens, is at the heart of ventures, like CAF, that may be seen as modern technologies of governance. Chapter 2 also explores theoretical insights from science and technology studies for understanding agency in respect of both children and adults as 'becoming citizens,' who are always changing and developing assemblages of skills, competencies and other forms of human and social capital, as actors in networks of heterogeneous agencies.

Chapter 3 provides the main discussion of research methodology, design and process in the fieldwork, and includes analysis and review of the empirical work of the thesis. Reasons are given for the choice of a qualitative method. The choice of interviewing as a method of inquiry is examined, and it is shown how the semi-structured interview schedules were designed for use with different age groups. In keeping with the objectives of the research, ethics, consent, gatekeeping issues, sampling and reflection on effective communication with children and young people are dealt with in detail in this chapter.

Chapter 4 is an empirical chapter that gives an overview of the families engaged by the research, and profiles the group in terms of their background and history. This serves to ground the following chapters dealing with interview data. Chapter 4 includes a series of brief case summaries, which introduce the respondents as service users, and using elements of their own narratives further contextualises the experiences discussed in subsequent chapters.

Chapter 5 presents the findings from the interviews of seven young people. The relative detachment of young people

from the CAF is contrary to the idea of CAF as a child centred process. The young people were keen to engage with practitioners on a one to one basis, but there was evidence that in comparison with the relatively open ended engagement between parents and practitioners, engagement with young people tended to be strictly time limited, if available at all. The focussing of CAF activity around schools is also explored. A model of childhood is identified and shown to be recognised by both adults and young people. This defines young people as apprentice or 'becoming adults', future investments, relatively incompetent and in need of socialisation and discipline, particularly over school attendance issues (Wyness, 2011). Children's attendance at meetings is discussed and the evidence points to a lack of inclusion strategies that could engage them in decision-making processes. Parents also often felt disciplined at CAF meetings, suggesting that CAF meetings are not an appropriate place for children, as difficult parenting issues were often raised. Children's agency was often represented by parents as passive, not engaged, and a focus on control was prominent.

Chapter 6 is the first of two further findings chapters that examine the parents' experiences of CAF. Firstly, the chapter discusses the experiences of parents becoming enrolled in CAF. The issue of consent is explored, which engages the significance of the perceived threshold between CAF and children's social care involvement. Also some parents found the introduction to the CAF meetings a disciplinary experience that questioned their parenting. The tension between support and safeguarding surveillance was recognised by all the parents. Some parents developed relationships of trust with practitioners and accepted these tensions. In some cases young people's needs and parenting assessments were

contested, and service users went on to develop strategies of resistance while seeking to enhance their skills and knowledge in order to assert themselves more effectively.

In chapter 7 the development of service users' human agency is discussed. Assembling skills in administration, managing meetings and gathering valued knowledge in order to take part as powerful actors in CAF is examined in a themed exploration of developing human agency. Personal growth, and learning to be assertive, became vital for some service users, who found themselves challenging practitioners and seeking alliances with others. Some respondents acknowledged profound appreciation of the support they felt from practitioners they had engaged with through the CAF. Others described a different experience. The anxiety and shame around perceived labelling as a bad parent was visceral in some accounts, and added to significantly traumatic experiences for some parents. In this chapter I explore the relationship between the defence of parental feelings of identity and self-worth, and the engagement with specialist psychological assessments of children and young people's needs.

Chapter 8 concludes the thesis, and discusses the findings further in the light of the literature review and the empirical research. The participation of children and young people was shown to be influenced by a model of childhood that sees them as 'becoming adults', what Wyness (2011) calls an apprentice model of childhood, and in need of discipline and socialisation. The prominent role of schools as the predominant space for CAF is discussed as a powerful contextual discourse for both parents and young people, and one that serves to make participation a more challenging achievement for service users generally. The appreciation of

service users' human agency as an assemblage of skills, knowledge, and attributes of personal growth is central. Using this perspective, in considering the findings from parents, it can be seen that the dynamics of multi-agency work made particular demands of service users, who wished to develop an active and assertive role.

In the context of the multi-agency setting I assess the applicability of actor-network theory as a way of exploring how service users' agency may be analysed. This approach can show how service users in practice actively engage with dominant discourses over expertise and models of childhood in the CAF process. Actor-network theory also, however, introduces the concept of non-human agency. This approach is discussed showing the potential application for social work research. However a fuller exploration of this use of actor-network theory in the CAF would require a different research design from the one adopted here and include a more 'hardware' based focus on the CAF including documentary analysis and an engagement with professional systems of technology and practice. Further possible future research questions raised by the study are discussed in chapter 8 in concluding the thesis.

Chapter 8 also considers practice implications and makes a number of points about the participation of service users, whether as children and young people, or adults, engaged by multi-agency processes. Recognition of the rights and benefits of a fuller participation for children and young people is required. A relational approach that can recognise and facilitate the personal journey towards participation that service users are required to make is also required. The role of prevalent discourses around models of childhood and the expectations this produces for both young people and adults is

likely to prove a significant influence on the possibility of participation in planning and decision-making for service users and I suggest thought is given to the concept of CAF as a children's space. I refer to literature on Family Group Decision Making around engaging young people in meetings that offers insights about a deeper engagement with children and young people, and around their sensitive involvement in forums and meetings, if their views are to influence decisions made, and reflect a more balanced assessment of needs and personal resources. I also suggest a rethinking of how specialist psychological and medical expertise is engaged in the process of a more solution focused engagement with families. However, chapter 1, which now follows, will begin with a historical social policy focus introducing and contextualising the CAF.

Chapter 1 – The context and operation of the Common Assessment Framework

Chapter 1 discusses the social policy context of the CAF and considers the New Labour era, when the CAF was introduced as part of a re-shaping modernisation agenda, before summarising more contemporary developments. I discuss the social inclusion and social investment agendas, and the early intervention projects that form a background for CAF. The point is made that CAF was introduced as part of a major programme of social policy innovation that reflected shifts in political perspectives and ideologies in the latter part of the twentieth century. The CAF itself is described in its constituent parts, and a review of research follows. After a more general discussion of research into multi-agency practice, I identify gaps in research knowledge. I identify knowledge gaps on the impact of multi-agency programmes and practices, including CAF, on children and young people, and also the experiences of service users engaged in new ways of working together with practitioners. The notion of partnership between the state and service users' families emerges and is explored in a critical focus on service users' experiences of participation throughout the thesis.

1:1 The social policy context of CAF

The New Labour social policy programme began in the first years of office, from 1997, and ended with the general election of 2010, when the Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition government was formed. The New Labour programme was arguably the most profound redrafting of social work arrangements, for surveillance and intervention in the lives of

children and families, since the establishment of social services departments in local authorities, after the Seebohm Report of 1968 (Frost and Parton, 2009). Central to this programme was the intent to modernise and reform the delivery of public services. We are still very much in the shadow of the modernisation agenda of the New Labour government and it is to this period that I turn in seeking to introduce the CAF.

It is only by working in partnership with parents that we can make a difference to the lives of children and young people; after all it is parents who raise children not Governments!

This quote is from a local authority parenting strategy document where this project was undertaken, and is almost a direct quote from the New Labour government's Children's Plan (DCSF, 2007: 5). The quotation introduces the mantra of partnership, and reflects the dilemmas for the kind of governance developed by the New Labour government, that also introduced the CAF. The Every Child Matters (ECM) Programme, introduced in the first years of the 21st century, laid out far-reaching plans for intervening in the lives of the nation's children and young people (DfES, 2004). However, this intervention would necessitate working together with parents outside the statutory compulsion of child protection procedures, and engaging the language of partnership, support and consent. It would also require a corporate inter-agency strategy to bring a diverse children's workforce together, into a coherent process, with a common language and holistic assessment formula. Crucially it required a negotiation between the broad aims of government and the

independence of families' own support agenda. As I shall show throughout this thesis, the realities of families asserting their perspectives and achieving participation as strong partners in this process, is compromised by the substantial challenges they face from the authoritative participation of professional agencies and expertise. Service users in the research were often in conflict with agencies and practitioners in order to achieve a measure of participation in decision-making. Frequently, they sought knowledge and experience from other service user support groups so as to effectively challenge plans at a multi-agency level. In this respect participation raised issues of power, control and effective exercise of human agency, that are explored throughout the thesis.

1:1:1 Outcomes led services, new technology, and new safeguarding

One of the strategic changes introduced in pursuit of this goal was the shift from a guiding focus on the delivery of relatively standard local authority services, meeting an assumed template of need within the population, to that of an outcomes driven corporate plan engaging a diversity of providers from the public and private sectors. The term 'new public management' was employed to indicate the influence of private sector practices on public services (Newman, 2001; Meagher and Parton, 2004). Key influential aspects include: the application of performance standards; targets and indicators; the shift from bureaucratic controls and inputs to quantitative measurement of output indicators; competitive outsourcing of services and a 'doing more with less' efficiency mantra. New public management also brought with it the language of the consumer and the market place. This important shift is associated with a vision of an information,

revolution fueled by the growth in digital information technologies (Garrett, 2009). This period saw the beginning of the contemporary era of big data, as the potential sophistication of large data collections, strategic analysis and data sharing was explored, and more wide-ranging concerns and social perspectives on risk were reflected in new managerial practices in social work (Parton, 2008; Peckover, White, and Hall, 2008; Webb, 2006). As a key part of the ECM programme, the ISA (Information Sharing and Assessment) project explored the use of information technologies and gave rise to three innovations. This included the ill-fated ContactPoint system, which was to comprise a national database for inter-agency information sharing, but was closed down by the incoming coalition government in 2010. In addition, there was the Integrated Children's System (ICS); a national standard system for recording professionals' work with children and the CAF (White, Hall, and Peckover, 2009). Together, these innovations heralded a prescriptive and new standardized system for recording and managing social work information.

A fundamental part of the ECM programme was that child safeguarding was broadened, to encompass a standardized conception of wellbeing and developmental normality, as a pre-requisite for future national prosperity. Local Authorities were to lead partnerships of local organisations across the public and private sector, building a picture of the lives of children against a set of national outcome measures. These measures formed a key plank of the programme, introduced through a Green Paper in 2003 (H.M. Treasury, 2003). The Green Paper introduced the five key areas of the ECM outcome targets for children and young people; be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a

positive contribution, and achieve economic wellbeing.

Underlying the government social policy programme was a concept of social investment, linking the wellbeing of children and young people with the future economic performance and security of the nation. Anthony Giddens introduced the term 'social investment state,' and helped underscore the link made between public welfare, public services, and the economic performance of a nation (Giddens, 1998). The ECM programme and the vision of a successful future, based on timely preparation of children and young people for socially integrated and productive lives, was to be secured with significant investment in the Sure Start outreach family support programme, children's centres, schools, and health services. The Sure Start programme, operating as a local service from children's centres, and the investment of significant government funds through the Children's Fund, to kick start the development of services for intervening in young people's lives, forms the background for the introduction of the CAF. Before I turn to a closer inspection of the CAF, however, I develop this exploration of the social policy background, during the period of the late 20th and early 21st Centuries, further.

It is important to briefly contextualize this vision of a new age of social investment and focus on the integration of the nation's children, in terms of the climate of anxiety over disintegration and social anomie. During the years of the Thatcher government (1978-1990), which featured high levels of unemployment alongside an emerging new right, or neo-liberal, political ideology, much was made of Thatcher's statement in an interview with Women's Own magazine in 1987, that there was '...no such thing as society. There are individual men and women and there are families. And no

government can do anything except through people, and people must look after themselves first... and then look after our neighbours' (Thatcher, 1987). The morally conservative independent and private patriarchal family was held as the central institution of social integration (Pilcher and Wagg, 1996). Concerns over the disintegration of the family, and the disaffection of youth, permeate the post war period. This required a political balance between a 'patriarchal' and 'laissez faire' approach, keeping the state out of the business of regulating the family, and on the other hand, a state paternalism and child protection approach, variously intervening to support and remove children (Featherstone, 2003; Fox Harding, 1996). These approaches have waxed and waned, largely co-existing, with one or the other in ascendancy, in post war Britain. The 1989 Children's Act reflected a concern to balance state paternalism and the right to a private family life (Featherstone, 2003). The New Labour programme was imbued with these shifting moral concerns over family and state intervention, but was beholden to the fears of popular political discourse over perceived crime and delinquency amongst young people, declining economic performance, poverty and mass youth unemployment (Pilcher and Wagg 1996).

The answers to these social questions were not to be seen in the context of a social work response, but a broader vision of a project of investment in young people's lives, and a new concept of safeguarding against social disaffection, ill health and economic underperformance (Frost and Parton 2009). This new concept of safeguarding would engage the whole spectrum of the expanding children's workforce. Safeguarding would encompass a broader remit than that of child protection against risk of significant harm, as defined in

the 1989 Children's Act. Frost and Parton (2009) describe the birth and gradual defining of the new safeguarding term that emerged, and was first formally defined in guidance accompanying the 2004 Children's Act. The new safeguarding concept is couched in terms of a joint working imperative: 'protecting children from maltreatment', 'preventing impairment of health and development' and 'ensuring children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care'. This public safeguarding would form a corporate responsibility for all agencies working with children and young people. The Common Assessment Framework would emerge as a key part of this strategy, offering a common approach and process as a baseline for agencies working with children. It has also meant the increasing restriction of traditional social work services to a child protection role while the broader social work of family support and relational work has become the remit of an expanded children's workforce (White, Morris, Featherstone, and Thoburn, 2014)

The development of social policies does not take place without a reflection on the political and social engagement of populations that are subject to such policy, and I turn next to a Foucauldian perspective on the governance of populations to consider the developing citizenship that engages with this policy background. Chapter 2 will return to a more comprehensive discussion of the application of Foucauldian theories to the thesis.

1:1:2 The strategic reversibility of government social policy

Gordon (1991) discusses what Foucault named the 'strategic reversibility' of governmentality, where the terms and domains of specific governmental practices determine, or predict, the aspirations of governed populations that are brought into being. This requires explanation. By governmentality, Foucault meant the pragmatic 'art' of managing the conduct of populations by the state (Burchell *et al.*, 1991). According to Foucault's governmentality analysis, the aim of social governance in the modern state is to harness and shape the subjectivities, the attitudes, and actions of individuals and groups, and we can expect to find a corresponding resistance mirrored there, and the playing out of contested agendas. The kinds of partnership proposed between state and citizens, that form a significant locus for the working through of the governance agenda, are reflected by particular kinds of political resistance and aspiration from citizens. Following through the logic of strategic reversibility, then, the burgeoning of the post war welfare state and the growth in entitlement of social benefits and services, however welcomed, has been answered by a growth in critical social movements around rights for participation of user groups, and associated struggles over the politics of disability, identity and gender. These struggles challenge governmental agendas, and extend corresponding political agency at the level of citizenship. The new areas of social action opened up in the post war state have led to the challenge of the state, from a citizen/consumer/service user perspective, as well as a neo-liberal economic lobby concerned to break up the concept of social entitlement, and assert the marketisation of welfare and

public services in general (Williams, Oakley and Popay, 1999). This has involved renegotiating the social contract between the state and the individual, and the terms of access to the means of subsistence and support throughout the human lifecycle.

The discrediting of state universal and bureaucratically run professional service provision could be described as part of the political consensus within mainstream government and electoral politics at the end of the 20th century. Williams *et al.* (1999) describe the 'jostling' of critiques from the left and the right. State professionals and bureaucrats could be discredited from the left for sexism, racism, and representing entrenched power, too remote from user control, and simultaneously from the right for inefficiency, restricting consumer choice and obstructing flexible solutions to problems, through both the exercise of trade union power and monopolism. The ideology of the consumer as a discerning force in the market place, forcing change through individual choice, was employed across the mainstream political spectrum reflecting the shift from post war ideas around solidarity and redistribution towards neo-liberal individualism as a driver for pragmatic, flexible, market driven solutions to problems (Clarke, Newman and Smith, 2007). This ideology allows the presentation of a highly managed social policy domain and market orientated economic strategy as a pragmatic and ideologically neutral policy.

1:1:3 Social Investment

New Labour's modernisation agenda offered a technocratic 'what works' vision, where the ideological entanglements of traditional political perspectives of left and right could be cast as representing the prejudices of established interests holding

back progress (Newman, 2001). Engagement with the market, the partnership agenda between government and the private sector and the search for pragmatic solutions illustrate this desire to leave the baggage of dualistic left and right ideological politics aside. This was the 'third way', which also owed much to an interpretation of the ideas of Anthony Giddens, advocating investment in human capital and the balancing of rights and responsibilities (Giddens, 1998). The concept of a free but responsible citizen, an informed consumer making choices in a market place of possibilities, represented the new society, based on a modernisation of the value base in line with a shift from entitlement to responsibility. Friendly to business, focussed on work, making a contribution by helping individuals help themselves, the government was to focus on investing in human capital. For New Labour, the welfare agenda was not to be based upon delivering an entitlement to support to the victims of an unfair society but, engineering, if need be, the individual taking of responsibility primarily through work, and equally through education as a means to work. Naturally, policy towards children and young people would be central to this policy, as was the focus on parents being responsible in their attitude towards child rearing (Featherstone, 2003).

1:1:4 Social Inclusion

The social inclusion unit was one of the first policy units set up by the New Labour government, and forms part of the corporate vision of the modernisation agenda that was to underpin the social investment state. Social inclusion would be won through engagement with work, and responsible self-help, remoralising the disaffected and the marginalised

(Williams, 2004). The new social contract would not be an entitlement without strings. The potential social inclusion agenda, in respect of tackling social justice, was never developed. Axford (2008) writes that the emphasis shifted from the concept of tackling exclusion as a critique of economic, educational and health inequalities in wider society, to discourses on personal and family improvement, and parental responsibilities, and hence lost the social justice agenda and initiative. In this sense, the participation agenda is focused on the 'responsibilisation' of the excluded, as opposed to the richer and powerful excluding sections of society (Clarke 2005).

1:1:5 The early intervention agenda – partnership and participation

Central to the New Labour strategy is, what Glendinning and Powell term, the governance narrative of partnership (Powell and Glendinning, 2002; Newman, 2001; Rhodes, 2000). The rationale behind this partnership agenda is the 'third way' vision of an integrated corporate social investment state, able to engage private and third sector parties in pragmatic cooperative planning and service provision. The limits and strains underlying partnerships practice is, however, as strained and compromised by conflicting agendas at the national level, as it is at the local level, as I will later show with the empirical CAF data. Newman discusses these notions of partnership as stemming from a vision of holistic government, based on horizontal self-organisation of mutually interdependent actors, engaged in negotiation, compromise and pragmatic activity, rather than hierarchical control, confrontation and bureaucracy (Newman 2001). This notion of

partnership forms an alternative to the competitive market and administrative bureaucracy, giving rise to a technocratic, pragmatic, reflexive knowledge-driven economy. However, the tension between the urgency of national state leadership to achieve measurable goals, and the gentle steering from above implied by the partnership model leads, perhaps inevitably, to a mix of measures from legislative dictate to national target setting and prioritisation, which serves to compromise the vision of partnership implied by the modernising agenda (Powell and Glendenning, 2002). This difficulty over the realisation of partnership agendas, and the conflicts between output goals and processes, features throughout the governance agenda, at all levels, including that of the relationships I discuss using empirical CAF data in chapters 5 to 7. It is an irony that the vision of a facilitating, empowering state, governing through a network of institutions, public and private, sharing outcome led goals for the greater good of all, should become characterised as a centralising controlling target led state, whatever the assessment of measurable success achieved (Newman 2001; Jordan 2011).

With the shift from a welfare state based on entitlement to one of personal responsibility, there is an emphasis on a sense of obligation in the new partnership between state and individuals. Individuals should maximise their contribution by achieving economic independence from public funds, achieving autonomy and normative social integration. Parents, on the other hand, should fulfil their obligations in turning out well adjusted children, socialised, flexible, and economically viable (Williams, 2004). There is, then, an onus created for parents to respond to the government agenda for social investment. On the government intervention side, the growing momentum during the 1990s behind calls for earlier intervention to

improve outcomes for children, is described by Parton and others (Parton, 2006; Utting, 1998). In answer to this concern to develop a child development focused, evidence based, intervention in the nation's children, the New Labour programme was a comprehensive corporate strategy. The early intervention agenda, introduced in the early 21st Century, was an outcomes-led approach informed by the Every Child Matters (ECM) strategy (H.M. Treasury, 2003). The five outcomes for children: be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution, and achieve economic wellbeing, were underpinned by tables of indicators (Ofsted, 2005). The joining up of education and social services into children's services departments, and the formation of children's trusts, by legislation, in 2004, were two key planks of the new corporate regime for service provision. Although presented as a response to the Laming report (2003) into the death of Victoria Climbié in 2000, the ECM white paper was the result of prior government strategic thinking, and went beyond the child protection concerns of the Laming report (Parton, 2006). However, the Laming report, with its critique of inter-professional working and inter-agency communication in child protection, underlined the government's vision for an integrated children's workforce with a common core of skills, and that was to form another plank of the plan (DfES 2005b).

The revised, and more far-reaching concept of safeguarding, emphasised the vulnerability of all children in terms of the five target outcomes. Gathering data on the nation's children and young people required an equally innovative programme of technological solutions to increase surveillance information sharing. The collection of data on large local and national data bases concerning children and their families was, however, opposed as a step too far by civil

liberties groups and by conservative opposition, and was covered at length in the national Press (Lightfoot, 2009). Critiques of the programme were often couched around this proposed extension of digital surveillance, including the collection of data on large databases for inter-professional sharing, with consequent risks to confidentiality (Garrett, 2005). Plans here included ContactPoint, where registered professionals would access details of all children on a national database, and in time, use of the CAF for children with additional needs was to be flagged on this database. Political opposition was aided greatly by the loss of computer discs by a civil servant, containing the details of millions of families claiming child benefit in 2007. After long delays in its implementation, due to difficulties with the technology, the ContactPoint scheme was closed down in 2010 by the incoming coalition government. The technological innovations of the ICS system for recording social work activity, and also the CAF, have drawn critique from academic evaluations, including the Munro Report (2011), commissioned by the coalition government, as concerns over the condition of professional social worker judgment and expertise, under a burden of standardized data collection imperatives, gathered force (Broadhurst *et al.*, 2009; White, Wastell, Broadhurst, and Hall, 2010).

In summary, arrangements prior to Every Child Matters were based on the mass provision of universal services to all children and young people, meeting universal needs, with a smaller specialised social work service for cases where agencies identified welfare concerns. The new arrangements would include an extension of targeted services, and a deeper surveillance of children and families. This was accompanied by the growth of a much larger children's workforce, answering to

local Children's Trusts, in turn forming a local partnership of agencies, including third sector agencies, along with the statutory health, social services and educational sector. This extended the child and family surveillance and intervention mandate across the full children's workforce. The imperatives of multi-agency working, inter-professional communication, and common terms of assessment and engagement, became ever more central for the governing of children and families.

Aside from the concerns over the collection of personal data, the Every Child Matters programme was also critiqued by academics, in the social policy and legal fields, over the focus on the child as future worker, and a developmental as opposed to rights perspective on citizenship (Penna, 2005; Williams, 2004). This critique was applied to the whole New Labour social investment and social exclusion programme, and questioned the focus on economic integration and participation over and above a more redistribution-based discourse that focused on the inequalities of wealth and power (Frost and Parton, 2009; Levitas, 2005).

1:1:6 Contemporary context for early intervention

Since the Thatcher years of government of the 1980s, the creeping marketisation agenda of successive governments has formed a mainstream political consensus, which has made gradual advance reaching deeper into local government service provision (Jones, 2015). With the conservative party in 2015 forming a small but decisive majority government, Prime Minister Cameron has signalled the further extension of private enterprise and 'opportunity' into the provision of social services by a 'smarter state'.

Number one is reform. What energises many markets are new insurgent companies, who break monopolies and bring in new ways of doing things. We should apply this thinking to government. So many of our country's efforts to extend opportunity have been undermined by a sort of tolerance of state failure: children-in-care and prisons being two absolutely standout areas. (Cameron 2015)

After the demise of the New Labour government in 2010, and the arrival of the coalition period, the 'Big Society' was offered as policy template for a new relationship between the public and the private sectors. This transformation of service provision was to engage citizens and service users in the delivery and provision of services. Jordan speculated in 2011 what the coalition 'Big Society' might mean for public services after the contract culture, the targets and the close woven corporate New Labour 'third way' (Jordan, 2011). With the departure of the coalition government, the Big Society discourse has gone with it, and little remains as a legacy beyond the continual depredations on public provision of family support services and social security entitlements. Whilst the NHS, pensioners and schools may have escaped the brunt of expenditure reductions, local services, including housing and children's services, were cut by a third or more during this period (Lupton *et al.*, 2015). Aside from an end to the relatively copious New Labour plans and strategy documents, and government commissioned literature reviews on issues of practice, it is not clear whether the Big Society has represented anything more significant than the further marketization of public services (Jones, 2015).

Post coalition, there has been rhetoric around increasing professional standards, less bureaucracy, and more

accountability for social work professionals. New proposals to outsource Children's Social Care mean private service providers have reached the final nucleus of local authority child protection services. The large corporations and their subsidiaries advancing into this territory will not be subject to Ofsted inspections (Jones 2015). Meanwhile, we have seen the collapse of the practitioner-led College of Social Work in 2015. The college was formed in the wake of the Munro Report (2011), and the professional and academic led Social Work Task Force which both made wide ranging recommendations for the bolstering of professional leadership in social work. In the context of realignments of early intervention strategies around perceived risk to children's early development, which increase the sense of ambivalence towards supporting children in struggling families, these developments may have ramifications both in terms of policing the practice and dealing with the consequences of innovations in service provision (Butler, 2014; Featherstone, Morris, and White, 2014).

Following the riots in England, which produced in answer an outburst of moral indignation from policy makers, the Troubled Families Programme (TFP) began in 2011. The TFP represents the most prominent government initiated family intervention programme, post New Labour, of the contemporary period. It looms large as a characteristic discourse of current family policy. It encapsulates the development of the MUD (Moral Underclass Discourse) discourse, and harsh discourses around poor and vulnerable families generally (Bond-Taylor, 2014; Butler, 2014; Crossley, 2015a; Featherstone *et al.*, 2014; Levitas, 2012). While under New Labour although there was a critique of families in poverty, it was accompanied by some limited measures of redistribution, through tax credits, uprating of benefits, and

spending on social programmes, such as Sure Start children's centres and the Children's Fund (Audit Commission, 2008). Current discourses are tempered with significant austerity and are both harsher and more tenuously grounded in an evidence base (Crossley, 2015b; Levitas, 2012).

As far as social work is concerned, an increase in referrals to children's social care, increased numbers of children on child protection plans, increased care applications, and increased numbers of children being removed from families, reflect what Butler calls a shift from 'rehabilitation' to 'rescue' (DfE 2014; DfE 2015a; CAFCASS 2015; Butler 2014). It is likely that participative or partnership working in practice will, to some degree, reflect these changes in the coming years. In addition, we are witnessing the gradual reduction in children centre provision (4Children 2015), and with the 2015 Autumn spending review projecting future local authority expenditure cuts over the next 5 years, the pressures on local authorities is set to continue. The realities of early intervention strategies will also continue to reflect these pressures.

In seeking to introduce and contextualise the CAF as a process of multi-agency assessment, it has been necessary to return to an account of the days of New Labour social programming. This was necessary not only because this is where the CAF is rooted, but also because, despite the passage of 5 years and two changes of government, the New Labour practice agenda is still a point of reference for multi-agency working and early intervention practice in local authorities. The latest Department for Education 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' guidance document (2015b) requires an 'Early Help' strategy and includes brief mention of the CAF as one possible local response to a need for joint assessment between agencies, but the evolution of the CAF in

the context of new arrangements for joint working with health boards, post New Labour, has been devolved as a matter for local authorities. The CAF has lost its key role as a plank of national government policy but remains a common point of reference in local authorities. I will now discuss the CAF as a process, before moving on to look at the research that was conducted on the CAF following its implementation.

1:2 The Common Assessment Framework

The Every Child Matters green paper found legislative backing in the Children's Act 2004. The police, and new youth offending teams, local health agencies, children's services departments, and third sector organisations working with children and young people, were obliged to form children's trusts under the leadership of the local authority. The creation of a local children's plan, and the development of databases whereby strategic outcomes for all children could be monitored, became mandatory measures for all local authorities. This modernising, and evidence based administration of services, came with information technology that would reflect the new ways of thinking, and have a significant impact on practices, from administration to fieldwork, across services (Garrett, 2005; Harlow and Webb, 2003; Parton, 2008; Peckover, White and Hall, 2008). This academic literature considers governmentality, through means of information, as a technical rationality associated with the management of risk, that also has an impact on the narrative and reporting practices of practitioners. The practitioner's traditional remit of personal judgement, practice wisdom, and relationship-based assessment implemented in a narrative style, was being challenged with a nationally standardised

'informational' approach and new calculus for data collection, monitoring, and risk assessment (Broadhurst *et al.*, 2009; Parton, 2008; White, Hall, and Peckover, 2009).

Accompanying these profound changes in the delivery of services to children and families came the expansion and diversification of the children's workforce (CWDC 2008). The sum of £960 million was made available by the government for The Children's Fund, which supported an expanding third sector providing child and family services (Morris and Barnes, 2008). In addition, there was the establishment and growth of children's centres, including: in-house and outreach family support services; the establishment of the Sure Start preventative programme working with families with young children; and the diversification of schools' involvement in family support, fuelling a burgeoning array of practitioners working with young people and their parents.

It was as part of this expansion of activity of inter-professional coordination, family support and inclusion, but also surveillance and targeted outcome measures, that the CAF came into being as a multi-agency strategy. As I explained earlier, the 1989 Children's Act made provision for those defined as children in need, using a broad definition, which had defined a threshold for local authority social service departments to provide assistance. However, the CAF would bring a lower threshold to bear, that of children with additional needs, which could not be met through universal services alone, and required an intervention to secure their welfare according to the ECM outcome measures. The CAF, then, was designed to become a key tool in the new wider concern of safeguarding children, and although not a statutory requirement, it became a key part of arrangements in all local authorities, in England and Wales, since its initiation in 2003.

This footing in guidance, rather than statute, has allowed that arrangements have taken a variety of organisational forms across the country. Research into the adoption of the CAF confirmed that, by 2010, CAF was widely in use across England, in some shape or form (CWDC, 2010a; Samuels, Bailey and Brierly, 2009; Easton, Gee, Durbin and Teeman, 2011). As for the Every Child Matters outcomes framework, it is no longer a government strategy in name and does not appear in Department of Education literature. However, Children's Trusts and local Children's Plans remain a statutory fixture for local authorities and it remains to be seen how planning and strategy in that sphere will evolve.

In the following section, I will describe in more detail the CAF itself as a process and a way of working, before considering the research undertaken into the CAF, and also related research into multi-agency working. A key contextual point for this thesis is that the establishment of CAF as a corporate early intervention service suggests a model for engagement between state and family where partnership, consent and participation are watchwords. When multi-agency holistic assessment is added to the mix, there is a question as to what new practitioner and service user relationship is being created or implied, and how this may impact upon service users.

1:2:1 The CAF Toolkit

CAF was introduced to practitioners in the form of a toolkit offering a national template assessment form, a set of principles and a procedure involving a checklist assessment, to help practitioners decide whether CAF was an appropriate choice in any given case, and guidance on the role of lead

professional. In some authorities, the CAF would become eCAF, an online form creating an accessible database for local practitioners. However, although the original vision for the eCAF was to enable national sharing of information through the new technology ContactPoint. ContactPoint was itself, as discussed earlier, abandoned. Subsequently, eCaf is in use sometimes as a local term referring to local authority arrangements for electronic completion and sharing of CAF assessments. The key elements of process are the lead professional role, the national template for a holistic assessment, and the team around the child (TAC). TAC is where a multi-agency meeting, including child and carer, is convened to consider the child and family centred assessment of need, and to take forward planning and review functions in meeting those needs. In this study respondents used the term in this context and in the discussion and analysis of fieldwork this is the convention I use. In 2006, the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) took over the role of the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) in preparing a series of guidance publications, for both practitioners and managers, and went on to commission literature reviews reporting on integrated working practices, the lead professional, and the CAF, subsequently (CWDC, 2010a; CWDC, 2010b; Oliver *et al.*, 2010; CWDC 2009c). The CWDC was disbanded in 2012 by the coalition government.

1:2:2 The Assessment

The CAF assessment, as indicated above, was developed from the Assessment Framework employed by social services departments in working with higher threshold children and families, where assessment of children in need and child

protection work was carried out by social workers. Based on three domains comprising the child's development, parenting and wider family and environmental factors, it was designed to be accessible to a common denominator, or common core of understanding, across the board in the children's workforce. The assessment was embedded in the national CAF form, which practitioners would complete with the child and family (See Appendix 1 for a copy of the national CAF assessment form. Specialist assessments could then be called for by the CAF meeting, or team around the child as and when appropriate and agreed upon jointly. The CWDC also prepared a guidance document on the common Core of practitioner skills, which introduces the concept of a common language of child development, needs and assessment (DfES 2005a; CWDC 2009b; CWDC 2009a)

1:2:3 Lead Professional

The lead professional could be a practitioner from any agency or sector within the children's workforce, and after using the checklist, and discussing with the child and family their views and willingness to use the CAF process, was then responsible for coordinating the multi-agency process, chairing the meetings and otherwise guiding the process. Research into CAF would quickly confirm the lead professional as a source of concern for practitioners, where confusion over the full extent of the role and concern over extra workload would come to the fore (Brandon *et al.*, 2005; CWDC, 2010a).

1:2:4 Team Around the Child

As the title suggests, the TAC (or CAF meeting) involves a multi-agency group formed around a child, and overseeing a coordinated support plan. Formerly introduced in literature and practice on working with disabled children, the TAC is often discussed as a model in its own right (Samuels *et al.*, 2009). The TAC model is described in more detail below, but forms a key element of the CAF in engaging the child and family with multiple agencies around a common assessment of need, and guided by a lead professional, towards the development and review of an action plan.

1:3 CAF Research

Since the CAF was launched by way of pilot in 2005, there has been research into the CAF itself, and research that focussed more broadly on models of integrated practice, or multi-agency practices, but which discusses CAF as an exemplar. In this section, I will review this research, and identify some broad conclusions, before discussing some of the gaps. This review is a necessary step before discussing the questions to be addressed by this thesis and outlining the reasons behind the particular approach adopted methodologically.

The original research conducted for this thesis uses CAF as a case study of a multi-agency model. In order to review relevant research on this way of working, and the CAF in particular, I have organised my review of CAF research under a series of headings, presented below, as a means of summarising the main issues. In addressing the research questions, I will present an overview paying particular

attention to the representation of service users' perspectives and experiences within that research.

1:3:1 Implementation across the country

The Children's Workforce Development Council commissioned a report on TAC work, which reported in 2010 on the basis of research into 30 randomly selected local authorities across England (Samuels *et al.*, 2009). They identified a list of elements to define the TAC system, which were:

- some form of joined-up assessment
- involves a Lead Professional
- is a virtual/flexible team
- aims to provide services that are integrated at the point of delivery
- involves the establishment of a regular meeting
- the child/young person/families will be invited to attend TAC meetings
- develops a TAC support plan at the meeting (Samuels *et al.*:3)

This list includes the elements of CAF, but does not stipulate the name, or the national forms used with the assessment protocol itself. They found that two thirds of authorities were operating this kind of TAC. The figures included six out of seven county authorities and six out of ten unitary authorities. In all cases, the TAC system was used to work with children with additional needs, and those not using the system were often planning to implement it. A Local Authority Research Consortium (LARC) commissioned report (Holmes, McDermid, Padley, and Soper, 2012), on the financial costs of CAF, refers

to CAF being fully implemented in all local authorities across England and Wales by 2008, but it is clear from Samuels *et al.* (2009) that take up less than 100% (Easton *et al.*, 2011). It is difficult to make a more accurate estimate of how ubiquitous the CAF (or TAC) is in one form or another. Based on the above evidence, however, there is reason to believe that multi-agency single assessment process with a lead professional and a team around the child model is widespread in England. The extent to which CAF is in operation in Wales is less clear. As I noted earlier the CAF is mooted by government Working Together guidance as an option in respect of arrangements as part of an Early Help strategy for children and young people (DfE 2015b).

1:3:2 The early implementation of CAF

After the introduction of CAF as a pilot in twelve local authorities in England and Wales, one of the largest research projects focusing on the implementation of the CAF was undertaken by Brandon and colleagues, involving all of the pilot areas, and this study is still much cited in the CAF literature (Brandon *et al.*, 2005; Brandon *et al.*, 2006). The focus of the research was on the factors helping or hindering the implementation of the CAF and lead professional working. This focus remained a priority topic under CWDC commissioned research in the last years of the New Labour government (CWDC 2010a; Samuels *et al.*, 2009; Oliver *et al.*, 2010). The Brandon research used focus groups and interviews with practitioners and managers. There is an acknowledgment that there was no remit in the research to consult with service users, although the researchers did speak to a small number of families engaged in the process.

During this early stage evaluation, practitioners generally only had experience of undertaking one or two CAFs. The study notes the positive assessment from practitioners, who felt that the initiative was a positive one for children and families, but also reported how the lead professional role caused a mixed response from workers, underlining concerns about training and support needs. The increased demands on workers in holistic assessment, managing the emotional demands of working with issues such as informed consent from families, chairing meetings, and taking key responsibilities in a multi-agency setting, were often seen as daunting. In summary of this key CAF study, the researchers were positive about the potential for professional practice to be galvanised by better collaborative working practices between practitioners and agencies, better information sharing, and a more responsive service for children and families, but they warned these were tentative results, and further work needed to be done on the views and experiences of service users. The general conclusions foreshadowed findings from subsequent research into CAF.

1:3:3 Specialist roles and holistic assessments

Adamson and Deverall (2009) studied the implementation of CAF in a small case study of a rural area and, like Brandon and colleagues, noted that education and health workers tended to be the most prominent services involved. One finding was of a poor understanding around the principles of the holistic assessment. They felt that the training practitioners had received had failed to instil the necessary skills and understanding of the principles behind common assessment. The extra emotional demands on workers working in this way

with families and other agencies, was also noted as a challenge, together with the extra burden of time involved in doing the work. This finding was corroborated in other studies, where practitioners found it challenging to move beyond their traditional job specialisms and remit, and discuss personal issues with families in a way they were unaccustomed to doing. Agencies appeared reluctant to replace their own specialised assessments with the CAF, and this was identified as a significant barrier to achieving the potential of integrated and inclusive ways of working Adamson and Deverall (2009) identified in the CAF. Professional perspectives and identity, and specialised assessment skills, formed another common theme in the available CAF research. This theme occurs in connection with working collaboratively with other practitioners, and also in respect of the holistic assessment and the kinds of information and 'data' gathered by practitioners and agencies. Referring back to government guidance, the specialist worker is often presented as an obstacle to reform, and working collaboratively as more effective. The government common core guidance suggests it is often not helpful when workers see themselves in specialised roles, such as health visitor, teacher or social worker (DfES 2005a).

Another study, by Pithouse (2006), looked at the implementation of CAF in Wales, and used a before and after semi-experimental method. The focus was on the common or holistic assessment, and the difficulties faced by workers experienced in a specialised approach, and making the transition to a broader perspective required from the CAF assessment. Two neighbouring sites in Wales were compared, like for like, where in one case CAF had only been implemented recently and in the other, not at all. The study

argued that the idea that holistic assessment is 'an uncomplicated opportunity waiting to be exploited' (Pithouse 2006: 215) was demonstrably unrealistic. After studying completed CAF assessment forms, Pithouse found a significant decrease in missing basic information, and increased coverage of health and education fields. However, out of 120 cases studied, 60% still had incomplete sections dealing with the child's identity and social presentation, emotional and behavioural problems, and family and social relationships. There were, nonetheless, some tentatively positive conclusions around how referrals were managed in a more focused and coordinated way between social services and other agencies.

1:3:4 Information, data, and narrative in written assessments

The extent to which practice may form a kind of resistance to change is further explored in the context of CAF specifically by White, Hall and Peckover (2009) and also more generally by others in the exploration of the notions of information and data (Garrett, 2005; Harlow and Webb, 2003; Parton, 2008). Looking at the assessment practice of lead professionals in four local authorities, and the utilisation of the standard form for CAF assessments, Pithouse, Hall, Peckover and White (2009) found a tension between managerial data gathering requirements, and practitioner thinking that was expressed in creativity and resistance in the form filling. In this study, as in previous studies, it was found that education workers and health workers were the most common lead professionals (Adamson and Deverell, 2009a; Brandon, 2006; Gilligan and Manby, 2008a; Jones and Gallop, 2003; Pithouse, 2006). They found a narrative style, and a language on 'concerns' as

opposed to 'needs' to be more pronounced in practitioners' use of the forms. This research poses the distinction between a relational style and focus from practitioners in tension with a more actuarial database driven informational shift in the management of services by strategic authorities.

1:3:5 Consent

Another finding related to the issue of informed consent. Pithouse *et al* (2009) found evidence that despite an explicit requirement that consent from children and families be documented, there was little evidence on consent practices, and the explicit views of children, within the assessment process (Pithouse *et al.*, 2009: 605). Parents had signed 76% of forms, and 25% had direct entries by children. They contrast this with the earlier Welsh study by Pithouse (2006) where 10% of cases had comments from parents, and none had input from children. Some other studies noted that difficulties around engaging reluctant families were a stumbling block in the CAF (Kellett and Apps 2009; Adamson and Deverell 2009).

1:3:6 Professional style and identities

The exploration of professional identities, and practitioners' flexibility in approach and outlook, is also explored by Kellett and Apps (2009), who used semi-structured interviewing to look at how practitioners in health visiting, paediatrics, family support and teaching roles used what they call 'subjective and objective elements of practice' in assessing parents. They found a high degree of consensus around definitions of good

enough parenting. However, they found less confidence amongst teaching and paediatric workers in making parenting assessments. Teachers often seemed to feel that their role was primarily one of making observations other professionals could in turn use to further assess and reach conclusions. Generally, they found teachers lacked confidence in assessing how and when to intervene with families, and their comfort zone was orientated to the traditional teaching remit. In respect of practitioners overall, they identified the role of 'gut feeling' as trumping any widespread use of theoretical models of assessment.

Despite these hindrances, the CAF was used as a primary tool by many of these practitioners' agencies. Some benefits were recognised, particularly in working with families where a large number of agencies were involved. Specific benefits noted were gathering information systematically on one form for subsequent sharing, and also a minimising of duplication for the families in telling their story to multiple agencies. On the other hand, the challenge of working in this way on cases, where cooperation and consent were lacking, was also noted. As in other studies, the time taken to use the CAF process was also viewed as a significant barrier to its use more widely.

Kellet and Apps (2009) found that health visitors and teachers were most likely to view the CAF as a means of making referrals to other agencies. Other researchers also found that CAF was used as a referral mechanism, and thus competed with its use as a method of direct work (Adamson and Deverell, 2009; Pithouse *et al.*, 2009; Samuels *et al.*, 2009). Kellet and Apps (2009) found that CAF was most often being used in this way, rather than to assess and provide direct support. Turning now to research evaluating the

effectiveness of CAF, and the experiences of service users, there is a significant gap in knowledge, as I explain below.

1:3:7 Outcomes and engagement of families, children and young people in CAF research

The difficulties of evaluating programme outcomes in social work are well documented. These include: distinguishing between programme effects and other life events and conditions; the time scales for programme effects may be different for different service users and may depend on other life events and conditions; difficulties deciding which outcomes are important and how they can be defined and measured is also problematic (Sampson, 2007; Statham and Smith, 2010). It is also clear that studies effectively linking multi-agency working and outcomes for service users are relatively scarce (Atkinson, Jones and Lamont, 2007; Marsh 2006; Sloper 2004). Measuring change in people's lives in a robust way is difficult enough, but attributing causality is equally fraught (Statham and Smith 2010). The studies of CAF have primarily focused on practitioners' practices and attitudes, or on more organisational and systemic matters. None of the studies found for this review generated longitudinal data on children or young people, which could be an important method in assessing change in association with any programmed intervention. Reports of impact or outcome for service users, involved with CAF, tend towards evaluations based on interview data from practitioners, although some have consulted limited numbers of service users. Therefore, research on the experiences of children and their families relies largely on practitioners' assessments of how well particular goal directed outcomes are achieved, as opposed to

interrogating service users' experiences. I will now look at some of these studies.

Gilligan and Manby's (2008) examination of CAF, implemented in two towns in Northern England, set out to evaluate the evidence in respect of 'government rhetoric' around early intervention in a broad spectrum of children's additional needs, and secondly, greater inter-professional integration in assessment and working together. They selected three main issues through which to carry forward their analysis. Firstly, they identified numbers and attributes of the children and young people involved. Secondly, they explored the issues explicitly addressed by practitioners, and thirdly, they considered extent to which young people and their families were involved in the process.

Their first observations were that practitioners struggled with the additional burden of a more lengthy process of assessment, and the greater emotional demands made in carrying out this kind of work. This finding was already identified from other studies above. In addition, they found that the CAF was mainly applied to boys who were displaying behavioural problems that parents were struggling to address. Further to this, they concluded that the involvement of families, and particularly children and young people, was patchy at best, and fathers were not involved. In fact, they found that most decisions over cases were made at multi-agency meetings, where families were not invited.

Despite these reservations, Gilligan and Manby (2008) judged that the CAF process had potential to produce benefits for children, if sufficient resources were deployed in supporting the process. They found that, as well as the failure to involve parents and children, only a limited range of children with additional needs were being identified, and thus able to benefit

in the way suggested by the promise contained in the government rhetoric of participation and inclusion. The researchers concluded greater thought needed to be given to the training and support of practitioners, to deploy this significantly new and challenging way of working.

Samuels *et al.*'s (2009) study of the TAC intended to address more directly the question of service users' perceptions and experiences of TAC and CAF. This study was directed specifically at the 11 to 14 age group and attempts were made to recruit families and young people in three case study authorities. The researchers had aimed to recruit 18 young people for interviews, but only managed to involve 4 young people and 3 parents across the three sites. They found practitioners reluctant to facilitate this part of the research, and cite this as a limitation of the study findings. However, practitioners' views were explored on the participation of young people and their families. Practitioners and managers in all three case study areas claimed that the involvement of children and families was central to the process. In one case study, area practitioners offered a 'pre-meet' with families, and offered to represent the young person's views at the meeting, or alternatively, young people could be invited to attend for part of the meeting. Many practitioners across the three areas were of the view that the TAC system could only be successful if the young person was closely involved by the lead professional. However, it was also noted that some practitioners felt that the 11 to 14 age group could be difficult to work with, and they preferred to work closely with parents where this age group were concerned. The four young people who took part in the research did offer positive assessments of their involvement in the TAC process, and they appreciated being invited to the meetings. The families too, said they felt

that the TAC format gave them a feeling that practitioners were 'pulling together' with them, which they felt was supportive to them. Generally, there was a feeling from practitioners across the board that the TAC format probably helped in the accessing of services in an effective way, and was particularly helpful with young people experiencing difficulties at the lower end of complexity. The researchers reported that most practitioners expressed a view that the TAC could take them so far, but with complex needs, resource issues were often crucial, and it was difficult to make progress when needs were complex and required additional support which was lacking. Practitioners also expressed frustration when other practitioners avoided engaging with the TAC. None of the case study areas in Samuels *et al.*'s (2009) research recorded outcomes routinely for children and families. The researchers were dependent on the interview data from practitioners and managers. The researchers concluded that practitioners tended to be positive overall about the benefits of the TAC way of working, but equally, expressed reservations about the amount of time, energy, and support required to engage effectively with the process.

Another evaluative study by Jones (2007) considered two of ten local authorities taking part in the government Information Sharing and Assessment (ISA) 'trailblazer' programme in 2004. The research took the use of CAF, including the TAC, and information sharing as primary foci. This was a qualitative study interviewing a sample of 12 families. Of the 12 children in the study, 4 were interviewed. A total of 38 practitioners were also interviewed and attended focus groups. As in the Samuels (2009) study discussed above, the difficulties of recruiting young people for this kind of research were noted in this study. The findings in the Jones'

study were overwhelmingly positive, in terms of the evaluation of CAF and TAC meetings by young people and their families, although they were mixed in one of the study areas. The key role of the lead professional in supporting and guiding the families through the process was noted. This was the only study where key findings include young people's voices. Early engagement of young people's motivation, the crucial role of relationship building from the lead professional, conscientious support around TAC meetings, and consideration of simple and clear communication throughout the process, are all cited in this study. Jones also suggests that in engaging young people, consideration should be given as to whether the school is a suitable venue for meetings, where a child has school-related difficulties. She also recommends that practitioners and parents consider the value and appropriateness of having child-centred meetings, without parents, in accordance with family dynamics and the engagement process generally.

Where parents were concerned, the two local authority areas were similarly positive about support from TAC meetings, although in one area there was evidence of frustration over resources available to meet the needs of young people with more complex problems. The importance of early intervention and a focus on good communication from professionals, were identified as key, including specialised provision, where necessary, to keep young people with complex needs informed and part of the process. Families appreciated informality from professionals who kept meetings small and friendly. Small gestures of practical support to families were appreciated and built goodwill. As with the young people, the support from lead professionals was central to the parents. This included: support before and debriefing

after meetings, listening, communicating well, being a good advocate and offering practical assistance, where required.

Amongst other research looking at outcomes from CAF working, perhaps the largest studies are the National Foundation for Education Research and the Local Authority Research Consortium (LARC) studies (Easton, *et al.*, 2011; Easton, *Morris and Gee*, 2010; Lord *et al.*, 2008). These three studies utilised the combined resources of the Local Authority Research Consortium and the LARC 2 report, which focussed on the CAF, drew in 24 participating local authorities, and consulted 350 participants, including an undisclosed number of children and young people. The first LARC1 study, which looked at the effects of integrated working across 14 local authorities, consulted 102 children and young people, and 69 practitioners and 68 strategic managers. The third LARC study, LARC 3, looked at the cost effectiveness of CAF across 21 local authorities, using 80 costed case studies.

For the purposes of this literature review I will focus on summary comments on the LARC2 study, which deals directly with the CAF as a form of integrated working, and includes a focus on outcomes for children and young people. In this study, the authors have analysed and summarised the 24 small research projects undertaken by practitioners in the different local areas. The researchers provided consultancy support to these local projects, but acknowledge methodological issues that had to be considered in assessing the quality of the data. The authors report that all the local authorities undertook qualitative studies, which reported findings favourable to their own original propositions and hypotheses about CAF support, but some of the projects did not produce sufficient evidence to back the claims made. Following the five Every Child Matters outcomes scheme, the

overall conclusions of the LARC2 report were that there was evidence of good outcomes in all areas, but it was difficult to find a solid causal link to CAF, based on the presented evidence. The strength of the study is perhaps in the large number of participating authorities, and the large number of young people and parents, who were consulted. Below, I have briefly summarise the findings in terms of their ECM outcomes.

1. Be healthy: A majority of local authority contributors found benefits extending to both physical and mental health of young people. More self-confidence, self-esteem, more resilience, and enhanced social and emotional awareness and general wellbeing, were found.
2. Stay Safe: A quarter of local authorities found that the CAF assessment had identified risky behaviours from young people. Practitioners were able to offer support to families, thereby helping young people to avoid engaging in risky behaviour and feel safer as a consequence.
3. Enjoy and achieve: The CAF was said to have improved attendance at school in 13 authorities, enhance learning in 9 authorities and to have enhanced peer relations in 4.
4. Making a positive contribution: 13 authorities found CAF had empowered families, given young people access to positive activities and improved relationships.
5. Achieve economic wellbeing: Six authorities reported improved economic wellbeing by addressing housing

and welfare difficulties, and raising aspirations in education and future employment and training.

Aside from these benefits, authorities reported better parenting, better school transitions, better relations between families and schools, and between family members. So, methodological reservations aside, the report recognised a significantly positive appraisal of CAF working overall in terms of outcomes amongst service users. The report does not elaborate on how service users participated in the local authority reports, although quotations from service users are included to underline findings throughout.

The supporting elements of CAF, which the local authority studies identify as contributing to successful interventions using CAF, can be summarised under the following broad headings:

1. Engaging children and young people, and their families, in the process.
2. Consistent and skilled lead professional support.
3. Integrating all the elements of the CAF process.
4. Multi-agency working and information sharing.
5. Assessing children and young people's needs at an early stage.

These identified factors raise questions in respect of what is understood by some of the terms employed, such as multi-agency working, integrated working, and engaging service users in the process, and in the following section, I will explore this further. Pulling key findings from these 10 CAF research studies, discussed thus far in this chapter, shows that there is

agreement on a number of issues, and in summary, I list eight key points before moving on.

1. Nearly all of the studies note some benefits of practitioners working together, including improved information sharing, and a more responsive service. However, most studies also note a poor grasp of the principles of holistic assessment, with workers finding it difficult to move beyond traditional specialist remits and ways of thinking. Some agencies were reported as being unwilling to abandon their own specialist assessments in favour of CAF.
2. Increased emotional demands on workers in engaging with families using CAF was noted by three studies, including, specifically, the demands of working with reluctant service users, and the extra burden of time taken to use the process.
3. Tension between the prescriptive data gathering format of the CAF assessment, and more narrative-based practitioner thinking styles, created both creativity and resistance in the form filling, according to one study.
4. Gaining consent from child and family involvement in CAF was inconsistently evidenced, according to two studies.
5. Positive benefits for children and young people were noted in more than one study. However, this was qualified by a paucity of reliable evidence linking the CAF to any improvements.
6. CAF was most commonly used as a means of making referrals to specific agencies, according to three studies. Another study questioned whether schools

were an appropriate venue for engaging young people with school difficulties, and suggested more careful thought needed to be given to the engagement of young people in meetings.

The relationship of partnership between families, including children and young people, and the state, which is posed in the CAF process, has not yet received a central critical focus in studies of CAF. This is despite the crucial status of this relationship between state and service user in the policy context that gave rise to the CAF. I will turn at this point to some of the other, more general, literature, on multi-agency working, and notions of integrated working practices, and researching outcomes.

1:4 Multi-agency practices and integrated working

The practice of inter-professional and multi-agency working is integral to the CAF approach. The holistic assessment, the breaking down of specialist thinking, and the development of a common language between agencies, are all central ideas. In reviewing the literature on multi-agency working, the extent to which the New Labour policy programme resulted in a relatively rich period of research and literature reviews, dealing with a broad range of approaches to working together, stands out. Aside from the reports outlined above, where the CAF is directly addressed as an exemplar of new practices under the ECM strategy, there are numerous government commissioned studies that examine constituent elements of practice that also inform the CAF approach. Aside from the research discussed above in the 'common language project',

Axford and colleagues examined the language in use in these documents (Axford, Berry, Little, and Morpeth, 2006). Needs, threshold, service and outcome were common concepts designed to sit on top of specialist professional perspectives. The term 'research mindedness' also appears, promoted as part of an evidence-based approach, where practitioners work collaboratively towards outcomes underlined by a shared understanding of child development perspectives. However the difficulty in defining terms and investigating their impact on practices and outcomes is a significant challenge, as I discuss next.

1:4:1 The difficulties of defining terms

Defining terms is a key difficulty for an examination of both practice and outcome. Some writers have compiled comprehensive schema for a typology, including: levels of collaboration, integration, co-location, pooling of budgets, coordination, shared management functions, joint strategy development, shared outcome goals, inter-professional working, partnership working, multi-disciplinary practice, or, from New Labour political language, 'joined up working' (Frost, 2005). Howarth and Morrison (2007), who are interested in the development of collaboration between agencies dealing with child protection, primarily use a scheme based on a range from low level communication between agencies, to integration where organisations merge to form a joint identity. This model goes through steps, from ad hoc communication between practitioners, through joint case working coordination, to increasing formalisation, until joint structures involve loss of autonomy for agencies. Siraj-Blatchford and Siraj-Blatchford (2009) employ a simpler three elements

scheme: integration at service delivery level, agency level, and coordination of services level. Percy-Smith (2006) reviews research in respect of partnership working between agencies and notes the difficulty in finding a clear definition. Her definition of partnership stops short of the integration of agencies and it essentially represents the coming together of two or more organisations, who maintain separate roles and identities, but collaborate over shared goals, without a relationship of contractor and provider.

In considering the kind of working together in arrangements over CAF, it is fairly safe to say multi-agency working sits at the collaborative and partnership end, in theory at least, if we consider the breadth of agencies, which might be working together under the aegis of a local Children's Trust. However, this has to be acknowledged as an assumption, as local arrangements and relationships can vary. The difficulty in terminology itself, then, marks the difficulty in operationalizing research strategies to investigate outcomes between comparable contexts (Statham and Smith 2010). Throughout the research undertaken for this PhD project, partnership emerges as a key concept at three levels. I discussed this, firstly, in the modernising governance arrangements introduced by the New Labour social policy programme, and secondly, in the literature examining multi-agency practice. Thirdly, I discuss partnership as one form of participation in the relationships between practitioners and service users, and I explore this further in the empirical chapters, from chapter 5 onwards. Although the literature tends to refer to differing sources for a working definition, I found Percy-Smith's (2006) working definition, summarised above, a useful one, in that it is possible to see the maintenance of separate identities, together with self-

determination, as a basic pre-requisite in any context. Anything less suggests movement towards something more integrated than partnership. At the same time, there is an implication that the relationship should reflect power sharing, rather than domination in a process of decision-making. This loose definition serves the research in this thesis as it can carry between contexts, and includes the independence of individuals as service users, and agencies as collaborators. In the discussion of findings it is shown that partnership in those basic terms of reference can be difficult to achieve. Service users are placed at significant disadvantage and face distinct challenges in developing assertive partnership with service agencies.

1:4:2 Difficulties in assessing outcomes and benefits

The breadth of the field of possibilities for multi-agency arrangements, and the lack of shared understanding of essential elements, underlines the difficulties of comparative work, particularly when it comes to outcome measurement and evaluation. In considering the widespread support for multi-agency working that she found amongst Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) in schools, Barnes (2008:239) notes that multi-agency working is seen as the answer to 'all the frustrations and anxieties encountered in a fragmented system of time-consuming appointments, assessments, and poor information sharing'. Atkinson *et al.* (2007) provide a list of improved outcomes for service users, claimed from a review of literature on multi-agency working for the National Foundation for Education Research (NFER).

This list is provided below, under the dual headings of improved services and improved lives (2007:30).

Improved lives

1. Improved ability for children and young people to stay at home in their homes, at their school and in their community
2. Improved support for children and young people
3. Improved educational attainment

Improved services

1. Easier/quicker access to services
2. Referral to appropriate services/agencies
3. Increased focus on prevention/early intervention and reduced need to access specialist services
4. Reduced stigma attached to accessing services

Atkinson *et al.* also underline that these outcomes are not based on robust evidence across all the reviewed studies:

Multi-agency activity is rewarding and stimulating for staff and provides them with a greater understanding of other agencies and services, although it can also lead to uncertainty over professional identities. In contrast, there seems to be very little empirical evidence for the impact on service users. (2007:85)

Oliver *et al.* (2010) echo the conclusions reached by Atkinson and colleagues, and they summarise evidence from different contexts. They employ the term 'integrated working' to include all kinds of multi-agency working, from CAF arrangements to Sure Start children's centres, and other centres where

professionals come together, such as extended schools that offer additional services to families. In addition to the points made by Atkinson *et al.* (2007), they find some evidence that integrated service provision in centres, including nursery provision, improves quality of service, which improves outcomes in the early years. They also found parents were positive about such integration in services for the early years. In terms of youth justice and anti-social behaviour, there was little evidence of improved outcomes from integrated working, although there was some evidence of changed attitudes and behaviours amongst young offenders. Both studies cite Abbott, Townsley and Watson's (2005) 3 year study of disabled children and their families, which concluded that disabled children's health needs appeared to be well served by the multi-agency context, but the wider needs of the parents and families, in particular, emotional and social needs, were not significantly improved.

Other reviews of the research evidence support positive evaluation around the value of increased levels of collaboration between agencies and professionals, in terms of benefits to service users, but all acknowledge the lack of robust evidence regarding detailed outcomes and experiences, and agree that this is a notable gap in knowledge (Frost, 2005; Marsh, 2006; Samuels *et al.*, 2009; Siraj-Blatchford and Siraj-Blatchford, 2009; Sloper, 2004; Statham and Smith, 2010). Frost (2005), Marsh (2006) and Brandon *et al.* (2006) all cite the study conducted by Glisson and Hemmelgarn (1998), which suggests that in focusing on inter-agency and inter-professional arrangements, a more important dynamic is often overlooked. Glisson and Hemmelgarn found that good communication between practitioners within organisations was a more influential factor. This, they claim, in turn conditions confident

and outgoing practitioners, who communicate well, and feel supported in their own agency environment when working with external agencies. The difficulty is not necessarily the lack of impact on outcomes linked to particular ways of working, but certainly includes the complexity of the research problem, including the methodology and research design, listed below:

1. The difficulties in isolating defining terms and conditions, including measureable outcomes and specific work practices.
2. The lack of extensive studies, including longitudinal studies, which can examine outcomes and change over time.
3. The lack of engagement with service users' perspectives.

There is a tendency for evidence to be based around systems, working practices and processes that are being investigated as innovations in practice. Close examination of service users' experiences is rare, and forms a gap in research knowledge, as already argued above. The difficulties in measuring and evaluating outcomes in the context of such a complex process as social work, and human development, are profound. The literature also indicates that even when multi-agency working is reviewed positively, the lack of access to resources may mean that effective practices will only get families part of the way in meeting their objectives (Samuels *et al.*, 2009; Townsley, Abbot, and Watson, 2004). Ethically, there is a clear need for research to examine the experiences and perspectives of service users, who are vulnerable due to circumstances and personal attributes, and highlight these

findings against the background of organisational and policy priorities.

Reviewing the implication for further research of their review, Statham and Smith (2010) recommend more in depth qualitative studies, that can take a broad view of contexts and service users' lives, outside the specifics of programme and practice elements. This would include exploring the quality of professional and service users' relationships, and the relationships and circumstances of service users that allow or encourage successful engagement with professionals. This approach suggests a broad and rich gathering of contextual data that can lead to an exploration of outcomes that reflects the experiences and concerns of service users.

Much of the literature discussed above employs a relatively passive version of the service user, as a subject of research, which is aimed at evaluating particular practice innovations or programmes that interest policy makers or providers. As I discuss in the following chapters, research and practice can and should engage a more active version of the service user as a participant in social care practice.

1:5 Partnership

The arrangements for service users' participation in child protection social work practice as reviewed in social work literature finds particular focus around the implementation of the Children's Act 1989 (Corby et al. 1996; Thoburn et al. 1995; Bell 1996; Cleaver & Freeman 1995; Percy-Smith 2006; Department of Health 1995). In this literature the case was made strongly for improving outcomes for children at risk through a closer engagement with parents in child protection processes. Contemporary assessment suggests, however, that

the focus on a more rounded relational, family orientated practice has struggled to develop against a contemporary background of austerity in children's services. An increasingly actuarial assessment of priorities in respect of younger children, accompanied by a 'families as risk' paradigm, and growing bureaucratic and office bound 'case management' strategies in contemporary social work settings are cited in contemporary literature as creating barriers to creative and empowering family work (Broadhurst, 2012; Featherstone, Morris and White 2014; Garrett 2009; Munro 2011).

The family practices and Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) literature discusses an approach that has some relevance for the CAF as an inclusive process (Hayes and Houston, 2006; Morris and Connolly, 2012; Morris, 2012). It has begun to develop a body of evidence, and an inclusive perspective on decision-making, which is based on an ethical position of recognition and a rights perspective on participation (Hayes and Houston, 2006; Kirby and Laws, 2010; Morris and Connolly, 2012). Although this represents a process employed in child protection, rather than early intervention strategies, such as the CAF, this literature offers insights into the processes of joint decision-making by practitioners and service users including the engagement of children and young people's participation through the use of advocacy services.

The literature about participation of service users in public services generally recognises themes of citizenship rights, consumer related and personal development issues. A sense of ambivalence in the literature is evident, where some writers underline the use of participation as a governance strategy owing as much to co-option and the responsabilisation of citizens, as to genuine ceding of control and decision-

making (Carr 2007). Clarke, for example, explains the term *responsibilisation* as: 'the responsibility to produce the conditions of one's own independence' (Clarke, 2005: 451). On the other hand, there is a strong case for recognising the legitimacy of Bovaird's (2007) claims that co-production of services at some level reflects a necessary recognition of rights, and even logistical practicality, in producing flexible responsive public services.

In this thesis, the empirical data as discussed in the findings chapters, and the concluding discussion points to a need to consider the contextual impact of space (Gallagher 2006; Moss 2006; Moss & Petrie 2002), and related moral discourses of authority and expertise in assessing partnership as a relationship of practice in multi-agency settings (White 2003). By exploring the context of child and adult relations in CAF the findings discussed in chapter 6 show how for young people the school engages a model of children as incompetent and in need of discipline. Parents often related the role of the school as a critical and disciplinary agency. The thesis analysis in chapter 8 questions the central role of schools in CAF and their role in both excluding young people from a child centred participation and exercising a moral critique of parents in relation to children with additional needs.

Following Adams (2008), I consider partnership as a form of participation. Both are important concepts in this thesis, as they are central concepts in thinking about service users' agency and their experiences in the process of the CAF, as found in the fieldwork data. The New Labour modernisation programme cites partnership as a general principle of government at an institutional or service agency level, but we also find the term used in government guidance on the relationship between families and government in the parenting

of children and young people. Adams (2008) links participation, and partnership with empowerment and introduces this theme, which is reflected throughout the literature on participation and service users, that while participation may be couched in terms of an empowerment for service users, the reality may be otherwise (Bond-Taylor 2014). The extent to which partnership with families has developed in the wider child welfare field, and how much multi-agency practices have become part of this agenda, is a contemporary issue for early intervention practice with children and families. The discourses around participation and social inclusion have become associated with an early intervention, targeted agenda, aimed at the young people and the families who are considered as the most dis-engaged, economically, and morally, at risk. Post 2008, national financial deficit, long term unemployment, and perceived government welfare excesses, have developed the ideology around independent responsabilised subjects, targeting the poor and vulnerable, the unemployed and the disabled (Levitas, 2012; Clarke, 2005). Participation as social inclusion, then, implies engagement with a social contract of self-improvement, and employment at any price, in the unfavourable economic circumstances of the post-2008 era of austerity in state expenditure. Social inclusion and participation have often been characterised as acting as a foil for this agenda, and has seemed tainted. In her discussion of empowerment in the Coalition and Conservative governments' Troubled Families Programme, Bond-Taylor (2014) discusses how concepts of empowerment can serve significantly different ends. Alternative understandings exist, for example, where a redistributive concept of empowerment is opposed to an individual responsabilized one. In other words, whether

empowerment is seen as a means for individuals to be enabled to fulfil certain specified objectives of responsible individual participation and reduce the need for external support, or, whether a wider empowerment goal of redistribution of resources towards individuals and groups as acts of support and solidarity are seen as a goal.

The terms of partnership between the state and service users then, forms a critical focus for this thesis. The contextual and theoretical concern of this thesis will explore the experience of state surveillance and governmentality against the policy rhetoric of partnership and consensual participation in the process of CAF.

1:6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have introduced the CAF in the context of social policy and governance in respect of children and young people, and in a vision of a social investment state. I have also outlined the fundamental components of the CAF process and how the national template was introduced by the New Labour government. In considering the practice implications I reviewed the research conducted to date, and discussed some of the issues it raises. While noting the relative lack of service users' perspectives in the literature, I went on to examine some of the difficulties researchers have faced in researching the implications of multi-agency practices, in terms of practice issues and outcomes for service users. In addressing these issues there is a need to explore the perspectives of service users, not as an addition to an inquiry into systemic or operational practice issues, but as part of an inquiry into the experiences and active engagement of service users as subjects in the process. In addition, the rhetoric of partnership between service users and professionals in the multi-agency

process is, as I have discussed, a contested term which requires careful consideration in the light of empirical research. There is a potential for service users to realise a strong participative agency through multi-agency process but this thesis will show that in order to do so, policy frameworks and practice need to recognise the barriers identified in this thesis in respect of CAF. It is only through the careful consideration of service users' experiences that the conditions required for greater partnership may be achieved. The research questions, listed in the introduction, are designed to explore these themes. In the following chapters, I prepare the ground for the empirical part of the study by considering fundamental questions of agency for users of public services. In chapter 2, I discuss the service user as subject of governmentality and consider the sociology of childhood. Chapter 2 will also explore actor-network theory as a way of examining the active agency of service users in a multi-agency setting. These chapters form a methodological exploration of how to seek and evaluate human agency in networks, including public service agencies, and from there I will discuss further methodological issues and research design in chapter 3 and introduce the fieldwork data.

Chapter 2 - On governmentality, and assembling agency and childhood

This chapter presents the sociological contextualizing of the research, and it is organized into three sections. The first section considers governmentality as a rationality and as the 'art of government' of populations (Lemke 2001). Using Michel Foucault's (Burchell, Gordon, Miller and Foucault, 1991) concept of governmentality, I consider the role of the state in seeking to manage the conduct, but also the thoughts and aspirations, of citizens. In this respect I consider the operation of social work, and innovations such as CAF, as a means or 'technology' of governance. I also discuss the writing of Nikolas Rose, and others, who have applied these ideas to the role of psychological expertise, and the defining of modern subjectivity, beginning with the study of children in the early 20th century. The role of expertise and the notion of free individuals underpin the modern project of the responsible, economically autonomous self. The role of state social work in this project of governance is also discussed.

Secondly, the chapter will consider theories of childhood, offering perspectives on the different discourses that have influenced the perception of children's participation in social relations. The changing perspectives on children's agency are characterised using the idea of a shift from the child as a 'becoming' adult to a human 'being'. This involves the increasing interest in the agency and rights of children and young people in the latter part of the 20th century, and the use of a social constructionist paradigm of childhood in empirical work exploring the world of childhood. I will show how Alan Prout, and other childhood scholars, have articulated profound

difficulties in the continuing development of theoretical approaches to childhood.

In seeking ways to resolve interdisciplinary problems of nature and culture, following Prout (2005) I go on to discuss actor-network theory, and the notion of including heterogeneous actors, including discourses, technologies and non-human artifacts, as potential agents within networks of human agency. Actor-network theory is introduced as essentially a methodological approach stemming from science and technology studies. The basic precepts of the approach are outlined, and the small but growing recognition of this literature in social work writing is also discussed. The contribution of this approach is associated with two main features. Firstly, actor-network theory rejects over-arching structural explanations of social relations, such as class, as tools of analysis, and applies an approach that looks for agency in the immediate everyday practices and attributes of actors in a network. Secondly, the role of the non-human as actors having an agency in heterogeneous networks is explored. This is a key development of this approach, which as a consequence implies a reconsidering of theoretical disciplines and a reappraisal of the nature-culture duality. The actor-network approach consequently looks at actors and networks as heterogeneous assemblages that constitute particular conditions or possibilities for agency in specific settings. I conclude that it is worth exploring the actor-network approach in researching multi-agency practices, where a network analysis can problematize practitioner, service user and intergenerational social action in multi-organisational settings. Social work has always drawn widely from more specialised disciplines and theoretical approaches, and can only benefit from exploring new avenues.

2:1 Governmentality

The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is a process, designed and introduced by the Labour government in 2003, as an intervention in the lives of children and families across England and Wales. In this first section, I use the concept of governmentality in framing the early intervention agenda in social services to children and families. Here we are concerned with both the instrumental art and mechanics of governance of the population, but also the concept of an economy of institutions centred around the family, and the individual within the family.

2:1:1 The State

Foucault focused on the state as the expression of contemporary practices of government and, in a series of lectures in 1978, set out ideas around governmentality, which have since settled the word into the lexicon of social and political analyses (Foucault 1978; Burchell *et al.*, 1991). The term, governmentality, has become a set of ideas around the means through which power is exercised in both the public and the personal realms. This contribution can be seen as answering some of the problems with applying hegemonic concepts of power, associated with Marxist theories of the state (Rose, O'Malley and Valverde, 2006). Social Democratic government in Europe, in the 20th century, had presided over the development of the welfare state, and many on the political left found themselves 'in and against the state' (Corrigan and Leonard, 1979; Mitchell *et al.*, 1979). The difficulty was in theorizing the state as part of the political and

ideological superstructure serving and confirming the social relations of capital, and at the same time, responsible for the new entitlements of the welfare state, the extension of political representation, and the extension of citizenship rights in general. The state itself became filled with marching local government officers, who were labour voters and highly unionized. The ambiguity of state power and the increasingly complex ramifications of class structure in a diverse labour market, were part of the turn to post-structuralist theories. These changing perspectives reflected new voices from service users groups and gender identities and competing interpretations of political and social reality. The questioning of the fixed realities of traditional structural social theories and a very idea of a single true perspective from which to grasp the workings of the social world, became problematic for many (Appelrouth and Edles, 2011).

Governmentality is one such approach which sidesteps a structural theorization of state power in society in favour of a more pragmatic focus on the aims, reach and means of its expression (Gordon, 1991). Foucault explored the development of state power, in particular, with respect to crime and punishment, and the study of 19th century concern over epidemics (Rose *et al.*, 2006; Smart, 2002). In this analysis, state power in modern industrial society is a response to a series of developments, including; the urbanization of the 19th Century; the extensions of franchise and liberal revolutions post 1848; sweeping cholera epidemics and developing understandings of public health; the management of foundlings, and general concerns over the potential health and productiveness of the population (Donzelot, 1997; Lee, 2001).

2:1:2 Modern subjectivities

A central focus of governmentality is the individual subject and their engagement through techniques of managing, not only conduct, but also thoughts and aspirations. This extends to the enrollment of the family in the aspiration of governments. In neo-liberal governmentality, the state works to shift responsibility for social problems such as poverty, inequality, unemployment and poor health, onto individuals and families, making it a personal problem of correct living (Lemke, 2001). In this case, the exercise of power is a diffuse one, which involves influencing terms of identity, subjectivities, value perspectives, and plans, at a much more personal level, and which can be found as much within ourselves as without. It is here that the more subtle discourses of governmentality, which Rose (1989) teases out and develops from the writings of Foucault, become relevant to the study of social policy and practice. This interpretation of governmentality seeks to avoid constructing human agency and a constraining social structure as an oppositional duality, and views power and organisation not so much as explanations in themselves, but as phenomena in need of explanation (Prout, 2005). This is not a top-down zero-sum concept of power concerning class hegemony, where power on the one hand requires a corresponding loss to the other, or a plurality of competing power elites in a form of plutocracy or oligarchy. Governmentality is based on a more diffuse relational process associated with the manufacture of knowledge and the ebb and flow of transactions between institutions and individuals (Rose *et al.*, 2006; Bond-Taylor, 2014). The art of government is in managing a discursive field, engaging modes of thought and framing issues through the development of knowledge as well as practical measures

of control. This field extends from the public to the private, forming a continuum from the political control of the state through to the self-regulation of citizens (Lemke, 2001).

Rose (1989) is interested in the government of the psyche as it has unfolded in the 20th Century. This includes the establishment and the maintenance of modern tropes and truths around the psyche, and not only this, but also the novelty, the innovations, and the creation and stimulation of new subjectivities, which they foster. In this sense, he does not describe the exercise of power as a repression of the psyche, but rather a growth of possibilities and choice within a manifestation of governmentality in modernity. It is the production of an individual who feels 'free to choose', and feels responsible for making a correct choice, which Rose finds remarkable. For Rose, radical structural social critique has failed to capture the essential innovation and creativity of this process in the relationship between the power and the subject. Underlying the liberal freedoms, he describes the installation of a world of individual responsibility towards the productive and independent project of the self.

For Rose (1989), the history of the modern psychological sciences, beginning from the early 20th century, is a process that deals with the normalisation of behaviours and defining of subjectivity, starting with the child. The discovery of the normal distribution curve and the intense cataloguing, photographing and observation of infants and children, was made possible in part by the establishment of large scale nursery education, and clinical centres. These institutions allowed the studying of large numbers of children under almost laboratory conditions. Rose maintains this led not to the discovery of normality so much as its construction, in the detailed research and observational study undertaken. In

particular, Rose discusses the practice of Arnold Gessell, who carried out his work at the Yale Psychological Clinic, which had opened in 1911 for the assessment and treatment of children having problems at school. This was to become the science of development, a new concept, and the influence of psychometrics, as in the development of IQ tests, allowed the psychologist's gaze to reflect on the inner workings of the self and apply concepts of developmental normality across the board. Individuality and subjectivity could now be compared in greater detail and become part of bureaucratic, legal and educational evaluation of children and adults, which to quote Rose (1989), leads to the modern project of 'the governing of the soul' and the developing expertise of professionals in social work, psychology, health visiting and education. Rose's thesis leads onto a consideration of the intense scrutiny of the family relationships, attachments, and the relationships between mothers and children (Lawler, 2000).

A key theme developed in this work relates to the internalisation of expertise and the project of the self as an intrinsic part of modern life and modern government. The individual is granted greater liberal freedom but required to take responsibility for a personal project. The development of this particular modern subjectivity involves maximising one's potential, thinking about one's capacities in the field of work, considering one's role in respect of caring for self and other's, and evaluating one's position in respect of normality and deviance. Rose's work on the development of ideas around the importance of the early years, in the 1960s, in Europe and America, shows that the current interest in early development and hence early intervention, including the CAF innovation, is not new, but is more of a reprise. The role of the family was and remains crucial in the economy of institutions around the

raising of modern subjects. The project of maximizing the educational potential, the healthy physical development, and the social integration of children is to be achieved, not only through the exigencies of social policies, but by cultivating the family. Forms of expertise and discourse on the psychology of human needs and normal development encourage the adoption of appropriate practices in relation to parenting and forms of family living. This is achieved, not by destroying the autonomy of the family, thereby incurring other significant resistances and costs, but through the liberal project of governmentality and socialisation in the modern age (Donzelot, 1997). The CAF, with its language of partnership with families, can be seen as a 'technology' of governmentality in this respect.

2:1:3 Social work as governmentality

The concept of governmentality has then provided a conceptual framework, and gives insight into the historical development of social work, including the role of surveillance and governance of the population, and the interface with the inner life and individual subjectivity of both professionals and service users. This perspective acknowledges that social work, despite its roots in the philanthropy of the 19th century, is embedded in the nexus of social policy, developed by the state, in managing the population, and reflects an agenda of care and control. The analysis of discourses around knowledge, the 'normalisation' of individuality, and the development of the 'psy complex' of expertise on the human subject, gives a basis for considering social work knowledge as a technology of governance situated within modernity (Rose, 1989; Parton, 1991). Modernity here includes the neo-liberal

diversification of modes of social services delivery, including the increasing involvement of third sector and private enterprise in the field. This thesis is developed by Parton (1991) in respect of situating the institutions of social work in relation to the medical establishment, and the judiciary, and considering the genealogy of expertise and the architecture of social policy and institutional frameworks.

In addition, the implications of liberal freedoms in terms of self-governance is of central importance to the project of social work with vulnerable individuals. Social work engages with the concept of empowerment and the human agency of the service user as, not only the target of social work interventions, but as participating in a partnership, where there is a notion of supporting service users self-determination. Empowerment is a complex concept, and different interpretations of the term have different implications (Bond-Taylor, 2014; Pease, 2002; Adams, 2008; Kvarnstrom *et al.*, 2012). As Adams notes, there is an overlapping link between the concepts of participation and empowerment. There is a need to participate in order to be empowered, but forms or degrees of participation will condition the extent and meaning of empowerment. Bond-Taylor (2014) describes 4 different conceptualisations of empowerment, and these are listed below:

1. Critical social theory - here hierarchical power is disrupted from below, through efforts to seize power and control over resources and the political domain. There is suspicion over state offers of empowerment, which can be seen as limited offers within a narrow agenda, that serve to subvert more radical challenge to existing institutional arrangements.

2. Organisational theory - here empowerment is a more direct reference to facilitating members of an organisation in carrying out organisational priorities. Power is delegated, and allows individuals to carry out allotted roles and tasks, in line with dominant agendas.
3. Social psychological theory – in this conceptualisation individuals strive towards a realisation of personal development and fulfilment as agentic beings, able to pursue their own agendas.
4. Foucauldian post-structural theory – this sees empowerment as a continuous process of relational exchange, both exercising and being subject to power through the engagement with knowledge and discourses. This can be a creative process at any level of social engagement, and while having a critical focus on social forms of governance, it is non-hierarchical, and implicates individuals at all levels in the public hierarchies and private domains of institutional life. A key point here is the role of knowledge construction, and empowerment is focused on whether subjects contribute to knowledge about themselves, and the insidiousness of assumed truths and ways of self-disciplining.

These different conceptualisations, I would suggest, have a degree of inter-dependence, and are not necessarily competing, or otherwise rigidly held positions. The social work notion of anti-oppressive practice can also include gender, and disability, and race, as sensitising terms cross-cutting these empowerment paradigms.

The Foucauldian approach has been explored in social work and calls on social workers to recognise the exercise of power through their application of expert knowledge. Pease

(2002) makes the point that there are potential difficulties, or at least qualifications that need to be acknowledged, in the notion of empowering others through the imposition of expert knowledge. It implies the imposition of external truths, rather than the development of the other's own truth, which may be at odds. The imposition of expert notions of developmental normality and needs was considered dis-empowering by one of the parents in the CAF study, undermining her own assessment and expertise as a parent, as I show in chapter 6. So this exploration of inter-subjectivities, and the role of social work and its value base, is not straightforward for social workers or service users. The value attributed in social work to empowerment is balanced against social control and the exercise of statutory authority in the protection of others. The notion of 'normalizing' the troubled and vulnerable in society is part and parcel of social work, and represents diverse issues and practices (Epstein, 1999). Human agency, constraints, expertise, and choices interface with the field of values and ethics. A further point is made by Paul Hoggett (2001), who is concerned with the inner subjective world, and the limits of reflexive knowledge of the self, and the notion of a unitary settled will. As Hoggett indicates, the internal subjective world requires a balance of forces to be struck as much as the outer world, and includes unreflexive destructive agency as well as empowering reflexive agency. He warns against the adoption of a normative position that all agency is good, and not exercising agency is necessarily bad.

Those practitioners in the children's workforce, who may be engaged in CAF, operate then in this contested space where many waters meet. While framing the CAF as a form of governmentality, I show in the later empirical chapters a complex relationship between the worker and the service user.

There is an ostensible commitment to working together, where consent and sharing of decision-making and planning is a condition of engagement, according to CAF guidance documents. However, as I show in the findings from this study from chapters 5 to 7, the situation with regard to consent is more complicated and not so simply experienced by service users. There is also a multi-agency dimension, and the evidence from previous research, as discussed in chapter 1, suggests that practitioners find the close engagement with service users in the CAF process emotionally taxing. There is also a potential meeting of many service providers, with their own perspectives on issues. In addition, service users are to be engaged in the context of the Every Child Matters (ECM) outcomes framework. This is the novel dimension of a nationally standard set of targets, and a holistic assessment, again following a national format. One way of encapsulating the CAF is in terms of the requirement on practitioners to engage with the introduction of a more prescriptive set of working parameters and arrangements, while employing a rhetoric of engagement through personal negotiation and partnership with service users, including children and young people. In this sense, the engagement of governmentality through the means of discourse and knowledge is a complex and very personal interaction between different agents, which sets a significant challenge for all participants. These issues are reflected in the accounts of respondents in the fieldwork and are explored in chapters 6 to 8.

Another area problematised in this proposed partnership in governmentality with parents and professionals is the role of children and young people themselves, who are the target of technologies such as CAF. There are unanswered questions around the extent to which governmentality may engage the

human agency of young people themselves, and the role of early intervention innovations, such as CAF, in this respect. Intergenerational perspectives and the agency of young people forms a significant problem to be considered, and in the next section I explore conceptions of childhood and childhood agency.

2:2 The conception of childhood

If there is any discernable feature of our modern treatment of children, which is indisputable, it is the ever more comprehensive surveillance, which permeates every aspect of their lives. It is worth quoting in full from Rose when he says:

The modern child has become the focus of innumerable projects that purport to safeguard it from physical, sexual, or moral danger, to ensure its 'normal' development, to actively promote certain capacities of attributes such as intelligence, educability, and emotional stability... Along this maze of pathways, the child – as an idea and a target – has become inextricably connected to the aspirations of authorities.
(Rose, 1989:121)

I have already discussed, in the previous chapter, the social investment state, and its promotion of the effective integration of young people and their future economic contribution to society (Williams 2004). I have also made reference to the work of Rose, examining the growth of psychological measurement and the fixing of childhood through a developmental perspective on normality and expected growth, towards a state of maturity and adulthood. It is time to step back a little and explore understandings of childhood further in

order to help inform the approach to the participation and engagement of children and young people in the CAF.

2:2:1 Being and becoming

As discussed in chapter 1, the CAF process is conceived as a child-centred process that sees children and young people as discerning agents, engaged with parents and practitioners in assessing their needs, and planning action to meet those needs. In seeking to explore the role and experience of children and young people in CAF, the question of their personal agency in the process is clearly central. Interest in children's agency has become a fixation of childhood studies in recent decades, and it provides a wealth of perspectives, both empirical and theoretical. It is possible to hang much of this literature around the dualism represented by 'being' and 'becoming'. Why these ideas should be expressed as an opposition, and what attempts have been made to overcome this opposition, says much about how ideas about children and childhood have changed. The end of the last millennium saw many changes in the social world, and these changes have had significance for how children are viewed. These shifts include new modes of work and personal life (Gillies and Edwards, 2011; Smart, 2011), reflected in altered states of identity and forms of family life (Featherstone, 2003; Lareau, 2003; Lawler, 2007). One of the consequences of these shifts was the reappraisal, in sociology, of the individual subject and childhood, which is still playing out in contemporary social theory.

Interest in childhood was previously a relatively neglected area of social theory, and dominated by a framework of theories of child development and socialisation

(Corsaro, 2011; Prout, 2005, 2011). Looking at the sociology of Talcott Parsons and the psychology of Piaget, these theories are often represented as theories of 'becoming' (Jenks, 2005; Prout, 2005, 2011). The child is understood as undeveloped and unformulated but on a journey to a future state of completion as an adult. Children were thus seen to be 'becoming,' but not yet 'being' (James and Prout, 1997; Lee, 2001; Uprichard, 2008). Children possess only partial attributes in the domains of rights, competency, cognitive and physical development and rationality. What was found interesting about children was their futurity and the process whereby, in psychological terms, they made it from the undeveloped incompetent mind of neonatal childhood to fully developed, 'end of journey', competent adulthood, or, from the sociological point of view, how they were brought from a state of unformed, asocial and acultural nature, to that of fully fledged and integrated socialised adult human beings, ready to reproduce and socialise their own children.

Cultural theorists, such as Jenks (2005), argue that there were underlying fears of the unsocialised child and prevailing risks associated with the state of nature. The liberalization of human relations carries a risk. Here we have the implied Hobbesian view of the individual as essentially egotistical and self-serving (Hobbes 1968). There is an inevitable social dystopia and political chaos without the imposition of social control. For Hobbes, this demanded strong undemocratic leadership. Jenks discusses an equivalent perception of the child, which he calls the Dionysian child (Jenks, 2005; Lawler, 2000; Smith, 2012). This is the child who is essentially an amoral and sensual creature, and who requires the imposition of patterns of moral thinking and rules of social living to avoid the development of an anti-social, and

essentially morally depraved, outcome. Socialisation while children are young is a functional imperative then and this is a primary role and function of the family:

There is reason to believe that, among the learned elements of personality in certain respects the stablest and most enduring are the major value-orientation patterns and there is much evidence that these are 'laid down' in childhood and are not on a large scale subject to drastic alteration during adult life. (Parsons 1951:207 From Jenks, 2005:13)

Jenks (2005) posits the Apollonian child as a contrasting polarity. This child's essential nature is good, and requires only the love and acceptance of liberal oversight, to realize the full potential for a harmonious social development. This is the rational child of the enlightenment, explored by Rousseau in the spirit of liberty and fraternity, and with the new sociology of childhood and the focus on the flourishing agency of the child as 'being'. These two positions represent ambivalence about the nature and potentiality of children and young people that permeates discourses around children in cultural representations and social policy.

2:2:2 Old and new paradigms

If children were the blank slate on which the future would be written, then there was a corresponding growth in concern over how the process was managed, and where it could go wrong. In the dominant framework then, psychology with its focus on the universal properties of the developing brain, and socialisation with its concern over the fulfilling of social roles,

provide frameworks for evaluating childhood and growing up. In keeping with the growing confidence of science in general, and the advancement of rational modern governance, the framework provides the legitimising power with which the state, and experts within established sciences of the 'psy complex,' could seek to influence environments at home in the family, and in school where the future generation was maturing towards adulthood (Wyness, 2011; Lee, 2001).

The critique, which came from what became 'the new paradigm' of the sociology of the child (James and Prout, 1997), relates to the new growth of interest in agency and identity. This literature installs childhood as a state of 'being'. In this paradigm, children have competence, agency, a creative peer group culture, an agenda for participation rights, and a story to tell in the present tense. They are not on a journey to being social, but are social. In what was termed the 'dominant framework' by James and Prout (1997), three main ideas are critiqued. Firstly, the assumed 'natural state' of childhood; secondly, its universality; and thirdly, the notion of rationality as a yardstick by which to distinguish childhood and adulthood.

Oppositions to the paradigmatic deficit model arise firstly from historical accounts attacking both the essential or universal form and the 'naturalness' of childhood (Aries, 1988; Stainton Rodgers and Stainton Rodgers, 1992; Hendrick, 1990). In this literature, it is even possible to challenge the very existence of childhood, as does Aries in his contested study of medieval evidence (see Corsaro, 2011). The relative nature of childhood, its historical variability, and the notion of different childhoods constructed and crosscut by class, cultural, geographical or technological factors (Postman, 1994), opened the field for a radical reappraisal of what could

be portrayed as a complacent and inadequate treatment of childhood in the dominant framework.

The developmental approach to rationality is also challenged from two main perspectives. Firstly, the notion of recognisable universal stages of psychological development is undermined with a critique of Piaget's empirical work on children's cognitive development, and secondly, the assumption of a universal and definitive rational adult stage is rejected as an unsustainable ideal that does not conform to the reality of a heterogeneous and culturally imbued spectrum of adult rationality and social competence (Jenks 2005). Sociology had, according to James and Prout (1990), uncritically and implicitly accepted a natural developmental approach from psychology, and crucially the child was emptied of agency, rationality and competence. The rejection of the dominant framework by sociology then opened the field to the subsequent exploration of children as active contributors to their social environment, imbued with agency, diverse cultures, and a powerful peer group (Corsaro, 2011).

2:2:3 Childhood and standpoint theory

A more structural standpoint account of children's oppression by adults (Qvortrup, 1994; Mayall, 2002) has also challenged the dominant framework of development and socialisation. In this structural conceptualisation childhood may in part be acknowledged as a socially constructed phenomenon, but the necessity of recognising the difference between a state of childhood, and a later state of adulthood is upheld. A structural approach allows the comparison of conditions of life for children in different global settings, and reaches conclusions about their interests, their general treatment and

their experiences (Wyness, 2011; Qvortrup, 1994; Mayall, 2002). Here children are seen as a group with some commonality, which needs recognition, and so is often characterised as a standpoint theory, like feminism or a class analysis where, for example, the injustices against children may be brought into view, and their rights discussed and given coherence, using an account of common experiences. This facilitates calls for children to be part of the construction of their own knowledge about childhood, as I shall explore in the following chapter. Alanen (2001) develops the standpoint approach with a generational perspective. In this way researchers can seek to understand the ways in which 'generationing', can be achieved as a set of social practices in different cultural settings.

The re-appraisal of childhood, and an appreciation of these themes of the modern flexible and autonomous child, also opened the door to the diversity of global childhoods, as themes around rights, standpoint and agency play out in different spatial and temporal settings (Dahlberg and Hultqvist, 2001). With the new childhood approach in sociology came a focus on developing accounts of children's agency, competence and creativity within peer groups (Corsaro, 2011; Clark and Peter, 2011), and in terms of a rights perspective, on voice and participation from children's worlds across the globe, and in social work and educational literature (Gallagher 2006; Hill 2006; Prout et al. 2006; Shier & Train 2001; Thomas & O'Kane 1998a; Thomas 2002; Thomas 2007; Tisdall et al. 2006).

2:2:4 Children's agency and adult ambivalence

New thinking about children's agency was not confined to the academy, and Jenks and others write about the wider culture of re-evaluation and increased sense of moral precariousness about children (Franklin and Petley, 1996; Holland, 1996; Jenks, 2005; Walkerdine, 2001). In an explosion of interest in childhood, the agency of children was, and is, feared as much as it is respected, through discourses over the risk of earlier sexual maturity, teenage births and young single parents, plus fear of criminal deviance and gangs. In addition, concerns over the impact of new technologies, gaming, the internet, and children's screen time, can be added to the list (Buckingham, 2013; Postman, 1994). Fears over children's agency, and fears over the commercialisation of their bodies and their minds, have gripped western culture as much as their preciousness has gripped the aspirations of personal fulfilment for their parents (Jenks 2005). There is a sense that adults no longer understand the world of children, where the pace of change means their children's lives are tangibly different from their own. The death of coherent and reliable ideologies, the diversification of lifestyles and social patterns of belief and solidarity, unsettle the individual sense of self and meaning in life and relationships. As Jenks would have it, the very uncertainty and precariousness around futures experienced by adults in work and social life, places children centre stage. Adults refer back to an ideal of good old-fashioned childhoods imagined from the past as a resource for a sense of value and secure social bonding.

We need children as the sustainable, reliable, trustworthy, now outmoded treasury of social sentiments that they have come to represent. Our 'nostalgia' for their essence is a part

of the complex, late modern, rearguard attempt at the resolution of the contradictory demands of the constant re-evaluation of value with the pronouncement of social identity. (Jenks, 2005:112)

So what I mean to underline here is a sense of, not just interest in children's agency, but an anxiety about it, which touches raw nerves, both in terms of governmentality agendas in an insecure socio-economic world, but also a resonance in the more existential challenges of contemporary lives.

2:2:5 Problems with the social construction of childhood

To briefly recap, at this point I have outlined a reading of changes in contemporary conceptualisations of childhood in the end of millennium sociological theory, which mark a shift from a developmentalist and socialisation approach to childhood, representing a 'becoming' perspective towards a focus on a 'being' perspective. This perspective in turn marked an interest in childhood as a socially constructed phenomenon, with children actively engaged with their worlds in creative ways, and often using their agency to change it. Accordingly, children are actively engaged in constructing their own childhoods in the here and now, as opposed to their being constructed by others as socially incompetent in respect of a future-adult reference point. What are child-adult relations *now* in specific settings, and how do children actively take part in forming these relations, as competent actors? I have also outlined how, for some commentators, a further shift in perspective was required to understand childhood from a child 'standpoint,' where adults as a group oppress children and

young people. Here, the subordination of children by adults in terms of power, participation in decision making, and the limitation of their rights in general, including the right to contribute to the construction of knowledge about childhood experience, marks a human rights issue and a structural oppression. The holding of children as morally and cognitively incompetent in particular suggests a strategy of domination, much the same as that induced by the gender imbalance of patriarchy, the social construction of disability (Beresford, 2000), and racial discrimination.

However, there are problematic consequences for a social constructionist and a structural view of childhood, which are identified by Prout (2005; 2011) and others (Lee, 2001; Uprichard, 2008). The creation of an oppositional frame around 'being' and 'becoming', broke new ground in seeking to reach an understanding of both cultural perspectives of childhood and the perspectives of children themselves, within different localised and global cultures. However, it poses difficulties in terms of the materiality of children, and growing up. In seeking to purify the concept of childhood from developmental and biological concepts, this approach is in danger of losing something of the embodied experience of growing up. It ignores the growth and development of young bodies and minds as a process with a basis in a material world, just as the previous paradigms were reductive of childhood to the exclusion of the social construction of childhoods in different cultures.

I refer here to the difficulty in reconciling our notions of what is 'natural' and what is 'cultural'. Sociologists, who are busy focusing on culture and the social construction of childhood, can be interpreted as 'purifying' childhood from contamination by notions of biology and psychology, which

work with essential or natural paradigms of childhood development. In turn, these disciplines stand accused of purifying childhood and removing cultural elements, in an effort to capture an essential childhood of natural science, which could be considered universal and preceding cultural or social theories.

With the social construction approach to childhood, we have the perspective developed to an extreme that all is social, and nature seems wholly divested of a role. While wishing to acknowledge the fruitful research tradition developing from the social constructionist tradition, Prout (2005; 2011) suggests that to continue down this road is merely to avoid the issue of childhood as a process of development. In order to make progress in understanding childhood we need to leave the nature or culture dualism behind, and begin to see children and childhood as hybrid quasi-objects and quasi-subjects, which include the constraints and possibilities of biological and physical qualities inextricable from cultural and social phenomena. The interplay between the physical world of the body and the social world of structure and agency cannot be extricated from each other, without coming up against these seeming oppositional dualisms.

2:3 Assembling Actor Networks

In seeking to explore solutions to some of these theoretical challenges of childhood, and connecting this to the study of human agency, Prout draws on the ideas of the 'assemblage' and the 'actor-network' approach often called actor-network theory. I will discuss these ideas here, and then go on to explore the potential of these approaches for examining

practices in social work and other public service and welfare settings. Although relatively novel in social work literature, they have been used to good effect (Ballantyne, 2015; Høybye-Mortensen, 2014; Stanley, Plessis, and Austrin, 2010). It is worth determining whether research on participation in the multi-agency setting can benefit from the application of an approach to actor-networks, which problematizes oppositions such as practitioner/service user, and introduces a focus on the non-human as an aspect of social relations.

2:3:1 Assemblages and networks

Nick Lee (2001) utilizes French philosophers Derrida, Deleuze and Guattari to explain and explore the notion of the assemblage as an alternative to the 'becoming' status of childhood, as discussed above. Lee argues that, in effect, humans are the sum of heterogeneous parts, inherited, borrowed, won or imagined. In this argument childhood competence is seen, not as a developmental attribute, so much as an extension of social recognition granted or achieved through particular assembled means, which may include non-human things. A human actor is then an unstable shifting assemblage. The combination of television-child-marketplace is an assemblage that can be contrasted with teacher-child-classroom, for example (Prout 2005). Another example might be video conference-child witness-court, which Lee (2001) uses to discuss the means through which children's competence is extended in court settings. Each assemblage can imply different significance for children's competence, and readings of power and agency, in these examples. Prout (2005; 2011) joins the assemblage concept with an actor-

network approach, and by emphasizing the heterogeneity of social relations, which includes the material, then explores the ways in which influential factors or available resources are manipulated, resisted or assembled by actors in networks. This approach, like Foucauldian approaches, eschews structural theories to power and agency, which Newman and Clarke (2009) call the master/slave dyad, and looks for a diffuse and active agency at all levels of analysis.

2:3:2 Actor-network theory - the slaying of the leviathan

In Latour and Callon's revisitation of Hobbes's Leviathan they ask: how do actors macro-structure reality (Callon and Latour, 1981; Hobbes, 1968). Or, from the Hobbesian starting point, how can the individual begin to act, and apparently represent, the many in becoming the leviathan ruler? How is it that we grant power to large institutions in our thoughts and actions? In Hobbes's explanation, the leviathan of one man acting for the many as ruler was achieved through the once and for all social contract, whereby the individual gives up sovereignty to a ruler in exchange for an orderly society. Latour and Callon replace this social contract between the individual and a mighty ruler with the nuts and bolts of everyday life. In order to create macro-actors, they argue, we must:

transform the state of nature, replacing unsettled alliances as much as you can with walls and written contracts, the ranks with uniforms, and tattoos, and reversible friendships with names and signs, then you will obtain a leviathan. (Callon and Latour, 1981:284)

what makes the sovereign formidable is the palace from which he speaks, the well equipped armies which surround him, the scribes and recording equipment, which surround him. (ibid)

So Latour and Callon are concerned with offering methodological tools for seeking the explanations and interactions around what is taken as given or assumed in social relations. They point to the importance of focusing on mundane daily practices and how they can reveal the means through which macro social relations are established and upheld. Actor-network theory has its own terminology, and replaces the idea of a social contract between the ruler and the ruled, with the myriad of everyday interactions, where multiple detailed and everyday negotiations take place, and individuals, objects, and other entities, human and non-human, are persuaded or cajoled into becoming the 'intermediaries' in stabilizing and lending 'durability' to a greater project. To be made to play a part as a cog or detail in a greater scheme is to be 'translated' or 'enrolled'. In actor-network theory, an intermediary is a simple cause and effect relationship, where an element of a network as an input produces a direct effect or output. A mediator is where an input offers possibilities and potentiality that can transform meanings and practices, rather than offering a guaranteed effect or outcome (Latour, 2007:59).

Actor-network theory is centrally opposed to the notion of a 'sui generis' social structure larger than the sum of its parts. Latour compares such a Durkheimian construction to an absurd invisible force we neither see or touch (Latour, 2007). This is a critique of sociology's tendency to come, ready armed, with structural explanations mapping power and

agency at the ready, before examining a problem. Latour and Callon argue that if we grant size or increased power to actors in society, without interrogating how it is achieved, then the sources of their power and our understanding of its basis, will elude us. This is what happens when we jump from the micro to the macro, without the painstaking work of following the networks, the materials, and the assemblages forming macro actor-networks. We end up either anticipating and granting power unnecessarily to actors, or failing to recognize where it does exist. Much of the actor-network analyses in the science and technology field is geared towards investigations at the macro level of governments, large corporations and industrial enterprise or the laboratories of natural science (Law, 2003; Latour and Woolgar, 1979). These concepts and ideas nonetheless aim to bring a fresh approach to the relationships and activity of practice at all levels of analysis.

In terms of the agency of individuals, does all this in fact take us right back where we started, with the actor as constrained by actor-networks as social structures? Latour (2007) and Law (1992) argue, emphatically, that it does not. If the actor is conceived, in the flattened sociology of associations, as a star-like assemblage of connections to other actors, then the more associations and network connections we have, the more is our agency a unique constellation of action and choices, and the less is it a simple predictable role constrained by external conditions. Perhaps the most innovative element of actor-network theory is the refusal to adopt a social or a material determinism to actor-networks, and to reject an opposition between nature and culture. This move brings the non-human into the world of social relationships and agency and extols researchers to consider

the role and influence of both people and things in networks of agency.

2:3:3 The role of the non-human in social work

Contemporary analysis of social work practice has tended to overlook the mediation of non-human elements of social work paraphernalia, although there are examples where the mediation of technological artifacts is explored. One such example is Harry Ferguson's (2010) exploration of the car and its role within social work practice. Ferguson's analysis shows how the car may perform as a mediator. We could otherwise have cast the car in a role as a simple intermediary: a means of travel from A to B. It may get us from our office to the home of a service user. As Ferguson reminds us, there was a time when cars were not used in social work but they have become an increasingly essential item for the social worker as a fieldworker. Now it is a requirement for social workers to have a car, often made explicit in job advertisements, and students may find it hard to find a student placement without one. A valid driving license is essential for professional social workers. So how do cars mediate? Ferguson has described how social workers have discovered a role for the car in providing a particular in-between space for a therapeutic encounter between practitioner and service user, away from home and from the office. Ferguson presents accounts of social work practice in cars, which demonstrate the social and emotional possibilities of the 'powerful object through which meaningful, helpful work is conducted' (Ferguson, 2010:135). In this space, children could be helped in a process of transition between care placements, or they could be helped through disclosures in a close, comforting and intimate space.

In addition to those experiences, we could also speculate about a role for the car as an enabler of work practices, where greater spatial centralisation of practitioners and greater specialisation of tasks is enabled. In today's urban social work team, it seems less plausible to be walking round local streets visiting local homes and offices. The social worker is more likely now to travel the whole city and be dependent on satellite navigation. In terms of time to ponder, mobile technology also has had an impact, and gone are the days when social workers spent time walking or catching a bus out of earshot of the telephone, on the way to a visit, gaining an intimacy with the spaces and atmospheres within neighbourhoods. Cars and phones are specific spaces where practice goes on, and their impact on practice has been under acknowledged and researched.

Some researchers have explored how ideas are made more durable and entrenched via forms of organization, letters and forms, procedures and practices in the field (Høybye-Mortensen, 2014; Manning, 2002; Stanley, Plessis, and Austrin, 2010). Nick Manning's (2002) paper on the innovation of a new psychiatric classification provides an exploration of the use of actor-network theory. He uses the approach to good effect alongside a policy networks approach. In this example, the approach offers an analysis of a mediator attempting to establish itself as an intermediary in the networks involving mental health practitioners, courts and service users, amongst others. When an actor becomes an intermediary, it is taken for granted and unquestioned as a part of everyday practice and knowledge, embedding a form of social relations and understandings. The development of a new classification, for instance, the 'dangerous and severe personality disorder' (DSPD), and efforts to establish it in the

face of widespread contention, is an example of this process. Manning identifies key non-human actors in this process to include: the establishment of the category DSPD itself; assessment techniques, and treatments developed through the establishment of a research institute; a programme of legislation to allow compulsory detention of identified patients, and the treatment units built for patients.

Stanley and colleagues (Stanley, Plessis, and Austrin, 2010; Stanley, 2010) employ actor-network theory as an approach where they offer the assessment formats and reports, in child protection practice, as actors being put to use as tools in children and family assessment. Stanley *et al.*'s paper is an argument on the establishment of an assessment form as an important mediator, enabling service users and practitioners to establish joint assessment of needs and risks in child protection practice, and fixing these understandings in the forms used, giving durability to a sense of cooperation and participation. Stanley *et al.* may be criticized for not interrogating the ways in which the human actors who come to the table to negotiate around these documents, will not be starting from the same position. This can therefore not be accepted as a given, especially where there are vulnerable adults and young people in the network. A question is raised, then, as to what service users require in order to assemble for themselves the skills and qualities, when enrolled or enrolling in social work processes, in order to strengthen their voice and agency, in such settings.

In Høybye Mortensen's (2014) Danish study of social workers' use of artifacts, she also explores the role of the non-human in social work practices. In her study, she argues, social workers emphasise their professional legitimacy to ask sensitive questions, by showing laminated versions of the

assessment triangle to potentially reluctant service users. In this way, they established professional legitimacy for a penetrating line of questioning, which may have been resisted. Her respondents specifically mentioned the lamination as a reinforcement of the official status of the document. Mortensen suggests that, in a climate of increased regulation of social workers, the use of non-human artifacts illustrates the way the personal decision-making of social workers has become undermined as a source of professional expertise and wisdom. Their professional judgment lacks authority, and they seek to bolster legitimacy by appealing to these officially authorized documents. This is illustrative of the way in which the authoritative knowledge and expertise of the practitioners is sourced less in the judgment of practitioners and increasingly in the organisation. The practitioner requires a visual reinforcement to demonstrate that they are relying on officially sanctioned knowledge and experience. It is interesting to consider that in this case, both service user and practitioner must equally understand the role of the laminated form as actor for this to work. Equally, the implications for other aspects of these practitioner/service user relationships and practices are significant, if Mortensen is correct, and practitioners are struggling to establish trust in their professional judgments.

These examples of the non-human in social work draw the attention to the everyday artifacts used in social interaction that, can offer insights otherwise easily overlooked. More than that, however, the dilemmas and strategies of everyday practices can become more revealing of the complex transactions of people and things, and enrich our understanding of social action at all levels when we abstain from the artificial removal of the non-human from our

inquiries and explanations. Ballantyne (2015) has recently suggested the use of an actor-network approach where we wish to research the implications of introducing new technologies and associated innovations in social work. He re-examines case studies where researchers explored the introduction of technological innovation in human service sectors. One example involves 'Video Assisted Visitation' (VAV), which offered a substitute for face-to-face interaction in family reunification work. The technology used well known programmes, such as Skype, Face Time and Google Chat, with parents at one end, and children and child welfare workers at the other end. Here, Ballantyne addresses whether VAV is acting as a faithful intermediary, transporting meaning and practice without transformation, or as a mediator modifying, transforming or otherwise distorting elements of meaning and practice. He found evidence that VAV operated at times as a straightforward intermediary, helping to aid face-to-face communication over great distance, but there were many examples of how VAV was mediating and changing existing social arrangements. Technical challenges constrained human actors, so, for instance, workers felt unable to properly assess relationship dynamics, and parents felt unable to 'implement discipline'. Concerns were voiced that VAV could be inappropriately substituted for face to face meetings, instead of supplementing them, and also workers feared losing control of the process, where parents and children had access to their own technology, and could instigate the contact outside a scheduled and supervised programme. The concept of mediation is used to examine the entangled relationship between the human and the technological as actors.

Other writers have considered the role of technological developments, including the social work Integrated Children's

System (ICS), and also the CAF, in the changing forms of association between social workers and service users, without using actor-network theory as an approach (Garrett, 2005; Peckover *et al.*, 2008; Pithouse, Hall, Peckover and White 2009). Innovations in technology may be introduced as intermediaries in order to facilitate a managerial function, but quickly become mediators as they become adapted, ignored or bent to some other end by practitioners (Peckover *et al.*, 2009). The technology is not a straightforward means to an end, but instead offers potentiality and a new focus for creativity and change beyond the immediate terms of its introduction. White *et al.*, (2009) have explored technology as a mediator in CAF, and point out that, despite the standardisation of data collection and the intended prescription of the CAF assessment as an electronic form, the mediation of practitioners and local policy makers formed a crucial source of diversity in CAF arrangements and practices. They also consider the future impact of drawing a widening network of agencies and specialist practitioners under a CAF umbrella. They ask whether being drawn into CAF assessment activity will impact on the principles and practice of agencies working with children and young people, but not formerly engaged directly in child welfare work.

2:3:4 Stabilising networks

The durability of non-human actors as intermediaries or mediators is important in that it increases the *punctualisation* of actor-networks, offering potential stability. This can be readily seen in the greater power of the official letter over talk (Law, 2003; Manning, 2002). The contested use of written agreements in child safeguarding work could be seen as an

attempt to create this durability and stability for understandings and agreements, where practitioners' time is over-stretched (Ofsted, 2015: 2, 7, 10). In this case, a local authority was criticised by Ofsted in an inspection report for over reliance on replacing the active supervision of children where there were concerns, with written agreements signed by the children's carers. A written agreement in these circumstances, for example, may ask carers to agree that certain persons will not have contact with a child, or only under certain supervised circumstances. The implication of the critique is that the written agreements are sent to do work that Ofsted inspectors argued should be done through the active supervision of a social worker, and in the context of a casework relationship.

The mobility of actors can also be explored using actor-network theory. For example, the centralised production of a national CAF form can attempt to fix the CAF as a form in space and time, and can give it a stable coherence. This is termed the 'immutable mobile'. It is immutable because it fixes relationships in a network and mobile because it can be sent to do work in another place, at another time. A prescription for practice is enshrined in the universal form that travels a great distance, but without essentially altering the message. It has mobility, durability, carries power and attempts to establish itself as an immutable actor. However, as White *et al.* (2009) and Parton (2008) demonstrate in the case of CAF forms in particular - and actor-network theory underlines this - as actors attempt to create immutable mobiles, so do other actors attempt to subvert and challenge. Therefore, change is a constant feature of networks, where practices are resisted and subverted through the working through of human and non-human actors.

2:4 Conclusion

This chapter has engaged with the possibilities for studying CAF through a conceptual framework drawing on governmentality and childhood studies, and the relatively untried applications of actor-network theory, coming from the science and technology field. I have shown how the link made by writers such as Rose, Prout and Manning offers new tools and perspectives with which to critically analyse the social relations within practitioner and service user networks.

Governmentality offers a theorisation of the relationship between self-governing citizens and state social policy. The management of family life and the bringing up of children are explained as a suasive process seeking to recruit parents as partners through the deployment of 'psy complex' knowledge, expertise and institutions of care and control. The science of development and the measurement of progress towards social and psychological integration provide a liberal scheme of self-governance towards autonomous economic viability. This social and relational economy of parents and children in the modern neo-liberal state leads on to a consideration of models of childhood and interventions in children's lives as a key target for measures such as CAF.

In struggling to overcome the idea of an essential naturally given childhood and an opposing purely socially constructed one, Prout and Lee identify a nature-culture dualism in analyses of childhood and children. Childhood studies has offered a way forwards, utilising the concept of the assemblage and the actor-network. This essentially characterises life stages, such as childhood and adulthood, in terms of agencies, as in the assembly of heterogeneous

actors, embodied attributes and discourses, including non-human artifacts and spaces, biology and culture. Therefore, to recap, the argument I have been pursuing is that, particularly in the expanded practitioner and service user transactions of multi-agency assessment, we have to consider not only a practitioner and service user dyad, but also what could constitute a network of agencies, including the young people, the parents, and extended family in multi-agency. I include under the heading of agencies, those knowledge practices or discourses of childhood, and ideas about parental responsibility, as well as what it means to be professional or an expert. Here we may encounter a potentially large and heterogeneous assemblage of agencies, where the danger is as much one of making assumptions about power and agency, as the challenges of accessing useful data for research. In the actor-network methodology it is problematic to pose a level of structure that merely fills a gap in our argument and saves time by being offered up as an already established fact. It may be a useful short hand to employ capitalist hegemony or neo-liberal managerialism as a 'force' reaching down and constraining practices, but researchers still have to make decisions and assessments, which are rooted in what the actors themselves reveal. Perhaps the insights of actor-network theory may offer a means of, not only tracing the associations and intermediaries, which link the practitioner or service user to the organs of the state, and beyond, but also giving researchers a language and a means to consider not only the human actors but to consider what is delivering stability or change within the networks of practice.

The fit or linkage between actor-network theory and governmentality is not so much one of a shared perspective on social institutions of governance but concerns a

methodological sympathy with a diffuse and relational concept of power. Both governmentality and actor-network theory eschew a structural analysis of power and both accommodate a two-way process of influence and resistance (Rose *et al.*, 2006). Both governmentality and actor-network theory offer a framework for exploring the active agency of service users as human actors and assemblages and specifically for considering the experiences of service users engaged in the CAF process.

Chapter 3 -Methodology, Research Design and Process

In this chapter I present the research questions, methodology and research design for the project. I discuss why the research questions are suited to a qualitative approach where the perceptions and experiences of participants will be placed centre stage. Methodological and epistemological considerations form part of this discussion and are further explored in sections on the semi structured interview and strategies for effective communication. I continue by clarifying the research design and methods used, including: how I gained access to participants, sampling issues and considerations in interviewing children. I will also detail the ethical issues that were involved in carrying out the research.

3:1 Research Questions

In the previous discussion around social policy changes in chapter 1, particularly in the developing agendas of early intervention and multi-agency working in a diversified and expanding children's workforce, the ethical and practical need to consider the experiences of service users was discussed. The following research questions were designed to address the identified gap in knowledge.

1. How do children, young people and their parents experience multi-agency assessment practices?
2. What understandings are generated in the process of multi-agency assessment?
3. The CAF assessment involves professionals going beyond their specialism to prepare a holistic

assessment of children's needs. How do children and parents, as service users, perceive and respond to this extension of traditional professional roles and boundaries?

4. From a service user perspective, how are relationships between professionals and service users established and maintained?

The questions were framed after identifying gaps in the literature review around service users' agency and their experience of multi-agency assessment. They are designed to investigate the experiences and perspectives of service users. The questions do not focus on the family as a unit but form an inquiry into the perspectives of children and young people and their parents. The findings chapters analyse the rich data that resulted, facilitating comparative exploration of issues in the participation of both parents and young people in the multi-agency assessment process.

The third question is the most directly related to CAF literature around government policy and guidance directed at practitioner specialisms in early intervention work in particular and acknowledges a common theme from earlier cited research (Pithouse 2006; DfES 2005b). However, during the course of interviewing and collecting data, the question around perceptions of changing roles did not elicit sufficient response from respondents of any age. I concluded that whereas this question may have been significant for practitioners using CAF, the service users in this study did not consider the changing specialisms and remits of practitioners to be of particular significance to them. This conclusion emerged after reflection on the interview process. The question of professional roles and boundaries was addressed in the My

Services exercise (see Appendix 4) that formed part of the second adult interview, and was pursued in all interviews. However, it failed to register significant response. Rather than discuss the implication of this more fully in the findings and analysis chapters, I have prioritised themes emerging during the analysis and addressing the other research questions.

The findings and analysis chapters 5 to 8, present a thematic analysis of the material from the interviews. These chapters explore substantial data addressing the first, second, and fourth research questions, and resulting from the semi structured interview method discussed further in this chapter. The questions allowed me to reflect upon theoretical material dealing with models of childhood, the participation of children and young people, and structure and human agency in multi-agency assessment work.

In addition to the interviews, some contextual information on CAF users in the local authority area, where the research took place, was analysed. This data was in the form of local authority internal annual reports, compiled just prior to the research period. Contextual information from these reports is used to provide a fuller contextual picture in chapter 4, which also describes the respondent group in detail.

3:2 Epistemological Considerations and Qualitative Methods

There are 4 main reasons I have identified for selecting a qualitative approach to researching the questions.

1. The research questions focus on the subjective interpretation of experience.

2. The study involves a focus on a complex process rather than an outcomes-led evaluation.
3. The emphasis is on the experience and subjective understanding of service users, where some of that experience concerns a significant degree of emotional depth and sensitive personal experience.
4. It is exploratory and uses an inductive movement from selected data to theoretical premise, and is based on broad questions, as detailed above, rather than the testing of hypotheses in a deductive way, associated with the use of a positivist methodology.

All these components confirmed that qualitative research would be suited as a research method (Padgett, 1998; Shaw, 2008; Bryman, 2004). It was clear that as the researcher I had to be aware of the implications of methodological choices and the important role of reflexivity in the process (D'Cruz and Jones 2004; Padgett 1998). As the central human agent in the research design and process, I acknowledged that my particular experience as a social worker would have an impact on the gathering of material in interaction with service users, and in how I interpreted and presented this material (Denscombe 2003).

As a corollary of these methodological and research design factors, particularly the relatively small sample approach adopted, I have avoided any potentially problematic generalisation from the study to a wider population. Qualitative generalisations around the experiences of parents and young people across the study are nonetheless part of the exploration of analytical propositions discussed in the analysis chapters (Lewis and Ritchie, 2003). One important example, discussed in chapter 5, is the relative lack of participation in

the CAF process by young people, and the suggestion that there are particular models of childhood inherent in the CAF process, as found in the research examples relating to the prominent role of schools. This use of theoretical propositions arising from generalised research findings within the sample is discussed in the conclusion in chapter 8, which deals with issues of further interest suggested by the research.

3:3 Semi Structured Interviews

In this section I discuss the choice of the semi-structured interview method as an ethical choice to engage with the opinions and narratives of service users. I discuss the range of potential methodological questions raised by some authors over the use of interviews in social research. Following on from this I discuss the implications in respect of conducting research with young people and establishing effective communication. This chapter also discusses the interview schedules themselves and the ethical choices that were made.

The interview method must surely be one of the most common forms of formal communication between people in all walks of life. This affords it the appeal of familiarity for both respondents and researchers. However, the acceptance of the interview as a tool of social research is sometimes contested. One major reason cited by Silverman is that it is often characterised as a 'construction' of data rather than a purer 'collection' of 'natural' data by more strictly ethnographic observations of interaction (Silverman 2007). In contrast, other views on the interview as a method make a virtue of this, particularly standpoint researchers, who are ethically committed to reflecting the voices of their respondents. Feminist scholars, such as Riessman, have developed the

narrative interview method, acknowledging the specific bias of the researcher lens, the sharing of values and perspectives, and equally, the co-construction of meaning that is invoked by the interview method (Riessman, 2005; Riessman, 1993).

Charmaz favours the interview method for a grounded theory approach because of its 'flexibility and control' (Charmaz, 2003: 312). She lists the positive qualities of the interview as: offering more direct control over the construction of data; opportunity for in depth exploration of a topic where the interviewee has substantial experience and unique insight; access to the subjective world of respondents; and a flexible technique where ideas once raised can be quickly pursued by the researcher.

As Hammersley (2008) points out, there is no method that can truly claim to remove the researcher lens from the production of data and reveal the unfiltered meanings and realities played out in interactions of any kind. Assessing the critique of interviewing, it is clear that caution has to be exercised about claims made using interview data. But, as Hammersley suggests, if we take a position that interviews cannot offer unique individual insights of experience, and that they can say nothing about the research topic other than what went on between interviewer and interviewee, then the arguments take on a degree of absurdity, where the basis of our entire cultural life becomes questionable. We do have to acknowledge that cultural discourses impact on what is said or unsaid in interviews, and we do have to accept that the version of events constructed between participants in the interview may reflect one particular partial version of events. However, it is also possible to proceed on the basis that individuals have unique experiences and that using our shared cultural convention of language and behaviour, they can be

explored in a meaningful exchange. It is worthwhile then, to use the interview as a co-construction of meaning and understanding, which has wider relevance in exploring our general cultural and institutional life.

In summary, while acknowledging there are methodological issues of substance which require caution in the claims that are made for interviews, there is a methodological and ethical validity in offering an opportunity for respondents to self consciously formulate views and express opinions in an interview designed for that purpose.

The semi-structured interview method was chosen for the study reflecting a need to develop a flexible and responsive approach. In order to direct the interview, enabling specific aspects of the CAF process to be covered in all interviews for comparative purposes, interview guides were developed (see Appendices 1 and 3).

The schedules developed for the study were derived from an exploration of practice based therapeutic material (Holland, 2010; Lefevre, 2010), creative education resources (Steiner, 1993) and other literature on researching with young people (Clark, 2004; Hobday and Ollier, 1998; Mauthner, 1997; Veale, 2005). I also explored methodology from the Participative Rural Appraisal (PRA) literature (Narayanasamy 2009; O’Kane 2000; Chambers 1994; Skeels 2012). The PRA methods are international in origin and have been developed by action researchers working with agricultural, social and health related issues in majority world communities. These methods derive from situations where language difficulties may be inherent and are employed with participants of all ages, using visual and participative exercises to explore issues, often in groups. Thomas and O’Kane made use of this literature in developing tools, such as quickly drawn charts

and scaling exercises, for working with children in care in the UK (Thomas and O’Kane 1998a; O’Kane 2000). Given the central role of the interview in this research and the need to consider the involvement of children and young people, the next section of this chapter is devoted to a discussion of communication with young people.

I will subsequently account for the design of schedules for adults and young people with reference to the appendices attached at the end of the thesis.

3:3:1 Effective Communication with young people

It is well recognized in the literature that interviewing children and young people presents particular challenges (Hill, Laybourne, and Borland, 1996b; Mayall, 2000; Punch, 2002). Ethical issues are inseparable from the general issues of technique, due to the centrality of power imbalance between adults and young people as much as factors relating to competence in communication skills on either side. On this point, the more meaningful challenge to the researcher is not the incompetence of children as communicators but the competence of the researcher in engaging with children and young people as research participants (Punch, 2002; Thomas, 2002). The success of the research endeavour is not just finding appropriate tools and techniques, but includes the establishment of a relationship or level of rapport that can enable effective communication. In this section I reflect on the practitioner literature, which discusses effective communication with children and young people, and also on researcher accounts from the field.

Various studies emphasise that children and young people are competent communicators when the circumstances

are right, and the researcher's challenge is to facilitate those conditions by applying due observance to key elements of process (Harden, 2000; Hill, 2006; Holland, Renold, Ross and Hillman, 2010; Mayall, 2000; Punch, 2002). Lefevre's (2010: 61) three overlapping domains comprising Knowing, Being and Doing offer a simple and coherent model (see figure 1) for discussing the conditions for effective communication. The model shows that effective communication with children and young people happens where the three domains intersect.



Figure 3:1 Lefevre 2010

'Knowing' is about the practical and theoretical issues around what makes for good communication. In my earlier theoretical discussion I highlighted how the agency of children and their autonomy and independence of outlook are pre-eminent themes in social studies of children and childhood (Corsaro, 2011; James and Prout, 1990; Prout, 2005; Thomas, 2002). At the same time, the vulnerability of children subject to the power of adults and the notion of the developing child, although theoretically problematic, necessitates a child-centered approach, which considers the social pressures children face in their lives (Lefevre 2010; Ridge 2002). In this

case, researchers and practitioners have to consider how they may enable children when they ask questions about their lives. There is a considerable literature around what children have to say about professionals and good practice (Freake, Barley, and Kent, 2007; Hill, 1999; Morgan, 2012). Key themes I have taken from this literature include:

1. Willingness to understand children's perspectives and conveying empathy
2. Reliability (punctuality, being available, doing what you say you will do)
3. Respecting confidences
4. Taking action when needed
5. Not being patronizing
6. Being non-judgmental
7. Treating young people as individuals
8. Being competent and skilled
9. Being easy to talk to
10. Being caring and sympathetic
11. Being playful and creative

Other aspects of knowing include the skills or craft knowledge in communication. This would cover the interview techniques and what understanding to expect from children of different ages. Might they be expected to read, for example? What would school be about at that age?

The 'being' field in Lefevre's model is the area that most reflects the presence of the researcher or professional practitioner in interaction with children. The literature on children's views emphasises the importance of getting to know children, and the process of becoming a familiar and trusted adult, in order to engage with them effectively. A key ethical

component of my research design was therefore to reassure and be responsive to young people as individuals. However, it has to be borne in mind that a researcher's time is limited, and those initial minutes of introduction and explanation may be crucial. In Westcott and Graham's (1996) research into children subject to sexual abuse this was a key finding. The children were often bewildered by the lack of introductory relationship building from practitioners, who wanted the answers to personal and sensitive issues, with limited preparation through building rapport.

Developing a repertoire of techniques leads us into the overlapping field of 'doing'. 'Doing' refers to the capacity to attune to the child's pace, style of communication and vocabulary, to use helpful methods and techniques to work with concepts, perhaps including drawing and games, listening effectively, prompting, clarifying and engaging in a skilled way. Lefevre (2010:64) cites the 'hundred languages of children'; a term coined by Italian educationalist Malaguzzi. These include speech, metaphor, tone of voice, play, eye contact, body language, posture, movement towards or away from others, visual emotional responses, way of dressing, and all the subtle ways we can express ourselves.

In seeking a stance of openness and acknowledgement of adulthood, Mayall (2000:121) suggests a stance for the researcher when she says 'can you help me, an adult, find out about your world with your help?'. In this study, I needed to engage young peoples' interest through suitable aims and methods, and reassure them it was worth any risk they might feel they were taking in giving me their unique and individual thoughts and opinions.

It is in the spirit of this aim, in enabling the mutual constructions of meaning, that participatory methods are

employed. In this way, Hill *et al.* define participatory methods in their research into children's notions of wellbeing as seeking to 'blend and reconcile previously identified themes and questions with opportunities for children to identify their own ' (Hill, Laybourne, and Borland, 1996:131). They also observe that many of their techniques designed to engage children's interest and open up the areas they wish to address are taken from other professions and practices. There are handbooks for engaging therapeutically with children, which use tools and techniques that are very similar to those we find in Participatory Rural Appraisal materials (Narayanasamy 2009), in the practice of social workers undertaking children's assessments, and in the work of counsellors engaging with children's emotional lives (Boyden and Ennew, 1997; Crivello, Camfield, and Woodhead, 2008; Hobday and Ollier, 1998; Holland, 2010; Lefevre, 2010). The exercises I selected and adapted for the interview schedule (see Appendix 2) can be found in various forms in a diverse range of texts on good practice, and many of these tools are relatively ubiquitous with variation around a basic model. In the following section I account for the development of particular exercises in the formulation of the interview schedule for young people before going on to account for the adult schedule.

3:3:2 Children and Young People's Schedule

As can be seen from the schedule included in Appendix 2, several general areas are addressed by different sections of the schedule. These areas are listed below, and include an introductory and rapport building stage and a request for feedback on the schedule by the respondent:

1. Introductions and getting to know each other.
2. A narrative exercise exploring involvement with professional agencies.
3. A mapping of agency involvement and associated perceptions from the respondent.
4. Compiling a chart of multi-agency CAF involvement.
5. A mapping of mobility and spatial practices around CAF involvement for the respondent.
6. An evaluation of the research and interview process.

I used a broad range of drawing exercises with the children. I had specifically avoided giving an age below which I would not interview children. As it happened there were occasions when I would occupy very young children, ranging from age 2 up to 10, with drawing, while I was attempting to engage an older member of the family in interview. Where I sensed it was unlikely I would be able to speak to a parent without children being present, this was invaluable as a diversion and to facilitate interviews.

The 10 to 12 year old age group engaged well with the interview materials and enjoyed the ice breaking card tricks and drawing games. For building an initial rapport, the exercise called 'My World' (Appendix 2) encouraged young people to say something about themselves in an unpressured way, while representing their world as a picture, and allowed the researcher to demonstrate an interest in the child as an individual. It also allows some sharing of cultural references, as in food, pets, movies and music, for example.

The timeline exercise (Appendix 2) used a segmented snake drawing representing different events or stages in a respondent's life and was designed to engage more directly with experience of practitioners and CAF. This exercise could

become confusing with the younger children, who did not have much concept of a developing process over time when it came to practitioners and the family. With the older children, I was able to use the timeline exercise more effectively to record and discuss some of their experiences with the CAF process and practitioners generally, linking them to family and life stage events.

The exercises became more challenging with the services and agency-mapping drawing, which formed a venn diagram or spider diagram (Appendix 2). In this exercise agencies were mapped in circles drawn around a central circle representing the respondent. The drawing could be elaborated with colour coding and other indicators of attributes able to be identified by the respondent or suggested by the interviewer. Figure 5:2 shows a chart the interviewer prepared with a young person. Colour coding was used to represent relative weight given to agencies and/or practitioners. The following drawing (figure 5:3) made by another young interviewee speaks to her enthusiasm and application to the task. It is highly personalised and she uses her own ideas to emphasise important agencies and relationships. This exercise was valuable with all age groups, where drawing circles to represent service agencies, and writing their names down, made them more solid and easily referred to. The drawing then became an extension of the talk and the visual elements helped maintain structure and focus.

In general, however, the exercise had to be undertaken more swiftly for the younger age group, for whom I could see through their body language and their talk that the process could become tedious with time. Interviews tended to last approximately one hour.



Figure 3:2 Chart mapping agencies and services involved with a young person. Drawn by interviewer during interview.

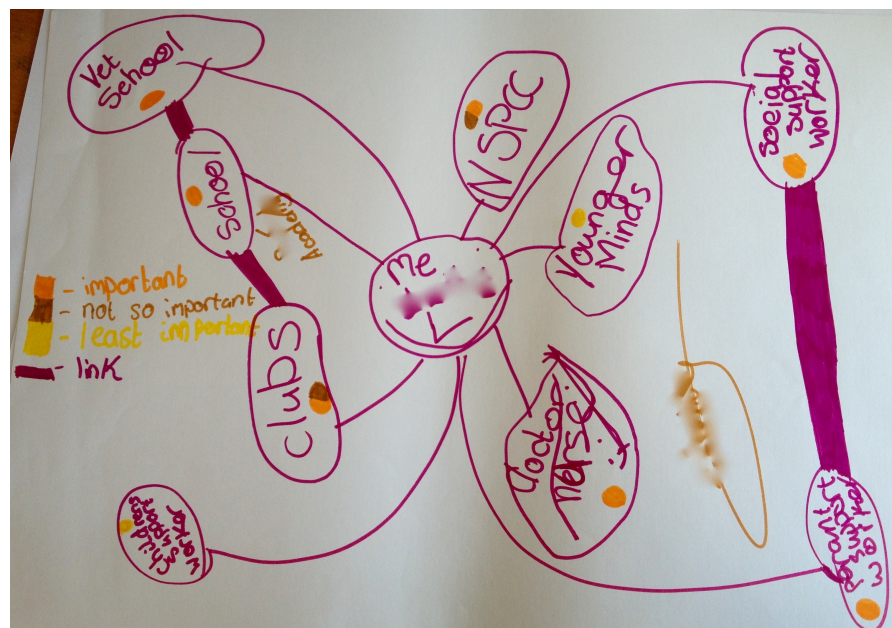


Figure 3:3 Chart mapping agencies and services involved with a young person. Drawn by young person during interview

The identification of different agencies was possible usually through particular practitioners and there were far fewer of them than with older respondents. Parents could often come

up with more than 10 agencies in their map, whereas the younger interviewees would tend to struggle after 3 or 4. However, as with the adults, I found that the mapping exercise was the most useful visualization that allowed the interview to move through different experiences, without having to focus on time frames.

Children and young people (aged 14, 15 and 19) who had attended meetings were able to use the CAF meeting chart (Appendix 2), devised to record different aspects of their experience of meetings. This exercise could be done fairly quickly and was specifically adapted from one described by O’Kane (2000) in interviewing young people in residential care settings. This involves quickly rating aspects of participation on a three point scale; none at all, a little, or a lot.

The children and young persons schedule also included a mobility mapping exercise where data on young people’s travel and movement in connection with CAF could be generated (Appendix 2). The format here was similar to the service mapping exercise in taking the form of a venn diagram. After the first two interviews with young people I decided to incorporate the issues explored by the mobility map into the earlier exercise mapping agencies and services. The reason for this was twofold. First, the time involved in undertaking another chart type exercise seemed unnecessary and uneconomic when time is precious. Second, it seemed easier to introduce any questions relating to space and moving around during the earlier agency mapping exercise. The format of this exercise was similar in form and I felt it risked impatience from respondents to include it.

Generally, I found it was not possible to predict which exercises would prove most useful with a particular young person and it was a question of being flexible and ready to

adapt to the individual. The feedback forms (Appendix 3) using a range of smiley faces were of limited use because most younger children used the positive smiley face to indicate the experience had been enjoyable. Only one ten year old child used feedback time to note that the agency mapping exercise had been hard for her. The pressure to give positive feedback to an adult in a feedback exercise may be particularly relevant for younger children making the formal exercise unreliable. A more reliable gauge, I concluded at an early stage of interviewing, would be my assessment gathered through the talk, the body language, and general demeanor of young people throughout the interviews.

In designing the schedule and researching the participatory methods which feature in much of the literature, I did not want to inhibit the young people who may prefer a more traditional opportunity just to talk and not necessarily to draw. With young people over 15 years I felt it necessary to use some more of the adult schedule topic areas and to omit the more introductory drawing exercises, which may be more suited to younger respondents. Rapport building was then achieved through an introductory chat, showing an interest in the young person.

3:3:3 Adult interview schedule

The adult interview schedule included material for two sessions (Appendix 4). In the first interview the schedule comprised a general covering of information and consent issues, followed by a rapport building and contextual section, where open-ended questions were designed to elicit general family background and history. The schedule then moved into discussion about involvement with professionals, and from

there to the CAF specifically and the experience of CAF. Once the CAF was established as the main topic, there were questions on how the child became involved; the lead professional; the assessment process; and the involvement of the child or young person in the CAF process of assessment and team around the child, or CAF meetings, as participants called them. The interview then pursued questions about the experience of dealing with multiple agencies and an overall summary of the respondents' CAF experience. During the first interview, which lasted between one to two hours, I found that different respondents needed the opportunity to tell it in their own way. I encouraged respondents to tell their story fully, before directing the interview with some questions directly from my topic schedule.

The second interview with parents employed either the Venn diagram or spider diagram exercise, which I have called My Services and can be seen in Appendix 4. It is a similar exercise to the one I devised for young people and has the advantage of being adapted in use as needed. This exercise offered a means of getting to grips with a mental map of potentially large numbers of agencies and a correspondingly potentially vast set of relationships between agencies and between service users and agencies. For example, in one parent interview we discussed 17 different agencies as having had, or having, a role with the family. Compiling the drawing by simply mapping agencies in terms of importance around a central family hub meant the interview could explore much more than could be drawn on the map. Being able to visualize relationships and the network helped to clarify and aid recall during the interview and after. I had envisaged respondents would stick down the cut out card circles and write agency names on them. In fact, this happened only once, and for the

other interviews, I did the drawing and sticking. Adult respondents were generally uncomfortable with the idea of drawing and writing themselves. I had to appreciate they may have felt unsure of what was expected. However, they quickly grasped the relevance of the map and I found the exercise tended to proceed in a relaxed way, once I took the lead in scribing. The exercise facilitated a slightly more structured interview than the first one, in that we were engaged in co-producing the agency map and my questions tended to focus on interaction with and between different agencies. It stimulated the discussion often as respondents studied the circles, generally on a table between us, or occasionally on the floor, and gave advice as to positioning. One father took over the pen and moved circles, drawing connections, and mapping what he saw as two conflicting groups of agencies in his child's CAF, and there was a lively exposition of how the lines were drawn up and various landmark meetings, where statements were made and battles lost or won. In this, and other cases, even where respondents were less hands on with the drawing, the method enabled both interviewer and respondent to point to features on the drawing and shortcut discussion with reference to groups of agencies or patterns. I found myself having to clarify verbally when respondents pointed to the map during the interview as I was conscious of the confusion this could provoke in listening to the recording later. In the later analysis, it proved best simply to view the maps alongside the transcription where required, to clarify discussion where required. Two examples of charts made with adult respondents are given by way of example below. In figure 5:4 the red line and the green line indicate different core groups from different periods. The larger discs rimmed in red represent the most central agencies whilst the smaller

blue rimmed discs are considered less central or important in the process. Note the educational psychologist is placed outwith the CAF group.

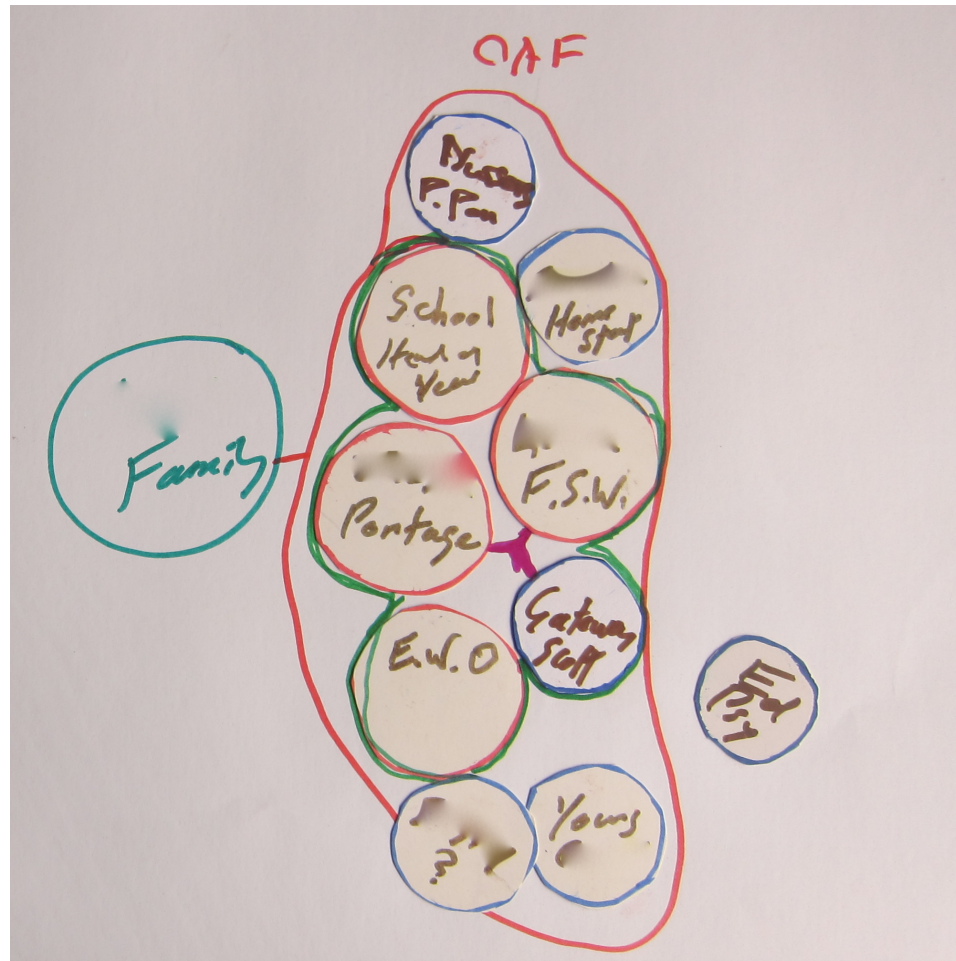


Figure 3:4 Chart mapping agencies and services drawn by interviewer during interview with parent

In figure 3:5 another interview produced a different chart with a colour coded key for different judgements made about the quality of relationships with particular agencies, how helpful the respondent had found them, and which member of the family they were concerned with.

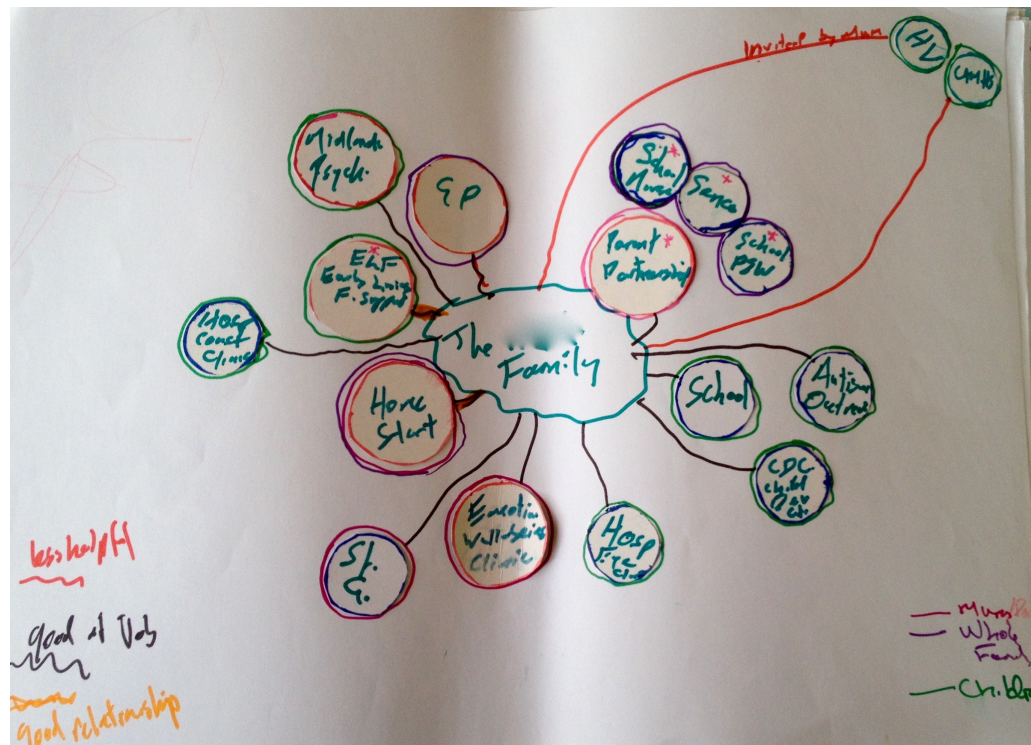


Figure 3:5 Chart mapping agencies and services drawn by interviewer during interview with parent

Having reviewed the schedules and interview methods employed I will move onto the research setting and the issues in respect of accessing and recruiting participants before finishing the chapter with a discussion around ethics and issues of consent.

3:4 Research Setting

Access to research participants for this study was obtained through collaboration with a local authority Children's Social Care department. The local authority setting for the research is a large Midlands County Council with a varied demography and both urban and rural areas. The process of initial contact to permission to proceed being granted took 6 months. This was an early indication of the sensitivity experienced around

access to service users and I will reflect further on this issue in my discussion on sampling and recruitment below.

3:4:1 Sampling

In this section I will outline sampling decisions that were made in research design and planning and discuss some of the necessary compromises that were required during the data collection stage of fieldwork. In the following section I will further discuss my experience of recruiting participants for the study.

My initial strategy was to aim for a purposive sampling of respondents with a set of criteria in mind based upon the research questions. I aimed to select parents or carers, and children and young people who had been, or were currently working within the CAF process. My main aim was to achieve as much diversity as possible in the sample, to broaden as far as possible the range of views and to avoid an exclusionary bias for particular groups (Hill, 2005). The advantage of this approach is to recognize diversity where it can be found and also to allow qualitative comparisons across participants (Marshall and Rossman 2010; Miles and Huberman 1994).

My primary goal was to obtain rich data from a small number of families, which reflected as much diversity across the sample as could be achieved within the constraints of time and ability to transcribe and analyse the data produced. In initial proposals I aimed for a sample size of 10 to 15 families. I concluded this number could develop into a large number of interviews if I was successful in recruiting parents and children in all cases and if repeated interviews were successfully achieved. The final figure of twelve respondent families took many months to secure and some of the challenges and

frustrations of the gatekeeping process are discussed below. The total interviews from the group reached 27, 7 of which are with young people.

In the sampling work with local authority staff it soon became clear that I would not be able to be selective, and the lack of control I had as a researcher in sampling cases was a feature of the fieldwork process. In short, I felt obliged to take any opportunity to talk to families that was presented. In chapter 4 there is an overview of the respondent families recruited to the research, where a range of characteristics are noted in tabular form and discussed.

The purposive sampling strategy involved an approach to practitioners in local support teams providing a direct service to families. This meant that these teams would know most, if not all, families involved in CAF. Each county district consisted of several family support teams under a single manager. These teams consisted of a variety of support workers, from early years parent and child support workers to educational welfare officers, family support workers and a targeted youth support service. It became apparent that at the weekly allocation meeting all staff would be present, and there I was able to meet the staff doing the direct work with families, discuss the research and find potential respondents.

3:4:2 Recruitment and Gatekeeping

The nature of the respondent population has important implications for recruiting respondents in research, and issues with gatekeepers are discussed in many fieldwork studies (Clark, 2010; Hayes, 2005; Kennan, Fives, and Canavan, 2012). There is the often lengthy process of ethical clearance required for vulnerable groups, but also the not inconsiderable

attention required to relationship and trust building, not just from respondents but their gatekeepers. Rarely are gatekeepers, as Clark (2010: 489) writes, the 'efficient and expedient conduit between researchers and participants' that we wish for, and this study is no exception to the case. It is worth detailing some of the events and issues the fieldwork raised in this project and placing them in the larger context of social work research. In doing so I will consider the influence of gatekeepers at different organizational levels.

3:4:2:1 First proposed research site

The first significant gatekeeping hitch and lesson learned in this research was with the initial approach to the first choice local authority, where I had been formerly employed and carried out MA research on a related topic. I had insider knowledge of the organization, including statistical and strategic reports of the CAF service, pre-established relationships of trust with key officials, and a local knowledge of the area and agencies in the field. By this stage I had ethical clearance from the university and knew that the authority had a relatively informal gatekeeping procedure that would depend primarily upon personal communication with key individuals. The initial approach to officials went well enough, but reorganization and pressures of work were cited as reasons when a senior manager refused permission for the research. This experience was one of the most straightforward examples of the straight refusal at first hurdle by gatekeepers (Heptinstall 2000).

Another possible approach to the contacting of vulnerable groups could be to consider bypassing the service provider and gatekeeper in this instance, and make a direct appeal to

recruit respondents through other avenues, such as third sector agencies or advertising in local media and community resources. In the first instance, it may be that the significant bias introduced by contacting small specialist agencies would be unlikely to satisfy the aim for a diverse respondent sample, and in the other case, there may be good reason to expect an uptake too low to make the project viable in short enough timespan. In seeking to contact young carers in Ireland, Kennan *et al.* (2012) sent fliers to one thousand venues nationwide to receive only one response, and had to abandon this approach for a direct approach to service providers. This is not to say recruitment to a CAF study would be inevitably similar in outcome using this method, but I felt an approach to an authority would be more likely to allow access to greater numbers and was more viable for my own resources.

3:4:2:2 Second proposed research site

The contact with the next local authority was more successful. In this case the contacts were middle managers with strategic responsibilities and the response was interested and enthusiastic. Formal gatekeepers are often seen in negative light, exercising power over vulnerable groups through restricting access to researchers (Broadhead and Rist, 1976; Heath, Charles, Crow and Wiles, 2004). In this view they are disenfranchising vulnerable individuals such as the disabled, the young and other excluded groups for possibly nefarious reasons, such as how the research may reflect on agencies. However, there are grounds for taking a balanced approach to engaging with gatekeepers. Professional gatekeepers are not necessarily all of the same mind or attitude towards research, and may be subject to de-motivating factors, such as pressure

of work or scepticism, but also may have enthusiasm for research (Cree *et al.*, 2002). There are likely to be benefits to any research process if it can engage with service providers as gatekeepers and gain maximum leverage for the knowledge output of the research (Morton, Phipps and Nutley, 2011). In the recruiting stage of the fieldwork I found that the issue of most concern was the difficulty in translating the enthusiasm for the research expressed at all levels from County Managers and middle managers to local managers to practitioners into active seeking for respondents amongst the potential population. There is a significant difference between gaining the permission to undertake research in principle, and gaining the cooperation in carrying it out, and I found it a laborious process of continual approaches to practitioners and managers to recruit respondents, and finding twelve families took months of determined pursuit of gatekeeping officials.

The plan to access respondents through the family support teams where the lead practitioners in CAF were based was readily agreed. Once the formal local authority research governance committee had approved the research, a letter was sent around with a short briefing alerting District Managers they should expect to be contacted by a researcher, citing the formal approvals and endorsements. Follow up emails were sent to the District managers and the phoning started to discuss local arrangements for follow up. In all cases it was agreed the best way forward was a visit to the family support team, where a local coordinator managing the support workers would facilitate the canvassing of cases and potential respondents. The teams would get a chance to hear about the research, ask questions, and discuss recruitment and introduction of the researcher to families. The issues of consent with adults and young people, the types of cases most

appropriate and the arrangements for meeting with families willing to proceed to the next stage, were tackled here.

I felt at home in this kind of meeting as I had experience of it as a social work practitioner. I understood the talk, I recognized the camaraderie, the informal relationships between manager and team, and I enjoyed undertaking a different kind of practice, taking a step back from the familiar in my role as a researcher. This was an insider feeling. However when a respondent declined a second interview in the early days of the fieldwork, one practitioner expressed reservations about my style and I felt insecure and suddenly an outsider. After discussion of the issues with the manager having oversight of the research within the authority, there was no significant alteration of the research design beyond ensuring practitioners could have access to copies of interview schedules, and the development of a tick-list of issues to underline about the research to be discussed with practitioners at the outset. However, this incident underlined the significant influence that practitioners, as gatekeepers, would have, even when the overall explicit response was positive towards the research aims and methods. This incident also heightened my awareness of the subtle insider and outsider positioning that other researchers have found so ubiquitous in qualitative research settings (Kanuha, 2000; Griffith, 1998; Woodward, 2008)

Practitioners generally expressed similar enthusiasms for researching service users' experiences, expressed interest in the findings, and would often reel off potential participants from their caseload who could take part. However, translating this into respondents was not straightforward.

All interviews were conducted in communities within a range of 20 miles from my base. Traveling to the furthest

extent of the local authority proved impracticable as in the following example. I attended a practitioners meeting in an area 50 miles away, where an Educational Welfare Officer identified 2 potential families, neither of whom wished to take part when canvassed by the worker. Another attempted visit to the area fell through, when I turned up to a meeting that had been cancelled without my knowledge. Attempts to contact the team coordinator were not successful, and in the final analysis I felt with the distance involved, the expense, and the sense of unreliability, I would be better to focus on areas closer to hand. The failure to recruit these families raised an issue for me that remained throughout the recruitment in all areas. I could not know what practitioners were saying to the families and whether they were presenting the research in the way I would want to. Also, despite making this point in every way I could, both with written materials and verbally, I was never completely sure that practitioners were clear that they were not expected to gain consent from families for participating, but only for a future contact from me to explain what the research would entail and seek consent at that stage. Other potential issues here were that although I was sure I had made it clear I would not be interviewing service users with the practitioners present, this led to a hiccup in one case and required last minute reiteration in another. If I harboured suspicions about whether practitioners felt vulnerable to critique through the research, it was never explicitly stated by practitioners, and there were no clear grounds for believing so. There was, at times, a sense that practitioners felt protective towards the service users, and felt a responsibility for introducing a stranger into the family. This protectiveness is often critiqued in the literature as a form of disenfranchising vulnerable people (Kennan *et al.*, 2012;

Carter, 2009). The researcher goes through stringent assessment and checking through the research governance process, including police checks, a detailed CV, several meetings with official gatekeepers at a higher level, and there is a sense when a gatekeeper closes a door that potential participants are unreasonably denied a competency to form their own judgments about who they speak to, and under what circumstances. Power is exercised, and for the researcher to fall foul of that power is to jeopardize the whole project.

In one case a practitioner was introducing me to a mother of three with two boys aged 4 and 6. After I introduced myself, the practitioner's first comment was that under no circumstances did she want me interviewing the boys as they didn't know anything about the CAF, and it would do them no good to be questioned. As it turned out during the interview, this service user greatly appreciated her support worker, who had shown firmness and resolve in advocating for her with a school problem, and had challenged education staff on her behalf. There was little chance that the practitioner was going to be defied by the respondent on the issue of the researcher, a stranger, interviewing the children.

In three cases I felt that the worker may have put forward a case because they had a particularly good relationship with the parent. Clearly there could be scope for a wide variety of responses in terms of which cases are suggested as potentially appropriate, and those that were not, and I was only party to a portion of this process. On two occasions potential respondents, who were advanced by practitioners, were later withdrawn before I could contact them. In these cases the manager had decided the cases had escalated and it would no longer be appropriate to suggest

they took part. This was clearly a selection process in which I had only limited control.

Despite the challenges in recruitment chapter 4 describes the sample group who were successfully recruited in detail and shows that in terms of family characteristics a diverse sample was achieved which enabled the generation of rich data for later analysis.

3:5 Ethics in the research

There are underlying ethical perspectives implied in the methodological approach to this project. These perspectives are included in the issues around exploring the agency and voice of a social group under particular pressure during a time of national austerity, and increasing vehemence in the discourses around the poor, the disabled, the unemployed, the migrant, and the young (Featherstone *et al.*, 2013). With the expansion of early intervention in work with children and families the need to explore the implications for this group are greater. My stance has been that social work research needs to explore further ways of accessing and engaging the voices of service users. Likewise, the focus on the effective presentation of the voices of young people and the discussion over their participation in CAF, is an ethical concern. In this section I will give an account of the ethical issues arising in the fieldwork and the measures I employed to address them.

3:5:1 Research with vulnerable participants

University ethical protocols recognise this project as recruiting human respondents who may be vulnerable. Hence there was a requirement for review by the University of Nottingham's

research ethics committee. In this case, the vulnerability of children and young people was the most salient issue but there was equal recognition that the project could involve those who are vulnerable due to life history, experiences, poor mental health, physical or mental disability or abuse. As application was made to a local authority social services department for access to service users, there was also an ethical review protocol for scrutiny by the local authority.

3:5:2 Confidentiality

Ethical issues identified during the planning of the research included general issues relating to confidentiality, secure storage of data, and the careful anonymisation of research participants in any report of findings. Measures to address these issues were put in place before the fieldwork commenced, by establishing an administrative protocol, which kept interview data only in one secure place, my office, and kept it in a form where only the researcher could identify respondents' real names and addresses from the transcriptions. Data on my computer was secured by password and again was made anonymous from the outset.

3:5:3 Consent

The primary ethical issues here were obtaining informed consent and safeguarding the children and young people who were involved. A formal protocol was agreed whereby I would report any serious safeguarding concerns around potential harm to vulnerable children or young people to named officers in the local authority, and the consent forms for respondents acknowledged this duty of the researcher.

In the literature it is the pervasive effect of adult researchers' power over young people, which offers greatest risk in conducting ethical research (Morrow, 2008; Morrow and Richards, 1996; Butler, 2002; Mayall, 2000). The information sheets I gave to parents and children included an assurance that they could withdraw at any time from the research without having to explain why (Appendix 4 shows two information sheets for younger and older children). However, it is important to acknowledge that this can be a glib statement in the information sheet given to a child, while the exercising of this kind of choice may be a difficult matter and not necessarily an easy one to overcome. Many children would find it difficult to say they wished to withdraw to a strange adult, especially if they have been encouraged to take part by a parent (Lewis, 2009). An ethical approach includes a range of elements incorporating the continual assessment of consent during contact with the respondent (Lambert and Glacken, 2011). It includes the way we strive to communicate effectively, and to open up the communication as opposed to closing down children's ability to respond freely (Lefevre, 2010; Luckock, Lefevre, and Orr, 2006). I found that my social work practice skills were valuable, and during my interviews with young people, I was assessing their enthusiasm for participation from the moment I entered the room, until the interview was over and I left the family home. During interviews it was necessary to check thoroughly on understandings about the aims of the project, who I was, and my independence from school and any other agencies. It was also necessary to focus closely on how comfortable young people were with the process and consider signs of confusion or awkwardness with any questions, and being careful not to go on too long.

3:5:4 Subtle signs of refusal

Respondents are gatekeepers to their own experience in determining how much to share with a researcher, and as with the more formal gatekeepers there was a need to engage with individuals at a personal level. This involved gaining trust and rapport through practical skills, measuring the extent to which I shared my own experiences, showing a degree of empathy and personal feelings, but not too much, keeping a measure of 'emotional middle distance' (Padgett, 1998: 92) and otherwise keeping the interviews to point.

Parents as respondents were also gatekeepers to their own children. Aside from the one case previously mentioned, when the professional caseworker for the family closed down the possibility of interviewing the children when introducing me to the family, the parents and practitioners involved did not explicitly influence the other cases in a negative way. There was another case where parents agreed to the interview of their 7 year old son, but attempts to arrange the interview fell foul of a cancellation, then a further cancellation and an agreement by one parent to discuss further with the other parent and call back, which did not happen. At this point I judged true wholehearted consent from the parents was not likely to be forthcoming and they possibly felt awkward about saying so. Cree *et al.* (2002) discuss this issue where the researcher may feel, as I did, that at a certain point there is a judgment to be made about undue and unethical pressure where the lack of progress is an implicit refusal of consent. Lambert and Glacken (2011) also talk of being alert to the 'subtle signs of refusal' and this refers to the issue of ongoing consent. Perhaps I should be reassured that some vulnerable

young people felt well able to decline even when their parents and other gatekeepers were in favour of their participation. Three young people, boys aged 9, 13 and 15 years declined after being asked personally by the researcher, and another two boys aged 11 and 14 years were never met, but when asked by parents had declined. It is not clear how significant the gender of these young people who declined is. A literature search did not locate significant discussion of this issue in qualitative research with young people. My feeling was that the older two of these three boys found it difficult to engage with adults in general, and I felt I did not want to press them further. With the 9 year old boy I was surprised by his refusal as he had appeared to enjoy relaxed conversation when his mother was present. She later told me by telephone he had decided to decline.

Related to the matter of 'subtle signs of refusal' and ongoing consent is the potential emotional effect of interviews. Researcher skills require empathy in recognising of any signs of distress and allowing respondents the time to manage their emotions and make decisions about continuing or breaking off the discussion. One parent was tearful on more than one occasion and I felt it necessary to check she wished to continue. On this and other occasions, where respondent parents were expressing strong feelings during their narration, they also were clear that they wanted their story to be heard, and felt that the research was such an opportunity for doing so. This made me appreciate an ethical obligation to represent their experiences accurately as I could in the report on findings.

When interviewing the young people, I was prepared to discuss whether they would wish to withdraw or whether they would wish me to involve a parent in talking through any

upset. I was careful in interviewing young people not to probe in what I would have considered an invasive way into issues that may have troubled them, but were not the direct focus of the research.

3:5:5 Venue for interview

Another ethical decision concerned the venue for interviews. For adults I planned to offer a choice of venue between home, a local children's centre or school. A family support worker who had made the initial approach to the family arranged the first meeting with a parent at a school family support unit. This was the only occasion when a parent chose to be interviewed away from home. In subsequent cases, I made the arrangement personally and parents found the convenience of home preferable. I had also made a decision to offer alternative venues for interviewing children at a local school or children's centre as a default, although in practice the local authority asked me not to suggest schools but children's centres. In fact, no child wanted to be interviewed away from home. However, I was glad to continually offer that choice as a flexible response to families who were considering participation rather than assume home would be most comfortable for respondents.

3:5:6 The ethics of the gift

A common strategy of researchers engaging young people is to offer a reward or gift. In Lewis's study of family communication over sex and sexuality a reward of £20 was offered to families as an inducement at the start and this was the most commonly cited reason for taking part offered by the

young people themselves (Lewis, 2009b). It is possible to reflect that any attempt to engage the respondent using an initial inducement of goods or money is an instrumental measure to induce a feeling of commitment to maintain participation and not to arbitrarily withdraw. I felt more comfortable to give a small gift as a reward after the interview, rather than employing it as an inducement. I reasoned that I would rather interview young people who had some curiosity and active motivation towards taking part in research for its own sake, and that the quality of interview data may benefit from this approach. I decided to give a small reward of a £5 colouring book or a voucher for young people. I did not mention this to child or parent until the interviews were complete. What I considered a very small sum of £5 in the form of a token was received with enthusiasm, even from older young people. In recruiting young people I relied on curiosity, an obliging attitude, and the idea that research can benefit others in the future. I was asking a favour and doing my best to make it seem like it could be fun or interesting to do the interview. On one occasion an enthusiastic 10 year old girl was persuaded when she saw the set of colouring pens I produced in their neat folding box. On another occasion, a ten year old boy, whom I had never met, was standing by the door when his father opened to let me in on the allotted day. I was going to seek his consent for an interview, and was in no doubt from the look on his face and his body language, before he opened his mouth to say that he wanted to be interviewed. In both cases, the young people were keen to be asked about themselves even when it led them to raise personal troubles.

3:6 Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the research questions, which included a post fieldwork reflection. I have subsequently given an account of the methodological choices made in undertaking the research. I have explained the attention to ethical issues and many of the practical matters relating to research design and process that were encountered during the fieldwork. In the following chapter, I describe in some detail the sample of respondents involved in the study, and include case summaries. Chapters 5 to 8 will provide analysis of findings in respect of the participants' experiences of the CAF process, and will further address issues raised by the research questions.

Chapter 4 - Introducing the sample

In this chapter I will introduce the twelve families recruited to the research study. The chapter is comprised of two main sections. The first section uses tables to describe overall characteristics of the sample and places it in the context of the larger population of CAF cases within the county. I show that the sample was a diverse one with varied personal histories and circumstances. Within the families that took part not all family members agreed to take part in interviews. It was regrettable that it was predominantly male partners and male young people who declined the interview but on the other hand, as I show below, there were male parents and young people who did take part. I indicate any previous involvement with children's social care and family troubles which were shared as part of the interview narratives and it can be seen that the sample includes a range of families from those with no previous experience of working with child welfare agencies beyond universal services, and those who had substantial histories of involvement including experience of child protection systems and the care system. I also summarise the reasons the young people were involved with the CAF and the range of practitioners and agencies involved in the CAF process.

The second section gives a series of case summaries that introduce the families prior to the analysis chapters, 6 to 9.

Table 4:1 Interviews by Case

Case	Family Type	Parents/Carers	Subject of CAF	Carer Interviews	Child interviews
1	Young person living independently		Lyn Turner 17 yrs		Lyn x1
2	2 parent family 2 children	Parents Pam and Jack Jones.	Tom 11 yrs	Pam x1	
3	2 parent family 6 children	Ged and Maggie Hughes	Michael 10 yrs	Ged and Maggie x 2	Michael x1
4	Single parent 1 child	John Smith	Angus 15 yrs	John x 2	Angus x1
5	2 parent family 1 child	Debbie and Nigel Parks	Derek 14 yrs	Debbie x 2	
6	Single parent 3 children	Clare Tinsley	Penny 10 yrs James 15 yrs Tina 19 yrs	Clare x2	Tina x1 Penny x 1
7	Single parent 3 children	Marie Holmes	Tim 4 yrs Keith 14 yrs Sandra 15 yrs	Marie x 2	Sandra x 1
8	2 parent family 1 child	Alice and Reg Patterson	Greg 7 yrs	Alice x 1 Reg+Alice x 1	
9	Single parent 1 child	Carol Ryman	Fred 9 yrs	Carol x 2	
10	2 parent family 2 children	Sharon and Billy Shearer	Aaron 6 yrs Darren 9 yrs	Sharon x 1	
11	2 parent family 2 children	Grant and Audrey Brown	Heather 10 yrs	Grant x 1 Audrey+ Grant x 1	Heather x 1
12	Single parent plus grandparents	Liz Black Pat and Matt	Lee 5 yrs	Liz x 1 Pat+Liz x 1	
Number of interviews				20	7

4:1 Profile of the sample

Table 5:1 shows the composition of families involved in the research. Throughout the following three analysis chapters, I use these case numbers to guide the reader when extracts are given or specific respondents are discussed. It can be seen that the sample forms a diverse set of family configurations. Table 5:1 shows which family members were interviewed, and how many times. Although each family was asked if both parents could be interviewed, this was not always possible. In cases 5 and 10, where a partner was not included, the interviewed parent rejected the idea on the basis that the other partner was not involved in the CAF. In case 2, the interviewed parent agreed to ask their partner, but later declined further interviews. In cases where there was a separated parent, they were not participating in the CAF. Reasons given by the carer parent were either that they were estranged and had no contact or in one case they chose not to be involved. In Case 4, Angus's mother had been involved historically but not recently. All the CAF cases were focused closely on the caring parents or parent with only Case 12 having a maternal grandmother who was also resident with the child attending meetings. Apart from cases 2 and 3, all two-parent families were reconstituted families, with step parent and step sibling relationships.

All names have been changed and identifying information is not included where I felt it could lead to possible identification of respondents. In later chapters where reference is made to particular respondents I have referenced them in brackets with a convention of giving the name followed by case number and in respect of young people the age in years, for example, Fred (Case 9, 9yrs).

4:2 A comment on the CAF population

There is no nationally comparative data on CAF to date. No statistics are collected by central government on the children, young people and

families involved in CAF. Given an overall figure of over 2,000 active cases in the county where this research was undertaken, it can be assumed that there is a substantial group of relatively under-researched service users across England, where CAF was to be implemented in some form by all local authorities, from 2008 (DFES, 2004; Samuels, Bailey, and Brierly, 2009: 28). Lack of knowledge of the growing population of families involved in the early intervention agendas of governments in the past ten to fifteen years extends from a lack of quantitative analysis of the numbers and characteristics of those involved nationally, to a lack of understanding of the quality of experience of service users. I have shown this in literature reviewed in chapter 1.

The sample of cases in this study reflected the common concerns of education, emotional wellbeing, child development, and living and family arrangements, as presented in the local authority annual CAF review reports. Two annual reports were made available by the local authority, which cover the two years prior to the research period. These reports are not publicly available but comprise assessment of internal practitioner returns on CAF cases. The reports acknowledge difficulties with accuracy of returned data from practitioners, but give general descriptive data that I have used, where possible, to contextualize the research sample. The reports express some doubt about the consistent application of categories in the statistical returns made by practitioners across the area. Nevertheless, based on an analysis of these reports, the research sample may be accepted as typical of CAF work across the county.

4:3 Family troubles

Where the parents have themselves raised historical issues of domestic violence or mental health troubles during interviews aside from the concerns relating to the reasons given for the CAF itself; where carers

have either sought treatment, or they have otherwise raised those issues in their personal narrative as relevant contextual information, I have indicated this in table 5:2. I have done so in order to give an indication of vulnerabilities and family troubles across the group. As can be seen in table 5:2, family issues were not raised in every case. The table shows that mental health troubles, but also domestic violence and previous contact with Children’s Social Care, although not a feature of every case, were common.

Table 4:2 Family Troubles

Case	Mental Health Problem of carer	Physical Disability/Poor Health of carer	Domestic Violence
1			
2	Yes		
3	Yes		
4			
5	Yes		
6	Yes		Yes
7	Yes	Yes	Yes
8	Yes		
9			
10			Yes
11	Yes	Yes	
12			

As discussed in chapter 1, the CAF is based on the identification of children and young people subject to ‘additional needs’ beyond those met by universal health and education services. The table shows general family support issues were often, but not always, part of the context in the respondent families.

4:4 Autism and child development issues

With respect to young people’s mental and physical health, I have indicated in table 5:3 below where a diagnosis was obtained, or sought, in each particular case. Seeking psychological diagnosis in the determination of young people’s needs was a prominent issue in most

family narratives. However, agencies providing diagnoses were rarely closely involved in the CAF process itself, where respondents were planning with other agencies about how to manage questions around young people's needs or behaviour.

Of the young people interviewed, four were formally diagnosed as being on the autistic spectrum. It can be seen, however, from table 5:3 that six of the young people overall were subject to assessment and diagnosis on the autistic spectrum. It was not possible to quantify the frequency of an issue such as autism in the case statistics that were collected by the local authority at the time of the research. Neither is it possible to discern in how many of such cases where an assessment in connection with autism is pursued that a positive diagnosis results. In four of the parent narratives it was parental perseverance that had led to assessment for autism. This last point is discussed further in chapter 8.

4:5 Child protection and historical Children's Social Care involvement

Table 5:4, below, shows where there was some previous involvement with Children's Social Care discussed by family members during interviews. Two parents and one young person spoke about previous incidents of child protection investigation, case conferences and periods of registration as children at risk.

Table 4:3 Child or Young Person and areas of concern in health or development

Case	Child or young person: areas of concern
1	None
2	Awaiting psychological assessment
3	Autistic spectrum confirmed
4	Counselling issues – family breakdown and self harm
5	Autistic spectrum confirmed
6	Learning Difficulty x1
	Auto-immune disorder x1
7	Downs Syndrome x1
	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) queried x1
8	Autism queried by parent
9	Autistic spectrum confirmed
10	None
11	Autistic spectrum confirmed
12	Autism queried by parent plus developmental physical issue

In nine families there was acknowledgement of previous involvement with Children’s Social Care and assessment visits, but it was not always clear whether these were investigations into allegations of neglect or abuse coming under section 47 of the Children’s Act 1989 or section 17 assessments relating to children in need. Only three of the twelve families indicated they had no previous involvement with Children’s Social Care. Two of the families had experienced two episodes of CAF within the last few years, and six of the families reported that their CAF involvement was a consequence of a Children’s Social Care referral, and in two of those, a child protection investigation. In summary, most of the families had some prior involvement with Children’s Social Care, even if only briefly, and some families had extensive experience of child protection systems and the care system

Table 4:4 Historical Children’s Social Care involvement

Case	Previous Children’s Social Care	Child Protection¹
1	Yes	Yes
2	No	
3	No	
4	Yes	Yes
5	Yes	
6	Yes	Yes
7	Yes	
8	Yes	
9	Yes	
10	Yes	
11	No	
12	Yes	

4:6 Reasons for CAF involvement

Table 5:5 provides a summary of the reasons given for involvement in the CAF. Parents were generally clear as to what they felt the issues were that were being addressed by the CAF, and had been throughout their involvement. Parents and young people referred to a broad range of usually developmental, behavioural and educational issues as their narrative developed during interviews, but also discussed personal mental health, domestic violence and family relationship issues. Practitioners were asked why there was a CAF at the recruitment stage of the research. Again reasons cited tended to be general and often referred to initial circumstances and a developing assessment of need. As I show in table 5:5, lead professionals were commonly family support workers. In such cases family support issues tended to be cited in a general profile of the family given by practitioners at the

¹ Indicates a reported previous incidence of statutory investigation or previous period of registration. In

recruitment stage. The recorded reasons for CAFs in the county-wide returns were broad categories of health and wellbeing, emotional wellbeing, living and family arrangements, statutory education, substance abuse, physical health, child development, and neighbourhood and friends. Table 5:5 also shows the approximate timescale for the current CAF involvement. In summary, the sampled families discussed a range of vulnerabilities, and perceived a range of children's needs. The reasons for referral reflected a variety of reasons ranging across a spectrum of educational, behavioural, and developmental needs. In addition, practitioners and families often cited family support issues as part of the reasons for the CAF.

Table 4:5 Lead Professional and reason given for CAF

Case	Lead Professional	Practitioner Reason for CAF	Approximate timescale of CAF
1	Teenage pregnancy worker	Teenage pregnancy / Care leaver support	6 months
2	School based family support	School behaviour problems / Family support.	1 year
3	Health Visitor	General coordination of services / Family support	1-2 years
4	Educational Welfare Officer	School attendance	2 years
5	Educational Welfare Officer	School attendance / Autism	1-2 years
6	Family Support Worker	Family support / Mother's mental health / Historic domestic violence	6 months
7	Family Support Worker	Attendance issues / Young carers	2 years
8	Family Support Worker	Family support / Education issues.	6 months
9	Family Support Worker	Offending behaviour	3 months
10	Family Support Worker	Family Support after Child Protection Investigation	6 months
11	Special educational needs coordinator (Senco)	School attendance / Autism.	2 years
12	Family Support Worker	Family support	3 months

4:7 Ethnicity

Ethnicity is not represented in this study. Ethnicity was not recorded consistently in the local authority's evaluation of CAF activity. It is therefore not clear what proportion of the CAF population is Black, White, Asian or part of other ethnic groups. According to 2011 census statistics for the county, these groups are under-represented in comparison to the national statistics. Of the families recruited, all were White and with an English heritage. Only one family had lived outside the county. I was unfortunately offered no opportunity to recruit any families who may have different experiences, related to ethnicity, and have to acknowledge this as a gap in the sample.

4:8 School issues

I have included mention of school issues in table 5:6 below as these figured largely in all respondent narratives and form one theme in the subsequent analysis chapters. Of the twelve sets of parents, five reported that they were involved with CAF initially due to their child's non-attendance at school. These parents went on to describe a range of issues being addressed by the CAF, and regarded school non-attendance as one concern amongst others they held in respect of their children's needs and welfare. In those five cases, other issues underlying the school non-attendance problem were identified by the respondents as ranging from autism and special educational needs, to family breakdown, and in one case, being a young carer. Parents saw school non-attendance as an issue related to these other concerns and troubles. Young people interviewed recognised school non-attendance as a prominent reason for being asked to go to CAF meetings.

Table 4:6 Reported school issues

Case	School Issue
1	N/A
2	SEN ² statement sought + behaviour
3	Autism support in school
4	Attendance
5	Attendance + SEN statement sought
6	Learning difficulty
7	Attendance Behaviour Behaviour +learning difficulty
8	Attendance + SEN support
9	Autism + fire risk
10	Bullying
11	Attendance + autism support
12	SENCO ³ Support + behaviour

4:9 Socio-economic background of respondents

The issue of socio-economic or educational background was not one pursued in the interviews. The families had various occupational backgrounds although in six of the twelve families, no one was in employment. Across both the unemployed parents and those employed currently there was a broad range of employment and qualified backgrounds from professional workers in public services to self employed skilled manual, white collar administrator, and two small business owners.

4:10 Lead professionals and agency context

In the CAF the term lead professional is used for the coordinator of the CAF process for individual young people. The lead professionals in this sample of CAF participants were two educational welfare officers, one health visitor, and family support workers. Not all the families were

² Special Educational Needs

³ Special educational needs coordinator

clear on the exact titles of workers they were involved with and I came across variations including child support worker, family support worker, and targeted youth support worker, amongst others. Table 5:7 shows the lead professionals involved in each research case. The local authority report data showed that the majority of lead professionals were members of the local authority children's social care support teams that include the various family support practitioner roles. These teams were distinct from the teams where social workers undertook statutory work. The local authority review reports indicate that, in the 2 years prior to the research, there was a significant growth in numbers of CAF cases, accompanied by a shift from schools providing the lead professional towards the local support teams taking on this role. The local authorities' own evaluation in 2013 puts the number of CAFs led by schools as 6%, while the local family support workers led 83%. However, and according to respondents' accounts, in this study school staff played a central role, and would be commonly represented by more than one practitioner at CAF meetings. Most CAF meetings in the study were hosted in schools. This fits in with evidence in the chapter 1 literature review where I discussed how schools have tended to play a prominent role in CAF arrangements featuring in other studies.

Table 4:7 Lead Professional and number of agencies involved in CAF episode

Case	Lead Professional	Total number of agencies involved with family
1	Teenage pregnancy worker	5
2	School-based Family Support	9
3	Health Visitor	17
4	Educational Welfare Officer	11
5	Educational Welfare Officer	7
6	Family Support Worker	15
7	Family Support Worker	11
8	Family Support Worker	8
9	Family Support Worker	10
10	Family Support Worker	5
11	Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO)	17
12	Family Support Worker	11

4:11 Service agencies

The families were often involved with a surprisingly large number of agencies, as shown in table 5:7 below, although generally there appeared to be a smaller core of agencies that attended the CAF meetings. A full list of the agencies encountered in respondents' accounts is given in table 5:8 below. The principal group of agencies shifted and changed over time in long running CAFs. A typical CAF meeting consisted of two or three school related practitioners, often including the school nurse, a special educational needs coordinator (SENCO), and a senior teacher like the head of the primary school. Educational welfare officers were often present and could be lead professionals for the CAF. The educational welfare service is primarily engaged with issues around poor school attendance. Other agencies involved in the sampled cases typically included a family support

worker as a lead professional with perhaps another two agencies undertaking direct work with the young person or parents. Doctors never appeared at CAF meetings, educational psychologists and other more specialized psychological service agencies conducting assessments would on occasion be cited as appearing but not as regular contributors.

Table 4:8 Services accessed by all respondents

Agency/Practitioners accessed	Number of families
Art Therapy	1
Autism Outreach Service in school	3
CAFCAS (Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service)	1
Carer Support Voluntary sector	2
CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service)	8
Child Contact Supervision	1
Child Development Service	2
Childline	1
Childminder	1
Children's Centre	2
Church	1
Community Psychiatric Nurse	1
Child Contact Supervision	1
Council Housing Agency	3
Counselling	4
Courts	1
Crime Prevention Officer	1
Dentist	1
Doctor (General Practitioner)	8
Domestic Violence support incl. refuge support – Voluntary sector	1
Early Learning Family Support	2
Educational Psychologist	6
Educational Welfare Service	5
Family Support Team (local authority)	11

Fire Service	1
Health Visitor	3
Home Start	2
Hospital Clinic support - various	3
Housing Association	2
Housing Support Project	1
Hypnotherapist	1
Lawyer	1
National Charity Support	2
NSPCC (National Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children)	1
Parent Advisory Service (Statutory local provision)	4
Parenting Course	6
Physiotherapist	1
Podiatrist	1
Police	3
Pregnancy Advice and Support	1
Psychologist	4
School ⁴	12
Children's Social Care – Social Workers	9
Special Needs Playground – Voluntary sector	1
Speech Therapy	2
Young Carers Support	3
Young Minds Support	3
Youth Work Voluntary sector group	4

⁴ Eleven different practitioner specifications were counted for schools. Behaviour support worker, careers advisor, teacher, teaching assistant, special educational needs coordinator (SENCO), school nurse, headteacher, school counsellor, mentor, home tutor, attendance officer

4:12. The researcher as insider or outsider

Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2010) suggest two kinds of necessary reflexive deliberation in research, and term those 'discursive' and 'confessional'. The discursive is in recognition of the toing and froing between researcher and respondent in the process of research and the confessional is in the researcher's thinking about their own motivation for the research, membership of relevant social groupings and general strategy for accommodating to the exigencies of the research in practice. The researcher as an insider or outsider has been a consideration from the conception of this project through to the fieldwork itself. There was a playing out of insider and outsider issues at different levels in the fieldwork including the initial selection of research topic and questions. I was aware that some respondents may have strong feelings about the impact of social workers in their lives and may be sensitive to my identity as a social worker.

Early discussion of the issue in social research is particularly exemplified by Robert Merton (1972) who was concerned by claims that only black researchers could do research about black culture. This introduced the notion of epistemological privilege as an assumption derived from membership of structurally constituted groups. In Merton's analysis there is a balancing of assets or liabilities that ultimately can and must be compensated for with the application of rigorous method. On the one hand, an insider may have easier access to the setting and the experience of group members, but on the other hand, there is the liability of having a committed perspective and pre-formed ideas that miss the perspective of fresh eyes. I adopted this balance sheet approach to the question as I considered the impact of my status as a registered social worker undertaking this research. In chapter 4, I discussed how I experienced the ease of familiarity, as an experienced social worker, when negotiating with practitioners over

recruitment and I felt at ease attending meetings and discussing potential respondent families. I also concluded that the benefits of knowing the system of children's social care brought an advantage. I had contextual knowledge that allowed me to understand elements of respondents' experiences without having to ask for clarifications possibly breaking the flow in a narrative. However, checks and liabilities were also experienced. In chapter 4, I also discuss how, during my interview of 17 year old Lyn (Case 1), a family support worker was present during the introductions, and she made it clear to her manager she had reservations about my style. Lyn declined a second interview, although the first interview had preceded without upset. I had realized that being interviewed was not particularly an enjoyable or easy thing for Lyn, and so I was not overly surprised when she declined the further interview. I heard later, through the strategic official with overall responsibility for facilitating the research within the local authority, that the family support worker had complained that during the introduction, I had stated that I was previously employed as a social worker. She felt this had been unwise, as Lyn was suspicious of social workers in general. At that point I felt vulnerable to criticism and had to question the comfortable feeling I had previously enjoyed. I concluded that I had not been really trusted by the support worker and I had to remind myself that I was not part of the team and was in fact an outsider. I felt keenly the critique from the family support worker, and the lack of trust. I realized that insider and outsider definitions are subtle and changeable in significance and effect.

Griffith (1998) argues that the researcher has to consider the ebb and flow of relationships and also the othering that can go on within predefined notions of social groupings. In another example of the sensitivity of my social worker status within the fieldwork, I was tested in a teasing fashion by Clare (Case 6). She had learned from her support worker, after the first interview, which had gone very well,

that I was an experienced social worker. She raised this information early in the second interview, accusingly, that I had not told her that I was in fact one of the 'child-catchers'. She was laughing, but I felt, given her own experiences with child protection social workers, the issue had a raw edge. I judged a sheepish acknowledgement was more politic than any overly defensive reaction to the 'child-catcher' name. The interview proceeded well enough, and the moment passed swiftly, but again this was another reminder of the discursive ebb and flow as group memberships are enacted in social relations. Griffith suggests we acknowledge that our knowledge and perspective are based on social position, and we can reflect and prepare to an extent but this is only the start of our story in the research. How will it play out as we go on is not defined or fixed. We are only one piece of the puzzle, and how we are regarded, what we invoke in others and how we deal with it, is dealt with, reflexively, in the moment.

4:13 Case Summaries

In this section of the chapter I will give brief summaries of the families' stories of CAF involvement. The purpose here is to help familiarise the reader with the families before they appear in the analysis chapters that follow. For each family I have given a summary paragraph in order to give a sense of the focus of the CAF as it appears in the family's own narrative. I have followed each paragraph up with a quote from a parent reflecting as far as possible some sense of how they presented the narrative of their CAF involvement. In some cases I have used a quote from the young person that I felt also gave some sense of their experience.

Case 1

Lyn Turner was a 17 years old young woman, a care leaver and living independently. Lyn explained that she had always had social workers

involved in her life as long as she could remember, and, aged 15, had been in care for a year. After leaving care, she had returned to live with her mother and became pregnant. Lyn explained that Housing Officials had advised that she would not be awarded her own tenancy whilst living with her mother. Following advice, and with the help of a support worker, Lyn moved to a supported housing project and a CAF was initiated. This was with a view to moving to a council tenancy in due course. Lyn was resigned to the process as a means to an end.

I suppose there's a lot of people that are working with me, they've got like twelve different teams working with me. I've never had like a stage without social workers and everything involved in my life all the way through and that's why I grew up like rebelling and its just like. 'Why have you got to be in my life? I don't need you in my life.' and I dunno now I'm just learning to accept people's help and I know I can't do things alone.

Lyn was reticent, and while agreeing to be interviewed, asked for her housing worker to stay. She declined a second interview.

Case 2

Pam Jones was the mother of two children, a teenage girl of secondary school age, and Tom, her 11 year old son, whose behaviour difficulties at school led to the CAF. Tom's father also lived at home and declined to be interviewed, as did Tom himself. Tom was now attending a Pupil Referral Unit in another town which he had to be taxied to and from on a daily basis. A Pupil Referral Unit is a form of temporary alternative educational provision for pupils who are excluded or deemed otherwise unsuited to a mainstream school. Pam related how his behaviour problems at school had increased after beginning secondary school, and communication between school and family was poor. The

secondary school had a special unit with a family support worker who had begun the CAF and Tom was sent to the Pupil Referral Unit while still nominally on the school role. Pam was happy that with the CAF, and the regular input from the family support worker, planning and communication was much improved with the agencies involved. However, by his own choice (according to Pam), Tom was not involved in meetings, and the one to one support practitioner allocated to Tom had finished after a time-limited programme, with the practitioner stating that he had just managed to get to a starting position with Tom. Jack, Tom's father, also had been reluctant to become involved in the CAF meetings, preferring to leave it to Pam. Pam, on the other hand, was delighted with her family support worker and was positive about the CAF generally.

She's my family support worker and she organises all our meetings and different things yeah. She does my typing up if I need it and does the letters and things. I rang up for a food voucher and she come out and bring one out for me. Yeah she's been really good. Just don't want it to end really.

Case 3

This was a two-parent family, with six young children, of which the eldest boy of 10 years was subject to CAF and had a recent diagnosis of autism. The parents in this family were enthusiastic contributors to the research and were decidedly critical of their CAF experience. Ged and Maggie had agreed to the CAF when struggling to cope with their eldest child's behaviour tantrums. They were at that stage unaware of any school concerns over parenting, but were upset at their first CAF, when a meeting of several agencies at the school was critical of them as parents. Ged and Maggie had a difficult relationship with some agencies and were fulsome in praise of others. The health visitor had

developmental queries over a younger sibling and the parents had found it hard to accept this. This couple were supportive of the principle of the CAF and felt that it was an important arena for parents to liaise with agencies and seek to meet their children's needs. However, they warned that parents needed to be strong and seek support to take agencies on. Oldest son Michael, who was subject to the CAF, was not aware CAF and had little practitioner support in his own right, aside from occasional assessment contacts with practitioners along the way. He was an enthusiastic interviewee, and spoke about his feelings of isolation at school, and how he missed friends and extended family at the previous family home in another part of the country.

Maggie: The CAF works if you know where you stand and how to use your own voice. It's finding your own voice in there against. It's not like what they said it was going to be, what we got. 'It's a place where all your professionals come together and help you out, discuss the next step.'

Ged: Yeah they were very...

Maggie: Whereas we went in and it was for all the professionals to get together and say this is what you've done wrong and this is what you've not done yet.

Case 4

This family consisted of single parent and father John, and his 15 year old son Angus. John was an articulate professional man and quite critical of most agencies in the field. When Angus was much younger, his mother and father had split up. His mother had mental health problems, and in custody and contact proceedings, Angus had been involved with numerous agencies, such as CAFCASS (Children and

Family Court Advisory and Support Service) and a contact supervising agency as well as counsellors. John held strong views that, as a man, his personal authority and ability to parent Angus effectively had been emasculated by various practitioners, from social workers to agents of the court. John had married again, and took on the care of his new wife's children, as well as his own. There was a child protection investigation after an allegation was made to Children's Social Care that John had hit one child and the family split. John spoke about how there had been a case conference, but no confirmation of the allegations against him had been forthcoming, which he put down to his wife's ex partner attempting successfully to disrupt the family. John's son Angus had mental health issues and suffered a sports injury, which had involved a lengthy period of physiotherapy. He developed a chronic school attendance problem that eventually led to his father's successful prosecution for non-attendance and the involvement with CAF. Overall, John felt the agencies tended to be ineffective and he was scathing about practice from social work agencies. He was a slight man, who spoke quietly but often about what he regarded as the traditional male value of discipline. John was initially undecided as to whether he should allow Angus to be interviewed but agreed after consideration. Angus gave a very extensive and enthusiastic interview. His views were not those predicted by his father and he was discerning about practitioners he had engaged with, including a positive assessment of practitioner one to one support overall. John and Angus were interviewed separately. In the first quote below John gives his overview and then Angus explains something of his own perspective on his troubles and what has helped.

I mean, you know, at the end of the day educational welfare officers would sit with me and usually one would sit here and then probably Angus would be brought in and there would be discussions saying, you know, he's a naughty boy and he's got

to do this, that and the other and then he proceeds not to do this, that and the other and then they step up the ante and so it goes on. And that's probably, that's about it. That's what's gone on throughout this whole thing, and then we brought in different agencies, you know, the involvement of the child psychologist and the involvement of CAMHS to try and see whether there was something that was an underlying problem. (John)

Basically, my mom was basically, from four till about age ten she did that stuff, and basically it was after, so I guess seeing that, made you want to say, 'oh why did you do it', you know, and all of that and so, I guess whatever, and that sort of made me emotional and my mom's very over emotional and sort of...she...I don't believe she has a mental illness you see, she says she does, you might believe in that, but she's more like a woman, rather a kid, a girl you know, someone my age desperate for attention basically. Because she, I mean she's tried to kill herself plenty of plenty of times, but she's not dead, I mean, come on, isn't it obvious if people...like say oh there's like a reason, but to be honest the way she did it is she did it basically so that people would know, you know? So she wouldn't die and stuff like that, but she didn't jump off a mountain or whatever, but yes it was, I guess that was significant at the time. Now I just sort of laugh about it. She's self-pitying herself to be honest. So that rubbed off on me.

Yes and yes and I was not very confident and I got better and I started...and because of all the things that I was sort of carrying, like you know, like weights on my chest basically, all my past things. And then I told them, and you know it's sort of like, it's like a feeling, it's hard to explain, it's where, you know, you've got all this weight on your chest and then it's gone, you know, and then you can actually, you start to actually realise, you know, I stopped self-dwelling and you know, started doing my

own thing, you know, getting better you know, at certain things or, and whatever. (Angus)

Case 5

In this two-parent family mother, Debbie, gave two interviews, but father and son declined to take part. Debbie's tale was at times a harrowing one as she spoke of the isolation and depression she had felt caring for her son with autism. Shortly after beginning secondary school Derek had begun refusing school and had become increasingly violent to his mother. Debbie had been a full time worker, and part of the children's workforce herself, but had felt unable to carry on working and succumbed to depression. Her husband worked away from home a lot and she was isolated and distressed by life at home. Through an educational welfare officer she had become involved in the CAF and had been seeking an answer to Derek's educational and emotional problems. Debbie had folders full of CAF business letters and gave two detailed interviews about what she presented as an epic struggle against various agencies involved. At the time of the interviews, Derek was attending a school part-time, and she felt again disappointed that after making enough progress to reach this point of a precarious and limited educational success, agencies had lost interest and momentum. Debbie was appreciative of some individual practitioners she felt had taken the time to engage with her and her son but she was frustrated and could not understand what she experienced as intransigent agency policies and practices. As with other critical parents, despite her criticisms and frustration, she saw the CAF as a crucial forum to strive towards meeting her own assessment of her son's needs. She also felt that she had learned much from particular practitioners involved along the way. Derek himself did not attend CAF meetings, and found it difficult to engage with practitioners generally. Debbie reported that Derek was always well aware of meetings, and always wanted to know what was decided

and what plans were being made for him involving school, but would never attend in person.

He said, I want you to ring somebody. He was getting himself so worked up, he was frustrated because he didn't understand his feelings, why he was doing what he was doing, because he would eventually cry and be sorry, and [say] 'I don't know why I'm doing it', so he was getting himself in a state. So it was really difficult to see him like that, you know. He's gone through times where he's just said, 'I just want to die, because I don't like it, I don't like being like this.' Because he just got grief at school, was told he was naughty, and I was told by [school] 'he's a naughty young boy and needs to grow up'. So that's how it got perceived, by the one man at the school who was supposed to be in special educational needs. I feel very let down by schools in general, that the primary school didn't pick it up, with all the issues that he had, I do believe if there was more training for the teachers, to pick these things up, something could have been dealt with, and if he'd had the support for that move up to [high] school, it could have gone so differently, but obviously he didn't.

Case 6

This single parent family comprised mother Clare and three children, all of whom had been subject to CAF. The oldest child Tina, aged 19 years, and the youngest, Penny, aged 11 years, were interviewed, but the middle child, 15 years old James, declined. The family history was a troubled one with a history of serious domestic violence involving periods of moving from refuge to refuge. Clare had mental health troubles that had led to hospitalization on more than one occasion. The family had experience of child protection registration, and brief periods of care, although the interviews were carried out during a period of

stability and improvement in the family's circumstances. Clare was very wary of and disillusioned with Children's Social Care and support from practitioners. She put this down to previous experiences. Some years ago she had felt punished rather than supported, after coming forward to seek help while suffering domestic violence. Subsequently she had felt the same after seeking help due to mental breakdown. However, at the point of interview Clare was fulsome in her appreciation of the family support worker leading the CAF. After Clare below, in her own separate interview, Tina talks about how she recognized a role for the CAF in helping the family think about their relationships.

I mean it is a good thing that the CAF is there 'cos you get your views over and it's not just one person listening to what you've got to say. There's like the different agencies. It's all written down and documented formally. That's one good thing I could say about CAF. So that what you have said it's not just, 'she's just one person coming saying this.' It's someone else coming and they'll club together so that is to me is worked out as a positive. (Clare)

It's good but then it's a bit intimidating in a way. Cos like if I was really, really, horrible to my little sister and she goes in school and she's like not talking to anyone or she's dead upset it affects, then you find that affects her school, like her work at school, and in a way it just like give's you like an eye opener in a way. And how you can improve it, like say I could be less mean and talk to my sister more and encourage her to do like her work in school and all that. Like how everyone in the family can help. (Tina)

Case 7

Marie Holmes narrated a difficult family history with a matter of fact breezy delivery that belied the trauma the family had been through. In fact, Marie had older children who were grown up and had left home from a previous marriage, and her current children were from a violent partner, now estranged from the family. Marie had sustained physical injuries resulting in spells in hospital, and at least one period when the children had been in temporary foster care. In part due to Marie developing a severe anxiety problem, and becoming dependent on her youngest daughter for support at home, Sandra (aged 15) had developed a school attendance problem, which had proven difficult to overcome, even when her mother's need for her help at home had receded. Her next child, Keith (aged 13 years), was at a pupil referral unit and Marie discussed behavioural and learning difficulties at home and at school. Marie's youngest son, Tim, was 4 years old with Downs Syndrome, and attended a day nursery, full time, 5 days per week. Marie had been closely involved with family support workers for many years and spoke highly of the support they had provided. Marie explained that there had been a CAF focusing on one or more of the children for some years, but she gave the impression that the family currently enjoyed relative stability and she herself a good spell mentally. Marie's daughter Sandra was interviewed, but her brother Keith unfortunately opted out.

At the beginning, I felt as if they were picking on me. Like, as if it was my fault that they weren't going to school, or Keith was banging his head or that, but then after a while it was just...they were just trying to help really. (Marie)

Case 8

Alice had been a single parent, caring for her young son Greg, before meeting and marrying husband Reg Patterson. Reg worked long hours in his own business, but joined the researcher and Alice for one of the two family interviews. Alice had some mental health issues, including Tourette syndrome. She described herself as recovering from a period of depression and reclusiveness where she had abandoned a developing professional career. Alice was an enthusiastic proponent of the CAF and had been through two episodes including the current one which had just ended. In particular, Alice appreciated her family support worker who had been helping her come out of her shell and gain self confidence. Alice's son Greg (7 years old) had a mild learning difficulty and attended a mainstream primary school. Unfortunately, initial hopes for an interview with Greg did not materialize. Alice and Reg had initially been taken aback by what they perceived as critical remarks made about their care of Greg. However they had largely overcome this and both were positive about their CAF experience overall.

It's just that eh sometimes obviously children get a bit grubby. You can get them pristine for school but by the time you get to school they are going to get a bit grubby. But they noted that and you know mentioned it to me. His hygiene. It was a...anyway they cared enough to tell me and then comments were made that were a bit weird. They would write them down in their notebook and they always keep me updated with how he was getting on at school with his reading and his writing and they praised him a lot more and he's had the one on one help he's needed. He's gone over, 'cos the school's also attached to a special needs centre. And they've said that they've put him...he goes over there one afternoon a week to give him that extra help and they've kept me updated, and any concerns, they've approached me every time. The other school never bothered at

all and it felt like they didn't care. Now I'd rather have a school come up to me and pester me and you say you know we have these concerns, 'oi, sort it', type thing, rather than just let it get worse and this school does that. (Alice)

Case 9

Carol was the single parent of her 9 years old son Fred, and also cared for her disabled mother who lived with her father nearby. Carol was unemployed but was keen to talk about her management of a local sports team. Fred's Dad lived with his new partner and family not far away. There had been regular contact prior to the incidents leading to the CAF, but Carol said Fred felt rejected by his dad in his new family. Carol had no experience of Children's Social Care but had been referred to the local family support service for a CAF after a child protection investigation. Fred had lit a series of fires both outside and in relatives' homes, causing some significant damage and much fear and alarm. His father had stopped his contact with Fred at this point. Prior to these incidents Carol reported that she had no inkling of any development problems Fred may be experiencing. Nevertheless he was diagnosed as autistic spectrum during the research period. Fred attended a mainstream primary school and was unusual to have had both the police and the fire brigade attend his CAF meetings. Carol was very positive about the support she and Fred had received through the CAF process and the preceding Children's Social Care investigation of Fred's circumstances. Fred declined the interview.

Absolutely fantastic, the things that have been put into place to help me and Fred, I've got nothing bad to say about it, nothing bad at all. I think they've done everything above and beyond, really, because [psychological services]; if it had been any other way apparently it can take months normally, but they've pushed and pushed to get it all in. If I'd have gone off my own back and

tried to get through to CAMHS, I mean, some of my friends, one of my friends down the road, her son's autistic and it took her three and a half years to get him statemented, whereas I've had CAMHS and [psychological services] in the space of three months, and that is with the help of Children's Social Care.

Case 10

Sharon was interviewed once but declined a second interview and declined an interview with her two young sons aged 6 and 9 years. While she was caring for children at home, her husband was out working for an out-sourced public service agency. Sharon was having some problems at home managing the two boys' behaviour, and also had trouble getting her views across to the school, where she thought her youngest son Darren was being bullied. The pressure mounted when a new baby daughter was born. Sharon wanted a professional assessment of Darren, as she was worried about his general behaviour. Sharon visited and sought advice from the family GP where, during the consultation, Darren alleged that his mum and dad had been hitting him. The GP referred them to Children's Social Care and two social workers came for a formal assessment visit. As a result of the visit a decision was made to offer Sharon a CAF and she accepted the offer of support at face value. Sharon was very pleased with the family support worker and the CAF. She cited improved communication with the school, and after attending a parenting programme (Triple P) and the counselling she had received from the family support worker, she felt more in control and more confident at home. She no longer felt that her son had a behavioural problem, as her own skills and understanding had improved, and so had her success at managing the boys. Sharon had had no previous contact with Children's Social Care and only had the family support worker and the school involved in her relatively short-term CAF.

And then [Family Support Worker] got involved and in the first meeting he [headmaster] was there. In fact he had turned around and he was like a completely different person and he was like all, 'oh yes we shall get it all sorted out.' Just 'cos I've got someone else in he's going to sort it out. Why couldn't he have done it if I was going in and telling him.

Whereas before it was just like I was no-one, 'cos no-one was listening to me at all. So the teacher was like, Oh I didn't see so I didn't [take action] 'cos I know Aaron does tell tales.

Case 11

Grant, stepfather, and Audrey with her two daughters had been a family since both children were very small. Audrey was disabled by a health condition that often left her often exhausted and she did not work. Grant had been in professional employment but lost his job due to the stress and time off he had taken attempting to resolve problems with youngest daughter Heather's (10 years old) school attendance issues. Audrey's eldest daughter had a baby during the research period. The couple were enthusiastic contributors to the research and gave lengthy interviews. Grant and Audrey were disappointed about what they saw as the lack of support the family had received in dealing with Heather's education issues and they were upset that they felt they had for a long time been blamed and written off as ineffectual and misguided parents. After a protracted battle over two years with their school, Heather had been assessed as on the autistic spectrum, and a statement of educational need brought extra resources to the school. However, after dissatisfaction and lack of openness around how the resources were employed, they demanded, and were offered a specialised school placement for Heather. During the fieldwork Heather had been attending the new school for a short period and by all accounts everyone, including Heather, was much happier. There was a

sense that both parents and Heather felt they had achieved at least a temporary success and a feeling of some closure after the diagnoses of autistic spectrum disorder, and their wish for a more specialized school placement had been realised.

There was kind of an action plan. I don't think it was an official one. It was just whatever notes was on their, [plan] I mean, Heather had an educational plan, but it never got updated. She had the same one every year that we saw. So, no, I think it was all very informal. You know, 'the SENCO will deal with this', with their support people, classroom support. 'We'll do it. We'll deal, we'll deal with it.' And very much, at the early stages, it was very much them saying, 'why aren't you doing this? Why aren't you making her come into school?' You know. 'Why isn't she doing her homework? Why isn't she doing this? Can we help you anyway?' I mean, we even, at one point, they were giving us parenting lessons, more or less. (Grant)

Case 12

Liz was a single parent who had recently returned to live with her mother and father, together with her 5 year old son, Lee, after living independently for some years. Liz was an administrative worker and Lee had just started school. Grandmother Pat took part in one of two interviews, and although Lee was not interviewed as such, he had a play session with the researcher after the interview with his mum on the second visit. The CAF was initiated after a health professional and a nursery teacher both referred the family to Children's Social Care saying they were concerned that Liz was not coping with Lee's care. Liz and her mother were both very angry about this referral and Liz had made a complaint to the Health Board and written to her MP about it. As a result of the referral a family support worker visited Liz. This worker had warned her that if she did not accept a CAF she would have

to become involved with Children's Social Care more formally. Again Liz was unhappy with this although she acknowledged a good relationship with the support worker subsequently. Lee had a health condition affecting him physically and Liz was also querying whether he was on the autistic spectrum. Liz's main gripe was that practitioners tended to dismiss her concerns about Lee's condition and what she felt were his developmental problems. As far as Liz was concerned the jury was still out on the CAF. She thought it was a good idea in principle and that she would like to have one to coordinate her son's care, but she was suspicious of practitioners taking on the leadership of the CAF. Liz had a strong support base at home and amongst friends who had children with special needs and was critical of the medical establishment.

Pat [grandmother]: I will say [family support worker] has been absolutely wonderful; at first I was disappointed that she'd had to be brought into our lives, but I'm glad she has because at the end of the day the greater good has come out of it.

Liz: And the people that did report us made themselves look stupid.

Pat: They've made themselves look very, very silly, all of them are very stupid. They were invited to attend the CAF meetings and they didn't, and they were invited to put reports in and they didn't, because they've got nothing to substantiate what they were claiming, absolutely nothing. And if anything, it's proved that what they did was wrong, they should never have done that. But, saying that, the greater good is that now things are in place for Lee at school, hopefully, you know, if the Child Development Centre do finally get on board and accept that there is a problem with Lee's social behaviour...

4:15 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have introduced the sample prior to the analytical chapters. I have shown that the sample group is a diverse one reflecting a variety of needs and circumstances and offering a range of views and experiences of the CAF process. The following chapter begins the analysis of data from the interviews. Chapter 5 will consider the data from the children and young people and present a thematic analysis relating to their participation and overall experience of working with practitioners. Chapters 6 and 7 will similarly deal with the experience of adults before the concluding chapter 8 draws the analysis together and considers the particular contribution of this research into the CAF process.

Chapter 5 - The agency and voices of young people in the CAF

This chapter begins by discussing data on the two main aspects of young people's contact with the CAF, firstly through attendance at meetings and secondly their engagement with individual practitioners. The data reveals that the young people tended to be positive about their engagement with practitioners on an individual basis but the contact was often strictly time-limited and the young people tended to be uninformed about decisions made around this kind of work. The chapter goes on to consider the extent of involvement of young people in the CAF process of assessment and planning that was found from the interviews with young people and their parents. This data shows that children and young people were generally not closely engaged with the CAF process. In terms of a discussion around partnership and participation, the young people's involvement with CAF does not appear to engage any human agency as defined by a notion of active participation in decisions or assessment work. I argue that this constitutes a lack of voice that is consistent with a particular understanding of childhood embedded in the relatively incompetent social apprenticeship model. The chapter considers the prominent role of schools in the young people's CAF arrangements and suggests that this may be reflected in the relatively disengaged and passive involvement of young people. This discussion concludes, then, that the central role of schools in CAF arrangements imposes a particular surveillance and control model of childhood, and is an inhibitor of young people's voices and participative human agency. Secondly, those organisational arrangements involve a lack of consistent, and followed through, engagement with young people by practitioners, which also encourages a focus on control issues from prevailing adult perspectives, while under-engaging young people themselves in using

potential active and creative agency in assessing and resolving problematic issues.

5:1 Children and young people's attendance at meetings

The question I address in this section of the chapter is what the data shows regarding the awareness by the young people of the CAF as a multi-agency assessment process in which they could have a voice in assessments or in planning. All the young people had some contact with practitioners and most had attended at least part of a CAF meeting. Six of the seven young people interviewed had been to a CAF meeting, although in two cases this was one meeting only. Parents were attending regular meetings with practitioners, so even when young people did attend, it was typically an occasional appearance only. One prominent theme is that with only one exception, involving one meeting, young people were not comfortable with CAF meetings. They expressed this across a range of issues, from how much they enjoyed meetings, to how much they felt able to say. In three of the cases the young people were clear that they thought they were at the meeting because they hadn't been going to school. In two of those families, the young person found the intervention upsetting or unrealistic or unhelpful.

One young person, Sandra (Case 7, 15yrs), found the meetings uncomfortable, but was equally clear that she felt they were supportive to her and that she was heard despite not feeling able to say much. In Sandra's case, although she felt sure that her school non-attendance was the reason she was part of the CAF, she also expressed much appreciation for practitioners who were engaging with her, and addressing the issue of being a young carer, outside the forum of the meeting. Sandra was one of the young people who was not expansive in interview dialogue. The chart in figure one completed during the

interview is broadly illustrative of her views and we can see what Sandra did not like the meeting and did not feel she had contributed to the plan but she gives a positive rating to the activity of practitioners in listening to her, supporting her and coming up with a plan.

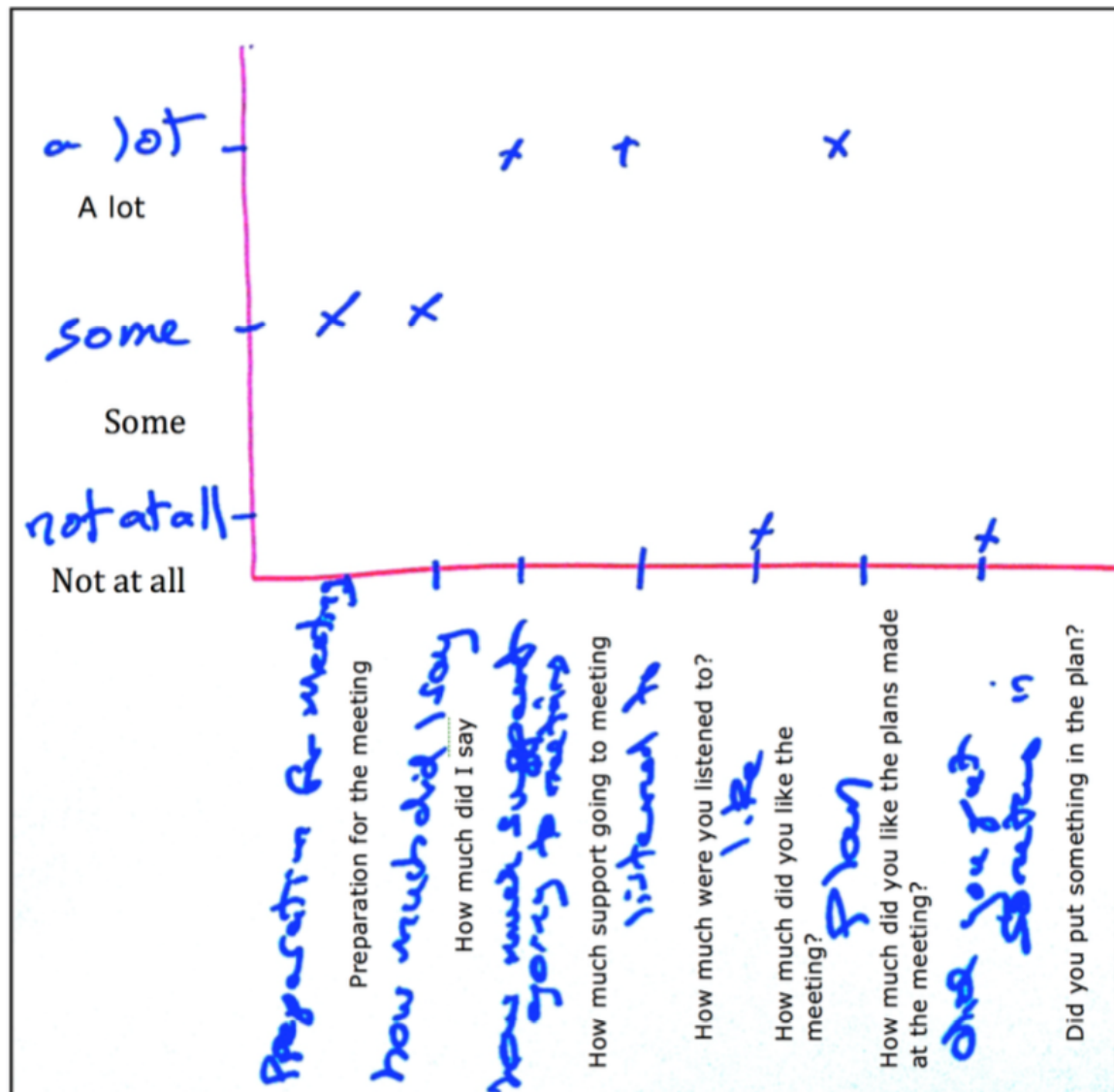


Figure 5:1 Sandra's views of CAF meetings

Sandra does not express any negativity about the practitioners she was engaged with. The chart did allow her to record, however, how little she felt she had put into the plan herself. She elaborated as follows about speaking at the meeting.

I don't know, whenever they asked me questions, they just told me all the consequences, and have them not happen, and why go [to school] and stuff like that, and how to get help.

Being brought into meetings to talk about her getting into school more often, was an uncomfortable experience, and not one where she felt able to contribute much. But she was engaged enough with individuals outside of this context to bear with it, and she presented a positive narrative about coming to terms with her options at school. It was notable that another young person, Tina⁵ (Case 6, 19yrs), responded 'not at all' when asked if she liked attending the meetings, but nevertheless indicated she felt she was listened to and that the plan was at least given a middle rating of being somewhat liked. Tina's chart is shown as Figure 2 below. There is a sense of a degree of loyalty and trust granted by these two young people to practitioners, although also little sense of an expectation that they would place something of themselves into the CAF plan. Sandra's talk was more around what expectation was laid upon her to engage with school, to think about the impact of her behaviour on others, and plan for an integrated and economically viable independent future. On the other hand, in explaining the reason for her CAF, Tina spoke about her college programme, her family troubles, and the need to solve relationship problems.

Tina. It's stuff about us children like how they can like help us like and I don't know like help us to, like them to help us at home.

Interviewer. So, like help you to...

⁵ Tina was 18 during her CAF although now aged 19 years I have included her as giving a young person's perspective on her CAF involvement.

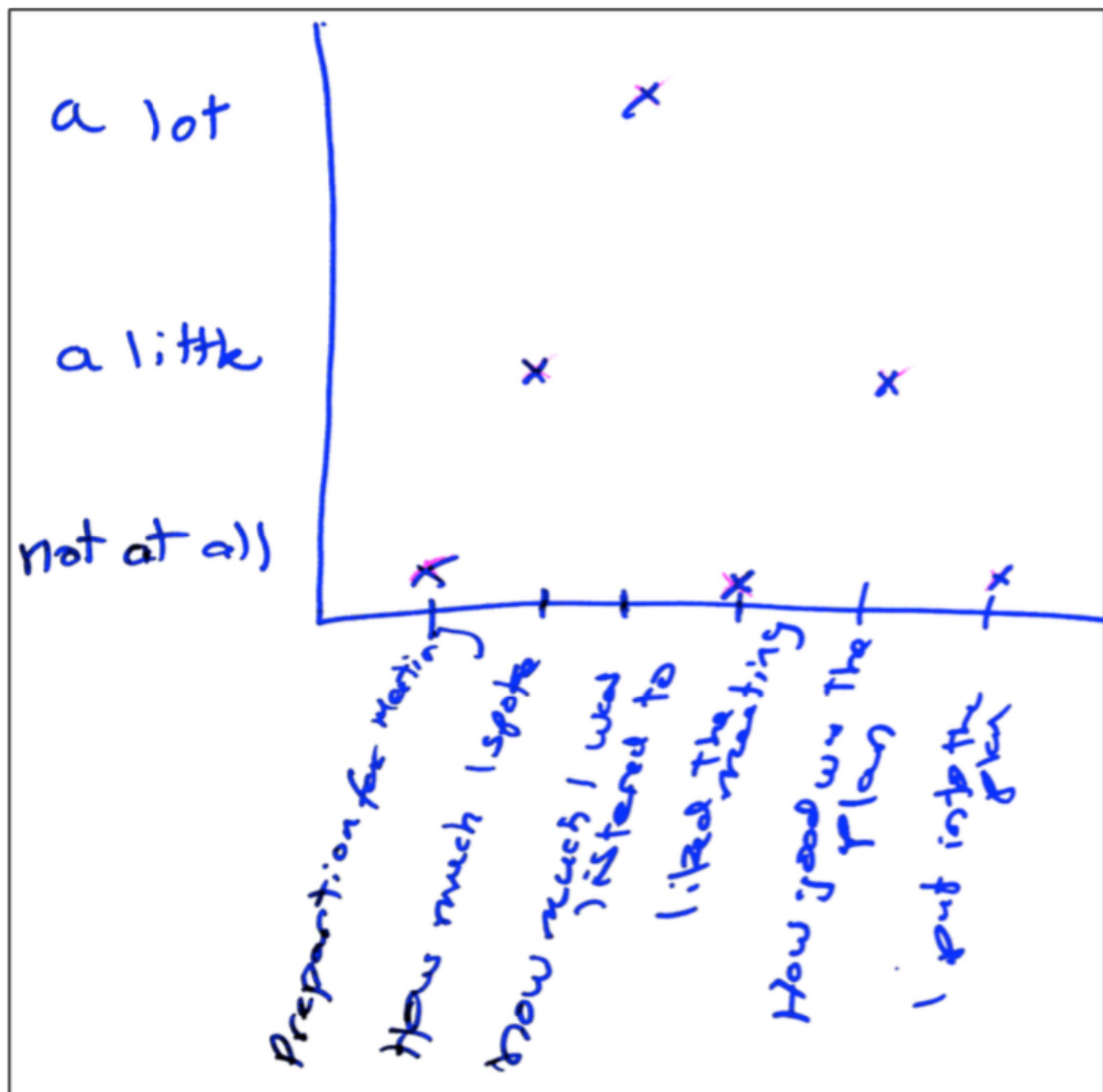


Figure 5:2 Tina's views of CAF meeting

Tina. Say if I was having trouble at home, it's like how, like say, and then they pinpoint it to one thing like say like I probably wind my brother up cos I've got low confidence and so they would like do an action form, say like write a list, and like how they can do to help me improve it.

Other young people who attended meetings to talk about school included Angus (Case 4, 15yrs). He was vehement about the lack of appreciation for his individual problems at the meetings. For him, there

was no real exploration of his problems. Angus did talk of successful engagement with practitioners on a one to one basis, but the meetings were chaired by a manager from the Education Welfare Service, who has responsibility for recommending prosecution, and his father had been fined over his son's non-attendance at school. Angus and his father spoke of a variety of challenges for Angus including: family break up and the serious mental health problems of his mother, court proceedings over custody and contact, depression, a serious injury with prolonged physiotherapy, self harm, child protection investigation and non-attendance at school. Here Angus talks about the meetings and the contrast he finds between the practitioners who engage with him individually and the manager who chairs the meeting.

I know what they're about, they're about my attendance, but the thing is they don't really think about, like the people that she sends out do, but the thing is, she just sits there and says, 'Oh you're doing it', that's it, you know, it's like, basically like you're doing, you know, you're a five year old boy who hasn't got any experience and pretty much put you into hard labour, you know what I mean for like 24 hours, you know.

And she just said you know, 'give us... why haven't you been in you know', but she says it, she doesn't ask why haven't you been in, she doesn't go through, 'oh well I haven't been in because of a certain, you know, mental, not mental crazy, but you know like the mental situation that I'm in at the moment and not feeling very confident, you know, she sort of just says, which obviously to be honest, is quite bullshit to me anyway, but you know, she doesn't think about anything, she just says, 'right you're doing it and that's it', and she's got a very negative... I spoke to her once, right, she doesn't smile or anything. I spoke to her once and she actually smiled, but this is when I was

actually talking to her, but when it comes down to business sort of thing, she's just a bit of a bitch.

In this quote as throughout the interview Angus offered a frank and strongly worded narrative about his involvement with practitioners and his attendance at meetings. He felt he was only brought into the meeting as a disciplinary measure to give him a clear message about school attendance. He did not feel that his participation reached the level of an opportunity to explore his views or his explanation of the matters at hand. He characterised the meeting as patronising, essentially unrealistic and impersonal in the form of the 'business-like' manner of the chair. Interestingly, though he contrasts the meeting's perspective with that of practitioners who are engaged by the meeting to work with him. 'they don't really think about, like the people she (the Chair and Educational Welfare Manager) sends out do.

The 10 year old daughter of Grant and Audrey from Case 11, whom I have called Heather, had almost no story to tell about practitioners taking the time to engage with her apart from a hypnotist the family consulted out of desperation to attempt to deal with Heather's aversion to school. On the one CAF meeting she attended she commented:

I've been to one... at [school] and it made me quite upset. I can just remember being quite upset. I was kicking my dad in the leg for ages trying to say, can I go out, can I go out?

Heather's account, including the leg kicking, was confirmed by Mum and Dad, who also described practitioners coming to the house to show them how to take matters in hand and physically dragging Heather screaming down the stairs into a car to take her to school. They only did this once but this incident gives pause for thought when we consider how vulnerable young people are and how far adults feel they can go under such circumstances.

In summary, even if they positively engaged with practitioners, the young people's accounts indicate that the meetings were uncomfortable. The young people did not talk a lot and they felt that they were primarily there to account for their non-attendance at school. Although they did not tend to disapprove of plans made at meetings, aside from Angus's comments above, neither did they feel they were making a contribution to an action plan. Of the young people who had attended a meeting and were asked if they had contributed to the action plan, none felt that they had. Generally, then, this represents an involvement falling well short of an active participative voice from young people in assessment and decision-making. It echoes previous research, such as Thomas and O'Kane's research into young people attending social work child in care review meetings (Thomas and O'Kane, 1999; Thomas, 2002). Typologies for young people's participation have appeared in the literature using the ladder analogy. For example, Shier's 'ladder for participation' of young people in research (Shier 2001). Shier's ladder analogy progresses from what he calls a non-participative initial three steps, including, respectively, manipulation, decoration and tokenism. The following five steps of participation progress as follows: assigned but informed, consulted and informed, adult initiated shared decisions, child initiated and directed, with child initiated and shared decisions with adults at the top of the ladder (2001,109). Thomas criticises the ladder analogy by pointing out the difficulty in compressing a complex set of elements into a purely linear progression, from bottom to top (Thomas, 2002: 174). His 'climbing wall' analogy offers an alternative, where different elements may be weighed separately, and compiled, offering a more complex assessment, where the elements are not hierarchical but form a set of building blocks. Thomas includes the elements of autonomy, choice, control, information, support and voice (2002, *ibid*).

CAF is, however, not solely about meetings, and the data also tells us something about how the young people were being engaged

with by practitioners more generally.

5:2 Engaging with practitioners

Unlike the adults (see chapters 7 and 8), for the young people in my study, meetings were not central to their experience and involvement with professionals. Indeed, as mentioned already, there was little sense, from the data, of CAF as a process, when talking to the young people. This contrasted with the adults, where there was always a strong narrative of an emotive involvement with agencies and practitioners, and a sense of important issues at stake, both in terms of meeting the perceived needs of the young people, but also in respect of self-determination, accountability, power, relationships, and resources. Adults raised a plethora of issues across the range of their experience. In dialogue with the young people, much of this drama, if present, was much harder to reach and perhaps reflected the relative exclusion of young people from much of the process. That is not to say that the young people did not at times speak movingly of their troubles and of some of their experiences, but those narratives had a different quality, perhaps less chronologically coherent, and generally less engaged with an idea of process.

The young people were far more likely to be focused on individuals that they had experience with, and rarely took an institutional or agency level perspective. They did not use practitioner labels, but almost always used personal names to identify the professional people with whom they engaged. Adult respondents would usually have a level of awareness at both levels and were usually willing to put aside any agency prejudices if they liked a practitioner. So narratives about the good and the bad practitioner were common in the interviews with adults.

Tina (Case 6, 19yrs) was older and talked of having had social workers involved with the family as long as she could remember,

including episodes of being in foster care. She had a learning difficulty, but had been receiving praise for her work at college and her CAF had recently ended. Like Sandra (Case 7, 15yrs), Tina spoke of her appreciation of individual practitioners who had engaged her personally outside the context of the meeting, but had greater experience and was more discerning of good and bad.

Well, a horrible one is like the one we had before Sue [Family support worker] She'd just like, say, all she wanted was put us in care and like split the family up but a ... Sue's a good one's actually, she knew what she was doing, so she wanted to help and didn't want to split us up and that. Worked on things that could help to bring us closer.

Tina also had a greater experience of counselling and could compare different agencies.

CAMHS were, like when I was 10 and getting bullied, they came out. There was a counsellor to like help me when I was getting bullied. That's what CAMHS were like. Young Minds is like, what I've talked about like, you [they] brought everything up, like talked to me about what's gone past and what I'm like now.

In her account Sandra was consistently positive about practitioners and the reasons she gave could be grouped into two sorts. They were kind to her as a person, or they made her think about her responsibilities as a young person to go to school, and care about the problems she was causing others, if her mother was fined for her non-attendance.

Well, it made me think about, about the fine thing, which made me care more and get in [to school] more.

Well, she [Family support worker] came out when I wasn't going to school and pretty much just explained what's going to happen and made me more like, I don't know, shocked, that I wasn't going.

She spoke to us as a person and not just like... she was helpful.

Setting targets for her was also something she found helpful, as with her teachers.

[They] set targets for me to get in, which made me even more eager to get in [to school] and helped me with my work, catch up, everything really. They've done loads.

Well, it's [attendance] gone from 48% to 62%.

Sandra's account was full of examples of one to one relationships with practitioners, from her family support worker to a mentor at school and Carol, who worked with the agency Young Carers. Sandra did not rate this agency very highly, as she was not comfortable with the group-work on offer. Sandra was a reticent young person and this may possibly have been reflected in her discomfort with the group-work.

Yes, but it wasn't Young Carers, it was just Carol. Young Carers didn't help at all.

I hate it when I don't know people, because I'm too shy to say anything or do anything.

The young people in this study valued the relationships that could be built with practitioners, and in all of their interviews

demonstrated their willingness to engage with practitioners who would take the time to work with them. One recurring issue here was the tendency for individual working to be highly time limited. One parent, Pam (Case 1), explained that her son, Tom (Case 1, 11yrs) was attending a course of counselling sessions that was to end despite the counsellor acknowledging he felt he was just beginning to establish the working relationship.

The bloke sent us an email and he said it was a ten week session and he found that, at the last week, he'd just got there with Tom [the child]...just formed a relationship with him in the last week.

Tom declined to be interviewed for the research, but there are other instances where young people described getting to know a practitioner, when the involvement stops, and the young person is not able to articulate the reasons for this, or as in the case below, is not aware. Here is Sandra once more, talking about Carol, the worker from Young Carers she liked.

Carol was meant to come every week, well, not every week, but like a month or a week or something like that, and she just stopped coming.

Penny (Case 6, 10yrs), Tina's younger sister, wanted more counselling and was active in asking for it, but to limited effect:

I had ten sessions and then when I think it was the eighth I asked for a bit more and they only gave me 2 sessions.

Angus (Case 4, 15yrs) was positive about his relationship with a sessional worker accessed through the Educational Welfare Service. I

have extracted some of Angus's comments about this youth worker, whom I have called Dave:

I don't know, now I'm pretty much the opposite [from before Dave], yes, and confident. Actually, you know, I'm speaking to you now whereas before I used to come up with short unresponsive answers such as, 'yes', 'you know', and stuff like that, and to be honest, I'm working with this guy Dave at the moment and a lot of the people he works with are self-dwelling, they're greasy, horrible people basically. And to be honest he says I'm actually quite a, sort of, happy... you know like positive to his sort of work because a lot of people are, you know, unhappy, depressed all that stuff and they stay in their beds and all that stuff. That's what I was talking about, being locked in.

Basically he's a motivational sort of guy.

So he's, you know, he's a cool guy, but... and then, I told him a lot of stuff, that got it off my chest.

He's like, one of the best, I'd say.

He's quite a trustworthy guy to be honest, and so was dead good, and we started, we started to make a camp fire and we went out and made a tent, not a tent, I don't know if it was a... it was like a shelter and all that stuff.... To be honest it could sort of allow you to sort of connect with him, but I already sort of did... it just allows you to sort of build yourself up physically and mentally and survival and stuff like that, and it allows you... it's quite a hard thing to explain to be honest, and it allows you to get better, you know, sort of better yourself and it makes, makes you sort of explore you adventurous side instead of being stuck upstairs all the time. At the time my sleeping pattern was knackered, I was going to sleep at about five in the morning you know, sleeping all day and whatever, and yes he'd sort of put

you to work and last week he's been waking me up, you know, like visiting me at eight.

Yes and it's like, yes now basically like it was this week and round about two weeks ago, yes and that week you see, and yes it's... basically I've started feeling a lot better about myself you know...

...Yes basically and I'd say it's him [Dave] and [Educational Welfare Officer] are basically quite big changes in my life, so it's basically from the start to better and then, you know, sort of even better. So I'm a lot, yes I'm in a lot better situation to be honest.

It is difficult to imagine a more roundly positive endorsement of a practitioner's engagement with a troubled young person. Angus's account outlines a state of relative lack of agency, where he was 'sleeping all day' and 'stuck upstairs' in his room much of the time. He goes on to list how Dave was, 'motivational', 'cool', 'one of the best', 'dead good' and 'trustworthy'. He could 'connect with him' and the sessions, 'allowed' him to 'build himself up physically and mentally', explore his 'adventurous side' and get out of his bedroom. Involvement with Dave had even helped him sleep better. But what Angus did not appear to know, and yet his father John did, was that Dave's work with Angus was now over, as the funding had been 'pulled'.

The person that's running the Educational Welfare Office is... originally she was told by the independent training school organisation that was brought in to do this, which is [Dave], that it would take five weeks of working with Angus to do this. And the original request to his firm had gone in when the head of Educational Welfare was not there. They were on holiday. When they got back they said it can't be five weeks, it's got to be a maximum of so long, and I think they've pulled the funding on it

now, so that's the end of the story. So the only thing that's actually ever been of any benefit to him has been taken away now anyway. And he enjoyed working with the person that actually he has been working with, but that doesn't exist anymore.

While it has to be acknowledged as only a partial account, neither father, nor son, appear to have had any input in the decision. The notion of strategic partnership between service users and practitioner organisations may be compromised by organisational priorities, including budgetary considerations, where service users have little direct influence.

Heather (Case 11, 10yrs) discusses the importance to her of more informal relationships, and how practitioners can engage with young people through the seemingly mundane ways they go about managing everyday life. Heather talked about how unhappy she was at schools prior to her current placement in a special school, but there was one shining light, in the form of a head teacher at the primary school she attended from years 2 to 4:

And [school] is a really, really nice school. They're really good. They brought my confidence back up. They just were really, really nice to me. And I was, I was best, almost best friends with the head teacher. She's had to retire now. But she's teaching head teachers to be nice to their pupils and stuff. So, basically, now she's a teacher teacher.

Stories of isolation at school featured in other children's accounts, and the absence of friends featured in most of the interviewed children's accounts at some point. Michael (Case 3, 10yrs) had moved from another city more than 1 year ago, but still felt isolated at school:

A few people like me. A good 75% of the class won't like me. A few people like argue with me an' all that. And then they all laugh at me when I shout at the class.

I asked Penny (Case 6, 10yrs) if anyone noticed she was lonely at school. Penny had a lot of insight about why she had problems with her peers.

They do notice. But every time...I've got anger problems. I haven't told them. I haven't told my teachers or my friends that I have anger problems and I'm not...I don't mean to but I strike out, you know what I mean? And that's why I lose friends.

When asked if she thought anyone at school could help her with this, she said:

Some do, some of the teachers. Cos, how they help me is if they like see me striking out they like get me to come inside and they just sit me outside the office for a bit to calm me down a bit. Sometimes give me something to do.

Generally, the young people interviewed appeared ready to engage with interested adults, but in this diverse set of experiences, there was little sense of any choices or involvement in decisions about what opportunities they might have to engage with helpful practitioners. The overview given in the preceding sections of the chapter represents a relatively passive picture of young people's engagement. There is little sense of how these young people may have made decisions about their actions, and indeed whether they felt they had any options to explore. In the next section, I will move on to explore the notion of young people's agency, and the underlying expectations that appear in the data, further. In doing so, I will raise the issues of control and participation. In addition, the school and

school space will be argued to work as key sources of authority, and thus form an important dimension of the CAF process.

5:3 Finding Agency – ‘Sit there and shut up’

In this section I discuss the lack of active engagement in CAF as far as young people were concerned. I give some examples of the kinds of agency articulated within the young people’s interviews, and move on to discuss parental representations of young people’s agency. A generally passive representation of agency emerges, where young people’s accounts reflect relative powerlessness in the process of CAF, and where parental accounts of young people’s agency often focus on concerns over negative reports of behaviours, particularly at school. The prominent role of schools in the location of CAF and in terms of the issues addressed with young people at meetings, is a key finding touched on earlier in the chapter. The process of assessment and diagnoses in some cases of young people’s mental health and learning needs, places educational institutions at the forefront of CAF business, and some of the parents in the study detailed epic narratives of contestation and struggle with agencies around those issues. Parents themselves had ambivalent views on the participation of young people in CAF meetings. Some were concerned about the potential harm from being questioned about problem issues, or the raising of family problems, and others were unconvinced that the meetings would be able to engage the young person.

The meetings were bad enough for adults, let alone a ten-year-old.
(Grant and Audrey, Case 11)

There’s things you can’t really talk about in front of a child. You, as an adult, you close up as well cos you can’t concentrate, you can’t focus cos you’ve got one eye, one ear on your child. (Alice, Case 8)

I just think Angus's view has always been very much the same. He's always on the defensive because he's in that meeting because he's either fallen out with a teacher and been unpleasant or he's in there because he hasn't been going in to school. So he's going to get beaten around the ears by some adults and all you've got is a group of adults in the same room all saying, come on, get into school. (John, Case 4)

He's supposed to come. The last couple he hasn't been. He doesn't like people talking about him, like sat there. (Pam, Case 2)

He just disrupts it. So there's no point in him coming in. And most of the things about Keith... If he was there, and they were saying all the things that he does in front of him, he would think that was funny, and go out and do more. So the things about Keith they're better just leaving him out. (Maria, Case 7)

She doesn't like it when people talk about her and I don't think that would have helped her self-confidence in any way. (Clare, Case 6)

In chapters 7 and 8, on parental experiences and perspectives, we will see that adults are often subject to a discourse of discipline and governance as parents. The young people are subject to dual governance, as service users and as children. Reviewing the strategies and practices under the thematic grouping of human agency in the data on the CAF, I have found a very lopsided accounting of matters between the young people and their parents. Parents talked about networking with other service users, self referring to other agencies, getting advice about the law, making official complaints, learning to better control their emotions, learning to take notes at meetings, working on their assertiveness, challenging practitioners and the list goes on. For young people, the list is somewhat more limited in scope

and the young people's engagement in the process generally comes across as passive.

Pregnant young person, Lyn (Case 1, 17yrs), lives independently and only goes to occasional meetings to see what is going on.

I don't really need to attend all the time so it gives people a chance to give feedback and pass it to other people but then I like to go into a couple of them so I actually know what's going on.

I just wait for their phone call. I wouldn't ring them to see when they are coming to see me I'd just leave it to them.

At the start when I was getting one or two people involved with me I was like I don't really like everyone involved with me but I understand now that they are there for a reason. I started to kind of accept it and live with the fact that I've got these people involved in me life and I can't change it.

Lyn was living independently after being in care and was about to be a mother, but her account of CAF involvement still involved more of a passive role as opposed to participatory engagement, where she just comes along now and then to 'know what's going on'. Mostly she just 'leave[s] it to them'. She doesn't feel she can do much other than 'accept' what she 'can't change'. Earlier, Lyn had explained that she could only get a house from the local council if she was involved with CAF practitioners, so she didn't feel she had a choice.

Another young person, Tina (Case 6, 19yrs), talks about her participation in meetings as follows:

I just sat there like dunno..??... just sit there and shut up and listen to what they had to say.

Tina didn't think attending the meeting would be a good thing for her younger sister, Penny (10yrs) and neither did her mother Clare. Penny had been involved in one meeting, where she had given a short presentation about her medical condition to teachers. When asked in the interview whether she would like to go to meetings she replied:

Definitely. To see, how, what they say about me.

In this respect Penny stood out as being one of the youngest two being interviewed, but also keen to be involved in her CAF, and equally keen to take the research interview in her own direction, which was mostly about playing card games and drawing. However, the tenor of young people's narratives about their involvement with professionals, and attending meetings, was about being managed by adults, speaking when they were spoken to, and listening. Young people described keeping their heads down as school non-attenders being held to account. Even at 19 years of age, Tina (cited above) keeps her head down and 'shuts up' at her final CAF. The strongest form of agency demonstrated by the young people was perhaps non-attendance at school. Hutchby's (2002) discussion of young people and professional discourses poses the 'interactional competence' of silence and the answer: 'I don't know,' where young people wish to 'avoid implication in the adult moral universe' of 'must do'. In considering children and young people's agency, there was little evidence of any enthusiasm for direct engagement in the process of CAF. Where the activity and contribution of young people was concerned in relation to engagement with practitioners in CAF, it was very much a lead or directed activity in response to adult arrangements and concerns.

Other accounts of personal agency revealed small acts of subterfuge, as in Heather's (Case 11, 10yrs) illicit support of a school friend she recalls from a previous school, where she was unhappy. She was around 6 years old at the time.

And they used to make Linda sit outside in the sand pit. So I used to go and sneak outside the classroom and go and see if she was okay because she used to cry all the time. There's this little tiny box sand pit. It was tiny, and she, the teachers made her sit there. So I used to sneak out of the class and see if she was Okay. I used to say I need the bathroom, just to see if she was okay because she used to cry all the time in there.

Angus (Case 4, 15yrs) discusses the act of self-harming. He characterizes his self-harming as a kind of learning experience, or exploration of adult behaviours he has witnessed and applied to his own sense of alienation as a teenager, more about feeling confused and hurt than as a positive strategy.

Twelve, 13 [years old] yes, year 8 basically and also quite a significant thing is, its just back in... basically when I was with my mom, my mom during my childhood, and this was quite a while ago, she don't do it anymore, but she basically... she used to try and kill herself and all that stuff. Now it don't really mean anything to me, you know, she used to self-harm and all that shit, so I guess actually trying it sort of, you know, not wanting it to [unclear] because at the time [unclear] sort of, I don't know putting it down to experience you know of how people would let off their anger or depression. I wasn't depressed nor angry, to be honest, I was more, like to set an example, I was more self dwelling and foolish to be honest, you know, it didn't really work for me, but because I wanted to feel equal and I guess, but I'm not really sure...

These examples of agency reflect the position of young people as lacking in power and subject to adult control. The example of Heather sneaking out to support her friend in the sandpit is an act of solidarity, and an individual strategy of resistance to adult authority in school.

Research by Corsaro, Clarke and others has examined the strategies of young people in peer groups subject to regimes of authority and structure in schools. This research offers rich material on the interactional competencies of young peoples' developing agency. There is little research on the strategies adopted by individual young people in these settings (Clark and Moss, 2011; Corsaro, 2011). Pollard and Flier have looked at the individual careers of school pupils over time, and found ways of examining young people's strategies longitudinally, but the methodological challenges of researching individual young people's agency in such settings are considerable (Pollard and Filer, 1999).

In this respect, the search for agency often shades into more therapeutic territory, as the expression of individual agency is examined for thematic material.

Angus's example of self-harming behaviour is also a form of agency relating more to a sense of powerlessness and perhaps emotional trauma. Current research into self-harming behaviour amongst young people includes a widely held conclusion that, above all else, it is a strategy coinciding with a sense of powerlessness and alienation at a personal level, with troubled close relationships and often family traumas as common factors (Dimmock, Grieves and Place, 2008; Catledge, Sharer and Fuller, 2012; Ougrin, *et al.*, 2012; Fliege, Jeong-ran, Grimm and Klapp, 2009).

Overall, the data on agency from the CAF study also raises the judgement around interactional competence where Hutchby (2002) and Iversen (2013) discuss how adults often tend to ascribe an evaluation of negative agency and negative interactional competence to young people, who choose not to cooperate with adult agendas, particularly in institutional contexts. However, the young people's talk around what they do is overwhelmingly more passive than the parents when it comes to CAF. These do not appear to be the creative acts of a powerful set of actors but rather the strategies of the relatively

powerless and alienated. Terms of engagement raised by the young person's data are not anything like the more resistant discussion around consent and partnership that adults grapple with in their narratives. Returning to a more sociological and institutional analytic register from the discussion of personal agency, a discussion of space applies a more contextual lens. Perhaps it is here that the issue of childhood spaces is one apparently strong conditioner in the forms of agency we see. Jenks puts the point forcefully and bluntly:

The central issue in relation to childhood space is, of course, one of control. Formal contexts allocated to the placement of childhood are dedicated to the control of the body and mind, and regulated by regimes of discipline, learning, development, maturation and skill. The child is very much aware of the close relation between the nature of its placement and the mode of control that will be its necessary accompaniment. Space, then, for a child, comes to fashion experience. (Jenks, 2005 p.75)

Given the prominent role of schools in CAF, the question is raised whether, under conditions found in this study at least, this forms a significant inhibitor for the development of young people's participation and agency in CAF. This would apply especially perhaps where these are young people struggling with isolation from peers and a relatively passive or depressed presentation generally. This discussion then needs to consider what is implied here for the reproduction of childhood as an institution and a discourse amongst practitioners, agencies, parents and young people themselves. Here we must consider notions of children, spaces, schools, families and the conduct of practices around childhood. This discussion is necessary as a context for thinking about the voices of young people and their parents in this study, and more generally. I will explore discussion this further in the concluding chapter, but for the rest of this chapter, I will continue

looking at perspectives on the agency of the young people in the study by considering the data from the parents.

5:3:1 Parental representations of young people's agency

So how did the parents represent young people's agency in the interviews? For some, like Marie (Case 7), the agency of their children was a confusing, troubling, enigma. Talking of son Keith (14yrs), who attended a Pupil Referral Unit as alternative to mainstream schooling, Marie said:

Although his attendance was good, even though he was going into isolation he still wanted to go to school.

The school got the psychologist in, because he was doing things that no kids his age was doing. Say like he was sitting in his classroom and he had to draw a picture, and it was for his exam, if he was sat and somebody walked by and maybe nudged him or annoyed him, he would just rip it up, and that's what he was doing at school. That's what he's done today at school.

He used to bang his head off walls and everything. Said everybody hated him. Didn't like himself. Pulled his hair out.

When I was listening to things that they were telling me that Keith had done at school, like he used to... He would stand at the doorway, put his hands up like that. Wouldn't let the teacher in, or the pupils in or out the classroom. Or he would sit and rip his work up, or he would just walk out the class, teachers had to run after him right out onto the road outside. So when I was sitting listening, I'm going like that, 'do you think maybe there's

something else? Like maybe attention deficit, or ADHD, or something like that?’

Marie found Keith bewildering. He wanted to go to school, but ended up in isolation because of difficult behaviour there. He was angry, frustrated and abused himself and others. She thought he must be suffering from a diagnosable mental health condition. Like Marie, Carol (Case 9) was confused and alarmed by her son’s behaviour, did not understand it and wanted specialist help, after Fred (9yrs), lit a series of fires in relatives homes, causing significant damage and fear and alarm in the family.

After he’d set the fire at his dad’s and I found out about the fields (another fire raising incident) I took him to the doctors and I said, ‘look, this isn’t right, I want something to put him into place’, and the doctor turned around and said to me, ‘without any Tier One intervention we can’t do anything.’ I said, ‘so basically you’re saying without getting in touch with the school nurse, which is going to be impossible because it’s the six weeks holidays, without getting a report from her, you can’t do anything.’ ‘No, we can’t.’

He wasn’t allowed out my sight, if I went to the toilet he had to go to the toilet, if he went to the toilet I went to the toilet with him, I was checking him every five minutes, he had to sleep in my room, because I was that scared, and I was just...I wasn’t getting a break and it did get to the point I was like that, someone just take him, I don’t care who, just take him. But obviously they didn’t, and we got over it.

In order to set her mind at ease, after her son had been setting fires, she made him sleep in her room so she could keep an eye on him. In this, perhaps extreme, example of concern over behaviour, Carol

wanted to actually see him at home with her own eyes, and in this way to control him, as she was so full of fear of what he might do. She had lost all confidence in the everyday control, self-discipline and good behaviour she previously thought her son had learned. In the shock of what her son had been doing, she had arrived at the bottom line, where there was no trust, and only by watching his every move could she feel she was in control of the situation. This proved too difficult to achieve, perhaps impossible, so she was ready to think the unthinkable and give the care of her son over to someone else, out of sheer panic and fear of what might happen.

The parents' discussions of their children was full of concern around control, and Carol's desperation shows one end of a spectrum of gradation in shades of trust and control over young people's agency. John's (Case 4) concern and belief that Angus (15yrs) lacked external discipline and control, is a dominant perspective on his agency.

I'm probably on record as having said years ago he needs strong discipline, because that's the only thing that will sort him out.

An analysis of his interviews revealed that almost every mention of his son demonstrated this concern over control. More specifically, John talks a lot about why he thinks he lost control, and what could be done to regain it. Another perspective on the impact of space is offered in the context of control. John suggested I interview Angus in a formal setting and ideally not at home. I should make the interview as formal as possible, so Angus would feel there was an authority structure where he had to respond appropriately.

If you feel you want to interview him [Angus] then I would prefer that he didn't see you at home because it will be too comfortable. You'll get a different, - not for you but for him-, and you need to actually take him somewhere and put him on

notice that this is something a little bit more serious than just coming down from your bedroom and having a chat with people and then going back to your bedroom. You know, if you're going to interview Angus, then make it as formal as you possibly can, because only in that way will he actually take it seriously enough ...

In the event of the actual interview, due to practical matters of making an arrangement that suited everyone, I interviewed Angus at home in the living room and his father obligingly went out for a time. In so doing he facilitated another aspect of space, required for research interviews, which is a confidential space out of earshot of others. During the interview, Angus was engaged, good humoured and well mannered. He clearly enjoyed talking about himself and had a lot to say. I was left unsure as to what I should have expected after his fathers' warnings, I also wondered how forthcoming Angus would have been in another place, with more 'formality,' as John put it.

The following examples show how, for some other parents, control issues at school were central concerns.

They would complain to me at the parent's evening, Derek just keeps getting up and walking round the classroom and sharpening pencils, and I'd think, well why are you telling me that, you know. The situation began to deteriorate again in September 2010 when Derek went to high school and then was finding it increasingly difficult to concentrate on lessons and frequently getting into trouble for being distracted and distracting others, because of his behaviour. (Debbie Case 5 re. Derek, 14yrs)

Well it really started when Tom was misbehaving at school (Pam Case 2 re. Tom, 11yrs)

Mostly it was all because Sandra wasn't going to school, it wasn't anything else, and his (Keith's) behaviour at school.
(Maria Case 7 re. Sandra, 15 and Keith, 14yrs)

Trouble with behaviour at school was present in 7 parental accounts of young people across the age range in the study. One notable exception was Heather (Case 11, 10yrs) where her parents felt that her quietness at school and her unobtrusiveness disguised her troubles:

At home, she's herself. She shouts. She screams. She gets annoyed. She does all the usual things that autistic kids do. At school, she just sits there and says yes, no, yes, no. So it's quite easy to miss, because she doesn't react. (Grant Case 11)

In summary, parents too, were often concerned about their children's behaviour and control at school, and at times at home also, and issues around control were the most often cited reasons for parental concern around young people. Alongside this concern for control, there was often a statement of bafflement about the reason, or the meaning of behavioural problems. The response to seek specialist psychological help in assessment, as I discuss in the following chapter, was at times embroiled with contestation over moral responsibility for the young people's behaviour.

5:4 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the participation of young people in the CAF process. I have shown that the participation described falls short of the child-centred engagement on assessment and planning envisioned in the CAF guidance materials. The young people's engagement with practitioners, on the other hand, discussed and demonstrated at times a lively interest in engaging with practitioners. However, what became clear where practitioners were able to spend time developing longer

term working relationships with young people, was that there was often the imposition of arbitrary timetables and rationing of these services. The data reflected children often seemingly uninformed and not involved in making choices and planning around these working relationships.

When young people's agency was examined from the perspectives of the young people and their parents, a sense of passivity was represented commonly on the young people's side, where a concern over control and behavioural issues was more prevalent in adult accounts. In an analysis of process, I have shown that the young people were not comfortable with meetings, but were however generally positive about their engagement with practitioners, and in many cases keen for more consistent and longer term support and engagement from them. On the other hand, there was an adult concern either with the vulnerability of children exposed to the adult discussion at meetings, or there was a questioning of whether young people were likely to take part effectively in meetings. Outside meetings, there was adult concern over behaviour and control of children, and often a searching for solutions or explanations. In chapter 8 I will consider these issues further, and examine the school space as a children's space and consider the influence of models of childhood and accompanying expectations for young people's participation in CAF as a process.

Chapter 6 - Parents on consent, partnership, surveillance and getting enrolled in CAF

In contrast with the participation of the young people discussed in the previous chapter, the parents were called upon to engage with a variety of agencies and attend diverse decision-making forums for discussion, planning, and action within the CAF process. The following two chapters will discuss what parents as service users tell us about their experience. In this, and the following chapter, discussion of the need to develop skills, acquire knowledge, and derive strategies around control and influence are common in parents' narratives. As a model of multi-agency assessment and practice with families, CAF reflects an explicit government vision recognising the right to participate for all ages, and the active voice and agency of service users (CWDC, 2009c; Gilligan and Manby, 2008). Consequently social work research can look for partnership in the role of the service user as an integrated member of a network of practice.

This chapter provides a detailed analysis of parents' experiences of CAF by following three main themes in involvement. First, I discuss the notion of a consensual process in the partnership between parents and practitioners. CAF engages with the thresholds in operation to process children and families across the spectrum of local authority priority, from universal services to statutory child protection interventions. I discuss the significance of this for how CAF is experienced by service users. I then move on to look at what parents said about working with practitioners, and how they come to terms with the surveillance and governance aspects of CAF. Last, I consider parents who challenged the constellation of power within the CAF process. This will lead into the next chapter, which considers in greater depth the challenges of taking part and developing the role of the service user as a partner in the multi-agency process.

6:1 Enrolling service users: A consensual process?

CAF is a voluntary arrangement and consent is implied on the part of service users. However, the voluntary engagement with CAF may be compromised in various ways, according to my findings. In essence, the introduction to CAF involves an enrolment into the role of service user, which, as the data reveals, may not always go smoothly.

In most of the cases in this study respondents appeared relatively uninformed as to the detail of the CAF process practitioners were guided by.

I mean we didn't know what a CAF meeting was. Didn't know who these agency people were. It wasn't explained to us. We were told, 'CAF meeting, we'll arrange this meeting for you to come in.' We didn't even know it was a CAF meeting for the first one. They said: 'Got a meeting. We need to talk about her education.' So we turned up. There's a teacher there. The headmaster was there. The SENCO was there, and this other lady. We didn't know who she was or anything. [We were given] very little information about what we were supposed to do and what our rights were, and what our rights weren't, and who these various government agencies were that were going to come in. And we had to learn right from the start. And it was difficult. (Grant Brown, Case 11)

In this example, Grant suggests that in entering into this process what they felt they needed but, initially at least lacked, was information about process, knowledge about their rights, information about the agencies and roles, and finally, a recognition that they were engaged in a learning process where they were starting at a significant disadvantage. What, in fact, were they getting involved in? The question: 'what our rights weren't' strikes an ominous tone implying

compulsion, power and authority. Grant's emphasis on rights introduces a key theme present in some of the parental narratives, and particularly those where, as the work developed, there was significant struggle over assessment decisions and allocation of services and resources. It introduces a court room or forensic aspect, which Hall, Slembrouck and Sarangi, (2006) and other researchers, have attributed to a sense of powerlessness in the face of accusation (Hall *et al.*, 2006; Cleaver and Freeman, 1995; Urek, 2005). This court room metaphor, as a discourse, will be returned to later, but compromises the notion of consensus, while also implying a means of redress.

Consent and voluntary participation, in this case, are mediating concepts introduced in the sphere of governance. They can be seen as technologies whereby particular relationships are established, which facilitate the preventative or early intervention service user in the welfare system. Discussion in chapter 2, around the establishment of Foucault's self governing subjects, and elaborated comprehensively by Rose and others (Rose, 1989; Donzelot, 1997; Parton, 1999), outlines central principles of modern liberal citizenship comprising self reliance, self improvement, and the sanctity of private family life. Rights and legislative frameworks underpin all these principles, and confirm the role of individuals and families in addressing questions of normalised developmental and behavioural attributes. Consent is underscored by liberal ideologies where a balance is struck between liberal freedoms and ensuring families fulfil a successful and self-governing role in the rearing of children.

The CAF Assessment Form requires a parental signature to approve information sharing between agencies party to the CAF. The Children's Workforce Developmental Council guidelines for practitioners undertaking a CAF assessment asks for informed consent from any participating child, or young person, and their parent, and the views of the child and parent or carer are held intrinsic to the process (CWDC, 2009c). This invokes the notion of a partnership, which transcends

consent and creates a mutual endeavour in seeking to establish agreed understandings of a child's needs, and formulating plans to address them. The question is how realistic partnership is in practice, and how convincing it can be where the partners are unequal in a range of measures, including both power and knowledge.

Adams's (2008) range of participation activity, moving from consultation through to power sharing, and decision-making, makes a close link to empowerment. Morris explores the development of working definitions of partnership in social work, from its appearance as a plank of the 1989 Children's Act, to more contemporary times (Morris, 2004). Here a more integrated decision-making partnership involving more than consultation and information sharing alone, is a later formulation that appeared with practice innovations such as Family Group Conferences. Potentially CAF is a forum where the more active participation in decision-making and assessment work could engender a more advanced and empowering partnership model, which extends to the participation of both adults and young people in decision-making and assessment activity in a multi-agency setting. However, the data from this study suggests that there are significant challenges to such a realisation.

Single parent father John (Case 4) was suspicious of 'jargon':

...when you refer to a, you know, a CAF, to me on the receiving end of anything, I've not been aware of any common assessment or otherwise. I'm just saying that it wouldn't mean anything to me anyway. Ultimately I'm looking for a solution to, or I'm looking for a solution, which is promoted by the school, that I need, to find a solution to it, but it's not something that I'd be even interested in, in what sort of jargon they employ between themselves as agencies.

Here there is no recognition of the CAF as a specific process. John implies a sense of service use, which is quite different from Grant, where as a service user he doesn't expect to be engaged in thinking around technical aspects of the service as a customer. There is a nuance invoked of the modern consumer in the welfare marketplace, commissioning a solution for his son, but not overly engaged in the technicalities of an active role in a partnership (Clarke and Newman, 2007, McLaughlin, 2009). In fact, John was prosecuted for his son's school non-attendance and fined, so the voluntary status of his relationship with agencies was severely constrained by the threat of legal sanction. This knowledge lends a sense of bravado to John's comments, and a sense of disengagement from the ideas of the practitioners he was working with.

John's local family support team explained during a meeting held to negotiate access to potential research participants that they did not always tell people they were using the CAF as a process, because they thought parents might be less likely to cooperate and sign up with a relatively formal assessment procedure. This explanation felt like families were being led into a service user role without the explicit discussion of the terms of their engagement. This was evidence of local resistance to, and revision of institutional strategy, and evidenced the coexistence of alternative strategies and technologies within the agency (Lipski, 1980; Prior, 2009).

There was a positive response from some families where the introduction of CAF was described in terms of an offer of help and support, which was welcomed, even after the potentially difficult experience of a social work assessment. In those cases, respondents showed that when there was clarity and understanding, trust could form relatively quickly, despite difficult circumstances.

For example, Sharon (Case 10), who came to CAF after a child protection assessment by social workers, explained she felt no resentment after the investigation and welcomed what she took as a

genuine offer of support. Sharon held a strong positive regard for her support worker. She took the child protection assessment at face value, as she did the offer of support. Her consent, as she described it, was a straight exchange of trust. She accepted the safeguarding role as legitimate, did not dwell on stigma or suspicion, -‘they dealt with it really well’ - instead emphasising a straightforward understanding of needs and solutions:

Darren turned round and said. ‘Eh, Mummy’s punched me in the face. Daddy has kicked me in the leg. Susan has pulled my hair, and Nanna smacked my bum.’ So like, ‘the cat scratched me arm.’ and automatically said all that, but obviously if he said that mummy and daddy hit him they got social services involved. When social services come round to the house and yeah, everything’s alright. So, em, they said they would like to get a CAF involved and I says: ‘yeah I would, because I need the help at the school as well’. And that’s what it all stemmed off of really. I understand that they’ve got to check. I understand that fully but, they dealt with it really well and they gave me the help that I needed then, with Darren, to see what Darren’s needs were, and like I thought like, ‘well, no, I’ve got no issues with them. I’ve got no issues with them at the moment, no’. Yeah, they just came out and said, ‘would you like the CAF to get involved?’ So I said, ‘yeah’.

In a later extract, Sharon describes how her support worker helped her identify support issues:

She said well what is it you want to do? So I says: ‘I want to improve on these.’ and we just worked it through together. Yeah, we just clicked straight away with her.

In this case there is an experience of partnership between Sharon and her keyworker, which facilitates Sharon's sense of ownership of at least some of the CAF agenda.

In another family, with an unhappy history of involvement with social services, single parent mother Clare (Case 6) had a very jaundiced view of social workers and social care workers in general. However, Clare was ultimately won over by her family support worker, despite initially things going badly wrong. In Clare's narrative, she began with her sense of anger and grievance over an earlier experience of seeking help. She described her anxiety approaching social services for advice and support, when struggling to care for her children and enduring domestic violence from their father. After coming forward to seek support, she was distressed when the children were placed on the 'at risk' register. According to Clare, the family support she had been seeking was not forthcoming, and to her the registration was a needless formality disguising the lack of useful support from social services.

When I needed support they couldn't put it in, it wasn't there, apart from the names on the 'at risk' register, which was really distressing to me because, you know, I felt even more as a failure and I knew what the next step is the kids could be took off me.

The CAF episode had begun some years later, when Clare was recovering from a mental health crisis and was not long out of hospital. She described how she had been offered some support from a family support worker and things did not go well.

And it was on Christmas eve she came in, it was the day before Christmas eve and she turned round and said 'I spoke to my line manager', and that, 'If you don't take your medication, we are going to have to put the kids into care, cos you are not taking

care of them.' I was in this house, yeah. My kids was in here, and we was just in the kitchen, just there, and the kids could hear everything she had just said. And so of course, 'we are going to end up in care, we're going to lose Mum', and everything, so, you know, all over Christmas different support workers were coming in each day. Brenda (family support worker) was useless cos she was off most of the time. She'd make an appointment and wouldn't turn up for it or she'd cancel it and rebook it. And then the CAF meeting was put into place. She was there then and it was, I felt as if I was being targeted. I actually walked out of the CAF meeting. I wasn't aware I could have called an end to it at any time. That wasn't explained to me that it didn't even have to go ahead.

Later Clare comments:

Steph (current family support worker) is absolutely fantastic. She explains CAF more clearly, and that I can cancel the CAF at any time. Well, Scot (another previous temporary family support worker) explained that bit to me, cos I think in a way he was hoping that I would say, don't bother then.

Clare's account emphasis a lack of control, of compulsion and fear, and a lack of confidence that practitioners were genuinely interested in helping her, during a period of personal crisis. After earlier experience of child protection procedures, which had left her cynical, and a threatening introduction to work with the local family support service, her narrative indicates she did not recognise a place for her consent. However, her current family support worker had given her a new perspective on what she might expect:

But at the minute, since Steph has been involved, I've got to admit it has been more positive than the first few I had. They

were so negative, I thought there is no point. I felt as if I was being victimized.

No matter what she's said, she's carried out.

And being there really. If you needed her she's actually there. You know, just a constant, continuous, the same face, not just getting to know you, but getting to know the family as a whole, and the work she's been doing with the family has made a big, big difference.

A recipe for the good practitioner emerges as a crucial ingredient in Clare's narrative with the negative and positive examples. Being sensitive to what is said in front of the children, not beginning a relationship with threats, keeping appointments, informing service users about rights and process generally, being positive, consistent, getting to know the whole family, and doing work with the whole family. Consent is recognised only in the building of a relationship of trust with a skilled and respected worker.

One single parent mother, Liz (Case 12), got off to a rocky start and felt ambushed by professionals after a health practitioner and a nursery referred her to social services with a safeguarding query. The outcome of the referral was a visit from a family support worker, Helen.

She says, 'we've got to stay in your life now, as a support worker, or it's social services'. So at this point I was, like, literally devastated, having to fight for my son to get a diagnosis as it is, and then have professional people turn on me like that, I lost complete and utter faith.

... because it's like I didn't have a choice about it, and it's like, if I didn't work with Helen, I would have been reported to social

services, even though I had nothing to hide, and I've got nothing to hide, you know.

Like Clare, Liz demonstrates again the leverage over consent that can be applied by practitioners where families are close to safeguarding thresholds, and social service safeguarding interventions may be feared. Broadhurst and Pithouse (2009) point out that social service departments have long been involved in the business of managing workloads through gate-keeping. It is this interface between thresholds, and in particular, the criteria used to distinguish 'children in need' from children with 'additional needs,' which is a key issue for frontline organisation of services, and the services offered by agencies to children and their families. Respondents were unlikely to be aware of those criteria, and there is evidence that practitioners involved with CAF also struggle with those thresholds (Kellett and Apps, 2009), but the presence of a 'step up' to more formal engagement with social workers over safeguarding was understood by most parents in this study. Some early commentators on CAF, as a national process, shared a common concern that in fact the CAF could amount to a straightforward means of referral to social service departments by other agencies, although certainly this was not the case in the data from this study (Mason, May-Chahal, Regan and Thorpe, 2005).

Liz, however, made what she felt was a strategic decision, to work on this relationship with the support worker, and to try and avoid what she regarded as a relationship problem with the health practitioners, which had led to the referral:

And I said, me and my mum discussed it, and I said, 'Mum, I'm going to keep Helen in my life because I don't want the school to do what the nursery have done, and he starts in September'.

Liz and her mother decided that having the support worker as a friendly ally might help avoid or deal with further issues, like being critiqued by another agency further down the line. In a further nuance in this case Liz states:

Well, I'd have a CAF meeting anyway because of all the agencies, even if Helen wasn't there, I'd still have to have a CAF meeting anyway because my friends, my friend, has them for her boy, and he's got multiple agencies working with him. I mean, I would have had that anyway, and I knew that. This is why I was trying to set the meeting up prior to him starting school. I was ringing school from June before, before I even had the referral to social services. I knew what I needed to do. And then when Helen comes in, I was doing everything exactly how Helen was doing it, and it was really frustrating for Helen to take over and do all that to start with because it's like, hold on a minute, that's what I was doing, sort of thing, so why are you taking that responsibility off me?

Liz was suspicious of agencies and their expertise generally, but despite this she wanted to have access to the multi agency forum of CAF, to influence decisions about meeting her son's needs. Her aspirations were for an engagement and partnership with agencies. The idea expressed by Liz, that, despite her reservations about her own experience, somehow the CAF itself was a useful or important forum for parents to be involved with, is another key finding, which will be returned to again in the analysis.

One last example of consenting to CAF includes this extract from another single parent mother, Marie (Case 7), who states:

No, it was just like this. Like: 'Do you understand, blah, blah.' Just like, 'you understand that such and such is going to be at

the CAF meeting. You understand this is voluntary, you don't have to do it, blah, blah, blah.'

Marie was under pressure from her children's non-attendance at school, her youngest son's learning difficulty, and challenging behaviour from his older brother, currently attending a pupil referral unit. She went on to explain how she had endured a period of severe physical abuse, involving significant injury by her ex-partner. The children had been in respite care on more than one occasion, and she had struggled with anxiety problems, including panic attacks. She attributed her daughter's school attendance problem directly to her caring role at home, and she described in the past being overwhelmed by these seemingly insurmountable problems. For Marie, and perhaps also with the extract from Clare above, the involvement of professionals was sometimes expressed as inevitable, at times a burden, and at times a great support. The tone of Marie's account suggested a relationship with a difficult family member, an overbearing in-law or parent, who is always present in some form or other, as a necessary, but at times, frustrating support. This more passive, overwhelmed, presentation of service users' agency may reflect the struggle to contend with life's multiple difficulties, and a feeling of powerlessness. It underlines the challenges for some in finding the energy and strength to engage with practitioners and agencies in a self possessed and assured way.

So, in summary, a key theme to emerge in the data is how the voluntary and consensual status of CAF as a partnership between service users and practitioners can be compromised in several ways. These included the position of CAF on a threshold before referral to social services on safeguarding grounds, and by the general vulnerability of families struggling with often diverse and multiple difficulties in health and relationships. The omission of practitioners in some accounts to inform and explain processes with clarity and

honesty was experienced on occasion as deceitful, and a misuse of official powers. However, exploration of this theme of consent and partnership also revealed that parents were often able to successfully engage with practitioners, despite many of these challenges and some respondents gave positive accounts of the support they had received through involvement with the CAF. This underlines the importance of good quality relationships of trust between practitioners and service users, and I found many good examples of this in the data. Even the perceived threat of a statutory child protection investigation can be held in abeyance, or balanced by an perception that engagement with practitioners can have practical value in pursuing goals in respect of dealing with family troubles.

In the remainder of this chapter, I will discuss the extent to which there was a perception of the CAF process as a specific approach to family assessment and partnership working. For the majority of respondents, the CAF represented a multi-agency meeting and a visible space where some business could be done with agencies and practitioners. It becomes a space where strategies can be developed and played out. Agencies can be challenged, alliances can be seen in operation and poor communication becomes evident. In other words, it is a space where service users can employ their own agency in a particular strategic way and engage with power and in different ways potentially develop their own leverage with what they bring to the table as service users.

Investigating the social construction of what they call 'clienthood,' Hall, Juhila, Parton and Pösö (2003) point out that the work of constructing the 'client' reflects fundamentally the nature of the different 'experthoods', agencies and settings involved in each context under investigation. What we can see with the CAF study is that, in addition to the language of social work and the received ideas of practitioners (Rojek *et al.*, 1988), there are modes of practice in the

multi-agency setting itself that may embody a form of discourse, beyond the spoken language of practice.

6:2 Partnership and Surveillance

We may not expect the accounts of service user respondents to reflect a familiarity with any of the government practitioner guidance materials around holistic assessment, the assessment framework, or forms of partnership, in undertaking formal assessments. There was, however, a clear expectation of mutual trust and working together implied by most parents' accounts. Two of the respondent parents had never heard of CAF, and were not aware they were involved in a CAF process, when attending meetings with professionals. The way they saw it, parents were just attending meetings with professionals they had been invited to. As we saw earlier, the young people did not have any familiarity with the term.

Lack of awareness of explicit institutional strategy does not entail a lack of response to those strategies or technologies, and most parent respondents discussed a conception of the CAF process as essentially defined by their experience of the multi-agency meetings, involving agencies, parents, and on occasion, children and young people. The adult respondents all discussed the process of CAF essentially as a way of organizing services and agencies around the parents and children, which involved a regular meeting, and the formulation of an action plan to be reviewed at further meetings. The respondent data demonstrates, what Prior (2009:23) calls the 'contingency of practitioner-citizen encounters,' where agency involves a response to a highly specific constellation of contextual elements and circumstances, which may constrain the formal course of events, but are in turn mediated by the agency of individuals. The following two extracts are typical of the kind of pragmatic summation of process from parents.

At this point, he didn't have his diagnosis, when we started the meetings, but we had to have the meetings to discuss what we were going to do about trying to get Derek into school, what they could put into place, you know, to make him able to go in. So that was the start of it, with all that. (Debbie, Case 5)

Basically we all sat down round the table, you know, when the CAF started. What we've done, where he is now and what we can do and we were all given an action plan each what we could work on individually and then we met up again. (Alice, Case 8)

In the above examples, the discussion of problems and issues with young people, the making of decisions and information sharing, are seen as central and with the use of 'we' there is a clear sense of a setting where the views of service users will be important.

However, the underlying element of surveillance was clearly discerned by respondents generally. Here, Carol gives voice to awareness of surveillance:

Yes. Like I say, I've got nothing to hide, all I'm focused on is finding out what's wrong with my little boy and putting things into place that'll help him, and all these people are helping me do that, so any help I'll grab with both hands and hold onto. Absolutely fantastic, the things that have been put into place to help me and Fred, I've got nothing bad to say about it, nothing bad at all. I think they've done everything above and beyond, really. (Carol, Case 9)

Behind the praise from Carol, there is note of tension around the awareness that with the CAF comes a degree of scrutiny of one's life, habits, and above all, the quality of one's child care, but there is clearly a notion of shared goals in favour of her son. The CAF as technology of

surveillance is invoked, as was shown with the extract from the interview with Liz (Case 12), on page 10 of this chapter: 'it's like, if I didn't work with Helen, I would have been reported to Social Services, even though I had nothing to hide, and I've got nothing to hide, you know'. As Carol demonstrates above, parents were often willing to recognise and accept this surveillance, although equally, there was often discomfort.

This theme is evidenced further below in the dialogue between Alice and Reg (Case 11), which shows a balance between notions of partnership and surveillance:

Alice: Yes, it started off with the (child Greg's school) attendance, and to be quite honest with you, I'm kind of glad it happened, because... we all work together a lot better now.

Reg: Yes, we just got everything sorted, didn't we?

Alice: Yes.

Reg: We got all the understanding about what Greg wanted, and..

Alice: To make sure that he's happy and he was settled, and... making sure we were singing off the same hymn sheet, so to speak.

The sense of partnership is invoked by 'working together' and 'singing of the same hymn sheet'. Alice and Reg felt supported well enough by their CAF that they overcame an initial set back, when they came under pressure over their care of 7 year old Greg, at their first CAF meeting, held at school. As was previously explained above Alice was clear that the CAF came about due to poor school attendance, but it

was Reg who explained, that when they attended their first meeting, the school raised issues, which challenged their parenting style:

Reg: Well obviously the school nurse wanted to check he was healthy, but then, 'so yes, so you know, we need to say he needs his hair cut'. It was getting a bit personal, yeah, but they were quite clear on what they thought, you know, we think you ought to be more... 'Oh well if that's what you say, if that's what you insist on, fair enough'. We didn't think it was a big problem, getting his hair cut.

Alice: Yes, he was due to get his hair cut anyway.

Reg: No really, I was a bit peeved, because it's like, 'you are not taking care of him'. You know, 'you should be doing this, or doing that', and I think well, we know how to look after him now, but, I wasn't upset by it. These were their concerns, so we addressed the situation, which is fair and fine, but I would say, look, I think if we've got a problem, hopefully they'll show the same respect. Say, 'Okay, we'll sit down and we'll talk about it'. What their concerns are, and what's going on, but...

Reg was careful to maintain an even handed sense of the legitimacy of agencies expressing concerns about child care issues, but expressed clearly the discomfort, and at least the temporary resentment he felt at the criticism of Greg's hair length.

So we have looked at how, for some, the CAF was expressed as a meeting with agencies, where there was a degree of working together, with perhaps some tensions around mutually agreed goals and professional oversight of parenting. However, for some parents, the process of CAF presented a greater challenge. Here the relationships could become more adversarial, and there are critiques of experthood and professionalism.

6:3 Challenging the practitioners

Ged and Maggie (Case 3) also experienced initial censure from the practitioners at their CAF meeting at school, but were less sanguine than Reg and Alice in dealing with it, and described an altogether more critical relationship with the practitioners:

Maggie: That's how it was introduced, it was more of a, 'instead of you going to this appointment, that appointment and this, or seeing this person or that person, we can bring it all together. We kind of got the feeling it was about your appointments, you know, like if you were going to the eye clinic and the speech therapist, it would all come together. Not about an assessment at that point, but come together at that point, and say, 'this is what we've got planned to help you', but we were rudely awakened when we went to the first one. It wasn't, 'this is what we've got planned to help you', it was 'this is what you've not done as parents to help your child', and I thought, we give everything we've got for our child, our children. I came home and sobbed. I felt awful, because you know that's how it was, it was a, just a...

Ged: It felt like we were being labelled as bad parents.

Maggie: Yeah, like, 'we've got this that you've not done on this list and we've got this that you've not done on this list', and it went round the room like that, and we were just sat, and no, we didn't know what to expect. We didn't expect that.

In this account the parents feel that they were given an introduction to the CAF, but what was billed was not what they got. There is a feeling that they were duped or tricked into a situation where agencies could

mount an overwhelming critique of their identity as good parents: '...it went round the room like that and we were just sat...'. Ged and Maggie developed an adversarial outlook with their agencies, and stopped allowing them to visit them at home, although they continued to attend the meetings. Their narrative became one of organizing themselves to become more assertive about holding agencies to account, and defending themselves at meetings.

I'll be truthfully honest that it's anger, it's anger that they made me feel like a bad mum and a bad dad, cos we're not. We do everything we can to help our kids. (Maggie)

This sense of resentment was evident throughout their account. Maggie and Ged spoke of the CAF as a political arena. They wanted to have a CAF, but they wanted it to operate on their terms, and they were ready to do battle in order to achieve this.

The CAF works if you know where you stand and how to use your own voice. It's finding your own voice in there, against. It's not like what they said it was going to be. (Maggie)

There was not a rejection of the process, and even after the horror of the first CAF, Ged and Maggie wanted to use the CAF. Maggie went on to describe a journey of developing a personal strategy and fighting back to take control, as they saw it, and theirs became a strong narrative about standing up and fighting back.

Maggie: We've changed ourselves.

Ged: Yeah

Maggie: And I think because we've changed and we know our rights, we go in with a list and we say this is what we want done...

Ged: Yeah

Maggie: ...and we want this sorted or that sorted. And the other thing we've found with them is, they would bring in the other children, we've got six, bring in problems with the other children like, our eight year old has constipation, they'd start bringing in his things and originally we wouldn't say anything or, Beth (other child), if she hadn't done her homework, you know silly things, and we wouldn't say anything and eventually, about six or five meetings in and we said 'actually we're not here for any of that. If you've got a problem with any of the others...

Ged: Make an appointment

Maggie: ...please feel free to make an appointment with us, we'll come over and pick them up early or we'll come at your convenience and they were quite shocked at that one as well, weren't they?

Ged: Yeah

Maggie: Yeah. Now we go in with lists with a notebook and say, 'no, this is what we want done this is what we've done, this is what you were supposed to do last time, it's still not been completed, why?'

Here, Maggie describes how they learned to wrestle some control over the agenda, by resisting the widening of the agenda to discuss other children, by using procedural means to establish their resistance, and by requesting a separate appointment. They were effective in turning

the tables by sticking to an agenda, and referring to previous notes. This requires recognition of standard practices in order to be challenging and assertive in an effective way, and the couple showed they had developed their understanding about the way things are done in these meetings.

The oppositional perspective demands a narrative that subverts and challenges, and Maggie gives two further examples of her challenge of expertise and professionalism.

But these, these people come in with their books and their ideas and their bits of papers about what they think you should be doing and have no idea what your life is really like.

I'm a mum and I just want to do what's best for my children, but because you say that's best that doesn't mean that's best for my children. I am their Mum.

In the first example, Maggie suggests that there is an unreality or a disengagement of professional expertise learned from books in the general, and applied to the particulars of a life as it is lived. These are ideas as ephemeral as 'bits of paper'. Secondly, this form of expertise is no match for the knowledge and experience of a mother when it comes to her child. This is presented as a superior knowledge located, as it is, in the embodied and everyday relationship between a child and its mother. The authority of knowledge as lived experience is always a powerful one that appears in many contexts. Even social workers use it, when it suits, against the unwanted interventions of academics, politicians and outsiders, and the special knowledge of motherhood is virtually unassailable.

However, narratives around knowledge aside, the example of Maggie and Ged demonstrates how, despite the discomfort and resentment that may be incurred, even under those conditions, taking

part in the CAF process may have an appeal. An opportunity for participation may be perceived. Ged and Maggie stopped allowing certain practitioners to visit them at home but they developed their strategy for participating in the CAF. In the next chapter, I go on to look at what is involved in learning to take part, and meeting the challenges of a participating service user.

To summarise this chapter, we have looked at how the data from parents in the study shows how enrolment in the CAF process has a nuanced relationship to the rhetoric of consent and partnership. The position of CAF at the threshold of referral to children in need services, and more formal social care safeguarding procedures, means that practitioners and service users have to navigate and make sense of a grey area. However, we saw how often respondents formed vital relationships of trust with practitioners, who managed to work with parents' sensitivity to parenting critique, and develop common ground. Respondent parents were seen to experience the tensions around the surveillance and safeguarding agenda, and acknowledge them. I went on to discuss how respondents generally held to an idea of working together with practitioners, even if there was little recognition of practice terms around the holistic assessment framework integral to the rhetoric of the CAF.

The following chapter will develop the analysis of parents' accounts and introduce further data, particularly on those who developed a more challenging engagement with practitioners around CAF. These cases perhaps most starkly show what kind of ingredients needed to be brought together, in order to facilitate a participatory relationship where users have some influence, especially where there was disagreement.

Chapter 7 – Parents and the assembling of CAF

The Common Assessment Framework, as conceived by the New Labour government of 2003, included the joint decision-making CAF or team around the child (TAC) meeting and a partnership agenda, to include the voices of parents and young people as key elements. This study has asked how the service users are engaged, and how the service is experienced. In the previous chapters, I have given an overview of respondents' experiences in becoming enrolled in the CAF, coming to terms with the aspects of surveillance and governance, and I have looked at understandings of the process itself. In this chapter, I show that in considering CAF as a technology of governance, there is opportunity for participation, for service users to marshal their agency, seek support, and pursue objectives, but that there are considerable challenges to be met in doing so. I will, following Newman and Clarke (2009), consider a process of 'assembling power,' from legislated rights, service users' knowledge and learning, and acquired personal skills and resources.

This study has shown that, in a small group of experienced CAF respondents, the number of agencies families could map in their network ranged between 5 and 17. Drawing service users as adults, children and young people, into an agenda of participative service userhood, with the engagement of multi-agency forums and professional and service user action planning, has implications for being a service user in this context (Morris 2013). If multi-agency assessment and practice with families is to fully engage with the right to participation for all ages, and to engage with the active agency of service users, what then are the demands on partnership in this context?

The chapter begins with an examination of some of the practical arts of administration that service users developed, to greater or lesser extent, in order to take part in multi-agency meetings. The following

section looks at the acquisition of knowledge and information from official and informal sources. Next, there is discussion of how parents, who challenged the practitioner agencies, describe developing an effective voice, and the difficulties this may present. The term 'bad parent(s)' was used explicitly by some respondents as they reflected on interactions with practitioners. The last section opens a discussion on the position of the 'bad parent,' and how service users dealt with the uncomfortable experience of parenting critique from agencies. Here, I consider the channelling of parents towards psychological services, and the dilemmas encountered, when the alternative to a categorisation as inadequate or bad parent is a medical or psychological diagnosis in respect of the child or young person. In summary, the chapter poses the CAF as a network where service users, who choose to develop agency and voice, are required to assemble attributes and resources in order to take part effectively.

7:1 The role and function of administration

All of the parents discussed the need for some basic administrative practice in keeping records of meetings and agreed plans from meetings, and keeping a diary for appointments. Marie (Case 7) had a folder with letters and kept two paper diaries:

I've got a lot of dates, a lot of appointments. Mostly with Tim [son], really. There's a CAF there on 22nd March, CAF on 16th April, and 4th June. So March, April, and June was the last one. The next one's on 18th July. Got that in here.

Pam (Case 2) relied on emailed records to keep track of actions and minutes from meetings. She kept track using her smart phone:

You see this is the format it comes in. That's the action, cos she (family support worker) writes on there, and this is school updates, and Jo (family support worker) takes notes of what everyone said, 'Tom made the decision the day before that he did not want to go to the TAC (CAF meeting).' She writes little things like that. Now I've got go doctors get Tom an appointment and get him referred to CAMHS (child and adolescent mental health service) again, now, that's to be done before the next meeting, yeah?

Pam was positive about the working relationship she had with her family support worker who was the lead worker for her son's CAF. She was critical of earlier working relationships with the school, prior to the CAF, but the organisation and record keeping in the CAF was something she was appreciative of, giving her a record of what agencies said at the meeting and what the action plan was at any given time. Her appreciation of her family support worker includes how well her administrative practice offers clarity and accountability to the CAF process.

Other respondents were less happy with the record keeping in their CAF arrangements, and it was common for respondents to be vague or unaware as to whether anyone was keeping or circulating minutes or plans after meetings. The Browns (Case 11) cited the lack of minutes as part of a general critique of their daughter Heather's CAF. Early on, they had had support from a parent advisory group, who took notes, and helped them appreciate the need for a record of the discussion, but they felt that there was reluctance from the school to submit to this kind of accountability. The following quote suggests this was also noted by other practitioners and came with the realization that, on the agency's side, there were different views and perspectives, which were not always in agreement.

Grant: I mean, occasionally they'd [parent advisory service]

say: 'but you [practitioner] said this and you said that', at the CAF meetings. Because, obviously, they would occasionally say: 'well, last week, last time you had a meeting, you said such-and-such. Has that happened?' But not very often! That was when we used to flounder, again, because of these meetings. We didn't know what we had to say for the first couple...

Audrey: We asked and asked and asked for the meeting minutes, and we never got a thing. And so did other people in the meetings ask: 'I haven't done my minutes yet. I haven't done my minutes yet. Oh, haven't yet.' That's all we got.

Despite Grant and Audrey's concern over the lack of minutes from CAF meetings, they worked with, and did not challenge, the underlying assumption that the responsibility for minutes; their preparation and distribution, lay with the professionals. Control over records was an element of official control in all cases. The practitioners are the carriers of the CAF process, from CAF episode to CAF episode, from case to case. As street level bureaucrats in public services generally do, they have adapted and learned, both individually and as a group, how to navigate and operationalise policy and process in their local sphere (Lipski 1980; Newman and Clarke 2009). Service users are initiated into a set of relationships already formed, and invoking power and authority they are likely to be familiar with in other settings.

Some respondents were not used to dealing with paperwork and made little use of it in their personal management of their CAF involvement:

There is paperwork, possibly, but I if you ask me whether I ever signed anything I couldn't tell you. I'm the type of person I can't remember what I had for breakfast yesterday. Em, but I never, I've seen notes and we've seen things and obviously I will get paperwork through eventually now it's [the CAF] closed. I've

had paperwork in the past before. I've had pieces of paper.
(Alice, Case 8)

Alice may not have been keen on paperwork, but most other respondents found there was a need to develop some kind of administrative system of record keeping and, as we saw in the case of Grant and Audrey above, for some the absence of a detailed record was a bone of contention. Alice's partner Reg had a different view of the paperwork:

It's so easy to deal with, I thought with the CAF structure, if the school are nagging about something, then we say, okay, let's have a CAF and we can lay it all bare, and discuss it all, and it's probably an easier way of doing it, rather than trying to discuss it with the teacher. The school gets involved, and it's a chance, but it's all documented as well, by other people, so if there's any... [overtalking] there's no mix up or anything, because it's all there, and people are all taking notes and everything, everything is just there.

Reg and Alice were happy for others to take notes and keep track. But Reg saw the CAF as essentially defined by the multi-agency meeting, and, in common with other parents in the data, he saw its potential to achieve a certain accountability where 'other people', 'rather than trying to discuss it with a teacher', will take notes and 'lay it all bare'. There is also a subtext about finding support to help crack the power the school hold, and avoid another 'mix up'. There was often a sense in the service users' accounts of the potential resource they can find in the CAF for, tentatively perhaps in Reg's narrative, exercising greater control over the construction of narratives and plans. For Reg, another door opened through the scrutiny of the meeting, whether the recording was fully exploited or not.

Urek (2005) writes that the power of the written record is performative. The finely worded report is worthless in the drawer. The minute of a meeting informs and prepares, allows preparatory activity in advance of a meeting and brings accountability afterwards. The person preparing the minute is in a powerful position to frame events in particular ways. Parents have few such props to bring with them to CAF. We saw in the last chapter how Maggie and Ged regarded the notebooks of the practitioners as important, and started to bring their own notebooks and lists along to the meeting, to challenge practitioners. So, for some respondents there was a need to make the paper work for them too, and use it in accordance with the practice of professionals to prepare, to confirm, and hold to account.

The lead professional is the practitioner who would keep the record of the meetings, and fill in assessment forms and action plans with families. Respondents had little awareness of the significance of the CAF form, which should from the outset, according to the official guidelines, be constructed in partnership and be firmly child centred (CWDC 2009c). This document, in the official guidance, would give an initial agreed joint assessment of children and young people's needs and circumstances, including any issues in their care, and crucially, be centred on young people and their carers' own perceptions and understandings of these elements. The form could then potentially be a central performer in the developing process of partnership. Even so, it hardly figured in parents' talk, and when it did, it was as a consequence of the interviewer raising it. Although it is clear that the importance of records and paperwork, for accountability and clarification within the CAF, was at times brought out in the parents' talk around how CAF worked, the potential for service users to become fully engaged here seems undermined. This is first, because of their relative unpreparedness in contrast to trained professionals, and second, by what seems like a lack of emphasis or focus in most cases,

at the very outset, on the methodical engagement of service users in the preparation of the CAF assessment document.

Throughout the CAF data we are, however, reminded that the skills required for participation should not be underestimated, and the learning process may be more difficult for some, than for others. Hall, Slembrouck and Sarangi (2006) employ the term 'institutional literacy' to encapsulate the capacity to work with institutional practices in terms of working with confidentiality and institutional modes of communication. These represent skills in exploiting partnership opportunities. Perhaps what is missing here is a critical framework deconstructing this cooperatively framed notion of partnership and considering the skills of resistance required, including how to critically assess information and how to oppose, to argue and move towards partnership, from a position of some confidence and authority.

In chapter 6, I noted that the children and young people were even more poorly equipped to participate than adult service users, and there is evidence that both practitioners and parents colluded in minimising their participation. This did not mean that the adults had no regard for young people and did not seek to pursue what they judged as the young people's interests. Adults giving accounts of meetings, for instance, might feel they were protecting children and young people from harm in limiting their involvement, and this perspective was indeed offered by more than one parent. Parents invoked the model of the child as a 'becoming' adult, with less than adult interactional and moral competence. In CAF guidance, as in and the UN Convention on the Rights of Children there is no determination of what age, or level of maturity, adults need to act for children, forming a view of their 'best interests' (Thomas and O'Kane 1998). To an extent the adults, as practitioners and service users, may share these views. At least, there was no indication of differences in viewpoints on children and young people's participation between parents and practitioners.

When considering the CAF as a technology of governance, we have to bear in mind that it is both practitioners and service users who are subject to the technology. However, practitioners have an advantage, they are trained in skills and knowledge, and have experience of working with many service users. They also have experience developing local resistances and working practices to manage the work with their managers in the organisation. Within the technology of governance there is always opportunity. As the analysis develops in each of the sections in this chapter, I will show how service users manage to assemble and develop knowledge and skills, to begin to work with the CAF process, and to challenge and develop strategies in pursuit of their goals.

7:2 Gathering knowledge and valuing experience

Some respondents found they needed to seek other options from those that were on offer. They felt they needed to know who the experts were, they needed to know the ropes around the educational, health and social service support agencies, and find the keys to unlock other services they felt may help them. In the CAF study, the experiences of other service users were valued highly as a source of knowledge, skills and often values, as well. The service users in my study often used the Internet to seek answers and network with other parents. Here they made new relationships and joined informal and formal support networks, when they could find them. Previous research has noted how often service users indicate that family are the first port of call, and a preferred source of support, when it is needed (Quinton 2004). The CAF respondents did often cite the support of friends and family, giving support in attending meetings or emotional support at home between couples or extended family, but voluntary sector carer support groups were more frequently cited, offering a more specialised knowledge base, and a source of strategic and tactical advice. Here, Grant and

Audrey Brown (Case 11) talk about how other people, who shared their experiences, had been helpful as sources of information:

Grant: But that's where most of our information has come from.

Audrey: Yes.

Grant: It's not from organisations, government organisations or council.

Audrey: No. No. No.

Grant: It's word of mouth and other people who've gone through the same thing, and them trying to help you. I mean, from that [carers network] one, that's where we got in touch with the [Autism] Society, wasn't it?

And Maggie (Case 3) commented:

...we found another mum who , her little boy went to [a school] he's autistic and he does [another group],but she put us on a Facebook group and it's they are the ones, it's other mums who have been through it that'll help you, 'have you tried this, the educational advisory service, have you tried [the parent advisory service]? They can help, they are based in [town]'. And its other mums that you get on and you get the help.

Particularly where parents were contesting practitioners' assessments, they were drawn into a highly complex, and at times clearly highly emotive, arena. Neil Duncan (2003) carried out a qualitative study of parents of young people who had a statement of special educational needs (SEN) in 4 different local education authorities in the Midlands of England. Rather than friends and family or statutory organisations, he found a greater reliance on voluntary

sector service user and carer associations, which parents used to seek advice and support in working with agencies, and seeking to meet their children's needs. Duncan (2003) asked parents of children and young people to compare the experience of working with the statementing process to other life events, and found that the stress and emotional upset associated with statementing commonly rated it as amongst the hardest and most demanding undertakings families had experienced.

Some of the CAF study parents pursued knowledge around legislation, and independent support and advice. In such accounts, the business of the CAF appeared very demanding for parents, but this was also where they most clearly developed a sense of their own power and agency. In these cases, the assemblage of agencies and knowledge brought to bear became more elaborate and more formalized in terms of assessment protocols and legislative input, rights and responsibilities. At times, the relationships between service users and agencies began to fragment, and alliances became unstable. There was evidence in some narratives of disagreements between agencies, alliances between service users and particular agencies against others, frustration, open conflict, and respondents reported use of emotive language at meetings.

...they [the educational psychologist] couldn't actually do a statement at the time, because Derek wasn't at the school. So we were in a bit of a grey area, because he didn't go, there was no evidence as to why he couldn't cope with it or what his needs were, but that they would keep an eye on that and look into things. The SENCO [special educational needs coordinator] at [School] should have contacted Autism [agency] and was told to, but didn't. I went knocking on their door. I contacted Autism [agency] and required them at the meeting, from which I left before everybody else after, having a bit of a shout, because Autism [agency] had said, we, when Derek comes into school, we can see him, and that's what we do, we come and help them

in school. I said, but he's not in school, he's at home. Well, we don't see children at home. So who's going to see Derek? I had a go at the SENCO about something, I had a good old shout and just left, and I don't think I went to the next meeting. (Debbie, Case 5)

What made sense to agencies was often incomprehensible and frustrating for parents. Debbie felt stuck because her son would not attend school and was becoming violent towards her at home. She gave up her job and sought personal help for depression. All the agencies involved with educational assessment operated only by school visiting. Only after extended pressure, and an alliance with an educational welfare officer, did Debbie later get someone to come out to see her son at home, and begin to assess him.

In a similar example, Grant and Audrey (Case 11) took advice from a carer's group about legislated rights, and began to get more demanding:

Grant: Yes, we threatened to take them to court if they didn't sort this out.

Interviewer: In the CAF meeting?

Grant: Yes. Because then it's down on record, isn't it? So, if you don't get this sorted out and getting the education she deserves, then, more or less her [Audrey] exact words, then we're going to take you to court. Because Audrey literally said... well, I said to the school: 'can you cope with her educational needs?' And they said: 'yes, we think so'. I said: 'well, can you actually cope with her or not?' So there was quite a lot of things said in that meeting, probably that we should have said years ago. Because, again, us being us, we don't like arguing and shouting and, well, I certainly don't. And we were slightly... you can't really... you rely on people doing their jobs, don't you? I mean, there's that

many people involved. You would have thought somebody, certainly in the initial stages, would have done something.

After Heather was assessed for the second time, and an educational statement was prepared (SEN), there was a further meeting where the allocation of funding for the plan was to be discussed, and Grant and Audrey had prepared themselves, and had invited a senior member of the assessment team to attend:

Audrey: So went into this meeting. Grant had highlighted everything he wanted to say. And he went through it. But the SENCO, Mrs Palmer, sat there like this [makes an unhappy face] throughout the whole thing. We've got the headmaster sitting there and just staring at her, giving her evils all the way through.

Interviewer: At the SENCO?

Audrey: At the, at, yes. All the way through the meeting.

Grant: During the CAF meeting, yes.

Audrey: Because, like I say, they hadn't told each other anything. What had happened when we'd gone in that time to complain, we told him [headmaster] what was going to be happening in his school, and he had no knowledge of it whatsoever. And what he said was, all he, in his mind, all he'd got, he'd been given a pot of money to do whatever he wanted with. And, because I said to him, I want to know what Heather's money has been spend on. And then he said, well, excuse me, we don't have to, we don't have to tell you that.

Grant: We can't give you that.

Audrey: And the lady from the statementing team said, well, actually, you do.

Grant: Said, oh, well, actually, you do.

Interviewer: You do.

Audrey: And actually, I'd like to see a copy as well, please.

Grant: Yes. Again, that was word of mouth. Ask for...

Audrey: Because somebody had told me then, you see, next meeting you go, ask for a breakdown of blah, blah, blah, whatever it's called.

Grant: Yes.

Audrey: So that shocked him. So it made him give the SENCO more evils. And we're like...[amazed], and she said, 'I'm so sorry' I said, I don't want sorry. I am sick of sorry. I want my daughter to get an education.

In the above example Audrey gives an account of the lack of clarity and communication within the school, and the possibility of an alliance between the parents and another agency, in challenging school authority and control, by the demand for budgetary accountability. Tensions were running high and people were upset. The representative of the educational statementing team supported Grant and Audrey in demanding to see how the money allocated to the school, for meeting Heather's assessed needs, had been used. They had already discovered at a previous meeting that the headteacher seemed unaware of what was happening in respect of their daughter and the educational statement.

Perhaps in anticipation of many of these issues, national guidance for the preparation of educational statements stipulates local authorities should provide parent advice agencies. Accordingly, the local authority was running an agency that operated as an advisory group for parents in the area. These practitioners were generally well praised by respondents, for their advice regarding procedure and legislation, but more than that, as they would attend CAF meetings to support parents, and often speak up to hold practitioners at the meeting to account. The quotes from three parents below illustrate this:

...because I went for help down, to [parent advisory agency], to see if I could get, what's called a statement (SEN) for Derek. She actually wrote a letter for me which I did hand deliver, and I was asked to go and see these ladies, who explained to me, the service that would have done the statement. (Debbie, Case 5)

They are kind of like a legal counsel would be if you were arrested and they work on your behalf. They just sit there quiet until they think something been said and they think that's not right and they say you [practitioner] need to stop because you can't say that. (Ged, Case 3)

They're run by the council. They have a professional service they offer, and, again, they were quite good. They always took notes for us and told us what we could ask and what we couldn't ask, a few rights. But, again, they... I suppose they're a bit like solicitors. They don't give you answers unless you ask the particular question. (Grant, Case 11)

There is a forensic legal quality to the description of proceedings in these accounts. And, as was noted earlier, the record keeping

was viewed as a specialised or skilled function which parents happily devolved to advisory agencies.

Generally, as indicated for instance by Grant above, those respondents, who were in contention with agencies in the CAF process, cited other service users and third sector voluntary groups as the most reliable sources. Below, Grant talks about a regular carer's support group Audrey attended:

It probably would have been word of mouth or something. So they were quite good. They gave lots of practical advice. I think that's the way to describe them. Because it was, they knew the parents who'd gone through the same thing, and they were giving us their... 'you need to ask them this. You need to ask them again', very disjointed, the way people's memories work, and..., but we were able to take that and then exploit it further.

So this activity was very much about finding out how to get things done, how the system worked, and how to make things happen. These examples shows how vital it could be to find that support and information, particularly regarding educational assessment and planning, where the field of responsible agencies is complex, and there are legislative provisions, which underpin financial and other arrangements for service provision. As well as gathering useful knowledge from trusted sources of valued experience, there was a theme of personal growth and change, associated with the challenges of managing involvement with agencies and practitioners in CAF. In the following section I will show how this was drawn out in the accounts of some parents.

7:3 Style and learning to be assertive

Some parents discussed the process of personal change they underwent in order to make progress. Some parents spoke well of practitioner referrals to resources, like Triple P, a parenting course where they met other parents. Here they talked of developing understanding and strategies that they felt were of use in managing their children, or even just how they enjoyed an opportunity for sharing with others in a similar situation. Some respondents, like Audrey (Case 11), discussed the process of their self-development in order to fulfil their role in working with practitioners and other agencies. Audrey describes how contact with other service users could be inspiring, and as she describes it, empowering:

And I went to this meeting, and they said, you and your husband are the only people in this world that can stick up for your child. You're the only ones. Forget everybody else. What are they going to do? Will they really put you in prison? [for their daughter's non attendance at school] No they don't, because if they go to court, who's going to look the stupid one? If they try and fine you, you can go to court. Who's going to look the stupid one at the end of the day? And I have said to Grant when I came back, I said, Grant, I said, I feel a bit empowered. She has, she only, has only got us. And we kept that in our head, didn't we?

Those respondents who were not comfortable with the assessments of their children's needs, made by the initial CAF agencies, like Ged and Maggie, Audrey and Grant, and Debbie Parks, as I showed above, sought out a network of other agencies and individuals who could help them develop their understanding of policies, procedures and legal

matters, particularly in respect of Special Educational Needs (SEN) statements.

However, in addition to acquiring knowledge, there was the theme of how to challenge professionals effectively in order to achieve parental objectives. This was the case with Grant and Audrey (Case 11), who narrated their personal development through their experiences. They provided a powerful account of despair, depression, loss of employment, and learning to 'toughen up,' as they tried to deal with their daughter's needs.

Audrey: And people kept telling us to toughen up.

Grant: Yes. But I was, I was pretty...

Audrey: Toughen up and tell them what you think.

Grant: Yes, I have always been of the idea that if you make waves things don't always happen. I know, I know it's probably a bit naïve. But I like... because I know the way things work in schools and... well, the way the [former place of work] worked, anyway. And I didn't want to put anybody's back up and make it worse for Heather. That's what I was thinking about all the time.

Much of this adversarial struggle in the CAF was around meeting the needs of young people where autism was at least part of the narrative, even if there was no diagnosis. There were four families where the narratives were dominated by this kind of struggle in meetings over needs and resources. Grant and Audrey's daughter, Heather, was diagnosed as on the autism spectrum after 3 assessments, but for a long time, in her parents' account, they felt that her refusal to attend school was placed at their door and they felt they were critiqued as being soft and ineffectual as parents. For those parents dealing with issues around autism, the interviews often gave an account of a

struggle to have their own assessment taken seriously, and that poor or ineffective parenting was blamed for existing problems. Audrey here reflects on the school liaison worker, who came to discuss Heather's refusal to attend school:

They just blamed us, because we were too nice. What are we supposed to do there? I said, 'okay, we don't hit our children'.

When they began to seek advice and attend service user support groups, they faced this critique again, but from 'the other side'. Grant explains:

No, you've got to fight to make sure they do it. And that's what everybody had told us, and what everybody told Audrey in this [support] group. She said, you've got to fight for it. You've got to fight for it. But until you actually realise that and see that you've got to, you don't realise how much effort you've got to put in just to push people to do... it doesn't come naturally to us to push against the system. But it's a lesson I've learned, because I'll never not do it again. I think, from now on, I'll push.

For Grant and Audrey, this appeared to go against the grain, but nevertheless, there was a sense from these parents that this was what was required, to be prepared to fight your corner. A review of an Audit Commission survey of SEN provision in 2002 found the high level of negative SEN experiences, described by carers, remarkable. The review found that there were high levels of stress associated with the process, and the way parents 'had to fight' to have their children's needs recognised (Pinney 2003). In Cleaver and Freeman's study of parental perspectives in cases of suspected child abuse, they state 'effective belligerence is a professional skill professionally learned' (Cleaver and Freeman 1995 p:85). They found that parents sometimes believed that to be aggressively assertive was a risky strategy, that

may work against them. Passivity, on the other hand, was seen as expected, and a safer option.

In contrast, some parents in this study spoke about learning to oppose effectively within the multi-agency CAF forum, and how they worked to develop a more assertive disposition. Maggie Hughes (Case 3) discussed how attendance at a health centre 'emotional wellbeing' clinic highlighted for her some of the ways she needed to work on her self control and communication skills, in order to manage the CAF work with professional agencies:

Yeah, I did one to one counseling sessions and I did emotional wellbeing, that's in [clinic] but you get help from them and it was like a back to basics course on how to stay calm in a situation and how to use the 'I' statements and ... that's worked a lot, that's helped a lot because instead of picking up the phone and going blah blah blah down the phone I'm, 'and I'd like to arrange a meeting with whoever and I can go in say, 'No, this is how it affects us'.

Maggie felt that emotional control was crucial, and being assertive meant getting to grips with her tendency to lose her temper and lose the argument. She found that developing a measured and controlled response was more effective. However, when some respondents perceived they were assessed as somehow 'at fault' with respect to meeting their children's needs, they followed a similar path by pursuing more formal psychological assessments, and formal statements of educational need, while they felt practitioners appeared to drag their heels in offering access to specialised support services.

7:4 Bad Parents

The problem seems to be that, while child welfare intervention is propagated on the needs of the child, the

parent experiences the attribution of responsibility as inevitably pointed at him/herself. (Hall *et al.* 2006 p. 119)

It is an intrinsic part of the social work assessment protocols across the board to see parenting as a central plank of children's welfare. It is important to consider how parents and practitioners do this kind of work together, particularly where we recognise the complexity of multi-agency settings, and the inevitable power imbalances and family support issues involved.

In some cases in my CAF study, respondents acknowledged that they required support with parenting skills and knowledge. Often they had approached agencies, asking for help and support at an earlier stage. In those cases, there were often favourable reviews of the Triple P parenting course, and other forms of family support from agencies, such as Home Start, or individual practitioners, such as family support workers or educational welfare officers.

Yes, Jackie (family support worker) is good because she took me to that parenting class, she took me, because she knew I used to panic, you know, with driving, there were some roads I wouldn't go on. I'll go on them now, but at that particular time I didn't, and Jackie took me, she came out and she spoke to Sandra and Keith. And this is from the very beginning, there was Jen, who was, oh, who did Jen work for, she used to come out, she would come out and, likes of when my electricity meter was broke, it just run, it wouldn't run out at all, so she phoned up the electricity company for me, to get them to come out and fix the meter, things like that, she would help me, things like that. She helped me get this house. (Marie, Case 7)

Well, for one, she came every week. It, I mean, it took a long time at the start for Derek to not be sat on a chair, hiding behind a cushion. But Laura (family support worker) formed a

good relationship with Derek and she had a child with autism so, you know, she could relate to things, so I felt at ease with her and she could help me and help Derek. (Debbie, Case 5)

It does, it makes you feel a bit more comfortable. I was always feeling as if I was a failed parent at first. I really was low at heart coming out and saying that. But then Shirley (family support worker) said, 'No you're not.' It really lifted me up. Said, 'look we are going to sort this out.' She did. Plus then I went to Triple P and I learned loads from that. (Sharon, Case 10).

These narratives are illustrations of how respondents expressed appreciation for particular practitioners, and acknowledged need for both practical and emotional forms of support. The last two quotes, from Debbie and Sharon, reveal some of the vulnerability these parents felt in acknowledging a need for help to practitioners who were strangers. Debbie's citing of her family support worker's own experience with autism reflects the high value placed on the personal experience of support professionals.

However, a high proportion of parents reported a parental critique, in particular from schools early on in the CAF episode, and we have seen examples of this throughout this chapter and the last. We have also seen how, in some cases, respondents reacted by seeking further expert assessments, and in particular, looked for diagnoses of autistic spectrum and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). There is then a need to consider whether the framing of work with parents in this setting can be a driver for recourse to neurological or neuro-developmental assessment.

For example, the Browns (Case 11) and the Hughes (Case 3), Marie Holmes (Case 7), Carol Rymen (Case 9), Debbie Parks (Case 5) and Liz Black (Case 12), were all seeking psychological assessment to establish aetiology for children's behaviour problems. Their early

experiences with assessment from practitioners led them to feel that poor parenting was being blamed for the difficulties with their children. In seeking further expert assessments of their children's needs, they also sought to overturn this verdict, often with the support of some practitioners, but often without practitioner support, at least initially. In the Brown's case, there were repeated assessments until a successful diagnosis of autism was achieved. As long as the CAF appeared to be attributing the responsibility to poor parenting, support for the child and the parents, as reported by all, was minimal and very much under-resourced, even though the problems amounted to a significant degree of distress to child and family. When a formal diagnosis is made, more resources may be available, such as, for example, the employment of teaching assistants and special school provision, although research tends to suggest the management of SEN support subsequently is also stressful (Lewis and Campbell, 2007). In this sense we can see the framing of the child and family difficulties is achieved through an expert discourse, as found by White (2002) in paediatric settings, where there can often be an 'either or' choice between inadequate parenting and a psychiatric or psychological aetiology established through expert assessment. The CAF assembles the regulatory technology of governance through the addition of powerful psychological expertise in the normalisation of family and child relations and mental health (Rose 1989). This expertise is rendered perhaps all the more powerful by being so difficult to access, through professional gatekeepers, and remote from the actual multi-agency meetings of the CAF, which these experts rarely attended in person.

However, the data here shows how it is by no means necessarily practitioners who drew these agencies into the frame. Parents often pursued expert psychological assessment in the face of what they felt was inertia from practitioner agencies. With the framing of children's needs assessment through the binary of inadequate parenting on the one hand, and neurological or neuro-developmental disorder on the

other, it is easy to see how parents would feel personally vulnerable in terms of their identity as caring, dutiful and adequate parents, and why neurological epidemiology could be both repellent and attractive at the same time. When parental ability was intrinsic to the problem identification, then this was perceived on the part of service users as an attack on the self. It was shown, in the last chapter, how Maggie Hughes (Case 3) 'came home and sobbed' after her first CAF meeting, and vowed never to let it happen again: 'it's anger that they made me feel like a bad mum and a bad dad cos we're not.'

In the data we have seen above, there is a strong sense of how service users can feel their identity as parents profoundly challenged in their relations with practitioners. Respondents sense of themselves, certainly as parents and carers, is bound up in the interactions they have with both practitioners and other service users or carer groups (Hall *et al.*, 2006; Urek, 2005). This underlines for Hall *et al.* (2006) that 'clienthood' is a relational form of self or identity and people's conception of themselves is, at least in part, a product of those whom they are interacting with in this work with practitioners. It is often then a raw experience, feeling deeply personal. Practitioners, too, may experience an identity deeply bound up in the role of practitioner, both in terms of professional knowledge and values. However, they may also, in their official capacity and training, their greater experience and familiarity with the setting, and their official authority, have a greater command of both process and the defence of their subjectivity.

In the above discussion, I have quoted references to court by Grant and Audrey in the interview data above, and referenced Ged's analogy between parental advisors and legal counsel that indicates a strong sense of service user powerlessness at times in the face of practitioners' power. Juhilla, drawing on Goffman (Goffman, 1963) discusses the role of stigma in an analysis of talk between professionals and service users (Juhila, 2003). She observes speech construction and language practices, which effect defensive narrative

work countering potential stigma and unsavoury labelling as bad parent or bad service user. However, there may be other forms of defensive work undertaken by service users as they seek to engage with expert assessment discourses.

Those service users who described feeling under pressure from practitioners' constructions of them as inadequate, in some cases went on to develop their 'institutional literacy,' and make concerted efforts to develop recourse to alternative assessments, and find alternative interpretations of their child's needs or behaviours, and their own role vis a vis these. In the CAF data we see recourse both to alternative psychological assessment as a higher authority and the development of legislative and procedural savvy to exert control in the CAF meeting. Some quotes above used a procedural court metaphor for CAF meetings, and below, Ged and Maggie invoke the Headmaster's study as an alternative analogy:

Maggie: They sit at this side altogether, and you as parents sit here. It is very daunting.

Ged: Like the headmaster's office.

Maggie: It is like being a child. And they've all got what they think you should be doing and they might all differ or they might all agree.

There are important differences between the two settings of 'the court' and the 'headmaster's study'. The latter is not a democratic institution. Discussions with children and young people, in chapter 6, illustrated how, as Jenks and Wyness conclude, young people know what model of childhood is invoked by the headmaster's study, and the authority relations embedded in this space (Jenks, 2005; Wyness, 2011). Adults, too, appreciate the significance of this space, and I showed how some respondents experienced the meetings in schools. Resistance to this

scenario required personal assertiveness and empowerment for service users that are not necessarily the same as the assemblages of counter challenge and accountability associated with the courtroom metaphor. In the courtroom, at least, there can be recourse to professional representation, recourse to law, and formal records for accountability. We saw earlier in this chapter how both Grant and Ged had involved the parent advice group in their CAF, and ascribed them a court room role as 'a kind of legal counsel', 'a bit like solicitors', 'told us what we could ask and couldn't ask, a few rights'. The courtroom reference can, in the sense of these extracts, be taken as a mode of resistance as well as persecution. It can be a metaphor indicating a solution for service users feeling under pressure at meetings as well as an expression of powerlessness and victimhood.

7:5 Conclusion

This chapter has shown how the parents in this study had a diverse range of experiences of, and responses towards their engagement with the CAF process. I have examined how the interaction between parents and practitioners is mediated by established administrative practices and 'punctuated' by the solid forms of official discourse, such as assessment documents, but that parents exert little control there. Parents experienced the administrative practices of CAF as challenging, and developed strategies to advance their agency and effectiveness in this area. They were often disadvantaged by lack of initial skills, knowledge and confidence, and also by a default administrative control of the process by practitioners.

I have discussed how parents gathered information and knowledge, and how the experiences shared by other service users was valued highly, while official sources were often judged as least adequate. The support from family and friends played an important

role, but ultimately more specialised and detailed consolidation of service users' experience and knowledge was sought out from carers' groups and voluntary associations. In addition to this acquisition of knowledge, personal attributes such as confidence, assertiveness and 'institutional literacy' were also outlined in some accounts as important parts of the effective service users' assemblage. This reflective engagement of the self by service users in meeting the challenges of involvement, led to significant re-evaluation and personal change by some of the participants, seen as necessary to be able to be proactive and challenge effectively.

There is a consideration of power in this analysis, and I have discussed how power has to be perceived as working in subtle ways rather than as simply top down, wholly structural or institutional. In this Foucauldian model of governmentality, the street-level bureaucrat and the service user are using their different opportunities, resources and abilities to exercise agency, and pursue goals within the network of actors they find themselves in. Such a model can better explain the potentially contradictory role of the state. For example, the parent advisory service referred to by several respondents is a provision demanded by a national government code of practice for special educational needs provision (DfES 2001). One part of the state offers a balance or a resource, albeit limited by a statute, which some parents found could be used to resist or challenge local educational officials who are also part of the state.

Earlier, I invoked Prout and Lee's exploration of the notion of the assemblage in the construction of models of childhood (Lee 2001; Prout 2005). Newman and Clarke (2009) also develop this term as offering a basis for a nuanced conception of the essentially heterogeneous and unstable coming together of discourses and practices in the welfare arena, and the CAF lends itself to this kind of interpretation. In this context, the implication is not that all players have an equally weighted set of resources to bring to the table, or

indeed, that disadvantage or exclusion does not feature for particular groups, but I have argued that it is important to look at what constellation of opportunities and restraints may adhere in this network, and what kind of assemblage is featured in the practice of service users as actors. In this respect, the data shows how, where service users rise to the challenge, they assemble resources largely from the unofficial sector of support groups and informal contacts. These knowledge practices alone suggest a significant critique of the partnership agenda in the format as found. For Beresford and Croft, the integration of service users' knowledge with social work knowledge itself forms a long term goal for the participative agenda (Beresford and Croft 2001).

In chapter 5, I have shown how for children and young people there is exclusion from the CAF process much of the time. In this chapter, I have shown how being an effective partner with practitioner agencies in CAF requires assembling a formidable range of knowledge and skills, especially where there are contested assessments of family functioning and young people's needs. Service user adults could find their identity as caring and effective parents undermined and challenged in a group setting. Mounting a defence and marshalling personal resources can be a bewildering and upsetting experience. At times, the defence of their own parenting forced participants to seek formal psychological or neurological diagnoses for problems faced in caring for their children. This approach to family support can be adversarial, and can work against the involvement of young people in many cases. In this light, leaving young people and children out of the CAF meetings was at times seen as an act of care on the part of parents. These conclusions suggest there is still much to be learned from the study of welfare practices, and much to consider in providing a space where young people and their parents' voices can participate in effective partnerships with professionals.

In the concluding chapter 8, I explore and analyse these themes, and those that arose in the preceding chapters, further.

Chapter 8 – Conclusion

This thesis has combined approaches to thinking about human agency from the sociology of childhood, actor-network theory and governmentality, to explore service user participation in the multi-agency setting of the CAF. This concluding chapter draws together the various strands of discussion and findings from the theoretical and empirical research, and considers the value of the adopted approach. I begin with a review of the arguments and concerns of the thesis, developed in chapters 1 and 2, where the CAF is introduced, and human agency and participation are theorised. This is followed by an overview of the research design and process, presented in chapters 3 and 4. Next, I return to the analysis of the empirical data from the young people and the parents. This involves a review of the empirical findings, introduced in chapters 5, 6 and 7, with a development of my analysis. These findings draw attention to important issues in respect of partnership working in multi-agency settings, including the participation of children and young people. The research undertaken for this thesis raises issues for empowering partnership and participation and offers a conceptual and empirical understanding of agency and working together in such multi-agency settings. It is important for the realisation of more participative arrangements between service users and professional agencies that the significant barriers to successful and confident partnerships described here are understood, acted upon, and brought into policy and practice. Accordingly I have made recommendations for policy and practice at the end of this chapter.

8:1 Contextualising CAF

The first chapter introduced the CAF and contextualised its roots in social policy initiatives using a governmentality framework. I argued that the role of governmentality in producing particular subjectivities should not be taken as a wholly determining production of docile individuals. Following Rose (1989), I have sought to theorise and explore the existence of an active human agency within a nexus of discourses of the modern citizen that frame liberal freedoms. The attempts of national and local strategic authorities to 'punctuate' and give 'stability' and 'durability' to practices, using tools and technologies of governance, contextualises the agency of human actors, including child welfare practitioners, in adapting and accommodating, innovations. In the innovation of national programmes, such as CAF, I discussed how the mediation of non-human actors forms a part of the attempt to establish durable and stable working practices. This work also explores the relationship between the non-human and the establishment, and prescription, of professional expertise. The fieldwork evidence from parents and young people suggested that they had little awareness of these formal aspects of CAF, relating to the prescriptive CAF assessment forms from the national CAF. In this sense, as I discuss below, the role of non-human agencies was only partially discerned in this study, although the findings do show how there is further potential for exploring the role of the non-human in CAF, particularly by focusing on the domain of professional practices. In chapter 1, I discussed the relevance of existing CAF research, which explores the relationship between new technologies and new information regimes underlying shifts in the management of social work since the 1990s (Garrett, 2005; Parton, 2008; White, Hall and Peckover, 2009; White, Wastell, Broadhurst, and Hall, 2010; Pithouse, Hall, Peckover and White, 2009).

For the parents and young people interviewed, the CAF was embodied in the practitioners and the CAF meeting. It was here that agencies met and decisions were made. The discourses around social spaces and expertise were evidenced more clearly in the fieldwork data with service users, and these ideas are introduced in chapter 1. I address this further below. The critique of parenting and the use of specialist psychological expertise emerged as a significant element in most of the user accounts of CAF. Here, as I discuss further below, the governance of parenting is a strong theme and it proved difficult for service users to challenge this expertise. These arrangements in CAF supported an interpretation of it as a technology of governance, which was a difficult experience for service users, but did not go unchallenged. However, as I showed in chapters 6 and 7, in order to challenge CAF's technology of governance, service users were required to assemble knowledge and personal skills, extending their agency, and engaging with the CAF process in an assertive way. The fieldwork data did demonstrate the utility of the actor-network approach to assembling actors in networks of agency in this respect.

The participation literature (Shier & Train 2001; Sinclair 2004; Thomas 2002; Tisdall et al. 2014; Davies et al. 2014; Carr 2007; Carey 2010) discusses participation as a democratic right, as a mode of improving services, and as a process offering personal development. The findings in the fieldwork offered insight into how service users responded to participation in all three of these domains. What was perhaps most notable was the extent to which young people did not actively participate in the process, and I return to this below. Parents, on the other hand, had a stronger sense of their right to participate, and indeed, most took part in the research to offer their insight with a view to improving CAF for others who may follow them. The experiences of service users showed how an assertive participation could require a determined struggle in some cases. The role is a demanding one, and participation produced a diverse set of responses

and strategies from service users, sometimes supported by practitioners, and at other times not. In some cases service users found that support elsewhere, through service users' networks and also through information and advocacy services provided by the local authority. I expand on these themes further below, but firstly, I will review the fieldwork process and highlight some issues in the discussion of data that remain outstanding.

8:2 Research design and the sample

In chapter 3, the research design was set out and the empirical research process discussed. The research questions that informed the research design with service user families were open-ended questions, designed to explore the unknown experiences of service users and their sense of agency in the CAF process. As a vehicle to inform the semi-structured interview schedules and allow respondents to present their own understandings and narratives, the research questions worked well and the interviews provided rich data. The exception was research question 3, which focussed on the idea that traditional professional specialisms had extended their remit in the holistic assessment process underpinning the CAF. This was the only question that I felt did not produce a particular resonance with respondents. It was also the question that most directly linked to the existing research literature on CAF, which has focused on practitioners.

One result of having relatively open questions about experience, and thus focusing on what issues were directly raised by service users in the interviews, is that there are issues that may appear conspicuous by their absence. In this study, the two issues that did not feature prominently in service users concerns were gender and poverty. One exception is the case of John (Case 4), who made some points concerning his perception of the gendered qualities of practice from practitioners. The couples who took part in joint interviews focussed on

issues around mutual support in their relationship. In those cases where husbands or male partners did not take part, the mothers - Debbie (Case 5), Sharon (Case 10), and Pam (Case 2) - excused their partners either on ground of employment, meaning they had no time, or in addition, that the CAF was their responsibility and they would rather deal with the interview as they had with other CAF business. I acknowledge that those issues could be explored further, but in my analyses, I have prioritised the issues raised by service users themselves. While gender could be explored as a future more focussed research topic, with both adults and young people, I did not feel my interviews had produced enough insight to focus more on this issue. Similarly, poverty and more resource-focussed issues were not raised by respondents themselves. In a larger sample, with more demographic variability, other issues may have come to the fore, but I took a methodological decision to stick with a service-user led prioritisation of the issues in working with practitioners. My analyses include themes on the experience of working with organisations and practitioners in the public sphere, and on becoming a service user in the CAF process.

Overall, I judge the research fieldwork a success on the basis of the interview data that was gathered, and the richness of the data in terms of the experience and narratives from service users. This is despite substantial challenges in accessing the research population. This includes the fact that the first local authority approached turned the research down after lengthy negotiations, whilst eventual participant recruitment relied on layers of gatekeepers, thus making recruitment time-consuming. I do think I adopted the best access strategy by going to local practitioner meetings to recruit from practitioners directly. Possibly a more active facilitation of the research by senior managers might have moved things along more quickly. For the next section of this concluding discussion, I move on to consider

the empirical findings and analyses of the interview data, presented in chapters 5, 6 and 7, at some length.

8:3 Voice and participation of children and young people in CAF

The research findings challenged the participative agenda of the CAF process. The seven young people who were interviewed generated a variety of views and experiences that were in keeping with their unique circumstances and attributes as young people. However, the findings underlined the lack of a real sense of engagement in the CAF process as far as these young people were concerned. The interviews with the young people suggested that children and young people's participation in CAF, was at the lower end of active participation, and is best characterised as a form of consultation (Adams 2008). Data from parents supported this conclusion. A criteria of participation in planning and decision-making, including elements of choice around how to participate could represent a progressive range, where recognition of young people's capacities and competences to participate could be balanced with an appraisal by adults, together with young people, of appropriate involvement in areas of decision-making (McLaughlin 2009). Various benefits of deepening participation by young people are documented in the literature, but my findings gave evidence that young people often felt that the purpose of attendance at meetings was essentially a disciplinary one, and they did not feel that they were able to contribute significantly to planning and decision-making. Tina (Case 6, 19yrs) and Sandra (Case 7, 15yrs) were both in agreement with plans made but did not feel able to contribute, whilst Angus (Case 4, 15yrs) and Heather (Case 11, 10yrs) resented the meetings they had attended and expressed this in strong terms. Learning democratic or interpersonal skills in the data seemed to be more about sitting quietly in the meeting, while adults made plans or held young people to account. Nevertheless, it would not be fair to say there was no

evidence of gains. Penny (Case 6, 10yrs), was enthusiastic about the Powerpoint presentation she had given about her health condition to a CAF meeting, and her sense of confidence and willingness to engage with adults on her own terms was palpable in the interview setting. However, like other parents, her mother did not think that as a rule the CAF meetings were a suitable forum for young people. With only the exception of Debbie Parks (Case 5), whose son Derek (14yrs) wanted to know what was decided but would not agree to go, parents generally did not see meetings as effective or appropriate forums for the young people to attend. In this respect parents can be seen as mobilising a childhood discourse where children are seen as vulnerable 'becomings' (Prout 2005; Lee 2001; Uprichard 2008), and as such need protection from the possible harm from participation. This, then, becomes one of the ways in which the participation of children and young people is discouraged.

Participation as a means of improving the effectiveness of assessment and making more accurate and effective plans, was confined to the engagement of parents and practitioners. The engaging of young people outside the context of meetings, generally in their own homes, was resourced in a limited way. If we consider the data further on the engagement of young people by practitioners outside meetings there was commonly a positive and willing evaluation from the young people. In some cases, such as that of Angus (Case 4, 15yrs), the benefits of a supportive, listening, relationship with a practitioner was clearly spelled out as an avenue for exploring self-knowledge and personal change. However, as I showed, generally this support was rationed and hard to come by, tending to involve third sector projects and ancillary services. Specialised psychological services were almost exclusively focussed on assessment, and rarely engaged in planning in the CAF forum or directly supporting parents and young people. In the economy of resources supporting young people's participation the eagerness with which young people described relationships with

practitioners did not appear to be matched by the resource commitment from service agencies.

As I discussed, the evidence from the young people was that they were brought into meetings generally to hold them to account over non-attendance at school. In this sense, the active agency of the young people was often presented as something that needed to be controlled. These findings can be considered in the light of the evidence raised in chapter 1, from the Family Decision Making Conference literature on advocacy and participation for young people. Meetings with adults are acknowledged as presenting a challenge for engaging young people, and successful engagement in meetings is likely to require relationship building and planning work. Skilled practitioners and family members need to give thought, together with the young person, to the purpose and design for participation in meetings (Dalrymple, 2002; Kirby and Laws, 2010). Young people may find it difficult to speak out and express opinions when adults are authority figures and many would rather not. They may be unused to being included in this way. The work of Thomas and O’Kane, on children in care review meetings, underlines these challenges, while also underlining the considerable support for meaningful participation from many young people themselves (Thomas and O’Kane, 1999; Thomas, 2002). As discussed further below, Mayall (2006) also found young people reluctant to share personal matters with professionals in the public domain. The findings showed that, across the cases, there was little evidence of sufficient investment in time and resources to engage young people as active participants in assessing their own needs and circumstances. This would require the support to take part in planning and decision-making opportunities in a carefully planned way, which could maximise their potential understanding and contribution, both to their own situation and to develop the systematic effectiveness of the CAF process itself.

In the following discussion, I will focus further on the idea of CAF as a children's space. This discussion revisits the literature on childhood and assesses some of the implications of the data in the study.

8:4 The school space, the CAF and children's space

So what kind of a childhood do we find in the data where the talk is on involvement with CAF? What kind of childhood is reflected in the narratives of this study? One way to explore this approach is to consider what I have discussed in the data relating the close contextual relationship between the school as an institution and as a relational space with the potential for children and young people's participation in the CAF. The data analysis in chapter 5 revealed how entwined school issues were with young people's involvement in CAF, and for some, the most vivid examples were about attending meetings focusing on their attendance at school. Of the 7 young people interviewed, 5 were at school. Four of them had experienced non-attendance at school as a matter directly addressed by CAF. Schools were involved in all the CAFs, and meetings were held at schools where young people understood they were involved mostly to discuss non-attendance issues. Schools, then, despite not providing the lead workers in the CAF as such, were ever present, and in the accounts of both parents and young people, as I have shown, represented a sense of power and authority.

Much of the sociological innovation in childhood studies since the 1990's have been premised upon the creative agency and the interactional competence of young people, particularly when they are engaged with their peer group (Corsaro, 2011; James and Prout, 1997). However, Hendrick (1990) discusses the appearance of the 'school child' as a historical development of a particular childhood in the 19th Century. Wyness (2011) characterises the whole concept of

mass schooling as an exercise in marginalising the individuality and agency of children. He refers to rigid lines of authority and responsibility and we can add the formal codes for dress, behaviour and discipline upheld by the legal statute that makes attendance in effect compulsory for most young people, unless local authorities are satisfied there is a viable home schooling alternative. Young people's engagement with the institutional framework around them has been explored in different educational settings, but as with the earlier quote from Jenks above, Gallagher holds that particular spaces constitute particular discourses, and in important ways, also produce particular subjectivities. He writes: 'only by producing a space for themselves can people constitute themselves as subjects' (2006: 162).

Agency and voice are linked in the physical and cultural spaces of institutional life for adults and young people. An example is provided by extracts of adult talk in chapter 7, when Maggie and Ged (Case 3), parents of Michael (10yrs), who had never attended a CAF meeting, laughed nervously about the feeling from their first CAF meeting of being back in the headmaster's office, and what this did to their sense of voice when critiqued in that context. Maggie described how difficult it was to respond and that she felt so frustrated that she cried when she got home. It is in keeping with this approach to consider both what notion of childhood emerges from the study and what contextual factors may be in operation when it comes to the voices of young people.

The notion of an essential or natural model of childhood has already been thoroughly and persuasively rejected by scholars in sociology, children and childhood studies, and human geography in recent decades (James, Jenks, and Prout, 1998; Kraftl, 2013; Lee and Motzkau, 2011; Prout, 2005; Ryan, 2011; Taylor, 2011). In Wyness's (2011) discussion of mass schooling, he introduces the notion of the social apprenticeship model of childhood. In this model, the young person is what others have termed the 'becoming adult' (Lee 2001;

Jenks 2005; Uprichard 2008). The child is the blank sheet waiting to be written on. The progression through the years of the school curriculum involves a measured and incremental progress towards an acceptable level of knowledge and skill, as assessed regularly and meticulously. Not only does the school facilitate the acquisition of empirical knowledge, but also imbues a normative and moral growth towards an acceptable, economically viable, and politically responsible individual, ready to exercise an acceptable adult agency post education. This is an environment of control, surveillance and nationally underwritten targets and curriculum.

In this model, truancy and difficult or troubled behaviour are a basic challenge. The social apprenticeship model requires the individual to conform to the normative standard and for those young people struggling to do so, or opting out of school, the challenge is clear and present for all concerned. The requirement of full-time school attendance has been prioritised by successive governments, and the target in respect of young people designated as NEET (not in employment, education or training) is a national statistic, which features in national and local government planning agendas (Simmons, 2008; Marmot, 2014). Schools are placed here in a position where the governance of young people as a group is a primary focus, and the measuring and normalizing of behaviour and presentation is the focus of operations for the surveillance and governance of pupils.

Where does this place the voice and the agency of young people and children? Sociological approaches to thinking about young people have revealed rich seams of agency amongst the peer group. Corsaro (2011) illuminates the agency of young people in peer groups through his notion of 'interpretative reproduction', where the role of young people in resisting and shaping their institutional environments has opened up new perspectives on institutional life and creativity. Here, the children's agenda is one of creative strategy and learning through interacting with peers, rather than an intra-subjective and incremental

psychological development along a known path. However, in the CAF data, there is significant evidence of young people who are finding that integrating into the mass schooling peer group is a difficult challenge, and for a variety of reasons. In chapter 5, I showed Micheal and Penny both describing difficulty in making friends at school, whilst Keith is drawn to school, but his mother cannot understand his continual issues with peers that lead to violence and rejection, time and time again. Derek eventually attended school part-time, but wanted to be walked in by the head teacher and sit in a private room. Heather was dragged screaming down the stairs to school by two support workers, and Angus spent days in his bedroom as a chronic truant for over a year. These young people have experienced a degree of alienation from peers and group agency at school. Essentially, accessing these young people's voices and understanding their sense of personal agency at school, and in relation to their peer group, is not a straightforward endeavour. My experience in trying to recruit some of these young people for the research, and the data from parents, supported that view.

Consequently, a question posed by the data is whether young people could be better engaged by a shift in perspective, which starts not so much from their relationship to a normative school career, but seeks to engage them personally in the assessment of needs outside the context of the managed school environment. In seeking to involve psychologists and mental health agencies in the multi-agency process in CAF we have seen how parents and practitioners are seeking a more personal assessment of individual needs, one couched in a nuanced understanding of each young person, their development and their thoughts and opinions. However, what is also suggested in the data is that the actual engagement with young people in this process seems restricted, and relatively short lived at best. Its main focus is the assessment and categorization of young people's troubles using external criteria. We have seen how, for the most part, psychological

agencies do not appear at CAF meetings. The focus of assessments appears to hinge around the making of diagnoses and beyond recommendations for schooling there is little evidence from young people or parents of on-going coherence in strategies for supporting and engaging young people themselves.

It is worth considering whether the school space is the most conducive place for this kind of engagement. Mayall (2006) discusses the distinction between the public space and the private space for young people, and distinguishes them in terms of the kinds of relationships available to young people and the way in which they move from one space to the other. She characterizes the school space as a socialisation space, and children as socialization projects with limited participation rights. Education policies have done little by way of extending the participation agenda for young people over the last decades (Wyness 2011). Citizenship agendas in school discuss preparation for civic life after school, not in school, where the expression of targeted achievements in curriculum results will not be jeopardized by the disruption of as yet unschooled young people.

Mayall (2006) claims her research shows that young people will, for instance, often hide concerns about health from professionals at school as they do not judge school as sufficiently trustworthy an avenue for seeking help. There is a tension between the school and the home for the socialization of young people that is understood by children, and she suggests that they learn to move from one to the other, exercising appropriate and differential skills in each realm. In Hallett, Murray and Punch's (2003) study of young people and welfare agencies, family and friends were the most popular choices to go to when there were problems. Approaching professional agencies was fraught with problems of lack of awareness, to problems accessing them, to gender, age, issues of confidentiality, trust and anticipating poor responses from adults. These issues may not be insurmountable but may require perseverance and a consistent focused approach

listening to young people's own concerns (Hill 1999). Although Hallet *et al.* (2003) and Hill's (1999) evidence does not directly address school professionals, it underlines the challenges for adults occupying formal practitioner roles engaging with troubled young people.

Moss offers an additional perspective when he discusses his vision of what can constitute a 'children's space' (Moss, 2006; Moss and Petrie, 2002; Moss, 2007). Children's spaces are those that reflect the participation of children at some level. This term is not about a physical place one can go to necessarily, but forms an institutional or relational space where the participation of children reflects a tangible shift in power, discourse and structure. Such spaces, or indeed services, would reflect children and young people's agendas and the more fleeting temporality of now, as well as the futurity of planned adult agendas and national curriculums. They would carry the possibility of idiosyncrasy, reciprocation and democracy at a micro level and focus less on the orientation of policy, future goals and targets, control and surveillance. Moss does not wish to preclude the judgments and guidance of adults, but to point to a possibility of shifting powers and perspectives, leading to different, more balanced, accommodation between the adult and the young. These ideas are grounded in comparative studies of education policies and programmes in different European countries, including family centres in Italy, and an adventure playground in Wales. For Moss, bringing democracy into children's spaces engages children into dialogue about the purposes, and the practices, in spaces such as schools and playgrounds, and in addition, involves them in evaluation through participatory methods. Moss suggests children can 'contest dominant discourses, what Foucault terms regimes of truth, which seek to shape our subjectivities and practices through their universal truth claims and their relationship with power' (Moss 2007: 12).

Another way of seeing the participation of children and young people in the fieldwork is that their participation was so circumscribed

that their opportunity to assemble agency was squeezed to the extent that the active response seemed to be passivity and non-compliance. This discussion leads us to a consideration of what and where is the best space to centre a multi-agency process around children's needs as individuals in need of support and care, who can extend their agency in positive ways while recognizing negative destructive agency as also real. To place this in the school, not a children's space as Moss defines it, is firstly to risk closing down the possibilities for dialogue, engagement and participation from young people. Secondly, it may also risk over-identifying children with problems around school as 'problem children' in all aspects of their life and relationships. Thirdly, the CAF process, as we can see from the material from the parents, is in danger of invoking the blaming and moralising discourse between home and school as places of socialization.

My analysis arrives at a point where there is a need to return to the language and aims of CAF in order to re-assess, reaffirm and remodel what can be done to engage children and young people in the process. If the benefits of a common approach to participation, assessment, planning and decision-making around children and young people are to be realised as a guiding principle for young people, then thought has to be given to the CAF process as a particular type of facilitating space. This includes providing young people with the support to explore different forms of appropriate participation in meetings, and outside of meetings, where the opportunity to develop and sustain relationships of trust with practitioners is available. Another type of engagement centring around the child: offering more consistent and open-ended approaches to working with young people, may allow an appreciation of the resilience, the strengths and a fuller picture of potentiality and promise from a young person, and thereby engage them more fruitfully and personally in solutions to their troubles. The question of whether these conditions can be met within the physical and relational space of most schools is also part of a wider

discussion about the role, function and organisation of schools. The reformation of schools often appears to be a constantly changing and contested political discourse, so wed to national agendas of social and economic policies, that it may be that local, more democratic and participatory exploration of children's spaces would require a certain distance from schools, where curriculum and managed regimes predominate. I will return to these thoughts when I consider policy recommendations later in the chapter. Turning now to re-visit the findings in respect of parental experiences of CAF, I will examine further the more active participation that I found there.

8:5 Understanding the experience of parents in CAF

Chapters 6 and 7, which discussed data from the interviews with parents, revealed the complexity of conceptualising participation in multi-agency settings. The service user and practitioner relationship is commonly perceived as a binary, with practitioners on one side, and service users on the other. There is logic to this dualism where for one side of an equation there are practitioners paid to deliver a service, and on the other, consumers of the service. However, this study has problematized this analogy in more ways than one.

In respect of children and young people, I have shown a dichotomy between adults and young people and offered a critique of arrangements where a model of childhood operates across the service user and practitioner domains. This childhood discourse corrals the participation of young people in a non-active consultative role. Here, young people's agency is more of a concern for involved adults, than a resource in problem solving. Intergenerational processes are at play most notably, as I have discussed above, in the school setting. The portrayal of governance as a service to individual consumers is difficult to sustain.

Equally, there were examples where service users sought alliance with practitioners against other practitioners. Parents made use of third sector and local authority advice and support organisations in seeking empowerment and greater purchase in decision making throughout the CAF process. Some service users perceived rivalry and disagreement between agencies, as when Grant and Audrey, in chapter 7, were shown to have enrolled the educational statementing team in challenging their daughter's school at the CAF meeting.

The role of parents in this coming-together of organisations and individuals was shown to be complex and demanding. Initial exploration of the issue of parents' consent to CAF, in chapter 6, showed that this is a slippery and frequently ambiguous concept where the safeguarding thresholds and proximity of social care interventions were either already known to parents, or sometimes introduced directly as an encouragement to take part. In addition, the concept of CAF was not often clearly explained and left some parents picking up bits and pieces of information as they went along. This kind of enrolment in the CAF process embodies a disciplinary discourse, and where parents cannot make fully informed judgements, it is disempowering at the outset.

Chapter 7 went on to discuss the assembling of knowledge and skills, and the quality of voice that could help parents gain a sense of purchase when they felt disempowered and under critical review by practitioners. However, I have also represented the diversity of responses to CAF by parents, and included those who were full of praise for supportive practitioners and felt that the CAF had been all they could have asked for. Some service users did not seek an equal stake in decision-making. Carol Ryman (Case 9) was pleased by the effective application of expertise by professionals, who managed a difficult situation, and provided stability and solutions to ease her anxiety over her son's fire-raising. Carol expressed in clear terms her desire for someone to take charge. Sharon's family (Case 10)

underwent a child protection investigation after her son made allegations of physical abuse on a visit to the family GP. The diversion of this case to a family support worker, and the following CAF episode, left her offering fulsome praise of the process from start to finish. On the other hand, Grant and Audrey, Maggie and Ged, and Debbie Parks were frustrated by their lack of knowledge and control, and sought ways to galvanise their participation in CAF. They wanted to challenge and to develop their active agency in the process. In this sense, each case was a unique assemblage of circumstances with its own narrative and developing relationship, including elements of struggle and cooperation. The engagement between practitioners and parents was a negotiation between active, although not equal, participants. It was noted that even parents who gave a critical account of their experience spoke positively about the concept and principle of the multi-agency forum, where agencies could be challenged, information exchanged, and decisions about resources made. Parents were shown to hold to a principle of participation where they felt their views should be respected and given due weight in decision-making. Where this was felt to be inadequate, or lacking, it was more than once revealed in the court-room analogy, used by some parents who felt undermined. This analogy of CAF raised the spectre of powerlessness, but also suggested the redress in fighting back by gathering adequate knowledge and representation, whether by developing personal confidence or finding support from other sources. So, aside from giving space to some of the varied narratives the parents offered about their CAF experiences, there was insight into the kinds of demands that came with the role of a service user in CAF. The exploration of skills, knowledge and personal development required to develop the service user role in different ways was described with passion in several of the accounts.

Throughout this thesis, I have utilised aspects of Foucauldian perspectives on power and knowledge, and the role of discourse and governmentality, in shaping modern subjectivities. However, the

analysis of parental data has also resisted any sense of hollowing out of subjectivities. If anything, the parental data has underlined a sense of the individuality in responses to powerful discourses and reinforced a sense of the particularities within the life course of individuals, which are represented by singular attitudes and responses. CAF is only one detail in the complexity of life and relationships in every case. The course of resistance or cooperation was not determined in any predictable way, although I have pointed to the powerful role of the discourses around expertise and childhood as actors within each tale of accommodation or resistance to events and circumstances.

It is here that the methodological approach of actor-network theory and Foucauldian sociology make their contribution, and come together in determining the CAF as a particular space of choices and options where service users actively develop their role as CAF service users. I have discussed the childhood discourses that come into play, and also how parents take different stances with respect to discourses of, for instance, expertise, parental discipline, participation and child development questions. The resistance to practitioner parenting critiques, and the engagement of knowledge and expertise from other service users' organisations, involve choices and stances that service users make and take in response to how they experience the CAF. In the following sections, I develop this perspective through further consideration of participation, the managing of parenting critiques, and the engagement with specialist psychological expertise.

8:5:1 Parental participation

Commonly, parents did not have a sense of the participative opportunity of the holistic assessment that is a keystone of CAF in the guidance to practitioners. Perhaps for some practitioners, it may be challenging to bring service users into the assessment, and it becomes yet another complication in their efforts to exert control over their

work. In the review of CAF research, it was noted how often researchers described a view from practitioners that there was an intensity in engaging closely with families in CAF that they found emotionally taxing and time consuming. It is also possible in many cases service users will push against an open door, and find practitioners ready to collaborate.

The joint preparation of the CAF assessment document could be an opportunity for service users to gain leverage and set some of the agenda for their participation, but this study shows some of the difficulties here. The wider discourse of participation in planning and decision-making was readily imagined by parents as a cooperative ideal, but perhaps only rarely glimpsed. The strong ideas expressed by some respondents around working sympathetically and closely with particular practitioners, and what could be effective cooperation in meetings, is an indicator of the power of this discourse and its intuitive importance to service users. Parents' initial expectations may be conditioned by discourses around expertise and the consuming of services that position them as lacking knowledge, in need of guidance, and as relatively passive recipients rather than active partners. Parents in the study tended to see themselves as being in the hands of practitioners who defined and led the agenda and the process. A way of interpreting this finding is to see service users as responding to the strength of governmentality discourses of expertise and institutional authority. This genealogical reading of the paternalistic role of the 'psy complex' expert follows the Foucauldian approach of outlining the development of psychological expertise, while in addition owing something to the 'sick role' of the medical model (Rose, 1989; Donzelot, 1997; Moncrieff and Middleton, 2015). In this analysis, ubiquitous psychological expertise allows the interpretation of behaviour and the normalising of expectations through the development of comprehensive systems of assessment and measurement. This forms the practice and goal of modern governance.

While for individuals the 'sick role' of the medical model excuses them from a degree of responsibility, due to being 'sick', it also accepts the paternalistic authority of the expert, and forgoes agency and self-knowledge as part of the bargain. However, a number of these respondents were looking for something more and were engaged in an active resistance. They sought independent knowledge, they looked for support, and defended themselves using what resources they could find. For these respondents, the CAF process was a vital and powerful experience that changed their lives in ways that left them with powerfully ambivalent feelings about what they had been through. If we return to notions of participation in the light of this, then there is not only the participation that is offered or conditioned by the practice process of CAF in the multi-agency setting, but there is evidence that participation is struggled for and achieved through human agency. As the findings have shown, adopting an actor-network approach offers a methodology for examining how service users may assemble agency from heterogeneous actors. I return to this perspective on assembling agency below, but firstly, I analyse the findings around parenting critiques by practitioners, and the effect on some service users, further.

8:5:2 Expertise and bad parents

Parents spoke with warmth and appreciation of the supportive relationships they developed with some practitioners. This was appreciated as the expertise of skilled and caring practitioners, who were felt to be helpful. Equally, there were accounts of those perceived as bad or unhelpful practitioners, who failed to engage well with service users. But this was a different kind of practice expertise from that formal psychological or medical expert knowledge, possessed by specialised assessment agencies. These agencies produced as much

unease as appreciation, and were presented as emotionally more remote, unyielding and powerful.

Even if some of these practitioners, such as doctors and psychologists, exercised sound expertise in engaging service users and putting them at ease, there could be little negotiation with this kind of expert medical and psychological knowledge and I showed how some parents were frustrated with these experts at times. Relationships with these practitioners tended to be more short lived, be based on formal interviews outside the family home, and the result would be a diagnoses, which was based on formal assessment methodologies, and not open to lay interpretation or negotiation. That formal expertise, which was present in most accounts, was a hard struggle to negotiate with, and was not easily challenged in the CAF meeting. The role of this expertise is made particularly salient where the sense of its connection to the assessment of parenting becomes discernable.

The galvanising effect on some parents, of parental critique, was a prominent theme and I gave examples in chapter 7. The distress of being regarded as a bad parent was made clear in a number of accounts by parents. The response of parents in this context raises questions not answered by the data. What is the relationship between parental pursuit of neurological diagnoses for young people with perceived behavioural problems, and perceiving a bad or poor parenting assessment in dealings with professional agencies? White's (2002) account of ethnographic work looking at paediatrics, cites a body of other research in health settings, where parents' responses to problems with their children are seen to form a critical part of assessments as to whether cases are judged medical or psychosocial. Similarly, analysis of conversations between social workers, and social work records, from White's (2003) ethnographic study of social workers and agency meetings, discusses the moral work implicit in social workers characterisations and assessments of family members, parents and children. This work shows two things. Firstly, professionals

tend to attribute blame and responsibility to parents for problems with children, as opposed to children themselves. Secondly, only when there are accepted medical or neurological reasons for the behaviour established by expert assessment can parents be ascribed as morally blameless. White concludes that these constructions suggest a preference in practitioners' accounts for problematic children's behaviour to be attributed to faulty parenting, and hence avoidable, and often associated with a construction of parents as morally deficient. This position suggests a particular construction of childhood where children and young people's agency is often held as a property of parents and parenting practices, at least within certain age categories and in respect of particular behaviours.

The work of Ara Francis (2012; 2014) explores the role of middle class North American mothers, and gives them a powerful role in the successful pursuit of neurological diagnoses of young people. The nature of this dynamic of parental agency and neuro-psychological diagnoses could be usefully explored in the context of multi-agency practices and parental agency in the UK. In this research, there were cases where parental insistence in pursuing repeated specialised assessments appeared to contribute to successful diagnoses, often against initial reluctance from practitioners in some agencies. These are complex issues that engage neurological expertise and cultural practices, and warrant further careful research and analysis. In the light of these findings, I can now also reflect on how this approach raises significant methodological questions that need to be acknowledged. As was discussed in chapter 2, Prout (2005), Latour (1993), and others, have argued that the nature and culture duality, culturally rife in relation to children, needs to be overcome in order to avoid the distortions of the purification within disciplines, whereby culture and nature form a false dichotomy. The domain of children and young people's development has to engage the cultural within complex technological fields, such as neurology, and likewise, recognise the

biological, genetic or neurological within the domain of cultural explanations in the private and public spheres of relationships and social action. These are difficult questions requiring the development of detailed knowledge of often competing areas of knowledge and opinion derived from different methodologies and research expertise. The findings from this study highlight these difficulties. I suggest that a more explicit focus on these questions in further research is justified, and could seek further insights.

To summarise this analysis of parental CAF experiences, I found a range of parental evaluations of their experiences of CAF, and found that parents were often poorly informed about the CAF process at the outset. Parents made choices, however, about developing their agency within the CAF process. I developed an example where these choices and the trajectory of engagement was associated with a linking of young people's troubles with a parenting critique by practitioners. In the next section, I return to the theme of actor-networks and multi-agency practices, and consider what this approach has had to offer the overall enquiry into CAF.

8:6 The actor-network and assemblage as theoretical tools and ways of seeing

The concept of the assemblage allows a move away from the straightforward conception of the dyadic relationship of service user and practitioner in multi-agency settings. I have shown through the findings that this may reveal the intersection of a diverse set of actors. The analysis in terms of an assemblage at different levels can support a conception of the individual as an active assemblage in the context of the larger multi-agency setting. I have explored the power of discourses, including spaces and forms of expertise, as actors, framing and acting along with the knowledge, skills and attributes of individuals in the exigencies of the multi-agency process. The findings described

how some parents worked to develop a more powerful assemblage, by augmenting knowledge and personal qualities of self-control, and other skills, to make their participation more effective. This led to the effort to grasp the construction of the service user as an assemblage within a specific context. The work of Hall *et al.* and others, looks at the practice context and the language discourses between practitioners and service users that both reveal the construction of service user identities and the construction of service user roles (Hall *et al.*, 2003; Urek 2005). These writers suggest that with the specificities of each practice setting, a different form of service user is constructed. In a related way, the work of Newman and Clarke (2009) that examines subversive citizen groups, applies the assemblage as a form of analysis to consider the politics of citizenship. Here, they analyse the unique assembling of citizenship in different settings from 'multiple projects, discourses, acts and identities' (2009:68). They find a convoluted set of interactions and active agency negotiating power, not a simple binary of domination and resistance. The multi-agency context of the CAF, represented in my research, confirms this through an account of the particular challenges faced by service users and indeed, practitioners also, in this participatory context. In my analysis, I have worked with the idea of skills, knowledge and expertise assembling, in order to explain how some service users resisted, subverted, and defended their identity as good parents, and furthered their active and participative role. I have shown that engagement with CAF can present a significant challenge for both parents and young people, but perhaps most fundamentally for the young people, whose voices are largely excluded from the process. For the young people, I suggested that the model of childhood found in the space that is the CAF process acts to inscribe their incompetence and inhibit their participation. In these accounts of service user experiences, there is an assembly of elements specific to the context. These elements include a broad Foucaudian definition of discourses, as in the model of childhood; the cultural and

physical spaces of multi-agency meetings, and the role of schools in particular; personal skills and attributes; the involvement of 'psy complex' discourses and expertise in the partitioning of parental and children's responsibilities for troubles; and the role of service users' knowledge and support networks. All these factors work as elements in an assemblage within the subjective service users' identity, and the context of the CAF process comprises a network and sphere of engagement for actors in CAF, which gives it particular scope and an experiential reality. In this way, empowerment becomes more than an act of giving or facilitating in professional practice, but is equally something actively appropriated by citizen consumers or service users. This does not place service users on a par with professional organisations and ignore the uneven and complex field where power and influence, knowledge and understanding, are corralled by discourses of governmentality, but looks for the operation of choices and agencies exercised by service users as active participants.

8:6:1 The non-human

Another implication of the actor-network approach as methodology, which I have explored in the thesis, has been the role of non-human actors within the assembling of the CAF process. In this respect, as I discuss below, I have offered partial insights on the CAF process as shown in the findings from the fieldwork. On reflection, I believe that there is potential to examine the questions of non-human actors in the CAF process more fully though further research. Much of the documentary and practitioner technology engaged in the CAF process was not part of this enquiry of service users experiences. Ethnographic research, for instance, which examined the documentary and procedural recording of CAF and the operational systems and practices of practitioners in different agencies and the multi-agency meetings, would offer ways of looking more closely at non-human agencies in

CAF. However, there are observations and analysis from the fieldwork, as I describe below, that suggest there is potential insight to be gained from an actor-network approach that subjects the non-human to analysis.

I discussed the role of paper forms and procedures as mediators and intermediaries attempting to standardise the CAF process, and found them incomplete solutions to the establishment and maintaining of stability and durability in systems of multi-agency assessment and planning. The theoretical literature review in chapter 2 discussed the role of non-human elements of actor-networks. This granting of agency to the solid forms of discourse, such as the letters, reports, and social workers' cars, is given some coherence in the stabilisation of processes and relationships through the use of solid forms (Ferguson 2010; Ballantyne 2015; Høybye-Mortensen 2014; Law 2003; Stanley 2010). The official CAF form attempts to provide form and continuity as an authoritative actor in welfare events. The standard procedure made solid may be characterised as a tool of governance, but is itself, as a form of discourse, a product of resistances and past political struggles for participation in other places. This is the case at a higher level, locally and nationally, where policies and procedures are conceived and written down with the authority of statute or government guidance. Peckover and colleagues, Parton, and others, have discussed the way practitioners may in turn resist and bend the official formats to accommodate local practice (Peckover *et al.*, 2009; Parton 2008; Lipski 1980; Carey and Foster 2011). I discussed in chapter 1 how the CAF, although launched as a national policy with a national format, has been implemented with variation amongst local authorities, and with the passing of the New Labour government in 2010, there has been a vacuum in terms of this national leading of the early intervention and ECM programme. A recent Ofsted review of 'Early help' made this point, and found local variation in provision:

Inspectors found considerable variability in how well local authorities and their partners were sharing accountability and coordinating early help services. The evidence indicated that the current statutory powers do not make clear the roles and responsibilities of the different agencies involved in early help provision. Without this clarity, none of the partners can give early help the priority that it requires. (Ofsted, 2015: 5)

The consolidation and maintenance of stability in the policy and practice sphere is then inherently unstable, and subject to resistance and remodelling at all points of purchase along the way. Technological innovation within social care settings is a social phenomenon and part of our particularly human negotiation with the world of things. In the CAF data the use of paper, minutes, letters and action plans was revealed as something that service users had to come to terms with. For some getting to grips with the administration was part of the process of becoming a service user, although it did not feature in young people's accounts. This could be partly responsible for the greater sense of chronology and structure in the parents' accounts than that of the young people interviewed. It also reflects the different mode of coordination and control found in the adult domain within CAF, where again children and young people tended not to be engaged in this administrative maintaining of the CAF network, by filing minutes of meetings, action plans, letters and keeping diaries. In chapter 7, I discussed how some parental service users perceived written texts within the CAF as a challenge to be engaged with, as a part of raising their own game in dealing with practitioners' practices. For some, this was experienced as a straightforward keeping up to date with minutes conveniently received from the lead professional through email, and for others, the compiling of lists and appearance of notebooks was experienced as a disciplinary move by practitioners criticising parenting practice. Either way, the practice around administration, including

recording of plans and letters, forms an important part of the structuring of communication and the establishment of continuity and authority within the CAF network. For Grant and Audrey (Case 11), the lack of minutes from meetings indicated a lack of transparency and invoked a sense of suspicion about the motives of practitioners at school. For Pam (Case 2), the emails and letter writing support from her family support worker was appreciated as a measure of keeping her informed and up to date with what was expected of her. All the respondents were asked about the CAF form and the assessment, but few could recall much about it, or gave it much estimation or importance. None of the young people were aware of it. So while paper work could be seen as playing a role in the CAF, the idea of an authoritative assessment document structuring the CAF process was not one percolating through the fieldwork findings beyond the more mundane keeping of records.

In summary I have found the actor-network approach a fruitful one in conceptualising and analysing the diverse context of relationships and interactions involved in service users experience of the CAF process. The assembling of a complex interactional process goes some way to unravelling the constraints and the potentiality within the CAF process. It also offers a way to move beyond dualistic templates for relations of power and agency and engages the role of the non-human as an agency integrated with the human, not only stabilising social relations and practices but mediating and responding to creative human choices.

8:7 The contribution of this research

In the final analysis, the contribution of this thesis has been firstly in generating empirical understandings of service users experiences of the CAF process, including that of children and young people, and in exploring methodology for understanding human agency and

participation in multi-agency settings. I have conceptualised the experiences of service users as an assemblage of social relationships engaging an active agency on their part. I have also shown that previous research has failed to adequately address that agency in respect of children and young people, and their families. The body of data presented in these interviews has offered insight into the development of service users' agency as parents, and children, and young people, and I have conceptualised and discovered what agency looks like for those participants in the CAF process. I have shown how there are significant obstacles that may face vulnerable service users as participants in processes of assessment and decision-making. These obstacles include moral discourses around parenting exercised by practitioners and experts, and also the need for an assertive assemblage of skills, knowledge and personal confidence. I have also identified the under-resourcing of an inclusive and open practice towards engaging and sustaining relationships with young people, who may be isolated and vulnerable prior to any engagement with assessment services. I have outlined an approach that recognises the need for the development of realistic resources and inclusive practice to support service users' agency in the challenging environment of multi-agency social care interventions.

8:8 Policy recommendations

The insights gained through this research have implications for the development of programmes of multi-agency practice. The study of CAF was in this sense a case study of multi-agency work, which aims to develop partnership, not only between professional agencies, but also with the diverse constituency of children, young people and their families. In the new and developing landscape of early intervention, and children and young people's health and wellbeing, the CAF is recommended in the Department for Education's Working Together

guidelines and the Local Authority Association's Early Help strategic recommendations for local authorities (DfE and HM Government 2015; LGA 2013). Local safeguarding boards have the responsibility to have an 'early help' strategy in place, and it is a requirement subject to Ofsted inspection. The findings from my study point to specific areas where attention is required.

1. While early help services need to engage whole families, they also need to engage and build participation with the children and young people, whose vulnerabilities are at the centre of early help services. The evidence is that children and young people can easily switch off in a setting where the expectation is of well-schooled conformity. There is a need for thoughtful and imaginative engagement of young people in assessments of their needs, through sustained engagement with skilled practitioners, with a view to integrating young people's perspectives into the process of assessment and planning. The location of meetings on school premises, and the prominent role of schools with 2 or 3 school staff members attending meetings, is unlikely to facilitate the contributions of young people.
2. The relational space for supporting children and young people needs to be built around a recognition of parents and young people as citizens with rights to democratic participation. There is a need to recognise the personal journey that service users will have to make, in order to participate in terms of the acquisition of relevant knowledge of process and development of self-confidence and trust. Any rush to moralise or prematurely judge parents as responsible for children's troubles, almost by default, is counter-productive, and may even have unintended consequences for the labelling of

children further down the line, as responsibility for young people's troubles is contested.

3. Several parents noted the value of advocacy and information services for parents, and thought needs to be given to young people in this context, as noted in point 1, where greater efforts to engage young people would allow them to play a more central role in the assessment of strengths, needs and solutions.
4. This study found that multi-agency working with families was often intense and was demanding of time and resources. It supported previous research suggesting that for practitioners, too, it could be emotionally draining. This work requires a recognition that investment in specific training, and support for maximising the participative potential for working with families in multi-agency settings, are needed.
5. The involvement of specialist assessment services is made difficult by the relative scarcity of the resource, but an assessment or diagnosis does not itself advance a solution for young people's troubles. A closer engagement of specialist resources, in planning with families and other agencies, to recognise the exigencies of young people's needs within their family and future learning environment, could help inform more effective plans.

8:9 Future research

This research was an exploration of the experiences of service users and accounts of those experiences. This was undertaken to address a gap in current research knowledge. In extending the research to draw in practitioners and more ethnographic observations of CAF work, including the CAF Meetings, there is potential to explore the assembling of multi-agency practice further. Further research that is

able to revisit families and undertake a more longitudinal perspective is needed to develop understanding of service users experiences, and their role and agency, in the course of their engagement with services. This would provide new knowledge of how outcomes are assessed by service users, and offer further insights into intergenerational experiences and perspectives.

An ethnographic approach to CAF meetings, and service user and practitioner interactions, could also offer different kinds of data and develop new opportunities for analysis of practitioner and service user discourses in interaction, similar to the way that recent child protection research has pursued the often invisible practices between practitioners and service users on home visits (Ferguson 2014). This could give an extra layer of analysis and further pursue themes in the multi-agency assemblages that are included in early intervention or 'early help' work with families in local authority settings. These are possible future projects that engage closely with practitioners, parents and young people as participants in multi-agency settings. It has to be borne in mind that the use of CAF in this thesis was as a case study of a multi-agency process. The contemporary configuration of local early intervention arrangements form a topic for further examination, and indications are that where the CAF is still a point of reference in this setting, variation is likely, and perhaps more likely over time (Ofsted, 2015; Oliver, Mooney and Statham, 2010). There are other research agendas potentially employing other, more quantitative methodologies, that could explore on a larger scale, questions around the ages, numbers and characteristics of children and young people who are subject to early intervention programmes nationally. These are the young people deemed to have additional needs, and on whom there is a scarcity of national and local data.

The exploration of patterns of participation, and engagement of children and young people with practitioners, and forms of assessment, is likely to continue to represent an important field for continued

qualitative, participative and ethnographic forms of research. CAF has often been characterised in the research literature as a practice requiring a significant application of resources, particularly in respect of practitioner time and energy. The research bore this out when the direct engagement of young people was discussed earlier in chapter 5. In these difficult times of financial austerity and organisational change for local authorities, there is a question about the future and the continuity of early intervention processes, such as CAF. The greater engagement between health and social care services and the continued breakup and marketization of local authority provision, are two factors ensuring the importance of multi agency practices in service provision. Furthermore, the active engagement of service users is equally likely to continue to reflect a drive to be heard and to cooperate, resist and subvert as participants in this setting. The current high profile of the troubled families initiative, and accompanying discourses around the responsibilisation of families and individuals for public troubles, is only a part of this picture, but recent announcements about its expansion indicate the likely increasing significance of its role locally (HM Government, 2015; Bond-Taylor 2014). The relationship between this national programme and other existing local arrangements in respect of children with additional needs is an evolving one (White, Morris, Featherstone, and Thoburn, 2014). These developments and the working through of practice agendas and discourses amongst practitioners working with families, forms an important research agenda for social work. As Morris (2013) points out, and this research confirmed, families want practitioners to understand their realities, and it is important that research continues to engage with service user perspectives and experiences.

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Appendix 1

National CAF Form 2006 DCSF

Every Child Matters Change For Children		Common Assessment Framework for children and young people (CAF)		
CAF form		Date assessment started		
<i>Notes for use: If you are completing form electronically, text boxes will expand to fit your text Where check boxes appear, insert an 'X' in those that apply.</i>				
Identifying details				
<i>Record details of unborn baby, infant, child or young person being assessed. If unborn, state name as 'unborn baby' and mother's name, e.g. unborn baby of Ann Smith.</i>				
Given name(s)	Family name			
Male ☐ Female ☐ Unknown ☐	AKA ¹ /previous names			
Address	Date of birth or EDD ²			
	Contact tel. no.			
	Unique ref. no.			
Postcode	Version no.			
Ethnicity				
White	Black or Black British	Asian or Asian British	Mixed/Dual Background	Chinese & Other
White British ☐	Caribbean ☐	Indian ☐	White & Black Caribbean ☐	Chinese ☐
White Irish ☐	African ☐	Pakistani ☐	White & Black African ☐	
Traveller of Irish Heritage ☐	Any other Black background* ☐	Bangladeshi ☐	White & Asian ☐	Any other ethnic group* ☐
Gypsy/Roma ☐		Any other Asian background* ☐	Any other Mixed background* ☐	Not given ☐
Any other White background* ☐				
*If other, please specify	Immigration status			
Child's first language	Parent's first language			
Is the child or young person disabled? Yes ☐ No ☐				
If 'yes' give details				
Details of any special requirements (for child and/or their parent) eg signing, interpretation or access needs				
¹ Also known as ² Expected date of delivery				

Assessment information

People present
at assessment

What has led to this unborn baby, infant, child or young person being assessed?

Details of parents/carers

Name Contact tel. no.

Relationship to unborn baby, infant, child or young person

Address

Parental responsibility?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Postcode:

Name Contact tel. no.

Relationship to unborn baby, infant, child or young person

Address

Parental responsibility?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Postcode:

Current family and home situation

(e.g. family structure including siblings, other significant adults etc; who lives with the child and who does not live with the child)

Details of person(s) undertaking assessment

Name		Contact tel. no.	
Address		Role	
		Organisation	
Postcode:			

Name of lead professional (where applicable)	
Lead professional's contact number	
Lead professional's email address	

Services working with this infant, child or young person

GP	☐ Details		Tel.	
Early years/education/FE training provision	☐ Details		Tel.	
Service	☐ Details		Tel.	
Service	☐ Details		Tel.	
Service	☐ Details		Tel.	
Service	☐ Details		Tel.	
Service	☐ Details		Tel.	
Service	☐ Details		Tel.	

CAF assessment summary: strengths and needs

Consider each of the elements to the extent they are appropriate in the circumstances. You do not need to comment on every element. Wherever possible, base comments on evidence, not just opinion, and indicate what your evidence is. However, if there are any major differences of view, these should be recorded too.

1. Development of unborn baby, infant, child or young person

Health

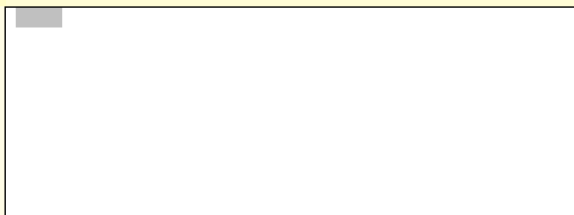
General health

Conditions and impairments; access to and use of dentist, GP, optician; immunisations, developmental checks, hospital admissions, accidents, health advice and information



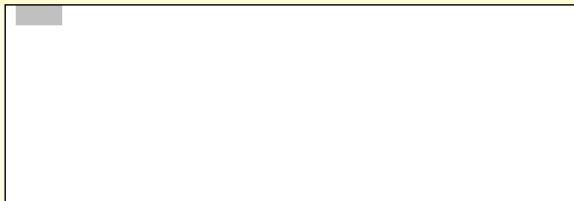
Physical development

Nourishment; activity; relaxation; vision and hearing; fine motor skills (drawing etc.); gross motor skills (mobility, playing games and sport etc.)



Speech, language and communication

Preferred communication, language, conversation, expression, questioning; games; stories and songs; listening; responding; understanding



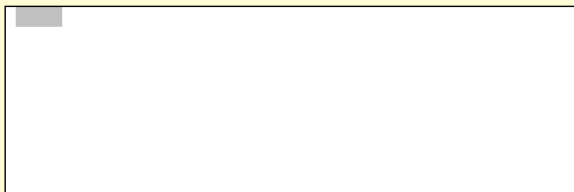
Emotional and social development

Feeling special; early attachments; risking/actual self-harm; phobias; psychological difficulties; coping with stress; motivation, positive attitudes; confidence; relationships with peers; feeling isolated and solitary; fears; often unhappy



Behavioural development

Lifestyle, self-control, reckless or impulsive activity; behaviour with peers; substance misuse; anti-social behaviour; sexual behaviour; offending; violence and aggression; restless and overactive; easily distracted, attention span/concentration



1. Development of unborn baby, infant, child or young person (continued)

Identity, self-esteem, self-image and social presentation

Perceptions of self; knowledge of personal/family history; sense of belonging; experiences of discrimination due to race, religion, age, gender, sexuality and disability

Family and social relationships

Building stable relationships with family, peers and wider community; helping others; friendships; levels of association for negative relationships

Self-care skills and independence

Becoming independent; boundaries, rules, asking for help, decision-making; changes to body; washing, dressing, feeding; positive separation from family

Learning

Understanding, reasoning and problem solving

Organising, making connections; being creative, exploring, experimenting; imaginative play and interaction

Participation in learning, education and employment

Access and engagement; attendance, participation; adult support; access to appropriate resources

Progress and achievement in learning

Progress in basic and key skills; available opportunities; support with disruption to education; level of adult interest

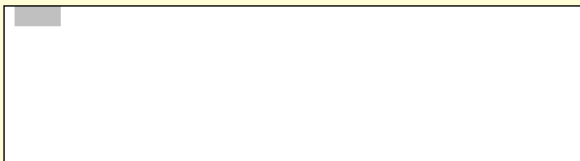
Aspirations

Ambition; pupil's confidence and view of progress; motivation, perseverance

2. Parents and carers

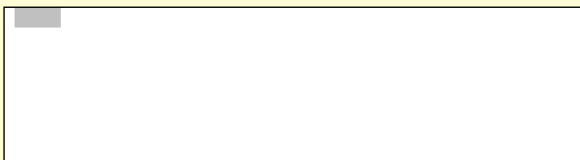
Basic care, ensuring safety and protection

Provision of food, drink, warmth, shelter, appropriate clothing; personal, dental hygiene; engagement with services; safe and healthy environment



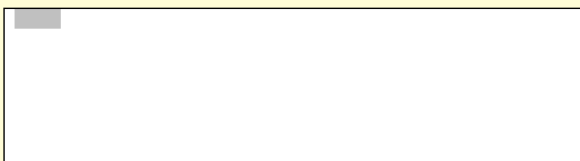
Emotional warmth and stability

Stable, affectionate, stimulating family environment; praise and encouragement; secure attachments; frequency of house, school, employment moves



Guidance, boundaries and stimulation

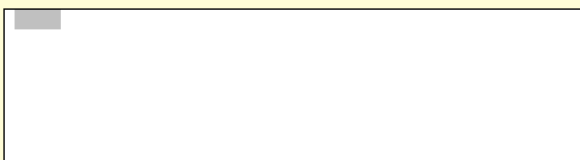
Encouraging self-control; modelling positive behaviour; effective and appropriate discipline; avoiding over-protection; support for positive activities



3. Family and environmental

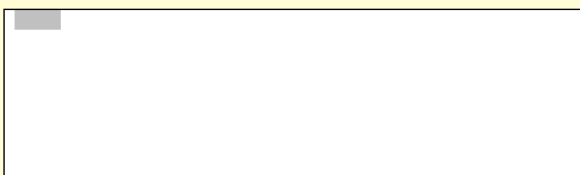
Family history, functioning and well-being

Illness, bereavement, violence, parental substance misuse, criminality, anti-social behaviour; culture, size and composition of household; absent parents, relationship breakdown; physical disability and mental health; abusive behaviour



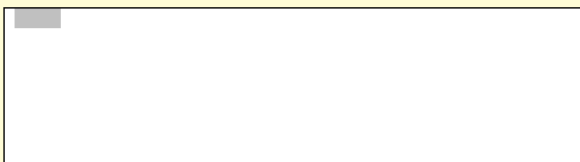
Wider family

Formal and informal support networks from extended family and others; wider caring and employment roles and responsibilities



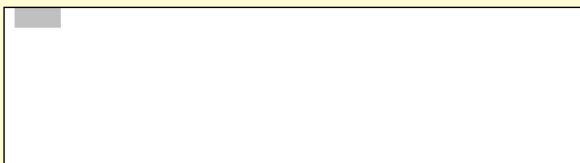
Housing, employment and financial considerations

Water/heating/sanitation facilities, sleeping arrangements; reason for homelessness; work and shifts; employment; income/benefits; effects of hardship



Social and community elements and resources, including education

Day care; places of worship; transport; shops; leisure facilities; crime, unemployment, anti-social behaviour in area; peer groups, social networks and relationships; religion



Conclusions, solutions and actions

Now the assessment is completed you need to record conclusions, solutions and actions. Work with the baby, child or young person and/or parent or carer, and take account of their ideas, solutions and goals.

What are your aims?

(What are the key aims the child, young person and/or family would like to address?)

What are your conclusions? *(What are the child/young person's/families strengths and resources, what are their needs – e.g. no additional needs, additional needs, complex needs, risk of harm to self or others?)*

Strengths & Resources:

Needs/ worries:

What changes are wanted? *(Include the child/young person's, parent/carer's and practitioner's views)*

How can change happen? *(Include the child/young person's, parent/carer's and practitioner's views)*

Agreed Actions *(in order of priority list the actions agreed for the people present at the assessment)*

Desired Outcomes
(as agreed with child, young person and/or family)

Action

Who will do this?

By when?

Agreed review date

Goals *(e.g. How will you know that things have improved? What will things look like at review?)*

Child or young person's comment on the assessment and actions identified

Parent or ~~carer's~~ comment on the assessment and actions identified

Consent statement for information storage and information sharing

"We need to collect the information in this CAF form so that we can understand what help you may need. If we cannot cover all of your needs we may need to share some of this information with the other organisations specified below, so that they can help us to provide the services you need. If we need to share information with any other organisation(s) later to offer you more help we will ask you about this before we do it."

"We will treat your information as confidential and we will not share it with any other organisation unless we are required by law to share it or unless you will come to some harm if we do not share it. In any case we will only ever share the minimum information we need to share"

I understand the information that is recorded on this form and that it will be stored and used for the purpose of providing services to:

- ☐ Me
- ☐ This infant, child or young person for whom I am a parent
- ☐ This infant, child or young person for whom I am a carer

I have had the reasons for information sharing explained to me and I understand those reasons.

I agree to the sharing of information, as agreed, between the services listed below Yes ☐ No ☐

Signed Name Date

Assessor's signature

Signed Name Date

Exceptional circumstances: concerns about significant harm to infant, child or young person

If at any time during the course of this assessment you are concerned that an infant, child or young person has been harmed or abused or is at risk of being harmed or abused, you must follow your Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) safeguarding children procedures. The practice guidance *What to do If you're worried a child is being abused* (HM Government, 2006) sets out the processes to be followed by all practitioners.

If you think the child may be a child in need (under section 17 of the Children Act 1989) then you should also consider referring the child to children's social care. These referral processes will be included in your local safeguarding children procedures and are set out in Chapter 5 of *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (2006) (www.ecm.gov.uk/workingtogether). You should seek the agreement of the child and family before making such a referral **unless to do so would place the child at increased risk of significant harm.**

Delivery Plan & Review *(Actions from the assessment should be brought forward into the delivery plan and added to where a multi-agency team around the child response is required and/or used to review progress)*

Personal Details

Given name(s) Family name DOB or EDD

Address Postcode Male ☐ Female ☐ Unknown ☐

LP Details

Name Agency/Relationship Email

Address Contact Number

FOR COMPLETION AT REVIEW STAGE

Desired outcome (as agreed with child, young person, family)	Action	Who will do this?	By when?	Progress & Comment	Date Closed	Contributing to ECM Aim ¹

¹ These outcomes should be linked to the 'Every Child Matters' aims where appropriate. Please see the CAF Practitioners Guide Annex A for a full list of the ECM aims which sit below the five ECM outcomes.

Review

Date:

People present

(Review delivery plan and update with any agreed further action)

Next Steps

Can the CAF be closed?

Yes

☐

Reason for closure:

No

☐

Agreed review date:

Review Notes

Child or young person's comment on the review and actions identified

Parent or ~~carer's~~ comment on the assessment and actions identified

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APPENDIX 2

Children and Young People Interview Schedule

Stage 1: Rapport Building and Introducing the study

Explain what the research is about

Confidentiality and qualification

Recorder on asap

Explain I will have an information sheet to take away and I need them to sign consent also

Icebreaker

Squiggly line drawing or card trick

My World

This is for youngsters.

YP is asked to draw a 'world' on a sheet of paper. They can decorate it with stars and planets etc around the outside of the circle and inside write the important things to know about their world and the inside can be also decorated with drawings and patterns etc. The interviewer guides the process with appropriate 'getting to know you' questions.

- What is your favourite food?
- Who is your best friend?

- What do you like to do after school?
- What pets do you have?
- What are you good at?
- What are your favourite clothes?
- What TV programme do you like to watch?
- Where would you like to go for a holiday?
- My favourite pop star
- My favourite record
- My favourite film

For Slightly older young people an alternative

For those who don't like drawing.

The card trick might still entertain

For all young people

The Life River or Timeline

the researcher drawing a snake-like shape with segments and the participant drawing events, places, people as required in and alongside the segments with any accompanying illustration or comments. The aim will be to provide the chronological events but also to begin to get a sense of what kind of an experience the young person has had and what are the key factors they identify through the interview.

A significant area of interest for the tackling of research questions is that of family practices and responses to services. Rather than focusing on what the practitioners do I want to hear what families do in managing their contact with agencies and practitioners.

Services and Agencies Venn Diagram

All those people you come across who are not your family but are doing a job. Could mean teachers, Doctors, Youth Club leaders, Health Visitors and so on.

- Together with the participant a list would be drawn up
- The respondent would be facilitated to draw a central circle on a large sheet of paper and perhaps draw themselves on there or just write their name.
- Simple version: A child is asked to draw circles for each agency and give them a size and distance from the centre according to how important they are.
- A more elaborate variation would involve beginning with prepared card circles of two or three different sizes. The size of the circle indicates the degree of importance attached to an organization. Importance to you or importance to family – colour code?
- The cards can also briefly note the respondent's opinion of what agencies are for, what they are good at, any reservations and so forth and perhaps note where they overlap.
- Yet more complex version: For each agency the participant would be invited to select a size of card circle in accordance with the importance they feel the agency has and place it at an appropriate distance from the central circle according to how much involvement they have. Circles can be torn or re shaped and moved around until the respondent is satisfied that they are correctly placed and represented.
- respondents could be asked what factors they might use to decide which agency is most important in addressing children's needs.

- how effective the agency is and use drawing such as a thick or thin line or other means to record it on the chart.
- The cards can also be placed in proximity to others in accordance with how closely they work together. So cards may overlap.
- in one map we could have effectiveness, ideas of importance, relevance, cooperation, and level of involvement all indicated.

CAF Meeting Exercise

- one, two or three beans are placed by the children in a labeled pot in accordance with their rating of issues; none at all, a little, a lot.
- The pots would be placed on the written text on A3 paper in a line:
- preparation for meeting
- how much I spoke
- how much support did you get
- how much I was listened to
- how much I liked the meeting
- how good was the plan decided on at the meeting
- did I put something in the plan?
- The list could be altered or added to accordingly in response to issues raised by the participant. One bean for none, two beans in the pot for some and three beans for a lot. The researcher discusses the participant responses and notes them during the exercise.

Alternative is I draw a chart with scores up the Y axis and the issues along the X axis.

Mobility Map

The mapping exercise involves again the participant drawing a circle to represent their home this time and for each place they visit as part of their involvement with services and agencies a line is drawn representing distance and direction. Along this line mode of travel and any issues of difficulty or pleasure are noted. At the end point, represented by a circle, points about the venue and the experience can be noted. Details such as frequency of visit, mode of transport and importance attached to the visit and any other points of note about the experience can be discussed and noted.

End of Interview

APPENDIX 3

Evaluation and Feedback Exercises

Feedback- Please tick the smiley to show how you liked each exercise

Squiggly line drawing or card trick



My World



The Life River or Timeline



Services and Agencies Venn Diagram



CAF Meeting Bean Pot



CAF Meeting Chart



Mobility Map



The whole interview



THANK YOU

APPENDIX 4

Adult Interview Schedule

Introduction

Remember:

- Recorder
- Aims of research
- Independence of research
- Participant info sheets
- Consent form
-

Anything you want to ask before we start?

1. Can you tell me about your involvement with professionals?

2. Can you tell me about how your child is involved with professionals

- How many of these services have you previous experience of and can you tell me a bit about that please?

3. Who first introduced the idea or where did you first hear about the CAF?

- When was this?
- Can you tell me who is involved with you in the CAF?
- Can you tell me what it has involved for you to take part?

- I understand there is a lead worker called the Lead Professional who organizes the CAF. How does that work in your experience?

4. Can you tell me about the actual preparation of the CAF Assessment document?

- Who was involved in preparing the assessment and how did that work exactly?
- Was the Child/YP involved at any point and how was that achieved?
- Was the assessment what you expected?
- How did you feel about the process of assessment?
- What areas of your life and your child's life did the assessment cover?

5. What's it like being involved with the lead professional and the other people who are involved in the CAF?

6. Were you asked to go to any meetings with other agencies or services there?

- Who is it that comes to the meeting?
- Does Child go to the meeting and how does that work?
- Who decided about these things?
- Where do they take place?
- How do you get there?

7. Can you tell me about if and how your child is involved in the process of CAF?

- Was your child involved in the assessment?

- How was that done?
- Where was that done?
- Were you involved in that part of the assessment?
- How well did it go in your opinion?
- How do you think child has coped with it?

8. What's like being involved with a group of services together?

9. What if anything could be done differently?

10. Overall then what kind of an experience has it been for you to be involved with CAF?

My Services Exercise

For this exercise I will seek another session. Probably this next session will include any negotiation over arrangements for interviewing children in another venue ie school or children's centre etc.

I will introduce the session as one where I will, with the participants help, draw a spider diagram representing the different universal and specialist services which the respondent is involved with through the CAF or any other means but most centrally the CAF experience centred around their child.

The respondent and family are at the centre of the diagram and services as satellites surround and distance from centre can express closeness etc

Issues to represent will include:

- Distance
 - Travel
 - Expense
 - Do you visit
 - Do they come to you
 - Any other geographical issues ie crossing neighbourhoods
- Historical involvement
 - Any previous experience
 - Have they changed
 - Good expn – bad expn
- Expertise
 - What is their expertise
 - Have they changed in your experience
- How important are they for you
 - Are they placed in your inner circle or outer
 - Reliable or not
- Trust
- Are they for children or the whole family
- Form and style of communication