AN HISTORICAL STUDY OF LONDON'S EDUCATION WELFARE SERVICES
1870-1990

2. FULL REPORT

BACKGROUND
This study examines the history of work by London's education services to prevent truancy and to enable children to benefit from going to school. It charts the development of the school attendance service and of the Care Committees, a system of volunteers providing poor children with school dinners, clothing and medical care. Both services relied on visits to a pupil's family, creating a bridge between home and school. In 1970, they were merged to form the Education Welfare Service (EWS). The study covers the period 1870-1990, during which London had a unified education service.

The project started out as a small-scale study which aimed to produce three journal articles. However, it developed in the early stages of research into a larger investigation and led to a book entitled The Children of London: Attendance and Welfare at School 1870-1990 (see OUTPUTS below).

Before this project, little research had been done in this area. An ILEA report in 1966 contains some discussion of the historical background to the attendance and welfare services of London, but it is brief and heavily oriented towards the aims of the report (Bedford Report 1966). Although some books and articles have referred in passing to the work of Care Committees and School Attendance Officers in relation to London local government (for example Pennybacker 1995), they have not done so in any systematic way. One book has been written on school attendance in London, but it is limited to the period 1870-1904 (Rubinstein 1969). This gap in the literature is all the more glaring, given the range and high quality of historiography on education in London (for example Maclure 1990, Bryant 1986, Ringshall et al 1983, Devereux 1982) and on elementary schooling (Hurt 1979, Gardner 1984).

Historical work on the role of the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) in Britain more generally is limited to an introductory chapter to a policy study of contemporary truancy in the 1990s (Carlen et al 1992), an historical account of the role of the Education Welfare Officer (MacMillan 1977), and a short history of the National Association of Social Workers in Education (NASWE), the EWOs' professional association (Coombes and Beer 1984). There are some very brief accounts in government documents (for example DES 1984). A recent (and otherwise excellent) history of the school medical service in England and Wales contains no reference to the crucial role of London's School Care Service in the development of public health provision in schools (Harris 1995).

The Children of London builds on previous work by staff in the History of Education section at the Institute of Education, which investigates the past as a way of understanding the background to current policy and practice and of drawing lessons for future social policy (Aldrich 1996, Aldrich et al. 2000, Williams 1997). 'Our lives in the present and future,' argue Richard Aldrich (a co-applicant on this project) et al., 'are governed to a great extent by what has happened in the past.' Each human situation, they add, 'is unique and we cannot predict the future with certainty. Nevertheless, the record of human experience that is usually referred to as "history" provides a rich store of data which we neglect at our peril. Our understanding of the present and journeys
into the future will benefit from possession of accurate maps of the past' (Aldrich et al, 2000). This approach has been applied to the historical study of London's education welfare care.

The study is timely, given current debate about the future of the education welfare services in the UK generally. EWOs are seen as 'vital to any attendance initiative,' because they visit the family home and 'are detached from the school and yet familiar with its staff, structures and procedures' (Blyth and Milner 1999). Repeated attention was drawn in the late 20th century to the importance of the relationship between home and school (such as 'Home-School Agreements'). EWOs have been described as the first line of defence, since they are the first people to visit a child's home; on occasion, their commitment to the child can bring them into conflict with the wishes of the social services, schools and parents (Reid 1985).

The relevance of the study is enhanced by the renewed interest in -- and the government's stated commitment to -- the role of the volunteer in the community. Additionally, there is much concern currently about the best way for social services to protect and care for children. An Epilogue has been added to *The Children of London* as a way of looking at recent policy issues and relating these to the particular needs of the metropolis.

**OBJECTIVES**

1. **Aims**
   1a. *To trace and analyse the evolution of education welfare services in London from 1907 to 1990.*

   This was achieved. However, the period covered was extended: the starting-point was moved back to 1870, on the grounds that the Care Service had developed from roots planted much earlier than 1907. Moreover, using 1907 as a starting-point would have privileged the Care Service over the attendance services, which were begun in the year following the 1870 Education Act.

   1b. *To produce new knowledge and to offer an historical perspective on current debates concerning non-attendance at school and welfare provision to school children.*

   This was achieved.

   1c. *To lay the basis for a larger, in-depth project to investigate the historical development of education welfare policy and practice throughout the UK.*

   See **FUTURE RESEARCH PRIORITIES** below.

   1d. *To pay special attention to the issues of ethnicity and gender.*

   These issues were not investigated with the concentrated focus that was initially planned, but in the context of the study as a whole. So little work had been done generally on the history of education welfare, that it was deemed more important to carry out the research in a rounded and unified way, than to foreground these particular concerns. Further, it quickly became clear from the research that they are integrally related to other key issues, such as poverty and social class.
2. Output
Initially it was planned to produce three journal articles of approximately 8,000 words each. However, the study developed into a full-length book of about 75,000 words.

A key aim of the project was to disseminate its results as widely as possible, to policy makers and to service providers and users, as well as academics. It was therefore decided to develop a style for the book that would combine a high level of scholarship with readability, free of jargon. The readership of *The Children of London* will include: education welfare officers; school governors; policy makers in education; teachers; school health practitioners; researchers in issues relating to the child; academics of many kinds; local government; voluntary services, especially welfare agencies; public health historians and policy makers; social workers; social historians and historians of education; and members of professional organisations of EWOs. The use of illustrations, diagrams, tables and a detailed chronology will increase the accessibility of the book, which will become a valuable resource.

METHODS
In order to uncover the story of the education welfare services of London, it was necessary to carry out extensive research in archive collections. A wealth of qualitative and quantitative data were collected. Especially important were the papers of the London School Board, the London County Council (LCC) and the Inner London Education Authority, which are held by the London Metropolitan Archives (LMA). These documents include correspondence, memoranda and reports, especially the annual reports of the education service of London local government. The annual reports of the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education were consulted at the Wellcome Institute for the History and Understanding of Medicine. Also important were papers relating to the Education Welfare Officers' National Association, which are held at the Modern Records Centre at the University of Warwick. The records of central government, notably those of the Board/Ministry of Education and the Ministry/Department of Employment, were consulted at the Public Record Office. The archives held by the London School of Economics helped to fill some gaps. The archive collection of Patrick Ivin provided a core set of material and also provided some documents that were not available elsewhere; this collection was supplemented by additional material donated by a number of interested people.

Further sources included government and non-government reports, newspapers and journals, and a range of printed books, such as diaries and memoirs. Fundamental to the project was a review of secondary literature, including theoretical discussions and historical studies.

Interviews were conducted with a number of key informants, including former LCC and ILEA Care Committee organisers, volunteers and former and current Education Welfare Officers. Other service providers and users have contributed comments and recollections. Baroness Serota, who has particular experience of the School Care Service in her long history of service to children in London, provided a number of interviews at different times. All these interviews were held on a semi-structured and informal basis, which developed as the best method of helping informants to feel at ease and to share their ideas and recollections. Written comments were sent in by some former practitioners, including a former Young People’s Adviser and a Children’s Worker.

Contacts were made with a range of professional organisations including the National
Association of Social Workers in Education (NASWE).

An important reason for the enlarged scope of the project was the addition to the research team, on a voluntary basis, of a practitioner in the field, Mr Patrick Ivin. Mr Ivin, whose current role is that of educational management consultant, specialising in school exclusion, has vast experience both of London local government and of the education welfare services in particular. He became Director of ILEA Social Work Services in 1986; he worked as assistant secretary of the ILEA Education Welfare Officers Guild and was later President of NASWE. He had collected a vast set of documents on the subject, which he made available to the project. Mr Ivin is listed as one of the authors of *The Children of London*, to reflect his contribution and also to signal to readers the policy-relevance of the book.

RESULTS
The results of this study were threefold: first, the charting of London’s education welfare services between 1870 and 1990; second, the conclusions that were drawn; and third, some implications for future policy development.

1. **The historical account**

It was found that the education welfare services of London have their roots in the period immediately following the 1870 Education Act, which introduced universal schooling. The London School Board organized the enforcement of school attendance by ‘School Board Men’. Numbers of voluntary organizations, in order to ensure that the children of London were able to benefit from their right to an education, set up systems to provide poor children with school dinners, clothing, medical care and, later, help in preparing for life after school. These efforts were harnessed by the London County Council (LCC) in 1907 to form volunteer groups of Care Committees, which were organized by LCC employers. Both kinds of service -- attendance and welfare -- relied on visits to a pupil’s family, creating a bridge between home and school that was not normally provided in any other way.

This dual service of welfare and attendance was unique to London: most education authorities in Britain started with an attendance service only, which was staffed by paid School Attendance Officers and gradually took on welfare duties. Repeated recommendations were made to merge these parallel services. In 1970, they were combined to form the Education Welfare Service (EWS), which dramatically reduced the number of voluntary workers. Pressure grew for the EWS to become primarily a social work service, which culminated in the renaming of the service in 1986 as the Education Social Work Service. In 1990 education welfare care was devolved to the individual boroughs of London when the ILEA was dismantled.

2. **Conclusions drawn from the study**

2.1 **Care versus control**

Running through the story of London’s education welfare services is a tension between care and control: care of the needy by the provision of food and clothing; and control through compulsory attendance. However, the study has shown that this is not a straightforward dichotomy, since welfare provision was also used as a means to enforce certain kinds of behaviour. Nor is enforced schooling simply an act of control, since making children go to school also served as a liberating and empowering force.
2.2 **The value of the services**
The education welfare services of London have achieved differing degrees of success at different times: numbers of individual children have been given invaluable assistance, but many opportunities have been lost. Some of the causes are discussed below in 2.3--2.7.

2.3 **The disappearance of children’s voices from policy making**
Children have been given little voice in the development of education welfare services and their views are given scant attention in documents and reports. If anything, they appear to have become less visible over the years. This is reflected at the most literal level of visibility: the photographs of children that filled the LCC annual reports have disappeared from the flurry of reports produced in the last decades of the 20th century.

2.4 **The dimension of social class**
Education welfare services have always been targeted at the so-called ‘lower class’ children of society: attendance services were set up to get working class children into elementary school; and Care Committees were created to give food to the children of the poor. Even after the Education Act of 1944, the children of better-off families were largely untouched by these services. The class dimension has been complicated further by the different social status of the workers in this area of care: the early attendance officers were largely working-class; the volunteers and the Care Organisers were educated middle class or upper class; and the post-1970 EWOs have been professionals on low pay.

One of the aims of the Care Service, especially in its attempts to prepare children for life after school, was to integrate the elementary school leaver into ‘civilised’ society. This may be interpreted as the inculcation of middle class values which were perceived as superior to working class modes of behaviour.

2.5 **Issues of gender**
Care committee volunteers, who were mostly women, had more prestige and status than attendance officers, who were nearly always men. This was because they were almost exclusively from the middle and upper classes, while the attendance officers were working-class. For the most part until 1970, the two groups worked separately from each other, despite their shared aim to help children at school.

The pool of women available for voluntary service started to shrink between the wars, when middle class women began to pursue careers of their own and to work for pay. Even when they remained at home, their availability was eroded by the shortage and expense of servants to do their family’s domestic work.

Boys and girls were treated differently by attendance officers, who generally took a softer approach to girls.

2.5 **The ‘problematisation’ of the child**
At first, education welfare services in London were a direct response to the needs of poor children. But it is arguable that the services evolved in a way that at times better met the needs of the people working in the service, than the children themselves. This was most apparent after the creation of the welfare state, which removed some of the need for practical help. In order to
survive, the Care Service shifted its concerns away from material and practical difficulties to problems of behaviour -- away from children with problems, to children who were seen to be problems. This development was related to the growing influence of child psychology.

Evidence suggests that the Care Service diagnosed and 'treated' a range of so-called behavioural problems where this was inappropriate. The risk was greater in the case of volunteers, who received little or no social-work training.

2.6. The impact of professionalisation
The push for the survival of the Care Service in the Fifties was driven by the growing professional status of the organisers, who supervised the volunteers. For them, as members of the first generations of women becoming professional workers, the service provided a means of marking out the boundaries of new territory, with its own hierarchy. The growth of the social work profession contributed to -- and was promoted by -- the attrition of volunteers after the creation of the EWS in 1970. The service then moved from a partnership between the voluntary sector and the state to a situation where the voluntary sector had become irrelevant. One irony of this development was that many of the paid social workers came from a background not dissimilar to that of the earlier Care Committee volunteers.

2.7. The value of the volunteer
One of the more surprising findings of the project was that many families were more comfortable with a visit from a volunteer, than from a professional social worker. Parents often resented the hand of professionals and feared their power, as agents of the state who could even arrange for their children to be taken away. Volunteers, on the other hand, were not seen as threatening in this way. On the whole, families did not seem to resent the fact that Care Service volunteers gave them advice on how to bring up their children, even though they had no direct experience of the working-class mother's struggle from day to day to feed and care for her children.

Although the difference in social class between volunteer and client established a social divide, this was offset by the fact that volunteers worked without pay, which was seen as a testament to genuine concern. They were seen by many families as real advocates for children.

3. Implications for future policy development
The findings of this project will constitute a valuable resource for future policy makers and service providers.

3.1. The weighting of attendance and welfare
An important question thrown up by the research was whether education welfare provision -- in London and nationally -- should be a social work service or a service focussed on attendance.

Future plans need to take into consideration that the merger of the attendance and welfare services in London in 1970 was not so much a natural development, as one that developed out of external pressures. One of these was the shrinking pool of volunteers, now that many women worked for pay.

On the one hand, welfare and attendance service providers share the aim of helping children at school; moreover, both kinds of service require home visits and non-attendance may be
underpinned by social problems. But on the other hand, there is not an inevitable relationship between attendance and welfare duties. Criticism of the services before 1970 centred on the problem of duplication: but the duplication sometimes lay in the fact of the home visit, not in its purpose. This issue is underpinned by the tension between care and control (see 2.1 above).

3.2 Between home and school
The ‘bridging’ aspect of education welfare work – between home and school – has been regarded as the great strength of the Education Welfare Officer (EWO), whose remit today includes both school attendance and welfare help. But like the social worker and the former school attendance officer, the EWO represents the state, so may not be trusted as a disinterested friend in the same way as the earlier volunteers (see 2.7 above). This may be a reason for developing a new voluntary mechanism based on the successful aspects of the Care Committee system.

3.3 Consulting the children
Children have always been the focus of attendance and welfare care, in the sense that without them and their needs, there is no reason for the services in the first place. But despite this obvious fact, they were not consulted in the development of education welfare services (see 2.3 above). Such consultation may provide a way of better meeting their needs.

3.4 Investigating the question of social class
Issues of social class have been difficult and complicating factors throughout the history service (see 2.4 above). Exploring the reasons for this may be one way of interrogating the low rank of education welfare in the current hierarchy of social services. It may also serve as a first step to giving a voice to children, the service users.

ACTIVITIES
The activities generated from this project have been wide-ranging and have benefited from the visual evidence discovered in the course of research (see OUTPUTS). They are as follows:

- A seminar paper entitled ‘A silent service: School Care Committees in London 1907-1970’, given on 9 March 2000 in the History of Education Series at the Institute of Historical Research, University of London. The seminar was attended by several former practitioners in the field with experience going back to the 1930s, who contributed to the discussion that followed.

- Teaching sessions in the Doctoral Studies Programme at the Institute of Education, University of London. The material generated by the project has been drawn on heavily for sessions on ‘The Collection and Analysis of Data’. The sessions are termly: four have taken place and two are to follow.

- A paper on ‘The School Care Service of London 1907-1870: the role of women volunteers’. This will be given on 27 February 2001 at Oxford Brookes University. It will be one of a series entitled ‘Rethinking Health and its Social Relations in Historical and Contemporary Contexts’, which is organised by the Research Centre for the History of Medicine: Past and Present.

- A three hour teaching session on ‘The Children of London: Attendance and Welfare at
School to MA students at the Institute of Education. This will take place on 28 February 2001 and is part of an MA module entitled ‘Childhood: An Historical Perspective’ at the Institute of Education.


- A workshop is planned to launch the publication of The Children of London in September at the Institute of Education. Speakers at the workshop will include: Grace Cheese, President of NASWE; education and social welfare experts and academics; former and current service providers, including Baroness Serota, who is contributing a Foreword to the book; the last volunteer working in London (in Lambeth); and former service users.

**OUTPUTS**

1. **Book**

The Children of London: Attendance and Welfare at School 1870-1990 will be published in September 2001 by the Institute of Education, University of London. Its authors are A. Susan Williams, Patrick Ivin and Caroline Morse (in this order) and there is a Foreword by Baroness Serota. The structure of the book is chronological. Throughout the book, efforts are made to highlight the experience of the children themselves and to give them a voice. A wide range of photographs and other illustrations (see 3 below) are used, as well as tables, flow charts and diagrams.

The structure of the book is as follows:

**CHAPTER**

1. Introduction
2. School Board Men
3. Children’s Care Committees
4. Between the Wars
5. War and Evacuation
6. The Welfare State
7. The Bedford Report
8. Merging the Services
9. Conclusion
   Epilogue
   Chronology
   Appendices
   Bibliography

With the backing of the Institute of Education and the support of the Institute Press Officer, the book is likely to attract considerable media attention. Because of the focus on children, it is expected that this will extend to such fora as Women’s Hour on Radio 4 (on which the
director of the project has already spoken three times). This will help to disseminate the project findings and to ventilate public debate on current and future policy.

2. New Dictionary of National Biography (New DNB)
Research for this project identified a number of women who had played a significant role in British history but had previously been overlooked by historians. As a way of helping to fill this gap -- and as a consequence of project dissemination so far -- the director of the project has signed a contract to produce (by August 2001) three separate entries for the New DNB on the key women involved in the School Care Service: Miss Margaret Frere, T. M. Morton and Miss H.G. Nussey.

3. Collection and outline-listing of documents and visual evidence
A mass of documents has been accumulated in the course of this project. Much of it has been made available by Patrick Ivin, who has expressed a commitment to depositing this material in the archives of the Institute of Education in the near future. This collection has been supplemented by the collection of other documents, many donated by service providers. It will serve as an essential resource to future researchers.

A large number of photographs have been discovered, covering the whole period of the study. Other visual evidence includes cartoons and posters. The most exciting discovery was a silent film, which was made in the 1920s to recruit volunteers to the Care Service. All these have been used as effective aids in the teaching and seminars mentioned above (ACTIVITIES).

IMPACTS
A number of welcome links have been established. The interest of education welfare professionals, as individuals and as an organisation, is reflected in the wholehearted support of Grace Cheese, the President Elect of NASWE (National Association of Social Workers and Education) and President as of April 2001. Ms Cheese has asked the research team to help with the revision of its history of the professional organisations of school attendance officers (Coombes and Beer 1984).

Practising EWOs in London have expressed keen interest in the project and have asked to be invited to the workshop planned for September (see ACTIVITIES).

Interest in the research and the book has been expressed by the Office of the Children’s Rights Commissioner for London, which was set up in 2000 to promote and to protect the rights and interests of young people in London. Reference to the project and the book will be made in the first State of London Children’s Report.

At an individual level, the third researcher on the project, Caroline Morse, became so interested in the research that she is planning to do a PhD in history of education in a related area.

FUTURE RESEARCH PRIORITIES
1. When research for the project was first started, it was hoped that a subsequent project would extend its focus from London to the national picture. Certainly the research has identified a vast gap in the literature and has indicated that such work needs to be done.
Moreover, the current project has provided a useful model for such research: as a case study of London, it has developed an appropriate framework for the questions and methodology that would be required for a systematic and successful study.

2. Another priority for future research is an in-depth history of the ILEA. Again, little work has been done in this area, which created obstacles for the current project. This important study should be undertaken as a matter of urgency, while it is still possible for key informants to make their papers available and share their recollections.

3. Policy development for London would benefit from a study of the education welfare services in the metropolis today, looking at the priorities and work of the individual London boroughs and identifying the ways in which they do – or do not – work together. Comparing this situation with the more unified education welfare system of 1870-1990 would usefully inform plans for the future.
REFERENCES


Coombes, Frank and Beer, Dave (1984), *The Long Walk from the Dark: School Board Man to Education Social Worker. A Short History of the National Association of Social Workers in Education and its predecessors*. Birmingham, NASWE


