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SP10 5BE

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Scottish Child is a non-profit making co-operative involved in publishing, training and event organisation that promotes an understanding of the importance of children and childhood in society

ISSN 0950-4176

Letters and articles to
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Subscriptions

UK Annual Rates: individuals £14; organisations £19. Cheques should be made payable to Scottish Child. Overseas airmail: individuals - Europe £23, rest of the world £27; organisations all countries £37. Overseas subscriptions are payable by Sterling international money order or banker's draft.

Advertising

Contact Alison or Aileen on 031-220 6502

Production

Typesetting: North Edinburgh Typeset
Camera: Edinburgh Make-Up Services
Design: Colin Chalmers
Printing: Scottish County Press
Front Cover Photo: Colin Chalmers

EDITORIAL

5

CONNECTIONS

6



The Fife Enquiry has finally reported - **Rosemary Milne** looks at its damning conclusions. Plus **Martin Graham** on **ChildLine** for kids in care - and **Helena McNulty** on a victory for children, parents and common sense as Glasgow's Achamore Centre is reprieved!

SEXUAL ABUSE

10

Child sexual abuse is more than a source of shock stories for the tabloids - it's a secret horror for every child who lives through it. **Ouané Baine** takes a look at sexual abuse from the child's point of view; and **Sarah Nelson** asks whether the Orkney Enquiry Report might lead us to take what children say about abuse less seriously than we should.

FAMILY LIFE

14



Christine Kay brings up four kids on her own - and even finds time to tell **Scottish Child** all about it!

EDUCATION

18



Roll over, nativity players - here come the rainforest tribes! Primary teacher **Carol Harris** gives the lowdown on some dramatic moves taking place in classrooms, corridors and gyms - wherever her brightly-painted pupils prowl!

EATING OUT

22

Eating out with kids - nightmare or delight? **Aileen Bruce** takes us to the yummiest and yuckiest joints in town.

CHILDCARE

26



Marion Flett takes a look at childcare in Scotland and asks if we are really doing enough make sure that it is available, affordable - and of the quality our kids deserve.

NEW VOICES, NEW WRITING

30

Some poems by **David Cameron**.

REVIEWS

32



Kids reviewing books for Christmas - and **Linda Ramsay** looking back at how we were.

LETTERS

36



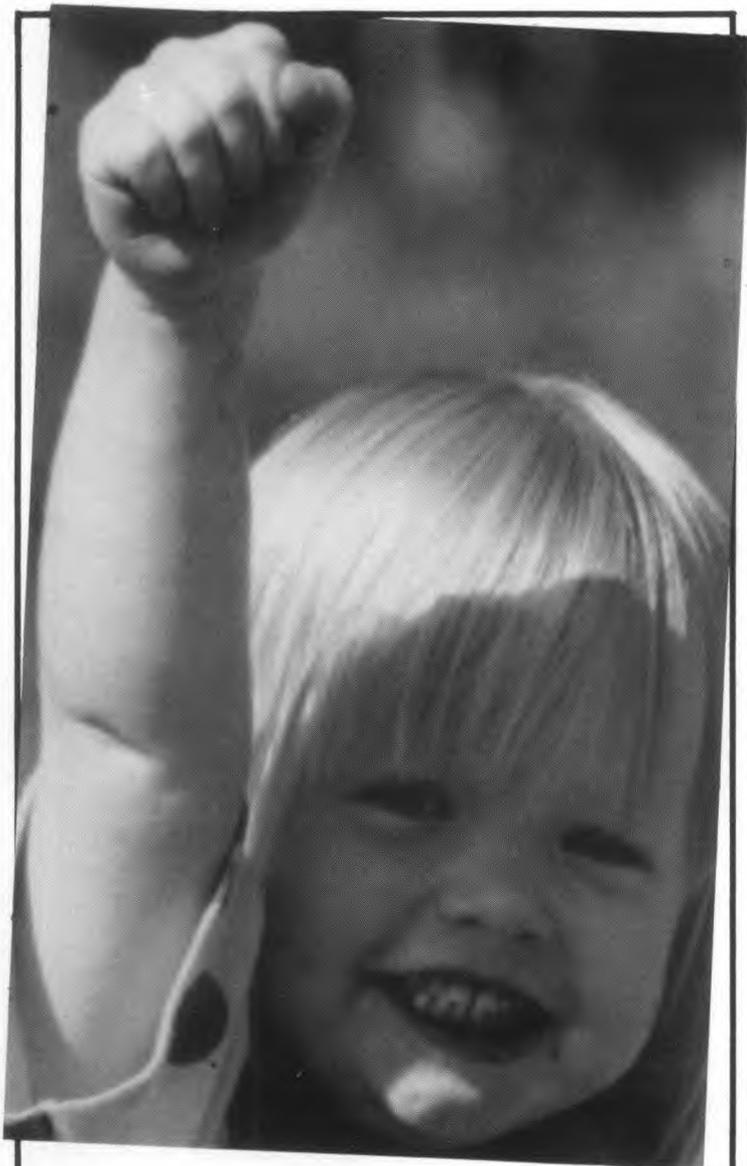
IN MY LIFE

38



John Pelan on being a new father.

*As you may notice, this is another bumper issue of **Scottish Child** - in response to demand for more pages in the magazine, we have expanded the magazine permanently to 40 pages. Unfortunately, to pay for this expansion, and our rising costs, we have had to put up our cover price - our first increase in two years. We hope you understand.*



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We Believe You

I used to work with homeless teenagers, teenagers who had, as many would see it, a 'housing' problem. Within a month of starting that job those teenagers had opened my eyes to the sort of violence and abuse which children in this country suffer at the hands of adults. I remember in my first week sitting in a room as a girl of sixteen told me in a quiet, emotionless voice how she was locked in cupboards, tortured, humiliated and sexually abused. I thought, naively, that this must be a very extreme experience - I soon found out that it was not. For over four years I heard horror after horror from teenagers who had had the courage, the age and the ability to leave the homes they were being abused in. At least a fifth of the teenage girls I worked with had been sexually abused.

We worked in a way that allowed the many abused teenagers we worked with to talk about their abuse. We didn't immediately send them to some 'specialist' (message: there is something wrong with you, and I don't want to know about it). We tried not to pretend that their abuse had 'nothing to do with housing' and so nothing to do with us - we listened and we learned. I would tell countless teenagers, as they told me of their abuse, "I believe you. It wasn't your fault. I'm glad you've told me".

What I remember most from talking to these young people was the ordinariness of it all, the everyday, matter-of-factness of how they were abused - and the torment these young people endured as they found the courage to talk about it. I remember one girl telling me - and meaning it - that she would rather have someone put a half brick in her face than talk about her father. I remember the girl who told me, on the night the Cleveland Report was published, that she had been abused by her stepfather, and I remember how she hated me after that with a fury I'd never known, because she had told me - because I *knew*. And I remember the young women, with stomach cramps that wouldn't go away, who told me how she kept thinking about her dad - but couldn't talk about it. Instead, she'd go to her room, alone, and cry all night to wake up smiling, as if everything was fine. Because it had to be.

Oh yes, we could certainly do with an enquiry into sexual abuse in this country. We could ask why, in the whole of Scotland, there are only two hostels, with a total of nine beds, for teenage girls escaping sexual abuse - and none for boys. We could ask why Scotland's leading centre for working with sexual abuse, the Overnewton Centre in Glasgow, is being shut. We could ask pretty fundamental questions about a society where adults feel the need to, and feel able to, subject children to violence and abuse with little risk of recrimination. Instead we got the Orkney Enquiry.

The six million pound Orkney Enquiry never was an enquiry into sexual abuse - it was an enquiry into the people whose job it is to do something about it. So the Enquiry's Report, and the media coverage of the Orkney affair, adopted a narrow, legalistic approach, concentrating on the 'mistakes' of social workers, the lack of 'expertise' of the people we charge with helping children who have been abused, the 'fatal flaws' and 'failures' of those who listen to children. It ignored completely (outside the remit, you see) the question of how we actually start

creating a society where children will not be abused.

The narrow, legalistic terms in which the Report discussed sexual abuse were eagerly seized upon by a media glad not to have to examine deeper questions about the warped power relations in our society that make sexual abuse so common, and so hidden. The press had a field day - attacking social workers (always popular), defending families against monstrous bureaucracies and generally offering a sigh of relief that we didn't need to get into *why* children are abused and *how* we can stop it.

The fact that the cost of this Enquiry has actually led to services for abused children and their families being cut was totally overlooked. And the cost could grow yet. Morris McKenzie, the minister at the centre of the allegations, was quoted in the DAILY RECORD as saying that "It has hurt and I have suffered. And the only thing that will compensate me for that is a large amount of money."

What is most worrying about the Orkney Report, however, is its readiness to play down the importance of what children say; in the words of the Report, the importance of not falling "into the trap of confusing the taking of what a child says seriously with believing what the child has said." As Sarah Nelson points out in this issue of SCOTTISH CHILD, "If carelessly seized on, this recommendation could set child protection back by years - giving comfort and succour to those who still believe that children often fantasise and lie about sexual abuse."

This is a real danger. There are many children in our society who are abused and get no help, who get no sense that society as a whole is ready to hear their story - and there are many adults who have very good reasons for not wanting the daily abuse that children suffer to come out into the open. We are a long way from creating a society where the abuse of the powerless by the powerful is emphatically condemned and where sexual abuse is seen as just one other way in which the powerful abuse the powerless. We are a long way from telling children who tell us uncomfortable facts that we *do* believe them; that we *don't* believe it is their fault; that we *are* glad they have told us. There are many children, and many adults, out there who would like to see that change - and if we are to make that happen we need to make our voices heard.

●

From the next issue of SCOTTISH CHILD I'm taking a break as editor - Rosemary Milne will be taking over. I'd like to thank all the people who I've worked with as editor - colleagues, contributors, photographers and illustrators, friends - for making it such a rewarding experience. I'm proud of the fact that, despite very real financial and, at times, emotional strains, we've managed to bring out an independent magazine that has celebrated the vitality and potential of our children - and given voice to those who want a better future for them. I'll continue to support that work - I'm sure you will too.

Colin Chalmers

FIFE ENQUIRY

A few years ago, **Scottish Child** published a critical profile of Alan Bowman, the Director of Social Work in Fife, highlighting his controversial policies and the controlling management style of his department. Reading Sheriff Kearney's huge Report on the Fife Enquiry you can't help wondering, a bit like with the Orkney Report, if we really did need to spend such a vast amount of time and money to determine what was already staring everyone in the face in the mid-eighties.

Saying this is by no means to take the line of Fife Region politicians and officials who, apparently far from wishing to distance themselves from their discredited Director of Social Work, have slavishly leapt to his defence with statements about the "potential redundancy" of the report. This weighty tome, all 780 pages of it, may suggest that when someone as powerful as Alan Bowman is imbued with what, at one point, Kearney refers to as "a view elevated to the level of an almost religious orthodoxy" one's only realistic strategy may be to gather such a weight of evidence that none but the wilfully blind can fail to be convinced by its conclusions.

As we said in 1987, Mr Bowman is truly a man of the eighties, a believer in the Thatcherite model of governance through 'strong leadership'. That kind of brutal certainty looks distinctly outmoded in the wobbly nineties, as we reel from the fall-out of the disastrous Thatcher era. But whatever the present political climate, and however damning the conclusions of this Report, the man who set in place Fife's childcare policies in the eighties is still at the helm of his Department. And, if we profess any kind of concern for vulnerable children, even a cursory reading must make us ask how can this be.

Perhaps one answer is the relatively little coverage the Report has received in the national press. When both Fife and Orkney Reports were published simultaneously the papers chose to focus on Orkney rather than the more mundane matters of the Fife Enquiry which had been "dragging on" - as one **Social Work Today** article put it - for over two years. Orkney, you can't help thinking, got the press coverage largely because the parents were so effective at manipulating public sympathy.



The Cost of Brutal Certainty

How can a child like little Kenneth, whose case is cited in Kearney's Report, match the noise of injured protestation coming from the adults in Orkney? Sadly, the answer is probably that, even without Orkney, because Kenneth only sustained "severe injuries" he was never likely to make it to the heights of newspaper fame.

Kenneth came to the attention of the Social Work Department early in his life. His mother had a history of child neglect, including a prosecution for assault against another son and neglect of a four year-old daughter some years previously. Initially, the Department provided support in the form of a homemaker and a social worker. But further problems emerged, including the father losing his job, the mother rejecting social work help and refusing to co-operate with the health visitor. The mother had also started drinking again.

A case conference was called to discuss Kenneth's situation. The memo of the conference, dated ten weeks after it took place, noted that he was a "high risk" for cot death due to his premature birth weight and a heart problem. The conference also noted increasing concern about the mother's coping abilities, her bonding and her apparent relapse into her old pattern of drinking when under pressure. It was noted too that there was the possibility of physical assault on the mother by the father.

The recommendation of that case conference was that a letter should be drafted to the mother offering her an appointment to discuss her recent difficulties. The decision was also taken "to withdraw social work intervention". It is indicative of the mental set of the social workers concerned that they chose to describe what they had been offering to this parent as "intervention" rather than "support". Not only did the social workers decide to 'withdraw their intervention', they failed to place

Kenneth's name on the 'Child Protection' register on the grounds that there was no risk to him directly from his mother. It was agreed that the social worker should retain an involvement with the case and review the situation in two months.

Over the next two months there were continued crises in Kenneth's mother's life. There were reports of domestic violence. Once she appeared at the local hospital in the early hours of the morning "quite frantic" and expressing unfounded fears about Kenneth's health.

The final crisis came when Kenneth's mother was discharged from hospital after being admitted for head injuries. Having been unsuccessful in persuading the hospital to hold onto the mother over the weekend, the health visitor found, on her next visit, that Kenneth was in the care of his father, his mother being too drunk to do look after him herself. On examining the baby she found his leg to be injured and took Kenneth to hospital, where he was found to have serious injuries to his leg. The mother was subsequently prosecuted for this injury to her son.

Kearney makes two observations about this appalling case of abuse: "May not the inadequacy of the response of the social workers and social work management, including the decision of the case conference to, 'withdraw from the family as their support was seen as threatening in the light of past experiences' be consistent with the implementation of a policy of minimal feasible intervention?"

"The possibility that the omission to intervene effectively until after the events of (date of the Monday after the mother's return from hospital) was consistent with the implementation of a policy of non intervention in the form of an over-mechanistic application of the principle that families are best kept together."

He concludes this section thus:

"the case of Kenneth represented more than procedures not being properly followed. It represented also a failure by the social workers to be sufficiently alert to the implications of the repeated earlier problems which was consistent with an over-rigid adherence to principles which emphasise keeping children at home without 'unnecessary' social work intervention. That so many failures to intervene took place, apparently with the approval of senior staff, seems not only consistent with but distinctly indicative of a habit of thought which undervalues the role and contribution of the social worker."

That emphasis on non-intervention, on using voluntary and "non-invasive" forms of social work help is the core of Bowman's care policy for children and families. It is a policy built around the belief that the consequences of statutory intervention are very frequently more negative for families than leaving things alone. In Scotland, as the law stands at present, such a policy cannot be upheld. The 1968 Social Work Act is based on the conclusions of the Kilbrandon Report that there are certain standards of behaviour by children and parents which society recognises as adequate or inadequate and social work is charged with the duty of enforcing and monitoring these standards. But such a policy is not simply legally questionable, its morality too must be in doubt because it leaves the tussle of conscience to the individual social worker who must reconcile the competing demands of his duty as defined by the law and his duty as defined in the policy statements of his department.

Tragically in fact, although many of Fife's staff seem not to be aware of it, like the children this report examines, they too are victims of this over-rigid orthodoxy and the consequent lack of care. The difference between vulnerable children and social workers stops there however. Social workers do have a choice - they can stay in a controlling management relationship or they can leave. Children, especially the children who come to the attention of social work offices, have usually to take what they are given. Kearney's report makes it quite plain that what some children in Fife have been getting is much, much less than they deserve. And whose responsibility is that?

Rosemary Milne

Successful Campaign Ensures Achamore Centre Stays Open

HEALTH

In June 1991 **Greater Glasgow Health Board** announced its proposal to close the Achamore Centre, a pioneering centre for children with special needs in north-west Glasgow. Within a year and a half, thanks to consistent campaigning and widespread opposition to the proposal, the Achamore Centre has been relieved.

The Achamore's role as a child development centre is unique - it is the only centre that sees children from birth through to when they are satisfactorily transferred to adult services. The Centre has also pioneered a multi-disciplinary approach to working with children that starts from the needs of the child, successfully avoiding the professional demarcation disputes so common in work with children. There were a lot of reasons that people wanted the Centre to stay open.

When the **Achamore Parents' Group** heard of the Health Board's proposal to shut the Centre we were outraged at the prospect of losing such a valuable service. We had come to rely heavily on the Achamore to enable us to cope with the difficulties we faced in caring for our children. The Parent's Group decided that we

were not going to sit back and allow the Health Board to do this - we were going to stand up and fight for the services we wanted and needed. The campaign to save the Achamore began the same week the Health Board's proposals were known.

The Parents' Group started by writing to all the local councillors and MPs. As Achamore covers such a wide area of Glasgow - the whole of the north-west - there were many people involved. We contacted a whole range of groups and organisations who were aware of the value of the work going on at the Achamore Centre - the **Scottish Society for the Mentally Handicapped, Barnardos, National Children's Homes, Scottish Downs' Syndrome Association** and others.

We already had a lecturer from Glasgow North College coming to the Parents' Group on a weekly basis to look at ways of enabling the group to participate in different aspects of learning - but because the campaign had started he helped us with it. We then decided to organise a public meeting and invite as many people as we could along to it.

The meeting was held in June 1991 and was a great success. Norman Dunning, the Director of the **Scottish Society for the Mentally Handicapped**, was one of the people who came along and after the

meeting he offered us the services of the Scottish Society's Legal Adviser, Colin McKay, in fighting against the closure. The Society continued to give us support, helping with typing, postage and making up mailing lists.

We got in touch with all the local newspapers, some of which covered our campaign throughout. We collected over 8,000 signatures on a petition against the closure of the centre. A local students' union, the Queen Margaret Union at Glasgow University, heard about our campaign and 800 students sent letters of protest to Michael Forsyth, then the Minister responsible for health in Scotland.

The Parents' Group eventually held a meeting with representatives of Glasgow Health Board about the consultative document. At this meeting, the Health Board's representatives told us that Achamore was "out of synch" with other child development centres and that it would not be cost-effective to keep Achamore open. We were stunned by these remarks. The Health Board were saying to us that our children need a service that is too expensive - in other words, our children are not cost-effective.

The consultation period ended in October 1991 and we were told that we would know the outcome

by the end of December. December came and went and we heard nothing. We were then told we would know by February, but by March we had still heard nothing. The months passed. We wrote again to the Health Board in August and still heard nothing.

Then one evening in September I was sitting at home watching the Scottish news and what should I hear but the newscaster saying that the Achamore Centre was to remain open.

The next day we got in touch with the Achamore staff to find out if it was true. It was. Not only was Achamore to stay open, it was to be used as a model for all other child development centres in the area. I felt kind of numb at the news. After all this time our campaign was over - we'd won!

We got busy sending out thank you letters to all the people and organisations who had supported us - including **Scottish Child**. We organised a wee party in October for everyone who had helped us stop the closure. Meanwhile, the students from Glasgow University who had supported the campaign so much, had started up a befriending service for families who attend Achamore. It had been a hard fight at times - but it had been worth it.

Helena McNulty





'I'm Not Being Listened to'

RESIDENTIAL CARE

ChildLine have started up a new phone helpline specifically for children and young people living in children's homes, foster homes and residential care. In the first ten days of its operation in Scotland, 263 calls were received, 69 of them requiring what **ChildLine** term 'substantial counselling'.

Launching the new scheme, Margaret McKay, Director of **ChildLine (Scotland)**, pointed out that ever since they started in 1986 there has been a consistently disproportionate number of calls from children in care. "A child in local authority care is four times as likely to call **ChildLine** as a child who isn't. In the last 12 months nearly 1,600 children in care in the UK have phoned us up for help."

Children who ring **ChildLine** from care do not give one message about the nature of residential care or their experience of its staff and management. Indeed some callers ring because they want to go into care as a refuge from their families. Many callers are satisfied with the care they receive but are worried about a change that is about to take place. However the overall impression from the calls is of poor standards of care, bad communication and little staff attention. As **ChildLine** commented in the run-up to the launch of the special helpline,

"We hear a ghastly catalogue of misery: sexual and physical abuse; emotional neglect; large and petty deprivations - of food, educative and play opportunities; physical restraint which borders on and frequently becomes assault; restrictions on freedom of movement and choice; abusive responses to difficult behaviour - children have complained of having their faces rubbed in their wet and dirty sheets; violence and bullying by other residents; racism by the staff and residents.

"We also hear depressing accounts of inactivity and reluctance to help by staff and social workers: their readiness to break promises and cancel arrangements; their inaccessibility and unapproachability to children; children's inability to talk to staff about complaints because 'they all stick up for each other'; and staff restricting their ability to make calls contacting people 'outside'."

The calls that **ChildLine** has already received to the new line have reinforced these concerns. Many of the callers were worried about being hit by other children in care - as one nine year-old girl put it "No one believes me, they say I'm lying. But I'm getting beaten up by other girls every night."

Children often feel they have no say over their future. One eleven year-old told **ChildLine** "I'd rather stay in the home. I don't want to go back to my mum. I'm not being listened to at the Children's Panel." Quite a few talked about

bereavement, saying how they felt that they had no one to talk to without losing face.

Children see in **ChildLine** a service that is independent, confidential and anonymous - it feels like an agency that is 'on their side'. But do young people in care think this special line is necessary? Why do they think children in care are so much more likely to phone **ChildLine** than other children? **Scottish Child** asked some youngsters in care about their concerns.

Steven, who has been in care for almost four and a half years, speaks of some of the problems of being in care. "I've been to so many different places. I still miss my family, I haven't seen my mother since I came into care. I used to think I shouldn't be in care - I'm not like that, this isn't the right place for me. Now I know that everybody feels like that. I was shit scared at first. Now I just get on with my life."

Fran agrees that you feel like you just have to manage. "I've grown up a lot faster being in care because there's nobody to look out for you. You've just got to start looking after yourself because nobody else cares."

There are ambivalent feelings about the staff in children's homes. "A lot of them are alright," says James, "but at the end of the day..."

Alan is more forthright. "Some staff are just there for the money. There's places where the staff just lock themselves away in the office

and leave you to get on with it."

So has anyone ever phoned **ChildLine**? "I phoned **ChildLine** once. The staff knew I had a problem, but I was saying nothing. They told me to phone **ChildLine** and I did - and they listened in on the extension. I heard them when it was too late. Later on they said 'We know all about your problem now!'"

Everyone agrees, however, that being in care was not all bad. Fiona remembers going into care: "I was a bit of a 'clepto', I was into everything and anything. The first place I was in didn't make me any better, it made me worse. But when I came to this place I got treated like a person. They helped me see what I was doing wrong and they showed me my good points instead of just saying 'You're just a wee fuckin' shit' all the time."

Alan agrees. "Here there is respect with us and the staff, both ways. In some other places the staff don't care, there's no affection, whereas here the staff are more like friends. Sometimes they come in on their day off because it's your birthday. Then you know they care."

A bit more of that and the phones might not be ringing so much at **ChildLine**.

Martin Graham

Children in care wanting to phone the new ChildLine number can call free on 0800 884444 between 5 and 10 o'clock every day.

IN BRIEF

Stuck for something to do with the children on another of those wet afternoons in **Stirling**? Well you're in luck - Stirling District Council's equal opportunities unit have recently brought out the third edition of their guide to what's on offer for children in the District - **Stirling with Kids**.

It is an impressively comprehensive booklet, including details of opening times and cost for a wide range of council services. There's information on free activities, such as parks and libraries, as well as a list of where you can find changing and feeding facilities if you're in the town centre with a small baby - and facilities for parents whose children have special needs. Following the growing trend, there is also a section surveying those eateries in Stirling district which are 'child friendly'.

You can pick a free copy up at any library in the District, or from the Equal Opportunities Unit in Spittal Street, Stirling.

A new collection of **writing** called **If I Were A Sadist...** has come out of a writer's group brought together by **One Plus**, the Strathclyde One Parent Families organisation last year.

The authors of the assorted poems, short fiction and reflections are all lone parents, sharing thoughts on the lives with humour and honesty. The writers, 12 women and one man, are relating their own experiences, experiences that don't usually find their way into poetry and prose. Getting on the bus with the kids; watching a swimming gala; queuing to use the only working telephone for miles around; the book is full of the stuff of life. For a sample, here's the title poem, by Irene McLeod:

*If I were a sadist,
I'd hurt you till you cried,
I'd lie and cheat,
And laugh at you,
Until you nearly died.*

*I'd say I love I hate you,
And turn you on then off,
Then cause you pain,
Again and again,
While I would sit and scoff!*

*But then I'm not a sadist,
It's you that's into that,
I hope someday,
You'll find someone,
Who'll treat you just like that.*

You can get **If I Were A Sadist...** for £2 from One Plus, 39 Hope Street, Glasgow G2 6AE.

The **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child** came into force in Britain a year ago this month - on 16th December 1991 - placing an obligation on all bodies dealing with children to meet the principles of the Convention.

A new Scottish initiative that aims to highlight and ensure the implementation of the Convention - the **Children's Rights Development Unit** - is now in operation from its Glasgow base. Its one part-time worker, Alison Cleland is busy promoting the Convention and looking at how Scottish law needs to change to meet its principles.

You might think that one part-time worker to deal with the rights of children across the whole of Scotland is something short of ideal - but it is a beginning and a welcome change in that the rights of young people are gaining greater recognition.

Alison would like to hear from anyone who has something to say about the law and children. So, whether you're a child or an adult, if you have views you want to be heard, contact her at the Children's Rights Development Unit, 170 Hope Street, Glasgow, G2 2TU, or phone on 041 353-0206. She can provide you with a copy of the UN Convention, and the questionnaire on children's rights prepared by the unit.

November saw something exciting and innovative take place in Scotland's **prisons** - the launch



Amanda's piece of advice and cartoon can be found in the recently published 1991-92 report from Glasgow's **Women's Aid** - a report packed with reports, articles, reviews and statistics highlighting the work that organisation carries out.

According to the report, over 3,270 women contacted GLASGOW WOMEN'S AID last year. Out of this number, 221 women were admitted to Women's Aid hostels in the city - along with 215 children. The report shows just how valuable this support is to the women and children who get it. As one woman puts it in the report, "You are meeting other people and discussing things you wouldn't normally discuss with anybody. Also, it is people who have been through the same sort of things as yourself. It helps you to get to grips with yourself and you're not bottling all your feelings up."

The flipside to all this positive activity, of course, is the ever-growing number of women that WOMEN'S AID have to turn away because they don't have enough places. According to the report, GLASGOW WOMEN'S AID turned away 1,047 women last year due to lack of space - an increase of over 200 on the year before. While it is important to recognise the very real help that abused women do get from organisations like WOMEN'S AID let's not forget the 20 women a week in Strathclyde alone who want to and can't escape abuse - because someone has decided there's no money to help.

Copies of the report are available from GLASGOW'S WOMEN'S AID at 227 Ingram Street, Glasgow or by phoning them on 041 248-2989 while stocks last.

of **The Stiff**, a prisoners' newsletter. This modest looking publication marks a real step forward for Scotland's prisoners. Written by prisoners in different jails, with production help from outside, this is genuinely a newsletter written by prisoners for prisoners.

We're proud to say it's the brainchild of a **Scottish Child** editorial group member Joe McGrath, currently in Shotts Unit.

Since the public rarely gets the chance to hear what prisoners themselves think about all the rhetoric of the new-style Scottish Prison Service, it looks as though **The Stiff** will soon gain a large and interested readership.

The Stiff can be obtained by sending a large stamped addressed envelope to Joe McGrath, Editor, The Stiff, Shotts Unit, HMP Shotts ML7 4LF.



THROUGH A CHILD'S EYES the experience of sexual abuse

Many adults find sexual abuse a difficult subject to deal with - but do their personal anxieties prevent them seeing it from the child's point of view? Here **Ouainé Bain**, who has helped many children talk about and recover from their abuse, attempts to look at the reality of sexual abuse - as experienced by the child who is subjected to it.

I am very much committed to the view that it is not just experts and professionals who help children speak out and recover from sexual abuse. A whole range of people that children are in contact with - family, friends, teachers, carers, whatever - can give real help. And as I see it there are three ways we can learn to give that help more effectively.

Firstly, we need to acknowledge that child sexual abuse evokes in us a whole range of personal feelings. If these are not to overwhelm us, or debilitate and undermine us in our response to children, then there is a need to acknowledge, examine, share and if necessary get help with them.

This article is based on a speech given in October at an inter-disciplinary conference on child sexual abuse organised by the University of Edinburgh's Centre of Continuing Education.

Secondly, our attitudes need to be informed ones. We have a responsibility to look beyond the myths that have obscured the reality of sexual abuse in the past, and take advantage of some of the knowledge that has been acquired and is available in books, journals, programmes, training.

Thirdly, and this is mainly what I want to look at here, we need to understand sexual abuse from the child's point of view. We need to try to understand what is going on in the head of a child who has been sexually abused. What are the psychological dynamics? What is it that the child is dealing with and what are the strategies they are using to do so? If we look at what has happened through adult eyes, we can sometimes be way off the mark about what the real issues are.

So where do we look for this kind of

understanding? What are our sources? Well, firstly, I would like to pay tribute to the adult survivors (brave women, mostly, although there are now some men) who have spoken out, who have informed the world from their own painful memories, who have got themselves together in groups or who have written poetry and personal accounts. **Cry Hard and Swim** by Jacqueline Spring, **My Father's House** by Sylvia Fraser, **The Family Secret** by Eleanor Hill - all these accounts are powerful, insightful and enlightening.

We can also learn by listening to children and young people who have been abused. For example, when Maureen Sanders and I were putting together the guide for abused young people **Out in the Open** we found that in many ways it was written for us by the contributions and quotations from young people themselves.

Then we can look at some of the research that

has been done. For example, most people imagine that it is the nature of the abuse that is most important in determining how deeply a child is injured by it - what the abuser actually did to the child, how old the child was, how long it went on for, how often it took place, whether the abuser was a family member or a stranger, and so on. All these things are important of course; but in fact the most important thing affecting a child's long-term recovery is the amount of support that child gets from within his or her family. More than anything, sexually abused children will be helped if at least one meaningful adult is there to give them messages that are positive about themselves.

Once again it is the psychological process that needs to be addressed, and we can be working with the strong, non-abusive bits of the family in order to allow the child to get that kind of support.

Are there any other insights from research that help us get 'the child's eye view?' For example, to what extent do the behavioural problems of children following sexual abuse help us understand how they are reacting psychologically?

Well, one of the problems is that children react to abuse in a bewildering variety of ways. Although studies of adult survivors indicate that a history of sexual abuse has an enormous effect on their mental well-being as adults, it has been noted that as many as one in five children show no major behavioural symptoms using checklists of behavioural problems, and half do not score highly. One way of explaining this discrepancy is to recognise that the child's response to sexual abuse is not just an affective one - fear, pain, anxiety, and so on. Sexual abuse is experienced at a learning level as well as a feeling one, at a cognitive level as well as an emotional one. The child learns to develop strategies to deal with the problem - to stay sane. These are survival strategies, but they, in their turn, store up problems for the future.

Because the child is powerless, many of the strategies will be avoidance ones - passivity, running away, withdrawal, dissociation, mentally cutting-off. Although they may serve them well at the time, and help them to present a fairly 'coping' face to the world, in the long term they can be built into the adult psyche, elaborated on and have a debilitating and draining effect on the adult survivor.

Recently I have been looking at one particular aspect of the psychological dynamics of sexual abuse - the apparent paradox of the child who even after he/she is 'rescued' continues to show loyalty and attachment to their abuser. The crude and popularised version of this is "Aye, whatever happens, the child still loves her daddy, grandpa...etc". Of course such a simplistic analysis is not at all helpful and can be downright dangerous when it leads into the notion that intervention is perhaps worse for the child than the status quo.

Celia Doyle in *Working with Abused Children* looks at this in the light of what we know as the 'Stockholm Syndrome' - the mechanism by which the hostage or kidnap victim, despite their sufferings, makes bonds with their persecutors and demonstrates loyalty to and affection for them. First of all there is *denial* - the hostage wants to deny the situation they are in, to believe that the captors really mean them no harm and they are not going to kill them. Then she describes the captor's *paralysis*. Normally when one is in a frightening situation the reaction is to panic, run, scream, and so on.

"However the hostage, like the child in an abusive situation, has all the exits closed off, is totally trapped, and can't do these things. He will adopt the posture of 'frozen fright', narrowly focussing all his energy on survival. He will concentrate exclusively on the terrorist, until the terrorist totally dominates his reality. He will feel isolated, powerless and helpless." Anyone who has been sexually abused or worked with abused children will recognise this picture all too well.

Hostages sometimes find themselves having to *repress their fear and anger*. They turn their anger not against the captor, because that is too unacceptable, but against the rescuing authorities. There is a sense in which both the captive and the captors feel united against the outside world. The threat within is transferred to the external menace. Again, this is familiar to many of us who work with sexually abused children. When you intervene to 'rescue' a child, you expect some expression of relief - and of course you do not always get it.

Celia Doyle's second analogy is with the methods of control used in concentration camps. Prisoners are humiliated, they are forced into a state of dependency and complete compliance. The camp regime creates this dependency and compliance through a number of strategies involving confusion, intimidation accompanied by enticements and promises and so on. After the initial shock and terror, prisoners often become apathetic, psychologically protecting themselves from the horrors around them by going into a kind of emotional hibernation.

If you work with abused children that will ring bells. They are systematically confused and intimidated. Many become apathetic, no longer looking for any kind of escape. They start to accept, and see themselves as responsible for, their mistreatment. A lot of children do resist being abused, but are unable, because of their powerlessness, to do anything about it - and many internalise what is happening to them.

The approach that I have always found most helpful and insightful is contained in a paper by Roland Summit called **The Accommodation Syndrome**. He is talking from a practise base, and the prime source is the child. He formulates a model for looking at the child's reactions throughout various stages that the abuse goes through.

The *engagement stage* is the first one. How does an adult begin to engage a child in sexual activity? In some ways this is the easy stage for the abuser - we teach children to respect adults, to be helpful, to think adults know best, to please adults, to be compliant. The abuser can exploit all of these things in what is often a very gentle induction into abuse.

What follows is a period of confusion for the child, who is not at all sure what is happening. When working with survivors it is often possible to identify when this period of confusion started and finished - when there was a clear realisation that this was something that should not be happening. This can be helpful if they are still living with the notion that they "didn't stop it in the first place". I remember one teenage survivor who said that it was when another child enrolled in the school, and there was talk in the playground of her "Being in care because her dad touched her up...", that she had her moment of realisation.

To understand this confusion it is important to note that adults are the mediators between the child and the world, we make sense of the world

for children. For example, a child gets a smack on the hand. The simple message the child gets is, of course, one of pain. But what makes sense of this, what meaning can the child put on it, how do they place the experience in a conceptual framework? Well, they begin to make connections between the action and what precedes it. They see the adult's facial expression. They learn that their mum smacks for one thing and their dad for another. They see other children get a smack or they see it on TV. There are a whole number of bases they touch on the road to some understanding of the experience.

But because sexual abuse is a private, secret activity the child has no way of making sense of it, has no external criteria to consult. The child is, in fact, at the mercy of the definition that is put on the activity by the abuser. That is what they carry in their heads. So when an abuser says to a child that "We only do this because we love each other" or "this is just a little game" it is an approach that is likely to work.

Of course, *the next important stage in the abuse is to establish secrecy* - this is central to sexual abuse. The secrecy is established in a whole range of ways, and it is my experience that the threats that are used to silence the child will escalate as the child gets older or has more autonomy.

A great number of the threats centre around the integrity of the family. "Don't tell, or mummy will be angry... she'll put us out... she'll go away... she'll get ill." "Don't tell or I'll get put in jail... you'll be put away... I'll get another wee boy/girl..." For the child, the family is synonymous almost with their identity as well as security. For them to have the power to break up the family is very frightening indeed.

Then there are the physical threats. One wee boy was told "You'll get stabbed with a knife." There had in fact been a stabbing in this boy's extended family not long before, so the threat seemed a very real one to him. Often the abuser will hint at his capacity for violence. Sometimes he will hurt pets or make sure the child sees acts of violence in the home.

A group of teenage girls I worked with were discussing how it was that they couldn't tell anyone what was happening while they were being abused. Five out of the six said that they thought they would get a doing or get killed if they told anyone - there was the threat of violence. The sixth said it was because she would lose love. She was a young woman who had been very emotionally deprived in her own house and she was sexually abused by a neighbour who she went to because that was the only place she could look for any kind of nurturance and attention, and, of course, he exploited this.

I remember a programme about the Gracewell Clinic, a clinic in England that works with sex offenders, where two men were re-enacting how one of them would abuse a child. The one who was playing the role of the abuser made his victim sit on the floor after the abuse and he just stood there for four or five minutes. "That's what I do, I just stand there in silence". He did not need threats. He was just establishing himself as the one with the power - the victim down there, him standing up here.

Then there is the threat that "no-one will believe you anyway". One teenager I knew was abused by somebody who bred dogs. We were talking about what it must have been like to have been threatened with the dogs and I said "You must have been terrified." But she said

A Failure to Listen?

What was most striking about the aftermath of the publication of the £6 million Orkney Report was just how quickly real children disappeared from public discussion. The children supposedly at the heart of the Orkney furore slipped through a hole in a Report whose remit excluded any discussion of whether or not they were in need of protection. Everyone is now shorn of responsibility for tackling that.

Newspaper reports expressed outrage about the fact that the parents and minister had been rocked by an "88 week reign of terror". The air was thick with talk of apologies to adults, compensation for adults, community reconciliation among adults, vindication of adults, possible resignations by adults. It was all very revealing of the priority our society gives to children.

Highly conscientious and thoughtful the much-praised Orkney Report may have been - but were some crucial parts of it, in a famous phrase, "Fatally flawed?"

One of the most publicised Orkney recommendations, that investigators must not "fall into the trap of confusing the taking of what a child says seriously with believing what the child has said", could have far-reaching implications. It is true that interpreting the way children, especially young children, express and voice their experience is indeed very difficult for adults. It needs a lot of skill. But if carelessly seized on, this recommendation could set child protection back by years - giving comfort and succour to those who still believe that children often fantasise and lie about sexual abuse.

The basis for this recommendation would have had to have been sound and convincing. It was not. It lay overwhelmingly in the Enquiry's judgement of one aspect alone - statements and drawings by three 'W' children in February 1991. The full report details these and other children's allegations.

Few neutral observers would disagree that after the 'W' children's statements social workers and police should have done far more investigation - for instance of the various adults and children named - before deciding if they should place nine other children in care. The Report's analysis, however, did not centre on this, but on the fact that the 'W' children came from a family with a history of abuse, "which was likely to have affected their development".

Professional assessment of the children by a psychologist or psychiatrist would have been prudent, to consider "whether their perception of reality had been in any way coloured or affected by the abusive experiences (of some of the family)... what might have seemed real to them might well not accord with what was real to others. It was not impossible that innocent incidents could have taken on a sexual overtone in their

imaginations..."

The message is familiar. In cruder language, screwed-up kids with histories of abuse need their minds testing before we take their matter-of-fact statements as matters of fact. But there are many problems about using such arguments in this case. The Report rightly stressed that the nine children should have been treated and investigated as individuals - which did not happen. But the Report itself failed to consider the three 'W' youngsters as *individuals*, treating them instead as a single entity.

There were remarkable similarities in very detailed accounts of places, events, trappings and names, by children kept apart for months (apart from one brief supervised meeting between two). The Report's argument would mean that three separate children's life-development had been identical, that their distorted perceptions of reality had been identical. Innocent incidents would have had to have taken on exactly the same sexual overtones.

Sarah Nelson looks at some of the Orkney Enquiry's recommendations - and asks whether we may be in danger of taking what children tell us less seriously than we should.

Such 'sexual overtones' would not explain why all these children believed they witnessed or experienced physical pain, distress and sadness. Throughout the Report, no alternative explanation is offered for what exactly these innocent incidents, that involved such experiences, might have been.

There are, and will continue to be, many more real children throughout Scotland making very similar 'bizarre' allegations, who may be dismissed or accused of fantasy because of just such reasoning. Taking children seriously means treating them as individuals, using basic knowledge about child development in assessing them, and testing truth or error by investigating the *evidence* they actually give. Otherwise we grant them no respect.

The Report failed to listen to the voices and actions of real children in another key sense. A report with so much to say about children's evidence and about proper techniques of interviewing them is remarkably silent about the status of bizarre, disturbing and very detailed statements and behaviour of some children as revealed to foster parents.

For example, according to a foster parent, one eight year-old boy kept saying he liked killing people and hurting himself; he recited strange unusual

verses and drew his foster mother being scarred and cut to pieces; he said he lived in a bad house, using dolls to suggest sexual abuse happened there with a range of adults.

A nine year-old boy was said by a foster parent to have enacted gruesome, violent and sexual plays in front of other children, involving having blood smeared on him, being shut in a cardboard coffin and being left alone on a hill. He said a minister had hit him with a buckled belt and abused other children in front of him. He and his sister showed a strong fear of churches.

At one point the Report criticises interviewers for failing to "pursue matters raised by a child", matters which appeared to describe abusive incidents. But the Enquiry Report merely concluded that "in the case of some of the children, it is not impossible that there could have been some matters, perhaps far removed from any incidents in Orkney, which could have been troubling them".

It was not within the Enquiry's remit to pronounce on whether abuse occurred or not. But it does seem extraordinary, in the light of the rest of the Report, that it had so little opinion or guidance to offer on how people working in child protection should regard and deal with spontaneous information from children which is disturbing and suggestive.

Given the Orkney Enquiry's numerous recommendations about the proper planning and conduct of interviews with children, where does this leave the status of revelations in home settings, at the dinner table, during natural play, in school, in the car, outside the interview building? Are we now to become so professionalised and specialised that all these become invalid? Do such revelations have to be tested again in unnatural interview settings, with questioners the children may not trust?

We need answers to these questions urgently. Not just because this would have offered a way of listening to several real children in Orkney, but because it is precisely in natural or incidental settings that children are most likely to reveal crucial information on whether or not they have been abused. However excellent many of the Orkney Report's recommendations have been, the emphasis, in this sense, was in the wrong place. We do not find out the truth, nor lessen more than marginally the burdens of evidence we place on children, by reducing interviews from four to two a week, or even by meticulously recording the questions and answers.

We do it by cutting down the whole status, role and importance of investigative interviews with children. First, by switching radically towards investigating adults instead. Secondly, by finding the most professional ways of validating vital information that children give spontaneously - in everyday places where they feel comfortable, and where they have the right to remain. ■

“That wasn’t so bad as when he said that no one would believe me.”

Some things that might not sound so bad to us can have tremendous resonance for children and the abuser can become very skilled at knowing what threats will work to make sure the child does not tell. Some things which can sound quite ridiculous or bizarre to adults are totally convincing to a young child. Someone at a training session once said, “You know, my abuser - who didn’t even live in my house - told me that if I told he would put poison in my mummy’s cup of tea. I know it seems silly, but I used to watch my mum, every time she drank her tea, with great terror in my heart.”

So the abuser has all these ways of keeping the secret safe, and the secret itself begins to take on dimensions for the child. It becomes like a burden they carry around with them. And it can begin to dominate their emotional life, after leaving them drained and unable to concentrate.

And the other complicated thing about this secret is that the child doesn’t always know the boundaries of it. “If only I knew what it was that I’m keeping secret, but what is it? Is it that bit? I know there’s a lot of stuff going on, but I’m not sure what bit of it is the bit that’s wrong or needs to be kept secret, or will cause the explosion if it’s let out. If only I was not so confused then I wouldn’t be in danger of letting any of it leak out...”

And what do you do if you are carrying such a secret? Well, you might avoid P.E. classes at school in case, by undressing in front of other children you will somehow ‘reveal yourself’ and they will ‘know’. At the extreme end, you might withdraw and talk to no-one, so that there is no danger of ‘leaking’ anything. Or you might throw up a smokescreen of fibs in reply to any personal questions - even trivial ones - and get yourself labelled as a chronic liar - very useful of course to your abuser, if any investigation should ever be made. These are some of the ways of trying to deal with a secret that is elusive and difficult to define and it takes up a tremendous amount of emotional energy.

Every child wants sexual abuse to stop. They might not want all the other things that go along with telling someone about it to happen, but they want the abuse to stop. This secret is the key to it stopping - “If I could tell somebody who believed me it could be stopped. But it might also make all these other things happen.” That is the dilemma - a real Catch 22.

I want to move on now to the next stage, *the accommodation stage*. The child lives with the abusive experience in its secret world, but also has to live in the ordinary world out there. They are increasingly able to distinguish between the two worlds - but how do they learn to survive in both?

One way is to take the attitude that “This person (*the abuser*) that I am dependant on must be a good person because I need him to look after me. He can’t be doing bad things to me so it must be me that is bad. Right enough, I didn’t stop it in the first place.” Or “This person seems to be OK - he comes to my house and my mum and dad seem to be his friend...”; or “he is respected in the community and looked up to - how can he be in the wrong?...” And the abuser is right there at their side to encourage this way of thinking.

So they begin to think there’s some kind of responsibility they have for it. They think that not only are they responsible for the activity itself, but for the emotional well-being of the

family too. “If I keep the secret, my mummy won’t get hurt or my brothers and sisters won’t get abused as well - if I keep it to myself.”

The child can start feeling responsible for the abuser; “If he gets into trouble it is going to be my fault.” The child becomes responsible for that as well. In Eleanor Hill’s **The Family Secret** the girl has a father who is wonderful at opening up the outside world, who takes the family camping and away on adventures, but who occasionally gets violent and moody. He dominates his wife and is difficult, casting a shadow over the whole family.

The girl learns that if he asked her to go off with him during these bad moods for a drive in the car and sexually abuses her he will come back in a good mood. She grows up seeing herself as responsible for dealing with her daddy’s moods and for the emotional well-being of the family. She learns to service this man and be responsible for him.

So this accommodation stage involves a complete reversal of roles, with the child taking on responsibility and the adult assigning it. In one case, this was neatly put into words by the abuser - “What we are doing is wrong, and I could get into trouble, so you’ll need to stop me next time...” And, of course, the child tried to do this unsuccessfully, exacerbating her feelings of guilt and responsibility. It also means that if the story begins to come out, then there is no immediate relief for the child or young person - only despair that what is being revealed is not the abuser’s shame, but the victim’s. The victim has enormous fears about what the world is going to think of them.

So what are the feelings we are dealing with in the child prior to any disclosure? Well, confusion, vast confusion in lots of areas of life. Fears, real fears. “When is it going to happen again? Is Mum going out? Am I going to get sent here for my holidays again?” Fears of getting pregnant for teenagers, fears that somebody will find out...

‘The law prefers clarity and consistency - and that is the very thing a sexually abused child is going to find most difficult’

But there is also often a progression from fear to anxiety. We get the child that regresses, that bedwets after having previously been toilet-trained, that soils, has nightmares and agitated sleep, night terrors, poor concentration, generalised fear of males, and so on.

Sometimes, there is the anxiety to please. The child that seems over-mature, rushing to please you. “I know if it comes out, people will hate me and reject me, so I must work twice as hard to prove that I’m a good person.” This again takes enormous energy.

There is also guilt and shame and there are feelings about the body - so some teenagers wear layers and layers of clothes to mask their sexuality, or get into alcohol and drugs, or feel worthless ugly and damaged.

There is a tremendous feeling of isolation, of being different. Even children who have read about sexual abuse or seen a programme on TV about it and know it does happen to others, will still, inside their heads, feel that they are alone, segregated. Often when the abuser is in the family he will try to isolate the child he is abusing from other people - not let her go on

school trips, stop her from getting to know her teacher and so on - because he is afraid that she might start trusting somebody else. So the child’s sense of isolation grows - the abuser encourages this isolation because he gains from it.

The *disclosure stage*, then, is never simple. If you think about the child experiencing any of these feelings at all, is it really surprising that we don’t get children coming up and saying “I’m being abused”? In this context, we know disclosures are going to be fragmentary, disguised, confused, coming in little bits at a time. You will be tested out. “If I told you something I bet you wouldn’t like me” is a common thing for care workers to hear. It is going to be “I know somebody...” or “I’ve got a friend who...”. There will be anonymous notes in school jotters, unconscious bits of behaviour. Given the burden that the child has been under it could not be otherwise.

It would be wonderful if the legal processes could take account of this. But the law prefers clarity and consistency - and that is the very thing a sexually abused child is going to find most difficult. It would be wonderful, wouldn’t it, if children could just come and tell us “I’ve been abused” - it would certainly make our job a lot easier, we wouldn’t get criticised so much, we wouldn’t be discredited in the courts so much. But the reality is they just can’t do that.

And it takes time. Sometimes there are bits that are left for a month, or a year, or longer. These are often the bits that make the child feel worst. They aren’t responsible for these bits, of course, but they feel they are. If a child has been made to do something *to* the abuser, that can often lead the child to feel somehow responsible for the abuse; it is often a lot more difficult for a child to talk about what he made them do to him, or made them do to other children, than to talk about what he did to their body. That guilt can be carried well into the healing process. I always think survivors are pretty far along the

line when they are able to talk about these things.

There can come a stage when the story is coming out, the secret is starting to disintegrate, and panic sets in. Many of the things that they were threatened with really do begin to happen. The child feels that people don’t believe, or they wouldn’t be asking all these questions; the non-abusing parent has no one to support her through her personal crisis, so may be having difficulty giving the unequivocal and immediate support the child is looking for; the child may be under tremendous pressure, covert or overt, from the abuser. Life is in chaos. It is sometimes much easier to go back to carrying the old familiar weight of the secret than face these new pressures - so we have the child who retracts what they have said.

I hope it says something positive about the way we work now that we are not getting so many retractions. Hopefully we are learning to make it easier than it once was for a sexually abused child to tell us about their abuse, be believed and be helped. Hopefully we are learning to listen better than we once were. ■



'JUST ME AND MY WEANS'

Almost a quarter of all families in Strathclyde are one parent families - single parents are no longer a small minority. **Christine Kay** talks to **Colin Chalmers** about her experience of bringing up four children on her own in Glasgow - and of the help she did and didn't get.

The happiest days of my life were when I had the three and they were all younger. Bringing up three kids was a complete doddle, it was lovely. No social life, no nothing, just me and my three weans and I was happy. I wish I could be like that again.

I've got the four now. Graham's 5, Stephen's nearly 12, Alison will be 15 in March and John turns 16 next month. But then I was staying in Castlemilk, in one of the schemes in Castlemilk.

14 *Scottish Child* December 1992/January 1993

If you mention Castlemilk to anyone they say 'I wouldn't stay there, it's this, that and the next thing'. But Castlemilk was alright.

In the summer I'd go out and sit with the neighbours, with the weans all playing. There were the playschemes and they used to take the weans everywhere - art galleries, here, there, everywhere. It was really good.

I used to be with my weans all the time. Then they started going to nursery and school. There

were nurseries when they were young, I had no problem nursery-wise. They were available in Castlemilk.

I got to meet people more when they were in nursery. I'd go to the shops, maybe visit a neighbour, or walk back with one of the lassies from the nursery. I remember at that time feeling that I was constantly talking - I couldn't shut up, no one could get a word in. I think it was because I was talking to an adult, I was trying to

'The best years of my life were when I just had my three weans, quite happy and content'

say in the space of five minutes things I'd wanted to say all week. I was that short of adult company I'd talk about everything in the space of ten minutes. Then gradually it wore off as I got to know more people.

One time I was going to go out and work and I put into a nursery to get a full-time place. But the problem I found there was that you had to have the job for six weeks before they would even entertain taking the wean in. That's really no good, because when you start the job you need it there and then. So that put me off.

I went to a class once, I went to do my Higher English at St. Margaret Mary's in Castlemilk. I had to get one of the lassies down the stairs to keep an eye on the weans, it was from six to half-seven, but the class folded because there weren't any funds. So I gave that up.

I feel childcare has got a lot easier now, but it depends on the area. Some places have started courses for single parents where they go and pick up your weans from school and keep them until a certain time. But it does depend on the area. Some places you have to depend on a neighbour or a friend. The way that works out quite a lot is through the single parents' group. If you go to your single parents' group and you wanted to go out to work and you knew that somebody there would rather watch the weans to let you go out to work then you can work it between you.

When I had just the three of them and they were all younger it was a lot better financially than now. I had no family to back me or help me in any way, but when they were wee I could manage on the money I got from the DHSS. I was on my own, I had nobody - but at that time I could buy Alison a skirt and a jumper every week and John trousers and a jumper every week.

You get more problems being a single parent once the weans are older. In the last three years, with the three older ones growing up, I've found it really tough. I can go through two loaves in a day - the amount of food I go through you wouldn't believe. When I go shopping you'd think I was shopping for a month.

It takes you all your time just keeping them going in clothes. they want this and they want that and if you get them anything cheap they're not wearing it. If they see a **What Every Woman Wants** bag they're just not wearing it. See if John wants trainers I need to depend on my cheque man to get me a cheque to get him trainers - and even at that it's "I'm not going into a shop with a cheque."

At Christmas, when I buy my weans their Christmas presents, I buy them everything I can think of buying them because none of my family buys them much for Christmas or even birthdays. I've got to do all that myself, compensate for being the mummy, the daddy, the auntie, the uncle and everything at Christmas time.

There was never such a hardship financially when they were all younger. I was never in debt then, but in the last three years it's been debt constantly. The only way out of the financial situation I'm in is through debt. My John turns

16 next month and he'll not get any money to live on. He'll not get a penny. So that won't make things any easier.

When I think back five years ago, my life was just totally my weans. That was before I got involved in the single parents group here and started getting to know what a social life was. A couple of the lassies would go out on a Thursday night and they asked if I wanted to come out with them. I said okay and that's how I started going out.

I've never had a holiday myself without any of my weans. I've never even had a night in the house myself without any of the weans. But in the last two years I've started going out a bit. At first it's strange, but then you do gain confidence and you start to take more interest in yourself. I'd been cut away from all that for so long. Then I started to realise that there was more to life than just staying in all the time.

Individuals are all different. Some individuals don't want to give up their night life and they get babysitters in all the time. Then there's other people who just have an instinct that they want to stay in with their weans and they're quite content with that. One of my pals has always wanted to go out as well as have her weans. But for me, the best years of my life were when I just had my three weans, quite happy and content. It depends on the individual.

A man can add to your problems. Like just now, I've got a lot of financial problems, but I always get there. But if I had a man here I wouldn't be able to do that, I'd be keeping an extra man. Plus you've got all the problems of his moaning and growning and wanting money for this - and that means the weans doing without. Wee things like that. So I don't think life would be easier for the weans if there was a man about.

Some women stay with men who get drunk and batter them all the time and it's just selfishness. They still love them and they can't live without them so they'll stay with them. They've still got those feelings and they love them that much that they can't live without them and that's why they take it.

Once the hate sets in that's when they'll leave. That's when they come to terms with it. When I got battered about, that's when I called it quits.

I moved to Castlemilk from Springburn to get away from my husband. He was always in prison - he would get released from prison and then after a bit he'd end up back inside. He would get out the jail and he'd come back up and I wouldn't open the door and he'd kick the door in and he'd batter me. This was when my weans were young and they didn't know what was going on. They'd be in their bed and he'd come up drunk and kick the door in and batter me.

At the time I went to the Housing to see if they could get me a house well away from him so he wouldn't know where I stayed. But they said the house was in my name so they couldn't do anything about it - in other words you've just got to take it.

Then one day I was talking to this woman who said she wanted a house in Springburn and I told her I wanted a house away from it. I said I'd exchange houses with her as long as she never told anyone where I went to. It worked out and I ended up in Castlemilk. I wasn't caring where I was going, what like the area was - I just had to get away and that's what I did.

Once I got away from Springburn, away from him altogether, cut all the ties from him and moved to Castlemilk, life was great. I didn't have the hassles of him appearing at the door or wondering if the Social was going to stop my money, all those things.

Once I'd moved to Castlemilk he did find out where I stayed though. He broke my nose once and the police in Castlemilk said I should take out an interdict on him and so I did. I've never heard anything from him since.

I never thought of going back to him. Some single parents are afraid of admitting that they're having problems, that they can't cope, and that's why some of them take their man back. But it's a waste of time going back into a situation that can only get worse. You need to cut the ties, carry on with your life and think of your weans. There'll always be another life for you and your weans later on. I never thought there would be another life for me when I was going through it - but there was.

I had a friend who went through all that going back and forward, back and forward. She had a terrible life, she nearly lost her weans through that. The court actually took all her weans into care until eventually she divorced him. That's when she got her weans back.

Once you've divorced one man it's hard to trust another man. A man can hurt you so much it's unbelievable. To listen to a lot of single parent women you'd think they were anti-men. They're not really anti-men though, they just can't trust a man. But then there's somebody turns up and they fall for him and they're hurt again. It does go on. The safest thing is to keep away from men and that way nobody can hurt you.

A lot of my pals say that at night when the weans are in bed, specially with the winter nights, they sit and get kind of lonely. But I was just entirely different. Men never bothered me. I wasn't interested - I couldn't care less.

If I was to meet someone next week and they wanted me to get married I wouldn't marry them, even if I wanted to marry them. I don't think it would be fair marrying somebody and if he was working expecting him to pay off all the debt I'd accumulated over the last couple of years. I'd be more inclined to try to clear off all my debts and then think about it later on. I couldn't afford to get married at the moment.

I remember years ago I knew a lassie who had a wean at 15 and got married as soon as she turned 16. She got divorced when she was 24 or 25 and the minute she was divorced she was never in. Her mother had her weans, everybody had her weans except for her.

We were talking about it one night and I asked her "What makes you go out and do such



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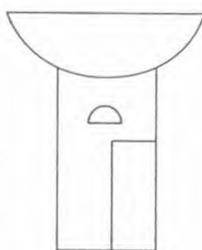
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'Some single parents are scared to go for the help they need because they're scared of having their weans taken away'

stupid things?" and she went "The way I look at it I never had any teenage life, I'm just making up for lost time". She married the guy who was the father of her wean and all he did was mess about, he never took the wean seriously. She was left to bring up this wee wean, then she had another two after that and all he did was have girlfriends - he was never there. I never agreed with the way she was acting but I could see her point to a certain extent.

I never seemed to get lonely - but it can be a problem for a lot of single parents. The single parent groups are good for meeting other single parents so you can just phone up a pal if you're really fed up and maybe go over and sit with her.

Once you start being a single parent you seem to go into yourself to a certain extent, things happen and you just accept them. The Social Security did a lot of things to me in the early years and I just accepted it.

There was one time when I was staying in Springburn my ex-man came up and stayed for two or three days. The Social Security stopped my money because of that, they stopped my money for six weeks. They sent for me and this fraud guy was shouting and bawling at me, saying "We're not paying you" and I went "Is that right?". I just accepted it, went up the road, no money to keep the weans and that was it!

I managed though. I had a neighbour down the stairs who had her electricity cut off so she couldn't feed her weans, so when she got her weans' dinner in she'd cook it in my house and she'd give John his dinner. Alison was only on bottles at the time. At that time you had milk token books, so I could still get Alison's milk.

After a while of this I collapsed in the street with starvation and worry and ended up in Ruchill Hospital. When I got out I went up to the Social Security and they started paying me again. But that was six weeks they hadn't paid my gas, electricity, rent or anything. I had to pay back all that arrears. At that time I didn't know anything to say - if it had been five years later I would have known to have put in an appeal and claimed back that money for the six weeks. But I didn't know about all that then - like I say, you just sort of accept things.

Some single parents are scared to go for the help they need because they're scared of having their weans taken away. See if a baby falls off a couch, a single parent mother will be frightened to tell a doctor when she takes that wean to a hospital that the wean rolled off a couch in case they say she's not looking after that wean properly by leaving the wean lying on the couch. She'd be more inclined to say something stupid, the first thing that came into her head, and then they'll tell her the wean couldn't have got an injury that way. And yet if that was a married couple they would say "The wean rolled off the couch" and nothing more would be said about it.

Last year one of my weans got into a wee bit of trouble with the police and got arrested. As a result of it all he went to a Children's Panel. That was the first time I'd ever had anything

like that happen to me and I really panicked - I grounded him, I done this and done that, I couldn't believe it was happening.

Then I wondered if I needed to get a social worker. So I phoned the Social Work Department and explained the situation and all they did was listen to what I'd done and how I dealt with it and said "Well at this stage there's nothing we can do, you're coping well". That was it, story ended. The social worker said I'd done everything possible, so there was nothing more they could do that I'd not already done.

But at the same time, at the back of my mind, I was thinking "I hope they don't think I can't cope and then when it comes to this Children's Panel they take him away". Because that would destroy me. As far as I'm concerned nobody will ever take my weans away. I'll always be in control. I know my weans - how far to let them go and how far not to let them go - and I can deal with them. Nobody will ever be able to say to me "You cannae cope, I'm taking your weans". No chance. I've kept my weans all this time and I've done everything for them and nobody's going to come in and say they're going to take them away.

There is a lot of prejudice against single parents, and children of single parents. When you first become a single parent you feel as if everybody is going to be talking about you. I know quite a lot of single parents who don't admit that they are single parents because they feel embarrassed about it. There's a lot of older people still don't want single parents staying beside them.

There was a single parent moved into the next close to my mother, a young lassie, and my mother didn't like it at all. I said to my mum, "I'm a single parent!" "Aye," she says, "but some of these single parents have different people in their house", and this, that and the next thing. I says, "I never done that". "Aye, but that's different"; I went "That's not different, you're judging that lassie before you even know her. She might be an ordinary single parent that just prefers to be with her weans and isn't interested in guys, there again she might be one that is. You'll just have to wait and see before you go shouting your mouth off."

Some people seem to think that single parent families aren't proper families. A lot of people tend to think if there's trouble it'll be the single parent's wean that's responsible - it wouldn't be the other one because he's got a mum and dad. Social workers are a bit like that. As far as they are concerned all children with single parents are problems. That's why all these surveys are coming out saying children with single parents are the ones that get into trouble - they must be getting their statistics from somewhere and I maintain it's from the Social Work Department.

Social work today, say compared with ten years ago, has absolutely collapsed. The only cases they deal with are child abuse, they're not helping any individual families or any individual person. Something has to happen before they do

anything and then they come out to you and try to re-organise your life. People nowadays feel there's nothing the Social Work Department can do for them that they can't do for themselves.

The biggest majority of single parents get help from their families. If they don't have families it's usually friends. If they've not got any friends it would be really hard, more depressing than anything. I think it's important to have some sort of friends, like a good neighbour.

Now and again I take depressions, which I never took years ago. But then years ago they needed me more so I had to keep going and keep them going so I never got the chance to get depressed. I was happy when they were young, getting their things ready for the morning, things like that, but now I can get depressed very easily.

I get to the stage sometimes that I feel they don't appreciate anything I do for them, they don't care what happens as long as they're alright. They can do everything for themselves and sometimes it feels like there's no point me being here. It's feeling sorry for myself - whatever I do, I can't please them. They're out the door away playing with their pals, they're quite happy, and I'm left sitting here. Things like that get to you.

I've got a neighbour with a £52,000 house, two weans, her and her man are working, and she tells me "I don't know how you manage with four of them". A lot of people say they don't know how I do it but at the end of the day I just have to and that's it.

I feel there should be people you could phone and tell that you've got a problem. Say your 12 year old isn't in and should have been in an hour ago, you want someone you can phone and say "I'm getting worried, is there any chance of you sitting the wean while I go looking for him?" Or say you needed to take a wean to the hospital and you needed someone to look after the other weans while you go to the hospital. There should be someone you could phone to help you out.

One time Graham had an abscess, I didn't know it was an abscess till I took him to the doctor and she told me they would have to operate. I'd never heard anything like it, the only thing I knew about abscesses was that the junkies used to get them. I had to go to Yorkhill to get the operation and it's miles away and awkward to get to. So I phoned my pal Anne and asked her if there was any chance of her running me to Yorkhill with Graham to get taken in and operated, and she came over and ran me out, with her own two lassies, and she collected me as well.

There should be a contact for things like that. I think a lot of single parents would like that idea. I'd like it if somebody phoned me up, say even two o'clock in the morning, and said, "Christine, could you take these three weans in for the night?" or whatever. I'd find somewhere for them to sleep. That's one thing - single parents do tend to help each other out. ■

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DRAMA IN SCHOOLS

As thousands of school children across Scotland begin rehearsals for a Christmas performance, just how much will they be learning from their experience? **Carol Harris**, a primary teacher at Murrayburn School in Edinburgh, describes her own less traditional approach to school drama.



gic!

Upon seeing the star, Joseph turned to Mary and said... and said... and said... nothing. He'd forgotten his lines. Pushing back his scratchy head-dress, well actually a dishcloth, and looking at his teacher flapping frantically in the wings, he finally says.... "Eh miss?" Sounds familiar, doesn't it?

At this time of year, schools throughout Scotland are hard at work preparing for their production of the Nativity Play - the re-enactment of the birth of Christ. This is "Theatre", structured to give pleasure to the invited audience of parents and guardians. The plays usually get 10 out of 10 for their cute factor and have their place as a community event, but what is the educational experience that they offer? Before I answer this, let us have a look at what is going on in the school playground.

Over by the trees children are deep in discussion about the secrets of the tall giants and desperately working out how to retrieve a stolen, magic key. Between the two sets of railings other children are working out how to cross a crocodile-infested river. On the football pitch a child deftly dribbles the ball past her opponent to the cheering sounds of a packed Tynecastle Stadium. Two more children are furiously clapping hands and singing *When Jenny Was a Baby*. Behind the main building some older children are discussing the problem of a bully and working out and agreeing a plan of action. In a corner, a house is being set up and a meal made from leaves and twigs. An argument develops because a child doesn't want his dinner. Nobody is forgetting their lines and nobody is feeling self-conscious. It is natural dramatic playing with no need for an audience.

Suddenly, the bell goes. The bubble immediately bursts and all the footballers, explorers, families and magicians line up ready to return to the classroom.

As I see it, it is then that my most challenging task as a teacher working with educational drama begins as I attempt to create in the classroom a similar atmosphere of magic and purpose that I see every day in the playground. This facilitates all kinds of expressive activity and provides a framework which extends play into meaningful experience with clear educational goals. Children's games usually have a tense 'moment' which is worked through co-operatively to suit the players. It is this

conflict that sets the imagination alight. The age old questions "What's going to happen?" and "What should we do in this situation?" engage the children immediately.

Likewise in educational drama, a conflict or a tense moment is presented as a problem to be solved. In a nutshell it's 'learning by doing'. Educational drama is structured so that children get a kick out of its process. It may have, but it does not need an end performance in front of others as its goal.

In a current topic on The Rainforest, my class and I have entered an imaginary world where we are a tribe called "The Hidden People". Together we have re-named ourselves according to the qualities within us. Piranha Hearts, Squawking Macaws, Running Panthers abound and of course as the Shaman (or wise person) I am Old Jaguar Heart. We have set initiation tests to check our stealth and bravery as warriors. We are given symbolic feathers for these and wear them proudly. Using our special, chameleon-like powers we change ourselves into bridges to cross raging rivers, caves to protect ourselves from hungry jaguars or simple stepping stones to avoid the sucking leeches in the quagmires.

As teacher, remaining 'in role' it is not what I say but the questions which I ask which engage the tribe's families in discussion and problem solving. When a member is bitten it is the tribe who must devise a ritual ceremony to appease the angry spirit of the snake. They improvise chants and choreograph movement naturally out of their need to please the snake. At no point do I suggest moves (e.g. hop, skip, jump), although as wise woman, I do provide the stimulus of drum music in the background.

The class, in their role as Indians, work in what is known as complicité style. Through a subtle process of co-operation and follow-my-leader they tune in to an awareness of themselves as integral parts of a group. The leaders who emerge in such groups are often different to the regular ones in class. Children who are unmotivated in class become totally engaged in the learning experience. As the drama work progresses, so does the complexity of the environment they have created. Death, marriage, and hunting rituals are devised, spoken and non-verbal communication is developed to run alongside this. The next problem to be solved



Photos: Colin Chalmers



will be a theft in the village of one of the treasured feathers...

From a structured start in drama, I gradually give over more control and responsibility to the group for their own learning. Children frequently *know* what *they* want to learn - their approach is always unpredictable and original. In a previous rainforest drama, with another class, the development of the work was along a quite different path to the one above. Its shape closely followed the children's own interests.

On one occasion we were white explorers tracking the Indians. The children spoke with little respect or care for the Indians. Intervening, to deepen the experience we did a "meanwhile" exercise and became the Indians. Similar to my current class, we quickly built up a community and arrived at our understanding of the interdependence of life in the rainforest. Returning later to our original roles as the explorers, the children decided to abandon the trip. On asking "Why?" a child told me that "We had no right
20 Scottish Child December 1992/January 1993

to be there and we would only cause trouble". This turnaround is a clear example of how drama can effect the meaning of a situation for children at a deep and internal level.

Coming back to the Nativity Play at the beginning, I ask - can the level of understanding I am describing above be reached through this type of theatre? What about all those Josephs who can't remember their lines? The answer is really quite simple - if a child has really stepped into the shoes of a character they themselves have created, they understand the conflict which faces that character and they *always* know what to say. They understand the essence of what is going on and although the precise words may change on repeating a scene, the meaning is similar.

Certainly the teaching of theatrical skills *does* have its place and devising scripts and then using them as the basis of a staged play is potentially a useful learning situation. However a more *real* need for written work can arise from

drama. This can include maps, plans, letters, poems, songs, interviews, scripts, stories and reports.

In a project we did about the Highland Clearances, children entered into the role of poor, evicted crofters. The children, in an attempt to revoke the law, wrote begging letters to the factor. They apologised through gritted teeth for an unfortunate incident that they felt had precipitated their unfair eviction and pleaded their cause. The letters were very powerful and echoed their feelings of despair at their fate. The drama work which went before the writing of the letters was instrumental in their deep understanding of this situation.

On leaving the croft the children wrote a beautifully sad poem about their life there. A stunning masterpiece was painted of the scenery in Van Gogh style by each child as a piece of reflective action. Other poems were written telling the story through clapping songs in the style of playground games, waulking songs in



'Using our special, chameleon-like powers we change ourselves into bridges to cross raging rivers'

English and Gaelic, and precise and clipped machine performance poems reflecting the new life in the city factories. Throughout this work children of all developmental stages were very motivated and committed. Drama can feed work across the curriculum in this way.

Drama work can also explore and investigate a wide range of social issues. In a recent project the class simulated a local radio station. As an action broadcasting team they researched, wrote and recorded a 20 minute radio programme centred on the theme of bullying. This approach allowed a sensitive topic to be aired safely without prying into painful personal experiences. Many of the situations were role-played so that real-life bullying victims played the role of bullies and vice-versa.

The children grasped not only a strong sense of their listening audience but also the *real* purpose behind the work - underlining the importance of speaking out about bullying. Several children who normally experience

difficulty with written language work were so motivated by the experience that they were bringing scripts, jingles and vox-pops into the classroom that they had produced at home. The conclusion of the project was the playing of the tape and the showing of a hand-crafted illustrative slide show.

The kind of drama activities I have been describing, by their very nature encourage co-operation and trust to develop within the group. This inevitably has beneficial spin-offs in the interaction of the class members in situations inside and out of school. As a situation is solved, language skills are quickly built up but equally crucially a practical working method is also put into place - the co-operative process of devising a plan, experimenting through trial and error, and finally reflecting on the experience gained and arriving at an appropriate resolution. This model of working can also be applied successfully to the solving of mathematical or scientific problems.

My own approach to structuring children's learning through drama was developed from observing and studying children's dramatic play in informal settings. By providing a vehicle for children to express themselves that is based closely on the format found in the playground, I attempt to bridge the gap between the world outside and the classroom. That this process is also successful in reverse is attested to by feedback from parents describing the enormous amounts of energy and enthusiasm for just about everything that the children begin to bring back home with them. Instead of slumping in front of the television they are suddenly making and creating things for themselves and blossoming visibly in the process.

What more can I say except to return to the Nativity Play one last time and suggest that it is perhaps time for us to encourage the white-netted angel to move on out of the limelight and to start really thinking about finding Mary a room at the inn. ■



LET'S GET STUFFED!

Eating out with kids - is it a fun-filled treat or a hassle not worth the effort? **Aileen Bruce** tells us about some of her experiences as a mother of two - and sounds out parents and children from around Scotland on their experience of taking the kids out for a nosh up!

Nowadays I rarely make plans to eat out with my two children. Partly that's because it's so expensive - partly it's because the experience is likely to be such a stressful one that the actual eating barely registers. On a recent visit to Glasgow, for example, I dragged both my children past **Burger King**, all the way up Sauchiehall Street to what used to be called the **Third Eye Centre** and is now known as **The Centre for Contemporary Art**. We had previously enjoyed family meals in the cafe there and I knew that there was space to park a buggy and a flexible menu offering appetising, healthy food. It was also somewhere I could have a glass of wine while the children were eating.

As soon as we arrived it was obvious things had changed. I noticed that the big, squashy settees had gone and that the place seemed quiet even though it was Saturday lunchtime. I was sorry about the settees but the quiet atmosphere felt like a plus - queuing at a self-service counter with two hungry children in tow is no way to start eating out!

The place, I saw, had been re-vamped as **Cafe Barcelona**. Nice little dishes - tapas - were now on offer, and a good selection of salads. I asked for a single hot dish and a big plate of mixed salads that we could all share. Immediately I gave my order, the woman behind the counter went over to another woman and they began whispering. A few moments later I was presented with a small plate of green salad. Summoning my courage and keeping my temper, I explained that what I wanted was a selection of different salads on a big plate for the three of us to share. I was told firmly that the salads "only come as side dishes". It was horrible to feel so unwelcome. Worst of all I knew before we even

started that we'd still be hungry when we left.

Of course it doesn't have to be like that. From my own experience of other places and from talking to parents across Scotland I know there are cafes and restaurants, not to mention pubs and hotels that do welcome children - enlightened publicans, friendly waiters and waitresses in restaurants serving the food of various countries - Italian, Indian, Chinese, Greek - as well as child-friendly vegetarian cafes like Glasgow's **The Bay Tree** and Edinburgh's **Seeds** and **Helios Fountain**.

Maybe we've come to expect places that sell 'real foods' to be welcoming to kids. But other more mainstream commercial ventures are slowly getting their act together as far as children and eating out goes. Take somewhere like **The Waverley Market** in Edinburgh. Several children I know of say they like its waterfalls and the pianist and the feeling of space that the open-plan offers.

When I first asked parents about their eating out patterns with their children I found their initial reactions were much like my own - "We don't eat out with the children" and "We used to eat out with them but..." However on closer questioning many people realised that they eat out with their children more often than they think. If you look around any town or city there are adults eating out with children at almost every hour of the day. Typically it's mum having a much-needed seat with the kids in a cafe, shopping mall or a fast-food outlet.

So, what are the consumers from around Scotland saying about their choice of places to go? As Janet, mother of eighteen-month old Nathalie from Inverurie sees it, "Aberdeen is a child-friendly city but even so you have to know



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'If we take the rigid view that children's play and adults' leisure are necessarily at odds with each other then we are going to miss out on the real possibilities for shared pleasure that eating out with kids can offer'

where to go. For choice, Natalie and I go to the **Bon Accorde Centre**. It has a food court with a communal area and good changing facilities with free nappies if you need them. There is also a creche for slightly older children. The Centre is Natalie's favourite... I know because that's where she's most relaxed. For special treats we go to **Buckie Farm** - a steakhouse about 5 miles out of Aberdeen - or the **Little Chef**."

Amanda, who lives in Edinburgh with children aged eight and four, reflects that "parents who have been out shopping want somewhere with child-sized portions of decent food and highchairs and bibs, accessible loos and room for the pushchair. I rate safety as a priority. Why present a table cluttered with lethal weapons? My advice to parents new to eating out with toddlers is: Don't spend your meal moving things out of reach like a demented chess player. Wrap your child in plastic and let him explore the ketchup and mayonnaise unhindered! I'll bet you a poke of chips that table becomes miraculously uncluttered before you can say pass the J-cloth! My children adore **McDonald's** or **Burger King** and the embarrassingly tatty **Commonwealth Pool** cafe."

Although quite a lot of parents who eat out with children during the day see themselves as still 'on duty' and not able to fully relax, those who run the businesses, providing the food and the setting, are aware that with the right "aids to happy eating" feeding children can be a stress-free, cheery occasion. Ronnie Rusack, manager of **The Bridge Inn**, Ratho is in no doubt that a progressive attitude towards the needs of families eating out is where the future lies in his business.

"We started off with my wife, a trained nurse, offering a babysitting service to new mums to allow parents to get out together again. More recently, with the business sector diminishing because of the recession, we've moved more into the family sector. With everyone having more leisure time and the return to old-fashioned family values, the emphasis is more on doing things as a family. 20 years ago the pub was a place for men not women - hopefully we've progressed a lot since then.

"I think it's important to educate children to appreciate that the pub is not a mysterious place, that drink is not always to be associated with violence. The days of pubs as the drinking man's retreat are over. Places that don't cater for families are missing an opportunity."

But that view is still a minority one in Scotland. Hosts who want to hold on to the 'children shouldn't be seen or heard' in pubs and restaurants are still very ready to use the licensing laws to bar children from their premises. And of course parents with children are left in no doubt when they're on premises with a public house licence - they're thrown out!

Hardly less unsettling is the frosty reception

- the snub over the menu, the uncompromising size of portions, being relegated to the back room, away from the 'real' business of the restaurant. Most parents I asked could recall instances of being ignored, given poor service or rushed through as quickly as possible. Interestingly, several of them could still name these child-unfriendly places even when the experience dated back many years. All, like Janice who lives in Fife, were clear that when you get this type of treatment you don't go back again - with or without your kids.

"I've got three children between twelve and sixteen and I can honestly say that my worst experience was at **The Waterfront** in Edinburgh. We were so angry. We'd spent a lot of money at that place going there as a couple but when we took our kids we sat for fifteen minutes being glared at - then we left."

If we take the rigid view that children's play and adults' leisure are necessarily at odds with each other then we are going to miss out on the real possibilities for shared pleasure that eating out with kids can offer. Rhona from Dumbarton whose three children are aged between 8 and 15 puts it this way - "I take the view that if I'm going to go somewhere, the children come with me! In Glasgow the **Spaghetti Factory** and **Di Maggio's** treat kids like adults, with as much a say as anyone else. **The Parthenon**, a Greek restaurant, was very good at explaining the dishes to the children, very friendly. It was made clear that if the kids didn't like something, it could be changed. At **The Ghandi** on Sauchiehall Street they paid as much attention to the children as the adults and offered smaller portions. Nearer home in Dumbarton we're very happy with our local Chinese restaurant. The **Pizzaland** on Sauchiehall Street were very slow to serve us, and even then my eight year-old got his 'kiddies meal' later than everyone else. No apology or explanation was offered. We felt we were being rushed out. But they had lollies at the cash desk so they must've been trying at some level to be child-friendly..."

Janice felt the same about her preferred Glasgow eating places. "I'd suggest **El Piscatore** or **The Godfather** in Glasgow. They're both very welcoming and my kids love eating Italian food. They get daft ices, with silly straws and free ice-creams if they get to know you. So, needless to say, we keep going back!"

Are attitudes in Scotland slow to change because people don't have an alternative with which to make comparisons? John from Renton who has four children aged between eleven and eighteen thinks this may well be part of the problem. "When our first child was born we lived in the Middle East where children were seen as important and generally welcomed. It was something of a shock to return to Britain with three children aged five, eighteen months and six months. We'd forgotten just how backward the British attitude to children can be. There seems to be a fairly general view that "the

children can wait". What they fail to realise is that when a family are in a restaurant it's usually because the children are hungry and the last thing a hungry child wants to do is wait.

"I do believe things are improving though. Some cafes and restaurants are *almost* welcoming to children. The cost of eating out is fairly prohibitive for us, but we recently went out as a family to **The Indian Palace** in Balloch for a birthday treat for mum. The children were served sensible amounts of their choice, the same food as for adults, but a little less to suit their smaller appetites. Their soft drinks were poured out for them with as much service as those for their parents making them feel important and wanted. Very importantly, their food was brought at the same time as the adults' food. All six of us left having enjoyed a relaxing meal together."

Across the the country in Fife, Elaine with her three children aged five, eight and twelve has some positive things to say. "I'd say Fife's good for eating out with kids. **The Pitfirrane Arms** in Crossford has videos to amuse the kids - once they've eaten they're off! **The Hope Tryst**, a pub in Dalgety Bay, is good too."

And further south, Pat reports from Jedburgh that "the only time our wee darlings gave us a hard time was in a vegetarian restaurant that we had dragged them into in a fit of zeal for healthy eating. They were not amused and let us know it. Looking back I'm not surprised - the food was boring and not terribly well-presented. In almost 18 years of eating out with children of all ages we really haven't had any bother, although we've probably avoided the ultra-smart, very expensive places where they might not have been particularly welcome. I'd personally recommend the **Glenbank Hotel** in Jedburgh. It allows children in at lunchtimes and evenings. I'd also recommend **The Green Cafe** in Hawick - traditional, warm, cosy, welcoming - the children really love it there."

The last word on all of this should go to the children themselves. Where do *they* want to eat? In a quick check round among a group of teenagers fast food joints seem to win hands down. As one of them summed it up, "I like **McDonald's**. I can go there with my pals. It's simple to order and you know what you're getting. You may see some of your pals there too, because people meet up at places like that. Next after **McDonald's** I like any self-service. You've less people hassling you and you can look and see what you're having before it arrives on your plate."

There are lessons in there for mums, dads and anyone who runs a business selling meals to people. Making space for children and adults to eat out together, and for teenagers to feel that they're welcome, makes sound commercial sense. It also goes some way towards helping to create a *people-friendly* culture - one in which everyone, children and adults, can enjoy their leisure time together. ■

Childcare in Scotland - Getting Better?

For the vast majority of parents in Scotland, childcare has been, and still is, limited by availability and cost. **Marion Flett** suggests that it will take more than new government guidelines on standards to ensure that childcare in Britain begins to match the quality already enjoyed by children in other European countries.





Julia Morris

Since October of last year, each Regional Council in Scotland has had by law to produce a review of services for children under eight. All existing services like day nurseries, playgroups and childminders have been inspected and have had to fulfil new regulations laid out in Section 10 of the Children Act in order to be re-registered. All such services will now have to be inspected every year. The theory is that this will provide a better guarantee that those who look after small children maintain certain minimum health and safety standards. Regional Councils must now also review their services every three years so in future we should be better informed and more aware of what is available in the way of childcare in every region in Scotland.

In the first instance the registration process should pinpoint where the gaps lie and where there is a mismatch between needs, demands and what is available. We already know however - and have done so for a long time - that the major problem is the lack of provision to meet changing family circumstances and the unwillingness to spend public money to meet changing childcare needs. Little has changed since the European Childcare Network Report of 1988 showed us as having the worst levels of childcare provision in the European Community.

There are dangers in the new guidelines because the government so far shows no sign of making new money available to fund much needed changes and improvements in childcare services. Without an injection of more money into this area of public spending the guidelines may drive local authorities towards a supervisory and regulatory function - the one they are required by law to fulfil - rather than encourage them to expand existing services and develop new ones. If this happens the guidelines will not serve as a mechanism for improving either the quantity or quality of childcare on offer to parents.

Indeed the fear must be that this is likely to be the case. At a time of deep economic recession it is increasingly difficult to persuade either the public sector or employers that increased support for childcare is of benefit to us all - despite the fact that providing good quality childcare has been shown to be 'cost effective' in the long term. Another danger of emphasising the

regulatory function is that there is a tendency to stifle creativity and initiative rather than encourage new approaches and innovations.

Yet the need for good, affordable childcare is as great as ever - as Usha Brown of the **Scottish Low Pay Unit** has reminded us (see *Working Miracles Scottish Child* August/September 1992) the vast majority of women have to work out of sheer economic necessity - out of 'need, not greed'. But at the same time as they are encouraged to rejoin the labour force, retrain and use their skills in the marketplace little effort is made to support their most pressing need of all - good quality, affordable childcare.

Recent Scottish Office statistics, if taken at face value, could lead one to suppose that pre-school children in Scotland are well catered for when it comes to childcare - almost half of all three and four year-olds are in some form of daycare and over a third have an education authority nursery school place. There is no reason to doubt these figures. What we need to remember, however, is that only 7% of the nursery education places are full-time - the vast majority are part-time, meaning about two and a half hours a day. As for daycare being provided for nearly half of all three and four year-olds, the Scottish Office figures include not only childminders and day nurseries but also playgroups and family centres, many of which do not provide childcare as an alternative to parental care at all, or only on a limited basis. There are other anomalies - some children are counted twice because they attend two types of provision; childminder figures cover all children up to five, not just three and four year-olds. The picture is not as rosy as it might at first appear.

The regional reviews should give us a much more accurate picture of levels of childcare provision than is currently available. Regional authorities already have information on services for all under-fives, not just pre-school children (aged 3-5) and they now have to consider all services available for under eights. Perhaps this will provide encouragement for the idea of considering the needs of all young children and not simply those in a particular age group, or 'pre-school' children as if the status of children of three and four was defined already by their relationship to an institution which they do not

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'Mothers, particularly working mothers and those on low incomes, will be left having to 'work miracles' as usual'

yet attend. Accurate information on the current position is a first prerequisite.

The split between childcare and education continues to cause real problems in the provision of services for young children, as Helen Penn has highlighted in her book **Under-Fives - The View from Strathclyde**. That Region's pioneering efforts to coordinate services for under-fives show that this split is not simply due to administrative difficulties caused by the different areas of responsibility traditionally held by different departments. Departments can differ fundamentally in their attitudes and values, which can be difficult to reconcile - even more so against a background of scarce resources and growing need.

The result of all this is that money is spent piecemeal, without sufficient account being taken of the overall picture of childcare needs. Take Grampian, for instance. The Regional Council there have responded to an increase in demand for nursery provision in rural areas by extending nursery education on a 'part-time', part-time basis. This means that children can attend three nursery education sessions every week of two and a half hours. Leaving aside the pros and cons of this type of provision - and there are both - what is noticeable about this response is that it is not part of an overall attempt to coordinate services, both statutory and voluntary, in the area. Grampian Region has in fact given greater support to the voluntary sector in recent years, as well as initiating its rural nursery project - but they do not seem to have attempted to fit together the pieces of the childcare jigsaw. That task remains with parents - particularly mothers.

There is a similar picture in Lothian, but on a much grander scale. There, the Regional Council has announced that all four year-olds in the region are to have the opportunity of a nursery place in their pre-school year. Already 82% do so - and additional investment will allow for the creation of 1,100 extra places by the end of 1993. This means in effect that all children will have the opportunity of a publicly provided part-time place in a nursery run by the Education Department.

Like Grampian Region, Lothian seems to be working on the premise that the priority in terms of resources is the extension of the formal education system downwards. Yet in doing this, they are unable to move beyond the bounds of traditional nursery education provision.

Members of Lothian's Education Committee readily acknowledge the value of nursery provision - but their optimism in declaring that the educational nursery model "allows parents, particularly mothers, more freedom" is widely misplaced. It allows little scope for mothers to find jobs and indeed restricts many women whose domestic timetable is severely constrained by the demands of taking and collecting children for such short sessions. Mothers, particularly working mothers and those on low incomes, will naturally take up the 'free' nursery place but will still be left with the problem of arranging and paying for supplementary childcare and having to 'work miracles' as usual.

The Lothian and Grampian experiences both highlight the confusion we face in providing children under five with care and education. Policy makers in different departments make decisions about particular services without taking into account the complexities of what is needed. Parents need services which benefit their children and which are flexible enough to accommodate the needs of family life. Yet they are often forced to accept less than suitable options because they are the only ones available and affordable in their area.

So what are the important issues that we should be looking in these reviews of childcare services?

Well first of all, we need to be clearer about what constitutes good quality childcare. Good childcare is not a substitute for mothering or fathering - it is not compensation for inadequacies in families. It does, however, involve children in positive relationships with caring adults as well as other children and an acknowledgement of the learning that occurs by default, if not by design, wherever a child is placed. Thus the educational dimension is an inherent part of the process. How it is put into practice is another question.

We also have to be clear about the difference between *standards* and *quality*. The Scottish Office guidelines place great emphasis on *standards*, relating to such issues as space, adult-child ratios, safety measures and other quantifiable regulations. A recent discussion paper produced by the European Childcare Network, on the other hand, highlighted a whole range of issues that relate to the question of the *quality* of childcare - access and availability, resources and materials available to children, the experience and qualifications of staff, relationships with parents and the local community, and much more.

While not wishing to undermine the importance of standards, we have to recognise that they are not necessarily synonymous with what constitutes good quality provision. What actually goes on in a childcare setting, including the relationships between people, both adults and children, are crucial to good quality childcare but hard to quantify in terms of standards.

The role of staff in nursery settings is another area of concern in the debate about quality. Once again, boundaries between departments, each with different aims, expectations and training structures, have been a source of deep confusion about the contributions of different staff in early education and childcare settings.

Educationally trained staff are primary teachers who may have an additional qualification in nursery education. They work in education nurseries with children aged three and over. They are not trained to work with younger children and have little opportunity to gain experience of organising integrated full-day care as so much of nursery education provision is organised in short, intensive time periods.

Nursery nurses are trained in all aspects of childcare for very young babies up to the age of five and, increasingly, beyond. In a childcare setting they may have sole charge of young children; in an educational setting they will be

part of a team responsible to a teacher. At one time nursery nursing was not regarded as a long term career and the pay and conditions in both public and private sectors reflect the low status that has always been attached to the job of bringing up our youngest children. Yet many experienced women are now returning to the field - or staying within it. Their contribution is often undervalued and unrecognised. Despite the fact that in some social work settings they are asked to work with adults as well as children and to take on an increasingly sophisticated job, their training, support and pay have not improved.

Social work staff are trained to work in settings where there are problems. Their job involves working with families who need additional support and children who require 'care' as an alternative to care in the family. Since it is Social Work Departments which provide publicly funded daycare it is not surprising that such provision has become stigmatised, with such daycare being seen as a *substitute* for family care and by implication second best. We are not always good at making the distinction between quality childcare as a universal provision and social work 'care' for children 'at risk' or 'in need'.

The childcare review poses a dilemma for Social Work Departments in Scotland. On the one hand it is Social Work officials who are responsible for the inspection and registration of all childcare services. On the other hand these same departments provide childcare services - but of a particular type, for children whose families are under stress. Social Work Departments need to make a clear distinction between their inspection/registration role and their provider role. Otherwise there is a danger that all childcare provision will be judged according to Social Work criteria, designed for family support rather than universal care and education.

Responding to the needs of young children and families offers many challenges for the nineties. In Britain as a whole, and in Scotland in particular, we still lag far behind our European counterparts. French childcare experts are concerned about supporting European Community Directives in childcare for fear that they will be dragged down by the poor levels of provision in countries like Britain. They are worried that far from encouraging everyone in Europe to achieve the high standards set by countries like Denmark, Belgium and France, national governments will cut back their contributions on the basis that 'If they can get away with it in Britain, why not here?'

We have to hope that the childcare reviews will lead to more than an expansion of a regulatory function for local authorities and that it will mark a further step on the path towards recognising the need to value children - all children, but particularly the disadvantaged and dispossessed. As the poem goes,

Many of the things we need can wait
The Child cannot
To her we cannot answer 'Tomorrow'
Her name is 'Today'.

David Cameron

was a childcare worker at a residential school for young people with epilepsy from 1989 to 1991. Here we publish four of his poems dealing with that experience.

Case Conference Report

I sat approvingly in the committee-room
And waited for the event to start.
It surprised me to have been invited
To this case conference of the heart.

A child appeared as representative
Of that repulsive, fat organ
The mention of which invokes a myth.
The committee wished to push on.

The surprise was that the smart child
Began to scream and then convulse.
The doctor placed his mound of paper
Under the head, and checked the pulse.

'This is the reason we are here,
And the main object of my study.
The heart, gentlemen, is ugly and queer,
And well-placed in the human body.'

I started to feel my heart beating;
Two tears filled my eyes.
'You, sir, surely beg the question.
This child cannot refute your lies.'

I was never in a room so silent,
Even the laboured breathing stopped.
There was no hiding what I meant.
I imagined myself naked, my hair cropped.

'By all means speak of the murder of innocence
Certain defects must be corrected
If from the murdered innocent
A normal child be resurrected.

We are trying to rebuild the heart.'
The doctor spoke calmly, and with aplomb.
And when the sick child let out a fart
There was no laughter in the room.

from A Scarecrow for all Seasons

I overlook, from my field,
A residential school
With children who wear helmets,
Not to look cool

But because they cannot stand
Without falling down:
A general sickness in man, but more
Pronounced in them.

I never saw them froth
At the mouth, as is said.
They looked, to tell you the truth,
More alive than dead.

Despite this, they are carried
As human corpses are,
Away, not to be buried,
But somewhere, somewhere.



Lis Carpelan

new voices, new writing

Simon

I should keep stumm, like Joan or Darby,
Work my shift, watching the mice take fright;
But I say that Simon, who wets and shits all day,
Can't help it, because he fits at night.

He's a nice boy, and once was almost bright:
You can tell it in his eyes when he says 'I'm sorry'.
He dribbles and wears an apron, as you might
Expect. When he says sorry I say 'Don't be'.

When Simon was spilling dinner from his mouth
One day last week, I asked him who I was.
'Give me a clue,' he said. It's the truth
That beautiful ignorance deserves applause.

I would like to hear him ask, once in a while,
What is the meaning of life? instead of spilling
All that food down his front, but it's his style,
And over little territories he is king.

A childcare worker, whom children shun
Who know what's good for them, their wicked uncle,
I am a showpiece cog in a contraption,
Like Joan or Darby, equally sentimental.

But once, as in a fairytale, I stood up.
'Simon is a good boy,' I declared.
'It wasn't he who ate your porridge up,
And besides, things like porridge should be shared.'

I suddenly remembered I'm a coward,
And thought, I must be sick to say such things.
Too late, I was accused of being shop-steward,
A heavy accusation that still stings.

In for a penny, in for a pounding's
The stance the management took. It was absurd,
They realised, that all this commotion was
Over a boy whom few had seen or heard;

Who convulsed at night, and in the day said 'Sorry'
So witheringly, it stirred pity in your heart,
For which his favourite food was taken away,
And crimes committed in which I had a part.

I should have known my place, Like Joan or Darby,
Or the inanimate cuckoo thrust from the clock.
Cuckoo, cuckoo, Simon shits all day -
It's alright, cuckoo, the boy can hardly talk.

Geoffrey's One

Why do I keep avoiding you,
Writing letters I don't send,
And walk the leafy avenue
As though our friendship's at an end?
How's Crumpy? And how's Sam?
Who do you say I am?
Remember me. I was your friend.

All my hope goes out to you
And other friends I cared for there.
I called it a prison and a zoo
At various times, which was unfair.
Iron bars make a cage:
there are no bars, just your age
And mind are too dissimilar.

You left others more dear to you
Many times over, and so I fade.
A past which doesn't belong to you,
Where no distinction can be made,
Places me with the rest,
A fellow-traveller. At best
I'll maybe see you once a decade.

A mind so early undermined
By epileptiform activity
Teaches how merciful and kind
Is the God we worship on a Sunday.
Three languages you spoke:
Now you barely get the joke,
But laugh your head off anyway.

I saw the shape of future poems,
But kept them pickled in a jar;
Like you, pretended to join in the hymns,
Knowing what we both prefer:
To tear the words up and sing,
Our rags of newsprint washing
Windows down with brown vinegar.

You sing 'I Love America'
Over and over, and I mock
Your South American ancestry,
Unmistakeable in your talk.
Never the rose without
The thorn that puts faith in doubt;
And the nettle grows beside the dock.

I have avoided you, my clown,
Very successfully, but at last
The fool I am is breaking down
And sits mesmerised before his past.
Never, my friend, the thorn,
The rose without which we are born
Incomplete and die too fast.



The Good, the Bad and the Very Strange

Penguin Small by Mick Inkpen (Hodder & Stoughton £7.99)

This is a good story with nice pictures. The big pages you open out are fantastic! But the end came too quick. I thought the Neverwozanoceros was funny and he had a clever name. A book that is lovely to read and look at. It would be fantastic to keep.

Sami Ibrahim, aged 6

I liked this book very much. I like penguins and I know that they live at the South Pole. The snowman was funny when he said, "What's a hat?" I laughed when the polar bears were jumping up and down. I like the pictures which fold out, especially the great big whale. I like the pictures of the penguins feathers flapping about. The story was exciting and I was pleased when he found his friends.

Christina Knox, aged 5½

Penguin Small was about a penguin, a snowman, toucans and the Neverwozanoceros bird. I like the bit when the penguin was in the big storm. It was a bit scary and I like scary things. I liked it when the other penguins went to the South Pole. Penguin Small was sad and I like sad bits because they are interesting. There was a lovely picture of the jungleland in the middle of the book. I also like the picture of Penguin Small looking out of the snowman's hat when the waves were calm. It's a gentle picture which make me feel calm. I liked it when the snowman said "What's an Eskimo?". It was so funny!

Ellen Spaeth, aged 5

Omelett: A Chicken in Peril by Gareth Owen (Red Fox £2.50)

I thought the skeleton of the story was good, but it wasn't fleshed out very well. The descriptions were pretty rubbish. The dialogue was pretty lifeless and I could have done better illustrations. I thought this was an attempt to write like Dick King-Smith.

I did not like this book but if they simplified

are so well described in their often horrific detail that I often felt that I was there myself.

I thought that the use of numbers instead of names for the mink was especially good because it reminded me of a human army where men are often given numbers instead of names.

Although the price of this book may seem to be slightly prohibitive, I would thoroughly recommend it as a gift for any young person

With Christmas just around the corner lots of us are rushing out and buying books for children. But are the ones we're buying any good? Here to help you with your choice are some reviews of a few of the books currently in the bookshops - by children aged from five to fourteen.

the language it would be better for young children.

Jamie Miller, aged 9¾

●

The Mink War by Gene Kemp (Faber £4.99)

This poem, describing what happens when the inhabitants of Wistman's Wood are faced with extreme danger in the form of an army of mink on the run, is among the best narrative poems that I have ever read. The story is powerful and fast-moving and the characters and battle scenes

with imagination and a love of animals. It is well illustrated in both words and pictures.

Elizabeth Simpson, aged 14

The Mink War is a narrative poem all about a group of animals who go into battle with a gang of mink. The story is colourful and vigorous. The verse presented an intense image of a wood and some animals preparing for battle in a way that reminds me a little of **Watership Down** or **Animal Farm**. The story is rather brutal, in parts, describing the "bones and speckled feathers" of the chickens that the mink have left behind



I Want Doesn't Get by Rony Robinson (Faber £8.99)

I tried very hard to read this book but I found that it was very difficult to follow. It was as though someone was talking and being interrupted all the time!

The little numbers were confusing sometimes and kept making me lose my place. - So I gave up and decided that because my Mummy had often said "I want doesn't get" to me I really knew already what the book would be about.

I don't think I could recommend the book, but it might be the right style for some children.

Kirsty Murray, aged 9 1/4

On Christmas Eve by Peter Collington (Little Mammoth £3.99)

It's a book with lots and lots of pictures and no words at all. It doesn't need words. Lots of angels are flying about and lead Santa Claus into a little girl's bedroom. One angel opens the door for the others and they all climb onto the Christmas tree and get candles. The pictures are really beautiful. The angels are very pretty with very pretty wings and very, very pretty dresses.

I like the picture of the girl eating chocolate because it gives me a warm feeling in my mind and I like the warm feeling of chocolate!

Ellen Spaeth, 5

Here I am by Russell Stannard (Faber £8.99)

This was a very strange book. I thought it was clever the way God spoke to Sam through the computer. I didn't like the way it didn't answer the questions it was asked.

I didn't like this book as it left you wondering. You didn't even know if Sam was a girl or a boy!

Jenny McKillop, aged 10

The main characters are God and Sam. Sam has a computer and God spoke to him through it. Sam didn't think it was God at first, but a hacker who got into his computer. The hacker wanted to teach Sam as much as possible. Sam eventually realised it actually was God. Whenever Sam was bad and didn't say sorry, God wouldn't come through on the computer. This worried Sam.

The story is teaching us about life, in some ways it was sad and some funny. It teaches about feelings and how to care for other people. My favourite chapter was "Boring" which showed Sam that church wasn't so bad after all. There was a chapter that I thought was quite scary. Sam was out in the dark and thought there were people following him.

I liked the book very much. It was very very funny especially in chapter six. Chapters one and eight didn't have as many adventurous things in them and weren't as interesting. There were a few words I didn't understand as I am only eight.

Laura Frame, aged 8

Black Holes and Uncle Albert by Russell Stannard (Faber hardback £8.99, paperback £3.99)

This is an extremely interesting and fun book, which has managed to put complicated physics into an easy and enjoyable form. Once Gedanken, Uncle Albert's niece, steps into the thought bubble you go with her, visiting black holes and the Imaginary Universe Laboratory.

Black Holes and Uncle Albert is an informative book and has taken the fear of physics out of me.

Jamie McCracken

This book would have been moderately interesting as a textbook, but as a story-book with scientific elements, it failed miserably. Its general style was very condescending, assuming the children had no knowledge of elementary physics at all. Younger children of about seven or eight might be happy with it.

I think that the general idea of textbooks-as-storybooks is a rather bad one. This book might help parents to explain various scientific facts to their children, but mostly the plot was too weak and artificial to really carry the idea through. I would not recommend this book, especially considering the outrageous price.

Rebecca Yearling, aged 13

Turbo and the Magic Meteorite by Zaqeline Souras and Lydia Souras (Old Bakehouse Publications £5.95)

The story tells you a lot of facts about space. I felt that they found the meteorite rather quickly. I think that they should have taken it more slowly there. The character I like best is Turbo.

The pictures are quite good, especially the ones near the beginning. I like the picture at the end of the book best.

Though the book seems like it's for children of 6 or 7 near the beginning I think its really for children of 8-11 or 12 because 6 or 7 year-olds probably couldn't take in everything e.g. "Earth's carbonate rocks prevent us from being poisoned."

I liked this book and recommend it.

Elizabeth Knox, aged 9

Good as an educational book giving facts in an enjoyable story. Some children would find it easier to read than a straight factual book. The story is too short but the illustrations are excellent. The book is not suitable for younger children who wouldn't understand it, it is for 11-14 year olds. The way they met the meteorite was particularly interesting. I like the way it portrays dogs as intelligent beings.

This is a good book for older boys and girls, but not for those with no interest in space.

Neil Weston, aged 12

These reviews were written as part of the book reviewing scheme in the Children's Department of John Smith & Sons Bookshop on Byres Road, Glasgow. Thanks to all the children who wrote the reviews and to Enid Boston for gathering them together.

them. There are also several unpleasant illustrations to go with the most gruesome bits.

The story was fresh, enthralling, atmospheric and vivid. I would recommend it to anyone from about eight upwards. On the other hand, sensitive readers may become distressed by the frequent, unsettling mentions of death.

Rebecca Yearling, aged 13

The Not-So-Jolly Roger by Jon Scieszka (Viking £7.50)

I thought the book was written in American. It starts in the middle and then explains the rest. This could muddle people but it made it exciting. The book is about three friends who were transported to the time of pirates. They meet Blackbeard the pirate and fight his enemy, the navy. They have a sea-battle and win. I enjoyed this book and think people from 5 to 9 should read it.

Robert Nimmo, aged 8

This book is all about three boys, Fred, Sam and Joe. Joe has an uncle who gives him a book. It is called 'The book'. Fred decides to go back in time, Sam and Joe don't want to, but as quick as a flash they find themselves on Blackbeard's ship.

I think this book is not very good. I wouldn't recommend it to others because it was not interesting or funny. The story is fairly boring and not worth reading.

Richard Livingston, aged 9



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The Way We Were

COUNTRY BAIRNS GROWING UP 1900-1930

Lynn Jamieson and
Claire Toynbee
Edinburgh University Press
£14.95

Linda Ramsay

The publication of this book is a welcome addition to the increasing array of literature based on reminiscence work. This is no sepia-hued, nostalgic meander through 'the good old days' - instead, the authors have used oral history to produce an academic, yet accessible, social history of family life in early twentieth-century Scotland.

A lot of the book is concerned with the experience of being a child at that time, exploring the relationship between children and their parents and the part played by young people in the everyday life of their community. The people interviewed for the book grew up in different parts of Scotland and in families of different social classes. They were children of crofters, of farm servants and of farmers, and they came from the highlands and islands, the northern lowlands and the southern lowlands.

The book's main interest is in the interviews carried out with people who were children at the time. However, in keeping with their view that "Lives are socially constructed" and that "The pre-existing features of the immediate social

environment put limits on individual experience", the authors devote a lot of space to the cultural, economic and household context of each of the people they talk to. In this way, they document the extent to which the everyday, personal experiences of the interviewees were shaped by the social and economic realities of rural Scotland at the time.

The transcripts reveal many regional and chronological variations. The authors point out that in an age of industrial capital "not all our interviewees were wholly integrated into a capitalist system of economic production or a money economy." Then, as now, many families had to find ways of 'getting by' in the face of extreme poverty and the interviews illustrate some of the ways families did this. Children often had to work, making an essential contribution to the household economy at the expense of their schooling; and mothers had to draw on all their expertise as household managers to make sure the family did 'get by'.

The view that 'children should be seen and not heard' was clearly the norm at the time. The unchallengeable authority of parents was universally taken for granted and was reinforced through the power of the church and the school. The Evangelical notion of the child being born of original sin was common. However, within these confines, the interviews illustrate the possibility of children from similar backgrounds having very different experiences of family life - often dependent upon the ideas and religious beliefs of their parents.

Perhaps surprisingly, in such an authoritarian environment, a high number of respondents report that they were rarely smacked. It is an open question whether this is because children were so aware at the time of the need for their

co-operation in order to survive that they rarely questioned their parents; or whether memories are unreliable and people have chosen to 'forget' the physical punishment they suffered; or whether the initial reprimands occurred when the children were too young to remember.

In emotional terms most children's relationships with their parents were less close than those of today, the more middle class parents appearing to have been the most distant. By the age of about 14 many respondents had to abandon 'childhood' anyway, to take up work or go away to school. Yet there is little resentment about this - a general air of resignation seems to reflect the limited expectations of what was then possible.

Few people are comfortable criticising their parents. We tend, then as now, to treat parenthood, and especially motherhood, as sacred. The accounts of childhood recounted here are, of course, adults' views of how children, usually themselves as children, 'should' behave, all of which makes interviewing the child within the adult more difficult, especially considering that even today society accepts that children are legitimately subordinate to adults in the hierarchy of power relations. However oral history of this type is an important step forward, especially for the less powerful in society. It has the potential to be the authentic voice of those who usually have their history and everyday life experience written about them by 'their betters'.

As reminiscence groups and oral history projects have increased in popularity over the last twenty years they have been used by various bodies such as women's groups, community development workers or those working with the elderly - all to achieve different ends. Using people's own accounts of their lives and giving value to that experience can encourage self-confidence, self-awareness and a self-consciousness arising from shared experience. Oral history can help give the experience of 'ordinary folk' the importance it deserves. It is a sign of the suspicion with which oral history is still viewed, however, that the authors feel the need argue the case for it in an appendix.

The arguments against oral history reflect a deeply-held prejudice that certain sections of the population - usually the young, the old and the poor - need someone else to speak for them; that their expressed views and needs are only valid if they can be 'properly' investigated and assessed by professionals and academics. Oral history of the type found in **Country Bairns** can be very revealing - not only about the way that 'ordinary' folk lived in the past but also the way they *felt* about their lives. Hopefully books like this that give a voice to the less powerful in the past will encourage a similar respect for the views and feelings of similar groups today. ■

Among the Contributors in this issue...

Ouainé Bain is a senior psychologist, specialising in child sexual abuse, with Strathclyde Regional Council Social Work Department and co-author with Maureen Sanders of **Out in the Open - A guide for young people who have been sexually abused**. **Aileen Bruce** brings up two children, runs her own business and is a member of **Scottish Child's** editorial group. **David Cameron** lives in Glasgow. **Marion Flett** is a Senior Research Fellow in Education at the University of Aberdeen and is Director of **Young Families Now**, a community-based project for young children and their families. **Martin Graham** is a social work student at Teeside University. **Carol Harris** is a teacher at Murrayburn Primary School in Edinburgh. **Christine Kay** lives in Glasgow with her four children. **Helena McNulty** is secretary of **Achamore Parents' Group**. **Sarah Nelson** is a journalist and author of **Incest: Fact and Myth**. **John Pelan** runs the children's section in an Edinburgh branch of Waterstone's Bookshop. **Linda Ramsay** is an adult education tutor in Edinburgh and a mother of two.



March Against the Child Support Act, Aberdeen

The Child Support Act - An Emotional Ordeal

Dear Editor,
After being awarded Income Support recently, I was called to attend an interview with the D.S.S. Family Support Unit. The woman who interviewed me presented herself and her department as a caring, protective unit whose aim was "to ensure that as a single parent family you receive maximum benefits and support".

Although I did have some idea that their *real* purpose was to try and increase my ex-partner's maintenance payments for the children I was totally unprepared for the emotional battering that I was to be subjected to for the next hour. No other benefits or forms of support were mentioned - the whole interview centred upon forcing me to supply information about my ex's whereabouts and circumstances. Was he married? Did his wife work? How much did he earn? These were the sort of questions they wanted answers to. I was told that if I did not answer these questions my benefit would be "affected".

Having given them some information, I was told that a form would be sent out to him ensuring

that he was paying what they considered to be "enough" maintenance. At this stage, I pointed out that I understood it was possible to stop this happening in certain circumstances, particularly if this this would put a woman or her children in any kind of danger.

The woman interviewing me told me that it was the law that the letter would have to go out to my husband. She lied and said she did not have the power to stop it. But how was I to know at the time that she was lying? An hour later she told me that in fact she could "put an over-ride on it" and that my ex-partner would not be pursued.

What took place for me in that hour, however, was an emotional ordeal. In an increasingly upsetting series of exchanges I had to convince the interviewer how much worry and harm might befall me and my children if my ex was harassed for extra money that, frankly, he did not have.

I ended the interview in tears, only just managing to hang on to my very real arguments - arguments which I had put perfectly clearly in the first place. I wonder how many other women are finding

themselves put through a similar ordeal? Even more frightening, how many of them are being placed in potentially dangerous situations so that the DSS can pursue absent fathers?

Name and Address Supplied

Dear Editor,
On Saturday 10th October about 50 women and children from around Aberdeen marched together down Union Street to the DSS offices in the Gallowgate and leafleted shoppers passing by to draw attention to, and protest against, the **Child Support Act** which will take effect in April 1993.

The Act will force lone mothers on Income Support to name the father of their children and will leave them dependent on maintenance with no guarantee of regular payment. Susan Fiddes, a member of the **Aberdeen Poverty Action Group** which organised the march, said "Lone mothers will be put in a position where they are forced to name the absent father even if the man is violent. Refusal to co-operate with the Child

Support Agency can mean cuts of up to £8 or 20% in Income Support or Family Credit."

The women and children, including groups from Tillydrone and Seaton, then made their way to Aberdeen Women's Centre in Shoe Lane for lunch and a discussion about the campaign's future plans to involve other women who will be directly affected by the Act. These plans include setting up an information base at Aberdeen Women's Centre, drawing up a leaflet and petition and setting up a regular Saturday morning stall outside Marks and Spencer. 'Caught in the Act', a board game dealing with the issues for lone mothers, will continue to be offered to community groups. The group are also considering initiating a Scottish-wide action.

If you want more information about the campaign you can contact Aberdeen Poverty Action Group c/o the Women's Centre, Shoe Lane, Aberdeen or phone them on 0224-625010.

Lesley Dunbar
Aberdeen

Another One Bites the Dust - Not!

Dear Editor,
Readers of your esteemed organ will be familiar with the **Powis Young People's Project's** 'restructuring' saga (*Another One Bites the Dust* Scottish Child February/March 1992). What they may not realise is that the project is still very much alive and kicking.

The general import of Ruth Campbell's article was almost that of an obituary, an anthem for doomed youth. The young people of a deprived area in Aberdeen had struggled for nine years to prove that the pseudo-equation 'Powis = Failure' did not hold true for them. Alas, all good things must come to an end. The headstone inscription reads 'Died, aged nine years. The 'much loved' offspring of Grampian Regional Council. R.I.P.'

Wipe that tear from your eye.

The **Powis Young People's Project** lives! During the 'reorganisation and restructuring' of services offered to the Powis community last spring, the project users decided to claim independence from Grampian Regional Council. What is more, they found that the weather wasn't that inclement out from under the council's umbrella. A self-sufficient **Powis Young People's Project** has encouraged the users to take even more interest in the day-to-day running of their project, including fund-raising to ensure the maintenance of its essential role for the young people of Powis.

Andrew Byrne and Kirsten Laidlaw
Powis Young People's Project
Aberdeen

Sexual Abuse Training Pack

Dear Editor,
The advance publicity you gave to the sexual abuse training pack *Can You Hear Me?* produced by Jordanhill College Division of Social Work and the RSSPCC Overnewton Centre and the review of the pack published in the October/November issue of **Scottish Child** will have contributed to the efforts we have made to bring it to the attention of as many people as possible.

Unfortunately, however, an editing mistake was discovered in the video as the first copies were produced. It was corrected for all the packs sold but not before the review pack had been sent to **Scottish Child**. It is regrettable that a message left for the reviewer did not reach her. It would have clarified the confusion she identified in the penultimate paragraph of the review.

I would like to reassure those who have already purchased the pack, as well as any potential purchasers, that the video and training materials are properly matched.

The pack is selling well and has been reprinted. As Jean Raeburn says in her review, "the pack is competitively priced and likely to be useful to a whole range of practitioners."

Tom Hammond
Project Leader
Overnewton Centre
Glasgow

Scottish Child welcomes readers' letters. Please send them to
The editor, **Scottish Child**,
40 Shandwick Place,
Edinburgh, EH2 4RT
or fax them to us on 031-226 3778.
We sometimes cut letters for length.

Research into Anti-Racist Childcare

Dear Editor,
As a magazine that highlights the rights and needs of all young people, I thought your readers may be interested in helping me with a research project I am undertaking for an MSc in Social Work.

The project is titled 'Anti-Racist Practice in Residential Child Care' in Strathclyde Region. It covers policy, how this is put into practice and how young people perceive their needs being met by this practice.

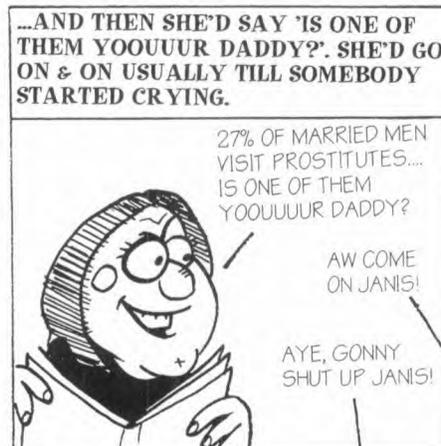
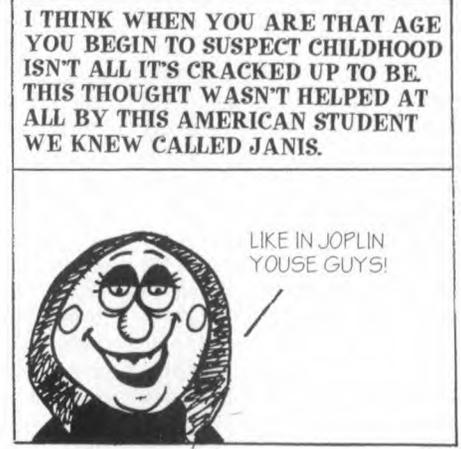
I am trying to compile a sample of young black people who have been through the residential child care system within this Region. Could I appeal through your columns for any young people or workers who know of young people

in this position, to contact me. Any interviews or enquiries will be strictly confidential.

Angela Gillies
Department of Social Work
Stirling University

We Spend All Our Adult Lives Trying To Recreate Our Childhood

Coburn & Naughton



Nothing can really prepare you for your first child. No book, video or hospital leaflet, nor any advice compensates for the shock to your system. Be warned. If anyone reading this is about to become a first-time parent then I recommend that you stop whatever you're doing for a moment, sit down, relax and enjoy the sweet taste of freedom. It will be your last for a very, very long time. For Baby is God.

I thought I was fairly well prepared, at least in practical terms. When, at long last, the time arrived and my wife's waters broke (it was either them or her) we set off for the hospital with enough bags for a world tour. We had large bottles of mineral water, bendy straws, boiled sweets, pocket monopoly, umpteen magazines, books, cassettes (we thought we could ease the baby into the world with some nice classical music - how naive), a studio's worth of camera equipment and pockets bulging with change for the phone. As it turned out, strangely enough, Jane wasn't really in the mood for playing monopoly or reading Women's Own whilst in the throes of labour. And the actual birth, when it happened some fifteen hours later, was accompanied by an energetic Betty Boo from the hospital radio rather than Vaughan Williams.

I had helped as much as I knew how to during labour. Rubbing Jane's back, squeezing her hand, sitting down between contractions to read the Sunday papers - just being generally unnecessary and in the way. More than anything I wanted a drink but it probably isn't a good idea to wet the baby's head before it's actually appeared. But appear it did, quickly followed by the rest of Him - Robert the Child-God.

It was a moment that Jane and I will never forget. It wasn't just the sudden awareness that our whole lives, in those few seconds, had been utterly transformed - it was also the shock of being confronted with the reality of what we had done. No longer a bump of indiscernible sex that kicks a lot but a real, live, ready-to-go baby



Jane Ogden-Smith

The New Father

John Pelan tells us about becoming a father for the first time.

that was all ours. I have to admit I did cry, but not as much as Jane.

And just what exactly were we supposed to do with Him? It was fine in the hospital with the midwives, nurses, doctors and cleaners on hand but when the time came for Jane and the baby to come home then we were well and truly on our own. Baby manuals are all very well, but the photographs are usually of happy, smiling, clean, dribble-free babies. Why can't they show the other side? Nappies filled with industrial waste; projectile vomiting; and a scream that sounds like someone has just let off a car alarm in your bedroom. Yet somehow, because He's a baby, I can cope, although not as well as Jane. And when He's happy - which, to be truthful, is most of the time - and gurgles or smiles then, yes, I do go all gooey inside. It must be a hormonal reaction. Christ, what's happening to me?

One of the best things about becoming a father is telling everyone. It's a bit like informing a friend that you have just come first in something or have won a

huge amount of money. I tried making the pretence of appearing modest and self-effacing about the news but in reality it was quite clear that I was obscenely gloating. However a lot of people didn't actually find the idea of fatherhood anything to gloat about and responses varied from 'Congratulations!' and 'Great News!' to 'Oh, well, that's your wings well and truly clipped' and from at least one person a long, dark laugh full of foreboding.

In general, people's attitudes to me, now that I am a father, have been pleasant and reassuring. However there are still many people who are obviously quite disturbed by the sight of a man pushing a pram on his own around parks and supermarkets or carrying a baby in a front-harness. When Jane takes Robert out she's continually being stopped by old ladies who want to poke Him and generally make a fuss. When I go out with Him I'm aware of accusing stares from some people who clearly think I'm defying the ordained and sacred role of motherhood.

People also seem to think that

because I'm a man I should be able to cope better with getting on buses with a collapsible buggy, four bags of shopping and a baby under my arm and that I would be offended if help was offered. A good example of this was when I was trying to cross a very busy road near my home whilst pushing Robert in His pram. I had been waiting, in vain, for almost five minutes for a break in the traffic when, to my relief, a lollipop man and woman appeared on the other side. As they stepped out they stopped the cars with their lollipop, crossed over to where I was standing and then walked past me without a word or even a glance, allowing the traffic to resume its manic rush. Clearly, men with small babies in prams don't merit help. Or perhaps they were just off-duty lollipop people, and I'm becoming neurotic.

In the three months since Robert the Child-God was brought forth, Jane and I have quickly grown accustomed to our new positions as unpaid slaves. What we have found extremely difficult however, is coping with the trauma of sending Robert to a nursery while we both continued to work full-time. Even though He's only there for three days - I have a sympathetic employer and can work weekends - it's far from ideal and, apart from anything else, bloody expensive. I get angry when I hear of how mothers can take a year off after the birth of their child in Scandinavian countries or how France provides tax-free childcare. Even my homeland Ireland, which is hardly a forward-looking country, has a longer minimum maternity leave period than the U.K. Why is this country so backward when it comes to anything to do with children?

All this makes it sound as if becoming a father is not really worth the hassle. Yet I can say, without any uncertainty, that Robert is the best thing that has happened to the both of us and each day brings something new and exciting in His great adventure to which we are happy and willing witnesses. I can't wait until he starts teething. ■



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IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF
SCOTTISH CHILD
FEBRUARY/MARCH 1993



HIV/AIDS is already a major health problem in Scotland - but are we doing enough to stop its growth amongst the young? A lot of people think we aren't - SCOTTISH CHILD investigates.

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