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COMMUNITY SERVICE VOLUNTEERS

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'THE CHILD IN CARE' SCHEME  
An Interim Research Report

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## 'THE CHILD IN CARE' SCHEME

### An Interim Research Report

#### The Context of the Scheme

No one can deny the problems and difficulties posed by older teenagers in care. We have still no satisfactory policy for meeting the needs of deprived 15-18 year-olds and they tend to have been missed out of the recent liberal legislation that has benefitted children. Indeed, some teenagers may even have been sacrificed for the good of others, as <sup>we</sup> now have record numbers of offenders under the age of 18 being admitted to Borstals and Detention Centres and many of these (one-third in the case of the Borstal Group) come into the penal system direct from local authority care.

Particular strain is felt at present in residential child-care institutions for adolescents. Residential care will, of course, always be necessary for a proportion of children in care but much of our orthodox provision is not a satisfactory solution to the problems of older teenagers, many of whom are already institutionalised and rebellious. Girls seem particularly troublesome.

Unfortunately, we know little about older adolescents in care although some research findings exist for those who are delinquent. What we learn about this sub-group of offenders is not encouraging. Our own studies of the old senior approved schools revealed that 20% of the boys in them were transferred prematurely, usually to Borstal and a further 40% of those released soon entered another institution. Similarly, the 80% re-offending rate for young people leaving Borstal confirms that residential approaches for older offenders are not particularly effective, except as a storehouse. In 1970, we suggested that half the boys in the old approved schools need not have been there as they had no particular need for residential treatment and gained little from their experiences. They had largely arrived in institutions because of the 'tariff' system of sanctions which had been applied to their cumulating string of offences.

Criminality is a common characteristic of deprived children and there is little evidence to suggest that the situation of other adolescents in care is any better than it is for these delinquents. After all, some 6,000 young people go out of care each year simply because they attain the age of 18 and what indications we have of their subsequent careers is not encouraging.

Ideas for helping the older child in care are sparse. Most social workers would wish to prevent institutionalisation and labelling and to foster healthy emotional growth and independence in young people but the question is, how? Official reports such as the P.S.S.C's A Future for Intermediate Treatment and NACRO's Jay Report on Offenders both stress the need for more community care, but this is more easily said than done and initiative as well as imagination is essential to get things under way. Even then, the schemes that are devised often only serve specialised minorities. NACRO's 'New Careers' scheme in Bristol, for example, originally sought Borstal lads who were intelligent, extravert, sub-cultural offenders but the project had great difficulty in recruiting enough of these from penal establishments.

C.S.V's 'Child in Care' scheme is clearly an important development in our thinking about the community care of older adolescents. The scheme has been in operation for one year and some interim findings are available. These discussions are based on an analysis of the backgrounds of all the 156 young persons accepted for the scheme by February 1979 and a review of every placement negotiated before December 1978. These details are provided by the C.S.V. placement organiser. Both placement heads and volunteers are invited to complete and return an anonymous questionnaire about the experiences and, to date, we have received about 65% of those distributed. This information, therefore, is less exhaustive than the overall survey of backgrounds and placements but is still sufficiently large to provide an independent source of data.

A glance at the characteristics of the volunteers indicates immediately that the project seems to help a whole range of children over the age of 15. As there are no

national figures for the characteristics of this group, it is hard to say just how typical are the 156 young people who have joined the scheme but we suspect that they are among the most problematic of adolescents, particularly as participation in the project tends to be an alternative to residential care, a facility which usually shelters the more intractable cases. Among the volunteers the cross section of experiences and needs is remarkable. 80% have been in care for over one year, yet there is also a small proportion whose stay has been barely a week. In all, about one-third are long-stay cases (in care for at least three years) and some of these have been in care for most of their lives. The scheme seems equally applicable to the long-stay child in danger of institutionalisation as to those adolescents who unexpectedly face a crisis and who find themselves, within a matter of days, homeless, expelled from school and in trouble with the police.

If we consider the offences of the volunteers, we find similar contrasts. We see from Table 10 that 69% of the participants have convictions and that some of these have 30 or 40 recorded delinquencies. Yet, nearly a third of the young people are not delinquent and are in care because they present problems of long-term deprivation and handicap.

The other noticeable feature in the evidence on the background characteristics of the volunteers and the placements negotiated for them is the flexibility of this approach. Each local authority uses the scheme differently. Social workers in Lambeth, for example, refer more young people as a preventive device for adolescents who are in danger of going into residential care whereas Haringey and Brighton utilise the scheme more as a rehabilitative measure for those in danger of institutionalisation. Other differences can be seen, for example, in Bolton and Suffolk where fewer referrals than elsewhere are living at home or in Brighton and Haringey where the adolescents are less likely to be offenders. The placements of the volunteers also reflect these features and at Lambeth, for example, a larger proportion live at home on while on the project than do elsewhere whereas at Haringey and Bolton, more residential placements are preferred.

This ability to adapt the project to suit local needs is a great strength and from this evidence no one could put forward the familiar excuse, "It wouldn't work for our kids." While there are important differences between the types of children on the scheme in each of the authorities, each of the areas have nominated some very difficult adolescents for participation.

### The Background Characteristics of Volunteers

A close examination of the backgrounds of the first 156 volunteers on the five schemes reveals the following important points.

1. Sex of Volunteer: There is an even division between boys and girls with 54% girls and 46% boys.
2. Age, Care Status : 64% are over 16 and 75% under 'care orders' in accordance with the C.Y.P. Act 1969.

40% have been in care before and 80% for over one year. Some have been in care all their lives and 17% were first taken in under the age of 5. Consequently, the degrees of residential experience vary considerably from those recently received to those who have spent ten years or more in community homes and boarding schools.

69% are offenders. Some are persistently delinquent and are still in the midst of a behaviour crisis with 2 or 3 recent court appearances. The average of 5 offences per offender is not dissimilar to the figures we have found among the senior C.H.E. population.

The main reasons for application of a care order to the adolescent were being beyond control, offending or being abandoned and neglected.

Only 38% of the volunteer's families are reported as having been 'co-operative' with social workers in the past and this in itself indicates the unfavourable home circumstances of so many of these adolescents.

3. Education and Employment

: The scheme has accepted young people with a wide range of intellectual abilities. 85% have obtained no academic qualifications and only 4 out of the 156 have passed an O-level. 91% have average or below intelligence and 13% have been classified as E.S.N.

Schooling has generally been problematic and only 17% were influenced positively by their educational experiences. 92% truanted, 32% displayed violence and 33% were expelled or suspended at some time.

Employment histories are equally unstable and few had jobs before joining the scheme. At least one-third of the over-sixteens were long-term unemployed.

4. Multiple Problems: Among the volunteers there is a range of handicaps and health problems. 7% had mental health and 17% physical health problems. 19% were severely depressed or suicidal.

Over one-third of the volunteers faced additional problems of this type in addition to the stigma of being in care or in trouble.

5. Family Circumstances: 25% of volunteers are not in touch with their families. When this figure is combined with the one-third who are long-term unemployed, we can see that among these young people, there is large group of extremely vulnerable cases for, in our previous research on offenders, we found that the homeless unemployed were five times more likely than others to be convicted of offences and to go back into institutions.

62% of volunteers' families have been dislocated by separation or re-marriage.

71% of volunteers have experienced serious rejection.

The families of the volunteers also display many general symptoms of stress:

- 51% parent-child conflict
- 54% marital difficulties
- 38% illness, death or handicap
- 42% financial problems
- 34% neglect or cruelty to children
- 29% housing problems
- 50% extensive involvement by local authority social services.

The young people, too, have experienced poor care and

- 46% have run away from home at some time
- 33% have been brought up by relatives
- 50% have been neglected, deserted or cruelly treated
- 62% are said to be beyond parents' control
- 46% have been in care at some time with siblings

It is not unlikely, given these figures, that the young people who have joined the scheme are very similar to the majority of adolescents in long-term care. Certainly, this group displays more problematic characteristics than the old senior approved school population where, in 1970, we found that 77% were able to return home on leaving.



## The Placements of the Volunteers

In Appendix B, we analyse the placements negotiated for each of the first 97 adolescents referred to the scheme. These initial findings must be viewed with extreme caution as they were gathered only six months after the start of the project. Inevitably, those placements that had ended by this time tend to be the least successful and, while they are important, they will hopefully not be typical of the majority which were still continuing at the time of the survey. Bearing this in mind, we can still gain some valuable insights from this initial enquiry about the working of the scheme during the first six months.

We can see from the tables in Appendix B that all referrals are accepted for the project but because of changed circumstances, such as the volunteer finding a job, changing their mind or going to Borstal, about one-sixth withdraw before the placement is negotiated. There is no selection by the C.S.V. volunteer organiser so all cases referred by social workers are accepted.

The type of placements negotiated for each volunteer vary widely (Table 6) and cover the complete range of community and residential facilities for all ages of client. There seems to be no channelling of volunteers into 'unproblematic' areas hence we see that psychiatric hospitals, community homes and residential centres for the handicapped are frequently used. 16% of the placements have been in nursery schools, 15% in old people's homes, 13% in residential centres for the mentally handicapped and 10% in play groups. Other popular choices have been community projects, day centres of all kinds and institutions for the physically handicapped. In each case, the placement was carefully matched with the needs of the volunteer and, over time, the volunteer organisers have developed considerable expertise at identifying the characteristics that lead to success. We shall be exploring these later in the research.

During their placements, half of the volunteers lived at home, 18% lived in the institutions in which they worked, 24% went to their work from a hostel or community home while 7% were in foster homes.

By December 1977, 60 placements had been terminated. 26 of these had been 'planned' and 34 had been unexpected. As we said, these 60 may not be typical of the overall pattern so it is unwise to draw too many conclusions from them. Generally, they each lasted about 2½ months and it seems that the unplanned breakdowns did not precipitate too much of a crisis. Usually, the volunteer was re-allocated or alternative provision was used and few of the terminations generated a situation where an immediate counter-plan was required. This calm with which breakdowns can be handled and the lack of damage to the status of the adolescent contrast sharply with the panic responses so often created by difficulties in other care contexts, such as absconding from residential care or loss of employment in working boys' hostels.

In their placements, the majority of volunteers enjoyed excellent relations with both staff (73%) and clients (78%). If there were tensions, they were far more likely to occur between the volunteer and placement staff rather than with clients. About one-third of the volunteers found it difficult to communicate with others and to accept authority and a small proportion, one-seventh, misbehaved by being aggressive or indulging in petty theft. The main complaint of supervisors, however, was a perfectly normal moan about young workers: time-keeping and attendance. The only exceptional problems were posed by the minority who were delinquent in their free time. Given the backgrounds of the volunteers, these findings are quite remarkable for it will be recalled that many of these adolescents have been in care for long periods and have often been labelled as 'beyond control'. The fact that the majority make good relationships and work satisfactorily in their placements, behaving more or less like any other young worker, confirms the contribution made by the Child in Care scheme.

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The main contribution made by the volunteers in their placements was a practical one. An extra pair of hands released professional staff from routine chores and made the climate of the establishment more relaxed. In their questionnaires returned to the research unit, supervisors stress the positive contribution and emphasise that any gains were mutual.

The support given to volunteers by placement supervisors is particularly encouraging. Although the supervisors' participation in the scheme is voluntary, in 83% of cases the care they give seems excellent. This must confirm their deep commitment to social work and to the scheme. In fact, volunteers get more support from this source than from their own social workers, only 65% of whom are reported as offering care of a desirable level. This is important for the volunteers often struggle on alone and in only 22% of cases do their families show interest, a further reflection of their very difficult home circumstances.

The effects on the volunteer of participation in the scheme seem to be wholly positive. A growth of confidence and self-esteem, improved relations with adults, independence, willingness to talk over problems and increased maturity are features all reported by social workers. Home circumstances change, too, in about one-third of cases. This is the same proportion that we noted in our previous research for boys during their stay in approved schools. But, whereas in that study we found that home situations were four times as likely to deteriorate as to improve, the figures for the volunteers on this C.S.V. project are more encouraging and twice as many get better as grow worse. The effects of participation on the family life of volunteers, therefore, is surprisingly favourable given their unfavourable home backgrounds.

Of the 52 young people who had left the scheme at the time of our survey, 31 were living at home and only 5 had gone on to a Borstal or C.H.E. This last figure is particularly significant in view of the facts that the prematurely terminated placements are over represented in this group and that 69% of participants had previous histories of delinquency. Even though the employment of these young people seems to remain unstable, it does appear that, even for this group, there has been a clear move out of residential care and some halt in their rake's progress through institutions. It will be important to examine these aspects in greater detail when more information is available but much of this initial evidence is encouraging. Further evidence from placement supervisors and the volunteers themselves confirms these findings.

## Supervisors' Questionnaire: Interim Results

So far we have received 32 questionnaires completed by supervisors at the termination of a placement. This number represents 62% of the completed placements at the time of our survey described in the previous section. This number is sufficiently large to permit some review of the experiences and perceptions of placement staff based on their own replies and this complements our discussions of every placement with the volunteer organiser.

Table 1

### Placement Supervisors' initial reactions to C in C scheme

(figures are percentages)

<u>Very willing</u>	<u>Interested</u>	<u>Apprehensive</u>	<u>Critical</u>	<u>N.A.</u>
58	14	28	0	3
N = 29				

Table 1 indicates that nearly three-quarters of the placement supervisors were either very willing and interested in participating in the scheme while the remaining quarter were apprehensive. None of the supervisors were critical of the scheme. Although most of the supervisors' initial anxiety centred on the special nature of the volunteers, their worries were also related to problems intrinsic to their clients and some of the supervisors would have been equally concerned about accepting any volunteer.

Table 2

### Type of Work undertaken by Volunteers

(figures are percentages and not mutually exclusive).

General help	63
Helping staff	19
Domestic	34
Instructional	9
Relations with clients	44
Organisational	16
Other	13
N = 32	

Most of the supervisors described the work done by the volunteers in terms of being a general help but nearly half also expressed a wish for the young people to develop relationships

with clients. A third mentioned domestic duties as being a major component in the daily tasks performed by volunteers.

Table 3Did Volunteer's job change ?(figures are percentages)

<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>N.A.</u>
45	55	1

N = 31

Table 4Reason for Change of Job(figures are percentages)

<u>More responsibility</u>	<u>Less responsibility</u>	<u>More involved with clients</u>	<u>N.A.</u>
61	8	31	1

N = 13

During the volunteers' placement, nearly half experienced a change of role and, interestingly, 92% of these changes gave the young person more responsibility and closer involvements with clients. In the 32 placements described, only one volunteer experienced a down-grading.

Table 5Did your Volunteer do all that was expected him/her ?(figures are percentages)

<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Partially</u>
78	19	3

N = 32

Table 6How well did Volunteer work ?(figures are percentages)

<u>Very well</u>	<u>Satisfactorily</u>	<u>Not too well</u>	<u>Poorly</u>
59	19	19	3

N = 32

Table 7What was Volunteer able to contribute whilst with you ?(figures are percentages)

<u>A great deal</u>	<u>Quite a lot</u>	<u>A little</u>	<u>Nothing</u>
28	38	31	3
N = 32			

Supervisors, as Tables 5, 6 and 7 indicate, were on the whole happy about the work performance of their volunteers, over three-quarters saying that the young people did all that was expected of them and that the work they did was either done well or satisfactorily. The supervisors also said that 66% of the volunteers contributed a great deal or quite a lot to the placement.

Table 8Nature of Volunteers' Relationships whilst working in placement(figures are percentages)

	<u>Satisfactory</u>	<u>Reasonable</u>	<u>Unsatisfactory</u>
Supervisor	63	34	3
Clients	85	9	6
Other staff	66	22	13
N = 32			

The volunteers' relationships with the supervisor, other staff and clients in the placements was, on the whole, very good. The most satisfactory relationships were with the clients and the least satisfactory was with other staff.

Table 9Problems experienced with Volunteer during placement(figures are percentages)

<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>N.A.</u>
65	35	1
N = 31		

Table 10

Type of Problems experienced during placement  
 (figures are percentages and not  
 mutually exclusive)

Delinquency in placement	25
Poor behaviour (non-delinquent)	20
Attendance/time keeping/ Unreliability/etc.	50 10
Volunteer experienced externally related problems(i.e.home, etc.)	35
N =	20

65% of the supervisors answering the question, "Did they experience any problems with the volunteer during his or her placement?", answered "Yes" which balances the somewhat idyllic picture provided by the previous tables. Clearly, taking on the volunteers was no easy task for supervisors. It is interesting to note, however, from Table 10 that the major difficulties experienced by supervisors were related to the time-keeping and attendance of the young people and that the second set of problems which were most frequently mentioned were situations external to the placement, perhaps at home or with a boy or girl friend. Delinquency was not a major issue and only 5 supervisors reported that theft had taken place. Neither were there massive behavioural, personality or control problems, only 4 supervisors reporting difficulties in these areas.

Table 11

Ways in which Volunteers benefited from working in placement  
 (figures are percentages and are not mutually exclusive)

Greater self-confidence	47
Improved social relations	19
More mature/responsible	22
Improved work performance/experience	38
Reduced delinquency	6
Improved dress/hygiene	6
Not benefited from placement	9
N =	32

90% of the supervisors stated that the volunteers whom they had accepted had benefited from their experience.

Nearly half reported greater self-confidence and frequent mentions were made of improvements in work performance, greater maturity and improved ability in social relations. The fact that only 2 supervisors commented on reduced delinquency reflects the rarity of this behaviour in the placement.

Table 12

Supervisors' satisfaction with relations with CSV organisation

(figures are percentages)

<u>Satisfied</u>	<u>Unsatisfied</u>
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97	3
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N = 32

Finally, Table 12 indicates that the supervisors are very satisfied with the C.S.V. organisers. The 3% that were critical wished for more information about C.S.V. and the Child in Care scheme.

Comments

The information collected to date from the placement supervisors is extremely encouraging for it confirms the very high commitment on the part of the placement staff to the project and to the volunteers. It is also clear that the volunteers perform their jobs well and relate effectively to both staff and clients. Supervising a volunteer is clearly a demanding and time-consuming task but the problems faced are typical of young people starting their first job.



Volunteer Questionnaire: Interim Results

We have also received 39 questionnaires from volunteers who have completed their placements and this represents a return rate of 65% from this group. The range of placements represented in these replies is similar to that described in the earlier section when we presented information gathered from volunteer supervisors on all the placements.

Table 1Volunteers' description of job

(figures are percentages)

	<u>Domestic Emphasis</u>	<u>Instructional Emphasis</u>	<u>General Help</u>	<u>N.A.</u>
	61	16	34	1
N =	38			

Table 2Hours worked by Volunteers

(figures are percentages)

	<u>Less than 5 hrs.</u>	<u>5 hrs.+ 6 hrs.+</u>	<u>6 hrs.+ 7 hrs.+</u>	<u>7 hrs.+ 8 hrs.+</u>	<u>8 hrs.+ 9 hrs.+</u>	<u>9 hrs.+ Hrs. of work varied</u>
	9	6	12	35	21	12
N =	34 (5 were N.A.)					

Table 1 and 2 indicate that 68% of the volunteers said that they worked for seven or more hours a day and that their jobs were primarily related to clients and aiding staff with the domestic tasks. The volunteers' descriptions of their employment mirror those provided by their supervisors in their questionnaires.

Table 3Did volunteers' work change during placement ?

(figures are percentages)

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
	49	51
N =	39	

Table 4

Ways in which volunteers' work changed during placement

(figures are percentages)

	<u>More Responsibility</u>	<u>More involved with clients</u>	<u>More involved with domestic/practical work</u>	<u>Less involved with clients/less responsibility</u>	<u>N.A.</u>
	47	82	12	12	2
N =	17				

During the placement period, half of the volunteers said that their jobs had changed and nearly all stress that their new roles brought them into closer contact with clients and gave them greater responsibility. Very few volunteers report changes in the opposite direction of reduced contact with clients and increased domestic tasks.

Table 5

Aspects of job liked by volunteers

(figures are percentages)

<u>Money/Hours</u>	<u>Easy work</u>	<u>Teaching</u>	<u>Relations with clients</u>	<u>Relations with staff</u>	<u>Domestic duties, etc.</u>	<u>Organisation, Admin. etc.</u>
0	3	3	92	11	11	11
N =	38 (1 was N.A.)					

Table 5a.

Aspects of job liked by volunteers

(figures are percentages)

<u>Instrumental</u>	<u>Expressive</u>	<u>Organisational</u>	<u>Mixture (E &amp; O)</u>	<u>N.A.</u>
3	71	3	23	1
N =	38			

Table 5, relating to the question "What aspects of the job did you most enjoy?", shows quite clearly that most of the volunteers enjoyed making relationships with clients. In Table 5a we have divided the volunteers' responses into three groupings: instrumental, expressive and organisational. Responses under the heading 'Instrumental' are those related to the hours, pay and working conditions, while responses under 'Expressive' indicate clear moral and humanistic commitments to the job or client group and those labelled

'Organisational' are concerned with domestic, practical or administrative duties. The figures confirm that the volunteers clearly display high expressive commitment to their job and this response is every bit as great as that which we found among 'normal' adolescents similarly employed in social services. We will make some comments on these findings later.

Table 6

Number of volunteers disliking certain aspects of their work  
(figures in brackets are percentages)

Nothing disliked	Something disliked	N.A.
15 (42)	21 (58)	3
N = 36		

Table 7

Aspects of work disliked by volunteers  
(figures in brackets are percentages and not mutually exclusive).

I		E			O	
Money, Hard Hours. work		Relations with clients	Relations with staff	Boredom & lack of work	Organisation, Admin. jobs	Domestic duties, etc.
5	0	5	14	43	5	33
N = 21						

Table 7a

Aspects of work disliked by volunteers  
(figures are percentages and are not mutually exclusive).

Instrumental	Expressive	Organisational	Mixture (E & O)
5	62	38	5
N = 21			

58% of the volunteers claim that they disliked some aspects of their work. Their most common complaint was boredom which, in every case, stemmed from not having enough to do. The second most common complaint referred to domestic

and practical duties and young people do not like washing  
 nappies, cleaning floors or tidying up. One or two volunteers  
 felt that they were being used as skivvies and were given  
 the muckiest jobs. 14% of the volunteers also said that they  
 did not get on too well with staff but only 5% complained  
 about the quality of their relationships with clients.  
 Interestingly, lack of money and hard work were not mentioned  
 as disadvantages by any of the volunteers.

Table 8

Volunteers opinions of care provided in placement  
 (figures are percentages)

	<u>Could be improved</u>	<u>Could not be improved</u>	<u>Don't know</u>	<u>N.A.</u>
	43	48	9	6
N =	33			

Of the 43% of volunteers who felt that the standard  
 of care could be improved in their placement, 71% criticised  
 either the number or the quality of the permanent staff while  
 the rest felt that financial and material resources should  
 be increased.

Table 9

Problems involved in being a volunteer(figures are percentages)

<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>N.A.</u>	<u>Accommodation</u>	<u>Working hours</u>	<u>Distance to travel</u>	<u>Working conditions</u>	<u>Money</u>	<u>Other</u>
47	53	3	12	47	23	12	0	12
N = 36			N = 17 (figure not mutually exclusive)					

A little over half the volunteers said there were problems involved in being a volunteer and 47% of these mentioned the hours of work. Some volunteers worked evenings, particularly those who lived in and they tended to find the job socially restricting. Many others disliked shift work and early starts. For some volunteers, the distance of the placement from home was an additional problem while others disliked living in a hostel. Among the majority, however, complaints were few and those mentioned tend to be typical of adolescents adjusting to work.

Table 10

Volunteers' relationships during placement period(figures are percentages)

	<u>Very good</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Just about coped</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Very poor</u>	<u>N.A.</u>
Staff N = 38	39	39	18	0	3	1
Clients N=39	64	36	0	0	0	

Table 10 confirms the views of C.S.V. organisers and placement supervisors about the quality of relationships developed by the volunteers. Volunteers get on well with most people but, when there are tensions, they tend to occur with staff rather than clients. The volunteers are generally complimentary to staff and 88% say that their supervisors were supporting and understanding, 76% adding that they could not have been helped more. Of those that did express some criticisms of their care during the placement period, 24% said they were not given enough to do while others claimed that they were not being supervised closely. 82% of the volunteers stated that they intended to maintain contact with either the placement staff or clients after leaving.

Table 11What do family and friends think of volunteers' jobs

	<u>Very good idea</u>	<u>Good idea</u>	<u>Indifferent</u>	<u>Critical</u>	<u>Very critical</u>	<u>Don't know</u>	<u>Not applicable</u>	<u>N.A.</u>
<b>Friends</b> (N = 36)	42	19	19	11	3	6	0	3
<b>Family</b> (N = 33)	33	24	24	15	3	0	3	3

Table 12Volunteers' relationship with friends and family during placement

(figures are percentages)

	<u>Better</u>	<u>Worse</u>	<u>No Change</u>	<u>Don't know</u>	<u>Not applicable</u>	<u>N.A.</u>
<b>Friends</b> (N = 34)	32	0	65	3	0	5
<b>Family</b> (N = 31)	45	3	52	0	2	6

During the placement, 55% of the volunteers described how the experience had given them more friends. This is important as 40% reported that, initially, their family and friends had been critical of their participation in the scheme. Although support for the volunteers from home was scant, 45% said that their relationships with parents had improved and this is an important confirmation of our earlier suggestions that the adolescent's family and peer group relationships improve during his or her placement.

Table 13Does volunteer feel his experience has changed his outlook on life

(figures are percentages)

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Don't know</u>	<u>N.A.</u>	<u>More generally aware socially</u>	<u>Better understanding of people, particularly client group</u>	<u>Other</u>
<b>N = 33</b>	73	24	3	6	29	63	8
					<b>N = 24</b>		

Finally, Table 13 shows that almost three-quarters of the volunteers who answered the questions relating to their general outlook on life said that their period of placement had provided them with more social awareness, a greater understanding of people and an increased concern for the client group with whom they worked. 61% of the volunteers said they would be pleased to continue in the work which they had been doing if this was possible and 92% added that they would recommend the scheme to a friend.

When asked about their future plans, 89% of the volunteers were optimistic about their future, 44% said they had a job to go to and a further 10% intended to do voluntary social work.

### Comments

The results so far obtained from these volunteer questionnaires confirm the findings from our other two sources of information, the five C.S.V. organisers and the placement supervisors. This is important because in any evaluative research, especially that concerned with social work practice, the objectivity of the evidence is always a matter of concern. The fact that three independent sources of information provide complementary findings is a great comfort.

The questionnaires show that the volunteers are extremely committed to their job and to the people with whom they work. They were happy but occasionally became bored through a lack of activity. Most of the volunteers say that they had gained something from their experience, either in terms of friendship with clients and staff or in improved relationships with friends and family. This is an important finding, particularly coming from the young people themselves, as tensions in peer group and family relations have been among their major problems.

Volunteers enjoyed their caring role and, surprisingly, were indifferent to the low pay, long hours and the physically demanding aspects of employment. As the

volunteers are largely failures of other social interventions, their sense of involvement in the scheme is, to say the least, encouraging. It shows that cynicism, defeat and nihilism need not be enduring characteristics of supposedly difficult, delinquent and maladjusted young people.



## Conclusions

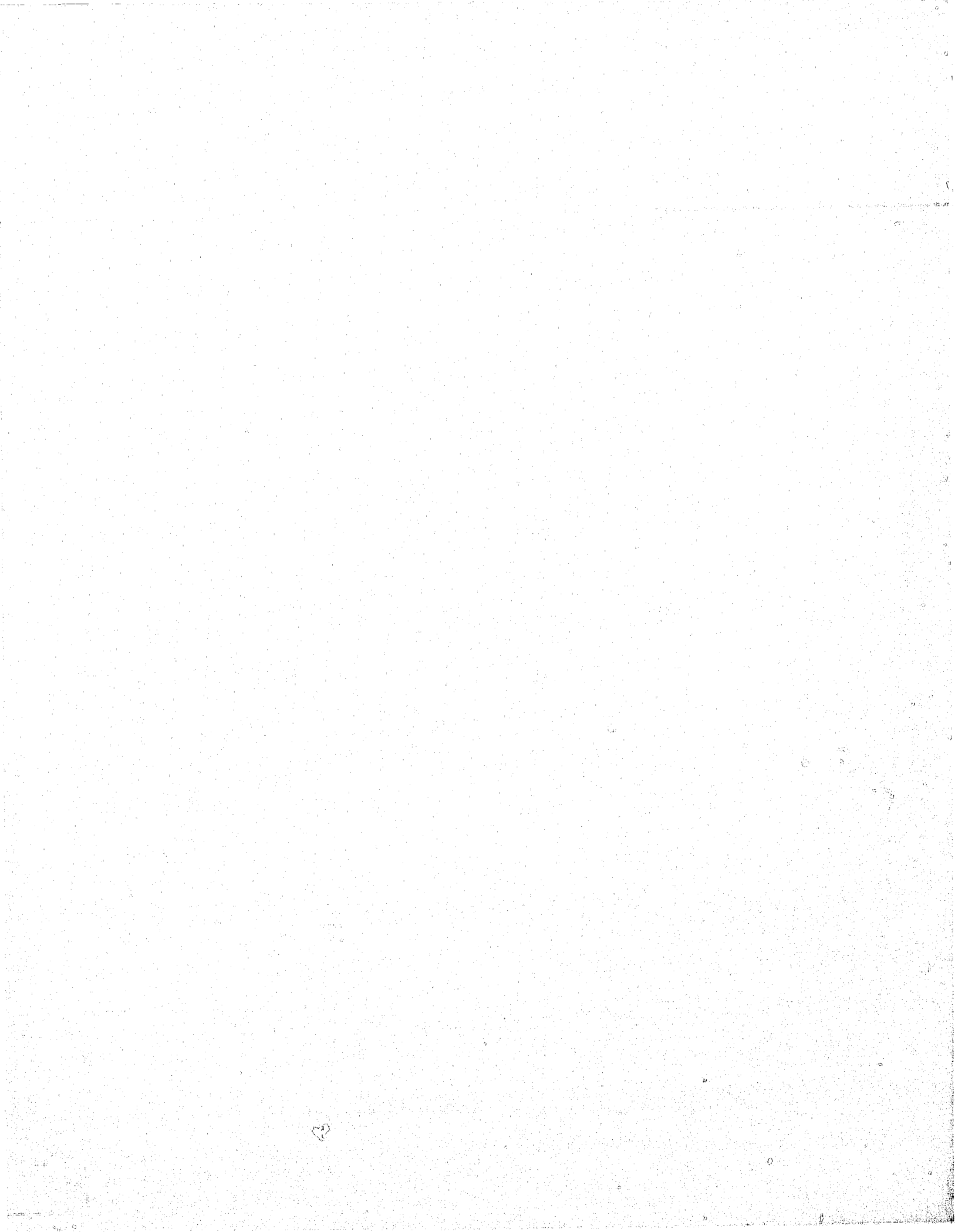
In caring for adolescents, we often use the word 'treatment' but this grand term usually means little more than manipulating the young person's social situation. Recently, there has been a move away from treating the adolescent's personality in isolation as we have become more aware of the situational influences on behaviour. Indeed, much adolescent acting out may be perfectly rational in the situations in which they find themselves, so we now try more to influence the environmental circumstances as well as the young person's ability to cope with them. By doing this we hope that maturity, relationships and, ultimately, marriage will help the young person to settle down. In the care we provide, we seek to reduce any deterioration of status generated by labelling and stigmatisation.

The evidence obtained from the research to date is encouraging as it indicates that provision in the community can meet the needs of some of the most vulnerable adolescents in care. While we cannot yet be certain of the long-term effectiveness of this intervention, the overall 'success' of the project is not quite the issue it seems for we must remember that most of what we provide for this group is largely ineffective. This is confirmed, for example, by the high rates of reconviction for juvenile offenders leaving residential institutions. So, while we cannot ignore the problems to which the project gives rise, we should remember that the alternatives are not particularly successful and are probably a good deal more expensive. The difficulties of negotiating and managing placements on a community care project, therefore, must be viewed in this context. It already appears to be true that a 'Child in Care' scheme is viable both in terms of economic and social work effects if a local authority has a genuine commitment to reducing numbers in residential establishments, is willing to provide for its own children within its own facilities and is prepared to delegate the placement decisions to an external supervisor.

It seems from this early evidence that the C.S.V. Child in Care scheme could make a significant contribution

to our services for vulnerable adolescents for several reasons. It translates theory into practice and provides an intervention which acknowledges the situational influences on behaviour and which prevents deterioration in the young person's status. It also helps a group of adolescents in care for whom existing facilities are generally ineffective, unimaginative and limited. The scheme offers a level of support which is in between that found in residential institutions and supervision orders and it changes the young person's role by offering employment. The scheme may be of invaluable help to those many older adolescents in care for whom existing interventions are inappropriate.

This report only offers interim findings based on the first groups to join the scheme. We hope that further analysis of the material will indicate just how typical these volunteers are of all other adolescents in care, reveal more about the factors which make for successful placements and offer comparisons with other young people in work. These early results, however, are extremely exciting.



**END**