An evaluation of the Home-School Support Programme

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An Evaluation of the
Home-School Support Programme

Conducted on behalf of
The Programmes and Research Directorate
DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES

by
Gary Partington

with the
INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR POLICY AND ADMINISTRATIVE STUDIES
A Research Institute of the
WESTERN AUSTRALIAN COLLEGE OF ADVANCED EDUCATION

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Home-School Support programme is part of Education Services. It operates in all metropolitan divisions as well as in three country regions. Education officers are resource persons for field officers who have statutory powers. The education officers, however, have no statutory powers. There are 9 Education Officers in the metropolitan regions. Only two divisions have full time officers in the programme. In 1988 the programme serviced 443 clients in the three metropolitan regions and education officers were consulted over a further 752 clients. The metropolitan operation of the Home-School Support programme was evaluated with regard to those operations concerned with school contact. Institutions and hostels were not included, and neither were the duties of education officers in relation to other programmes such as juvenile justice.

The goals of the programme which were well known to the education officers (who were able to cite them instantly), are:

1. To provide appropriate entry and maintenance supports to educational opportunities for children and young people who are clients of, or who are known to, the Department.

2. To protect and support the right of every child to receive appropriate and regular schooling.

The mode of operation preferred by the Home-School Support programme is based on casework. Education officers make contacts with field officers, schools, families and resources on behalf of clients. A firm network of support exists for education officers so that they are not expected to solve all problems in isolation from others. Regular regional and head office contacts with other education officers ensures advice and support on difficult cases.

First contact with the client is made by the field officer who calls in the education officer if necessary. The education officers have to ensure that the field officer keeps in mind the possibility of educational issues for the child. Consequently close contact must be maintained.

School contacts are usually maintained directly with the classroom teacher in primary schools, but in secondary schools the contact is often through an intermediary such as the guidance officer. Education officers seek commitments from school staff to give their clients extra support and consideration. This requires considerable skill and diplomacy, attributes which the education officers demonstrated on school visits.
The clients and their parents display low levels of efficacy in handling educational matters and need the assistance of outsiders to establish goals for schooling and make links with the school and external resources. There is a clear need for the services of education officers to fulfil this need.

**ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE PROGRAMME**

The principal finding of the evaluation was that the programme functioned in accordance with its goals. Even so, there are changes which could improve service delivery.

The main achievements of the Home-School Support programme are:

1. The education officers demonstrate considerable skill in liaising with clients and their caregivers, teachers, field officers and others. Their use of communication skills, and their knowledge of and ability with the strategies recommended in the training manual as well as their ability to relate well to others were key attributes in their success.

2. Clients benefited from the intervention, and outcomes included an increase in trust, self-esteem, friendship, the ability to cope and improved achievement. Even where success was not evident, caregivers identified client unwillingness rather than education officer shortcomings as the reason for lack of success.

3. Schools were appreciative of the support provided and responded positively to the advice of the education officers. The majority of schools reported that children improved or were stable, and few problems were perceived.

4. Field officers accepted education officers as professionals with special skills which enabled them to perform tasks that the field officers found difficult and time consuming. They considered the Home-School Support programme an essential support service in their dealings with children and it has made their job easier since its introduction.

5. The support provided by education officers for each other and the support of regional coordinators for the officers enhances the delivery of the service. The teamwork displayed during the course of the evaluation was evidence of an efficient and active service.
RECOMMENDATIONS

The major recommendations to emerge from the evaluation were:

1. A greater emphasis on prevention should be adopted by the Home-School Support programme. While education officers have to respond to the needs of field officers in dealing with clients who are in crisis, earlier intervention to avoid crisis is a preferable approach to meeting the educational needs of clients. Methods of early identification of potential clients should be examined for this purpose.

2. Each division should have a full-time education officer to meet the demands being placed on the service. Divisions with part-time officers reported longer waiting lists, less effective strategies for dealing with clients (consultation rather than casework), and inability to service all field officers in the division because they weren't on the job all week.

3. The balance of time on meetings, cases and administration needs to be examined, especially for part-time officers. Considerable improvements in productivity would ensue if part-time officers were made full-time.

4. The range of alternative educational opportunities in the government school system needs to be increased to cater for children for whom mainstream schooling is not effective. These structures should be available to clients of the Home-School Support programme as well as other children in and out of the school system. Associated with this, the range of resources available to clients, especially in the primary school, needs to be increased significantly.

5. The Home-School Support programme should remain under the control of the Department to ensure it has maximum impact upon clients and schools.

6. The present mode of operation should continue, with referrals made by field officers and education officers working on case management. Consultations should be in addition to case management. The casework service should not be available to outside agencies but the expertise of education officers should be used to support other community initiatives in education. Such support assumes an appropriate level of resourcing for the programme.

7. The Department should establish firm links with the Ministry to ensure that the schooling alternatives developed by the Ministry are adequate to meet the needs of clients of the programme. Joint initiatives should be encouraged and expertise shared.
8. The service to Aboriginal and ethnic minority clients should be further examined to ensure it is adequate to their needs.

9. Although awareness of goals is widespread in schools, the existence of a number of misconceptions regarding the purpose and operation of the programme is possibly detrimental to the improvement of school chances for clients. Education officers should make clear to school personnel the goals of the programme when they make contact, and at intervals thereafter.

10. The relative insulation of secondary school classroom teachers, compared with primary teachers, from the expert assistance of education officers should be reduced. Alternative strategies for establishing direct contact with these teachers should be explored.

11. Education Officers, and social workers generally, need to maintain a balance between taking responsibility for decision-making for their clients, and developing in the parents of clients the capacity to make their own decisions for their children. Where possible, education of parents in responsible decision-making should accompany the development of the children's education.

12. The relationships established between the education officer and the client influences the success of the intervention. Education officers should ensure close attention to the quality of this relationship. The workload of education officers should be monitored to ensure they don't overload and so reduce the quality of interaction with clients.

13. Success for clients is often difficult to determine. Long term planning and assessment is desirable to identify significant elements that contribute to success in interventions.

The Home-School Support programme is functioning effectively from an organisational point of view, but the delivery of services to clients is limited by the lack of resources and the lack of time for education officers to work with them. The strong balance of opinion among all those outside Education Services who were interviewed or questioned about the operation of the Home-School Support programme was that the programme provided a worthwhile and effective service. Within Education Services there was a commitment to the goals of the service and a high level of cooperation among officers at all levels. The use of education officers' expertise in supporting educational initiatives in other Departments, particularly the Ministry of Education, should be encouraged, but should be accompanied by full resourcing. The recommended changes within the mode of operation of the programme are consistent with the philosophy of the programme and will contribute to the enhancement of the preventative function of the programme.
CHAPTER ONE

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAMME

Until 1980 the function of Education Services was to receive school reports for children who were wards and in foster placements, and to provide tutors for children who were educationally retarded. Field officers were advised to visit schools if reports indicated that this was necessary.¹

In 1980 Margaret Morse was appointed as Co-ordinator of Education Services. She conducted a survey of foster children's school attainment and found that

(a) 60% of foster children were functioning below the appropriate grade level for their age;

(b) 30% of foster children were educationally retarded by two years or more; and

(c) the best single predictor of school attainment for foster children was the level of literacy in the home.

Among Morse's recommendations arising from the study were the following two:

(1) Education Services should be focused in the home;

(2) Instead of tutoring the child, tutors should work with foster parents to help prepare the child for school.

In 1981 the Preschool Home Programme was piloted in the Belmont Division, with three Education Visitors and one Senior Education Visitor, all working part-time. In 1985 the programme accepted 106 referrals and employed five part-time Parent Education Workers and one full-time Senior Parent Education worker. The success of this programme led to the development of an equivalent programme to teach parents to help their school aged children. Home Support Teachers were employed through the Home School Liaison Scheme to liaise with schools, teachers and families or group homes and provide special educational programmes if required. In 1983 116 referrals were taken by four part-time Home Support Teachers. In the same year the service was extended to the country with the appointment of a Home Support Teacher at Northam.

¹ Sections of the historical development of the programme are taken from the Home-School Support Training Manual.
In 1985 both programmes expanded to all metropolitan Divisions and staff became known as education officers. The title of the Home School Liaison Programme was changed to Home School Support Programme. Most of the Education Officers, who still worked part-time, were based in Divisional Offices and became members of Divisional teams. Their brief was extended to the education of all children under the care of, or known to, the Department. The object was (and is) to try to empower caregivers and their children to access educational opportunities. Education officers worked with homes, schools and the community to keep educational options open for children by impacting on government and non-government systems and in the wider community.

Regionalisation of the Department brought further changes to Education Services. Full-time Regional Co-ordinators were appointed in the metropolitan regions to train and supervise education officers. In addition, each metropolitan coordinator was made responsible for a country region. These co-ordinators were responsible to the Co-ordinator of Education Services who was in charge of the programme. Guidelines for tutoring were established at the same time. In 1988 further changes were made when the Co-ordinator of Education Services was re-titled Senior Programmes Officer and tutoring support was regionalised. Now the programme operates on a regional basis with the officers responsible jointly to their Divisional Supervisors and Regional Coordinators and through those officers to the Regional Director.

Today the Home School Support programme operates in all metropolitan divisions as well as in three country regions. While each metropolitan division has an education officer in the programme, in only two divisions is the officer employed full time. In 1988 the programme serviced 443 clients in the three metropolitan regions, and education officers were consulted over a further 752 cases. A breakdown of referrals for 1988 by each division is provided in Table 1.
### Table 1:1
**Client Referrals & Education Officers:**
**Metropolitan Divisions, 1988**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>No. of Referrals</th>
<th>Educ Officers:Hrs/wk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Southern Region</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fremantle</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>1*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armadale</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rockingham</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>0.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>163</td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Northern Region</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perth/Whitfords</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>1*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scarborough</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>0.5/0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mirrabooka</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>151</td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eastern Region</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria Park</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>1*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belmont</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>0.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midland</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>129²</td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>443</td>
<td>6.05³</td>
</tr>
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### STRUCTURE OF THE PROGRAMME

Education Services is situated in each region, but has links with the Programmes and Research Directorate via Family and Individual Services. Education officers are resource persons for the field officers, who have statutory powers. The education officers have no statutory powers. The structure of the Home-School Support programme is illustrated in Table 1:2.

### Senior Programmes Officer

The Senior Programmes Officer for Education is located within the Programmes and Research Directorate. The role of the Senior Programmes Officer is to maintain the integrity of the programme and the quality of service delivery, as well as to co-ordinate other projects and initiatives. Policy development, interdepartmental liaison, evaluation and research, representation on committees and responsibility for programmes in institutions are responsibilities of the Senior Programmes Officer. This officer is supported by the Programmes Officer.

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* Regional Coordinator for the Region

² Separate figures for the division were not available.

³ Not including the three regional coordinators. Nine officers actually participated in the evaluation.
Table 1:2
Structure of the Home-School Support Programme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regional Director</th>
<th>Senior Programmes Officer &amp; Programmes Officer</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regional Coordinators</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

North Region (Located in Perth Division)

Education Officers

South Region (Located in Fremantle Division)

Education Officers

Located in the following divisions:

- Mirrabooka
- Perth
- Scarborough
- Whitfords
- Parent Help Centre*
- Karratha*
- South Hedland*
- Belmont
- Midland
- Victoria Park
- Juvenile Justice*
- Institutions*
- Geraldton*
- Northam*
- Armadale
- Fremantle
- Rockingham
- McCall Centre*
- Albany*
- Bunbury*
- Collie*

Regional Coordinators

The regional coordinator's role is to coordinate the service at regional level, organise training, assist education officers within the region and provide consultation about regional matters. Regional coordinators have regular liaison with the senior programmes officer to maintain contact between officers in the field and the Programmes and Research Directorate.

Education Officers

Education officers are situated in divisional offices and are part of the divisional team. They are administratively responsible to their Divisional Supervisor and professionally responsible to their regional coordinator. The role of the education officers in the Home-School Support programme is liaison among home, school and community concerning educational issues. Their main goal is to keep educational options open for children by influencing government and non-government school

* Officers in these locations did not take part in the evaluation.
systems. They also try to empower caregivers and children to access educational opportunities available in the community.

GOALS OF THE PROGRAMME

The programme offers educational support to children who come to the notice of the Department for Community Services. The support attempts to integrate family, school and community resources. The programme aims to prevent problems for the clients rather than to simply respond to crises. For this reason the focus is on skilling the child to cope with the normal range of activities of the school in such a way that success is reasonably assured. The principle underlying the operation of the service is that A useful preventative service is directed towards supplying appropriate entry and maintenance supports to regular and normal services in our society. Such an approach enables clients to choose, to gain access to and to participate in our society's services; such an approach has above all, normalising effect. (Draft Training Manual 1988)

The goals of the Programme are:

1. To provide appropriate entry and maintenance supports to educational opportunities for children and young people who are clients of, or who are known to, the Department.
2. To protect and support the right of every child to receive appropriate and regular schooling.

The children who are involved in the programme can be categorised as wards of the State, children in foster care, children in institutions and children whose families are in receipt of services from the Department. The greatest number of children are in the last group. Most children at present are at secondary level, but education officers are keen to give greater attention to younger children in order to prevent behaviours which could lead to the need for the service later in life. Typically, clients have one or more educational deficits which require external assistance to remedy. Typically, these children suffer disrupted schooling, crises in family life, conflict with parent(s), inability to cope with peer groups and frequent changes of home and school. More severe events such as rape, incest and physical assault also are possible problems confronting some clients of the service. The severity of problems confronting any individual child, of course, varies enormously. Most clients are of lower socio-economic status backgrounds, and have trouble
articulating their needs and accessing services. Typical case histories can be found in 1988 Case Studies: An Insight into Case Practice⁴.

First contact with the child and his or her family is made by a Field Officer. If the Field Officer decides that educational support is needed for the child an Education Officer is called in. The Education Officer visits the family and interviews the child and the parent(s), then makes decisions regarding the educational needs of the child. These are discussed with the child and family and if they are in agreement the education officer proceeds to implement the decisions.

The range of actions available to the education officer is varied, and differs according to the school level of the child and the education officer's district. For a primary school child the education officer contacts the principal of the school and arranges a meeting with the class teacher and the principal. At this meeting the needs of the child are outlined and possible action agreed upon. If the education officer is not satisfied that the child will receive sufficient support in the school, a home tutor can be engaged for two hours per week to provide additional help. Each education officer has his or her own list of tutors, and these are members of the community who are paid to tutor the children. In extreme cases the education officer can arrange to have the child shifted to another school, but this is an option that is not entered into lightly because of the need to ensure stability in the child's life. Changes of school can be quite traumatic for any child, and for the child who is in care, this trauma may be increased.

In addition to casework, education officers are available for consultations. Advice is provided to field officers on educational matters related to their clients. In 1988 education officers conducted 752 consultations with field officers.

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CHAPTER TWO
EDUCATION SERVICES VIEWS OF THE PROGRAMME

INTRODUCTION
Personnel in Education Services include the Senior Programmes Officer and the Programmes Officer, Regional Coordinators and Education Officers. All who were active in liaison with schools in the metropolitan area at the time of the evaluation were interviewed. The interviews were conducted both at Divisional offices and on site at schools. The formal structure, purpose and operation of the programme has been described in previous chapters. The education officers' perceptions of these three elements of the programme will establish whether the programme as idealized is the same as the programme when implemented.

GOALS AND NEED FOR THE PROGRAMME
The education officers had a very sound knowledge of the goals of the programme. When asked, they were all able to give either a verbatim statement or a close approximation of the goals specified in the training manual. There was more diversity, however, with education officers' perception of the need for the programme, although parallels can be seen between goals and needs.

The service fulfils several needs and the children in the programme benefit through having their educational problems resolved. The education officer acts as an advocate in the school setting, although this is a formative goal because the ultimate goal is to give children independence so they can make it on their own. There are many situations requiring support from the education officer such as when a child changes school: the child has to be assisted to overcome the disruption that can occur in this situation. For some children such changes can be frequent as they go from the residence of one parent to the other, or shift from one foster home to another. The education officers take over the educational support role normally performed by parents in a functional family as one officer noted when he commented,

The children generally have no parents, or parents who don't support them. We need to look after the educational interests of the children.

Education officers consider that needs of younger children should be given higher priority because they prefer to deal on a preventative basis with primary school children rather than have to resolve the more
complex crises of older students. They claim intervention is too late if the child is in crisis.

The powerlessness of parents was a common theme in a consideration of needs of the programme. Along with independence in educational settings education officers considered their role included empowering parents to take positive action in their children's schooling. One officer said "parents can't articulate their needs and won't access resources themselves. They say 'I would like to but I can't bring myself to' ". To meet this need the officers must establish links between the parent and the school: "Getting parents and teachers together enables continuity and support between home and school". Such an approach helps empower parents so that the education officer can withdraw.

**ROLE OF THE EDUCATION OFFICERS**

The role of the education officer is a mixture of liaison, coordination, education and administration. They liaise with schools, families, field officers and resources; they coordinate the activities of tutors and the clients' access to resources; they educate families regarding their educational responsibilities and field officers regarding the assistance they can provide; in their administrative role they write reports, locate resources and participate in meetings and on committees. The skills they need for this diverse set of roles are assertiveness, independence, the ability to relate to others and communicate with them, a good memory, diplomacy, a sense of humour and organisational skills. The officers' ability to function in these aspects of the role will be examined in the remainder of this section.

**ADMISSION OF CHILDREN TO THE PROGRAMME**

The process of admission is described in the first chapter. Education officers expressed a number of concerns in relation to this process. A case is not referred unless a field officer considers that there is an educational issue involved, such as conflict at school, conflict in the home over educational problems, or failure in schoolwork. If the field officer is not alert to such problems they may be undiagnosed. The education officers must maintain a high profile with field officers to ensure the latter identify issues for them. One education officer stated the situation as follows:

*The education officer is the embodiment of the role. The most important thing is for the divisional officers to see me as a member of their team and a resource for ideas for any part of the child's needs. I attend all case meetings.*
This officer identified the strategies employed to maintain links with field officers: attendance at all case meetings where possible, lunch and morning and afternoon tea with field officers to keep a high profile, and frequent informal discussions with them. As a result of these efforts,

Now at meetings my input is requested and the educational aspect is considered a legitimate component of the child's needs. I go and talk over cases, and as a result the number of young cases is growing because people get to know what is possible and confidence in me grows.

There is still a tendency to refer only when the child is in a crisis such as when the child has been suspended, shifted school or run away, or when the family has broken up. All the education officers preferred earlier intervention before such crises. The education officers also expressed dissatisfaction with being brought into cases while they were in crisis: Until the child or the domestic situation is stabilized it is fruitless to attempt to work on school matters. Stabilizing the domestic situation is the field officer's job. This contrasts with field officers' perceptions for they considered it desirable to bring in an education officer during crisis. This will be considered in more detail in the chapter on field officers.

The education officers supported the team approach to casework. The discussion of cases among a group of officers provides an opportunity for them to give input to the case. Prior to the establishment of teams the individual field officer conducted the case independently of other officers. One education officer commented that the team structure has reduced possessiveness among field officers and now she gets cases from all officers. In one division the team structure was reported to have broken down and the education officer considered that this disadvantaged her in gaining access to the clients.

Attendance at intake meetings was also seen as advantageous. Daily meetings on new cases were held in divisions, and education officers participated.

Intake meetings are held every day. I don't go every day, only when I have time. When I go, I don't necessarily pick up a lot there - but I do get regular contact with officers. You get different officers each day and become more known. Therefore you get more referrals from other directions.

The present approach to admission of new clients gives education officers greater exposure to field officers and gives more opportunities for them to provide input on the child's educational needs than if field officers work in isolation. Much of the success of the Home-School Support programme depends upon the ability of the education officers to negotiate with field officers for input into the cases they manage. Education officers reported that field officers who know more about the Home-School Support programme tended to use it more. They were all
conscious of the need to promote the programme to ensure utilization by field officers.

**CASELOAD**

Education officers' time is divided among casework, divisional and regional initiatives and meetings. The manual for education officers identifies three categories of cases:

1. Very intensive, needing many home, school and/or community visits.
2. Less intensive, needing mainly phone contact with the various parties.
3. Being monitored by the occasional phone call for 3-4 weeks.

The manual notes that "It is expected that every education officer will maintain a balance of the three types of cases"\(^1\) and specifies the following caseload maximums:

- Education Officer working 14\(\frac{1}{2}\) hours/week - 8 cases
- Education Officer working 18\(\frac{3}{4}\) hours/week - 10 cases
- Education Officer working full time - 20 cases

Officers who have a full case load are instructed to place new referrals on a waiting list and inform the referring officer when they should be able to take the case. In interviews, most education officers stated that they had taken more cases than the recommended load. A problem exists in balancing intensive cases with less demanding cases. One officer, newly appointed to a division following a period when there had been no education officer, out of necessity carried 20 intensive cases for a short period. Another part-time officer working only two days a week (14\(\frac{1}{2}\) hours) pointed out that it was possible to spend the entire time on intensive cases:

> If a case is blowing up, you can spend the whole two days on it. If you had seven or eight cases, you couldn't respond. You would be able to handle only one or two cases intensively and have to monitor the rest.

Despite the concern, when asked what they considered to be ideal maximum caseloads most education officers reported figures very similar to those recommended in the manual. There were exceptions: the officer cited above considered that two or three cases for a two-day per week appointment was desirable, while another stated that the caseload should depend upon the nature of the cases: the more demanding, the fewer the cases. Given the supportive nature of the management of Education

Services, flexibility occurs, although most education officers appear to exceed the limits rather than remain below them. This practice suggests that more full-time officers are needed to cope with the demand.

Once a case is working smoothly the education officer will monitor it, and it is usually during the initial stages, or during crises when the established procedures break down, that the case will be demanding. Files on clients are kept open as long as necessary.

Education officers are also involved in other work: consultation with field officers is an important role, and some are members of community programmes, others are on committees for new initiatives. One officer reported that she was spending one-third to one-half of her time organizing a new programme which will provide alternatives to suspension in schools. She estimated that her involvement would diminish as the programme got under way, but it was demanding at the time.

Meetings take up a lot of education officers' time. They are expected to attend divisional meetings, casework conferences, regional coordinator's meetings and Education Services meetings. For full-time officers this load represents no problem, but for part-time officers (who have a similar meeting schedule as full-time officers) it can be a problem. The education officers, however, regard the meetings as essential: to maintain contact with field officers, other education officers and regional coordinators. One officer on 14 1/2 hours reported that she spent 9 to 10 hours per month at meetings, and another on the same hours reported two to three hours per week: roughly the same time per month. A full-time education officer provided the following breakdown of his meeting times:

**Divisional Meetings**
- Weekly Cell Meeting: 2 hrs on a Tuesday
- Fortnightly Staff Meeting: 2 -3 hrs (Wednesday)
- Monthly Case Meeting: 2 hrs

**Education Services**
- Regional Meeting: 2 hrs per month
- Home-School Meeting: 2-3 hrs per month
- Education Officers Meeting: 2 Hrs per month
- Staff Training: 1 day per 3 months
- Ad hoc as advised: 1-2 hrs per month

**Other Commitments**
- Committee #1: 2 hrs per month
- Committee #2: 2 hrs per month

**Total Hours per month (estimated)**: 26 hrs
He estimated that this total amounted to 12.5% of his time. This is the case if the special committee work is left off: in fact, 26 hours per month amounts to 17% of his time. Even deleting the special committee work, half-time staff members could have about 25% of their time tied up because they have to attend a similar range of meetings. This seems excessive. Either the commitment to meetings should be reduced, or part-time officers should be made full-time to gain more value from their attendance at meetings. An increase of a half-time officer in the above circumstance to full time (that is, a 100% increase in time on the job) could increase productivity by 125% because none of the extra time should need to be spent on meetings. For an officer on 14½ hours the increase would be proportionately greater.

LINKS

To be effective in the role education officers must maintain links not only with people in the Department, but with schools, families and a range of resource people and organizations. The role requires a person who is able to communicate the needs of the children in care, and organize resources to meet those needs. Education officers showed a high level of competence in these tasks. In interviews, they expressed the manner in which they planned their approach to developing rapport with field officers, schools and children. Their commitment to gaining access to appropriate resources for children was strong, and they exchanged information frequently in meetings with other education officers. Links are maintained with other agencies which can offer the education officer advice and support in their role. School Welfare, Health Department, Department for Social Security and school guidance officers are called on for support when necessary. Links with other education officers was an important part of the organization of the programme, and provided support and advice for each officer.

Communication with field officers exists through formal structures and informal dialogues. As discussed in the chapter on field officers' perceptions of the programme, the social workers rely on the education officers to provide professional support on educational issues. The location of education officers in the divisions enables daily contact with field officers at an informal level. In addition, weekly case meetings provide a formal context for interaction, as do staff training sessions. A problem exists for part-time education officers who are unable to make contact with field officers on their days off duty: they may rarely meet some staff because of differences in hours of duty. One education officer stated,

Part-time work is frustrating. The rapid change in individuals means that you lose touch each week. I'm not around enough, and they (field officers) forget to use you.
These field officers are denied the opportunity to use a programme that is designed to relieve them of tasks that they are not trained for. This would be remedied if all education officers were full-time and the service would be relatively more efficient because of increased contact between education officers and field officers.

**RESOURCES**

When an education officer takes on a case, he or she immediately assesses the child’s needs and decides what action to take for the child. For younger children the options are relatively restricted: attendance at school is compulsory, and a key decision is whether to support the child in the existing school or to change school. In both cases the education officer must negotiate with principals, teachers, parents and the child. Most education officers are aware of schools where principals are supportive and are willing to accept children who are difficult. Because they cannot impose on these schools too often, they must have a network of cooperative schools. This takes time to develop and requires considerable negotiating skill on the part of the officer.

For secondary schools the education officer usually works through the guidance officer.

> I make contact with the principal, then I see the guidance officer who will know the best teachers for the child. He calls a meeting of staff to discuss the child’s education. Some teachers are antagonistic but others are supportive. He works with the supportive teachers to assist the child at school.

Because of the organization of secondary schools, contact with classroom teachers is difficult for the education officers. They preferred the more direct contact with the teachers in primary schools because it enabled them to have more influence over the management of the child’s education. Working with an intermediary in the secondary school was perceived to be not as effective, although education officers reported that guidance officers were very supportive.

If the education officer decided that it was not worthwhile returning the child to school, alternatives were considered which would provide ongoing education or an introduction to the world of work for the child. Education officers were always seeking to identify suitable alternatives to school for clients so that the options chosen fitted the needs and interests of the client. The following list of resources were identified by education officers.
Government Supported Resources

Bridging the Gap
Camps - eg. Port Kennedy
Commonwealth Employment Service
CES youth activities
HEART
Joblink
Karringal
North East Regional Youth Council
Northern Suburbs Youth Options
Skillshare (formerly Community Youth Support Scheme)
Warralea placement programme
Youth Affairs Bureau
Youth Employment Scheme

Non-Government Resources

City of Stirling (recreational activities)
Lockridge Resource Centre
Medina Cultural Centre
Out of School Child Care Association (OSCCA)
Police and Citizens Youth Club
Parkerville work option
Task Force
Work experience

School Options

Community Based Education Programme\(^1\)
Education Support Units
Foothills Community School
Gnowangerup Agricultural High School
KIDS community School
Kwinana Senior High School youth support group
SPER centres
TAFE adult literacy
Tutors
Youth Education Officer

This listing is only those resources identified by education officers during interviews. When pressed for a solution to a problem, they will turn to their resource files to select a specific resource. Resources which exist for a short time only, such as exhibits and short courses are also utilized.

\(^1\) The Community Based Education Programme is funded by the Department and provides alternative educational opportunities for clients on the Home-School Support programme.
Resources differ for different children, and the education officer will select a resource to suit the child. Shortage of resources, especially alternative educational options for clients, is always a problem. The situation is better for secondary students because work options are available to them. For primary students there are few alternatives to ordinary schooling, and education officers find this a limiting factor. The number of primary school clients being suspended from school is growing, and more alternatives to mainstream schooling are necessary. Within-school alternatives, such as the Kwinana Senior High School's youth support group, are a desirable approach to catering for suspended and excluded children. Maintaining links with formal education is desirable to assist such children to succeed. The initiatives being jointly developed at present by the Ministry and the Department in some school districts is to be applauded and this trend should be reinforced.

**Operating in the School**

The efforts of the education officers to ensure all parties involved in the case are winners is demonstrated in the strategies they use in school interviews. Although they are aware that they enter the school from a position of power, they do not use this power to put teachers down. Initially there is often suspicion and mistrust on the part of school staff: they seek to allay this and try to build up a relationship with teachers, consciously showing respect for the teacher's position and providing support for them.

In their discussion of the clients, the education officers endeavour to get the teachers to see the client as a person, not just a 'welfare client', for stereotypes are common. They provide the teacher with strategies to use with the client. These are drawn from the education officer's own experience with previous clients, from discussions with other education officers and from knowledge of the client. The education officers are conscious that most of their clients will not succeed unless they get support from the classroom teacher. They provide sufficient information to the teacher to illustrate the fact that the child is in need of assistance, and suggest how the teacher can help. A commitment is sought from the teacher to implement strategies with the child, and the education officer makes an appointment to return at a later date, therefore putting an obligation on the teacher to complete the task, as one education officer intimated:

> The teacher will focus on Andrew as a person now. She has been set a task. I knew how he is going, but rather than tell her she has to find out for herself. She knows I will be back. The teacher may give thought to positive feedback and support.

The combination of power and knowledge, effectively used by the education officer, gains a commitment from the classroom teacher to
assist the child. It is important that personal contact be established, and for this reason education officers can be expected to have more success in primary schools than high schools, where the contact is less personal.

SUCCESS

Education officers were asked to define success in relation to their casework. In the field of human services the achievement of success is often problematic, but it is necessary for service providers to be able to indicate what they are trying to achieve for their clients. In the present evaluation the education officers were clear about the definition of success, even though there were a variety of definitions, and the nature of success was seen to depend upon the context and the individual case.

Continuation in schooling was seen to be a significant attribute of success. Most education officers mentioned this as desirable, and included such indicators as returning to school after a period of truanting, the child feeling comfortable in the school, and simply that the child get something out of a programme in school. Even so, many said it was not essential for the child to continue in or return to the school system: alternatives such as entering the world of work were also seen as a measure of success. The education officers indicated that they were rewarded with small gains:

Success doesn't necessarily mean the child gets a job or graduates from school. If you put a child in work experience and he goes for two days and then chucks it in, it may not be a failure: the child may realize that work is like school and not a lot of money and good fun. The child is getting an insight into what work is all about, getting experience, getting knowledge of his own interests and abilities.

Most education officers reported that they regarded the acceptance of new experiences by the client as a mark of success, so that if the client engaged in a programme and realized that he or she got something out of it, then success had been achieved. Even if the client did not like the experience, it was possible to see the programme as a success, for the client was finding out something about his or her character. As one officer stated, "You must pick out the good things, for example, 'She got on well with people'."

Outcomes for clients on the programme are diverse. Many re-enter, or continue, school, some go into jobs, others enter community programmes or training programmes, while others develop social skills. In some cases the outcome is on the part of the parent, who comes to understand the need for the child to attend school every day. Sometimes it is a more comfortable placement in school because teachers, who have been made aware of the needs of the child, treat the child more sensitively.

It is clear that there is no single, objective measure of success, and what qualifies as success is quite variable, being dependent upon the child and
the context. This is a measure of the flexibility of the programme and its capacity to meet the needs of children who typically are more accustomed to failure than success. The attribute that appears to be consistent across many of the statements of education officers is growth, so that if the client is seen to gain from the experience, growth has occurred, and this represents success.

**SUCCESS RATE**

Five of the six education officers who were asked this question were unwilling to identify a rate of success. The sixth stated that her rate of success was over 50%. This officer had a broad definition of success:

I see success if the child stays at school or starts going to school, if the behaviour matches the goals set, if there is a change in self-esteem, or if he accesses community resources.

A problem with trying to determine the rate of success is the itinerant nature of the clients, for many move on before they have been in the programme for very long. Success was regarded as more common in the primary school because there was a more supportive structure there. Also, the preparedness of the child to be in the programme, and the willingness of the family to be involved in the child's case were factors which contributed to success.

**CLIENTS WHO DON'T SUCCEED.**

Many cases are unsuccessful. Education officers considered that some cases don't succeed because clients are in unstable situations, and dysfunctional issues which should be addressed before the education officer is called in are unresolved. Family problems, in particular, impinge upon the progress of cases. One officer suggested that removal from the home may resolve this, while another suggested that in such circumstances bringing a social worker in to discuss the problems helps resolve them.

Undesirable outcomes are also possible: clients become dependent upon the education officers, they mix with the wrong people at camps and on other programmes. These things are difficult to control:

There is no big daddy role. The child does things voluntarily. A key aspect is that diversity and choice exist for the child. He or she isn't judged overtly: they are always treated as equal. This is an important factor in treatment.

Although children are free to withdraw from the programme, this is rare. Those who don't complete the activities developed for them usually fail to do so because they move out of the district.
Success and failure are related to the range of options and the level of support available to the client. If education officers have access to a wide range of resources and can match the needs of the client effectively, success is more likely. The assessment of the client's needs in casework meetings and through discussion with people involved in the case provides a guide to the education officer in planning a suitable programme. The provision of a high level of support for clients is essential for success. Field officers require the services of the Home-School Support programme to provide this support.

**REGIONAL COORDINATORS**

The three regional coordinators considered that their role was principally to provide support and training for education officers in both the Home-School Support programme and the Early Education programme.

This is the most important role - to coordinate the team so that it is a team. They must be independent, but still feel part of a team. Getting personalities gelling and getting all the prickles out is very difficult. Being a leader you have to look at the dynamics of a group, as well as be an administrator.

The evaluator was impressed with the high level of cooperation and the strong commitment to the team that all officers in Education Services demonstrated. Much of the responsibility for this can be attributed to the effective way in which the regional coordinators carry out their role.

The regional coordinator is responsible to the Regional Director, and is required to attend many meetings at the regional level where regional initiatives related to planning, programming and budgeting are considered. Meetings with the Senior Programmes Officer for Education Services, with other regional coordinators and with education officers form a large part of the work of the regional coordinator. They also maintain liaison, on a needs basis, with student services teams in district offices of the Ministry of Education. They also perform an administrative function, arranging tutors, organising materials packages and organising changes in staff.

Because of the primacy of the support role for education officers, the regional coordinators tend to spend a certain amount of time in divisional offices with the education officer. Because each coordinator is also responsible for a country division, they must spend part of their time in the country office supporting the education officers in those divisions.

The coordination function is an important one in the Home-School Support programme. They provide the administrative and pastoral support necessary for the education officers to carry out their roles effectively.
GOALS

Regional coordinators' views of the goals of the programme were very similar. Support for children was most important:

We have to give children the best possible chance of an education so that children can become functional citizens in the community. The school is too narrowly prescribed for children.

All the regional coordinators considered that the child had a better chance in life if the school was supportive, but this was seen as a problem. The teachers were often unaware of the problems children had, and were unaware of the defence mechanisms children use. "Without this awareness teachers will barge in and do the worst possible things to children." Flexibility in dealing with children in difficulties was stressed, especially for those children whose family support mechanisms had broken down. The next best chance for the children was the school, and if this didn't provide support, the child's chances of success were remote. One coordinator identified a number of necessary steps in resolving educational problems. First, the child's social life had to be maintained; a taste of work experience had to be provided, and commitment to life had to be built up. Several steps were identified which preceded work: improving skills; making the child responsible for him or herself; and setting goals. This last step is important, for goal setting required the assistance of an adult: the clients are too young to do it for themselves.

EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROGRAMME

The regional coordinators had very positive views of the programme. All considered that it was succeeding with the children. They also noted the effectiveness of the programme in providing support to schools, and raising awareness in school of the needs of children. The education officers provide strategies to teachers to cope with the children at school.

They also commented on the effectiveness of the programme in making families more competent in dealing with the child and in communicating with the school. This was particularly the case with younger children, for the education officer worked mainly with the family rather than the child, so that the family developed skills to support the child at school. With older children there was less emphasis on this as the education officer sought the 'right' resources for the client.

One measure of effectiveness identified by a coordinator was the growing acceptance of education officers by the field officers, who now find the programme 'very good'.
The field officer can work in the home with the mother and the education officer can work with the child. The education officer is seen as a positive influence on the child; it would be more difficult if just the one person was working with the mother ... and the child, and trying to be tough with one and a friend to the other. This way there is a clear role. If you can get one strand to be successful, this permeates the other areas. People come to think the kid is not as bad as they thought.

Effectiveness was seen in relation to age: the younger the age of the client when intervention occurred, the more effective the intervention. One regional coordinator expressed the benefits of working with preschool children for this reason: the older children have had years of negative school experiences, and the education officers must be satisfied with smaller gains than if the children are younger.

STRENGTHS OF THE PROGRAMME

A number of strengths were identified by the regional coordinators. The location of education officers outside the Ministry of Education but working in the schools was seen to be a great benefit, giving them power to get things moving in the schools. It also offered the opportunity to develop joint initiatives between the Department and the Ministry, as is happening at regional level at present. One coordinator considered that the programme enhanced the image of the Department in the schools because it was doing something positive about the children:

Teachers can't understand why the child is left in a home where disruption occurs and nothing is being done about it. There is a very negative image for DCS. The community and the school are distressed about it. HSS is seen to be doing something about this - dealing with the child's education.

The strong professional support which is built into the programme is also seen as a strength. It was considered by one regional coordinator to enable officers to take risks and be creative in seeking solutions to client's problems.

Access to homes was seen to be very important to the success of the programme. The education officer is able to work with the home, the field officers and the school as well as other agencies for the child's benefit. This network of influence is missing from the classroom teacher's repertoire of links, and gives the education officer a marked advantage in dealing with the child's problems. For this reason it is essential that the programme remains with the Department.

SHORTCOMINGS AND CONCERNS

The main problem with the service, as perceived by all three of the regional coordinators, was the need for full-time education officers in
each division. Part-time education officers were seen to be inadequate to cope with the workload in each division: long waiting lists and inadequate support for field officers were seen to be consequences.

One coordinator stated that there was a need to get beyond reacting to crises, and that schools should be able to deal with troubles before they arise. This reflected similar suggestions by education officers. In the scenario painted by the coordinator, schools would identify clients and a student services team would deal with their problems. This is a long way from the present situation where only the most needy cases are being met, and often these have to be put on a waiting list in divisions where there is a part-time officer.

Other concerns which were expressed related to the need for more resources, labeling of children, and animosity between the Ministry and the Department. The first concern, already addressed in this chapter, is one which was commonly perceived: the need for education officers to gain access to adequate educational and vocational supports for clients. Labeling of children is an issue that is difficult to avoid and relies on the persistence of those advocating the case of the child to promote the positive aspects of the client. A regional coordinator noted that schools identify clients as welfare children, which is a negative label, and the education officer must change school conceptions. Rather than labeling, the school must seek to adopt strategies which resolve the child's needs.

Education officers reported the existence of animosity between the Ministry and the Department, and regional coordinators also noted this. Both groups remarked that teachers viewed education officers positively, but were fearful of field officers. The presence of education officers, as noted above, presents a positive image for the Department in the schools.

**PROGRAMMES DIRECTORATE**

Responsibility for overseeing the operations of the Home-School Support programme rests with the Senior Programmes Officer and the Programmes Officer within the Directorate. The Senior Programmes Officer (SPO) is responsible for all matters related to education including programme development, monitoring and evaluation. Regionalisation removed some of the responsibility for the programme, but the SPO has authority for the philosophy and direction of the programme.

The programme is well grounded in educational theory and is sound philosophically. Changes of an ad hoc nature are consequently undesirable, and can only be made after careful consideration of consequences for future practice.
There was a strong measure of agreement between officers in the Programmes and Research Directorate and education officers in the field. On issues such as a shift from crisis to prevention care, the development of efficacy in families and the need for schools to work more with the family, the officers expressed similar views. The independence experienced by education officers as a result of their position outside the Ministry, and the need to fully resource the Home-School Support programmewere strongly supported also.

Such consistency of views is to be expected. A strong emphasis, however, was the importance of developing links with the Ministry of Education: recent developments in school districts is evidence of the success of this move towards a closer working relationship. They also expressed the view that education officers should take part in programmes that the community develops. Participation of education officers in juvenile justice initiatives at present is an illustration of this involvement. A problem with it of course is the growing demands on the time of the education officers. The execution of such functions requires better resourcing of the programme.

**SUMMARY**

Interviews with education officers indicates the following:

1. The principal role of the education officer is to act as an advocate in the school setting. Preventative work is preferable to crisis work and part of the task of the education officer is to empower parents and children in their interactions with the school.

2. Education officers feel they must maintain a high profile among field officers to ensure the educational aspects of cases are considered. Team approaches to casework should be encouraged because of this.

3. Caseload recommendations were supported by education officers but most exceeded the recommendations. The meeting demands on part-time officers is questionable.

4. The role requires a person who is able to make educational decisions for clients, to communicate the needs of children in care and to organise resources to meet those needs. Education officers are skilled in these tasks. In divisions with part-time education officers, field officers have more limited opportunities to make use of the support available.
5. A shortage of suitable resources to meet the needs of clients is always a problem for education officers. Alternative school-based programmes such as the Community Based Education Programme should be developed by the Ministry of Education, possibly in conjunction with the Department.

6. Education officers are able to use a combination of power and knowledge to gain commitment from teachers. Because this requires personal contact, success will be greater in primary schools.

7. The work of the education officers enhances the image of the Department in schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. A greater emphasis on prevention should be adopted by the Home-School Support programme. While education officers have to respond to the needs of field officers in dealing with clients who are in crisis, earlier intervention to avoid crisis occurring is a preferable approach to meeting the educational needs of clients. Methods of early identification of potential clients should be examined for this purpose.

2. Each division should have a full-time education officer to meet the demands being placed on the service.

3. The balance of time on meetings, cases and administration needs to be examined, especially for part-time officers. Considerable improvements in productivity would ensue if part-time officers were made full-time.

4. Resource availability for clients needs to be increased significantly, especially for primary school children. The range of alternative educational opportunities in the government school system needs to be increased.

5. The Home-School Support programme should continue to be located within the Department for Community Services. However, the programme should develop close links with the Ministry of Education and with other community agencies.
CHAPTER THREE

FIELD OFFICERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE PROGRAMME

The perceptions of field officers and executive staff in the Department for Community Services were sought as part of the evaluation. These staff consisted of regional directors and field officers, the latter group including district supervisors, social workers and graduate welfare officers. The results of interviews and questionnaire responses from these officers will be presented in this section. Fifty four field officers responded to a multiple choice questionnaire seeking their views on various aspects of the Home-School Support programme. Of these, seven were supervisors and 47 were field officers. A comparison of responses to the questionnaire by supervisors and field officers revealed that position had no significant influence on the choices made. Consequently all responses will be treated in the one group. The questionnaire, presented in appendix 3:1, sought responses on a four point scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Strongly agree scored 1 and strongly disagree scored 4, so that the lower the score the more strongly the respondent agreed with the statement. There was no 'uncertain' choice. Respondents therefore were forced to make a choice, but those respondents who felt that the item was irrelevant to their experience were able to place a zero in the response box to indicate that they felt the item did not apply to them. There were 34 items in the questionnaire.

In addition to the data obtained from the questionnaire three supervisors and six field officers were interviewed for the evaluation. This section of the report will incorporate this data along with the responses obtained from the three regional directors who also were interviewed. Most of the interviews were conducted prior to the administration of the questionnaire. The interview data and results of interviews of education officers were used to formulate the items for the questionnaire.

ROLE OF THE DIVISIONAL SUPERVISOR AND FIELD OFFICERS

The supervisors are responsible for the activities of the education officers in their divisions, but they tend to leave the details of their responsibilities to the regional coordinators of the Home-School Support programme. This division of responsibility was little cause for concern and the officers interviewed were happy with the existing situation. They considered that the education officers focussed most of their attention on the local area
rather than the head office. One regional director noted that the supervisor in each division is responsible for the management of the Home-School Support Programme while the regional coordinator is responsible for the professional development of education officers. No one identified any conflict in the performance of the dual allegiance. Another regional director stated that the regional coordinator's function was equivalent to a programme coordinator who reported directly to the regional director, thus by-passing the divisional supervisor, and as such should ideally be located in the regional director's office.

When education officers are appointed to a division they negotiate a role statement with the supervisor and the regional coordinator, and while this role statement is basically the same across divisions, there will be minor variations. The work of the education officer tends to be monitored by the divisional supervisor through monthly reports of the number of cases covered and the general details of these cases. More specific direction is given when an education officer is asked to participate in a case.

**Referral**

In most situations the education officer can only take on a case when asked by a field officer to investigate the need for intervention. This situation was investigated in the questionnaire. Two items were asked:

6. The services of education officers should be restricted to cases referred by a field officer.
   Mean = 2.288, SD = 0.75

7. The services of education officers should be extended to include cases referred by classroom teachers as well as by field officers.
   Mean = 3.0, SD = 0.775

A score of less than 2.5 indicates a tendency towards agreement with the statement while score of more than 2.5 demonstrates a tendency towards disagreement. For these two items respondents agreed with the first and disagreed with the second so there was definite support among the 51 field officers who responded to these items for the continuation of the restricted access to the services of the education officers. Throughout the Department there is a perception that the education officers already are working to the limit and any extension of their role will reduce their effectiveness to the Department. It was made quite clear by field officers that they regarded the Home-School Support Programme as a service to assist them meeting their goals for the client family as a whole and not as a service oriented solely to the child in the school. Field officers also need to monitor their time on cases carefully and they can increase their
efficiency by using support programmes like the Home-School Support programme.

I bring in as many resource people as possible because this cuts down on the need for me to work so much with the family. The goal is to stabilize the family so they can get to work on their own, then we can pull out. We have to reduce parent-child conflict and abuse, provide parent support, develop parenting skills... Overall it's a great help for me to have the resource.

ACHIEVEMENT OF GOALS

A continuing problem with social services is the problematic nature of the treatment. It is not always possible to achieve success despite the best efforts of the personnel concerned, and it is often difficult to determine whether success has ever been achieved. The immediate outcomes of support may not be at all evident, and it can be years before positive signs emerge from an intervention. Consequently officers working in the Department must provide the service without clear knowledge of the outcomes. Even so they do set target goals and endeavour to achieve them. For education officers, these target goals are sometimes not achieved. One item in the questionnaire sought information on the causes of this failure.

16. Failure to achieve target goals is usually due to factors beyond the education officer's control.

Mean = 1.822, SD = 0.469.

The result indicates a strong measure of agreement with the statement, and suggests that field officers are confident that education officers are striving to perform their tasks to the best of their ability. One field officer considered that the goals were extremely well achieved:

There was a high degree of effectiveness. They (education officers) are highly valued by field officers. They help them do their job much better... They (field officers) aren't working with the family while a hole exists. Education officers have plugged that hole. Parent child conflict is reduced, the behaviour of children is improved and school performance is improved.

VALUE OF THE EDUCATION OFFICERS

As qualified and former practising teachers, education officers have the skills and knowledge to operate in the school system. Item 21 in the questionnaire was included to see if field officers thought their work had been improved by the introduction of Education Services:

21. Before Education Services were introduced, it was much harder to resolve educational problems.

Mean = 1.653, SD = 0.597
There was strong agreement with this statement. Field officers acknowledged that the education officers have specialized skills in dealing with the schools. They call on their knowledge of the system and options and resources available within it informally as well as formally through the case conferences.

Field officers don't have time to put into education. They don't have time to keep up to date on resources. Having someone au fait with it and able to focus on educational aspects is excellent. They need to be able to liaise with many schools. It is an excellent system.

Another field officer noted:

Margaret has leverage: teachers are threatened if someone comes in from outside. They have to respond. In this way we get change. Margaret can be very confronting to schools: she knows the way they operate. She can confront school issues - for example the teacher picking on a child. She was able to get the teacher to relate differently to the child. Before Margaret came I did school contact. I wasn't getting anywhere.

The task involves more than just relieving the field officers of work: many of the clients of the Department lack the skills to make changes in their lives and need to be assisted to develop these skills. Education officers can assist field officers in teaching parents to understand how to meet the needs of children in the education system, and how children can achieve and behave at school.

In interviews the field officers reported that they called in an education officer when issues in the family warranted it: children having difficulty at school, children suspended or truanting, conflict between teachers and pupils, and poor performance in relation to ability. Field officers stressed that the problem of parent-child conflict was closely related to school problems for children. There is a need to tackle the problems holistically, with the field officer working with the family while the education officer works with the child in relation to schooling.

Decisions are made at regular case conferences. These case conferences typically consisted of the supervisor, one or more field officers such as the family welfare worker, the family resource worker, and a senior social worker, a psychologist, outside agents and possibly the education officer. Outside agents may include solicitors, parents, or hospital personnel. The education officer's participation depends upon the nature of the case: if school difficulties are a major issue in the referral, the education officer is invited to attend the case conference. If invited, he or she has a duty to attend. Item 10 of the questionnaire investigated the relevance of the education officers participation in the case conference:

10. By attending casework meetings, the education officer brings awareness of educational issues to field officers.

Mean =1.566, SD = 0.541
The result indicates that most field officers agree that the attendance of education officers at casework meetings is helpful. Because the case conference looks at various aspects of children's lives - health, psychology, education - it is not an individual decision, and if a wide selection of information and possible options are made available to the case conference then more effective decisions can be made. It appears that field officers consider that education officers are fulfilling the role for which they were created.

Field officers often worked with education officers informally as well as through formal case conferences. There was very strong support for this in the questionnaire:

11. Education officers should be available for informal consultations as well as formal casework.
    Mean = 1.396 SD = 0.494

The mean response of 1.396, indicated that there was strong agreement among officers for using education officers on a consultative basis. This was a common practice in divisional offices where the realities of the education officers work load precludes a formal case orientation for every child in need. It expands the range of cases in which they can have an input and enhances the efficiency of the Department. Such practices should be encouraged for cases where the input from the education officer is small and the field officer has access to other resources to resolve the issues. It is important that the casework approach remain dominant. To change completely to a consultative role would be contrary to the goals of the programme. Casework should always remain the principal means of executing the education officer's role because this approach not only uses the individual's skills more, but it also relieves the field officer of tasks for which he or she is ill-equipped.

The field officers realize that the education officers can contribute to an understanding of the case through their ability to find out things about the child from school: whether the child is able to function in peer groups, able to relate to adults, is rebellious or accepting. These things contribute to an understanding of the child.

These things provide insights into the child's character. It is useful for case development. You can't put aside the educational aspects of a case. It plays a big part in the development of the child.
PREVENTION VERSUS CRISIS AND STAFFING LEVELS

An issue which concerned education officers was their intervention in a situation while it was still in crisis. They preferred not to be involved until the family situation stabilized. This matter was of less concern to field officers. None mentioned it in interviews, and in the questionnaire most field officers disagreed with item 12:

12. Education officers shouldn't be asked to participate in a case until the home situation is stable.
   Mean = 3.241 SD = 0.494

The strong rejection of the statement, in contrast with the education officers' concern with the issue (see chapter 2), indicates a need for more consultation between field officers and education officers on the appropriate timing of intervention. Education officers have expressed concern at being involved when the family is in crisis, and negotiation is needed between field officers and education officers over the timing of intervention and the definition of stability in the family situation.

Another matter of concern to education officers was the desire to work on a preventative basis rather than a crisis basis. Results of the questionnaire indicate that the field officers support them in this: there was stronger support for the notion of preventative work than for a focus on crisis oriented work.

14. Education officers should work on a preventative basis.
   Mean = 1.827, SD= 0.617.

15. Education officers should work on a crisis basis.
   Mean = 2.653, SD=0.779.

Even so, there was an awareness that staff levels were too low to effectively implement such an approach. Item 27 stated

27. With the present level of staffing it is feasible to provide an effective preventative Home-School Support service as well as cater for clients in crisis.
   Mean = 3.245, SD = 0.662.

The results show that most respondents disagreed, or disagreed strongly, with this statement. The education officers' strong support for a preventative approach once again conflicts with this. The field officers require support during crisis, even if it is apparent that prevention is a better approach. An officer commented,
School is so important. If you can get one part of the child's life working right, this can help the other parts. You can get a foot into positive change.

It is questionnable whether a crisis involvement for the education officer is of value, for educational issues may be furthest from the child's mind at such a time. Field officers maintain, however, that straightening up one area can help straighten up the rest.

A change to prevention may be possible in the Home-School Support programme only when staffing levels provide time for it. There was some disagreement with the need for an overall increase in the size of Education Services, for some field officers were concerned that it should be kept at the present size. One reason for this concern was the unplanned development of the area. A field officer explained this development as follows:

It happened on a needs basis. Items were obtained on an ad hoc basis, and the Department hasn't committed itself fully to it. Education officers are mainly temporary and work odd hours. The Department grabbed part time items - for example fourteen and a half hours. At the time of government restrictions on staff, 15 hours was the lower level of load for an employee who counted. Fourteen and a half hours didn't count in the establishment. Expansion of Education Services was done on the quiet. Today we get a certain amount of salary.

In interviews a majority of the field officers called for an increase in size of Education Services. One field officer argued that

There is nowhere else (for the children) to go. You can't take them out, work intensively with them and then put them back into school with skills to cope. There is a real gap. The education officers could get their teeth into this. The Ministry of Education is only looking at ways of getting rid of children. If children are not at school, they are at home causing distress for mum, or in the community harming other children. By the time they are old enough to fit into school-work or work experience programmes, there is no motivation or self-esteem to succeed. If we can keep a child at school with the hope of getting a job, we can save megabucks compared with not skilling children.

Results of the questionnaire confirm the view that field officers support an increase in education officer staffing:

22. Funds used to maintain the Home-School Support programme would be better utilized to provide more field officers.
   Mean = 3.596, SD = 0.495

23. The present level of staffing in the Home-School Support Programme is adequate.
   Mean = 2.942, SD = 0.938.
24. This division requires more staff time allocated to Home-School Support Services.
   Mean = 1.857 SD = 0.791.

25. There should be a full time education officer in the Home School Support Programme in each Division.
   Mean = 1.5, SD = 0.707.

26. The distribution of education officers across the Divisions is equitable.
   Mean = 2.964, SD = 0.793.

A score greater than 2.5 indicates disagreement with the statement, while a score less than 2.5 indicates agreement. Item 22 scored the strongest measure of disagreement in the survey, suggesting that field officers strongly supported the retention of the services of education officers. The low standard deviation ((0.495) indicates a high degree of unanimity among field officers on this issue. Item 23 indicates that field officers are dissatisfied with the present provision of education officers, while there was general agreement with the statement in item 24: most officers considered that their division required more staff time. Items 24 and 25 correlated 0.86: officers supporting more staff considered that each division should have a full time education officer in the Home School Support programme. There was also a very strong negative correlation between items 22 and 25: officers opposing a reduction in Education Services also strongly supported the provision of a full-time officer in each division. The mean of 1.5 for item 25 reveals very strong support for this.

This demand, while strong, must be set against other factors. As one Regional Director pointed out, Education Services are only one of a number of programme areas in the Department, and funds for community services are not unlimited:

The advocacy for extra resources can become an endless pit. It is a question of threshold. Unless we target, the demand for extra resources can affect the balance between that programme and other programmes. This must be recognized by Education Services.

Without more staff, however, the Home-School Support programme cannot hope to provide an effective preventative programme and will continue to be oriented towards crisis. If it seeks to adopt a more preventative mode of operation it may make inroads into the realm of responsibility of the Ministry of Education. It may be more fruitful for the Department to establish stronger links with the Ministry and for the Ministry to accept its responsibilities, in line with the recommendations
laid down in the discussion document, Student Services 1989 and Beyond¹, in providing more effectively for those children who are at risk. The changing nature of school-community relations in recent times makes it more likely that schools will become increasingly responsive to the needs of the community and cater for the special needs of potentially at-risk children. Because school issues are significant in parent-child relationships the Ministry should make special efforts to ensure that assistance is available to children who are at risk.

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION INVOLVEMENT

One possible solution to the present situation is for the Ministry of Education to take over the functions provided by the Home-School Support programme. This option was put to the field officers in the questionnaire, but it was strongly rejected:

30. The Home-School Support programme should be administered by the Ministry of Education.
Mean = 3.229, SD = .751

Responses in the interviews supported this rejection. The interaction between field officers and education officers was seen to be crucial to the roles of both groups. It was felt that this interaction would suffer if responsibility for Education Services shifted to another government agency.

If Natalie (the education officer) wasn't part of the Department, interacting with us, getting ideas of what is going on, she would lose a lot of her value. She is of value because she comes in from the same perspective. She is an advocate for the child: she understands all the other issues involved - family issues, problems of children at home and so on. The schools don't have the knowledge or understanding of the perspective we come from. They shouldn't be expected to take on issues of family as well.

The issue of perspective was raised by another field officer who commented that personnel in the school system see the child from the school perspective, whereas workers in the Department for Community Services see the child from the family perspective. He pointed out that under the Education Act at present, the Ministry couldn't go into the family to do long-term support, but would be limited to assisting the child in the area of educational problems. Also, family conflict and peer problems would probably be neglected.

¹ Ministry of Education (1988), Student Services and Beyond: A Framework for Student Service Delivery, A Discussion Document, Student Services Section, Curriculum Policy Branch, Schools Division. In the document the Ministry recognises the need to provide a professional social work service to schools. It also suggests that students' educational programmes may be modified but does not go as far as recommending alternatives to formal schooling. This should also be considered as a desirable option along the lines of the Community Based Education Programme.
Views held by field officers of the school system were not favourable. In interviews, senior officers and field officers reported unfavourable perceptions of the Ministry's approach to the problems that Education Services was attempting to resolve. The following statement is typical:

The schools are a rigid system and can't cope. They just try to get rid of the problem, although a lot depends on individual staff. The school system doesn't have enough resources to be flexible.

As a result of such comments item 9 in the questionnaire sought information on the improvement in relationships between the Department and the Ministry as a result of the work of the education officers. It was found that there was strong agreement with the statement that "The work carried out by education officers has helped to improve relations between the Department for Community Services and schools." (Mean 1.462, SD 0.541). This item was related to items 28 to 32 of the questionnaire.

28. The Department for Community Services should not attempt to provide services that are the province of the Ministry of Education.
   Mean = 2.255, SD = 0.845.

29. The Department for Community Services should not attempt to provide long-term schooling alternatives.
   Mean = 2.25, SD = 0.968.

The means for items 28 and 29 indicate that respondents were fairly evenly divided between agreement and disagreement on these items, and the results are inconclusive. Even though the mean score lies roughly at the centre of the possible range, the very high standard deviations suggest a wide spread of opinion. As a consequence, it is not possible to determine if field officers favour more or less intervention by the Department into the educational field.

The present situation gave autonomy and independence to field officers in their dealings with education officers. If the education officers were under the authority of the Ministry there would be a gap and, as one officer stated, "we would probably be critical." Another benefit of the existing situation was also widely acknowledged: the independence of the education officers from the Ministry enhanced their authority in schools and ensured greater respect for them. Access to the home and to information relating to the family is central to the success of the Home-School Support programme, and this is the province of the Department. Lack of such access may limit the effectiveness of an equivalent service in the Ministry.
EDUCATIONAL ALTERNATIVES

An issue that was commonly identified as significant in early interviews for the evaluation was the range of options available to clients of the programme. Education officers were concerned to seek as wide a range of alternatives for the children in their care as possible. Field officers were asked their views on this matter in the questionnaire. They considered that a wide range of educational alternatives should be available for children not attending school:

31. More educational alternatives should be available for non-school attenders.
    Mean = 1.288, SD = 0.457

This item rated the highest measure of agreement in the questionnaire. There appears to be a strong measure of concern at the lack of opportunities available to children. The schools provided by the government and non-government systems tend to conform to a narrow pattern which fails to meet the needs of many children. There are few options for children who are perceived as disruptive, delinquent and non-conformist. For many of them school failure, suspension and exclusion are inevitable. The options provided by the Department for Community Services through the Home-School Support programme show that the chances for these children can be improved. A Regional Director stated,

What we have done is to show up something we think the Ministry should be doing. We are picking up a task that the Ministry should be doing: the Community Education model can be applied to schools. The programme is effective. Rather than pushing kids out, the Ministry of Education should look at other options. Home-School Support is an extension of Ministry responsibility. We have picked it up, demonstrated that it works. It is an encouragement to them to head in the same direction.

There is a clear message in the results of the questionnaire that the Ministry should focus more attention on the needs of children who are no longer attending school. The mainstream institutions may be unable to cope with these children but this does not mean they should do nothing for them. The effort to provide services more in keeping with the needs of the children must be made, even if it appears to provide a reward for children who fail to fit into the existing system. Developments in some school districts encourage optimism in this respect. Off-campus programmes and partial withdrawal for problem students are being piloted at present and offer promise for a move towards better provision by the Ministry for students who don't conform to the norm. It should not be the province of the Department to provide schooling alternatives. Programmes such as the Community Based Education Programme are more appropriately the role of the Ministry.
The final item which examined relationships between the Ministry and the Department in the area of school support was item 32. This was asked to test whether closer relationships between the two departments could exist.

32. I wouldn't like to discuss a client's case with an officer from the Ministry of Education, such as a guidance officer.
   Mean = 3.098, SD = 0.539.

This result shows that field officers disagree with the statement. In interviews, however, there was a tendency to be guarded about the kind of information that could be discussed. Even so, this is a reassuring result, for it suggests that field officers are willing to work with Ministry officers. This contrasts with a statement by a field officer who said she wouldn't be willing to discuss with Ministry personnel "the same confidential information". It does not alter the possibility that there are limits to the disclosure that would occur with non-Departmental personnel, as should be the case.

Field officers point to the absence of alternative forms of schooling which would cater to the needs of the target children. The Department accepts responsibility only for those children who come to its attention: those in need for reasons other than simply educational problems. Even so, it must retain a tight rein on the extent to which it accepts cases. To accept all cases would result in a flood of clients. One Regional Director stated,

> Education Services shouldn't attempt to assume the role of the Ministry of Education just because the Ministry doesn't fulfil a satisfactory role. The role of the education officers is to service primary clients rather than kids having trouble with the education system... Resources are directed to bona fide social welfare clients - ones who belong to our area of general services... The Ministry's efforts go to the middle of the curve

Resources, however, should cover the whole curve. The Ministry of Education has responsibility for educating all children. Not to accept this responsibility for children below the legal age because they have been excluded from school is a neglect of this responsibility. Inability to receive a complete education will exacerbate their problems and compound the burdens they will pose for society in adulthood. The cost to society may be much greater in the future because of this neglect than the cost of providing a range of alternatives now. Potentially permanent unemployment, detention in institutions, and the cost of servicing their needs could well outweigh a concentrated effort to rescue them from their predicaments at the earliest possible age.

Schooling, of course, is not the only or major cause of their problems, but it can play a significant part in contributing to them or it can be the vehicle for alleviating them.
UTILIZATION OF RESOURCES

Item 17 was included in the questionnaire to find out if field officers considered that education officers were utilizing appropriate resources in the performance of their job.

17. Education officers utilize suitable resources to meet the needs of their clients.
   Mean = 1.686, SD = 0.469.

This score indicates a very high degree of satisfaction with the work of the education officers. A regional director identified the strengths of the programme as follows:

   The education officers work on a one-to-one basis, their work is practical and they get down to real needs, it is not airy fairy. They work through what the client needs. Their work is intense: it focuses on the needs of one family. It is flexible: according to the needs of the family. It is not a programme that keeps a family locked into the welfare situation: it gets in, is short term, develops to goals, then the family takes on the momentum established.

There was widespread satisfaction among field officers with the work of the education officers. This satisfaction was also demonstrated in the area of resource utilization

SHORTCOMINGS

Responses to the questionnaire were very positive, indicating a high degree of acceptance of the work of the Home-School Support Programme. Even so, there were two areas where the responses indicated mild dissatisfaction.

18. The needs of Aboriginal clients are adequately met by the Home-School Support Programme.
   Mean = 2.744, SD = 0.715.

19. The needs of non-English speaking background children are being adequately met by the Home-School Support Programme.
   Mean = 2.73, SD = 0.652.

This dissatisfaction is only marginal: the mean scores are only just over the mean for the possible range of responses, and it may reflect a problem with service provision generally and not just with the Home-School Support programme. Even so, given the positive tenor of the rest of the responses this does indicate a reversal of the trend and should be given further attention. Remarks made in interviews, however, suggest that this is an area that needs more attention. In some divisions special efforts are being made by the education officers to cater more effectively for the
needs of Aboriginal clients. In Medina the Medina Primary School offers support for Aboriginal children in Years 1 - 3 in an effort to enhance school achievement of the children and to increase parental support for their children's schooling. The programme works on a preventative basis and is operated by the education officer and a Peer Group Leader, the latter being the Aboriginal Family Resource Worker from the Medina Aboriginal Cultural Centre. It is anticipated that the programme will result in increased confidence on the part of parents in communicating with the school, increased awareness of school issues, higher self-esteem and achievement for Aboriginal children as well as more regular school attendance. In Midland there is an Aboriginal worker supporting the programme at the Cullacabardee Aboriginal community. The purpose of this programme also is to enhance attendance, self-esteem and learning through the joint efforts of the education officer and an Aboriginal worker. Given the very poor attendance and achievement records of older Aboriginal children such support is desirable for children who come to the attention of the Department. This does not excuse the Ministry of Education for ultimate responsibility for the education of Aboriginal children. Already these special Aboriginal programmes are available to all Aboriginal children in the communities in which they operate, and this is an inroad into the responsibilities of the Ministry. It is an indication of the direction the Ministry should take in catering for the needs of urban Aboriginal children.

SUMMARY

1. Education officers have specialised knowledge and skills which enables them to perform school-related tasks for field officers. The field officers want this service restricted to their use and not expanded to provide access to other groups, such as teachers.

2. Casework conferences are the main avenue for education officers to bring education issues to the attention of field officers. Since the Home-School Support programme was introduced, the field officers' task in educational matters has been made easier.

3. The casework approach should remain the principal means of carrying out the task of the education officer.

4. In contrast to education officers, field officers want education officer involvement in cases where the home situation isn't stable.

5. Although field officers saw the desirability of a preventative programme, the present level of staffing makes an effective preventative approach in the Home-School Support programme unworkable.
6. More staff should be allocated to the Home-School Support programme, with a full-time education officer in each division.

7. There was strong opposition to the notion that the Ministry of Education could or should provide the service. The present situation gives autonomy and independence to field officers in their interactions with education officers, and it gives education officers access to privileged information from the Department.

8. More educational alternatives are necessary for children who are having trouble with regular schooling. Field officers consider that the Ministry of Education should provide these alternatives.

9. The needs of Aboriginal and migrant children require more attention from the Home-School Support programme.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Field officers consider the Home-School Support programme an essential support service. Its present mode of operation should continue, with referrals made by field officers and education officers working on case management. Consultations should be in addition to case management. The service should not be available to outside agencies.

2. Education officers should negotiate with field officers over the desirability of intervention in cases where the family is unstable or crisis is occurring.

3. Each division should have a full-time education officer.

4. The Department should establish firm links with the Ministry to ensure that the schooling alternatives developed by the Ministry are adequate to meet the needs of clients of the programme. Even so, the Home-School Support programme should remain clearly under the control of the Department to meet the needs of field officers most effectively.

5. All children of school age have a right to schooling, and alternatives to mainstream education should be available to provide this in a variety of ways. These alternatives should be available to the education officers for placement of clients.

6. The service to Aboriginal and ethnic minority clients should be further examined to ensure it is adequate to their needs.
CHAPTER FOUR

SCHOOL PERCEPTIONS OF THE PROGRAMME

The clients for whom the Home-School Support programme operates are nearly all of compulsory school age. Legally they are required to attend school, and the principal goal of the programme, as stated above, is to attempt to provide appropriate and regular schooling. Regular compulsory schooling is problematic for many clients. The attitudes of school staff to the programme influence their reception of education officers when the latter seek to intervene on behalf of clients.

To find out what personnel in schools thought of the programme a two-pronged approach was made, based on the belief that in secondary schools there would be a large number of staff involved with children in the programme, among whom one or more staff would be the most important link with the education officer. For this reason a questionnaire was distributed to schools seeking a wide response from all involved personnel. Also, key personnel were interviewed regarding their perceptions. In fact only a limited response was obtained from questionnaires: usually only one person responded, and this was either the principal, deputy principal or guidance officer. In some cases for high schools, two of these people responded. Also, in two instances, year coordinators responded to the questionnaire. For primary schools the response was similar, with only principals responding to the questionnaire and the interview.

THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Education officers delivered questionnaires to the primary schools and secondary schools where their clients were located. Ten primary schools and 11 secondary schools responded to the questionnaire, and altogether 30 were returned, with some schools returning more than one questionnaire. The failure to obtain a set of responses from teachers involved with clients in the programme can be attributed to the method of distribution of the questionnaires and the time of year. The questionnaires were distributed by education officers to principals, and it is likely that they performed a gate-keeping function, protecting their staff from external influences. Also, the questionnaires were distributed in the fourth term, and for secondary schools this has become a very busy time of year. There was an unwillingness to place more pressure on staff because of this. Furthermore, some schools considered that their
response to either the questionnaire or the interview was adequate and did not respond to both.

The questionnaire was based on the objectives of the evaluation and the items were drawn from points developed by education officers at a meeting earlier in the year. The interviews were a more goal-free evaluation of school perceptions of the programme and items were drawn from discussions held with education officers, field officers and school staff. Items in the questionnaire are presented in Appendix 4:1. The responses obtained by questionnaire revealed some important insights into the perceptions schools have of the programme. The following discussion outlines these perceptions and presents data relevant to the evaluation. Conclusions are drawn where appropriate.

PERSONNEL

Interviewees were questioned regarding staff involvement with the clients of the programme. As would be expected, more staff were involved with each client in the secondary schools compared with the primary schools. Generally, one teacher was involved with the client at the primary level, while in secondary schools between two and five teachers was common. The following table shows the distribution of contact with the education officers in primary and secondary schools.

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<th>Teachers per school</th>
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<td>No response</td>
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GOALS

There was substantial agreement among school personnel on the goals of the programme. Support for children in need was considered to be the main goal, with communication and liaison between the home and the school also of importance. Thus schools agreed with the philosophy of Education Services, to provide "advocacy and support to enable access to, and maintenance in, appropriate educational settings" (Overview, 1988, Draft). School staff considered that the support provided should
improve self-esteem and work habits, as well as the happiness and personal responsibility of the child.

Despite the considerable agreement on goals, there were still some schools which saw the purpose of the programme in different ways. Some schools saw the programme as a service to them "...to enable school staff to understand how children's home environment affects them" and "...an aid in settling down the student" Four schools saw the purpose of the programme as a support to teachers "when we deal with the student and the home". Where it was mentioned, the matter of remediating deficiencies was perceived to be the need of the client, never the school. School personnel generally considered that the client must change to fit in with their conditions; there was no need for the school to change. Several primary school responses mentioned the need to gain parental cooperation in the education of their children. This probably reflects the greater degree of home-school interaction at the primary level and the importance placed on it by primary schools.

Only two respondents stated that they had no knowledge of the goals of the programme, and one of these had only been in the school six weeks. The other respondent stated that the education officer hadn't provided information on this.

Although there is widespread awareness of the programme's goals, the existence of a number of misconceptions regarding its purpose and operation may disadvantage chances of success for clients. Education officers should make clear to school personnel the goals of the programme when they make contact and reinforce this in subsequent meetings.

**PROCEDURES**

School staff were asked to identify the procedures by which contact was established between the education officer and the school. A variety of responses was received, with a marked distinction between primary and secondary schools. There was much more direct contact between the teacher and the education officer in the primary schools (4 out of 6 schools that could give a response to this question) than the secondary (3 out of 10 schools), where communication through the guidance officer was the norm. All but one of the schools indicated a neutral or positive stance regarding the procedures, and this school was critical of the lack of communication between the education officer and the school.
CHANGES IN STUDENTS

Teachers were asked to identify any changes in the client since he or she had been receiving support from the education officer. This question was asked to determine whether schools considered that the officers influenced the child's schooling. There were three parts to the question, seeking responses on the child's schoolwork, relationships and behaviour.

Schoolwork

Among the primary schools four respondents stated that the client's schoolwork had improved, one said there was little change, and one stated that the child's work had deteriorated. The remaining 5 schools gave neutral responses which did not indicate the degree of change in schoolwork. Among these the predominant response was that time was too brief to make a judgment on progress in schoolwork.

Among secondary schools five schools reported an improvement, three noted little change and five stated that there had been no change. Only one reported a deterioration. Three schools did not respond to this question.

Relationships

The client's relationships with others had improved in four instances in the primary schools and in five cases in the secondary schools. There had been a deterioration in one case in the primary schools and two in the secondary. No change was reported by five primary schools and four secondary schools.

Behaviour

Behavioural improvements were most marked in the primary school, where the influence of the programme resulted in improvements in five cases and another four cases in which behaviour was considered to have been maintained but did not deteriorate. In the secondary schools eight cases were reported to have improved, and two had shown little change. No primary schools reported a deterioration in behaviour, and there were only two in secondary schools.

In primary schools it was common for the education officer to liaise directly with the classroom teacher. In only two cases did a senior staff member in a primary school control the link with the education officer, although in another three, the principals indicated that they, as well as the class teacher, were involved in the programme. This direct link was not as evident in the secondary schools, where the education officer usually
liaised with senior staff or the guidance officer. These individuals then organised the programme for the client. Given the different timetabling practices of the secondary schools this process would be more efficient, but it did have a disadvantage: the absence of a direct link with the teachers meant that the advice education officers were able to provide directly to primary teachers on strategies for handling clients with behavioural or emotional problems could not be implemented as effectively at secondary level. Given the more serious problems secondary teachers face in dealing with adolescent clients, this insulation from expert assistance is a characteristic of secondary school support which should be modified. In the case of one secondary school it was the policy of the principal to protect teachers' time, so he handled most of the contact, negotiating with the Department for Community Services and then talking to teachers. Given the principal's view that "most students are well adjusted, and we need to concentrate on the majority of students", one can question the extent to which the expectations of the education officer were transmitted to teachers. An encouraging feature of the structure of secondary school liaison, however, was the number of schools (6) in which a year coordinator was allocated responsibility for meeting the needs of the students. This role should be strengthened.

Only one school, in the non-government sector, utilised the services of a social worker on the staff. Given the responses on other questions put to school staff, this is a role that more schools could provide. It should be noted, however, that this role is not equivalent to the role of the education officer, who is responsible for seeking educational solutions to the child's problems. A school social worker would probably be more akin to the field officers in the Department.

**Effects of Involvement in Schools**

School personnel who were interviewed were asked how the participation of the education officer in the child's schooling affected the operation of the school. The effect varied among schools, with some reporting no effect on school operation and others indicating a heavy demand on teachers' time to cater for the needs of the child. Six of the primary schools reported that there was no effect on the operation of the school. Another four commented on the benefits of the programme as a support for the child, parents and teachers. The other two primary schools commented on the time taken for consultation.

Seven of the ten secondary schools which commented on this question considered that the programme had no effect on the operation of the school. Three of these, however, considered that the benefits to the children were worthwhile. The remaining three schools described the
processes adopted to resolve problems confronting the client, and all commented favourably on the support provided by the education officer.

It is clear that school personnel generally consider that the influence of the education officer is limited to the classroom, and change to school structures or processes is unnecessary. Those who noted an effect generally remarked on the time-consuming nature of the consultation necessary. If the needs of many children are to be effectively met, changes in structures and processes are essential, and the present superficial changes being implemented in schools at the behest of the education officer are unlikely to result in effective long term improvements for more than a small number of children in need.

MEETING THE NEED

In the interview school staff were asked if they considered that the children who are given support are those most in need, and whether there are other children who display as much need. In the primary schools there was strong agreement that there were other children who needed assistance. Seven of the eleven schools which responded to this question stated that they had children who could use support. The other four observed that the children with the most need were being catered for, but gave no indication of the extent of an unmet need. One school considered that a way to meet the needs of other children would be to allow them to participate in the special programmes, such as tutoring, being provided for the DCS clients. Only one secondary school considered that all children experiencing a need were receiving support, and this was the only school which employed its own social worker. All the other secondary schools stated that other students needed support. One secondary school commented that the year coordinator provided pastoral care and could pick up problems of some children but was unable to assist all in need. Another school remarked that the Education Services programme facilitated school understanding of the home environment of particular children, and this contributed to meeting their needs.

The perception of an extensive need among other children in the schools is reflected in the pressure placed on education officers to provide support for other children when they visit schools, as indicated in interviews with the education officers. The limits to the size of the programme exist only on the supply side. From a demand point of view there is clear evidence that many schools see a need for support for other children who do not qualify as clients of the Department for Community Services.
PROBLEMS

The schools reported that few problems existed in relation to the service. One primary school and one high school commented on the lack of communication. In the case of the high school the guidance officer noted that it was probably his fault for not liaising with the education officer when a problem became apparent. This perception that the service is problem free reflects the high calibre of the education officers. The work they do in schools displays a high degree of competence and confidence in their own ability to carry through the role. One other possible factor is the limited nature of the service, and the fact that it virtually stands alone as a support service which links the home and the school for clients who are disruptive in school. If schools were accustomed to receiving such assistance, they would possibly be more critical. They certainly welcome the service as a support for the children and their staff. Although changes are being made, unfortunately it is still common for the classroom teacher to assume full responsibility for events that occur in his or her classroom. This is in sharp distinction to the approach taken among the education officers, whose network of support is a model which should be adopted more widely in services dealing with social behaviours.

BENEFITS

The next question put to school staff asked whether the support provided resulted in benefits to the child and the school. Ten primary schools responded to the question, and seven considered that there were improvements to the child. The nature of the benefits to the clients depended in large part upon their particular needs, so schools tended to report different benefits. One noted that the child's attendance rate and academic standard had improved, another two remarked on reduced disruption in class, while a third summed up the influence of a tutor:

the child has been given work appropriate to his needs and ability level. Though the teacher tries to provide this they do not often have the time. The child achieved in sessions with the tutor.

Benefits to the school were reported by four schools with improved home-school relationships and reduced in-class conflict being identified by two schools each respectively. One school stated that the benefits are for the child rather than the school, observing that this is proper as the child comes first.

Three schools reported no benefits. One, which had reported communication problems earlier with the education officer, stated that the school's authority was being undermined by the intervention because the child regarded the education officer as an ally against the school. Of the
other two, one principal had only been in the school a short time, and the other stated that despite every effort the child had not improved.

All ten of the high schools which commented on this question considered that the programme was beneficial, particularly to the child, but also to the teachers.

Kids could get lost in the education system. The programme highlights problems and makes sure they don't. One to one attention is beneficial to the child. The kid's levels improve, teachers are pleased that homework is being handed in, the kids self-confidence improves.

The benefits of the programme suggest that the allocation of more resources, by both the Department and the Ministry, is desirable.

**IMPROVEMENTS**

The improvements that school staff members thought could be made to the programme tended to be consistent with the views expressed by the education officers themselves, and in general reflected limitations imposed by the structure of the programme rather than any shortcomings in its operation within that structure. Most responses recommended an expansion of the service (7 of the 10 primary respondents and 6 of the 10 secondary schools). Among these were suggestions for permanent attachment of education officers to schools, regular meetings between education officers and school staff, and the opportunity for schools to initiate contact. Two primary schools and two secondary schools declined to comment on this question, and the remaining schools (1 primary, 2 secondary) identified improved communication between the education officer and the school as a desirable improvement. All these recommendations represent an expansion of the service beyond the intention and scope of the operation supported by the Department for Community Services. The fact that schools see a marked need for an expansion of services suggests that the Ministry of Education should participate in providing a service of their own or subsidising the role of the existing education officers. The existing provisions for emotionally disturbed and disruptive children fail to cater for the large numbers of children in need of special treatment. It is unreasonable to expect the teacher to have to cope with the sensitive needs of such children as well as instruct twenty or thirty other children at the same time. Equally, it is unreasonable to place children experiencing such difficulties in classes of twenty to thirty children and then punish them for failing to cope. Alternatives are necessary where these children can be cared for in smaller groups by teachers specially trained to handle the situation.
MINISTRY PROVISION

The respondents were asked whether they thought the Ministry of Education could handle the job as well as the Department for Community Services. Only one of the seven primary schools responding to this question considered that the Ministry could run the service. Of the others, five stated that it was desirable that the education officers were independent of the Ministry and not involved in the day to day running of the schools. One school stated

“You need an independent body to run the programme. When you are part of the system (education) you are locked in and constrained by regulations. The programme needs to remain independent.”

Another reason presented by two schools was that the Ministry did not have the trained staff for the job. DCS staff could visit homes and intrude on family matters, tasks which were not possible for Ministry personnel. As one school claimed, "the Department for Community Services can make the family toe the line".

The responses of the nine secondary school staff were more evenly divided, with four considering the Ministry could handle it, and five stating it could not. Once again, the principal reason those opposing the notion was that Department officers had the skills and knowledge of the home background to more effectively handle the situation. The schools which supported the notion qualified their statements with the observation that at present there were insufficient staff. The area of responsibility of an equivalent line of staff in the Ministry would have to be determined before a significant impact could be made on the problems that exist.

SUMMARY

1. The response of schools to the programme is favourable. The majority reported benefits for the children and staff, and few problems were perceived, although a number of school personnel were not aware of the stated goals.

2. Education officers tend to form links with the teacher in the primary school but with the guidance officer, deputy principal or year master in the secondary school. Indirect links with classroom teachers in the secondary school may inhibit the chances of success for clients.

3. Schools did not perceive a need for change on their part: all change was the province of the child. This belief in the legitimacy of the school is a hindrance to the development of suitable alternatives for clients who have little chance of success in existing schools.
4. School staff considered that there are many other children who could do with similar support but who are not eligible to be clients of the Department. An expansion of the service was considered desirable, but under a body independent of the Ministry so that it was not constrained by regulations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Although awareness of goals is widespread, the existence of a number of misconceptions regarding the purpose and operation of the programme is possibly detrimental to the improvement of school chances for clients. Education officers should make clear to school personnel the goals of the programme when they make contact, and at intervals thereafter.

2. The relative insulation of secondary school classroom teachers, compared with primary teachers, from the expert assistance of education officers should be reduced. Alternative strategies for establishing direct contact with these teachers should be explored.

3. Alternative school structures and processes are necessary to cater for children for whom mainstream schooling is not effective. These structures should be available to clients of the Home-School Support programme as well as other children in and out of the school system.

4. The model of operation used by the Home-School Support programme ensures support and advice for individual officers when they are working on cases. This approach is ideal for services which deal with people and should be maintained within the programme and, circumstances permitting, commended to other agencies.

5. The Home-School Support programme should remain under the control of the Department to ensure it has maximum impact upon clients and schools.
CHAPTER FIVE

CAREGIVERS' AND CLIENTS' PERCEPTIONS

The views of the clients and their caregivers are essential for the evaluation of the programme. Many of the clients do not live with their parents but are fostered or live in group homes. Table 5:1 provides a breakdown of caregivers and clients. Twenty one caregivers (parents, foster-parents and group home workers) whose children were clients of the programme were interviewed for the evaluation. In addition, the children were interviewed where possible. In all, 23 children were interviewed, but there were a number of cases where it was not possible to interview the client, and so only the caregiver could be interviewed. For younger children the interviews contributed little to the evaluation, because the education officer had limited contact with them, working instead with the caregiver and/or the teacher, and so these clients had a restricted perception of the programme. Some teenage clients were unavailable because they had left home or were boarding elsewhere while others could not be contacted because they were working at the time of the interview.

Clients and their caregivers were selected for interview by the education officers. There is a possibility that a biased distribution of cases has resulted, but it was considered that a random selection of clients would have served little purpose and may have been detrimental to the client's welfare: some cases were in sensitive stages of development, and to intrude with questions may have jeopardized the progress of the case. Also, contact by education officers with many clients and their caregivers was minimal and an interview would have borne little fruit. Consultation with education officers resulted in the selection of a range of cases, both successful and unsuccessful, for the purpose of the interviews.

Eight clients came from two families, and another two clients came from the one family. In five cases the caregivers were interviewed but the clients weren't.

 KNOWLEDGE OF THE KIND OF HELP THAT CAN BE OFFERED

Twenty out of the 21 caregivers responded to this question. Twelve claimed to know very little about the programme or what could be done.

"Very little. Nobody gives information unless you go looking for it. Information needs to be more accessible. Need to know the right people and the right questions to ask before you get anywhere.
Table 5:1

Caregivers and Clients Interviewed for the Evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caregiver interviewed</th>
<th>Number of caregivers</th>
<th>No. of Clients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Natural parent</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster parent</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group home parent</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hostel Senior Group Worker</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another mother commented:

"Initially I thought the outings and other things were being arranged because I could not afford these things for David, but I see clearly now, and I have the joy of knowing that he has encouragement and opportunities, and is gaining in self-confidence."

As indicated by later questions, they all knew from personal experience some of the services. Six of those remaining indicated they had knowledge of the programme based on personal experience so basically they had the same knowledge as the above twelve. The other two people interviewed were a parent who was also a social worker and a senior group worker in a hostel, both of whom had a good knowledge of the parameters of the programme.

On the one hand, it would seem that if caregivers know too much about the programme, excessive demands might be placed on the system, but they have the best knowledge of the client and if they are aware of the range of options available they would have a better chance for early treatment of problems. Those in society who benefit most from society's rewards are the ones who know how best to use the system. If client caregivers don't know how to use the system, it is possible that they will not improve.

On the other hand, the lack of knowledge of options on the part of parents may reflect their relative powerlessness. Rather than burden them with the responsibility of identifying problems and solutions, education officers obviously worked on a need-to-know basis. This keeps it simple for the parents. It does not, however, lead to growth on the part of
parents. Responsibility for this growth rested with the social workers, who worked with the caregivers at the same time as the education officers worked with the children. It may be necessary to look at closer links between the two processes. Certainly there is a general impression that some parents displayed a lack of willingness to exercise power.

**ACTIVITIES PROVIDED BY EDUCATION OFFICERS FOR CHILDREN.**

A wide variety of activities was provided, including tutoring, work experience, change of schools, Community Based Education Programme (CBEP), and negotiation with schools. As expected, for most of them school related issues were prominent. For many a combination of work experience, self-esteem, and school were dealt with. The variety of options utilized in practice is remarkable, while the flexibility coaxed from schools by the education officers was pleasing to note. Finding a school which was sympathetic to the child's needs and then developing a programme which allowed the child to adjust progressively to school demands showed considerable skill by education officers. The following range of interventions demonstrates the predominance of school-related activities for clients.

**Table 5:2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interventions Identified by Caregivers</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work Experience</td>
<td>4(^1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change of school</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-esteem</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutor</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiated with school</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBEP</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Change of school rated high among the actions taken. There was a desire to locate schools which were sympathetic to the needs of the child. It is apparent that the caregivers were aware of the importance of selecting a

\(^1\) Other two caregivers reported that work experience was planned but had not yet commenced.
school which supported their child. They were also conscious of the fact that some schools were unsympathetic. It does not seem reasonable that schools should operate in a manner that is detrimental to the child's future, while others are better able to make provision for the same child. Schools have a responsibility to create environments which promote successful adjustment for all children, not just those who fit the norm. Throughout these interviews some schools were amenable to receiving and helping clients who displayed difficult classroom behaviour, whose attendance was erratic and who had emotional and social problems. There were others, however, which displayed an unsympathetic attitude to the problems faced by clients.

Social workers at the schools and the hospital didn't know or want to know about Mary's school problems once they learnt she was a ward of the state (due to my ill health). There were problems at Westville High School. I could not control the situation. I had major health problems at this stage. The deputy kept suspending Mary.

Some teachers appear not to realize that children, like adults, find it difficult to compartmentalise their lives. Events outside school impinge upon classroom behaviour and it is remarkable that many children are able to mask the difficulties they are burdened with when they enter the classroom, but for some this is not possible, and external difficulties are reflected in abnormal classroom behaviour. It is unforgivable for school staff, however, when informed of the difficulties children are coping with outside school, to ignore this information when dealing with the aberrations of the children in school.

PERSONNEL INVOLVED BY THE EDUCATION OFFICER

Caregivers were asked to indicate the personnel that the education officer had involved in the client's case. Three of the seventeen caregivers who responded to questions about the personnel involved in the activities the children were engaged in appeared to know little about the programme and what was being done for the children. One mother said that her son had had tests to assess his ability. She hadn't been told the results but would like to know. The rest reported a wide variety of activities: CBEP, Commonwealth Youth Support Scheme, Commonwealth Employment Service, Camps, Kids school, tutors, and computer usage. In general, there seemed to be awareness of the extent of personnel involved by the education officer.

REASONS WHY THE CHILD IS BEING HELPED

The children were all referred for school related reasons. The main reasons were absenteeism (7), behaviour (6) and low achievement (8).
There was a significant overlap in many cases. Behaviour, truanting & low achievement were characteristics of a number of the cases reported by caregivers.

Michael is fostered; he has been with the family from October - till February. He then went home to his natural parents till May. This did not work out so he came back to us. He is very bright, but has troubles with maths. Also he got involved with the wrong crowd at Birchwood High School. ... He started at Eastbourne High School last Tuesday. It was best for him to leave Birchwood High School because he had gotten involved with the wrong crowd. He was wagging school, he got suspended. The last couple of week at school there were real problems. I was scared he would get expelled.

The complexity of the cases makes multiple assistance necessary: clients need support in self-esteem development, tutoring in subject matter, behaviour modification, truanting and so on. Of the twenty one cases, only three or four were due to family disruption alone and in these cases the children still wanted to go to school. Catch-up assistance was a direct solution to this. Emotional problems and behavioural problems are more difficult to resolve. It appears that school problems interact with self-esteem problems and multiple assistance is needed for such children.

**HISTORY OF HELP**

Twenty caregivers responded to the question "Is this the first time the child has been helped?". For twelve it was their first time. Some people have had long term support including three children who have been helped over many years. Such children appear to take help for granted: they expect the Department for Community Services to provide the support and become knowledgeable about the kind of help that is available. Some parents did not feel they had the ability to influence the direction of their lives. It was evident in the remarks of several that any change in the children's lives must come through the intervention of the education officer rather than through personal initiative by the client or the parent. This indicates that Home School Support is resolving the problems of these children in the short term only, and is not developing strategies for independence in the long term.

There is a high rate of turnover of clients for each education officer, and so a large number of first-time clients should be expected. This makes the task of the education officers more burdensome because the task of liaising with a client for the first time appears to be harder than for a repeating client.

**EFFECTIVENESS OF HELP**

Of the twenty respondents to this item, fourteen said they were helped by the support provided. Trust and friendship appear to be very important
Commenting on the effectiveness of the assistance, a number of caregivers identified the development of a trusting relationship between the education officer and their child as very important to success. Statements such as the following were common:

"Peter is fond of her (education officer) and trusts her. He does not give his trust easily."

"Then the education officer was called in. She was really understanding."

"Olivia can talk to Rosalie (education officer). Teachers have been unsympathetic towards her."

Reasons given for effectiveness of the support varied. Two caregivers reported that their child was now coping with the situation. In another, it was stated that the tutor was effective and the client was now in the highest maths class at school. Another caregiver reported that the assistance was successful because her children were back in the education system. Socializing with other children was also seen as a mark of success for the programme, as was the provision of encouragement and opportunities for the child with a consequent gain in self-confidence. One child who had been unable to make friends before did so as a result of the programme. An associated evaluation was the claim by caregivers that the child's self-esteem was enhanced by the support, and the extra attention provided by the education officer and the tutor was rewarding for the child. Improved learning as a result of support was noted by several caregivers.

There was an awareness that the child has a significant influence on success. The following comment is typical of several caregivers' comments:

Patricia hasn't been helped really. While she was being tutored, her marks did go up, but she is not very motivated. When the education officer is around Patricia can be motivated but she loses this when they are not there. Overall she has not been helped.

This parent thought that no matter what is done for her daughter the effort will be wasted due to the daughter's lack of motivation. It is important to develop a sense of efficacy in the parents: the mother has to think that the effort is worthwhile. To achieve this social workers must work with parents while the education officer works with the client.

Education officers were successful where prior assistance from the school or other organisations did not work: many parents had problems coping with the school's reaction to their child's problems. One parent commented,
The Education Department (sic) has been of no help to us. They thought we had the problem, not the school. The education officer has realized that Robert is having problems with the school.

Education officers were not successful with all clients. Four of the 20 caregivers said the assistance was not effective, but even so their comments provide an insight into the operation of the Home-School Support programme. In one case the education officer arranged a visit to the school for the parent, who wanted to get a tutor for her son. The education officer considered this was unnecessary. The mother disagreed. She said she would not ask the Department for Community Services for help again as "they were not interested in helping her son."

Another parent was pleased with the education officers, but she still thought her son had not had effective help. This she attributed to the lack of power of the education officers. She believed the education officers needed more power so they could help keep kids in the school system. She considered that the camps her son attended led him to mix with the wrong children, while his placement in a class of handicapped children was inappropriate. Another parent, cited earlier, thought lack of motivation on the part of her daughter was the principal factor in the lack of success. She thought the education officers had worked hard, and lack of success was not their fault. A similar reason was given by a parent whose son had to go to court during the intervention. Following this his behaviour deteriorated, despite the education officer's assistance.

The question which arises is, could the education officers have done anything further to succeed with these clients? In the first case the mother saw a specific solution which the education officer failed to provide. It can be assumed that the meeting with the school was satisfactory in the judgment of the education officer, but the mother didn't communicate her dissatisfaction with the decisions. With regard to those caregivers who regarded the lack of success as a consequence of the child's own shortcomings, empowerment is required. Once again the lack of efficacy of the parent must be taken into account in home-school support. In the other case, the mother considered the school had made the wrong decisions and the education officer did not have the power to override these. This is quite unlikely. The decisions made would have had the support of the education officers, who have considerable influence in the school context.

**FURTHER POSSIBLE HELP**

Nine caregivers stated that nothing more needed doing. Of these, two implied that any effort on the part of the education officer would be wasted:
I don't think there is anything new which would help. He ... has had suspension, detention, activities, etc, and nothing has gotten through to him. The problems caused by Steven are getting worse as he gets older.

Perhaps some of the caregivers had no idea of the possibilities although one commented "Frank has explained all the options". Others commented that all that could be done was being done. One parent said she wouldn't ask the Department for Community Services for help any more. In three cases caregivers stated that help was needed, but did not specify the nature of the help. Specific requests were made by some caregivers: for help on apprenticeship, changing school and acquiring skills.

Positive reinforcement and emotional support were noted by some caregivers as areas which could benefit from further attention.

Vince needs some positive reinforcement. There is a need to maintain some contact, not dependence, but someone objective to talk to if needed. Someone to trust, a person with his welfare at heart. Someone who can help break negative thinking habits.

One would expect this to be the parent's role. The assistance which the Department provides to reinforce parental roles is obviously necessary to improve children's chances at school.

Weekend activities, total assessment of the child and an individualized programme for the child were also noted as possible future directions the programme could assist the clients with. Those who identified specific items seemed to have a clear knowledge of the kind of help the education officer could give.

The results of this aspect of the interview seems to suggest that parents rely on the education officers for continuing change in the education of their children. It may be a case of dependence on the system, and if so steps should be taken to wean parents from this. The short term spent by the education officer with each client, however, means that this dependence may not develop in the majority of cases. The question remains whether or not future problems for the clients can be handled by the parents, or whether they have to call in the education officer again. Concurrent work with the parents is necessary to ensure empowering of parents to cope in the future.

ATTITUDE TO THE PROGRAMME

Eighteen of the twenty one respondents expressed satisfaction with the programme. Most praised the assistance given. Of the three caregivers who were not satisfied, one considered that the education officer had done nothing to help, and had only arranged a visit for the mother to the school. Another considered that the programme was useful to the extent that
When the education officer was around Nina can be motivated, but she loses this when they are not there. Overall Nina has not been helped.

The third person explained the efforts put in by the education officer at length, all to no avail:

She used behaviour modification techniques, she set goals, rewards etc. Eg. if Ollie did not get into trouble at school for two weeks Francine said she would take him to visit a TV station. The tactics did not work.

Also, this mother was concerned that the education officer had made what she considered to be an incorrect decision to keep her son at the same school.

The programme should not be held responsible for the negative attitudes of these caregivers. In two cases considerable help was put in on the child's behalf to no avail in the short term, and in dealing with the complex problems these clients have there must be a certain measure of frustration and failure to achieve goals. The pleasing thing to note is that there is a high degree of satisfaction among caregivers, even when their children are not succeeding: the opportunity to have access to support is a reward in itself, and most caregivers appear to be aware that the education officers do all they can to help the children. While this is not a random sample, and cases had to be selected which were not sensitive, the strong measure of agreement among all caregivers seems to indicate that the programme is succeeding in its goals of providing educational assistance to clients in need.

**THE CHILDREN**

The children engaged in a wide range of activities. Many more activities were identified by clients compared with the number identified by their caregivers. Table 5:3 lists the activities that were identified.

There was a high degree of liking for these activities among clients. Most clients had a clear idea of what help they were receiving but they were not clear about why they liked the activities or changes to school: this is typical of children. Only eight clients gave reasons for liking the activities. Those who expressed a reason mentioned personal relationships, preference for the kind of activities, and in the case of a
Table 5:3

Activities Clients Engaged in as Part of the Programme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Clients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tutoring</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changed school</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEART</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Brother</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work experience</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Based Education Programme</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holiday programme</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CYSS</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kids Open School</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camps- Port Kennedy, Whiteman</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama and art classes</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work contract at school</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help with reading</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

girl on work experience, the adult status accompanying that. Three mentioned the benefits of interacting with others, and in a similar vein, another expressed satisfaction with out-of-school activities, but said he would prefer to go to school because he missed the social life. The remaining cases gave general comments such as "I like everything".

**PREVIOUS ACTIVITIES**

Eleven children responded to this question. Nine stated they had been going to school, and the other two stayed home watching television and doing housework. Of the nine school attenders, four indicated satisfaction with school and five said they didn't like it. The four who liked school were receiving assistance because they had to change schools for various reasons. One child made the following comments about her change of school:

I liked school. I had lots of friends. I had to leave school half way through Year 11, so if I went back to school I would have to repeat Year 11. I have been trying to arrange to go back to school at Eastville but there are only a few subjects available. I could go to Birchwood but I have been there before and don't like it. I hated being there and used to wag.

Most of those who didn't like school expressed a tendency to wag school. The two children who stayed home stated that they didn't like being at home, (especially when their mother turned off the television), but they
were scared to go to school because of the trauma of meeting new children and new teachers.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Seven children responded to this item. Three stated that their schoolwork had improved: one child was working at an appropriate level in maths, another had caught up on the basics, while the third said assistance with his reading had helped. Two commented on the social-emotional benefits of assistance: one said that at the camps he had learnt to get along with people, and learnt how to do activities, while the other stated,

> I feel more mature, more grown up and more responsible. I would like to go back and finish high school.

**DESIRED CHANGES IN THEIR PROGRAMME**

The clients were asked what they thought could be done to make the activities better. Ten children responded. Six could think of nothing, two said they would prefer work to school, another said, given the choice, she would prefer school but wanted to speak to the education officer regarding apprenticeship, and the remaining client expressed a desire to continue with the existing programme because he liked working with him. He stated, "He is exciting, really cool".

When asked if they would prefer work experience or school, two of the above respondents who expressed no desire to change their programme also said they would prefer work experience, while another said the combination of work experience and school she was engaged in was best. This particular client and her sister had been staying at home prior to assistance from the education officer, and were being eased back into school, with one doing only one subject and the other two subjects. The rest of the time they were participating in work experience. The client said,

> I like the combination of school and work experience. This gives variety and you aren't stuck in a class all day like the other kids. The experience of being out working is an adult experience. At school you can be a kid: there is a balance, you can be a child or an adult, and this is good.

Such flexibility on the part of the school is desirable, and the child's response is an indication of the success of this flexibility. Work experience has its problems though. Two clients perceived the work to be demeaning and felt as though advantage was being taken of them. One reported that she never got any thanks for what she did. Perhaps it is a growth experience to find that work may not be as pleasant as school.
It is evident from the interviews that the clients, like any children, require the direction and support of adults to guide their lives. If, because of the circumstances, parents are unable to provide this, then external support is needed. Guidance in educational matters is essential and the service of the education officers is highly desirable to provide support, direction and advocacy.

**SUMMARY**

1. A majority of caregivers knew little of the programme beyond the participation of the children in their care.

2. School related interventions dominated, and caregivers reported difficulties for children in coping with school. Low achievement, absenteeism and behavioural problems were the main reasons for referral. These overlapped, presenting complex problems for education officers.

3. Some clients had been receiving assistance for a long period of time, but most were new short term cases.

4. The help provided by education officers was regarded as effective and outcomes included an increase in trust, self-esteem, friendship, the ability to cope and improved achievement.

5. The child's attitude and the attitude of the caregiver influenced success. Parents and their children appeared to rely on the support of Departmental officers for direction in their lives, and needed to develop a sense of efficacy.

6. Clients were satisfied with the programme and had participated in a wide range of activities. They reported improvements in school achievement and in social-emotional dimensions of their lives.

7. Most of the children who were attending school didn't like it.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Education Officers, and social workers generally, need to maintain a balance between taking responsibility for decision-making for their clients, and developing in the parents of clients the capacity to make their own decisions for their children. Where possible, education of parents in responsible decisionmaking should accompany the development of the children's education.
2. Liaison between school and home should be enhanced so that decisions taken by schools can be modified in the light of home factors.

3. Education officers should be given access to as wide a range of alternative activities as possible to assist the educational adjustment of clients.

4. The relationships established between the education officer and the client influences the success of the intervention. Education officers should ensure close attention to the quality of this relationship. The workload of education officers should be monitored to ensure they don't overload and so reduce the quality of interaction with clients.

5. Success for clients is often difficult to determine. Long term planning and assessment is desirable to identify significant elements that contribute to success in interventions.

6. More appealing alternatives to school should be available for clients of the Home-School Support programme so they can experience satisfaction in their education.
CONCLUSION

The evaluation of the Home-School Support programme was based on extensive interviews and questionnaires. The outcomes from that process indicate that the programme is structurally very sound. The network of support which is built into the structure ensures that education officers are able to perform their roles in the knowledge that they are on firm ground. The clearly delineated processes and the theoretical foundations for the programme ensure that there is no uncertainty surrounding their practice. The structure of the programme should provide a model for other programmes dealing with the education of people in difficult circumstances. In fact, it would be a worthwhile model to apply to schools, so that teachers who are experiencing difficulties with children can call on their colleagues for support. At present classroom teachers are relatively isolated when it comes to this kind of support: they are often expected to handle children's social, emotional and educational problems themselves, except in the most severe cases.

Outcomes for clients are not always clear, but there was general satisfaction among those questioned concerning the outcomes: given the nature of the clientele of the Home-School Support programme, it is pleasing to note that most people considered success was achieved in many cases, and in other cases behaviours had not deteriorated. While there were exceptions, these were in a minority. Field officers, school staff and the clients and their caregivers strongly supported the operation of the programme.

The education officers were keen to move from a crisis model to a preventative model. This is a desirable change, for intervention in crisis situations can have little chance of success compared with early intervention. A problem of course is detection of children likely to experience difficulties at an early stage without interfering too much in the lives of potential clients. If this can be accomplished, the concept of early intervention, such as is already practiced with the Early Education Programme, is most desirable.

The education officers who perform the role demonstrate a high level of expertise in the required skills. In this respect the selection process is sound, and the officers contribute to the high standard of the programme. The problem is that there needs to be more staff in the programme. Each division requires a full-time education officer to effectively meet the needs of the field officers. At present some education officers are conscious of the difficulty of performing an effective job for all the demands placed on them, and the opportunities to improve the chances for clients would be considerably greater if each division had a full-time officer.
A problem expressed by many education officers was the lack of adequate resources for clients in need. The Ministry provides none of the alternatives that are used, although this situation is changing. It is considered that all children, suspended or otherwise, have a right and an obligation to attend some form of schooling. If formal schooling is unsuccessful for children, more palatable alternatives should be introduced. The private sector is leading the way in this, and the Department's own Community Based Education Programme is the kind of approach that is effective. It should not be the Department's role, however, to make such provision. The liaison which exists between the Department and the Ministry should be strengthened to ensure that a suitable range of alternative school avenues are available to clients in need.

In secondary schools a problem exists in that education officers have limited access to classroom teachers compared with primary schools. This is understandable given the variety of teachers children in secondary school have, but it does not help solve the client's needs if the education officer is unable to relate effectively to all teachers who work with the child. It only needs one unwise remark by a teacher to set a child on the path of self-destruction, and structures should be established to ensure closer liaison with classroom teachers at the secondary level. There should be more responsibility for such teachers for the effective implementation of intervention programmes. Some teachers demonstrated an unclear knowledge of the goals of the programme. More attention should be given to ensuring schools are clear on this so they do not have unrealistic perceptions of it.

The powerlessness of clients and their lack of efficacy in handling their own affairs makes intervention on their behalf necessary. The process of intervention, however, should lead to self-management. This is the goal of the programme, and it requires a multi-pronged approach involving the education officer, the field officer and the school, as well as other supporting personnel. The expenditure of energy in this respect is worth the effort if long-term institutionalisation or dependency is avoided. The goals of the programme have to be long term. Given the sound structure of the programme, the provision of effective resourcing and the modifications suggested above, these long term goals should be achievable.
APPENDIX 2:1

QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEW: EDUCATION OFFICERS

1. What do you see as the need for this programme?
2. What is the role of the education officer?
3. Describe the process of admitting a child to the programme.
4. At what stage is the Education Officer brought into the case? Is this early enough?
5. Do all the field officers in your division make use of your services? How do you maintain links with them to optimise your effectiveness?
6. Do you find the materials supplied by the Programme helpful, such as the problem solving flowcharts?
7. What is the range of resources you have available to the child? What options do you have for different children?
8. Are the resources different for children in different situations (e.g. Primary, secondary, not at school)?
9. What links do you have with other agencies?
10. Do you find the structure of the programme sufficiently supportive? What changes would you make if it were possible?
11. Do you find your location here in the Divisional office yet responsible to the education programme causes difficulties in allocating allegiance?
12. Do the officers in your division have a good knowledge of the programme and your responsibilities in it?
13. Do you think the Ministry of Education could provide the service as effectively as DCS?
14. What skills are needed by Education Officers?
15. What are the attributes of the job?
16. How demanding is the job?

THE CLIENTS

1. How many clients do you have on the programme?
2. How many do you think is an optimum number?
3. How long should clients be in the programme?
4. How would you define success for a child in the programme?
5. What is your success rate?
6. Are there any cases that are too hard?
7. What happens to children who withdraw from the programme? Can they do so voluntarily?
8. What are the outcomes for the children on the programme?
9. Are there any undesirable outcomes?
10. Are the children in receipt of support from other services at the same time?
11. What would happen to the children if they weren't on your programme?
12. Are the needs of enough children being met?
APPENDIX 3:1
HOME-SCHOOL SUPPORT PROGRAMME EVALUATION

Questionnaire for Field Officers and Supervisors

As part of the present evaluation of the Home-School Support Programme, you are requested to complete the following questions. Your responses will be confidential, and responses will be combined to give general results rather than identifying individual responses.

For the following questions, please indicate your response by placing the appropriate number in the box provided.

1. What is your position in the Department for Community Services:
   - Supervisor
   - Field Officer

2. How often did you use an Education Officer in 1988:
   - Not at all
   - Once
   - Between 1 and 5 times
   - Between 5 and 10 times
   - More than 10 times

For the following items, please select your answers from:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

(Note, if you feel that the item does not apply to you, please place the number 0 in the box).

3. By using Education Officers, Field Officers are able to handle more cases.

4. The success rate of cases where there are school related problems is increased by using an Education Officer.

5. Education Officers are more effective in handling school related matters than Field Officers.
For the following items, please select your answers from:

| Strongly agree | 1 |
| Agree         | 2 |
| Disagree      | 3 |
| Strongly Disagree | 4 |

(Note, if you feel that the item does not apply to you, please place the number 0 in the box).

6. The services of Education Officers should be restricted to cases referred by a Field Officer.

7. The services of Education Officers should be extended to include cases referred by classroom teachers as well as by Field Officers.

8. The Education Officer's presence at Divisional team meetings is essential.

9. The work carried out by Education Officers has helped to improve relations between the Department for Community Services and schools.

10. By attending casework meetings, the Education Officer brings awareness of educational issues to Field Officers.

11. Education Officers should be available for informal consultations as well as formal casework.

12. Education Officers shouldn't be asked to participate in a case until the home situation is stable.

13. Education Officers with clients in Community Support Hostels should give priority to the needs of these clients.

14. Education Officers should work on a preventative basis.

15. Education Officers should work on a crisis basis.

16. Failure to achieve target goals is usually due to factors beyond the Education Officer's control.
For the following items, please select your answers from:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Note, if you feel that the item does not apply to you, please place the number 0 in the box).

17. Education Officers utilize suitable resources to meet the needs of their clients.

18. The needs of Aboriginal clients are adequately met by the Home-School Support Programme.

19. The needs of non-English speaking background children are being adequately met by the Home-School Support Programme.

20. Educational issues are a major cause of parent-child conflict.

21. Before educational services were introduced, it was much harder to resolve educational problems.

22. Funds used to maintain the Home-School Support programme would be better utilized to provide more Field Officers.

23. The present level of staffing in the Home-School Support Programme is adequate.

24. This division requires more staff time allocated to Home-School Support Services.

25. There should be a full time Education Officer in the Home School Support Programme in each Division.

26. The distribution of Education Officers across the Divisions is equitable.

27. With the present level of staffing it is feasible to provide an effective preventative Home-School Support service as well as cater for clients in crisis.
For the following items, please select your answers from:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Note, if you feel that the item does not apply to you, please place the number 0 in the box).

28. The Department for Community Services should not attempt to provide services that are the province of the Ministry of Education.

29. The Department for Community Services should not attempt to provide long-term schooling alternatives.

30. The Home-School Support programme should be administered by the Ministry of Education.

31. More educational alternatives should be available for non-school attenders.

32. I wouldn't like to discuss a client's case with an officer from the Ministry of Education, such as a guidance officer.

33. The Home-School Support programme is the most important support service for child clients.

34. The Home-School Support programme should remain as a support service for the Department for Community Services.
APPENDIX 3:2

HOME SCHOOL SUPPORT EVALUATION

QUESTIONS FOR FIELD OFFICERS

1. What is your role in relation to the programme?
2. At what stage do you decide to call in an Education Officer?
3. Do you monitor the situation in any way?
4. How and when is a decision made to terminate?
5. What do you see as the important goals of the programme?
6. How effectively does the programme achieve these goals?
7. How do you define success for the programme?
8. What do you think are the strengths of the programme?
9. What shortcomings does the programme have?
10. What changes would you recommend to the programme?
11. Would it be possible for the Ministry of Education to administer the Home-School Support Programme?
APPENDIX 4:1
THE HOME-SCHOOL SUPPORT PROGRAMME EVALUATION

Questionnaire for Primary School Personnel

Involved with _______________________

Staff Member: _______________________

Position: __________________________

School: ____________________________

Address: ____________________________

________________________ Postcode: ___

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE CHILD

Child's Year Level: _______________________

Age: _______________________

Sex: _______________________

Ethnicity: (Anglo-Australian, Aboriginal, etc.)

____________________________________

Please Note: This cover sheet will be removed before the information contained in the following pages is analysed. All responses will be strictly confidential.
1. How many teachers in your school have had contact with an Education Officer from Department for Community Services?

2. Identify any changes in the child since he/she has been receiving support from the Education Officer:
   (a) in schoolwork:
   
   
   
   
   (b) in relationships with teachers and students:
   
   
   
   
   (c) in behaviour:
   
   
   
   

3. Describe how your involvement with the Education Officer affects the way you work with the child/children.

   
   
   
   


4. What do you consider are the most important goals of the service provided by the Education Officers?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

5. What are the good features of Education Officer involvement with children?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

6. What problems with the service are there in your school?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

7. How do you think the Department for Community Services could improve the service provided by the Education Officers?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
APPENDIX 4:2

THE HOME-SCHOOL SUPPORT PROGRAMME EVALUATION

Questionnaire for Secondary School Personnel

Involved With ________________________

Staff Member: ________________________

Position: ____________________________

School: ______________________________

Address: ____________________________

__________________________ POSTCODE: __________________

BIOPGRAPHICAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE STUDENT

Student's Year Level: ____________________

Age: ________________________________

Sex: ________________________________

Ethnicity: (Anglo-Australian, Aboriginal, etc.)

_______________________________

Please Note: This cover sheet will be removed before the information contained in the following pages is analysed. All responses will be strictly confidential.
1. How many teachers in your school have had contact with an Education Officer from the Department for Community Services?

2. Identify any changes in the student since he/she has been receiving support from the Education Officer:

   (a) in schoolwork:

   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________

   (b) in relationships with teachers and students:

   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________

   (c) in behaviour:

   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________

3. Describe how your involvement with the Education Officer affects the way you work with the student(s).

   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
4. What do you consider are the most important goals of the service provided by the Education Officer?


5. What are the good features of Education Officer involvement with students in your school?


6. What problems with the service are there in your school?


7. How do you think the service provided by Education Officers could be improved?


