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2021

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UNIVERSITY OF PLYMOUTH

**The Control of Safeguarding Children Social Work: A Mixed Methods Study of the Interaction
between Managerial and Professional Control in a Social Policy Context**

By

Julie Brown

A thesis submitted to the University of Plymouth
in partial fulfilment for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

School of Health Professions

July 2021

Acknowledgements

Thanks to my Director of Studies, Professor Rod Sheaff, and Second Supervisor, Dr Andrew Wills, for their incredible support, challenge, guidance and commitment. Thanks also to previous Supervisors, Professor Michael Sheppard and Penelope Welbourne.

Thanks to the social workers and managers who gave their time to participate in this research, particularly knowing the pressures of their work.

Finally, thanks to my husband Monty, who took this journey alongside me and who has patiently supported me throughout.

Author's Declaration

At no time during the registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy has the author been registered for any other University award without prior agreement of the Graduate Committee.

Work submitted for this research degree at the Plymouth University has not formed part of any other degree either at Plymouth University or at another establishment.

Relevant seminars and conferences were regularly attended at which work was often presented.

Presentation and Conferences Attended:

Institute of Health and Community Post Graduate Research Student Conference, University of Plymouth, 4 January 2013 (delegate)

Social Research Association Conference, 8th May 2015 (delegate)

Social Research Association Annual Conference, 14th December 2015 (delegate)

Social Research Association Annual Conference, 6th December 2019 (delegate)

Postgraduate Research Student Society, University of Plymouth, 20th June 2016 (poster)

'An Introduction to Tools for Social Media Research', SRA and New Social Media New Social Science, 11 October 2016 (delegate)

Methodological Innovations Conference, University of Plymouth, 25th May 2017 (presentation: The Control of Safeguarding Children Social Work: A Mixed Methods Study of the Interaction between Managerial and Professional Control in a Social Policy Context)

Annual Research Event for Postgraduate Research, University of Plymouth, 15th March
2018 (presentation: The Control of Children's Social Work)

Postgraduate Research Student Society, University of Plymouth, 11th February 2021
(presentation: The Control of Children's Social Work)

Word count of main body of thesis: 79926

Signed Julie Brown

Date July 2021

Julie Deborah Brown

The Control of Safeguarding Children Social Work: A Mixed Methods Study of the interaction between Managerial and Professional Control in a Social Policy Context

Abstract

While central government guidance has standardised children's social work processes, social work practice remains fundamentally the application of professional knowledge in complex and unpredictable situations. Existing empirical studies have prioritised the perspective of social workers and their frustration with the changes imposed on them by central government and local management and have neglected the view of management. This mixed methods study includes content analysis of official guidance and an analysis of interviews with local authority managers and social workers. This evidence reveals both the roles and attitudes towards control, of policy makers, managers and practitioners in their exercise of control over frontline children's social work. The clarity of roles and responsibilities that the statutory guidance brings is generally welcomed. Managers plan for compliance, reframing the statutory guidance as good practice and social workers understand their obligation to follow the guidance, referring to their line manager where there is a conflict with the social worker's professional analysis, so embedding the guidance in to day to day practice. But in contrast with the mechanistic descriptions of the guidance, social workers see their role as underpinned by professional social work values and speak positively about the support and reflection that takes place with their managers. Practicing in accordance with these values is undoubtedly challenged by pressures, workload the culture of the department.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter locates the research questions in its general (UK Government) and specific (children's social work) policy contexts. With only limited research in to the control of day to day children's social practice, this chapter sets out both the argument for and significance of this study and finishes with an overview of the thesis.

Context

This thesis examines the control of children's social work in England since the Children Act 1989. The overall aim of this research is to identify the key components and combinations of managerial and professional control theoretical frameworks in the design and implementation of safeguarding children social work. This aim has been developed into the following research questions:

- To what extent and in what ways is the content of government policy and guidance on safeguarding children social work in England underpinned* by managerial or professional control theory or a combination of both?
- To what extent and in what ways do each of the managerial and professional representative bodies promote the use of managerial or professional control over frontline children's social work?
- How is this combination of managerial and professional control understood and acted on by social workers who safeguard children?

- What are the implications of the above for safeguarding children social work policy development and implementation?
- What are the implications of the above for theories of professionalisation in particular as applied to social work?

*The term 'underpinned' is used here to mean the dominant theory of control revealed through content analysis of the statutory guidance.

Central government sets the legislative and policy framework for safeguarding children social work for which local authorities have the responsibility of implementation. In particular through section 7 of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970 and Section 11(4) of the Children Act 2004. Government communicates to local authorities the changes central government wishes to see in relation to children's safeguarding social work through the issue of statutory guidance under the above legislative provisions. The statutory guidance therefore represents a formal mechanism for the exercise by government of control over local authority work.

The objectives behind the implementation of new policy rules and guidance are generally attributed to an assumption by policy makers that the risk that any agency who has a statutory duty to safeguard a child fails to do so can be better managed (Lees et al (2013)) presumably lowered, through more rules and guidance. The social workers' perceptions are a combination of beliefs that these are strategies to further limit their own discretion, from a starting point that discretion is already significantly eroded, and to also protect the local authority, if necessary, at the expense of the social worker (Munro (2004)). There is an inevitable boundary to what is realistic for the local authority management system to

control, beyond which the de facto control of the local authority's response to each case transfers to the social worker.

There is a separate and inevitably localised range of policy making by local authorities themselves. One such example of this is the setting of local eligibility criteria for access to services which the local authority sets for itself and which the social workers are required to apply.

Children's safeguarding social work can be broadly defined as low conflict - low ambiguity (Matland, 1995) in as much as society on the whole views the protection and safety of children as a high priority. So as a policy area any work to increase the protection of children through the work of the local authority should be uncontroversial. Similarly, decisions to reduce protection of children (such as a reduction in preventative services) are controversial. Under the framework proposed by Matland, new policy in low conflict policy areas ('goal') could be achieved through administrative implementation ('means'). Jarzabkowski et al (2009) separate ambiguity into three domains (compared to the two of Matland) of goal, authority and technology (in this case technology being social work practice). Government guidance in relation to children's social work has been frequently criticised by social workers, for adopting too bureaucratic a stance leaving insufficient discretion for social workers to exercise their professional judgement (see Parton (2009), Pithouse et al (2009)) and further widespread criticism of organisational bureaucracy. So while central government may view the issue of instructions to local authorities, as appropriate and straightforward, the social workers themselves are more likely to see this as work that is subject to a high level of professional judgement and certainly context specific (Greenwood, Suddaby and McDougal 2006 and Malhotra et al 2006). Greater ambiguity within central government guidance could enable social workers to take the

decision they need to in a way that appears within their authority using procedures that are permissible, or at least not outside of, the official guidance (Jarzabkowski et al, 2009), but still within the framework of the law and decision making by the court.

Statement of the problem

Studies in to changes to the management and organisation of children's social care (Chapter 3) have focused almost entirely on the perspective of social workers (see Burton and van den Broek (2009), Marinetto (2011), Pithouse, Peckover and White (2009) as examples) in isolation of the context for change with only limited discussion as to the objectives of change on the part of the local authority management. The absence of the management's perspective limits the ability to properly understand the impact of recent changes to organisational arrangements of social work. In isolation, the studies reviewed do at one level portray these management interventions as frustrating to social workers who are having to learn to use new tools and frameworks. A fuller understanding of both central government policy makers' and local government management's intentions may assist in better understanding the process of change, and how each (government, local management, social workers) seeks to exercise control over it.

These studies are typically focused on the individual social worker's experience of social work projects being implemented in their local authority. These studies are also rarely, if at all, longitudinal, so it is difficult to separate issues of newness and novelty about the change under analysis, from more fundamental questions about the long term consequences for the safety of social work practice that arise from those changes and things that have stayed the same. According to these studies, the majority of social

workers believe these changes have been to the detriment of social work practice because they now spend less time with children and families.

Given the complexity of the environment in to which government is seeking to make changes theorising this as a simple sequential staged approach to the implementation of central government policy and related statutory guidance appears unlikely to reflect the reality which is more likely to play out as a messy negotiation and ultimately a compromise between the policy as intended and that actually implemented.

These compromises give rise to local variations in delivery on the ground and amount to a potentially significant implementation deficit (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1973). This deficit may be unintended. But add in to this already complex situation, a motivation on the part of social workers who may be resentful of the proposal or who simply disagree with it, then the drift between the outcome expected by local management and what is actually achieved grows both intentionally and accidentally. Reflecting then on situations where a policy may be considered to have failed - in this context typically through the death of a child - the difficulties arise in seeking to attribute that failure to either one of policy design - it was never going to work - or to one of implementation, or both. The answer to the question clearly attributes responsibility in very different ways. A further question in such circumstances is whether the risk of harm including the death of a child can always be managed and mitigated. The hindsight bias (Munro, 2011) inherent in the serious case review process, by definition, overstates the ability of some events to be predictable.

The relationships between management and the professional social workers can increase the likelihood of deficits in the implementation of statutory guidance (although not of the law itself relating to child protection) if management have not made clear to social workers

the workplace context or the relationships with other safeguarding agencies the social workers need to nurture. The social workers on the other hand will assume managers will mainly be concerned to access their objective and specialist knowledge (McGregor, 2006).

While this research is dealing with government policy on children's social work, it is not incorporating a study of the theory of policy implementation in general, but rather narrowing to the two fields of managerial and professional control, on the basis these are the systems that operationalise policy into practice within the local authority. This research is focused on the 'how' of policy implementation through examination of the control steps used to turn the policy into frontline practice.

Theories of managerial and professional control represent ideas about the organisational conditions in which children's social work is taking place. The interaction of these two theories coming in to contact in the workplace is examined in this research. At the outset of the research the impact of this contact represents the initially indeterminate situation which this research is intended to move from being doubtful and indeterminate, to one that is determinate. The use in the research of informants and case studies is intended to provide an empirical base which will be drawn from the experiences and observations of managers and social workers in the two research sites, as to how it is to be working at the intersection of these two theoretical control frameworks. Through this research this data will be tested in order to establish its strength as evidence, alongside the theory and their ability to resolve the doubtful situation. The approach taken in this research, to be able to understand the way and extent to which government exercises control over the organisation and delivery of children's social work practice (aside from through the legal framework), is through the analysis of the contents and subsequent interpretation through implementation of a piece of statutory guidance from central government. The stages of

the research examine the statutory guidance as written, the action of local authority managers overseeing its implementation and then by social workers and the impact of the statutory guidance on casework.

Significance of the study

The two theoretical frameworks of this study (managerial and professional control) have been the subject of extensive empirical research and theorisation in their own right (see Weber (1978), Tannenbaum (1968), Thompson (2008), Simons (1995), Freidson (2001), Larsson (2013), Evetts (2011) as a small number of examples). There is also a body of literature examining the extent to which those workers who have direct contact with the public are able to use discretion in the exercise of their employer's policy and procedures (Lipsky (2010), Taylor and Kelly (2006)).

This study goes further than many in the field of social work policy implementation in as much as these studies have worked with the views and experiences of social workers through qualitative techniques such as interviews, without then examining the evidence of changes in casework (see Burton and van den Broek (2009), Marinetto (2011), Pithouse, Peckover and White (2009) as examples). The approach in this research enables the study to not only compare any differences in the statutory guidance as written and interpreted by central government, local government and social workers, but also the impact of the statutory guidance evidenced by social workers in their practice. Responses to a questionnaire completed by an extended sample of managers and children's social workers will enable an analysis about the consistency of responses across a larger group of respondents.

This study attempts to understand what influence policy makers, managers and professionals have over the control of frontline children's social work through two theoretical managerial and professional control frameworks. This will lead to an understanding of which elements of those frameworks are utilised by policy makers, managers and professionals and which elements of the two theories do not seem either visible or validated through the research findings and so point to newly identified deficits in the explanatory theoretical models themselves or whether the context is one where these aspects will always be less visible. In this way, the conclusions arising from this research will not only be about the practice of sharing control of children's social work between government, management and professionals but also on the development of the two theoretical frameworks and the utility of the research methods used.

Overview

This research has been designed to gather evidence about the sources of organisational, managerial and professional control over children's social work by comparing the social work as delivered and implemented through the local authority management structure with the social work designed within a legal framework by government. The thesis begins by examining the tools available to management and to the profession to exert control over the work, as these are the main mechanisms available to the three main constituents (central and local government and the social workers themselves) to be able to exercise some degree of control. So theories of managerial and professional control are studied (Chapters 3 and 4 respectively) with a view to settling on a suitable framework from each to act as the lens through which to examine what each of the constituents do and say (write) in the organisational design and implementation of children's social work practice. The government's attempts at control are analysed through a formative piece of statutory

guidance (Chapter 8) to understand what are the controls the government is using when it sets out the guidance. Data from interviews with managers and social workers (Chapters 9 and 11 respectively) provide evidence of how they each respond to the government's instructions and also how the social workers respond to the local managers' instructions. Then a review of casework (Chapter 11) showing the practical effect of the statutory guidance at the case level will create a further perspective on what effect the guidance has had. A wider survey of social workers and managers (Chapter 11) will then assess the generalisability of the findings within the two research sites.

Chapter 2: Safeguarding Children Social Work Policy and Delivery in England since 1989

The institutions and legislation underpinning children's social work in England and their respective roles are set out here to give a broad context for the specific policy area. The chapter then explores more generally the literatures on policy making and implementation.

2a. The English statutory and institutional setting

This research is concerned with understanding the extent to which and how the statutory guidance issued by central government embodies managerial and professional control frameworks. Statutory guidance issued by central government is published and therefore accessible and a review of recent publications is the starting point for organising the search for a single publication to follow throughout this research. Central government is one of a number of stakeholders influencing the work done by safeguarding children social workers but in relation to top down (Hill, 2013) national policy making is the dominant source. The local authorities in which the social workers practice also exercise influence through the way in which they organise the work of the children's social work department as well as through setting the thresholds for access to services.

Aside from the work of government, central and local, there are a number of other bodies associated with the social work profession itself who identify themselves as working to improve services and develop the skills of social workers. These bodies and their relationship to children's social work are summarised in the table below.

Organisation/Role	Relationship to children's social work
<p><u>Central government and related institutions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chief Social Worker for Children and Families • Social Work England (SWE) • Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advice given to central government on social work • Regulator of those registered to practice as social workers • Improvement agency for social services
<p><u>Local government:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Government Association (LGA) • Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support, promote and improve local government • Professional contact for central government on children's services
<p>Professional Bodies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • British Association of Social Workers (BASW) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote best possible social work services and well-being of social workers

Table A Organisational Roles in Children's Social Work

The Chief Social Worker for Children and Families

The Munro review of child protection in 2011 recommended the establishment of the role of Chief Social Worker to give social work 'greater visibility and voice within government'.

In 2013 the Office of the Chief Social Worker was established. Included within the role was the following:

- provide independent expert advice to ministers on social work reform and the contribution of social work and social workers to policy implementation more generally
- provide leadership and work with key leaders in the profession and wider sector to drive forward the improvement and reform programme for social work
- provide leadership to the network of principal social workers to improve practice and influence national policy making and delivery' (gov.uk, 2015h).

Thus, the Chief Social Worker is influential in the drafting of central government guidance but whose own influence is not formally separately identifiable within it.

Social Work England (SWE)

The role of guidance and policy issued by the Health and Care Professions Council was until December 2019 to give clear instruction to those registered with it, regarding the standards to be met for that registration to remain valid (Standards of Proficiency, HCPC (2012)). This responsibility transferred to a new specialist regulator, Social Work England, on 1st December 2019 which is an independent body self-funded through the fees it charges to social workers and, while considered a public body, it is not part of any government department. So while it has a direct relationship with individual social workers its regulatory authority comes not from the social work profession but from government legislation (in particular the Children and Social Work Act 2017) and so, for this purpose, is considered a further formalisation of managerial control which it exercises through its

regularity functions rather than through the production and issuing of guidance to local authorities and social workers.

The Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE)

SCIE describe themselves as an improvement agency and are an independent charity. Their focus is on social care services for adults and children, and they can be commissioned to undertake training, consultancy and research activities. Fundamentally however they are not a membership organisation for social care professionals and any guidance they do create, although universally accessible, is voluntarily accessed by anyone with an interest in social care.

The Local Government Association (LGA)

Full membership of this political association is open to councils in England and Wales (LGA, 2014) and it works 'to support, promote and improve local government.' (LGA, 2014). Its governance structure contains a number of programmes which include Children and Young People and Workforce, with social workers one of the specific groups identified. Its role is therefore to seek to influence government policy and decision making across the entire range of its own statutory functions, of which safeguarding children social services is one. As a politically led cross party organisation its interests will inevitably be linked not only to parliamentary politics but also having a local dimension where local authority members are dependent on the support of their voting communities, who all variously use the services provided by the council. The acceptability of new government policy will be viewed therefore not only in the context of its political ideology, but also its appeal to local voters.

Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS)

The remit of the ADCS is senior leadership of children's services within local authorities in England, of which social care is one element. Thus, its membership includes professions including but not limited to social workers.

'Within local government, ADCS is the professional contact point on children's services issues with central government. The Association works closely with Ministers, government officials, the community and voluntary sectors, local government organisations and other professional bodies on designing and delivering integrated services for children and young people, inspection and developing the children's workforce, among other issues.' ADCS, 2015.

The ADCS represents the senior professional leadership, ie managerial, of local government children's services delivery. The members of the association have a key role not only in the development of government policy but also its implementation locally once agreed and issued nationally. When the government sought to influence local authority management arrangements by pushing for a single children's services department following the Laming Review into the death of Victoria Climbié, the managerial leadership of these new combined departments comprised senior executives from previously separate services and so may be senior education managers or social care managers. Thus, in some local authorities the senior managers of the departments in which children's social care is delivered carry a social work qualification - in others they do not. Whether either occupational profile assists or frustrates government policy implementation is unclear given some studies point to the alienation of social work qualified managers by frontline workers who are critical of the motives of those leaving social work to become supervisors and managers.

The position of the ADCS as a non-political association contrasts with that of the LGA. Although they are both active in the development of policy with central government.

British Association of Social Workers (BASW)

BASW describes itself as 'the largest professional association for social work in the UK, with offices in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

'We're here to promote the best possible social work services for all people who may need them, while also securing the well being of social workers' BASW, 2015.

Membership of the organisation is voluntary. In a consultation response in January 2015 they approximate their social worker membership as 17,000 working in all social work settings, not only safeguarding social work, and across the UK, not only England, (BASW, 2015).

This compares to 24,890 children's social workers (gov.uk, 2015g) and 16,500 adults social workers (hscic.gov.uk, 2015) in England as at September 2013, being 41,390 in total. Figures for Wales at March 2014 are 2,706 and 2,216 respectively (wales.gov.uk, 2015). For Scotland, at the end of 2013, 2,712 and 2,362 (sssic.uk, 2015). For Northern Ireland the equivalent numbers are calculated as 1,900 and 1,496 (dhsspsni, 2015) based on vacancy information at March 2014. In short, BASW represents about 31% of the UK social worker workforce (54,782).

If the proportion of social workers across each of the UK regions is reflected in the take up of BASW membership then approximately 76% of the 17,000 members would be from England. Further, if the profile of members reflects the proportion of social workers in

children's and adults' services, then the reach of BASW to children's social workers is limited to under 8,000 being a little over 30% of the workforce. This reach extends to 68% if the entire membership of BASW were found to be located in English children's services.

BASW also assumed responsibility and holds copyright for the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) following the closure of The College of Social Work in 2015. BASW described the PCF as 'the profession owned, over-arching framework of social work education and professional development in England' (BASW, 2020). This is however separate and distinct to the standards set by Social Work England described above.

2b. Making central government policy on safeguarding children

In England it is a function of central government to set the legislative and policy framework for safeguarding social work which local authorities have the responsibility to implement.

While since the 2010 General Election there has been a single joint publication from both the Department for Communities and Local Government and Education (gov.uk, 2015a), primary responsibility for the setting of government policy and related guidance for safeguarding children social work resides with the Secretary of State for Education. Two statutory provisions in particular cover instructions from the Secretary of State to local authorities in relation to children's social care, being:

- section 7 of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970:

'Local authorities shall, in the exercise of their social services functions, including the exercise of any discretion conferred by any relevant enactment, act under the general guidance of the Secretary of State', (legislation.gov.uk, 2015a).

- section 11(4) of the Children Act 2004:

'Each person and body to whom this section applies must in discharging their duty under this section have regard to any guidance given to them for the purpose by the Secretary of State', (legislation.gov.uk, 2015b).

The creation of Local Safeguarding Children Boards through the Children Act 2004 (and subsequent revisions to become Safeguarding Partners in 2019 through the Social Work Act 2017) widened the number of stakeholders to whom the Secretary may wish to extend instructions and so an additional provision enabled the extension of that authority:

- section 16 of the Children Act 2004:

'A local authority in England and each of their Board partners must, in exercising their functions relating to a Local Safeguarding Children Board, have regard to any guidance given to them for the purpose by the Secretary of State', (legislation.gov.uk, 2015c).

Guidance issued under these provisions must be implemented by the local authority and any other specified parties. The Department also issues non statutory guidance which may make recommendations to the local authority but which the local authority is not formally obliged to implement. Since May 2010 there have been four pieces of Statutory Guidance in relation to safeguarding responsibilities in general and social workers in particular, among other professionals (gov.uk, 2015b,c,d and e). Since the role of these documents is to communicate to local authorities the changes central government wishes to see in relation to children's safeguarding social work it therefore represents the formalisation as a direct and tangible tool the exercise by government of control over local authority work. The extent to which the requirements of these pieces of guidance have been implemented is then inspected by OFSTED, the central government inspector of local authority children's services.

The main legislative basis for current child protection social work is the Children Act 1989, in particular, sections 17, 31 and 47. These set out the responsibilities of the local authority to safeguard children and promote their upbringing by their families (section 17), the circumstances in which the local authority is given the power to make an application to court in relation to the care and supervision of any child (section 31) and the local authority's duty to investigate if they have cause to suspect harm. A copy of the relevant sections is included at Appendix A. The NSPCC is the only other body aside from local authorities with powers to take action in relation to child protection concerns - in particular to make an application to the family court and to conduct an assessment, (Stanley et al, 2014). A review of the child protection social work of the NSPCC is not within the scope of this research project.

Local government safeguarding policy making

There is a separate and inevitably localised range of policy making by local authorities themselves. One such example of this is the setting of local eligibility criteria for access to services which the local authority itself may determine and which the social workers then apply.

Influence over safeguarding policy by the profession

There is no single organisation that has a membership of all social workers in the country providing the sort of professional leadership that the institutions and societies of other professions enjoy. BASW is the closest to this. The publications produced by BASW and other interested bodies are often responses to consultations issued by the government but

which can hardly claim to represent the majority view of the profession. Nonetheless where they do exist, and for the purpose of this research, these documents are taken to represent either the formalisation of the exercise by the profession of control over their members' work or the expression of resistance to a proposed change to their members work. Notwithstanding the partial membership of the entire social care workforce they represent, they may nonetheless be perceived as representative of social worker views.

The College of Social Work (TCSW) CLOSED 2015

TCSW arose from a recommendation from the work of the Social Work Task Force which called for the creation of an independent body to represent the social work profession in England. The College was independent of government and had responsibility to drive up standards of social work practice and education, as well as the profession's standards. The College was closed in 2015, variously reported as being due to the financial problems raised by its failure to secure enough memberships and contracts (Leper and Brown, 2015).

2c. Challenges in government policy and programme implementation

The organisations within the table above form part of the 'implementation structure' (Hjern and Porter, 1981) of the multi-agency practices set out in statutory government guidance. In addition, Working Together to Safeguard Children defines those charged with responsibilities for safeguarding children, including the local Police, Health and Education agencies. These organisations are not necessarily related regarding their institutional arrangements ((Hjern and Porter, 1981) but rather they are committed to the obligations the statutory guidance imposes on them (gov.uk, 2015).

Local delivery of the statutory guidance is built on relationships, specialist roles as well as local discretion. The previously Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) (Children Act 2004) and now Safeguarding Partners (Social Work Act, 2017), provides a formal mechanism to oversee the working of the local implementation structure drawing on the authority of the statutory guidance to hold agencies to their respective responsibilities.

Generally though, this analysis draws on a top-down model of policy implementation (Hill, 2013) where policy formulation and implementation are identifiable stages in a policy process. At the same time however the structure of this research reflects the multi-level nature of governance and the interaction of the political, administrative and managerial actors within this (Lyn et al, 2000). Given the complexity of the environment in to which government is seeking to make changes implementation, according to Majone and Wildavsky(1979), is more a process of evolution and ultimately a compromise between the policy as intended and that actually implemented. This negotiation takes place within the drafting of the guidance itself, as well as subsequently through its implementation.

The overall effect of a large number of variations away from the intent of the original policy amounts to a potentially significant 'implementation deficit' (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1973). But add in to this already complex situation, a motivation on the part of social workers who may be resentful of the proposal or who simply disagree with it, then the drift between the outcomes which central government desires and what is actually achieved grows both intentionally and accidentally. Reflecting then on situations where a policy may be considered to have failed - in this context typically through the death of a child - the difficulties arise in seeking to attribute that failure to either one of policy design - it was never going to work - or to one of implementation, or both. The answer to the question

clearly allocates accountability in very different ways. Although, as described later, the process through which government policy is designed includes consultation stages.

This leads to the question of in what ways government are concerned with issues of implementation or not. Their intention and priority may only be to facilitate changes in practice by local authorities but leave up to the local authorities how effectively they are able to work with the formal power and resources that they have. The government may be concerned more with the way in which the creation of the policy, however symbolic (Hill, 2013), will reflect positively on them as having taken demonstrable action in relation to an issue of voter concern and be unconcerned about issues arising in relation to its implementation. Distance from implementation enables the policy makers to evade responsibility for any deficits in local implementation, (Hill, 2013). But likewise, where a policy is considered to have led to positive change then this can equally be attributed to the 'fidelity of the designers plan', Matland (1995, p 154).

The deployment of ambiguity in the policy document in relation to government's goals for the policy or the means by which these are achieved can have the effect of seeming to be all things to all audiences (Jarzabkowski, 2010). At the same time however the degree of ambiguity (or not) in the guidance could also reveal something of the efforts required in order to secure ministerial approval of the policy (Matland, 1995). According to Howlett (2019) the achievement of policy objectives is implemented not only through the behaviours of those within the policy network but also the mechanisms government has to bring about changes in who the actors are but also how their behaviour is modified.

This links to the difficult question as to what definition of success the government is using in relation to implementation of policy and from who's perspective. Particularly where

central government determine both the resources available to support children's social work and the social policy framework within which the services are delivered.

The objectives behind the implementation of new policy rules and guidance are generally attributed to an assumption by policy makers that the risk inherent in children's social work can be better managed (Lees et al (2013)) presumably lowered, through more rules and guidance, which in turn enable audit activities to be carried out, to ensure social workers are doing what they should, Munro (2004). The stated aim of the statutory guidance (Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2015 (revised 2018)) is:

'...to help professionals understand what they need to do, and what they can expect of one another, to safeguard children. It focuses on core legal requirements, making it clear what individuals and organisations should do to keep children safe.' p8

The government therefore sees the lowering of risk of harm to children as being at least in part delivered through the statutory guidance that defines individual and organisational roles and responsibilities.

Far from welcoming - or believing – that the uncertainty that is characteristic of social work can be made certain, the social workers' perceptions are a combination of beliefs that these are strategies to reduce any discretion they can still exercise, from a starting point that maintains this is already significantly eroded, and to also protect the local authority, if necessary at the expense of the social worker (Munro (2004)). As an indication of the character of the relationship between the social work department and the local authority, this presents a bleak position. The systems of control that the local authority management can afford to put in place cannot achieve direct surveillance of all the work of the social

work department. Therefore, control of day to day social workers' practice is shared between the practitioner and their manager, operating within the local authority policy framework.

Where the focus of the policy announcement is to concentrate on what is new then this enables elements of the old policy to wither away (Hill, 2013) or form part of the layers of rules within the organisation's historically evolved structures (Clegg, 1981). The process of announcing new policy can be argued to strengthen what was in place before without dwelling on the deficit that is presumably now being rectified and to whom the responsibility for any such deficit should be attributed. Government's articulation about the aim and effect of their new policy guidance presents these policies as replicas of their mature state, according to Majone and Wildavsky (1979). The local implementation process may be further complicated by the interaction and possible conflict of this policy with existing policies and the culture of the organisation in which implementation is taking place. It is also probable that the assumptions government may be making about the starting point for their policy change does not reflect the reality of the many starting points across local government which must be a significant frustration for central government when judging the likely effectiveness of what they are proposing to achieve as their desired effect. The structure of local government and in particular its local political context creates challenges in the introduction of external frameworks if not handled carefully and collaboratively (Sanders et al, 2017).

The bottom up approach to the analysis of policy implementation would see the activities of those charged with implementation of government's decisions as being a part of the process of developing the specifics of the policy, often having to choose between competing government decisions - new and old - where these conflict. The extent to which

policy is being made daily has been addressed by Lipsky (2010) in considering street level bureaucracy. Arguably, there may be circumstances in which it is the consequences of the policies in place locally to which central government responds with the creation of new or additional guidance. Described this way, it is the work and its consequences in local settings that drives central government policy.

While Lipsky examined the role of the frontline staff in applying policy in day to day encounters with service users, Gassner and Gofen (2018) examined the role of the senior managers working at the intersection of formal policy making for the local target population and the context specific frontline work. According to Gassner and Gofen (2018) where the senior leadership had once themselves been street level bureaucrats, this gave them the confidence to resolve conflicts between policy and the needs of the service users in favour of the latter where the senior manager viewed this as appropriate. The study also indicated senior managers who were previously street level bureaucrats might uphold a complaint so putting themselves in conflict with their own street level bureaucrats.

Children's safeguarding social work can be broadly defined as low conflict - low ambiguity (Matland, 1995) in as much society on the whole would view the protection and safety of children as a high priority. So as a policy area any work to increase the protection of children through the work of the local authority should be uncontroversial. Under the framework proposed by Matland, new policy could be achieved through administrative implementation. The issue of ambiguity is more difficult where government guidance has been frequently criticised for adopting a bureaucratic stance and which social workers maintain is a distraction and obstacle to the work they feel they need to do with children and their families. So, while central government may perceive there to be limited ambiguity which then enables the issue of instructions to local authorities, the social workers

themselves are more likely to see this as highly ambiguous work, needing to assess the uncertainty and complexity of each family they are working with on their own merits. According to Hood (2014) conflict arises between the instinct of managers to try to rationalise professional work as far as possible but the resistance of complex children's social work to being rationalised.

Although the impact which policy makers intended from the proposed change in policy may be ambiguous, the implementers and ultimately the service users may expect a high degree of certainty about the likely effect rather than a trial and error approach to achieving the desired outcome - acting first and then seeing what happens, Dunsire (1978). Rather service users may prefer an approach that carefully considers the potential of a number of options using knowledge and simulation to test strategies to the fullest before setting them into a real world context. The consultation processes deployed by central government in developing policy could be considered part of this latter 'synoptic' (Dunsire, 1978 p 94) approach to policy making in order to tease out the likely response from those charged with implementation of a proposed set of actions. Central government may instead pass to the implementers part of the responsibility for the design of the actual changes themselves, thereby drawing in and sharing accountability for the design to mitigate against any defensiveness or distancing by them when the final policy is decided and passed for implementation.

The nature of the policy area is also significant when considering which approach to take, where a trial and error approach involving work with vulnerable individuals poses much greater ethical issues than work without human involvement or in some other way posing some risk to health or well-being. In relation to children's social work and other similarly preventative or protective policy areas, obtaining predictive and reflective evidence of the

policy's impact is problematic, where success often lies in something not happening. In this situation, the local authority is left to pick up the consequences of the policy as implemented. From the perspective of central government, their task of designing a new policy and instructing local authorities to implement it is complete.

Conclusion

Central government use their power to issue statutory guidance that defines children's social work processes, which local authorities are obligated to implement. Social workers and their managers translate this guidance into day to day practice. Theories on how managers discharge their responsibilities are explored in the next chapter (3).

Section one – Theory and Literature

Chapter 3: Managerial Control

This chapter explores the literatures on managerial control to help shape the design of the research. The perspective of managers in children's social work practice is under-researched and so a key part of this research. The chapter moves through general themes to an analysis of the nature of social work as something to be managed. The chapter concludes with a proposed theory to use in the study design and analysis.

Direct and indirect control

Managerial control is used by managers to affect the behaviour of another person or persons (Tannenbaum, 1968) in pursuit of their (ie managers') objectives and so is specifically associated with an act of control exercised by a manager over a worker. It is the status and position of the person who is the manager that gives them their authority (within the constraints of the law and the organisation's own constitution), which can then be deployed to achieve the particular actions (or restraint from action) that the manager wants from their workers. While the broader field of study into managerial control explores a range of areas including but not limited to decision making (Taylor, 1914), production design (Ritzer, 2013, Woodward, 1965), organisational design (Weber, 1978, Parsons, 1960, Mintzberg, 1979) and power (Daft, 2010, Courpasson, 2006), this review of the literatures has been assembled in a structural functionalist tradition to four emerging themes about control over work and workers, and how it is used, being: telling staff what to do; checking on what they are doing; controlling through relationships; fine tuning the

control, in particular through the application of technology. In examining these themes of control further below, the terms 'direct' and 'indirect' control have been used.

In this context, *direct control* has been used to refer to a management control approach in which managers directly instruct workers (contemporaneously) as the worker carries out their activities. Examples can be found in industrial production where specific defined tasks are assigned to individuals who will carry these out in the way prescribed by management and reflects the scientific management approach (Taylor, 1914) and more recently in the services sector where options are narrowed to ensure a single replicable process (Ritzer, 2013). The managers also assign a group of workers the role of supervisors to ensure these activities are compliant with instructions given and use data about volumes and activity duration as part of a diagnostic system (Simons, 1995) to evidence the level of performance being attained. This requires the work to be observable with any discretion being limited and immaterial to whether the official procedure is complied with. On its own therefore this is unlikely to be an effective managerial control where work takes place out of range of supervision and where the worker may be required to exercise judgement and discretion. Notwithstanding the worker may internalise the purpose of that supervision so acting as though it were already and always present (Foucault, 1980). So frameworks that deal with only direct control systems are unlikely to meet the needs of this research project which includes an analysis of the controls used by central government, local authority management over frontline case work, only elements of which are directly observable and include the exercise of discretion.

Centralisation, specialisation and standardisation are important dimensions to the *indirect control* of tasks and have consequences for the development of the worker and also the experience of the product or service by the consumer. These do not by themselves act as

a direct control over what the worker does but rather how the activities required from all workers can best be co-ordinated. The Professional Bureaucracy (Mintzberg, 1979), for example, comprises a dominant operating core, small middle line and technostructure as the appropriate configuration for a small centralised supporting function with the majority of service delivery provided through specialists. The clustering of similar activities together and assigning them to a group of staff is an enduring feature of structural design and empirically based (Mintzberg, 1979), including within the service sector. This supports the argument for the benefits for organisations of learning and practicing doing one thing really well (Durkheim 1984, Taylor 1914 and Ritzer, 2013). These tools result in gains for the organisation (for example economy, efficiency and effectiveness) but at the risk of simultaneously passing on work to the customer who has to interact with a larger number of people for different aspects of their enquiry. This structure also increases the need for managers to ensure co-ordination across work groups and departments. More broadly, these are decisions regarding the distribution of resources, Weick (1995) and when resources are scarce it is inevitable management will need to protect and prioritise use of the most scarce resource. The remainder of the activities of the organisation are then reorganised such that generalist tasks can be performed at the lowest possible cost. This leads to tension between management and workers where workers see both the creeping disaggregation of their role and the loss of control of some areas of expertise. Frameworks to understand how the controls of centralisation and specialisation are being used by management provide particular insight when used to compare and contrast managers accounts of what they are doing either between organisations or within the same organisation where changes are being made over time within those frameworks (Mintzberg, 1979).

Telling staff what to do

Direct controls are those where management have defined tasks and procedures and issued instructions to staff as to how work is to be conducted. The definition of the process would typically arise from an analysis of the steps and resources necessary to complete it, which may or may not involve collaboration with the worker (Follett, 1995) but overall is what (in a normative form) the scientific management approach, (Taylor, 1914) purports to describe. At the same time however it is important for the acceptance of control by workers that they are in turn able to exercise some control over their work, (Tannenbaum 1968d). This method of control requires definition of tasks by management, where the role of the worker is to carry out these tasks in the way defined by management ie procedural standardisation (Timmermans and Berg, 2003) giving rise to a standardised output at a standard defined by management. In industrial settings with high levels of standardisation and automation, and workers assigned a relatively discrete replicable task, then control over tasks and processes is achievable and has been used widely for many decades. However, this control system requires that the work is of a nature about which managers can define precise activities and through that exercise control. Direct control is also achievable outside manufacturing settings (eg food outlets, Ritzer, 2013) even though such physical production controls may not be available and so other forms of control are needed including those described below. Therefore, the system of controls in operation within an organisation may comprise direct controls, but not exclusively so.

Indirect controls in this context refers to the structure and rules around which the organisation is designed and staff activities are co-ordinated. The frameworks which describe these help us to understand the system of controls around the work rather than the controls applied to the way in which the work itself is done, these being direct controls. Organisations with a high degree of formalisation are those whose structures are codified

and communicated to its members to be understood and its order followed. Evidence of formalisation can be found in published policy documents and procedures, standards attached to individual roles and transparent processes typically conveyed through an induction programme for new members including statements of ethics and values. The bureaucracy is the most recognised example of a highly formalised organisation structure with duties assigned to officials through a system of documented procedures, command and control, all of which can be learned, Weber (1978) and/or otherwise internalised (Foucault, 1980). The organisation designed through improvisation, Weick (1995) (ie emergently) is much less formal in comparison and places much less importance on blueprints, instead thriving on trial and error, viewing these as opportunities to develop and improve in an iterative way. These two opposing designs in which work outcomes develop represent the extremes where actual organisations can exhibit all the degrees of variation of formality in between. To some extent the degree of formality within the organisations considered by this research is less important than understanding what are the indirect controls used by management in each organisation and over the children's social work team.

In contrast to an analysis of structure that focuses on its function as numbers of tiers, teams and roles, (Parsons, 1960) identified and analysed three levels of hierarchy within an organisation, being technical, managerial and institutional. The role of the managerial level was to mediate the effects of external forces on internal practices, protecting those parts of the technical hierarchy as necessary. There is a persistent claim in more recent writing on the role of management that this mediating task is a key one (Thompson, 2008). How far management can go in their mediating activities will depend on the extent and reach of their indirect controls, which as activities in themselves, may only serve to provide reassurance to management rather than actually provide an effective system of control,

given how unlikely it is for two workers to hold the same position in an organisation and perform it in exactly the same way, or one person consistently over a long period of time (McGregor, 2006). Tension between the managerial level and the technical level arises where the role of the latter includes delivery of the service but perhaps more importantly should give guidance to management on what and how the service should be delivered (Parsons, 1960), which management may not be open to. This is particularly the case where the challenge for management is to reconcile the work of the technical hierarchy with the available non-monetary resources. Where the basis of the technical level is professional competence (Parsons, 1960) the route to resolve such tensions may be through the deployment of professionals into managerial roles (Evetts, 2011). The hierarchy described by Parsons recognises the different roles of these three constituents rather than the conventional super/sub-ordinate relationships. This is pertinent to this research which is examining the ability of central government to exercise control over the work that takes place in local authority children's social work departments through both the provision of guidance as well as through legislation. It is important to government that it is seen to be concerned about this area of public service and it has structural tools in the form of being able to issue statutory guidance to local authorities setting out minimum levels of behavior. On the one hand the central and local government bodies are part of an overall system of government including the courts but clearly in organisational terms they exist as separate entities.

The bureaucracy described by Weber is based on logic and rationality and focuses on the separation of the individual's work life from their private life as well as accepting there are positions of authority defined by the management of the organisation to whom subordinates defer. There are challenges regarding the sustainability of a number of these characteristics in the context of the current working environment which does not lend itself

to the stability envisaged by Weber or the conduct of work solely within the physical environment of the organisation's offices or a worker's own home where work tasks extend the beginning and end of the day. Thus a range of contingencies have the potential to prevent management achieving the objectives of the organisation and which therefore have to be mitigated. Daft (2010) identifies culture, environment, goals and strategy, size and technology as the five main contingency factors that influence structural design. Similarly, Thompson (2008) concluded that variations in the structures of organisations were not random but were linked to the contingencies and constraints both inside and outside the organisation. Design of the structure therefore also comes from a strategy to reduce the impact of those internal and external contingencies meaning changes in structure may become necessary. The approach taken in this research is to analyse the structure of indirect controls at a point in time as it is the results of the comparison of the management controls in place, rather than the ways in which they may have changed over time, that are of particular relevance.

These indirect control systems are broadly used by management to set boundaries (Simons, 1995) around the things workers can do but stop short of forming instructions as to how the work itself should be conducted (direct controls). Peters and Waterman (2012) described 'loose-tight' controls in which firm central direction co-existed with maximum individual autonomy. Rather, the frameworks that approach the analysis of indirect controls provide inventories of the different facets of structure and describe the main options or variations that can be found around each. This means these indirect controls can be present and highly formalised within organisations even where the nature of the tasks carried out by the workers requires a high level of discretion. A high level of direct controls does not necessarily imply or require a high level of indirect controls and vice versa.

Where the nature of the work is based around the provision of services by humans then workers in this context will be responding to service users who themselves can be unpredictable and sceptical so making the creation of standardised and prescriptive processes challenging to create and impose as a direct control. According to Timmermans and Berg (2003) (medical) guidelines and standards shorten the distance between accumulated knowledge and daily decisions as well as help coordinate professional decision making (rather than be a substitute for it). The service sector is not immune to the application of procedural controls. Rational bureaucratic principles can be utilised to create a system that controls both workers and customers (Ritzer, 2013), evident in fast food outlets such as MacDonalds. Every activity in each process is broken down, analysed and rebuilt to be consistently repeatable time after time, through which the possibility of deviation or discretion is significantly reduced. Such an approach cannot be assumed for all sectors and services where the measurability and ability to predict the production and consumption of the goods or service is subject to greater variability which is a feature of the service and knowledge sectors. While as a sector, hospitality for example, may be considered a service, the ability to define the production process in such detail and anticipate the customer's response is largely through closing down the number of options available to the customer and the areas for worker discretion in the production and delivery processes. The sectors on which Ritzer has concentrated have managed to introduce a high level of technical control variables to what is traditionally a service sector such that the process of the preparation of the food chosen by the customer amounts to a series of routines each one carefully controlled individually and as a chain of production. Services involving the provision of professional advice could likewise try to define a set of scenarios of customer need but the matching of the advice with those needs will be much less amendable to a predetermined range of interventions. To the extent the ability of management to exert direct control over production and delivery is a means to reducing

risk and uncertainty, which managers may think desirable in itself, then there will be a desire on the part of management to separate technical knowledge from the worker (professional) and appropriate to managers as technical standards (controls).

Checking on what the workers are doing

Managerial control can be described in a number of ways. These include expressing its composition as a set of functional characteristics (Luhman and Cunliffe, 2013), an outcome (Tannenbaum, 2008) or as both a cause and effect of effectiveness (Tannenbaum, 1968c).

The identification of managerial control where viewed as a set of tools and techniques is relatively straightforward to the extent these exist in the decisions managers have taken about a range of policies and procedures. Some controls may physically limit or encourage the activities managers intend, other controls may operate as instructions. For example, much is written about control systems such as the adoption of lean principles in the workplace including the service and knowledge sector (Staats and Upton, 2011). So to the extent managerial control is thought of as a series of activities, then everyone is subject to all or some of them. The particular challenge for managerial control in relation to knowledge work is how control can be exercised over the worker's thinking and decision making.

A further view on indirect controls is one that focuses on the skills and competences individuals need to have to carry out certain tasks. In this approach the functions of the office are described not in terms of the particular tasks that have to be carried out but rather the behaviours and skills an individual will have and draw on in carrying out these

tasks. Both are systems of control although the assessment of the performance of individuals in those roles would be carried out differently. In relation to the task based system the evidence would be the completion of the task or not and in some ways doesn't amount to an evaluation of the individual but rather the length of the list of activities completed or not. A system based on competency does however lead to a judgement about the skills of an individual in the completion of the assigned task whilst simultaneously weakening the control of the individual over their own reputation (Courpasson, 2006). Arguably, the competency framework is also not a neutral statement of skills and experience but rather the administrative expression of the values put forward by governors of the organisation, for example through credentialisation. It therefore plays an important part, in management's ability to define not only what work needs to be done but also what beliefs and values the workers carrying it out should hold. Frameworks examining the use of competency are relevant to this research given the nature of the work being examined (child protection social work) is subject to a formal qualification and workers must hold that qualification in order to practice. There are also links to how far reaching an approach to the extraction and centralisation of activities that do not specifically require the direct intervention of the qualified worker, has been taken by the management of the organisation.

Control through relationships

The confidence managers have that any control actions they take will have the desired effect will influence the particular control mechanism they use, Thompson (2008). They can be very specific with their interventions where they have full knowledge and a high degree of confidence that action A will lead to consequence B and that B is desirable to the manager. This is a rational view of the way in which managers make decisions about

controlling activities and the extent to which they themselves can be controlled. It also suggests a rational view about both the choice of control to be applied and the achievability of the outcome itself. Where there exist tiers of management, then the task of one management tier may not always be to determine what the outcome should be. To the extent they may even consider the goal unachievable, then they may have very little confidence in the controlling actions available to them to deliver the required outcome. Conflicts of interest arise in organisations whether personal, task or career based (Morgan, 1984) with consequences for how managers react to them including avoidance or competition. The task of managerial controls may therefore not always be to deliver the choice of outcomes of the managers applying them and be the rational means to achieve those outcomes.

The extent of reciprocity between the leader and the follower (Tannenbaum and Georgopoulos, 1957) has an impact on the achievement of a successful outcome from the application of a managerial control. Where reciprocity is high then workers can be assumed to be more likely to behave in accordance with the guidance and instruction given by managers. Where confidence is not so high then a stronger centralised managerial control function may be operated, particularly where the skills of staff to be able to work on a more distributed discretionary basis are not there or considered by management to not be there, Thompson, (2008) in contrast with what can be subject to and measured against technical standards set by management. The degree of reciprocity is inevitably influenced by the confidence of workers in the motives and aims of management but must also be impacted by the workers own confidence that the controlling interventions are effective and appropriate. Reciprocity is therefore influenced not only by the workers belief in the motives of management but also that management

have designed a competent and effective controlling activity to achieve a legitimate purpose.

The transparency of the system of direct control depends not only on the integrity of the controls being applied (as being the most appropriate for the level of technical control variable content) but also the extent to which workers' compliance is genuine. Work to rule or 'soldiering' (Taylor, 1914 and Gillespie, 1993) describes activities by workers which give the appearance of compliance with a control environment but in the view of management would not represent the best that can be achieved for the resources being used. The challenge for management lies in detecting these activities which workers will do their best to disguise, typically in a context where they are reacting to what they consider are some form of threats to their working arrangements. While Taylor considered that the application of a scientific management approach was the way in which soldiering could be eradicated, any production process involving human activity will remain susceptible to deviation from the theoretical ideal. Follett (1995) also considered value in the application of a scientific management approach through which a focus on the task would reveal the best way to carry it out and on which the manager and worker could agree through consensus rather than compliance through application of hierarchical authority which is, in itself, potentially conflictive. Such consensus is difficult to achieve in practice as it requires a transparency on the part of both management and workers and a set of common objectives. But the political image of organisations (Morgan, 1984) would view the environment as inherently conflicted. It will also depend on the culture of the organisation to work collaboratively and encourage the sharing of ideas to improve its performance. If the objective of management is to have workers carry out a specific procedure in the way in which they have designed then perhaps the motives of the workers in complying are irrelevant. Except where workers' motives lead to behaviours that impact on the reliability

of their compliance (in practice or appearance). Workers may also exercise discretion where they believe their knowledge in a given situation is more reliable than the official procedure prescribed by managers. Understanding whether and where this is taking place requires an analysis of not only what control activities are in place but also the worker's motivation for the activities they have undertaken.

The organisation can be described as a social entity (Daft, 2010) with power and politics present and operating to create a further unofficial structure that can both reinforce the official version but also contradict it. And to the extent the organisation's management are working with finite resources, then the distribution of these becomes of itself a social act, Weick (1993). Control, politics and power are present in all organisations. The presence of power other than in the same place as where managerial control is located has the potential to lead to conflict, where the aims and objectives of those with power are not consistent with those seeking to exert (legitimate) managerial control. Intergroup conflict occurs between separately identifiable groups where differences from goal incompatibility, differentiation, task interdependence and limited resources are the most likely sources of conflict (Daft, 2010). The range of stakeholder groups in and around any organisation is complex so the activities of managerial control are being exercised simultaneously over a range of stakeholder groups - internal as well as external. The extent to which any conflict spills over and prevents managerial control from being effective will relate to how much the powerful stakeholder is prepared to compromise and yield to managerial control. So power amongst stakeholders is a significant contingency factor that management of the organisation needs to consider in its design process so as to try and design a structure to create the balance of power amongst key stakeholders to the organisation's advantage - or at least mitigate against the most harmful of stakeholder powers. This assumes however that power is limited overall rather than viewing power as an unlimited resource

(Daft, 2010). Where power is considered unlimited, one stakeholder acquiring more power does not necessarily mean another stakeholder is losing an equal amount. So while Weber focuses on the physical characteristics of the control system, an alternative view is to consider the motivation of management in using bureaucracy as a control and power system, that seeks to reduce deviation and variety in workers behaviours (Courpasson, 2006).

The organisation enables communication amongst both workers and management in the organisation and also provides a medium through which management will try to exert influence over the workers in order to shape their attitudes and behaviours to be in line with those management intend. When sufficient numbers of workers do respond as management intend, this can exert further pressure on others to conform. The opposite of course is also true where significant numbers of workers do not respond in that way creating a significant obstacle to the effective use of either or both direct and indirect controls. The reach and impact of the system is extensive compared to the intensity of effort if the same communication of beliefs and standards were to be conveyed solely through the individual contact between a worker and their manager. Therefore, feedback about the way individual workers are interacting with the system can be used by management to make changes in what or how their priority messages are being disseminated and reinforced and with a view to correcting any undesirable responses from workers. Part of the management task thus becomes one of orchestrating a series of adjustments based on the interaction of workers with the social system, Tannenbaum (1968). Despite the impact of possible lack of controllability or desirability of the behaviours of all workers, the social system within which the work takes places enables management to communicate with all its workers. For management itself the reinforcement of its own priorities in effect becomes a task dispersed through its whole workforce rather

than relying solely on the efforts of individual managers. At any point in time the social system within the organisation will be in competition with the beliefs and priorities of a number of other social systems, which individual workers may also be members of. These can comprise non work and social systems. Competition between these social systems at an individual worker level is therefore a challenge for management to try and overcome, supported by the deployment of other mechanisms and tools of direct and indirect control.

The social system is also influenced by the choice and use of direct and indirect controls. Where Thompson (2008) focused on the particular function that hierarchy plays as an indirect control giving an organisation its structure, being to enable the resolution of conflict in the level below, others have considered the qualities of hierarchy as well as the functions it performs, including its social and ethical qualities (Diefenbach and Todnem, 2012). This analysis draws out a perspective on hierarchy that proposes it is far from a neutral set of objective arrangements but is in fact loaded with motive. In its purely functional role as conflict resolver, the presence of power is inevitable. Likewise, as a social tool according to Diefenbach and Todnem it is presented as fundamentally undemocratic where corporate leaders retain management privileges (goal setting, performance management etc). Diefenbach and Todnem assert that in its ethical form it is fundamentally unjust. They go on to describe the way in which the cultural values are wound into the hierarchy through the practices that take place within it. The potential for conflict is apparent where management may apply a system of highly restrictive direct and indirect controls and yet use its social system to communicate a preference for distributed discretion and empowerment. The extent to which the rhetoric of managers' communication (Fairclough, 2003) is visible to staff as such is an indication of whether the social controls lack subtly or are otherwise less effective than their direct and indirect control counterparts.

Aside from instructions and rules, managerial control can also be exercised through the social system (Tannenbaum, 1968) or environment that influences the way the worker thinks and therefore behaves. Management can use the social system within the organisation to promote the beliefs and standards that they in turn believe support their values, purpose and direction for the organisation (Simons, 1995) at the same time as the exercise of direct and indirect controls. These 'softer components' alongside formal procedures and rules serve as important influences for creating the culture defined by management (Chambers, 2014).

Two assumptions underlie the decision to define and train staff on a set of consistent values. Firstly that those values will have an effect on staff behaviour and secondly that positive outcomes will result (Meglino, Ravlin and Adkins, 1989). The likelihood of these assumptions being realised can be enhanced where statements of values are developed in a participative way, being more likely to become embedded amongst staff (Chambers, 2014).

Managers use statements of values to define official general beliefs about right and wrong with an intention on the part of managers that these guide the behaviour of staff (Quick and Nelson 2013) communicated through staff training. The need to proactively socialise these value statements with staff is important given individuals also carry their own values (Dose, 1997) hence a need for management to give and train them in those values they want staff to model in the workplace (Quick and Nelson, 2013).

Leaders then need to model those values to staff to persuade staff to behave in ways consistent with the leaders wishes (James and Lahti, 2011) or else risk undermining the

authenticity of the values where they become espoused rather than enacted (Schein, 2010).

The role of social systems and social control needs to be seen however as complimentary to the other control mechanisms that management uses. While it may encourage workers to be committed to the organisation for whom they work, that commitment in itself would not enable an incompetent worker to compensate for their lack of technical skills and knowledge. Although it may make them more likely to want to learn and improve their skills in order to give effective service to their organisation. The social systems also form an important function in the integration of new members, Tannenbaum (1968). But being clear that while the system's aims may in part include some concern for the well-being of new members, more fundamentally it is there to serve the needs of those exercising control. These systems may be visible or hidden from workers. The disadvantage of the social system however comes through the relative lack of controllability by management of both the social system itself and of the workers' reactions within the system. The existence of the system is a given and acknowledged in the context of this research but its frameworks are not the focus of the research because of the inability of management to control this, instead focusing on the control systems management put in place over which it can exercise control, being direct and indirect controls. This project is looking specifically at the control mechanisms used by management and the professionals within the organisation where the social system itself is created and sustained by the actions of all of its participants.

Fine tuning

The extent of technology in the production process is an important dimension in the design and control of the way in which tasks are co-ordinated and performed both in terms of the extent to which the process is rooted in technology (Woodward,1965) and also the extent to which that technology is analysable and variable, (Perrow in Daft, 2010). Perrow argues the technology of the production process is itself therefore a determinant of the level of direct control that managers can apply. This can lead therefore to a working environment characterised as one of a high level of managerial control but where that derives from the nature of the production process rather than any intent on management to apply such controls. As for information technology, according to Sinha and Larrison (2020) research into the application of technology to social work has been principally on its role in education rather than as a resource to expand the practitioner's professional capabilities.

The selection of a single managerial theoretical framework through which to understand the control applied by management over child protection social work is based on a number of criteria. Given this research is examining the control of both the policy framework within central government through to the local procedures within the local authority, used to plan and deliver child protection social work services, then the framework needs to be broad enough to accommodate the range of stakeholders and their own domains of managerial control interest. The research data will inevitably be based on analysis and feedback at a point in time rather than a longitudinal piece of work and so managerial theoretical frameworks with a strong chronological connection will be less able to analyse that data. Rather the framework needs to offer a set of attributes against which the controlling activities of a number of 'management groups' can be analysed and compared. In addition to the selection of the managerial theoretical framework is the selection of a professional

theoretical framework given part of the objective of this research project is to discover the presence of features of either or both of these.

Simons levers of control fulfils these requirements as a framework for analysing managerial control. It sets out four domains of control systems incorporating control over day to day work through to strategic decision making. Simons' levers of control (LOC) is a model developed principally from the commercial sector but it is transferable to the social work/local authority sector with some care. It sets out a range of features which can be used to analyse existing managerial control activities. These features also enable a comparison to the selected professional control framework.

3a. Defining and understanding the technology of social work

The International Federation of Social Workers is a global organisation supporting 126 country members (IFSW, 2020). It has developed a global definition of social work below, which has been adopted and adapted by its members (including the BASW) and speaks to its multi-faceted nature and purposes.

'..practice based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing. The above definition may be amplified at national and/or regional levels.' (IFSW, 2019)

As the IFSW definition above describes, social work is a practice as well as an academic discipline. The knowledge used in the practice of social work includes not only theory in relation to the effect of social work as an intervention but also an understanding and ability

to apply the law as relates to social work. In any given case a social worker is presented with there will be legal options as well as social work practice options and these are being measured and considered within unpredictable situations (Braye and Preston-Shoot, 2016).

Social workers form the operating core (Mintzberg, 1979) and their work consists of the application of knowledge in the assessment of risk in the context of a child and their family. This risk assessment leads to the making of a decision then regarding an intervention with that family in order to lower the risk posed to that child and their well-being. This technical role within the organisation (Parsons, 1960) is in contrast to that of their managers whose role is to mediate the demands of official procedures with the needs (Thompson, 2008) of children and families.

Given the service is consumed at the same time it is being provided, it makes that work indeterminate ahead of that moment of assessment, decision, action. Managers issue official procedures that set out thresholds and referral criteria to guide the social worker's decision making about the risk and issues presented through the process of assessment and this achieves some consistency and predictability of work processes (Taylor, 1914). Compliance with these remains under the control of the social worker but with adverse consequences for them if they do not, although much decision making is not taken in isolation of partner agencies through case conferences.

Managerial control is defined here as a set of actions by management to design, monitor and regulate the operations of the organisation using physical and procedural controls, data regarding the performance and use of an hierarchy of decision making. In this context 'management' is taken to include those outside of the social work profession but

who are seeking to exercise control over social work. In particular this includes central government through its powers to issue statutory guidance which councils are required to implement. It also includes the managers within the council. There is a need to distinguish between managers who are professional social workers themselves from managers outside of the profession. For the latter there is no technical social work knowledge so control would be managerial in nature placing reliance on the duties and responsibilities conferred within the organisation's hierarchy (Weber, 1974). For the manager who is also a qualified social worker (the 'hybrid manager' see Wong and Lee, 2015 and McGivern, 2015) then there is the potential for a duality of control systems to be active. In the management role the individual will be using at least some of the tools of managerial control and will themselves be accountable to more senior managers to show this is the case and so they will have the power that comes through their authority as managers. But these managers also possess the professional knowledge and so have the ability to exercise control that comes through that knowledge base.

The UK government Subject Benchmark Statement for Social Work [QAA, 2019] contains a number of defining principles, values and ethics that underpin the work. These include recognition that social work is a moral activity. The standard requires that students learn to 'show respect, honour diverse and distinctive organisations and communities, promote social justice and combat processes that lead to discrimination, marginalisation and social exclusion.

Social workers are obliged as part of their registration to practice with Social Work England to adhere to these defining ethics, values and principles wherever they may be practicing. These values are not exclusive to the social work profession meaning a social worker may

find themselves practicing in a local authority where these values are also shared with other occupations.

The title social worker is a protected title in that it has a particular meaning and status. Further the ability to practice as a social worker in England requires that the individual has a valid registration with the HCPC (at the time of writing, transferring to Social Work England from 2 December 2019)). Freidson (2001) characterised as that of a profession the ability to restrict the authority given to individuals to practice as a social worker and the activities that are defined as those that only social workers can do. However, through the issuing of statutory guidance government can intervene and define what work the social workers do. There is however no legal definition of social work itself, only legal responsibilities placed on local authorities to make arrangements for the fulfillment of those responsibilities. Consistency enables the government to operate a national inspection programme (OFSTED) and also compare and contrast the performance of different services with each other and against the standard. This is not the same however as giving instruction as to the way in which professional judgement should be exercised to reach a decision as to any choice of intervention with a particular child and their family. Management can nonetheless take some assurance that the professional qualification is evidence of a level of competency on the part of the social workers (Courpasson, 2006).

Government has sought to reduce variation and establish standards through the provision of statutory guidance and the single national inspection model. The practice carried out within individual local authorities will depend on the way in which the council has structured the work of that department including the use of centralisation of some activities in common across all casework, alongside the more conventional allocation of cases to named individual workers. The way in which social work is organised within the

local authority also has implications for how control is exercised by managers from the initial referral of a child and family through to the eventual closure of the case.

Management set eligibility criteria for use at the referral stage to determine whether a family can access services. Such criteria would define the depth and breadth of conditions experienced by the child and family to denote sufficiency of need for the referral to be accepted and the case allocated to the social worker. Managers use their supervisory roles with social workers to give guidance on the decision making of cases (Briand and Bellemare, 2006). Internal panels are also used, for example prior to issuing legal proceedings or agreeing care packages, to again assure management that both thresholds and quality standards are being met. Statutory guidance then prescribes the responsibilities of each of the other agencies involved in the case.

Government require the creation of certain documents and records of decisions and activities on cases through their statutory guidance and the council has some discretion as to how these requirements are operationalised in practice. Social workers will continue to draw on the knowledge from their professional training but within a crowded field of central and local government decisions about how their work is done.

While Government may succeed in the standardisation of procedures (Timmermans and Berg, 2003) the conclusions as to whether there is a standard of evidence supporting practice are much more mixed (for example Petersen and Olsson, 2014 and Gambrill, 2015). According to Petersen and Olsson, the matter is one of suitability where evidence-based practice does not sit well with the dynamic nature of social work, advocating instead for practice to be underpinned by practical knowledge drawn from authority, research and experience. This broader view is shared by Glitterman and Knight (2013) but they argue for evidence guided practice alongside the development and application of a range of

personal skills on the part of the social worker. Gambrill argues the claim of evidence-based practice is misleading where elements of research may inform specific interventions but there is no general evidence base underpinning practice. While the position of authors on whether social work practice is evidence based remains contested, Okpych and Yu (2014) describe the ongoing ambition of the social work profession to ultimately make it so.

3b. Levers of managerial control: Simons' account

Simons views control as an activity on the part of management in response to their analysis of progress with and threats to their business strategy. The information about these are secured through four formal systems or levers, being belief, boundary, diagnostic and interactive control systems, described in more detail below. While these four levers are information systems, it is when the information being captured and reported through them is acted upon by management that they become control systems.

Simons describes the role of management in deploying these levers as being to manage the tension between providing enough encouragement to workers to practice the kind of behaviours that management want and that will go on to support achievement of the business strategy, and to discourage the kinds of behaviours that are neither helpful and are potentially harmful to delivery of the business strategy. Given capacity and resources are both limited then management need to guide and if necessary withdraw attention and resource from activities that are not considered relevant in order to maximise resources available to those activities that are. So the four levers are split in to two types being those that are encouraging of behaviours preferred by management, and those that identify and restrict the likelihood of the occurrence of behaviours that management wish to see

restricted or eradicated. Kruis et al (2013) studied 217 business units to conclude that balance was contingent on the goals of the management of the organisation and their strategic objectives: stability, vigilance, exploitation or responsiveness.

Simons levers of control (LOC) has been subject to criticism including, according to Tessier and Otley (2012) the use of vague and ambiguous terms and also, according to Martyn et al (2016) its focus on only the most senior management of the organisation. This research nonetheless maintains the continuing interest in the use of Simons' LOC framework to research into management control systems (Martyn et al, 2016) so adding to the literature on the application of LOC to different settings and management levels.

Belief system

The belief system defines 'the basic values, purpose and direction' (Simons, 1995) of the organisation as decided by management, setting out broad statements applicable for the organisation as a whole rather than a detailed set of standards against which the actual performance of particular products or services will be measured. Simons asserts within this model that the more committed an employee to this belief system then the higher the level of performance, drawing on the work of Locke, Latham and Erez, 1988. The performance of a worker who is enthusiastic about the goals of their employer is more likely to be trying to improve and maintain a higher level of performance than one, maybe with advanced technical skills, but who really has no interest in helping the organisation meet its objectives.

Diagnostic system

Diagnostic control systems collect information on progress with implementation of the managers' intended strategies and so work on the basis that the required outputs can be defined and measured and that where performance is outside the acceptable boundary that corrective action can be applied. Simons proposes that this information is examined by staff professionals as the 'gatekeepers' with senior managers including themselves only periodically. Deviations from the required output may variously be due to mistakes or shortfalls and understanding each of these deviations may require different skills. The shortfall may be readily understood as being an under or over achievement against a budget or a production plan where manipulation of its constituents could bring the plan back in line. More challenging however may be the correction of mistakes where the moment of delivery of the service is already passed such as services in the knowledge sector. So the role of management becomes partly technical expert and partly bureaucrat. The setting of explicit targets can of course lead to dysfunctional behaviours where the focus on what is being measured can cause workers to pursue activities focused on target achievement at some cost to other desirable attributes of the goods and services. Inducements and incentives can be introduced to increase the likelihood of worker behaviour that is consistent with managers' intentions.

Boundary system

Simons characterises boundary systems as defining what cannot be done and so seek to impose limits on workers' creativity. Their aim is to define the acceptable domains for opportunity seeking behavior to take place. The boundary systems are divided in to those dealing with business conduct (how workers should behave) and those dealing with strategic opportunities (what criteria are being used to rule developments in scope and therefore also what the organisation's management will not want to pursue). This is in

contrast with the belief system lever which promotes the habits and beliefs that the management of the organisation wishes to see. Simons proposes within this model that the belief and boundary systems work closely together. In combination these two systems are intended to permit a level of individual creativity but within limits defined by the management of the organisation.

Setting these limits appears straightforward and the model also has levers of control that monitor performance so that corrective actions can be taken where actual results are deviating from planned. The model does not seem to accommodate however the exercise of discretion by the workforce. The level of discretion workers can exercise will impact the intensity of the boundary systems management feels it needs to put in place if management's confidence in the efficacy of the choices workers will make without these boundaries is low. It is conceivable in some occupations, manufacturing for example, that the application of physical boundaries would be entirely successful in physically limiting the actions of workers and reducing opportunities for workers to exercise discretion. The service sector generally makes such constraints potentially harder to design and implement with the same level of assurance as to their effectiveness, given the reliance of services on the interaction between workers and customers, which will be much harder to predict and control. The model uses the language of 'allowing' the workers individual creativity where in reality, workers will continue to exercise creativity, only part of which may be authorised and only part of which may actually be controllable.

The application of boundary system controls is also used when internal trust is low and so management believes the risk of undesirable behaviour is higher (Simons, 1995). Where the potential for worker discretion is high then management cannot obtain assurances about behaviour through direct observation of the work its output. The lack of that ability

would not necessarily by itself then motivate workers to behave in ways managers would not wish as workers may be motivated by any number of factors including those within the belief system. The model proposes boundary setting is deployed when both low trust and high behavioural risk are present. If trust were low but the risk of undesirable behaviour were also low then additional boundary controls would be unnecessary unless applied for some other purpose.

The trigger that causes a reduction in trust may not come from within the organisation itself but may arise elsewhere in the sector or industry, where a representative body, or the organisation itself, determines to take preventative action. Nonetheless, if the response from management is to add a further control to what could already be a crowded boundary control system then there is a risk of confusion for the worker trying to comply as well as for the system itself to begin to present some internal conflicts and inconsistencies.

Interactive control system

The interactive control system acts to generate innovation and adaptation to guide the bottom up emergence of strategy. So like the belief system it is a positive influence in that it acts to stimulate the search for opportunities in areas where there are strategic uncertainties, being those things that can threaten the delivery of the management's business strategy. So for as long as the interactive controls are not providing indications of areas of concern then they are used to ensure there is scrutiny and debate around areas that the current strategy may need to take account of and respond to in order to either modify and or consolidate. In a commercial environment this system may be gathering information about extending into new markets, making changes to existing products and also analysing what moves competitors are making. For commercial organisations, reliable

knowledge about competitors and consumer trends is key just as for public sector bodies understanding the policy environment of the current and potentially next government as well as a good understanding about the financial climate for public services is key.

In a non-commercial sector such as the public sector managers will be looking for opportunities to influence government policy to at least attempt to ensure their organisations are resourced by government at a level that meets the demand for their services. The aims of influence may also be to secure a change in statutory remit and therefore control over an area of public service and to present evidence that the work currently being performed by the body is valuable and value for money or looking at alternative delivery or funding opportunities. The structure of public sector organisations may however limit incentives to demonstrate such opportunities or competitive behaviours (Niskanen, 1979).

How management use the four levers, Simons argued, will depend on their business strategy. Where underlying strategy and performance are essentially sound but the risk is of falling market share or ranking with peers then the levers are applied to define what the new acceptable levels of behaviour are and then pushing those through performance management systems until delivered. Where radical change is required then the levers to explain 'the what and the why' and engage the motivation and commitment of staff, are used and then followed through with new systems to monitor the changes that were required have indeed happened and performance is heading where management intended.

3c. Managerial control frameworks in the context of child protection social work

Belief systems

How the council defines its values influences the manner in which children's social care as a function is constructed within the council. The council management may view its role as to provide a fully integrated set of activities or, in contrast, an autonomous bounded department with very little interaction with other council services and functions. Each council will have taken its own unique position. However, as bureaucracies exhibiting the characteristics set out by Weber (1978), councils will all have documented internal workings and procedures and rules that are communicable and that also designate positions of responsibility, typically in a hierarchical structure.

The role of Simons levers of control is essentially to help management achieve the objectives that they have set for the organisation including the fulfillment of legal duties. These objectives impact on the design of the individual control systems which are influenced by a number of both internal and external factors. The objectives of the local authority will be a mixture of achievement of externally imposed objectives including legal obligations as well as priorities relevant to the local setting. The aspirations of the council's political leadership will be concerned with delivery of central government priorities but also need to be sensitive to the wishes of the local community on whom individual councillors are dependent for election to office. The council's executive management are in turn then charged with translation of political priorities - both local and central - together with a technical professional remit for the delivery of the specialised services within the council's remit.

In order for central government to increase control over the behavior of social workers (Daft, 2010) it becomes necessary for central government to increasingly issue guidance in such a way that it is sufficiently clear and feasible for the council to implement. The council does not control or have the means to resist changes in government policy or law that determines how and what social work is done. But it has a statutory responsibility to make arrangements for children's social work to be in place. This requires the council to set aside some of its funding to establish this service, in competition with a range of other statutory functions requiring funding. Strong local political or managerial leadership of child protection that raises its profile in the council to become a key council priority would create conditions where central government policy to make child protection even stronger would be welcomed.

Simons framework also states that it is through the analysis of risks to the achievement of the organisation's objectives and the impact of those on the basic values of the organisation that control system maintenance decisions are made. In the context of children's social work it is often not council management carrying out the risk assessment that Simons' model suggests should or would happen and leads to the imposition of new or additional control activities that may or may not be of relevance to that particular local authority.

Diagnostic systems

In an area of work such as children's social work a high level of discretion is exercised by the individual social worker in their interactions with the child and their family. Discretion in this context refers the social worker applying their professional knowledge and skills in unpredictable situations to gain information, make an assessment and arrive at a

professional recommendation. The social worker must nonetheless follow the official procedures of their employer using relevant tools and guidelines supporting their direct work with children and families. The performance of the local authority itself is independently and formally investigated by OFSTED against their own self-determined performance standards and criteria. While supervision as a co-ordinating mechanism (Mintzberg, 1979) usually provides the opportunity to observe and inspect the work of another, much of the work of the social worker takes place out of sight of the manager, but with training and support from a Practice Supervisor, reliance instead having to be placed on the contents of the social worker's case records and the conversations about cases when the manager and social worker meet. This close working between the social worker and supervisor impacts then on the span of control it is realistic to expect a supervisor to assume and therefore the size of unit being designed in the department's superstructure, Mintzberg (1979), although one unit size may not suit all of the social work department's functions, if there is more or less standardisation in different aspects of the department's activities.

For Briand and Bellemare (2006) surveillance through direct supervision and indirectly through gathering (other) information is the main control tool, the practical application of which needs rethinking given the changing working patterns. The aim of this control system is to have timely and reliable knowledge about the activities of the workers even though trust is implicit. In contrast Courpasson (2006) proposes the purpose of the surveillance is to test obedience among workers and in particular to identify where this is not the case i.e. disobedience on the part of the social worker.

Through the use of discretion and/or standardisation, control can be distributed (Thompson, 2008). While management may plan for a level of authorised discretion to be

operated by social workers this is difficult in practice for management to restrict or contain. Stability as the key environmental condition against which the level of standardisation is set is not straight forward in the context of children's social work. Departments have always had to manage the flow of referrals - although the nature of the cases being handled may be of increasing complexity and volumes of cases rising unpredictably. It is also highly relevant to the field of social work that departmental managers have to be concerned with both resources and the avoidance of any serious incident involving any child referred to them. How management responds to the uncertainty within and around their organisation is dependent on the particular circumstances of that council, meaning no two organisations or managers will have exactly the same approaches, which in turn makes more challenging the ambition of central government to implement standardised procedures and policy nationally.

Boundary systems

Boundary systems define what social workers are authorised to do. In an operating model where one social worker is assigned to a case seeing it through from referral to closure, the level of interdependency either with other workers or other parts of the department is limited. The social worker carries out all stages of the work themselves reporting on this to their line manager. When different stages of the case become the responsibilities of different units then how information is shared and work transferred become more important. And social work has received significant public criticism in relation to failures in tracking cases and/or linking knowledge about children and their families across agencies (including but not limited to inquiries into the deaths of Maria Colwell, Peter Connelly, Victoria Climbié, Daniel Pelka).

Simons' boundary systems comprise a number of characteristics that have particular salience to children's social work. These include the application of boundaries where protection of resources and reputation is necessary and following a crisis in the organisation or sector. Pressures on council funding and the impact on councils of child protection failures are two significant risks councils manage. Changes in policy and practice are typically nationally driven and in response to a finding in an individual council. So while the matter may have arisen in isolation, the potential for undesirable behaviour across the sector is considered by central government a sufficient threat to impose universal changes.

Social work as a service also means the simultaneous production and consumption of the service being provided (Daft, 2010) which again adds to the challenges both in trying to standardise activities and monitor their delivery and impact. So service based organisations would ordinarily be designed with higher levels of decentralised decision making and lower formalisation and placing a greater emphasis on the skills of the worker. These conditions are consistent with higher worker discretion - at odds with Thompson's response to low resources and the consequences of significant negative events which would lead to increased standardisation, although increased discretion can equally be a response to a lack of stability in the environment. With each successive crisis in social care, social workers allege a little more discretion is removed. Although whether discretion, by its very nature, can actually be defined is questionable as it effectively exists in a space which hasn't been defined.

So as a tool for the exercise of control, policy determination by central government appears relatively simple in terms of its legitimacy of authority and the possession of the power to activate. But it is nonetheless a highly complex tool from the viewpoint of the

managers charged with implementation. There is nonetheless clear evidence in support of the use of strategic boundary setting and successive tightening of it in childrens' social work.

Interactive systems

Simons describes a role for the institutions of the industry in defining and agreeing boundaries and encouraging the same from their membership. In the context of local authority social work such a role in relation to local authorities could be said to be performed by the sponsoring central government department by whom they are funded, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), but in fact most of the origins of children's social work policy change arises in its own separate sponsor the Department for Education (DfE). So, two central government departments have an interest in the design and implementation of boundary work, but neither holds both the policy and delivery responsibilities and authority.

Strategic uncertainties in the context of children's social work are areas where knowledge is incomplete on matters that would impact on the council's delivery of its objectives. The council can be impacted significantly by events outside its own control where a serious incident in another council can bring about a change in central government policy which councils would have no prior knowledge of and which requires all councils to make changes to the way they are working. At central governmental level the death of a child in one council could be an example of a diagnostic control system kicking in - where government interprets the death as a failure in the system of controls to keep children safe. At the council level the occurrence of a death forms part of a system of feedback about strategic uncertainties as in this context the failure of a duty of care in one council

can and probably will bring about the resetting of current government policy and procedure - where the implications of implementing that locally may be significant. The change in government guidance can both respond to or usher in a new sensitisation to risks to children with child sexual exploitation and female genital mutilation as examples.

Control of the policy environment rests with central government for whom the main mechanisms available to secure the practice and performance standards it requires (Luhman and Cunliffe, 2013) are the machinery of government itself in order to define and set its policy and practice requirements for children's social care. The quasi-hierarchical relationship between central and local government provides central government with the authority and tools to direct local councils to the implementation of its policy aims. Using a combination of command and control, coercion and incentives, (Grubnic and Woods, 2009), central government has tools at its disposal to seek to secure the alignment of local councils with its wishes but whether this actually translates into policy fulfilment is not clear. Just as workers respond to what is measured within the council itself and by OFSTED through its inspection criteria so councils have historically invested heavily in responding to various performance management regimes to present their organisation in the best possible light. Policy outcomes are often also focused on the very long term and are typically much harder to measure objectively. The only practical measure central government can fall back on relatively simply is a check that specified procedures have been implemented.

Managers often then find themselves as the agents of policy implementation but not the decision makers or designers of the policies themselves leading to greater tension and mistrust between managers and professionals (Brown et al, 2011). Broader central government policy on statutory service delivery has pushed local management into an

increasingly challenging position, including where service delivery is transferring from council's own provision and towards the independent sector, where the aim of managerial control becomes the balancing of the provider's professional discretion with that of the council manager's trusteeship responsibilities (Budd, 2007). The local authority is challenged by central government to fulfill its statutory responsibilities in relation to children's social work within the resources provided by central government. While central government mandates a process to examine the causes of serious incidents, including the deaths of children, there is nonetheless no legal mechanism that holds the local authority to account for actioning the changes such a review necessitates. Where the substance of the policy change, as discussed above, is broadly procedural, then the task of the manager to positively promote the benefits of the new policy change becomes even harder, and adds to the suspicion that the procedures are needed because managers – and politicians – do not trust social workers. And perhaps wish to take away any discretion that social workers use in their direct encounters with service users, which take place away from the sight of managers.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the means through which managers try to control their workers. Where this work is professional work carried out by professionals, then the authority of managers derived from their position is challenged by the authority of the professional derived from their specialist knowledge, which is now explored in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Occupation Self-Control in Professions

Professional control is being used in this context to refer to the circumstances where the occupation itself controls the work of the profession, its knowledge and those admitted to work within it (Friedson, 1986). Of interest to this particular research is the manner in which professional control tools operate within a broader system of managerial control in the area of knowledge work. A number of consistent themes that have emerged from past research relating to professional control of work. Freidson's work on Professionalism (Freidson, 1986) is used as the framework for examining professional control of child protection social work in England and reviewing papers published over the recent years.

The focus of this research is to understand the control of children's social work in an English local authority context, so it is those frameworks dealing particularly with professional control that are relevant. This chapter therefore will concentrate on the explanatory frameworks that examine the structures, contingencies and mechanisms of control that the profession, and professionals, are able, according to these frameworks, to enjoy over their work. The approach in this study is not to debate the extent to which child protection social work meets any a priori definition of a profession but to analyse how a number of particular attributes of a professionalised occupation might provide the social worker with control over their work with a child and their family.

An analysis of writing about professionals and professionalism over time shows a trend from the early thinking being around the status and prestige of being a professional and also its association with high ethical standards and altruism. Since the 1960's inventories of characteristics and traits of professionals and professionalism were being analysed (e.g. Blankenship, 1977) as a means of determining which occupations met these criteria and

so enjoyed the prestige of being members of the profession. In return for professions exercising control over markets for services the state afforded to those professions control over both the knowledge base of the service and the entitlement to work and practice within it. More recent work has however reflected the dominance of larger organisational forms for the delivery of professional services and thus an apparent increased tendency for professionals to be employees of these organisations rather than self-employed (see Blankenship 1977, Brock 2006, Empson and Chapman 2006). The consequences of this either for the creation of diluted or different types of professional form have continued to be explored (see Evetts 2011, Noordegraaf 2007, 2011, 2013). The incompatibility between authority through knowledge and the authority of administrative hierarchy creates, according to Etzioni (1969) a semi-professional being of lower status than other professional colleagues. These various perspectives have been studied in turn across a range of professions, not restricted to those associated with more commercial occupations such as legal and accountancy (see Wallace 1995, Suddaby and Vale 2011), but also to areas more typically found commissioned through the state for the benefit of vulnerable people, such as social work and health care (see Scott 1969, Toren 1969, Jansson and Pardy 2011). Questions regarding the knowledge base, criteria for membership and entitlement to practice and the existence of a monopoly over the market for services are therefore as much a feature of publicly funded services as have been commercial enterprises, and the frameworks that examine these can be transferable to the public sector.

There is a high degree of consistency among writers on professional control in their definitions of what are the particular characteristics of professional work and its institutions. This work has been helpful in as much as it has exposed particular characteristics which seem to be at the heart of what makes any particular occupation more likely to come in to

conflict with any other type of occupation or organisational setting, regardless of whether that occupation is, or claims to be, a profession. The focus on attributes has created some defining characteristics of a professional. This is the line taken by Freidson (1994) in looking at the nature of an occupation as the broader subject area, of which professional is one classification, along with bureaucracy. This also enables this research project to make use of a framework through which to examine the range of professional control actions carried out within an organisation and which particular aspects of controlling activities dominate service delivery and those which are perhaps subject to override by the managerial control systems operating more broadly within the organisation.

4a. Freidson's defining elements of professionalism

This research project uses Freidson's work on professionalism as a framework to understand professional control through his five defining elements as follows:
occupationally controlled labour market; officially recognised body of knowledge;
occupationally controlled division of labour; occupationally controlled training programme;
ideology towards quality before economic reward.

The labour market

The accreditation of the profession by the state has the effect of closing the labour market which is important in order to legitimately exclude anyone other than professionally qualified workers from carrying out that professional work. Ongoing obligations on professionals for continuing professional development can also then be set so maintaining a control over the continuing membership after the initial qualification requirements have

been satisfied. This formal system of control legitimises the status of the profession and is absent in the semi-professions (Etzioni, 1969).

Conflict can arise however between the professional in practice and the institutions providing access to the professional training where the former would see a need to restrict the supply of qualified workers to maintain control over the market itself but where the latter have an interest in attracting students to study in its programmes (Freidson, 2001). Where the profession also then sets out standards of conduct including disciplinary procedures where an individual member's conduct has fallen short of those standards, then the profession can also eject from the labour market those who may bring the profession in to disrepute – and so continue to enforce the standards that have formed part of the consideration of the state in affording the profession its status.

Body of knowledge

The body of knowledge that professionals draw on is controlled by the profession - both the integrity of the existing knowledge and the creation and dissemination of new knowledge. This knowledge is specialised and to a greater extent than semi-profession according to Etzioni. It is the control and ownership of this knowledge that provides the profession with power, Freidson (1986), where it is the profession that makes the link between knowledge and power. The ability to influence the contribution of academia is therefore also important both for the profession to be able to point to this source to give credibility to its knowledge to various stakeholders and potentially critics, as well as to be able to take decisions then as to how new knowledge will be released into the curriculum for professional training. This privileged communication is not enjoyed by the semi-professions (Etzioni, 1969). The profession therefore needs to generate interest in its field

so there is an active community of researchers contributing to the growth of knowledge to demonstrate to the state that its accreditation is deserved which in turn then provides cover and shelter (Freidson, 1986) for that knowledge with the profession.

Division of labour

Professionals also retain control over the way in which professional work is carried out by its members. Clearly, the nature of the professional training will be working from a body of knowledge (likewise semi-professions, according to Etzioni) that is taught consistently to all trainee professionals, and so in that way could be considered standardised knowledge.

Professions also use standardisation to create consistency of practices but also to maintain jurisdictional control over their work (Timmermans and Berg, 2003) but where these guidelines in turn can then become tools with which external stakeholders may challenge the professional's compliance with them. Managers use standardisation to specify service quality and ensure uniformity supplied by workers. More formalised procedures and quality assurance processes can be effective management tools to tackle poorly performing workers but at the same time may well have an undermining and damaging effect on competent and motivated workers (Evetts, 2011). As an approach it can at best be only partially successful where the work of professionals is characterised by a high level of trust and is fundamentally self-regulatory in terms of its social control, unlike most other work occupations, including semi-professions where work is undertaken with less autonomy, according to Etzioni.

The training programme

Occupational control of the training programme provides the professional with control over the training of both its body of knowledge and its ideology. Where this is accompanied by government enforced self-regulation of the social workers to train and ultimately qualify then control of entry to the profession is also secured. The occupational control of the training programme requires that training providers have to have their programme accredited by the professional body such that the attainment levels from any one provider are consistent with other accredited providers and with the standards of knowledge the profession itself requires students to be able to demonstrate as a condition then of admittance into the profession. According to Etzioni (1969) while training is a feature of semi-professions, its shorter duration is one of the features that distinguishes it from full professional status.

Ideology

Sociological literature emphasises the self-governing character of professions, rather than work evaluated and formulated by managers (Freidson, 1984). An ideology that prioritises quality of work over the professional's own economic gain is an attribute of professionalism that has its roots in the earliest writing on the nature of professionalism. More generally however, professions adopt and promulgate a set of norms within the initial and then ongoing training of its members. Professionals were considered altruistic and upstanding members of their communities which together with their ethical code and recognition of the state meant they were often considered a safe pair of hands to undertake community roles. And in many ways this can still be seen, where legal firms conduct pro bono work and accountants are sought out to sit as unpaid Treasurers in community and voluntary groups. In these instances the preference for quality over economic gain lies not so much in their substantive work roles (ie the work for which they are remunerated) but rather

through the giving back to society the benefit of this professional knowledge where the commercial rates for accessing this advice and information could be prohibitive for the organisation or individual in question.

While the specific interpretation of the ideological approach varies between different professions, there is a consistency around the commitment and application of the professional to the task at hand resisting any pressure or inclination to abandon either the client or the quality with which the work required to be carried out is executed.

Themes on the professional's control

4b. The professional labour market

Membership of a profession confirms an individual's attainment of specialist knowledge and skill to those using the professional's services and those regulators with responsibility for checking those practicing in the profession are qualified to do so. The professional identity of the individual is thus a function of their shared expertise and the established community (Larsson, 2013). Participating in and cultivating networks of superiors, peers and subordinates from a very early stage in professional life will provide opportunities to continue to develop and practice the wider qualities that distinguish the professional. The networks professionals develop during their training years can prove the most enduring (Anderson-Gough et al, 2006). These networks help ensure foundational thinking about the knowledge and behaviours underpinning the profession is shared and reinforced through the countless interactions of members of the profession as they nurture and maintain their professional networks. Thus even where professionals are working within larger organisations, their shared membership and networks form an important connection

to the profession itself and in turn act as a reminder to those outside of the profession of its existence and connection with its staff.

Writers on the nature of a profession as one of a number of different forms of occupation (trade, craft, white collar, blue collar) have tended to look at the position of the occupation in relation to its being a political, social and economic body. The ability of the profession to control the knowledge base of an occupation is a source of power where the professional forms the link between that knowledge and power, (Freidson, 1986). At the same time however, professional status is also a function of political decision making - it is much harder for an occupation to establish itself as a profession if it is unable to secure the structural framework of licensing and accreditation that in turn then create the monopoly for official discharge of services. The absence of the legitimacy to monopolise an area of work means it becomes open to the market to deliver. There is also a risk the 'market' is assessed by potential providers as being too risky or not sufficiently lucrative such that few if any organisations will in fact provide these services. For non-essential services this may be no bad thing but in relation to services provided to protect and support vulnerable people including their health and welfare then at some point the government needs to step in to secure these. Assigning a professional status to these is one way then for the occupation to acquire sufficient prestige to entice providers back into the field (Larsson , 2013). The challenge then is for the new profession to assert itself and acquire, in its own right, the sheltering attributes that then help it to secure its own future. The vulnerability of any profession then lies in government at some future point determining this is no longer a priority and so removes its professional protection.

Threats to the protected status of the professional can be challenged through the engagement of professionals in institutional work, designed to defend their status and

protect their jurisdiction (Currie et al, 2012). The effectiveness of institutional work is much enhanced when the professional's role includes the assessment and management of risk. Attempts to introduce roles of a lower or no qualification can be more effectively rebutted when the profession can plausibly allege that one of the consequences for the organisation of doing so is an increase in exposure to risk. That is not to say that professions do not contain their own hierarchies where in the workplace these may span between the 'administrative elites and rank and file workers' (Freidson, 1986) ie hybrid managers and, outside of the firm itself, the top tier of academic elites. The fact such institutional work is going on may well not be apparent as it can manifest in subtle ways through the engagement of professionals in any processes of change and or challenge to established working practices. Nonetheless, the increasing standardisation of professional work through official procedures reduces the professional's flexibility over their work regardless of whether that is work professionals would prefer to continue to do in their own way.

4c. The knowledge base

Whatever the nature of the particular professional discipline, the cognitive base of the practitioner is typically one that is acquired through extensive study culminating in a test of knowledge but also that it is based on a body of knowledge drawn from science (Flexner, 1915) and research (Larsson, 2013). The proximity of the profession to the research and teaching is particularly emphasised by Larsson, not as a benign partnership but acknowledging that the professionals need to stay close to universities who institutionalise research and training especially where the origins of new knowledge in their area is outside of their control. While Larsson writes particularly in relation to professionals largely practicing on a commercial basis in the private sector, the ability to control the content,

access to and membership of professional activities in the public sector is also highly desirable for the profession. The alternative is that the monopoly over technical knowledge that the professional has previously enjoyed becomes eroded through the development of an expertise market where consumers have access to unlimited technical information through the media of technology in particular, enabling them to be far more selective in their choice of professionals with whom to engage (Susskind and Susskind, 2015).

For those aspiring to become professionals, the skills and knowledge needed must be communicable (Flexner, 1915) in part to ensure the future of the profession itself. If the knowledge cannot be passed on, then the prospects of an enduring profession are limited. Ensuring the knowledge is both codified (Larsson, 2013) and communicable also enable the profession to maintain control over the consistency and quality of both the work and knowledge although possibly not exclusively so. The ability of the profession to demonstrate such a codified body of knowledge and training, together with the requirement for aspiring professionals to succeed in a test of that knowledge in order to practice, provides further arguments for the legitimacy of the profession and its professional status. Networks are used by professionals as a personal and spontaneous way of sharing knowledge despite the existence of more formal resources (Anderson-Gough et al, 2006). In particular, the use of reflective practice is cited in many professions as an important part of learning from experience and sharing case notes with professional colleagues increases the amount of experience for each to draw on. Professional work frequently involves interactions with clients and so is characterised as a series of exchanges which makes developing the skills of anticipating responses and how to react to them an important skill to learn. Discussions with professional colleagues provides a safe place to discuss and debate casework. Such informal knowledge work cannot

however be considered part of the formal knowledge base owned by the profession but rather informal practical skills developed at individual practitioner level.

Most professions now have explicit requirements for continuing professional development so the practitioner accepts responsibility to ensure that the skills learned at the pre-qualification stage are kept up to date and replaced where necessary by new ones. While there may be some administrative matters to be aware of when joining a new employing organisation for the first time, the syllabus of skills learned by the trainee will be common for all training to join the same profession and this becomes the control mechanism for the consistency, quality and basic competence of the work, without the need for extensive manuals once engaged and immersed in an assignment. This requirement reflects the role of the professional as the primary conduit of knowledge (Svelby, 1997), in the workplace where other occupations place reliance on the higher level skills and experience of those in managerial grades believing that the task of management is to determine the way in which work can be best performed where the role of the worker is simply to do (Taylor, 1914). With the professional core (Mintzberg, 1979) in control of the production and application of knowledge then changes in the organisations own structures should be confined to most senior governance levels only (Svelby 1997) which would imply a relatively stable picture at the professional core, disturbed only where there is a major adverse event followed by some form of intervention. Within public sector services such interventions are often by government where it has shown a willingness to step in and intervene with both the contents of the professional core as well as the management arrangements that sit around it. Such interventions would not necessarily mean however that there has been a failure of knowledge and the motivation of whoever initiates the intervention may not arise from a belief by doing so some deficit in the knowledge base is

being corrected. The profession may own the knowledge base but be subject to external controls and challenges to how it is applied.

4d. Division of labour

According to Friedson (1986) professional work is typically non routine and so resists standardisation which when present enables elements of the work to be organised in ways to achieve greater efficiency and cost effectiveness - through centralising and thus creating economies of scale around common tasks for example. Whether the professional work is taking place within a larger non professional organisation or not, the potential for standardisation and also automation of work to lower the costs with which it can be delivered are important concerns for management either to increase profits in a commercial organisation, or lower the cost of delivery of the service in the public sector. Such standardisation may take the form of codification and formalisation to be applied to professional work. Likewise, professional work may also resist the measures of productivity usually associated with work performance, instead relying on supervision between a professional and a professionally qualified supervisor as a check on the worker's standards of practice. Supervision of the work of the practitioner provides an opportunity for the organisation to exercise some oversight of the standard of work being produced but much of the evidence of work is dependent on the practitioner themselves sharing this, with managers being unable to appropriate such monitoring information. According to Gilbert (2001) even practices of clinical supervision and reflective practice represent further tools of surveillance through their leading practitioners to share information, rather than these being tools of consolidating professional expertise. But as professionals become increasingly absorbed into non-professional organisational work settings, then their control over the content of the controlling mechanisms over the work

become important (Noordegraaf, 2007) as management seek to introduce a range of direct and indirect controls over the work. Where the management of the organisation are drawn from the same profession as that which has control of the knowledge base, then attempts to reduce the cost of the work are at least informed to a greater extent about the potential consequences of those changes compared to those of a manager from outside the profession (see Olakivi and Niska, 2017).

In the context of public facing professional service delivery in the public sector there is a substantial body of writing on the impact of managerialism on the discretion with which workers operate. According to Taylor and Kelly (2006) the introduction of more rules, audit and greater accountability have all restricted the rule, task and value discretion of street level bureaucrats. At the same time however the tools of audit and inspection are put forward as those that support the professions assertion about the quality of its work, notwithstanding these are fundamentally tools of managerial control (Evetts, 2011). The deployment of professionally qualified managers in to these roles to enforce but also endorse these control systems, including through supervision, is one way resistance by the practitioners themselves maybe overcome (Evetts, 2011) but at the same time the rise of the professional (hybrid) manager can be reinterpreted as the bureaucratisation of the profession (Brock, 2006). Nonetheless supervision can be seen as a positive by practitioners when experienced as a consultative exercise (Scott, 1969) particularly when conducted with supervisors with substantial experience and professional training who in turn exercise influence over the receptiveness of the practitioner. The practitioner will be influenced by their supervisor's attitude as to whether the demands of the organisational bureaucracy are a negative force that cannot be resisted, or as controls within an ordered framework. Further, according to Keulemans and Groeneveld (2019) the supporting and role model attributes of the supervisors of street level bureaucrats can have a positive

impact on the consistency of the decision making and attitudes towards service users of the frontline practitioners. While the length of skills and experience of the supervisor has a bearing on the receptiveness of the practitioner to their intervention, a practitioner with a lengthy period of training in their own career will be more resistant than those more recently trained and qualified (Toren, 1969), resisting the teaching element of supervision, which the social worker feels encroaches on their own professional judgement. What these frameworks are unable to clarify entirely clearly is whether the introduction of managers sharing the same professional background is able to mitigate or not the aspects of managerial control towards which professionals are most resistant or whether they influence the managerial controls themselves in such a way as they become less unacceptable.

Where control of the level of resources directed towards the professional staff is held by the organisation's management then the professionals own personal security is more dependent on ensuring management sees value in the contribution of the professional, although this dependency is not restricted only to professional staff groups within the organisation. But clearly threats to reduce funding could be used by management to secure greater control in areas where challenges to their work using principles rather than access to resources have not brought management the outcomes they had wanted. To the extent the professional department is reliant on the organisation's management for a share of resources would indicate management are already exerting a significant degree of control over the profession and a threat to the extent of control the wider profession itself is able to exercise (Freidson, 1994). Blankenship (1977) explains conflict arising as a result of the requirement of management for professionals to be more accountable to the organisation for their work. In the private sector this increased accountability may be in response to shareholder or partner demands for higher profits and so higher returns for

their investments. In the public sector the setting of performance indicators by government and inspection regimes that audit and then publish the outcomes of these, possibly with sanctions for poorer performance, will increase the need for managers to have information about the performance of the professionals working within their organisation. Where conflict arises then trust and confidence is compromised between the employing organisation and the professional workers (Evetts 2011) which is made more problematic where the nature of the work involves complex knowledge based work, delivered confidentially. In these circumstances it is the professional worker themselves who are the carriers of the knowledge and its application to the case under review (Greenwood, Suddaby and McDougal, 2006). It is possible for managers to appropriate this knowledge to some extent through codification and formalisation. Managers can also use reviews of case records to determine how knowledge has been applied in a case by the social worker. There is a role for professional bodies and associations other than the employing organisations to play in supporting their members resist or manage what they see as the harmful effects of bureaucracy over professional work together with the high level of personal autonomy with which individual practitioners are expected to work (Malhotra et al 2006). How effective these bodies and also other professional colleagues can be in providing that support will depend however on their ability to connect with practitioners within employing organisations. Networks provide one route to enable communication amongst members of a profession through which both knowledge and behaviours can be shared and reinforced (Anderson-Gough et al 2006).

4e. Training the professional

Key to the distinctiveness of professionalism is the specialised nature of the work that requires formal training in order to be understood and practised. The practitioner exercises

discretion drawing on a foundation of training that includes the use of theory and frameworks, but which is administered through an institution that exists entirely separate to the organisation in which professional practice takes place. These are the elements of Freidson's (1986) framework for understanding professionalism that are the most relevant to this research as it is at the interface with managerialism where any conflicts in their different ideologies are most exposed.

The formal professional training through the professional institution serves not only to provide the professional knowledge but also a set of values about the significance of the work being carried out (Evetts, 2011) such that the trainee emerges with the strong identity that marks the individual as a member of that profession. The professional institution plays a key role in the creation of knowledge as well as the filtering of new knowledge which it can create, pass on or resist (Friedson, 1986) the practical application of which may not be of concern to the institution leading to tension with practitioners in the field particularly when training is over and the reality of casework makes some translation of theory in to practice inevitable.

4f. Ideology

Within professional occupations, in whatever the organisational setting the practitioner is based according to Larsson (2013), it is the individual in whom trust is placed rather than the organisation itself. The concept of trust arises in two forms. Firstly in the trust placed by the client in the technical competence and skills of the practitioner who in turn has acquired those through years of training and experience to secure the professional qualification that entitles them to practice. Secondly, trust by the client as a social contract that ensures the personal integrity of the professional as an individual who will act in the

best interests of the client. This focus on the individual is also one of the criteria Flexner (in Austin, 1983) uses to define a profession, viewing the exercise of professional work as an individual responsibility.

The motives a service user may have for placing trust in professionals' integrity varies with the nature of the profession. For commercially oriented professions - law, accountancy, engineering - the service user's motive for trusting the professional tends towards protection from conflicts of interest (ie the professional will not over charge). For professionals working in public services - medicine, social care - the duty of care is higher as the provision of the service is usually in response to, or for the avoidance of, a human vulnerability that threatens an individual's well being in its broadest sense. So the sense of outrage when there is a failure is that much greater. In social services in particular the unavoidably intrusive nature of the work (Younghusband, 1978), confers on the practitioner a significant professional responsibility underpinned by a set of values that acknowledge and respect that.

Professional work is characterised as being value driven (Evetts, 2011) with those values being driven through the institutions of the profession (Evetts, 2011 and Suddaby, 1997). Importantly professionals are trained in the value systems that exist within their professional institutions and these may be in addition to those of their employer (Svelby, 1997). And from time to time these may come in to conflict with those of the employer, particularly for professionals that seek employment outside the firms of their own kind and in other organisations and structures, and/or find themselves engaged in work that is significantly diversified from the core knowledge and skills that underpin their profession (see Wallace 1995 and Empson and Chapman 2006).

That the professional is motivated by ideology has been presented as a strength throughout the history of thinking about professions but with some high profile failures in both the public and private sectors. Freidson asserts that professions have a commitment to quality and that it is dominant over the professional's motivation towards economic gain and efficiency. Is it the connectedness of these two aspects that make professional working distinct to Freidson's other occupational forms of market and bureaucracy? The second aspect of this characteristic is the assertion the professional puts quality above economic gain and what may be a more efficiently delivered outcome. This does not mean economic gain and efficiency are not desirable and will not be pursued. Crucially Freidson asserts when there is a conflict between these aims and that of quality work - then the pursuit of quality work will prevail.

The role played by values within professional work is to support the framework for professional decision making by setting out standards that are applicable across all professional work. They are defined by the profession itself. The values provide a definition of how the profession views people, the preferred goals for their clients and the means to achieve these (Barsky, 2010).

4g. Professional control frameworks in the context of children's social work in England

Occupational control of the labour market

Social Work England (SWE) is a specialist non departmental arms length body regulating social work, sponsored by the Department for Education. It is self-funded through the fees charged to registrants. Its remit is defined through the Children and Social Work Act 2017,

being to regulate social workers so people receive the best possible support whenever they might need it in life and so to protect the interests of service users. It is the regulator ie SWE who is controlling the labour market.

The substantive provider of child protection social work remains the local authority. Where independent social workers are active - it is often at the commission of the state anyway. The market is more developed in relation to daily activities of social care - private agencies do exist and members of the public can and do make private commercial arrangements for the provision of care. Even if a children's social work practice were set up - matters relating to child protection, where a concern was raised by a member of the public would need to be referred to the local authority as this is where the legal power and authority to act and intervene currently lies. So the dependency of the profession on the state extends beyond resources to encompass the permission to act in a statutory capacity. The benefits of establishing social work as a profession for the state come from the coherence this provides to the body of knowledge and competence - and credentials of those who wish to practice social work.

Knowledge

The initial formal acquisition of knowledge that leads to qualification as a social worker now takes place through the honours or postgraduate degree level study of a course approved by SWE. Whichever route is taken, there will also be a minimum of 200 supervised work placement days within that study period. The content and quality of this placement falls under the remit of the university in consultation and collaboration with the agency with whom the placement is made, typically local authorities. These arrangements show the strong link between the decisions regarding the standards and content of the

training curriculum and the registering of qualified social workers for the purpose of entitling them to practice in England. Social workers are required to register with SWE and must have a current valid registration in order to practice. So it is SWE, on behalf of the DfE, who both approves social workers to practice and also approves the university courses (being one of 8 training routes in to social work) at which student social workers can study.

What is also apparent is that the profession itself does not exercise any formal control over the development and dissemination of the knowledge base. It remains unclear whether any institution exists that 'owns' the social work knowledge base and developments with it. The role of the SWE is to protect the interests of those who come to use the services delivered by social workers registered with it which is not the same as a remit to cultivate and develop a recognised knowledge base for children's social care.

The way in which this body of knowledge is used and the evidence of it in use are difficult to audit given the nature of the work context in which the knowledge is applied and is beyond the remit of this research. This reflects the practical reality where the social worker and service user meet together, often alone, and where the impact of the social worker's intervention may be of such a long term nature before seeing an outcome or be otherwise difficult to measure regardless of timescales, because the nature of outcomes are not easily measured. This makes the acquisition, use and ongoing development of knowledge to some extent a private activity by the social worker. This is formally checked through the re-registration process with the SWE where social workers are required to submit a portfolio of evidence of learning and development activity undertaken. Where there isn't however a single professional body charged with updating registered social workers with changes in the knowledge base then the new information that individuals do come in to

contact with can be relatively hit or miss unless there are systems within the local authority social work department that at least seeks to establish consistency amongst that staff group.

A final aspect to consider in relation to knowledge is the nature of that knowledge. That is whether the knowledge is evidence based and to some extent capable of standardisation (Timmermans and Berg, 2003). Or whether the knowledge is in fact a way of thinking about situations such that when confronted with a situation the social worker calls on knowledge of how to assess risk for example, in order to make a professional judgement. This contrasts with a professional knowledge base that matches a set of circumstances with that learned during studies and then applying the solution presented in that same study. In social work recognition of similarities of a situation may help in narrowing the issues but the decision is almost inevitably going to be unique.

A knowledge of relevant law is a significant element of the knowledge the social worker needs to acquire and be able to apply in their decision making as law regulates social work activity. This extends to not only knowing the law but also being skilled in using a range of legal options, so demonstrating law informed practice (Braye and Preston-Shoot, 2016). The knowledge a social worker is expected to understand and apply is therefore broad and specialised unlike a semi-profession, but it does not sit within the control of the profession itself. The multi-variate nature of this knowledge may work against any formal profession ownership.

Division of labour

Information Technology does not appear to be the greatest cause for concern expressed by social workers, but rather the appearance of tools with a heavy technical-rational bias that social workers struggle to reconcile with the narrative of case analysis and decision making that they are familiar - and comfortable - with. The social worker exercises a level of discretion over their own work and also over the way in which services are delivered, although these services may be subject to standardised procedures, but have limited control over the legislative and policy framework for children's social care. While the application of direct supervision, manuals and 'technology' may enhance the compliance of the social worker with the policy and practice of the department, the actual task of social work takes place away from the live scrutiny of management, case feedback being entirely what the social worker chooses to share with their supervisor, although case records enable management to appropriate some knowledge about the work being done.

Attempts by the agency to re-engineer the end to end social work process are in the extreme experienced as a direct attack on the intrinsic worth of the social worker role and have no doubt stratified social work in to a range of roles such as hybrid managers at the top stratum, some of which are felt by social workers themselves to be far removed from its core purpose of working to protect and improve a child's well-being. Efforts by the agency to create a coded system for analysing and assessing risk come up against the continuing debate as to the nature of social work and its knowledge base. In particular the extent to which discretion continues to be exercised by social workers despite managerial controls being applied or whether in fact the discretion has been wholly or partially curtailed.

Departmental management in this context is taken to refer to social work managers. As professional social workers and managers their power comes from both their formal

authority in their role as a manager as well as through their own possession of knowledge and information (Morgan, 1986) giving them an occupational status as well as managerial authority. This credibility can however be challenged by social workers who view the rise to management as an escape rather than aspiration, (Pithouse, 1987) so the fact this management group hold the professional qualification in common with social workers doesn't automatically legitimate their authority with social workers. In contrast, the manager's skill in setting the ideological climate (Howe, 1986) can lead to an open exchange on casework, so important given not only the unpredictability of social work itself, but also that it takes place unobserved by supervisors (Pithouse, 1987). One of the greatest challenges for this management group however is to reconcile the need by social workers to have the discretion that the social workers need to manage the unpredictability within their work together with social complexity and uncertainty, with the demands of limited resources and performance management.

Management implement controlling mechanisms such control of resources, use of supervision, target setting and monitoring across the organisation to ensure consistency of standards (their own standards or those externally imposed). Where not compelled to do so externally, management use standardisation and codification to appropriate control of social work rather than rely solely on the quality of social workers' practice without these standards.

Training

Control over access to the knowledge base of social work training is held not by the profession itself but by the regulator, in consultation with the education providers. Students could be free to study at any university but if they do wish to pursue a professional social

work qualification then they need to be enrolled on programmes approved by the SWE. But neither of these speak for the profession itself or are within its structure. Nonetheless, this is a description of a recognized knowledge base which is consistent with the defining characteristics set out by Freidson but not appropriated by the profession.

Other bodies with an influence over the training of social workers include the QAA for HEI who through the use of subject benchmark statements set out the standard an HEI must meet in the teaching of the honours or post graduate degree course.

To this can then be added the policy and guidance issued by central government which apply to the content of the academic stage of the student social worker training and later in the workplace through implementation by the local authority of statutory guidance in the workplace. The training of social workers is thus substantial and formal across various components in contrast to the shorter duration Etzioni defines for the semi-professions.

Ideology

It is in the nature of children's social work for the social worker to become involved in the most intimate of family situations, usually unwelcomely so, and at a time more often than not of crisis. All stakeholders - service users, the community and employers - must be able to trust the social workers carrying out this difficult work. This trust extends not only to the technical competence of the worker, which is carried out more often than not in an isolated setting, face to face with a child, having to make choices and decisions on matters of great significance far away from the eye of professional and/or managerial peers and superordinates. The public has also to trust that where this work falls short of its own standards and regulations that this will be discovered and appropriate action swiftly taken.

BASW has defined a set of values and principles which BASW members are required to promote and practice in their work. The three values underpinning social work are human rights, social justice and professional integrity. Human Rights is described as social work being underpinned by a respect for inherent worth and dignity of all people. Social Justice is described as social workers having a responsibility to promote it. Professional Integrity requires social workers to respect and uphold the values of the profession and behave in a reliable, honest and trustworthy way. Of these three values it is perhaps the latter that shows more similarity to the elements of the definition of a profession applied by Freidson. This value deals with the manner in which the social worker conducts themselves as a professional. The other two values also underpin social work but provide more of a reference for the decision making and goals the social worker may have for the children and families they are working with.

4h. Conclusion

Where the relationship between professional and managerial control has been assumed to be conflicted (Freidson, 1986) found this not quite the case and that there was a long history of professionals working within larger organisations including children's social workers within local authorities. This was partly attributed to the supervision of professionals being undertaken by seniors from the same professional background within the employing organisation. The literatures on professional theoretical frameworks suggest children's social work shares some of the characteristics of a profession as defined by Freidson but also those of a semi-profession according to Etzioni. The conflict between authority of knowledge and that of administrative hierarchy is central to how social work with children is controlled. Access to supervision by the social worker from a professionally

qualified manager also allows points of knowledge to be tested. The standardisation of many of the processes of social work through central government guidance also enables a level of managerial administrative control to be exercised.

Chapter 5: Understanding the Management and Control of Children's Social Work through Existing Research

This chapter reports on an analysis of empirical studies based on a review of publications since 2010. The purpose of this is to explore what is already known through research in the field. This chapter reports on studies grouped by themes emerging through the review.

The decline of professional discretion

The implementation of tools and templates to secure consistency of recording case analysis and assessment as a means of countering the loss of public confidence (Skillmark and Oscarsson, 2018) has been the subject of a number of studies. The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) represented an attempt by central government to create a single consistent set of documentation to capture information about children at risk that could be completed and shared by any agency with which the child had come in to contact. Studies in to this project report social workers' dissatisfaction with the design of the framework both in trying to shoehorn their narrational (Parton, 2009) analysis of the facts of a case in to the boxes and headings presented in the form (White, Hall and Peckover, 2009) as well as frustration that completion of these forms took longer (Pithouse, Hall, Peckover and White, 2009). Longer than what is not explored in the study, which is a gap in understanding given the aims of the national policy were to create something - a consistent manner of recording early assessment and referral information - that did not previously exist. Thus any comparison of timings for completion is unlikely to be valid. These studies do not provide any information as to the activities of other members of the social work department - or outside of the department - that are impacted by the introduction of the CAF being completed by the social workers themselves. The

absence of the management perspective makes it impossible to understand the impact of these changes on the wider system although according to Skillmark and Oscarsson (2018) the inability of social workers to fully comply with standardised tools is acknowledged by both social workers and their managers.

The allegation the forms were designed without sufficient input from social workers themselves (Burton et al, 2009) continues a broader theme of change being expressed by social workers as this being one of many that are imposed on the profession with the consequent risk a) to social work of losing control of its own knowledge base and also b) being opened up to much closer scrutiny. Palermo et al (2010) viewed the loss of professional decision making autonomy as a direct consequence of the implementation of the range of central government reforms that have come to be known as NPM reforms within the probation service with its emphasis on control of outputs, processes and standards.

Broadhurst et al (2009) go further in attributing technology based tools for assessment and case recording as being home to latent errors - where the system of the framework and the capacity of the worker to use it mean shortcuts and other time saving devices are being deployed - to make sense of the tool rather than the information and evidence relating to the case in front of them. In this way social workers display workarounds to mitigate the mismatch between technology and the work process (Debono et al, 2013). Similarly, Skillmark and Oscarsson (2018) identified pragmatic documentation as the response of social workers to standardised tools along with workloads and administrative rationalisation as three of the forms of deviation from compliance with such tools, preventing managers and politicians aims for the system being fulfilled. The challenge for organisations is to view the incidents that can arise where child protection work fails - as

being a consequence of the systems design and not (solely) of the failure of practice of the individual worker. The techniques deployed by workers in this study are presented as well intentioned in the context of the demand pressures and capacity they personally have to spend time on each case - notwithstanding the system is driving the application of techniques that potentially contribute to a deterioration in the safety of the system that these tools were intended to improve.

Where the intention of management is to apply boundary controls to limit the amount of discretion exercised by workers, then instruments such as questionnaires and checklists can be effective in delimiting the information practitioners look for and so what gets taken in to account as well as how to interpret the information collected, (Høybye-Mortensen 2013). If the tools are connected with theory and models familiar to the practitioner then practitioners may support the use of such tools. Nonetheless, the tools succeed in applying a normative control over the definition and decision making on cases, the very categorisation of which makes easier the management of service users within the system, (Høybye-Mortensen 2013). For others however the tools are applied after their professional assessment and decision making has already been carried out, where the tools become documentation after the event rather than active within the professional task itself.

Combining similar activities into a centralised process where otherwise carried out in a dispersed way is a managerial tool to create efficiency and economy of scale in an operation. Such techniques risk undermining the building of intra-professional working where this is dependent on collegial working and communities of practice. Grouping teaching staff across subjects and creating separate nursing help desks (Jansson and Parding (2011)) broke down the ability for teachers, and separately nursing practitioners,

to draw on common subject area experience, seen to have negative consequences on shared knowledge and skills development. Both staff groups reported a loss of emotional support. This study was based on the workers experiences of changes to their working arrangements, although did not examine the actual impact on quality of the work carried out. The study also did not examine the objectives and findings of management in changing these working arrangements.

Studies in to the impact of changes in social work practice have focused on those likely to necessitate the most change in existing work practices, where the transfer of social work staff in to a Call Centre environment could be considered to be at the upper end of the scale of disruption. Disruption is alleged to occur in a number of ways. The loss of connection with the local community (Coleman and Harris, 2008) at most applies only to the group of social workers within the call centre itself and also implies that patch working is the only route to knowledge about local children and families. Of the many recommendations arising from investigations into child deaths, the need for all agencies to co-operate and share information is a consistent and enduring theme. Also, that transferring an element of the social work role to the call centre caused social workers to experience a fragmentation (Burton and van der Broek (2009)) of their previously composite social worker role (one which covered all aspects of referral, assessment and case management). This is a legitimate concern from the perspective of an individual who had previously enjoyed the fuller role and for whatever reason was now being placed in to a more narrowly defined job. Arguably, newer recruits to the Call Centre may not have had such experiences and therefore not perceive the role as a loss, as expressed by those in the 2009 study.

Perhaps of most interest is the view of these social workers that their location in the call centre impacted on their autonomy, in part due to the ability of the call centre managers to listen in on calls. Listening in on calls is not an actual intervention in the work taking place between the social worker and the caller so it is not clear in what way this interferes with the decisions and actions the social worker takes. So, if the impact is not to reduce autonomy, then it is more likely the social worker is raising a concern about a loss of privacy, which is impacted not only through the observation by managers but also between call centre workers. Reframing the concerns in this way changes the matter from one of restraint of professional practice to one of surveillance and self-discipline in the manner of Foucault (1991). Social work is generally conducted in private - between the social worker and the child and family. The relatively exposed setting of the call centre probably does feel different and inhibiting possibly, and yet the social worker defines the impact as a restriction on autonomy, which presumably sounds less defensive than expressing a concern about being watched. The managers of the call centre were not surveyed in this study so the reasons for establishing the call centre are not recorded. If the aim was to bring under direct supervision a part of social work that was previously conducted mainly in private, then the call centre has the potential to be very successful. More typically however call centres are established under broader principles of economy and efficiency achieved through de-skilling and algorithms.

As professionals become increasingly absorbed into organisational work settings, their control of over the content of their work loosens and is replaced by an emphasis on the content of the controlling mechanisms (Noordegraaf, 2007) including hybrid (social work qualified) managers. This stratification of the professional work setting enables other roles to develop - practitioners into managers, non-practitioners in to practice related and managerial roles.

Lees, Rafferty and Meyer (2013), review the managerialist responses to child protection failings through the findings of recent government commissioned reviews. This work is silent on the body of writing in to the exercise of discretion by frontline bureaucrats (see Evans 2011, Lambley 2020, Wastell et al 2010, Whittaker 2018) so while the work paints a picture of extensive rules and processes that officially intend to achieve consistency of practice to better improve child safety, that workers will exercise discretion, with or without the influence of organisational factors, enables the social worker to try to deal with the demands of their workload and those of the organisation. The acceptance by workers of these prescriptive working practices arises from their need to allay their own anxieties about the nature of child protection work, specifically because there is no other supportive constructive outlet to express these anxieties. Where the changes in procedures are intended by the organisation to reduce the risk of child protection failures through the formalisation of some routines and tasks, these are not always resisted by workers (Dehart-Davis and Pandey, 2005) unlike those mechanisms that attack the contents of the role itself - including the shift to centralising some aspects.

The objectives behind the implementation of new policy rules and guidance are generally attributed to an assumption by policy makers that the risk inherent in children's social work can be better managed (Lees et al (2013)) presumably lowered, through more rules and guidance, which in turn enable audit activities to be carried out, to ensure social workers are doing what they should, Munro (2004). Far from welcoming or believing that the uncertainty that is characteristic of social work can be made certain, the social workers' perceptions are a combination of beliefs that these are strategies to reduce any discretion they can still exercise, from a starting point that maintains this is already significantly eroded, and to also protect the agency, if necessary at the expense of the social worker (Munro, 2004). As an indication of the character of the relationship between the social

work department and their host agency, this presents a bleak position. The systems of control that agency management can afford to put in place cannot achieve effective surveillance of all of the work of the entire social work department. There is an inevitable boundary to what is realistic for the managers to control beyond which the control of the agency response to each case transfers to the social worker. While the development of new policy and guidance may attempt to exert more managerial control – presumably at the expense of social worker discretion – there remains a permanent gap.

In the context of frontline service delivery in the public sector there is a substantial body of writing on the impact of managerial reforms on the discretion with which workers operate. The introduction of more rules, audit and greater accountability have all conspired to restrict the rule, task and value discretion of street level bureaucrats (Taylor and Kelly, 2006). Unresolved is the debate where some writers have found examples of the positive application of professional discretion (Evans, 2011) and those who identify forms of discretion such as deviant social work (Carey, 2011) where its scale and impact are largely unknown because of the difficulties in identifying and potentially regulating its occurrence.

The conflict between the employing body and the professional

The lack of congruence of goals and principles between the profession and the intent of management prevents trust forming (Brown et al (2011)). This study of managers and clinicians took a multi layer approach to the way the development of trust is built or eroded. The article delineates between professionals and managers as two separate groups suggesting that even a clinician turned manager will be viewed by clinicians as having made a choice to shift from caring as their primary objective. And that what the managers

of the employing body are introducing (performance and resource management) reinforce the belief that managers do not trust clinicians - and so in turn clinicians trust is withheld. While the culture of compliance supports management in its control objectives, the very implementation of controlling activities is presented here as preventing that culture developing. That said, Brown et al (2011) do not share any information as to the level of compliance being achieved. Actual compliance may remain high even when there is no cultural appetite towards compliance. If that is the case, then the compliance is either irresistible through other levers of control - or the motivation for compliance is within the individual themselves - a professional obligation.

When it comes to work directly with service users, then it is for the worker to handle the dual responsibilities of providing a service at the same time as implementing the wishes of government (Hjorne et al, 2010) which is inherently conflicted and contradictory. So while the individuals impacted by government policy should be the users of services themselves, the trigger for the review of policy often arises from a serious incident that may have achieved particular publicity. The challenge for the worker then is to translate that policy as they set about providing services - or not - to those service users.

Lambley (2010) highlights a potentially more complex conflict than a straight forward head to head between management and practitioner which arises from which of the three roles of social work described by Payne (2005) the practitioner may be seeking to adopt (conventional, progressive or reflexive-therapeutic) versus the definition of the role as given by management. The strategies that may be adopted by the social worker include compliance, covert and overt resistance and/or collaboration (Lambley, 2010) but these in turn are influenced by the management style adopted by the manager.

Evans (2011) critical analysis of Lipsky challenges the assumed use of discretion by practitioners as means of resistance to control but rather found its use more positively in support of organisational objectives and where managerial policy requires work to be carried out by professionally competent individuals.

The position and response of the social work profession and professional is absent from Carey's (2014a) analysis of the effects of the historic and continuing fragmentation of the social care market and social work role, instead reflecting on the loss of organisational identity for social workers, including the erosion of their roles by unqualified staff and other professionals.

Ellis (2011) goes further to propose a typology of four different types of discretion arising from the relationship between the degree of formality with which discretion is exercised compared to the strength of managerial or professional control in the organisation, which itself is a consequence of the level of top down control exercised over frontline decision making. This presents a contingency model of discretion, hence Ellis' conclusion that the exact nature of discretion in an organisation can only be tested empirically.

There is a further line of thinking that suggests the tools typically associated with managerial control can in fact form part of an organisational professionalism where the practitioner fulfils their professional roles but through what are essentially bureaucratic controls, contrasted with the practitioner focusing on understanding their clients often complex situations and assessing and considering options to provide support and recovery work (Liligrén, 2012). This would seem to suggest there is no place within occupational professionalism for the use of bureaucratic controls without compromising its 'occupational' status. Acceptance of the bureaucratic activities of the practitioners role can

indeed signal the triumph of cynicism (Carey 2014) over the professional ideology, if not a strategy of survival or a willingness to support service users to access resources outside the range of approved criteria. But these can equally be evidence of social workers succumbing to the compliance culture of the organisation as a means to protect and defend the organisation and the worker from any future accusations of failure of duty in the event of the death of a child (Trevithick, 2014). Such a strategy limits the use of intuition and the development of relationships that would otherwise more properly reflect the knowledge and skills of the professional social worker when confronted with the complexity of cases and the relative lack of capacity on the part of the families they work with to handle the factors leading to the situation they are in (Trevithick, 2014).

Professional life

As a direct challenge to the portrayal of professionals within organisations as isolated and in conflict with their host, Suddaby and Viale (2011) describe the deliberate efforts of professions to use their presence and expertise to bring about institutional change - primarily to secure their own survival and status as an occupational group. Activities to achieve this include making and/or colonising new areas of knowledge and creating boundaries to working in the knowledge space and the standards of work. While professional education provides an opportunity to introduce students to possible future organisational contexts, within the medical profession this is utilised at best marginally, (Noordegraaf, 2011). Within a technical professional curriculum there may simply not be the scope to introduce training on broader occupational settings without diluting the technical content or extending the period of training.

Control of the knowledge base does not prevent the experience of the individual practitioner impacting on decision making where factors such as emotions, length of experience and also their own strength of voice have an impact - and a variable one at that depending on where the practitioner is on their route to and after qualification (Oconnor, 2014).

Within all of the studies reviewed as part of this analysis, none have touched on the role and activities of the regulatory and professional bodies and structures that deal with children's social work. Where the work of these bodies is disciplinary in nature then it is not surprising if these matters are handled confidentially. Nothing is known however of either the deterrent or endorsing effect of these bodies. Where studies do report individual practitioners reflections on the pressures they face and the discretion they may sometimes have to use that may take them outside of official council procedures, no mention is made of whether this could or should be a matter of concern for their professional bodies and what the consequences for them could be if the matter were raised. It may be the case of course that the training of social workers addresses self- regulation to such an extent that routine recourse is simply unnecessary – qualified social workers effectively carry the conduct and discipline code with them as part of their broader knowledge and skill set. Nonetheless this is an aspect of professionalism not yet addressed within studies so far reviewed.

While the above has focused on the tools within professions and professional practices to exercise and maintain control over the work, there is also body of thinking that looks at professionalism as a management activity in its own right, derived from the location of professionals within organisational settings. Where traditional thinking about professionalism has been based on its occupational position, organisational

professionalism (Evetts (2011)) describes a management approach that adopts attributes of occupational professionalism alongside more conventional management tools. The blending of managerial and professional skills is further reinforced then through the pursuit of managerial qualifications by professionals to further personal career ambitions and potentially the broader status of the profession. Which came first is difficult to say. It is unclear whether the adoption of professional attributes arises from the ongoing observation of management causing deliberate or gradual awareness these may be useful to adopt more broadly, so a pull of professionalism in to management activities, or the infiltration of the management space by professionals, thereby pushing organisational professionalism into the management space.

The vulnerability of social workers, despite their membership of a profession, can lead them to the development of highly personalised coping and defence mechanisms, particularly when public attention is heightened in response to the death of a child. Freidson's professional social closure does not in those situations protect or shield its members from external threats or the potential abandonment by professional managers, (Leigh, 2014).

The impact of information technology

Studies into the impact of information technology have tended not to be about technology in isolation but rather the implementation of some other social work project, for example the CAF, in a technological environment. Therefore, general observations about working with technology in social work are not necessarily different or unique to observations of switching any paper system to an electronic one. The lack of visibility of the holistic case record however, for example, was described as a particular shortcoming of electronic

records and the Integrated Children's System (ICS) (Hall, 2008). Why an electronic file should make less visible the case record than its paper predecessor is unclear and perhaps an unnecessary change. This is less about a shortcoming in the system but rather a difference. Although this study did find younger social workers adapted more easily to the environment, including communication with service users through text messaging and the internet, this is more likely to reflect familiarity with technology in its broadest sense, and not its adaptation for social work and practice as such.

There is a more concerning consequence from the increasing adoption of technology as the tool for case recording which has less to do with the users personal preference but rather the reductionist way (Gillingham, 2013) in which computers need to acquire and store information for analysis and retrieval. The consequence of this on social work practice - in particular assessment and subsequent decision making - does not appear to have been the focus of as many studies as early implementation findings have been. This is not the same issue as complaints by social workers reminiscing the loss of paper files. Gillingham reports a growing gap opening between the thinking and processing skills developed by social workers during professional training and then the storage and retrieval of this information in live casework in a manner potentially at odds with the way in which social workers have learned to process. Social workers find the tools that standardise their work inconsistent with professional practice (Skillmark and Oscarsson 2018 and Debono 2013). Calls for greater collaboration between social workers and technicians at the design stage (Gillingham, 2013) may assist in making systems more intuitive for social workers so the look and feel moves closer to the operating model of casework practitioners are trained in. From these early studies progress has been made in the transition of computerised systems from office based to the increased use of mobile connected devices so case records can be updated virtually in real time and from any location - this countering the

claim of social workers being chained to their desks. If however the building blocks of information storage, retrieval and reflection cannot be accessed intellectually by the social worker this is a risk both to social work and the agency. Systems are implemented at some cost to the agency with the promise of efficiency to make such investments worthwhile, so expenditure levels can be reduced and/or savings recycled into other cost pressures. It would be devastating to discover such investments have failed on both counts.

Central government policy making

The quasi-hierarchical relationship between central and local government provides central government with the authority and tools to direct local councils to the implementation of its policy aims. Using a combination of command and control, sanctions and rewards (Grubnic and Woods, 2009) central government has tools at its disposal to seek to secure the alignment of local councils with its wishes but whether this actually translates into policy fulfilment is not clear. Just as workers respond to what is measured within the council itself – in education terms ‘teaching to the test’ - so councils have historically invested heavily in responding to various performance management regimes to present their organisation in the best possible light. Policy outcomes are also often focused on the very long term and are typically much harder to measure objectively. The only practical measure central government can fall back on relatively simply is a check that specified procedures have been implemented. This approach inevitably sets the scene within the organisation as the detail of the policy is cascaded as part of its local implementation. Those involved in implementation will have questions regarding the impact of the policy change and so be able to see those which are outcome based and those standardising procedures.

Managers often then find themselves as the agents of policy implementation but not the decision makers or designers of the policies themselves leading to greater tension and mistrust between managers and professionals (Brown et al (2011)). The broader NPM policy agenda has pushed local management into an increasingly challenging position, particularly where service delivery is transferring from council's own provision and towards the independent sector, where the aim of managerial control becomes the balancing of the provider's professional discretion with that of the council manager's trusteeship responsibilities (Budd (2007)). Little outsourcing of child protection work has been seen among children's social service departments where even external agency social workers are subject to employee style supervision and not third party contract management. Where the substance of the policy, as discussed above, is broadly procedural, then the task of the manager to positively promote the benefits of the change becomes even harder, and adds to the suspicion that the procedures are needed because managers – and politicians – do not trust the workers. And perhaps wish to take away any discretion that workers use in their direct encounters with service users, which take place away from the sight of managers. In fact, while much writing on NPM has focused on its change effect, Palermo et al (2010) argue it is experienced as a controlling mechanism in its own right. And it is not one that supports agency objectives, but rather one that reduces worker discretion and their sense of identity of/with the organisation.

Inquiries have been used in the event of child protection failures and have gone on to generate changes in public policy. The evidence base considered by the Inquiry will be dependent on the terms of reference under which it has been convened. The remit of the Inquiry will need to strike a balance between sourcing a comprehensive evidence base - but nonetheless one that is practical in terms of both timescales and resources required. Recommendations arising from recent Inquiries such as the Laming Inquiry have given

rise to changes in policy and practice. This inquiry did not seek or review evidence regarding the informal social work practices that are an integral part of the child protection system (Marinetto, 2011) but was derived from an analysis of the testimonies of witnesses to the inquiry, of which informal social work practices were not a part. The recommendations arising from the review proposed changes to the structures of governance among different agencies involved in this work, believing the system could be made safer with more integrated working between agencies, which Marinetto attributes to assumptions being made by the Inquiry about these being the causes of child protection failures. The consequence of this is to proceed with changes to working practices based on an analysis of only part of the overall child protection system increasing the likelihood the actual impact of these changes may not be as intended.

Social work policy is also susceptible to the influence of broader government policy priorities where the effects of neoliberalism and managerialism across public sector services in general and social work in particular has led to the fragmentation of practice and delivery of aspects of social work by other professionals and roles, with the exception of child protection work, (Harlow et al, 2013). So as a tool for the exercise of control, policy determination by central government appears relatively simple in terms of their legitimacy of authority and the possession of the power to activate. But is nonetheless a complex tool from the viewpoint of the managers charged with implementation.

References in the studies reviewed to hierarchy and spans of control are limited in the context of managerial control. None have been found to consider the relationship between control objectives and job descriptions. None have discussed all of the relationships between subordinates, peers and super-ordinates. Studies do delineate between managers and their direct reports but not to explain any strategy in the construction of

these very particular relationships. As discussed earlier, many of the studies dealing with managerialism, in the social work context, have talked to the application of new methods into the department – but not necessarily what structural changes were or perhaps should have accompanied these to reinforce the control objective or to make a change that simply makes sense. Given the objectives of the change programme of which NPM was a key part, it seems unlikely the overall hierarchies of councils in the run up to the implementation of these change programmes were not subject to some modification. What changes councils made and the impact of these is not explored in the studies reviewed.

Managing child protection social work

The presence and impact of boundary and diagnostic control systems can create conditions where the professional extends into a managerial role (hybrid) to represent/protect professionalism, including as part of the professionals own career aspirations. The balance between managerial and professional control and interests can however be the source of conflict for professionally qualified supervisors where they need to balance administrative, professional and supportive roles, and also leads to mixed responses from supervisees as they look for a safe place to share anxieties at the same time aware their performance is being measured (Wong, 2015).

The introduction of managerialism in to social workers' professional lives has been articulated in particular terms by Purcell and Cho (2011) where their senior social work managers specify the performance and professional management tasks of social work qualified managers - taken to be the collection and scrutiny of data on workload measures and conduct of supervision. The managers generally seemed to report this positively provided there is time still for reflective practice. That these managers are also

social workers reflects Freidson's stratification of the profession where there exists a spectrum of seniority from the most junior frontline practitioner to a senior, potentially academic master. The managers responding in this study may be speaking less about the hybridisation of professional social workers into the management space, but more the inevitable ranking of professionals within their occupation. This is further reinforced by the requirement within the English social services sector for there to be a social work qualified Principal Social Worker within the council. The paper acknowledges its own narrow perspective being the views of a small number of senior managers. Junior managers views are not explored, nor are the views of frontline practitioners. The study also does not explore the managers assessment of the impact of their management role on practice itself ie is practice simply managed more now than before or does it lead to changes in actual practice at case level.

Summary of findings and research gaps

Studies in to changes to the management and organisation of social care over the last ten years have focused almost entirely on the perspective of social workers in isolation of the context for change with only limited discussion as to the objectives of change on the part of the agency's management although the Munro review of child protection (2011) included evidence from a wide range of people from different backgrounds and professions. The employing body's management perspective is invisible so limiting the ability to properly understand the impact of the social work projects of the last ten years. In isolation, the studies reviewed here do at one level portray these management interventions as frustrating to social workers who are having to learn to use new tools and frameworks believing what they had before was probably perfectly adequate. A fuller understanding of agency management's intention may assist in better understanding the

reasons for change. There is a concern however that some of these changes may have disrupted more than the practical and physical aspects of case recording and assessment but in fact have unknown, unintended and therefore potentially more harmful impacts on the way in which social workers synthesise information.

Conclusion

What these studies have in common is an in depth analysis of their respective attributes or themes at a point in time rather than consider the broader process of what has given rise to the change, how that has been planned and communicated and then its impact on the case work of the practitioner. The dominant theme through the studies, being the loss of professional discretion, provides a particular view about one aspect of this overall cycle of translation of a government policy document into the day to day work of a practitioner. The practitioners view of their reducing professional discretion has been explored in relation to a specific change in some studies (implementation of call centre working (Burton and van der Broek (2009)) or the Common assessment Framework (Parton (2009), White, Hall and Peckover (2009), Pithouse, Hall, Peckover and White (2009)). None of the studies presented an analysis of all the stakeholders' perspectives of the same policy or practice change. More typically studies have examined the views of the practitioners, rarely the management and even less the central government perspective, as gleaned through the written policy and guidance documentation. This wider range of perspectives is a deliberate feature of this research as described through the research questions next in Chapter 6 and the research design in Chapter 7.

Chapter 6 – Research Questions

The following subsidiary questions are presented to address the Research Questions, based on the review of theoretical and empirical literatures in Chapters 1-5.

Research Question 1: To what extent and in what ways is the content of government policy and guidance on safeguarding children social work in England underpinned by managerial or professional control theory or a combination of both?*

RQ1a – Does the content of the government’s statutory guidance on safeguarding children social work in England utilise managerial controls?

RQ1b – Do these managerial controls specify processes and actions for social workers to perform and the standards to which social workers must perform?

*The term ‘underpinned’ is used here to mean the dominant theory of control revealed through content analysis of the statutory guidance.

Research Question 2: To what extent and in what ways do each of the managerial and professional representative bodies promote the use of managerial or professional control over frontline children’s social work?

- RQ2a – Do the managers with social work qualifications expect the social workers to comply with the statutory guidance but also apply their professional knowledge where there is a conflict between the guidance and the social worker’s own view?
- RQ2b – Does BASW promote the values of social work and the professional knowledge of social workers?
- RQ2c – Do the ADCS and individual Directors support specifying process and actions for social workers and the standards to which social workers must perform?

- RQ2d - Do the ADCS and individual Directors support social workers applying their professional knowledge in preference to the statutory guidance where there is a conflict between the two?

Research Question 3: How is this combination of managerial and professional control understood and acted on by the social workers who safeguard children?

- RQ3a - Do social workers draw on the values of professional social work in their reflection and practice?
- RQ3b - Do social workers draw on their professional knowledge to arrive at decisions on the actions that support the best interests of the families they are working with?
- RQ3c - Do social workers seek advice from their manager where there is a conflict between the guidance and the social worker's own recommendation?

Research Question 4: What are the implications of the above for safeguarding children social work policy development and implementation?

- RQ4a – Does social work practice reflect the statutory guidance?
- RQ4b - Where the assessment of the social worker conflicts with that guidance, does the professional assessment prevail?

Research Question 5: What are the implications of the above for theories of professionalisation, in particular as applied to social work?

- RQ5a – Is social work therefore professional work in which social workers practice from a base of professional social work values and specialist knowledge?
- RQ5c - While standardisation of procedures may conflict with the professional's control over division of labour, does the overriding activity of the social worker

nonetheless remain the application of professional knowledge in complex and unpredictable situations?

Section 2: Methods

Chapter 7: Methods

This chapter sets out the overall research design and the separate methods within it, including the approach to synthesising the results in order to answer the research questions in Chapter 6. Ethical considerations are addressed at the end of the chapter.

7a. Research design

To understand the key components of theories of managerial and professional control within the design and implementation of children's social work, this research was designed to examine written statutory guidance and the attitudes of managers and social workers towards this guidance.

This mixed methods study combined the following main analyses and search of research literature for existing published studies (findings reported above) to answer the research questions set out below:

Research Question 1: To what extent and in what ways is the content of government policy and guidance on safeguarding children social work in England underpinned by managerial or professional control theory or a combination of both?

Policy analysis

Template analysis (Brooks and King, 2012) of a single piece of statutory government guidance (Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2015) impacting on safeguarding

children social work practices in local authorities against: Simons levers of control (managerial control) (Simons, 1995) and Friedson's defining elements (professional control) (Freidson, 2001).

Research Question 2: To what extent and in what ways do each of the managerial and professional representative bodies promote the use of managerial or professional control over frontline children's social work?

Policy analysis

Template analysis of the consultation responses from BASW and the ADCS to the statutory guidance.

Research Question 3: How is this combination of managerial and professional control understood and acted on by the social workers who safeguard children?

Analysis of informants' descriptions of application of the statutory guidance

Collation of evidence of local authority managers responses as recipients of this guidance through semi structured interviews.

Collation of evidence of children's social workers responses as recipients of this guidance through semi structured interviews.

Collation of evidence from an examination of a sample of casework nominated by the safeguarding children social workers comparing findings with responses described by them..

Survey for generality

Survey across a further sample of local authority children's social workers and managers based on key themes arising from interviews and literature search.

Research Question 4: What are the implications of the above for safeguarding children social work policy development and implementation?

Analysis of datasets to bring results together

Filtering answers for instances of responses to managerial or professional control arising from local authority managers and children's social workers and compare to the appearance and balance of control types in original guidance.

Research Question 5: What are the implications of the above for theories of professionalisation, in particular as applied to social work?

Comparison of empirical findings as to the balance of control types with theories on professionalisation.

A mixed methods research design

To answer the above research questions a mixed methods research design was used because of the need to capture evidence about the perspectives of multiple stakeholders and also work with both documents and informants and the different types of knowledge these represent. These perspectives included not only the views of the informants regarding the extent to which they exercised control in their respective roles but also their own interpretation of the statutory guidance issued by central government. The analysis of the statutory guidance itself was a practical solution to gaining an understanding of the

government's position, where it was not feasible to secure access to senior officials and Ministers. Testing the generalisability of the findings required a survey. Thus, no single method was able to capture all of these various aspects (Plano Clark and Badiee, 2010).

The existing literature into professional and managerial control and its application in a public sector context used semi structured interviews for eliciting the perspectives of the social worker. In contrast, this research examined written policy documents, conducted semi structured interviews including with local authority managers as well as social workers, conducted further analysis of individual casework and then concluded with a structured survey.

The use of mixed methods was further evidenced through the use of theory, initially to examine the policy documents as well as to devise the template for its subsequent use as a structure for the interviews (Creswell, 2009). The sequence of the elements of the mixed methods research was planned to represent core and supplemental inquiries (Morse, 2010). The core research component (semi structured interviews) was linked to the supplementary components at the interface with analysis (content analysis of the statutory guidance and related consultation responses) and separately at the interface with results (survey responses).

The survey element of the mixed methods study was intended to produce quantitative data, predominantly descriptive (Onwuegbuzie and Combs, 2010), in order to enhance understanding about the prevalence of views among social work staff and managers regarding the combination of professional and managerial control.

The qualitative elements of the overall study included the template analysis and the semi structured interviews. The template analysis used deductive coding drawing on theoretical frameworks of managerial and professional control theory and through which the central government statutory guidance was analysed. This analysis informed the questions for the semi structured interviews.

A cross case analysis was used to review the responses through the semi structured interviews in order to establish the extent of consistency between informants as well as consistency or divergence from the results of the earlier template analysis and identify any new themes.

The research used four data types (Onwuegbuzie and Combs, 2010), being interviews, case work, survey and template analysis. These comprised three qualitative data sets and one quantitative. The study took place in six identifiable phases. While the core component of the study was the interviews with social workers and discussion of their case work, a high priority was also afforded to the non-core elements of the study dealing with the examination of the statutory guidance, where this type of analysis had not been identified through literature reviews to date but also the interviews with managers where previous studies into social work departments had typically only been focused on the views of social workers.

A theoretical foundation of pragmatism

According to Peirce (1982) knowledge about a situation is the sum of all the consequences that are considered to arise from that situation. Pragmatism works to establish a level of 'truth' where there is something new added to our understanding of a situation. This

requires us to accommodate the continuous transformation of our knowledge through the active process of moving between actions and beliefs.

Pragmatism is often contrasted with other philosophical positions by referring to it as a set of philosophical tools (Biesta, 2010) rather than a position which typically then leads the individual down specific narrow research routes, considered to be those - and only those - that are compatible with the philosophical position taken. Pragmatism seeks to use inquiry and experience and the researcher's reflection on those as a means to gather a fuller understanding of a particular situation using both theory and empirical evidence to develop knowledge. This generative belief about knowledge creation is a feature of Dewey's beliefs about pragmatism, as described by Biesta. Given the temporal nature of knowledge, (Dewey, 1982) there can be no absolute conviction there is nothing more to be known or that events and circumstances may change so making it appropriate to examine the situation again and so making knowledge fallible (Biesta, 2010).

Pragmatism and implications for MMR design

The use of pragmatism as the methodological basis of this research is reflected in the use of mixed methods of research. Pragmatism permits the use of both theoretical and empirical approaches to research.

Unravelling a complex situation requires a systematic inspection of the situation to take place and in that regards mixed methods research approaches can support that process by enabling the researcher to examine a situation from a number of angles with a view to then synthesising the findings. Arguably however, focus on the situation and undertaking

of inquiry and reflection as a route to generate knowledge of a situation has the potential to inevitably focus more on explanations of what has been found rather than why things are as they are. That does not preclude the adoption of research methods to explore the interpretive dimension as part of a broader pragmatic view of the overall situation as is the case in this research.

To research using a pragmatist's approach involves the process of examining any and all potential alternative explanations for the problematic situation under review. Explanations that do not make a practical difference to a situation are in a practical sense no different to each other (James, 2012). Further, according to James, in the process of researching pragmatically theories are used as instruments in the resolution of situations where there is uncertainty rather than them being the resolution in their own right. Only those theories, the application of which provide a different understanding and interpretation of the situation under review are genuinely useful to the process of acquiring new knowledge. The pragmatist does not limit their pursuit of explanation to theory or experience but in fact uses both where their introduction adds new knowledge or understanding (James, 2012).

The process and role of inquiry

Pragmatists view knowledge not as a product coming at the end of some search but rather a process through which a researcher evaluates information acquired through inquiry and reflection and who then observes and makes decisions about how they interpret what they have found. The knowledge itself can be continuously developed until each action and reflection by the researcher produces no new or altered beliefs about the situation and its consequences. For Dewey (1982) the state of absolute truth was an ideal where it was not possible to go on continuing inquiries until there was no difference in understanding of the

current, previous and next situations. The process of reflecting on what has been learned and then using that to influence the action to be taken next enables the elements of learning that weren't previously exposed, to be processed and set in context of what was known, accepting that subsequent research activities will create new understanding that may challenge or corroborate what was previously believed. The intended consequence from the application of these tools will be to reduce the level of doubt that a given situation is presenting.

The multiple stages in this overall research project reflect the mixed methods approach being taken and is consistent with the adoption of a pragmatist philosophical foundation.

7b. Literature review

Method

This analysis of case studies was based on a review of papers published since 2010 in journals covering public administration, policy administration, social services and social work and local government studies. The selection of papers followed Creswell's (2009) steps for a literature review including identification by the researcher of key words, a search against library catalogues, selection of relevant reports which were then skimmed, summarised and the literature review then assembled. Articles were selected in part through a review of the indexes of journals in these particular fields and also based on their being returned through a search against a number of electronic databases, using search terms managerial control, managerialism, professional control and professionalism. Results were filtered to those having a focus on the management and organisation of children's social work, not papers on theories of social work practice itself. A small number

of studies outside children's social work were retained where findings nonetheless seemed relevant (see Hjerne et al (2010) on welfare workers and McGivern (2015) on hybrid NHS managers as examples).

Data required

These studies represented the particular issues of interest to researchers since 2010 and while they could not be considered exhaustive, they did show the relatively narrow and consistently explored areas of children's social work, typically based on the views of social workers themselves and with the gradual erosion of professional discretion the most commonly researched aspect. This data, once organised into themes, then informed the production of the template for analysis in later stages of the research.

Data collection

41 studies were selected for further analysis based on the chosen search criteria (Appendix B). A template analysis of these studies was created using the theoretical managerial and professional control frameworks of Simons (1995) and Freidson (2001). Four themes arose from the managerial control framework being the control systems of belief, boundary, diagnostic and interactive. Four themes also arose from the professional control framework being the control of professional knowledge, of the work content, of the market and ideology.

Initial analysis

A summary of the incidence with which articles addressed either or both of these frameworks is set out below. The combination of controls that featured the most frequently was control of task and boundary systems (27). This finding was not surprising given many of the studies were focused on social worker perceptions about changes to their day to day work in relation to which managers sought to try and apply boundaries but over which the social workers tried to protect their ability to apply their own professional discretion.

	Number	Percentage
Managerial control:		
Boundary	33	80
Diagnostic	27	66
Boundary and Diagnostic	25	61
Belief	6	15
Interactive	5	12
Professional control:		
Labour	30	73
Knowledge	12	29
Ideology	6	15
Market	2	5
Both control systems:		
Boundary and Labour	27	66
Diagnostic and Labour	22	54

Table B: Types of control systems addressed by selected articles

7c. Government policy making - a policy analysis

Method

The next stage of the research involved working with official documents (Gibson and Brown, 2009) which were subject to analysis as described below in order to generate data from them. A number of criteria were developed in order to select a piece of statutory guidance for analysis against theoretical managerial and professional control frameworks. Key to the selection criteria was that the guidance needed to have a statutory basis which local authorities would be required to implement. The changes required by the guidance also had to have an impact on the work of children's social workers. As the mixed method research design involved discussions with both social workers and their managers about their experience of implementing this guidance, then the guidance itself had to be sufficiently recent to be able to elicit a response in later interviews. If the age of the selected statutory guidance had been too old then the recollection of both the managers and the children's social workers would have been less detailed. A cut off of May 2010 was selected being the beginning of the term of the government at the time the research had started which increased the likelihood the statutory guidance selected would still largely be current practice at the time the interviews were being carried out. Generalisations about the preferred controlling mechanisms of any given government were not the objective of this research but rather the interplay of potentially opposing types of control through implementation of a piece of government guidance. Therefore, as the research design analysed in detail the contents of the selected guidance, through both a textual analysis and a number of other stakeholder perspectives, then a single piece of guidance was considered suitable.

The population of potential government policy publications was filtered from a longer search on the gov.uk website against the Department for Education (DfE) as the relevant department, safeguarding social care as search terms and then social care and children and young people as types of service areas. The note against each returned item in the search indicated the target audience for the guidance which enabled the list to be filtered only to those that identified local authority social workers. The aim of the search was to identify a shortlist of statutory guidance documents that were intended to have some impact on the way in which children's social workers in local authority departments were carrying out their work. A search was also made for the same terms against the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) as the other main relevant government department. No items of statutory guidance were returned.

Template Analysis

The method chosen to analyse the policy and associated professional guidance was by template analysis (Brooks and King, 2012). This is a technique for thematically organising and analysing qualitative data through the development of a coding template. This method enabled the organisation of text across themes drawn from the two theoretical frameworks being applied throughout the research into managerial and professional control, being Simons' control levers (1995) and Freidson's defining elements of professionalism (1986), respectively. Phrases reflecting the main elements of each theory were initially used as codes, organised in a hierarchical structure. This initial template was then piloted and further developed through its application against a 'test' policy, being The Care of Unaccompanied and Trafficked Children 2014, as this met the same criteria for selection of the policy that was to form the basis of the research study (Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2015).

The initial coding book comprised 44 short phrases extracted from the selected managerial and professional control frameworks. The phrases were taken from the two authors' original texts with a deliberate emphasis on noting more short phrases than may be needed so limiting the risk of any key aspects of their work being omitted. In all 44 phrases were noted, 18 were related to managerial control and 26 to professional control. The phrases used represented the main points of detail from the two control frameworks. These were attached to subheadings that represented the themes under which the two control frameworks were grouped, as set out in the earlier literature review. This initial set of phrases was then revised in order to place them within the context of children's social work. So for example, the professional control of 'ideology' translated from *'resist abandoning either the client or quality'* to *'the social worker resists restricting children's access to necessary services and any reduction in the quality of services to any children already in receipt of them'*. Similarly, the managerial control of 'diagnostic control systems' translated from *'collecting information on progress'* to *'government requires the inclusion of certain fields and information in the case record as an outcome'*.

The pilot was conducted as a project within the NVIVO software tool, using the statutory guidance document and the professional association (BASW) consultation responses as the two source documents, the contents of which were coded. As expected, through this design and pilot process there were themes that emerged outside of the a priori themes in the initial template design. These were reviewed and assessed for relevance in the final template design. A single template was developed to cover both the managerial and professional control theories and the same template was applied to both the government policy document and the consultation response on that government document by BASW. The use of template analysis and a priori themes assumed that the subsequent analysis of

the policy documents would contain some of these themes which could be tested initially and any recurrent themes appearing that are not covered within the initial selection of themes then being incorporated in to the final template. The process of selecting a piece of statutory guidance and the related BASW consultation response to pilot the template was the same as for the main statutory guidance around which the research was based.

Data required

The purpose of the template analysis of the statutory guidance was to capture an analysis of the types of control central government used within its guidance. This analysis provided evidence not only of whether managerial and professional control references were included but also within each type of control, further detail on the types of managerial or professional control, as set out within the two theoretical frameworks in Chapters 2 and 3.

Data collection

In order to code the entire body of the main statutory guidance document some additional codes were added. Two of these extended the list of codes related to managerial control. Two more were not considered controls in themselves and did not relate to either managerial or professional control literature but provided background information to the guidance document itself and also included a definition of terms used. The guidance document contained one appendix which was not coded. This appendix provided a series of references to associated guidance.

A number of issues arose during the process of coding that required decisions or assumptions to be made to ensure consistency of treatment through the remainder of the coding process. These are set out below:

- a. the research had assumed that the statutory guidance document itself was a source of managerial rather than professional control. This did not however prevent the simultaneous use of a control tool associated with professional rather than managerial control.
- b. the research assigned central government the role of sponsor of the children's social work profession (in as much as it determined the work which only qualified social workers could do) but was not the professional lead for social work.
- c. there were a number of instances where the guidance document specified areas of expertise or skills the social worker needed to have. These were treated as specifications of knowledge rather than instructions about what the social worker was required to do.
- d. there appeared a prima facie conflict arising between the managerial control that permitted individual creativity by workers compared with the use of a professional control that gave the professional control over the way in which the work was carried out. In these instances, each reference needed to be considered carefully in the context in which it was written to understand which of these two forms of 'discretion' were being used.
- e. the subjects to which any particular section of the guidance applied did not have to be social workers but instead the purpose of coding was to understand the nature of the control being used.

- f. where the guidance document was describing items that had to be included in case plans and assessments these were taken to be diagnostic controls as they were specifying information that could be subject to audit and scrutiny subsequently rather than the document at that point describing the activities of the preparation of these particular items, which would otherwise be a control over the work that was being carried out.

Initial analysis

Across the statutory guidance document there were 258 coding references, of which 250 were to managerial control codes and 8 to professional control codes. The highest number of managerial control references were to boundary systems. All of the professional control codes related to ownership of the body of knowledge.

7d. Managerial policy making and influence – analysis of ADCS response to government policy

Method

A search was conducted using the ADCS publications search facility using similar key words and timescales from May 2010 to that used in searching for government publications. From the list of results returned a review for relevance against the statutory guidance forming the basis of this research was carried out and where documents were connected they were included in the population for sampling. These connected documents were responses by ADCS to the consultations from which the final statutory guidance was produced and for this purpose were taken to be the stance of ADCS in relation to the

proposals being made by the DfE. These were in turn taken to be a proxy for the views and position ADCS represented to its Directors of Children's Services members. A template analysis was carried out on the ADCS consultation responses.

Data required

The purpose of the template analysis of the ADCS consultation responses to the statutory guidance was to capture an analysis of the types of control ADCS made reference to within their responses. This analysis provided evidence not only of whether managerial and or professional control references were included but also within each type of control, further detail on the types of managerial or professional control, as set out within the two theoretical frameworks in Chapters 2 and 3.

Data collection

The template analysis was carried out on the written responses made by ADCS during the consultation stages of the statutory guidance that forms the basis of this research. The selected three revisions of the statutory guidance (2010, 2012 and 2015) were all supported by consultation activities, although they varied in length and breadth. In particular, the number of questions, whether these invited general comments or were very narrowly focusing on a particular part of the overall guidance documents.

Initial analysis

Out of a total of 97 coded references, 31 of these were categorised as managerial control and 66 were categorised as professional controls.

7e. Professional policy making and influence – analysis of BASW response to government policy

Method

A search was conducted using the BASW publications search facility using similar key words and timescales from May 2010 to that used in searching for government publications. From the list of results returned a review for relevance against the statutory guidance forming the basis of this research was carried out and where documents were connected they were included in the population for sampling. These connected documents were responses by BASW to the consultations from which the final statutory guidance was produced and for this purpose were taken to be the stance of BASW in relation to the proposals being made by the DfE. These were in turn taken to be a proxy for the views and position BASW represented to its social worker members. A template analysis was carried out on the BASW consultation responses.

Data required

The purpose of the template analysis of the BASW consultation responses to the statutory guidance was to capture an analysis of the types of control BASW made reference to within their responses. This analysis provided evidence not only of whether managerial and professional control references were included but also within each type of control, further detail on the types of managerial or professional control, as set out within the two theoretical frameworks in Chapters 2 and 3.

Data collection

The template analysis was carried out on the written responses made by BASW during the consultation stages of the statutory guidance that forms the basis of this research. The selected three revisions of the statutory guidance (2010, 2012 and 2015) were all supported by consultation activities, although they varied in length and breadth. In particular, the number of questions, whether these invited general comments or were very narrowly focusing on a particular part of the overall guidance documents.

Initial analysis

Out of a total of 46 coded references, 9 of these were categorised as managerial control and 37 were categorised as professional controls.

7f. Case studies of local authority managers, social workers and their casework

Method

The criteria originally proposed for the selection of research sites included excluding any local authorities that may have been subject to any external management arrangements, typically arising as a consequence of concerns raised by OFSTED about the quality or safety of services. Working within these conditions was highly likely to make the local authority resistant to participation in the research anyway but there was also a risk that the management environment would be temporarily altered. Criteria for selection to be included in the study also included the size of the council on the basis it would be useful to compare different size councils. Finally, given the focus on the local authority's

particular responsibilities for children's social work then a criteria related to caseload ranges was assumed to impact directly on motivation and engagement by social workers and so a calculated ratio of caseload per worker was proposed to be used.

These criteria were applied to the list of local authorities with responsibility for children's social work and approaches to local authorities were made by the researcher to those matching those criteria but without success. While councils expressed general support for the aims of the research, each declined to participate including on the grounds of limited capacity of their managers and social workers to take part in the interviews.

A number of potential research sites were then identified through a contact of the researcher. The researcher approached each site and two agreed to take part in the research. These comprised one county council and one unitary authority. Thus, the size criteria had been met. One of the two sites had recently had a poor inspection outcome but was not within any formal process, beyond follow up visits from OFSTED. The levels of agency social workers and individual workloads varied between the two councils.

The researcher provided a description of the proposed research to each council explaining the intention to conduct interviews with the Director, managers and social workers. The researcher explained a review of casework was also desirable but acknowledging there may be problems regarding confidentiality and permission by the families to access the case records directly. The contacts within the two councils shared details of the research with their staff and a number of managers and social workers agreed to take part in the interviews. Information sheets were provided to each participant in advance of the interviews including a form for recording the consent of the participant.

Interviews with local authority managers included the holder of the post of Director of Children's Services and the managers responsible for the operational delivery of children's social work and supervision of their work. Interviews with the local authority director, managers and children's social workers were semi structured drawing on the themes from the theoretical managerial and professional control frameworks which contextualised the interview questions towards the research questions but without precluding any other areas being raised by interviewees (Gibson and Brown, 2009).

Data required

The purpose of the interviews with managers and children's social workers was to understand the attitudes of each towards the implementation of the statutory guidance. In particular, how managers viewed the guidance and whether they would recognise the need for any discretion in the application of the guidance where there was a conflict with a professional opinion and also the mechanisms used by the managers to achieve implementation of the guidance. In relation to the social workers, the purpose of the interviews was to establish the extent to which the children's social workers felt they could exercise any professional discretion or would accept the authority of the statutory guidance and their manager and implement as prescribed.

Data collected

The interviews were based on the themes from the earlier template analysis. These in turn were based on the key themes within the theoretical managerial and professional control frameworks. In addition, however, the interview questions were designed to elicit whether the respondent (manager or children's social worker) considered managerial or

professional controls to be dominant in general or in particular circumstances. This was achieved by juxtaposing the managerial and professional control frameworks along the four key attributes so that questions were structured around each pairing (four in all). The table below sets out the juxtaposition of the attributes according to each of the managerial and professional control frameworks and the rationale for their pairing.

Freidson	Simons	Rationale
Ideology	Belief	Both represent the values that underpin the professional work or the organisation respectively. They can be owned by both the individual and the institution.
Task	Diagnostic	For the professional, 'task' reflects their personal ability to determine the best way to carry out a piece of work. The diagnostic control system enables managers to examine the performance of workers to measure whether it is in keeping with their targets. So as a pair they describe what and how the work gets done.
Market	Interactive	Control over the market refers to restricting certain areas of work only to those who hold the professional qualification. That both enables the profession to prevent others carrying out that work but also defines the areas of work they can practice in. Interactive systems relate more to exploring potentially new areas of work but by implication are also then controlling the areas of work currently engaged in. Both control systems support the protectionist instincts of the profession and organisation to prevent loss of control of existing work and also look for opportunities to extend into other areas.

Knowledge and Training	Boundary	Knowledge and training define the skills the professional will use and what work they will do. Boundary systems are also concerned with management specifying the areas of work their workers should be engaged in.
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Table C: Pairing of Attributes from Managerial and Professional Theoretical Control Frameworks

In relation to the selection of a sample of cases then these were a sample of cases put forward by the social workers themselves. The primary objective in reviewing the contents of the case was to see the working practices as described by social workers, as a consequence of the implementation of the statutory guidance.

Initial analysis

The interviews with directors (2), managers (5) and social workers (10) were initially transcribed verbatim, 7 directly by the researcher and 8 by an independent transcriber. The transcriptions were then collated by role (director, manager, social worker) and a detailed analysis prepared of their contents in relation to the themes of managerial and professional control in the table above. Comments were organised broadly in to those consistent with the theme and those raising new issues. Descriptions of decision making and observations across a number of cases were given by the social workers and these were organised into the same themes of managerial and professional control as the analysis of interviews.

7g. Survey of local authority managers and children's social workers

Method

The purpose of the survey of social workers and managers was to test generalisability (Creswell, 2009) of the findings from the interviews carried out at the two research sites. The proposed questions were grouped into the same four areas of control used in the interviews (and also the template analysis work) so that the survey maintained continuity with the theoretical framework of the overall research. The headings for the four groups are set out below.

- Using values and beliefs to guide decisions and behaviour
- Applying limits to the activities workers carry out
- Controlling the way in which work is performed
- Defining the jurisdiction of children's social work.

Each group then comprised a number of statements which reflected the characteristics of either professional or managerial control. The participant was being asked to indicate the extent to which they believed that statement of control to be of significance in current social work practice. Appendix C contains the content of the survey in full and accompanying information sheet.

In order to separate the results between managers and social workers' responses, a final question was included asking the participant to state whether they were a Director of Children's Services, manager of children's social work team or service or a children's social worker.

The first pages of the survey set out information for participants.

A five-point Likert scale was used giving the respondent the option of selecting from strongly agree through to strongly disagree to a set of statements linked to each of the four themes above.

Data required

The responses to the survey provided quantitative data on the views of social workers and social work managers on the influence of different types of control on frontline children's social work practice.

Data collection

The survey was built on the Survey Monkey platform (www.surveymonkey.com) enabling the survey to be shared and completed electronically.

The primary routes for accessing participants were through the network of Principal Social Workers (PSW) and social media (Twitter). The PSW network for Children and Families Social Workers is administered by Skills for Care who provide support for national network meetings, resources and newsletters. The link to the survey was shared with the administrators of the network who shared the link through Twitter. The link was also tweeted directly and retweeted to encourage further participation. The survey was open from mid-April 2018 through to the beginning of June 2018.

Initial analysis

The survey was completed by 86 participants across the three roles of Director, Manager and Social Worker although 8 participants did not answer the question on their role with a further 8 questions across all participants not attempted.

7h. Synthesis

The initial analysis of theoretical control frameworks together with the findings of the empirical studies provided the thematic headings for a template analysis used to analyse references to controls found within the selected piece of statutory guidance. The template was tested using a second piece of statutory guidance and adjusted where necessary. The template was then reapplied to the original piece of statutory guidance so at that stage there was a clear analysis of the references to managerial and professional controls within it.

The template analysis of the consultation responses by BASW and ADCS were compared to the that of the statutory guidance to establish the extent to which both sets of documents contained references to mainly managerial or professional controls or a combination.

The analysis of the responses by local authority managers as to their attitudes towards the statutory guidance and how they intended it should be implemented by children's social workers gave an insight in to what controls (managerial or professional) these managers were most responsive to and in turn then seeing as the priorities in their plans for implementation. These were compared to the template analysis with a view to comparing responses around references to either managerial or professional controls or both. The managers interviewed included both the Director of Children' Services and the managers

with responsibility for operational delivery of children's social work services. An analysis of the responses of each of the managers was carried out separately and then compared with each other for any consistency in response. In particular this comparison was looking for acknowledgement of the controls indicated in the statutory guidance with the intentions of the managers in thinking through their own approach to implementation of the policy. These intentions may have included a straight transfer of the statutory guidance policy as written into a new operating procedure for the children's social work team without modification or debate. Or was there an attempt by the manager to engage in a dialogue about the merits and objectives of the statutory guidance and so seek to locate the changes required within the professional work of the children's social workers. Was there any plan to consult with the children's social workers as part of the implementation plan and were there any aspects of the guidance on which the managers would be prepared to allow the social workers to exercise discretion. The responses of the managers compared to the theoretical managerial and professional control frameworks identified in the statutory guidance itself revealed the extent to which there was any change in the blend of controls the managers themselves intended to use in seeing through implementation of the policy within their local authority. The expectations of the managers that the children's social workers would adopt and apply the policy as given was also examined.

The analysis of the responses by the children's social workers as to their attitudes towards the statutory guidance and its implementation as communicated by the local authority managers gave an insight in to what controls these professionals were most responsive to and how in turn the social workers then prioritised implementation of the changes required by the managers. These insights were again compared to the template analysis with a view to comparing responses around either theoretical managerial or professional control frameworks or both. This stage also included a comparison of each of the social workers'

responses between each other for any consistency in response. These responses were also compared with those of the managers to identify any changes in emphasis as to the controls most influencing the social workers decisions about their own role and motivation in implementation of the statutory guidance. This was particularly important to be able to identify where there may have been a shift in the balance of controls as interpreted by the managers in comparison to the controls in the statutory guidance, analysed in the earlier template analysis.

Examining the interview responses of the children's social workers was also an opportunity to test their consistency with the template analysis of the consultation responses by BASW.

The analysis of casework was intended to enable a comparison with the claims made by the social workers about how they had adopted the changes required through the statutory guidance.

The interview responses of the local authority managers and social workers together with the themes in the template analyses were used as the basis of a survey questionnaire that was shared through the Principal Social Worker network and through social media. The responses to the questionnaires were compared to the managers and social workers' interviews above. This confirmatory quantitative analysis provided an indication about the extent to which the adoption and implementation by managers and social workers of statutory guidance was carried out consistently across a larger sample of managers and social workers. This then provided insights as to what were the dominant controls - managerial and/or professional - and where in the process of implementation these were most influential on front line practice.

7h. Ethical considerations

This research project received the approval of the Plymouth University Faculty of Health and Human Sciences Faculty Research Ethics Committee on the 24 November 2016. The project complies with Plymouth University's Principles for Research Involving Human Participants. The participants for the interview stage of this research were recruited through two local authority children's social services departments. The social workers participation was voluntary and informed consent secured. Their confidentiality and anonymity have also been assured through digital and physical protection of their details and interviews and pseudonyms used in reporting on the interviews. This information will be destroyed after ten years in line with university policy. Social workers participating in the survey stage also did so giving their informed consent. The social workers provided no personal details in completing the survey other than confirming their role (social worker, manager or director).

Conclusion

The methods described above will gather data from documents and informants in order to answer the research questions. The data gathered and analysis of this is explored through chapters 8 to 11, beginning with the content analysis of the statutory guidance.

Chapter 8: Content Analysis of the Policy Documents and Discourse analysis

This chapter reports on the content analysis of the chosen statutory guidance in order to determine the extent to which managerial or professional controls are referenced by central government.

The Statutory Guidance

The guidance selected for analysis was *Working Together to Safeguard Children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children*, March 2015. This guidance contained an introduction (pages 5-11), five chapters (pages 12-85) and three appendices (pages 92-109). The introduction set out the status and intended audience for the guidance. The appendices contained a glossary, the statutory framework and further sources of information. The main content comprised: assessing need and providing help; organisational responsibilities; Local Safeguarding Children Boards; learning and improvement framework; child death reviews. A full list of contents is contained in Appendix D.

Coding results

The range and frequency of codes used in the coding of the guidance document are set out in the table below. The full list of codes and numbers of references is contained in the appendices.

Out of a total of 258 coded references, 250 of these were categorised as managerial control and the remaining 8 were categorised as professional controls.

Type of Control	Number of References
Managerial control: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boundary • Diagnostic • Belief • Interactive Total	205 43 2 - 250
Professional control: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge • Ideology • Market • Task Total	8 - - - 8

Table D – Results of coding the statutory guidance document

Utilisation of controls

RQ1a - Does the content of the government’s statutory guidance on safeguarding children social work in England utilise managerial controls?

RQ1b – Do these managerial controls specify processes and actions for social workers to perform and the standards to which social workers must perform?

The statutory guidance contained instructions specifying what should be done (boundary controls) and the way in which the work should be done (diagnostic controls). The analysis also identified examples where government defined the values that underpin the work (belief controls) which had not been expected. Likewise, the analysis also showed the use of professional controls, in particular the need for the application of professional knowledge, which had not been expected.

Managerial controls

Within the 205 coded references relating to boundary controls, 140 of these were statements of actions required of individuals of defined roles or organisations. 43 of the 205 were descriptions of actions needed without specifying who should carry these out. The balance of 22 coded references related to areas of policy and practice that individuals or agencies were required to have regard to.

Of the 43 statements without specification of who was responsible, 28 of these appeared to be principles of good practice rather than formal instructions about the practice itself (code reference 3.4.16). This suggested areas of discretion for agencies as to how the work might be organised using the principles described here as the basis for their design.

'Effective safeguarding arrangements in every local area should be underpinned by two key principles: • safeguarding is everyone's responsibility: for services to be effective each professional and organisation should play their full part; and • a child-centred approach: for services to be effective they should be based on a clear understanding of the needs and views of children.'

'Providing early help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children than reacting later.'

'Effective sharing of information between professionals and local agencies is essential for effective identification, assessment and service provision.'

'Every assessment should be child centred. Where there is a conflict between the needs of the child and their parents/carers, decisions should be made in the child's best interests.'

The guidance signalled the significance of the statements by the frequent reference to 'effective' even though there was no explicit definition of what that was. The fundamental nature of these principles ('*underpinned*') was also singled out for emphasis. The guidance limited the number of principles ('*two key principles*') so signalling these were the most important and others were either derived or subordinate to them. The guidance contained an implied criticism of local authority practice as 'reacting later' rather than focusing effort on early help. The guidance also used shortcuts in adopting the terms used within the professional work without further explanation ('*identification, assessment and service provision*' and '*child centred*'). This implied the readership of the guidance would be professionals working in this field and so already familiar with these terms. Finally, the guidance softened the description of a conflict between the child's best interests and what their family may want by describing this as a conflict of '*needs*', without tackling the harder questions about what these needs were and how such conflicts could be resolved.

Of the 140 statements about individual defined roles and organisational responsibilities, 43 of these related to other agencies generally and also specifically, where particular organisations were named (police, health, education, voluntary organisations, early years

and childcare, housing services etc with police, health and education being the most frequently referenced) (code reference 3.4.19).

'Local agencies should have in place effective ways to identify emerging problems and potential unmet needs for individual children and families.'

'Local agencies should work together to put processes in place for the effective assessment of the needs of individual children who may benefit from early help services.'

'In preparing a sentence plan, offender managers should consider how planned interventions might bear on parental responsibilities and whether the planned interventions could contribute to improved outcomes for children known to be in an existing relationship with the offender.'

Each of the three examples above illustrated the way in which the guidance was explicitly drawing different agencies in to safeguarding activities. Similarly, the guidance was also imprecise in the definition of actions ('effective'). In the last example above, as the agency was not working with the child directly, the requirement was to assess the implications of the proposed action with the adult.

'NHS organisations are subject to the section 11 duties set out in paragraph 4 of this chapter. Health professionals are in a strong position to identify welfare needs or safeguarding concerns regarding individual children and, where appropriate, provide support.'

'Housing and homelessness services in local authorities and others at the front line such as environmental health organisations are subject to the section 11 duties set out in paragraph 4 of this chapter. Professionals working in these services may become aware of conditions that could have an adverse impact on children.'

In the above two examples the trigger for any actions the organisations may have to take was passive rather than active (*'are in a strong position'* and *'may become aware of'*). The agencies could then be named within the guidance as having a role in safeguarding without the government actually specifying what that was and how it should be exercised.

17 of the 140 statements on roles and responsibilities were specifically about Local Safeguarding Children Boards (later changed in 2019 through new legislation to Safeguarding Partners). These comprised representatives from a number of local agencies so while they could be held to account as a collective there was no one individual agency responsible for ensuring compliance with the guidance. In a small number of instances these statements specified actions for the Chair of the LSCB.

'The LSCB should agree with the local authority and its partners the levels for the different types of assessment and services to be commissioned and delivered.'

'The LSCB should work with the Local Family Justice Board. They should also work with the health and well-being board, informing and drawing on the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.'

'The LSCB Chair should work closely with all LSCB partners and particularly with the Director of Children's Services.'

'LSCBs should have regard to the panel's advice when deciding whether or not to initiate an SCR, when appointing reviewers and when considering publication of SCR reports. LSCB Chairs and LSCB members should comply with requests from the panel as far as possible, including requests for information such as copies of SCR reports and invitations to attend meetings.'

Here again, the guidance was encouraging of activities (*'should'*) but stopped short of mandating these. This placed a need for the LSCB and on occasion the Chair, to try and

meet the requirements and face criticism from not doing so. The guidance also used imprecise measures of activity (*'the levels'* and *'as far as possible'*). This afforded the targets of the guidance some discretion as to their response and avoided the need for the authors of the guidance to be definitive, so accommodating the variations in local context of service delivery. Similarly, the nature of the activities themselves were described in broad terms (*'to be commissioned and delivered'* and *'informing and drawing on'*).

16 of the 140 statements on roles and responsibilities referred to responsibilities for all professionals to observe (3.4.17). These statements are more reflective of general principles (3.4.16 principles about good practice) but differ in their identification of their audience.

'Everyone who works with children – including teachers, GPs, nurses, midwives, health visitors, early years professionals, youth workers, police, Accident and Emergency staff, paediatricians, voluntary and community workers and social workers – has a responsibility for keeping them safe.'

'Where requested to do so by local authority children's social care, professionals from other parts of the local authority such as housing and those in health organisations have a duty to cooperate under section 27 of the Children Act 1989 by assisting the local authority in carrying out its children's social care functions.'

The guidance was both general (*'everyone'*) and specific (*'including teachers, GPs.....'*) in its definition of to whom the guidance applied so ensuring those it named were clear as well as leaving open any other individual or agency working with children. In relation to the second point above, while the duty to cooperate was general, the requirement set out here was limited in scope (*'where requested to'*) ie discretionary.

14 of the 140 statements on roles and responsibilities referred to responsibilities for both the social worker and their manager, signalling while the social worker may perform the actual task this had to be endorsed by the manager and that the manager was also responsible for it. While this might be assumed to be the case in a line management relationship, the guidance was making explicitly clear the social worker's manager carried responsibility too. The manager may also have been a qualified social worker, meaning the decision was still professionally grounded in as much as the manager was able to draw on their professional training as well as their roles and responsibilities as a manager. The need for the endorsement by the higher level authority was a function of bureaucracy and so managerial in form.

'Where the outcome of the assessment is continued local authority children's social care involvement, the social worker and their manager should agree a plan of action with other professionals and discuss this with the child and their family.'

'The social worker and their manager should review the plan for the child. Together they should ask whether the help given is leading to a significant positive change for the child and whether the pace of that change is appropriate for the child.'

The guidance continued to set out what was desirable ('*should*') which in relation to the first point provided a practical defence to what was a challenging requirement to meet ('*and discuss this*') given the resource implications of the manager accompanying all their social workers in discussions with the child. The second point set out an expectation of the nature of discussions within a supervisory relationship, which was in itself a diagnostic control (2.4.1).

The remaining 65 of the 183 coded references cover a selection of other individuals or agencies (including the social worker, the social work manager, the Chief Executive etc). A full list of codes and the number of references associated with them is contained within Appendix E.

Of the 22 coded references relating to areas of policy and practice that individuals or agencies should have regard to, 8 of these were reminders of the statutory authority under which the guidance was being issued (in particular Children's Acts of 1989 and 2004, Local Authority Social Services Act 1970).

The analysis of the statutory guidance produced 43 items coded to diagnostic controls, being those controls that determine the standards of performance applicable to the work being described. These reflected bureaucratic structures including requirements to meet specified targets or capture particular information (11); requiring systems to be created to monitor performance and actions (28); requiring the use of supervision to provide management oversight (4). These are discussed separately below.

'Within one working day of a referral being received, a local authority social worker should make a decision about the type of response that is required and acknowledge receipt to the referrer.'

'The maximum timeframe for the assessment to conclude, such that it is possible to reach a decision on next steps, should be no longer than 45 working days from the point of referral.'

'Many services provided will be for parents or carers (and may include services identified in a parent carer's or non-parent carer's needs assessment). The plan should reflect this

and set clear measurable outcomes for the child and expectations for the parents, with measurable, reviewable actions for them.'

These examples showed the imposition of specific targets around timescales to complete pieces of work (*'within one working day'* and *'45 working days'*). These specific targets were also anchored to specific points in time (*'of a referral being received'* and *'point of referral'*). The guidance acknowledged the probability of exceptional circumstances (*'should'* and *'such that it is possible'*). The guidance also seemed to reflect the need for some flexibility in how local authorities may organise their work by identifying *'a local authority social worker'*. The guidance was also written to avoid the targets being misinterpreted as a judgement about the amount of time that was needed, using *'maximum'* to indicate that in any given case the turnaround could or should be lower than that. The third extract described the contents of the care plan. What these extracts had in common was not only that they defined measurable performance but also that performance could be audited to test whether standards had been met.

The following extracts illustrated examples of the guidance requiring systems to be created to monitor performance and actions.

'In order to fulfil its statutory functions under regulation 5 an LSCB should use data and, as a minimum, should:

- assess the effectiveness of the help being provided to children and families, including early help;*
- assess whether LSCB partners are fulfilling their statutory obligations set out in chapter 2 of this guidance;*
- quality assure practice, including through joint audits of case files involving practitioners and identifying lessons to be learned; and*
- monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of training, including multi-agency training, to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.'*

'Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) should maintain a local learning and

improvement framework which is shared across local organisations who work with children and families. This framework should enable organisations to be clear about their responsibilities, to learn from experience and improve services as a result.'

'It is important that LSCBs understand the criteria for determining whether a statutory review is required and always conduct those reviews when necessary.'

The guidance reinforced the significance of its requirements by linking the text with its regulatory authority (*'In order to fulfil its statutory functions'*) so emphasising that any failing to follow the requirements as subsequently described would amount to not fulfilling legal obligations leaving open the question of punishment that may also arise as a consequence. Nonetheless, the requirements were introduced with a *'should'* although the text went on to set a floor to the level of compliance (*'as a minimum'*). The first extract then went on to describe a comprehensive system of self-assessment (*'assess'*, *'quality assure'* and *'monitor and evaluate'*). This system of self-assessment was repeated through the requirement to keep learning and improvement under review in a formal framework. The third extract went further in relation to the obligation to conduct reviews (*'always'*) and punctuated this by beginning with a rather obvious statement about the significance of the guidance (*'it is important'*).

The guidance made statements about the role of supervision as a resource for the social worker but also a source of management oversight for the social worker's manager.

'Critical reflection through supervision should strengthen the analysis in each assessment.'

'Effective professional supervision can play a critical role in ensuring a clear focus on a child's welfare. Supervision should support professionals to reflect critically on the impact of their decisions on the child and their family.'

'Any professional working with vulnerable children should always have access to a manager to talk through their concerns and judgements affecting the welfare of the child.'

The first comment set an expectation of management supervision of all cases (*'each assessment'*) on the basis the quality of the work should improve as a consequence (*'strengthen the analysis'*). This suggested the social workers own efforts in some way fell short of this strengthened position until the involvement of their line manager. This point was partly repeated in the second comment (*'can play a critical role'*) where the suggestion was again that the work may lack the focus needed (*'on a child's welfare'*) until the engagement of the manager through supervision. It may be the case however the social worker's focus was already sound in that regard (*'can play'*). The third comment clearly set out the assumption in the guidance of a supervision model operating in all the organisations who have professionals working with children (*'any professional'* and *'always have access'*).

The analysis identified examples where government set out definitions of values that it believed underpinned children's social work (belief controls) which was not expected. These statements were similar to those considered earlier that set out principles of good practice. They have been treated differently here though to reflect they were not statements about practice itself but rather statements of principles that underpinned the work itself (rather than the way in which it should be carried out). In particular these were not statements about the substantive decisions social workers make on individual cases.

'Effective safeguarding systems are child centred. Failings in safeguarding systems are too often the result of losing sight of the needs and views of the children within them or placing the interests of adults ahead of the needs of children. Children are clear what they want from an effective safeguarding system and this is described in the box on page 11.'

'Children want to be respected, their views to be heard, to have stable relationships with professionals built on trust and to have consistent support provided for their individual needs. This should guide the behaviour of professionals. Anyone working with children should see and speak to the child; listen to what they say; take their views seriously; and work with them collaboratively when deciding how to support their needs.'

The statements described principles that applied to all the work ('safeguarding systems') and all those working within them ('should guide the behaviour'). Where systems were not working, the statements described the reasons for this in relation to attitudes ('losing sight' or 'placing the interests of adults') rather than any failure to follow procedures.

Professional control

The statutory guidance contained statements regarding the need for the application of professional knowledge, which was an unexpected finding. These statements referred to either the use of research (6.3.2) in the development of the guidance or to other sources (6.6) of knowledge relevant to social work practice.

'For children who need additional help, every day matters. Academic research is consistent in underlining the damage to children from delaying intervention.'

'Research has shown that taking a systematic approach to enquiries using a conceptual model is the best way to deliver a comprehensive assessment for all children.'

'Social workers and managers should always reflect the latest research on the impact of neglect and abuse and relevant findings from serious case reviews when analysing the level of need and risk faced by the child.'

Each of these statements made general references to the existence of research informing professional practice. These references to research were used as rationale for different aspects of social work practice including speed of support (*'delaying intervention'*) and conduct of assessments (*'best way to deliver'* and *'when analysing'*).

Summary

Formalised instructions across institutions

This analysis of the statutory guidance revealed an approach by central government to specify what should be done (boundary controls, Simons (1995)) and the way in which the work should be done (diagnostic controls, Simons (1995)). The guidance defines roles and responsibilities across a number of organisations who collectively form the implementation structure (Hjern and Porter, 1981) of safeguarding children policy. These organisations are expected to take forward their responsibilities through instruction to their own staff implementing the policy from the top down (Hill, 2013), replicating the requirements in changes to working practices (Majone and Wildavsky, 1979).

Self-regulation through 'effective' and 'good' work

The frequent references in the statutory guidance to 'should' in setting out expectations of roles and responsibilities of agencies and professionals provided a clear indication of the desirability of the action but also the need for some discretion at individual case level. Terms such as 'effective' and 'good' are uncontroversial in themselves and so likely to secure approval from a wide audience (Jarzabkowski, 2010) or have been necessary in order for the guidance to have received approval for release (Matland, 1995). At the same time the inclusion of the terms 'maximum' and 'minimum' provide incentives to not just meet the obligation but do better.

Uncertainty reduced through timeliness rather than context

Numerical targets were included within the statutory guidance that enabled performance against the guidance to be both measurable, auditable (Munro, 2004) and reportable by local authorities giving the work a level of transparency. The inclusion by government of targets and specified activities form part of a broader strategy of government to reduce the likelihood of failures of child protection with further rules and regulations intended to reduce the risk inherent in social work (Lees et al, 2013). The ability to hold to account against this guidance anyone working with vulnerable children was achieved through casting a wide net in defining to whom the guidance applied as well as the use of broad statements of principles of child centred working for all organisations and professionals to observe in their practice.

Limitation of individuals professional autonomy

The statutory guidance included requirements for supervision and joint scrutiny of cases by the manager so preventing social workers practicing in isolation. In so doing central government are signalling to the local authority the role of the bureaucracy (Weber, 1978) to assign authority to officials who can be held to account. By making explicit the need for managers to review the proposed decisions of their social workers, central government is bringing visibility to work that takes place between the social worker and family away from the direct surveillance of the manager. Supervision provides managers with their main control tool (Briand and Bellemare, 2006) and source of information as to how compliant their social workers are with statutory guidance. Local authority children's social work does not reflect the only setting in which social work with children is practiced, but in the specific context of this study the professional autonomy and discretion afforded to children's social workers is limited.

Conclusion

This chapter presents an analysis of the types of controls used by central government in the content of statutory guidance documents as well as the underlying assumptions held by government about its role in policy making and expectations of how those receiving the guidance will respond. The analysis also shows government's preference for defining specific actions for named organisations and professionals. How these instructions are received and then interpreted within local authorities and their social work teams is explored in later sections.

Chapter 9: The Executive Response

This chapter explores the views of management on the way in which children's social work is controlled. It begins with a content analysis of the responses of the ADCS to the statutory guidance analysed in Chapter 8. The chapter then reports in interviews with directors and separately managers in the two research sites.

9a. The national level: consultation responses

An analysis was conducted on the consultation responses of the ADCS to three consecutive revisions of the statutory guidance, Working Together to Safeguard Children. The three revisions of the statutory guidance were all supported by consultation activities which varied in format and specificity of questions. In particular, through the number of questions asked in consultation documents and whether these invited general comments or were narrowly focusing on a particular part of the overall guidance documents.

Consultation on the 2010 Working Together to Safeguard Children took the form of a questionnaire where 20 questions had been set out by the DCSF. These questions focused on specific proposals within each chapter of the guidance as well as requests for any other comments about each chapter. For example, question 18 within the consultation questionnaire.

'18 Are there other aspects of working with children and their families that you think ought to be covered in this chapter? Please give any suggested additions.'

Regional conferences also formed part of this consultation process. Data about what was said at these conferences was not available to analyse as part of this research.

Consultation on the 2012 Working Together to Safeguard Children took the form of a questionnaire where 12 questions had been set out by the DfE. These questions were about particular sections of the draft statutory guidance but also included 3 open questions (numbers 4, 7 and 12) seeking '*any other comments*'.

Consultation on the 2015 Working Together to Safeguard Children took the form of a questionnaire where 5 questions had been set out by the DfE. These questions were about particular sections of the draft statutory guidance with no open questions seeking any other general comments.

Coding Results

The range and frequency of codes used in the coding of the three consultation responses guidance document are set out in the table below. The full list of codes and numbers of references is contained in the Appendix F.

Type of Control	Number of References
Managerial control: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boundary • Diagnostic • Belief • Interactive 	31 - - -
Total	31

Professional control:	
• Knowledge	66
• Ideology	-
• Task	-
• Market	-
Total	66

Table E– Results of coding the ADCS consultation responses

Out of a total of 97 coded references, 31 of these were categorised as managerial control and 66 were categorised as professional controls.

Utilisation of controls

RQ2c – Do the ADCS and individual Directors support specifying process and actions for social workers and the standards to which social workers must perform?

RQ2d - Do the ADCS and individual Directors support social workers applying their professional knowledge in preference to the statutory guidance where there is a conflict between the two?

The analysis revealed a combination of managerial and professional controls were found in the ADCS consultation response.

Managerial controls

The comments by the ADCS that were coded to boundary controls were of two types. The first were where the ADCS were stating in their consultation responses that they supported the guidance assigning roles and responsibilities so there would be clarity on these between different agencies. In particular, 18 of the 21 references to boundary controls related to government needing to clearly set out the roles and responsibilities of other agencies (3.4.19). For example:

'We note the section at paragraphs 53 to 61 on multi-agency responsibilities for children and families and we particularly welcome the description of how all need to be engaged in the development of common and shared assessment with the local authority as the lead agency. However, we are concerned that there is in some cases no mention, and in others not sufficient detail, of the roles and responsibilities of a number of important partners in the system.'

'The draft revised statutory guidance does not give sufficient information on safeguarding roles and responsibilities in the health system.'

'The guidance should include specific reference to the safeguarding responsibilities of the armed forces; the voluntary and community sector; the private sector; and social enterprises when working with and commissioning services for children and young.'

Through these statements the ADCS signalled areas of the guidance which they considered necessary to address ('*we are concerned*', '*number of important partners*', '*does not give*') rather than other areas that they were less committed to ('*should include*'). At the same time, they used their response to positively endorse those elements of the guidance they considered particularly well addressed ('*we note*', '*we particularly welcome*').

The second type of comment coded to boundary controls related to observations by the ADCS about some of the challenges around implementation of the guidance. These

included comments about the resource implications of some of the requirements and also the variations in interpretation being made in local areas. For example:

'We welcome para 2.22 and 2.23 but it is essential the guidance takes into account the resource implications and likely timescales for meeting such requirements and that these aspects are addressed.'

'We believe more clarity has been offered regarding preventable deaths however we also recognise that the word 'preventable' is difficult to define and therefore subject to variation and interpretation which again could hinder working together.'

The ADCS showed their qualified support for the guidance ('we welcome'), the qualification then being their doubts about the ability to deliver the guidance without additional resources. They signalled this as a significant barrier ('it is essential') but avoided a direct challenge to the government ('the guidance takes into account'). Likewise, the ADCS acknowledged the guidance contained an attempt at defining preventable deaths ('believe' and 'offered') but remained unconvinced the proposals relating to it would work ('could hinder working together').

Statutory guidance on the role of the Director of Childrens' Services (DfE, 2013) makes multiple references to the responsibility of the Director to ensure there are effective local agency arrangements for the safeguarding of children. That the ADCS should raise this in relation to the consultation documents is consistent with their statutory responsibilities.

While these comments by the ADCS are in relation to the boundaries of responsibilities, in this context the focus is on what other agencies should be doing, rather than statements about the roles of social workers. They are nonetheless consistent with the purpose of

boundary controls being to specify who is responsible for which actions, which a substantial part of the statutory guidance itself does do.

The responses of the ADCS did not however demonstrate any attempts to apply Diagnostic controls which would have sought inclusion within the guidance the standards to which the work within the statutory guidance should be performed. It is clear from Chapter 8 that the Statutory Guidance itself contained definitions of the standards to be applied so the absence of any comments on that by the ADCS in their consultation response implies their consensus with the standards as set out.

Professional controls

The analysis of the consultation responses also demonstrated, as expected, the application of professional controls by the ADCS through their challenges to the guidance based on their knowledge of social work practice and also how the existing statutory guidance was being delivered in local areas.

At one level these comments could be seen as akin to boundary controls in as much as they were encouraging greater precision in the guidance whether in definitions or in statements about roles and responsibilities. The difference between Boundary controls and Professional controls relating to the sharing of a body of professional knowledge however is where the ADCS were making comments to improve the guidance based on their experience of local systems and practice and what was working well in these, but also what may already have been problematic. Therefore, while the outcome of some of the comments made by the ADCS could be greater definitions and statements of

responsibilities, the assumption here is that they were informed by the experiences of the professionals and delivery of the professional work in local systems.

The types of challenges made by the ADCS in their responses related to whether the proposed guidance was sufficiently comprehensive, used ambiguous language, did not reflect current research in to practice or conflicted with other associated guidance. For example:

'The draft guidance is weak on information sharing. This is clearly a crucial part of the system.'

'The guidance also needs to deal with the status of the considerable body of supplementary guidance to Working Together. Is this guidance going to be reclassified as practice guidance?'

'One of the major challenges facing professionals seeking to safeguard children is dealing with parents who are hostile, non-compliant and resistant. The issue of masked or disguised compliance is also one that has come to the fore in recent months and years, yet chapter 10 is silent on these issues. This is a significant and major weakness.'

'However we would also like to draw attention to the contradictions between this guidance and ICS guidance specifically in relation to family focus/child focus.'

The ADCS presented their argument in such a way as to make it impossible for the respondent to disagree (*'it is clearly'*). In a similar vein, the ADCS built a case for a different objection by laying out all the evidence (*'one of the major challenges'* and *'also one that has come to the fore'*) so that when the criticism was actually made, the absence of the issue being included was almost ridiculed (*'yet chapter 10 is silent'*). The ADCS later reverted to a more deferential style of challenge (*'we would also like to draw'*).

There were a number of comments made by the ADCS which did however clearly refer to the need for professional knowledge to be allowed to drive decision making.

'We welcome the emphasis on the capacity of the assessment framework to allow professionals to exercise their judgement, an important aspect of Professor Munro's recommendations. This is a key area where local judgement and discretion can be very usefully used.'

'The issue here is not necessarily timescales but one of supporting workers in completing high quality snapshots of family/child circumstances with an early analysis and assessment of predominant need, risk and next steps.'

The ADCS signalled the credibility of their comments by referencing other high profile work (*'an important aspect of Professor Munro's recommendations'*). They took a further opportunity to illustrate their knowledge of social work practice and highlighted the possible gaps in the guidance on these issues (*'high quality snapshots of family/child circumstances with an early analysis and assessment of predominant need, risk and next steps.'*). The reference to 'high quality' also acted as a further invitation to agree with their point.

Summary

Across the three consultation responses, the ADCS challenged using both managerial and professional control arguments. The results of the analysis reflected the role of the members of the ADCS in delivering children's social care in their respective local authorities. In particular, the ADCS focused on wanting to ensure the guidance was clear on the responsibilities of various agencies including the local authority. The ADCS response also reflected however the challenges of delivering complex work in an environment of limited resources through their signalling in their responses the need for

local flexibility and through the provision of feedback about how local practice and systems already worked or could work better.

The ADCS utilised a range of tools in their responses in order to signal the significance of their comments. Criticism was frequently preceded by a general statement of support. The passive voice was used when making specific demands. Where the ADCS considered the guidance was unlikely to work, this was qualified with an element of doubt about its success. The ADCS also presented arguments as self-evident and rarely called out a lack of knowledge of current social work practice exhibited within the guidance directly. Whilst the ADCS on occasion adopted a deferential style, they also displayed their credibility by association with other significant work in the sector.

9.b Local Authority Directors

Directors and managers as recipients of government guidance have responsibility for its implementation within the local authority. The interviews with directors and managers across the two research sites examined their role in relation to implementation, how they approached this and their understanding of how social workers were implementing the guidance.

Research question two was concerned with the influences over social workers where clearly the directors and managers played a part. The attitudes and approach taken by the director and managers influenced how the social worker worked with the statutory guidance which was the focus of research questions 2 and 3. This section reports the findings from interviews with directors, section 9.c reports on interviews with managers.

The role of values

The Directors were asked how their councils used statements about values to guide the behaviour of their staff and what their own role was in promoting these. This question was asked to elicit evidence of the presence of Simons belief system within each council. They were asked to comment on whether they thought social workers would be more or less influenced by their social work values than by those presented by the council.

Directors argue the importance of having clear values set out by the council

Both councils had corporate statements of values that were incorporated into various HR processes (recruitment, appraisal etc) and that staff were encouraged to adopt. The Directors referred to these value statements as a 'strapline' (Council 1) or as the way the council does its business (Council 2). The statements were broad making them relevant to a wide range of staff.

Both councils had developed these values through consultation with staff. The Director reported the development of the corporate values statement was relatively new for Council 1. In Council 2, the Director explained the process had begun some time ago as a deliberate aim by the council to encourage a set of behaviours by staff.

'...which is a very clear strapline that use right across in most documents that we use.'
[Council 1]

'....and the programme was very much about saying, "We think that we should be resourceful and supportive. If you're not behaving that way then I'm gonna challenge you because the way that we do things around here in [Council name], it is[.]' [Council 2]

The responses of the two Directors differed in the degree of confidence in the way they spoke about the work on values in their respective councils. The Director's (Council 1) confidence (*'use right across'*) about the reach of the statements switched during the sentence (*'in most documents'*). The Director in council 2 described the work to develop their values statement through the form of a quote as though repeating a rehearsed line. The quote included a mixture of 'we' and 'you' where the former conveyed the intention to create a shared view across the council and the latter singled out anyone who did not share that view as an outsider. The statement also contained a threat if the desired behaviours (*'the way that we do things around here'*) were not demonstrated.

The Director in Council 2 explained how they thought there would be differences in the values between the different departments and functions of the council. They further explained this as some departments requiring more command and control style delivery where others benefited from more collaborative working, into which category the Director placed their own. They also stated they thought there were differences at team level within the department where teams with different professional backgrounds were working together.

The Director in Council 1 explained how their council's strategy came only after the Director had created their own set of values for the department as part of preparation for a return OFSTED inspection.

'So as a department, we've been using something for some time.'

The Director went on to describe how a significant amount of work had had to be done to improve performance and that staff had previously experienced the environment as oppressive.

‘..but the frontline practitioners group is very different, it’s a very different topic now that we talk about whereas when I first had that group it was very much about managing the crisis and people feeling unsafe’.

While the trigger for the work was their recent OFSTED inspection performance, the Director in council 1 considered the department ahead of the wider council (*‘we’ve been using something for some time’*) and considered the work on values to have been successful (*‘it’s a very different topic now’*) in changing staff attitudes.

The Director (Council 1) was sceptical however about the extent to which the council level values were really reaching front line teams referring to their hope that the team managers would be able to repeat the department’s own vision and values.

Directors expectation that professional values dominate social workers’ practice

The Directors in both councils considered professional social work values more influential over social workers practice, compared to the broader official council values and also distinguishable from other professional values. The Director in Council 1 stated they thought there was a strong sense of the professional values being dominant at team level. They explained the need to distinguish between team and service level, where there may be specialists within a team that was part of a broader service but it was at the team level where the professional values were most influential.

'And they have really strong sense of vision and values very much representing their teams, their roles and responsibilities, all talked about children being at the centre of what we do.'

The Director in Council 2 thought the adoption of 'signs of safety' had also had a significant and unifying effect on the departments work.

'And so they're utilising that language every single day of the week. They're working with families in that way. They're recording in that way. Their supervision is in that way.'

Both Directors used language intended to convey the strength of the adoption of values within their departments. This was both within the selection of adjectives ('*really strong*') as well as turns of phrase ('*every single day*', '*in that way*'), the latter being repeated with three separate statements, again to emphasise the extent to which this work had become embedded. The Director in council 1 volunteered themselves to be part of this way of thinking ('*centre of what **we** do*') where the Director in council 2 talked about the department as separate to themselves.

Placing boundaries on knowledge-based work

Directors were asked about the way statutory guidance defined the work of social workers and how would they respond if the social worker's own professional judgement conflicted in some way with what the guidance instructed them to do.

Using the statutory guidance as a benchmark

The Director (Council 1) described how the guidance, when used in combination with performance management, could help ensure the basics of the work was being done in compliance with the statutory guidance through providing definitions of standards of expected performance. The council (1) had performed poorly in their OFSTED inspection and was working through a programme of changes to improve performance.

'...when you're in chaos, the first thing you have to do, is give people really firm parameters in which to work, really clear. This is what we have to do. This is this is the bread and butter. This is the basics of what we've got to achieve here'.

The importance of the actions proposed was stressed through use of modality ('*have to do*') with repetition of the actions themselves ('*really firm parameters*' and '*really clear*') and also the fundamental nature of getting these right ('*bread and butter*' and '*the basics*').

The Director went on to explain how the procedures acted as a reference point for assessing whether performance had improved so that staff and management could then be assured that practice was safe. The Director said they provided an objective measure as to the standard of the work being performed. The Director went on to explain that the desire to avoid a poor OFSTED inspection result acted as a powerful motivator to any council.

In Council 1 the Director talked about how defining for staff the priorities of the department made a significant contribution to the successful delivery of improvement as had been evidenced through the follow up inspection. The Director said the steer given by the Director at the time of the inspection (not the interviewee) had not only emphasised the importance of the policy and procedures but had also appealed to the staff as professionals. The Director believed these actions of the previous Director had created a culture of transparency.

' And I think what got us there was really clear clear steerage about what we had to do'

At times working within or around the statutory guidance

The Director (Council 1) considered the procedures could be restrictive but also the procedures still allowed 'creativity' within them, particularly when used in combination with signs of safety which the Director said may enable and encourage staff to approach how they thought about their work in a different way. They went on to explain the strength of signs of safety was believed to be in its focus on the child and family.

The Director explained there were instances where to achieve a better outcome for the family, then a timescale within the official procedures may need to be overruled when it was clearly not in the interests of the child and family. The Director used a metaphor of a set of traffic lights on red or green, but where whether it was really safe to cross the road or not depended on whether there was traffic nearby. The Director stated that where a practitioner could evidence that the outcome from not following procedure was a better one, then that would not be questioned by the manager.

Controlling the way in which social workers work

The Directors were asked to describe what they thought their role was in defining the processes that would be followed by the social workers in their department. They were also asked what would happen in circumstances where a social worker wanted to take a course of action that conflicted with the statutory guidance.

The role of the Director to design the department

The Director in Council 2 described how they thought that while the statutory guidance provided a substantial amount of definition of processes that should be followed each local authority could choose how they organised their social work department. The Director said this then afforded them a significant role and responsibility in directing the use of the council's resources to achieve the requirements of the guidance. They went on to say it became their responsibility in making decisions about methods of practice, workforce development, performance management and quality assurance systems. The Director described their approach as being consultative with staff using engagement activities to gain the views of staff.

The Director also stated that having made the decision on the approach being taken by the department then this became the way work was done and where a social worker was not happy with that, then this was perhaps not the right authority for them.

'But ultimately, if you don't feel that you can work in that way and you want to work in a different type of Local Authority then you need to work in a different Local Authority.'

The Director began by signalling this was the definitive position on the matter (*'ultimately'*).

The position of the employee was then personalised (*'you don't feel'*, *'you want to work'* and *'you need to work'*) so that the solution to the problem became one of them leaving.

The Director in Council 2 explained that the decision to implement signs of safety within the council arose from seeing this work in another authority and then sending a staff group to visit and form a view about transferring it to this council. The Director said that the

benefit of adopting such an approach was to ensure staff '*weren't doing their own thing*' but that there was a level of consistency in the way staff were working. They went on to explain that this would also achieve a level of continuity if for some reason the case was allocated to another social worker. The Director described the lack of continuity as being unfair for the family and would make it harder for the family to try and achieve their goals.

Both councils used the services of an external agency to maintain the council's procedural manual which included the agency sending alerts when new pieces of guidance were being released by central government so the internal procedures could be kept up to date.

The Director in Council 1 explained how the use of the external company by many local authorities had given rise to a more uniform set of local procedures. They explained that while the individual local authority would be able to determine their own versions of the standard procedures that came from the statutory guidance itself, in their view it was likely the external company would be part of those deliberations, possibly sharing information about what other councils were doing.

'They're the ones that provide all the procedures for you. So they take working together and they basically say there's your bookshelf of procedures, and _____many many many authorities have actually bought those.'

The Director presented the outsourcing of the production of the departments operating procedures ('*all the procedures*') as straightforward ('*basically*') and consistent with other councils ('*many many many*' and '*actually*').

Directors support the interests of the child as being central to decision making

Both Directors said that social workers would follow the formal procedures. In responding to a question about in what circumstances an official procedure might be disregarded the Director in Council 1 described an example from a previous council of a decision taken by a social worker on an out of hours placement that gave rise to a disciplinary action. The Director explained that this case highlighted the social worker trying to solve a problem, felt there were no official solutions available and so used their individual discretion. The Director further explained a number of factors had led to the worker finding themselves in the situation of having to make that decision which included a lack of access to management as well as no available authorised placements.

'And this one particular practitioner hadn't sought management approval but was desperately trying to get a placement for a child and managing it all on their own which they shouldn't have been.'

The Director emphasised the isolated nature of the example they described (*'this one particular'*). They contextualised the action (*'desperately trying'*) given the seriousness of the situation. Having established there was no management oversight, the Director suggested the act of management was fulfilled by the practitioner (*'managing it all on their own'*) where they were carrying out a series of actions absent of any management oversight. These descriptions (*'desperately trying'* and *'on their own'*) encouraged a degree of sympathy with the practitioner which was reaffirmed by the Directors critique being of the practitioner being placed in that situation (*'which they shouldn't have been'*) rather than a criticism of the actions the practitioner took. The Director went on to explain while there may be circumstances in which some discretion could be exercised, doing so clearly introduced an element of risk for the social worker.

'I think practitioners can become unstuck very quickly.'

The Director emphasised the peril of discretion both in relation to the seriousness of any mistake ('become unstuck') and the pace at which this happened ('very quickly').

The Director in Council 2 explained how failures to complete pieces of work within set timescales might be justifiable and reflective of juggling the demands of the job, rather than a deliberate decision by a social worker to ignore the official position. They went on to say that generally if a decision was proposed to operate outside of an official procedure then that could only be through consultation with the line manager and then referred to a more senior manager if necessary.

The Director in Council 1 explained how at the same time as managers emphasised the importance of complying with statutory guidance, departments were also being asked to keep children and families at the centre of their work. The Director described quality as not being about the quantum of time but how time was used.

'And actually we have to work with children and families first and then work everything else around them, rather than like I say shoehorn them in.'

The Director asserted ('*actually*') the rationale for some approved deviation from the official guidance as resting on the general principle of child centred practice which was a requirement of the statutory guidance ('*we have to work*'). The Directors description of what that meant may prove harder to achieve in practice ('*work everything else*').

Applying limits to the jurisdiction of social work

Directors were asked about how social work practice, as a set of roles and responsibilities, was developed and how they saw the role of central government in this.

Government needs to continue to consult with the profession

The Director in Council 2 described how they saw the role of the social worker as being 'heavily governed by government' in a manner not seen in other professions. They went on to say that this made it important for there to be consultation with the profession as a necessary step for government in developing its statutory guidance.

Some of the consultation referred to by the Director related to reform and a number of councils were active in working on options for system reforms in particular areas of practice and they (Council 2) were in discussions with both the DfE and OFSTED on these.

The Director in Council 2 spoke about the recent consultation on powers to innovate. They said that without these councils may become motivated to demonstrate compliance with the statutory guidance but through means that may not have been what the guidance was intending to achieve. The Director illustrated with the example of assessments having to be led (but not personally completed) by a qualified social worker where the sign off may be compliant but the work carried out by other people.

'You then go from your Social Worker having the caseload of 16 to the caseload of 50 in those two different models, and I fundamentally do not think a Social Worker can be accountable for 50 cases.'

The Director demonstrated their awareness of alternative models for structuring departments but signaled in the strongest terms (*'I fundamentally'*) their own view of the weakness in such models.

OFSTED as a significant influence over the running of children's social work

The Director in Council 1 explained how a council might look to other council practices in order to learn from those who were already assessed at the inspection outcome grade the particular council was trying to get to. They went on to explain how OFSTED's position on a particular standard then became a lever in their own council to either change the council's own standard or reinforce the standard it already had.

'So it doesn't so actually no it doesn't feel like it's the government. I mean it's the government that sets the agenda for Ofsted obviously but no, it's more inspectorate I think.'

Working with other professionals provides reciprocal exchange of skills and knowledge

The Director in Council 2 referred to the need for constructive challenge between professionals as providing 'grit in the system' in which this challenge took place respectful of the different skills and specialisms of the various professionals involved.

The Director in Council 1 explained how they saw social work as broad and that while the social worker may not be an expert, the social workers nonetheless had opinions and experience to contribute. The Director went on to say this broader purpose and

perspective enabled the social worker to challenge circumstances where they had concerns even though the professional responsibility sat with another agency or individual.

'But are we the person that ultimately if you're in court giving evidence would be seen to be the expert? No. But we would expect to have an opinion.'

The Director in Council 2 explained that social workers were always likely to be thinking about their families more broadly than their statutory remit determined. The Director gave examples to illustrate where they considered this would not be appropriate such as the administration of a health intervention. The Director went on to explain the broader point that social workers championed the rights of the child and worked with other professionals to address their needs and that this was expected of them.

Section summary

RQ2c – Do the ADCS and individual Directors support specifying process and actions for social workers and the standards to which social workers must perform?

RQ2d - Do the ADCS and individual Directors support social workers applying their professional knowledge in preference to the statutory guidance where there is a conflict between the two?

The analysis reveals a combination of managerial and professional controls were found in the Directors' interview responses.

These findings evidence Directors would make use of managerial controls that enable them to test whether the obligations in the guidance were being followed by social workers. Neither Director challenged the appropriateness of the statutory guidance. The Directors described their expectation of compliance by social workers with the official procedures. The Directors did consider there may be occasions where a social worker might have a rationale for deviating from the guidance where there would be a better outcome for the child and their family and so prioritising the application of professional knowledge.

The Directors also described their role in relation to the design of the department consistent with the use of managerial diagnostic system controls. This included both councils commissioning their procedural guides through an external provider.

Unforeseen findings included the responses of the Directors that in their view social work values would be more influential than those stated by the council even though they both referred to the council statements having been developed in consultation with all council staff.

Key findings

Multiple value systems within the local authority

Both local authorities had published statements of values that served to tell the public something about the culture of the organisation and also to guide the behaviour of the staff within it (Quick and Nelson, 2013). The Directors explained staff engagement had formed part of the process of developing these values statements. Ordinarily, staff engagement

increases the embedding of these values with staff (Chambers, 2014) particularly given individual staff members carry their own values (Dose, 1997). Nonetheless, when asked about the influence of social work values on local authority social workers' day to day practice both Directors said they thought those professional values would exert a greater influence. In effect, the efforts of the local authority in any training of their staff in the values (Quick and Nelson, 2013) would not succeed in overriding the professional values of the local authority social workers although may be accommodated within or alongside them.

The need for authority and flexibility

The Directors highlighted the importance of having specific enough statutory guidance that in turn then provided the Directors with unequivocal authority to implement that guidance within their local authority. The Directors also argued for flexibility to adapt to their local situations at its broadest level, but also within individual cases at the level of most detail. Through this the Directors performed their role in the intersection between formal policy making with the local target population and context specific frontline work (Grassner and Gofen, 2018). The Directors nonetheless started from a position that their staff would conform with the guidance both in its internal arrangements (through the use of the external agency to produce standardised procedure manuals) but also how that was measured externally (by adopting the practices of other local authorities performing well in OFSTED inspections).

Ambiguity as to the purpose of the statutory guidance

The Directors understood their role in the implementation structure (Hjern and Porter, 1981) of the statutory guidance along with other local agencies and considered the professional knowledge and skills of their social workers were inherently valuable in that multi agency setting. At the same time the Directors viewed the involvement of central government in the work of the social work profession as excessive, in comparison to other professions. Government defined the purpose of the statutory guidance as being to make clear what individuals and organisations should do to help keep children safe.

9.c Local authority managers and hybrid managers

The role of values and beliefs

The managers were asked how their councils used statements about values and beliefs to guide the behaviour of their staff and what their own role was in promoting these. They were asked to comment on whether they thought social workers would be more or less influenced by their social work values than by those presented by the council. The managers were also asked how they would respond where social workers reported a conflict between their own professional values and those of the council.

Managers draw out the connections between official guidance and social work principles

The descriptions given by the managers across the two councils as to their role in relation to the promotion of values and beliefs fell in to broadly three areas.

The first was as 'sense-maker' where the term was being used here to describe the work of the managers to translate the requirements of the statutory guidance in to examples of

good practice. The manager in Council 1, for example, described the consistency of the belief that social workers shouldn't be involved in family's lives unless they needed to, with the performance management framework that set time limits for completing pieces of work with families. [RS1/4].

This recasting of procedure into practice also applied to council wide official procedures where the managers likened the new appraisal system with social work practice. The managers viewed both as empowering the individuals (the social worker and the family) in decision making about the work they needed to do to ensure the children are safe.

'And I think that's – we went into that sort of mode and now we're going back to, "No, we assess, but it's not about service provision." It's about, that won't keep a child safe, a service. So we're very much building on that continually about this is our moral purpose about working with families .' [RS2/2].

Managers explain their need to present a visible and consistent front to their staff

Managers described a second type of role, that of being role models. Manager 1 (Council 2) described this as setting the tone within the department and promoting the organisation's values and beliefs. They said they considered themselves to be a very visible leader and that staff recognised them having worked and been promoted within the council over many years. The manager went on to explain that visiting and meeting staff, who would showcase their good work, was part of the senior leadership role which also provided senior managers with insight into areas they may need to look at to do differently.

'We go out and meet with staff. So we will go out and spend time with staff. We call that showcasing good practice, so we give them the opportunity to spend time with us, showing us the work that they do so that we can understand some of the challenges they face, and

obviously so we can look at anything that we need to do differently as a senior management board.'

The Manager began one sentence (*'go out and meet'*) and then corrected themselves (*'go out and spend time'*) so changing the impression of the type of meetings the managers have with local staff. These sessions with staff were an integral part of the way the department worked and had their own name (*'We call that showcasing.'*)

Manager 2 in the same council described their role as being to help ensure the different parts of the department were aligned and working together which included cascading the departmental vision through the management structure into team briefings along with more focused aspects of practice.

'So that even now you do difficult conversations. And obviously with signs of safety, obviously that's our approach. Our whole framework. So again, in those meetings, it's about how we're utilising it. It's about developing that whole overall culture.'

The Manager (R2/2) provided personal insight to the challenges the new ways of working had presented (*'even now'*). Repetition (*'obviously'*) was then used to emphasise the self-evident nature of the situation being described. Repetition was deployed again (*'whole'*) to emphasise the expectation these changes in ways of working would be comprehensive in relation to practice (*'framework'* and *'signs of safety'*) and commitment (*'culture'*).

Manager 4 (Council 2) explained how they thought that the high level of trust between the members and officers of the council and also between the staff and the managers within the council gave staff confidence to exhibit the organisational values. The Manager went

on to describe their role as being to uphold the council's values and working to see them embedded through the organisation and day to day work.

Manager 2 (Council 2) stated the importance of the management team acting as role models, given the challenge of trying to create a common culture given the size of the department with a large workforce. They explained there was a new emphasis placed by council management on the council's values within the appraisal system which looked at these as well as performance against objectives. The Manager attributed resistance by social workers to submit evidence in support of their achievements as due to the nature of the social work profession as one which may not always be inclined to celebrate its successes. The Manager stated however it was the departmental managers' intention to encourage more celebration of success and sharing of good practice.

Managers use data on performance to monitor and follow up levels of compliance

Manager 1 (Council 2) described a third role being to enforce the official guidance and procedures. The examples the manager gave covered enforcement of procedures in relation both to the social work practice within the department as well as the council wide policy and procedures. The Manager explained how they received and reviewed performance data daily so that the manager could follow up instances where timescales had not been met. The manager described how it was the role of the service manager to find out and explain why timescales had not been met through an email circulated amongst the management group. The manager further described how team managers scrutinised performance in a weekly meeting so the team managers were able to understand the importance of meeting performance targets and to take that away then to their teams.

'Um well you respond back to the email where it's now gone in to red.... And copied in to that email are the um DCS the director um the heads of service and the team managers. So they all get the same email.'

The manager adopted the language of the performance management system ('*now gone in to red*'). They showed some hesitancy ('*um*') in explaining the range and status of the recipients.

The Manager said some of these timescales had been shortened by managers. The manager explained how this was in part because the family may already be known by the social worker and so the achievement of a shorter turnaround of a piece of work should be achievable. But also so that where the shortened timescale had been missed the longer statutory timescale could still be met.

Managers expect social workers to raise any conflicts of interest with their manager

The Manager explained that in instances where a social worker may have felt there was a conflict between their own social work values and that of the local authority then the social worker and their manager should consider why there was a conflict. Manager 2 (Council 2) explained that if the manager was still of the view that the approach to the case was right even though this was creating a conflict for the worker, then it was also part of the managers role to think how to support the social worker with the case which may even result in the case having to be reallocated.

'If there's still a conflict then it goes up a level to talk about it. But the bottom line is, if as a manager and it comes up the chain and as a senior manager that you decide, "No, we're

not taking that child into care. No, this is the way forward,” then you have to consider about if that person really feels they can’t do it, how can we support them, do you want to come off the case? Unpick it a bit more.’

The manager signalled the importance of considering the position of the social worker (*‘the bottom line’*) reverting to speech marks to illustrate how the conflict may be resolved (*‘do you want to come off the case’*).

This Manager further explained that while the individual social worker in this example was challenging the decision their supervisor thought was appropriate for the case, the social worker themselves had made threats to raise the matter with OFSTED. The Manager went on to say the social worker’s response was at odds with the culture of the department, which was to provide the social worker with support and talk through their issues.

‘...Social Workers will often come back and go, “Oh my God!” And that’s what I’m talking about. That resilience. Having that opportunity to debrief. Unwind. Unpack. Reflect. It’s absolutely important and as a manager I’ve always said to all my managers, “The one thing staff need to feel is safe. You are human. You will sometimes get the decision wrong, but that’s fine to say it’.

The manager emphasised through quotation (*‘Oh my God’*) the scale of reaction of social workers to a visit or court hearing. This was then built on through the grammatical effect of single verbs (*‘Unwind. Unpack, Reflect’*). The manager then demonstrated their personal concern through the quotation of their own conversations with their managers (*‘I’ve always said to all my managers’*).

Manager 2 (Council 2) viewed a lack of resources as problematic where the recommendation of the social worker required a level of resources that was considered by managers to be unaffordable.

Placing boundaries on knowledge-based work

Managers were asked about the way statutory guidance defined the work of social workers and how would they respond if the social worker's own professional judgement conflicted in some way with what the guidance instructed them to do. The managers were also asked how they saw their role in defining what their social workers did.

The role of managers is to maintain and disseminate official procedures

The Manager in Council 1 explained how procedures were actively promoted to staff including having these procedures on the laptops issued by the council. The manager said this was intended to maximise the likelihood social workers would ask for assistance and guidance.

Manager 1 in Council 2 stated that it was the manager's responsibility for ensuring policy and procedures were kept up to date. They explained that this included making sure staff were aware of the impact of the changes on their work. The Manager explained that training and support to new and existing staff was well organised.

'Obviously some staff are more experienced than others because they might have been early help workers, they might have been unqualified workers, they might have been youth workers. Some of them obviously have gone to uni having left school or college and they come out at 21 / 22 and don't have the life experience'.

The Manager described as self-evident ('obviously') that the support and training needs of social workers would vary with the degree and type of experience.

Manager 2 in Council 2 described the need for the team manager and practice supervisors to be consistent with each other in their message of what was officially required practice in order to ensure this practice was then applied consistently by all the team members.

Adoption of official procedures tested through quality assurance, reviews and staff's own portfolios of evidence

Managers in both councils described how quality assurance frameworks were used in their departments. The Manager in Council 1 explained how managers had to audit one case per month, where the selection of the case took place outside of the manager's control and the review of the manager would be based on a predetermined theme cutting across casework. The Manager explained that dip sampling also took place so that managers could also follow up with social workers where performance fell outside of the official standard.

'...there's safeguards in all of it so there's always somebody else looking at us and you know we've got a lot of um a QA framework um if we're not doing it somebody else is always looking at us team managers...'

The Manager's description of the quality assurance framework in the council focused on the experience ('*looking at us*') rather than the actual activities. The Manager identified themselves with a colleague group ('*us team managers*') who clearly understood there were consequences for work not done well ('*um if we're not doing it*').

Manager 2 in Council 2 explained how their quality assurance routine also included a deep dive across cases on particular themes and involved seeking feedback from social workers about their own cases.

'So you've got to get the voice, find out exactly what it's like on the ground, 'cause it's no good me coming back with a load of recommendations and things if I have not listened to the people on the ground who are dealing with this every day'.

Manager 1 in the same council explained that support to the social worker as they progressed in their role was well structured and involved the maintenance by the social worker of a portfolio of evidence about the work they were doing, which supported managers' decisions regarding their progression. The Manager further explained that staff unable to demonstrate they had met the required standard would have to remain in their current grade and build sufficient skills and knowledge to progress to the next level.

'And they keep their portfolio so their evidence and their work that they do, and again, that serves a dual purpose because that helps them, then, if the HCPC want them to evidence the work that they're doing in their continual professional development, they've got it. They're not scrambling around at the eleventh hour. So we keep them very prepared.'

The manager placed emphasis on staff as the primary actors and beneficiaries in the appraisal system (*'they keep', 'their evidence' and 'that helps them'*). The manager's justification (*'so we keep them'*) for the maintenance of the portfolio was to avoid a hurried approach (*'they're not scrambling around'*).

Manager 2 in the same council explained that they helped staff understand the guidance by linking it to social work practice which in turn motivated social workers to be compliant

with official timescales, because the social workers believed this was the right thing to do for the child and family.

'So, it's about your policies and procedures are there, but it's the culture about basic social work practice. I think the good teams where that culture is completely embedded, it's just done. Nobody has to chase or think about it.'

Onus placed on social workers to identify and raise with their managers any ambiguity in the statutory guidance

Managers from both councils described the application of management oversight on casework decisions when cases were first allocated. Generally, at this stage managers would review the case and provide initial guidance on how the case should progress. Similarly managers from both councils described how when during casework a social worker encountered an issue that they felt needed a response that might not sit within the guidance, the social worker was required to discuss this with their manager before taking that action.

The Manager in Council 1 explained how when cases were considered by the social worker ready to start formal legal proceedings, the papers relating to the case, chronology and proposed actions were presented by the social worker to an internal legal proceedings panel who would then confirm the decision to progress to court or reject for further work. The Manager further explained that the social worker and their team manager also attended this panel. The Manager stated it was not uncommon for the panel to reject the recommendation of the social worker and send the case back for further work, with the panel providing guidance as to what that further work should be.

'Every week every week you know they'll say we've done this we've done that and we now think we need to go to court and I'll say no because you haven't done this and you haven't done that you need to do all of this first and you need to fill in all of these gaps like absent father's still an issue.'

The manager used a series of repetitions ('every week every week', 'we've done this we've done that' and 'you haven't done this and you haven't done that') to describe their experiences of the panel meeting. While this was described as a panel of several people, the manager personalised the response ('and I'll say no') so conveying their own skills and experience.

Manager 2 (Council 2) described the need for a decision on a case to be defensible if not compliant with the statutory guidance. The Manager went on to explain that arriving at a decision that can be considered defensible would involve consideration of the child and the risk they may be facing and how could the outcomes for the child and their family be improved. The Manager stated there was still a clear expectation by a manager though that there would have also been a conversation between the social worker and their supervisor. The Manager gave an example of a social worker who had made a recommendation for the children to be removed and while there may not have been a disagreement on the eventual course of action, the view of the manager was the case would not succeed in court given the lack of evidence for the decision in the papers at that stage.

Manager 4 in the same council (2) explained there were instances where the need to refer a case through to a senior manager was less about confirming the recommendation but

where the case in question was of sufficient significance to refer to a more senior manager.

'So, we've had a few cases and it's been quite difficult. We've had to manage it on a case-by-case basis. But I don't think we could leave that with the Social Worker. I don't think it's fair to leave it at their door, so it's just come up to the Manager and I've agreed with the Team Manager what we've done.'

The manager explained the decision to escalate the case in this instance from the perspective of the social worker ('I don't think it's fair to leave it at their door') where the purpose of escalation was to ensure more senior manager oversight of decisions.

Controlling the way in which social workers work

The managers were asked how they saw their responsibility to ensure implementation of the statutory guidance. The managers were asked what would happen in circumstances where a social worker wanted to take a course of action that conflicted with the statutory guidance.

Managers use multiple channels to make sure social workers are familiar with official procedures

The Manager in Council 1 described a range of activities to share with social workers any new guidance including discussion and cascade through line managers as well as delivering training sessions and discussing within team meetings.

Manager 2 in Council 2 described how it was part of the managers role to ensure that the practice of social workers within the council mirrored the statutory guidance, with training, briefings and supervision part of the process. The Manager also explained that where the guidance included minimum standards of performance then existing departmental performance monitoring and management arrangements would be used along with audits to check compliance with the new standards.

The Manager in Council 1 also described the role of the operational manager to ensure statutory guidance is implemented.

'obviously when you're inadequate performance is the top thing to do and they need answers for everything.'

The manager presented as self-evident (*'obviously'*) that the focus the council needed to place on improving performance was driven by a poor judgement in an OFSTED inspection. The actions of the managers and all staff (*'top thing to do'*) were linked directly to performance improvement.

The Manager further explained that improvements in performance had been achieved. The Manager explained how the management team were now discussing with the Director the possibility of changing the intensity of performance targeting so that other aspects of practice could be addressed.

'And we're trying to say to ...its okay that supervision dips because there's a holiday or somebody's been away or somebody's been sick its okay for that to happen.'

Manager 1 in Council 2 described what they thought was the positive motivation of social workers wanting to do a good job and that the way in which the council supported social workers reduced the likelihood of social workers resisting official procedures. The Manager went on to explain this support included ensuring staff were involved in training about changes to procedures well ahead of the changes being introduced. The Manager described how they thought resistance to official procedures may be connected to a lack of knowledge about or confidence in practicing new work.

Managers assess the potential for resistance by social workers as low

The Manager (Council 1) described as rare any situation where a social worker was resisting the procedures and looking to exercise discretion. The Manager contrasted this to their own experience as a social worker where disagreements may have been more common, later on describing social work as previously having been more '*militant*'. The Manager described the lack of challenge by '*today's social workers*' as being partially explained by their being younger and less equipped to do so. The Manager contrasted this with two experienced social workers who had taken over cases left by other social workers and who had challenged the work so far and agreed with the Manager that they would do their own (new) assessments.

Manager 1 in Council 2 explained there was scope for creativity of social work practice in the way in which compliance was achieved through the processes the council had put in place. They gave the example of developing services to formalise kinship care arrangements that ensured a safe assessment of suitability was made but in the context of

the family members being considered as carers. This included the training and support for the carers themselves.

'So again, we're working within the regulations, we're working within the guidance, we're working within the legislation. So we're not breaching anything. But we're tweaking what we need to do and we're doing it differently. So I think, you know, that, I think, is probably a good example.'

The manager reiterated the compliance of their council (*'So again'*) and continued through repetition (*'we're working within'*) to both positively frame the compliance as well as deny any non-compliance (*'we're not breaching anything'*).

The Manager went on to explain how the changing nature of the problems being faced in families and the increasing complexity of risks and relationships could create a situation where guidance was trying to be applied to circumstances it may never have been intended to fit.

The Manager then went on to explain the council had recently implemented a new electronic case management system where some of the templates within the system hadn't felt to social workers as easy to relate to practice. The Manager said they would want to understand why the templates didn't work for the staff and then set about making changes.

Managers see their role to authorise the use of discretion

Manager 1 (Council 2) explained how the exercise of discretion by a social worker was possible within the statutory guidance but supervision and management oversight were

there to ensure that the work and the social worker themselves were safe in the exercise of that discretion. The Manager went on to explain that a social worker should feel supported by the council to come away from an interview with a family without making a decision, so the social worker would then have the opportunity to talk through with their manager rather than feeling under pressure to make a decision on the spot.

Manager 4 in Council 2 explained how the emphasis the manager placed on compliance may depend on the nature of the guidance and the extent to which it was perceived to be the highest priority in the context of many other aspects of statutory guidance along with frontline delivery pressures. They went on to explain this was also partly driven by the structures of the department where if there were specialist teams then compliance with the relevant specialist guidance was a priority for that team manager and their staff compared to a more generalist team for whom knowledge of that specialist guidance may have less direct relevance.

Manager 2 (Council 2) explained the need to help the managers to understand that their role was not to do the work for the social worker but to work with the social workers to understand what elements of the social worker's work needed to change and how, and then enabling the social worker to make those changes and move on.

'I talk a lot about getting on the balcony. "You need to get on that balcony. [inaudible 0:49:15.6] balcony, come down on the dancefloor, show them what the moves like, but you need to be back on that balcony. If you stay on the dancefloor, you can't see how those moves are working." I use that an awful lot.'

The Manager used the analogy of the balcony and dancefloor (Heifetz and Linsky, 2002) frequently in their discussions with their managers (although without reference to the source, added by the researcher).

Ambiguity in the role of systems to check social workers' compliance

Manager 4 in Council 2 explained their dilemma as to whether the purpose of audits and quality assurance work was testing compliance with the statutory guidance or the quality and therefore impact of the work on the child and their family. The Manager described a case where work had been completed with a family, all in accordance with the statutory guidance but where there was a recurrence of the same issue within the family a couple of years later.

'The best will in the world, we'd followed that statutory guidance but it didn't really help the child at all.'

Applying limits to the jurisdiction of social work

Managers were asked about how social work practice, as a set of roles and responsibilities, was developed. Managers were asked the extent to which they thought the statutory guidance was consistent with the legal remit of social work but also what would happen when fulfilment of that remit was at risk through resource constraints. The managers were also asked whether there were opportunities to try and push the role of social workers beyond the legislative remit.

Managers view defining the remit essential but doesn't prevent multiple interpretations

Manager 4 in Council 2 explained how they felt the existing remit for social workers was open to interpretation by other agencies resulting in social workers often being asked to get involved in activities or decisions they were not officially or formally required to. The

Manager went on to explain this wider interpretation of the role of the social worker was also thought to be evidenced in the degree of variation in practice between different councils regionally and nationally, particularly to definitions of thresholds. Notwithstanding, the Manager 4 said that Working Together guidance was very clear in specifying the actions of the social worker, manager and other professionals.

Manager 1 in Council 1 also said the remit of the social worker was considered by those outside of the profession to be very broad to the extent social workers were often being drawn in or kept involved with families where the social worker's view was that the social work responsibility had concluded. The Manager went on to explain that although attempts by other professionals to pass work over to social workers was resisted by social work managers, the process of resisting was itself a draw on limited resources.

'...I think other agencies think social work is everything and social workers should do everything.'

Manager 1 in council 2 explained their disappointment that the government had not pursued the proposed powers to innovate saying these would have provided an opportunity to do the social work differently. Had the powers been introduced, the Manager went on to say, then in their view the social workers would have welcomed a review of the level of bureaucracy associated with the current statutory guidance, both in terms of its prescriptive case recording and also timescales for completion of pieces of work that may not always fit with the needs of the family.

Manager 1 in Council 1 explained there was consistency between the requirements of statutory guidance and the legislation that sits behind it. They went on to say how the statutory guidance was implemented differed between councils, for example, where another council had decided to set up dedicated specialist teams to work with children with disabilities or children who have been trafficked. The Manager explained that generally they didn't consider government guidance was placing obligations on councils inconsistent with the legislative framework under which the council operated.

Meeting statutory duties was paramount whatever resource implications

Manager 1 in Council 2 did not consider resource constraints would prevent the fulfilment by the council of its statutory responsibilities. The Manager went on to explain that where resources were limited within the department then the matter would be raised with the council leadership. Generally though, the Manager said it was unlikely there would be a situation where the statutory duty could not be met. The Manager went on to say they considered the costs of not meeting a statutory responsibility would be higher than finding the resource internally.

The Manager in Council 1 explained the council's local budgetary constraints were not understood by the court who made demands for the provision of services that the council then had to implement and thereby fund.

'So they come out of court with this great big long list and we say no we can't do that and they say you've been ordered to.'

The manager used storytelling (*'come out of court'*) and imagery (*'great big long list'*) to illustrate how court proceedings placed obligations on the council despite efforts to resist this (*'no we can't do that'* and *'you've been ordered to'*).

The Manager went on to explain how the council looked to different ways to deliver court ordered activities at lower cost where possible, for example by bringing back in house some specialist assessments through training staff to do these. The Manager explained that while there were opportunities to try and influence the court such as through the Local Family Justice Board, they described the overall situation as one of a lack of consistency of view by the other agencies about the appropriateness of what was being asked of the council.

'So it's it's hard to get everybody singing from the same song sheet and realising that actually we don't have that money to spend. So, it's a hard place to be.'

Managers view as positive the opportunities that arise from participating in developments within and across the sector

Manager 1 in Council 2 explained how their own council provided peer support for other councils which also provided opportunities for staff to meet and work with colleagues in other councils. They went on to explain that sector led improvement was promoted by the council's Director including collaboration at regional level on developing and testing self evaluation frameworks. They said supporting this collaborative work across the sector nonetheless had to be managed alongside the day to day work.

RQ2a – Do the managers with social work qualifications expect the social workers to comply with the statutory guidance but also apply their professional knowledge where there is a conflict between the guidance and the social worker’s own view?

The analysis reveals a combination of references to both managerial and professional controls were found in the managers’ interview responses. This is evidenced through managers responses that they do see their role as ensuring compliance with the statutory guidance (reinforcement of managerial boundary controls). The managers also describe how they reinterpret elements of the guidance to present to their social workers as good practice (reinforcement of professional knowledge control). The managers also describe the use of monitoring systems checking compliance with aspects of the statutory guidance. The managers also describe systems to assure themselves of the quality of the work of the social workers and exploration of thematic issues which again combine the use of managerial and professional controls. Where in the view of the social worker there appears a conflict with official guidance then the referral of the issue to senior managers enables engagement in a debate on the position of that piece of official guidance set against the application of professional knowledge to the situation. Managers describe the override of the procedure where in the interests of the family.

The managers describe the design and implementation of a number of routes to introduce and embed the official procedures with social workers (reinforcing the use of managerial diagnostic controls). It was also expected that this group of managers who were themselves professionally qualified would support the use of professional control over the way in which work was done. This is not the finding here to the extent the managers express a low expectation of challenge to the procedures even though those procedures are defining the way in which social workers should do their work. The managers refer

again to the need for social workers to raise any issues with their manager but not that the social workers have any discretion of their own to change the way in which they work. As indicated earlier however, the managers do anticipate and engage with social workers challenging a decision on the basis of the social worker's professional judgement.

The importance placed by the managers on the use of organisational and professional values had not been expected. The managers describe their responsibilities and activities to promote the values of the council. They also acknowledge the presence of social work values in their social workers' practice with an expectation of dialogue between manager and practitioner where council and social work values appear to the social worker to be in conflict. Managers from both councils also describe how they use the language of professional values to explain some of the requirements of the statutory guidance.

Key findings

Values as leverage toward management goals

The managers described twin roles for values within their organisations. As with the findings from the interviews with Directors, the managers had the same understanding of the influence broader council wide official values can have on employee behaviour (Quick and Nelson, 2013) although the managers went further in volunteering an expectation that as managers they were expected to act as role models to their own staff (James and Lahti, 2011). At the same time however, the managers described the ways in which they could build on the strong value base of professional social work (Evetts, 2011) by setting the requirements of the statutory guidance in the context of those professional values. The

managers clearly saw this appeal to professional values as justification for compliance with official procedures.

Narrowing the opportunities for variations in responses

The managers described the ways in which they sought to ensure the work of the department was compliant with the statutory guidance, in particular not only ways that targeted the work of the social workers themselves (including audits and quality assurance arrangements). The managers also saw the need to follow the guidance as a means of ensuring consistency of the approach of all the managers themselves in their management of their social workers. This hierarchy of compliance thus combined elements of self-regulation by the social workers in their approach to compliance in their case work with managerial oversight of that work narrowing the instances of non-compliance and increasing the ability of management to detect where work was outside of the statutory guidance. The statutory guidance itself thus performed an important role in standardising the activities of the department (Mintzberg, 1979).

Managing the expectations of external partners

The Managers were positive in their description of the skills and experience their social workers were able to offer in their work with other agencies, but that the other agencies often also had expectations that the role of the social worker was broader than that based on the Managers' definition of their role. While the Managers may generally have been able to manage these expectations where another agency had sought to impose an obligation on the local authority, the exception to this was the court, who did have the power to make an order the local authority would be obligated to fulfill. The efforts

Managers made to manage expectations reflect a strategy (Simons, 1995) to ensure the demands placed on the local authority can be accommodated within both the resources available to it and the requirements of the statutory guidance.

Conclusion

The view of management as to how children's social work is controlled has been explored through analysis of the responses to the guidance made by the association of Directors as well as through interviews with directors and managers in the research sites. Through discussion of findings in Chapter 12 the analysis here is compared with the view of central government (Chapter 8) and social workers (Chapters 10 and 11).

Chapter 10: The Profession's Response

This chapter explores the views of social workers through their professional body as to the way children's social work is controlled, through a content analysis of the responses by BASW to the statutory guidance.

The consultation responses

An analysis was conducted on the consultation responses of BASW to three consecutive revisions of the statutory guidance, Working Together to Safeguard Children. The three revisions of the statutory guidance were all supported by consultation activities, described in Chapter 9 above.

Coding Results

The range and frequency of codes used in the coding of the three consultation responses guidance document are set out in the table below. The full list of codes and numbers of references is contained in Appendix G. Out of a total of 46 coded references, 9 of these were categorised as managerial control and 37 were categorised as professional controls.

Type of Control	Number of References
Professional control:	
• Knowledge	27
• Task	2
• Ideology	4
• Market	4
Total	37
Managerial control:	
• Boundary	9
• Diagnostic	-
• Belief	-
• Interactive	-
Total	9

Table F – Results of coding the BASW consultation responses

Utilisation of controls

RQ2b – Does BASW promote the values of social work and the professional knowledge of social workers?

The analysis of the consultation responses showed the use of professional control codes in relation to promoting social work values (ideology) and the professional knowledge of social workers (knowledge). This was expected. In addition, codes relating to social workers having control over the way they work (task) and also exercising some control over who is officially permitted to carry out certain social work tasks (market) were also

used. These had not been expected. The results of the coding also showed the use of boundary controls (managerial controls) which again had not been expected.

The references to managerial controls had not been expected given BASW's lack of direct control over social work. The themes that emerged from the items coded against boundary controls echo some of the criticism from the ADCS about the quality of the guidance as drafted in some places. These include criticisms regarding its length but at the same time requests not to reduce the content in some areas. For example:

“Working Together’ is becoming a cumbersome and unwieldy document and would benefit from being divided into two distinct documents’

‘Whilst we would also agree that there is always a need to keep statutory guidance under scrutiny and revise it as our awareness and knowledge of child abuse increases – i.e. the Government has just launched an ‘Action Plan on Witchcraft Based Child Abuse’, we question the rationale of dispensing with huge chunks of it.’

BASW used language that not only supported their argument regarding the length of the guidance but also suggested the guidance may be detrimental for that (*‘cumbersome and unwieldy’*). They then recommended a solution to this problem and asserted their confidence in it (*‘would benefit’*). They qualified their support to the general principle put forward in the guidance (*‘Whilst we would agree’*) as they then formulated their qualification as a question to the reason (*‘we question the rationale’*) rather than an outright objection to the proposal.

BASW also criticised the guidance for being too focused on the social work role and less about the multi-agency aspects of the work. For example:

'Firstly, it assumes that safeguarding statutory guidance is almost exclusively the domain of social workers when patently that is not the case; from its inception some twenty years ago, the purpose of Working Together was to improve the practice of key agencies with safeguarding responsibilities so that responses to child abuse would be better co-ordinated.'

BASW attributed an assumption underlying the guidance, but not who was making it (*'it assumes that'*). Despite not attaching the assumption to anyone, BASW then challenged the credibility of the assumption (*'patently that is not the case'*). The lack of credibility was further argued by reference to the history of the guidance (*'from its inception some twenty years ago'*) and in so doing BASW were able to display their own knowledge of the work and so their own credibility in making the challenge.

BASW also made comments, based on feedback from social workers, that the guidance was used as a document to refer to when they needed to, but was also used as a lever when other agencies were not fulfilling their own responsibilities. For example:

'When asked if they perceived Working Together to be a hindrance or a help, they described it as the latter arguing that they could use it to explain and justify their actions when challenged by other agencies and referrers. Equally, if an agency was reticent in fulfilling its safeguarding role, social workers were able to refer them to the guidance stipulating that they had a responsibility to act. In this respect, social workers found the guidance empowering and helped them to feel confident about their decision-making and professional judgements.'

BASW described the responses of social workers to an apparently narrow and binary choice (*'a hindrance or a help'*). However, the response of the social workers confirmed the guidance was a help (*described it as the latter'*) and were reported as saying it was so in relation to definition of boundaries (*'explain and justify their actions when challenged by*

others) although it was not clear whether they said they actually did (*'they could use it'*). BASW then reported the social workers found the guidance useful beyond definition of boundaries (*'helped them to feel confidence about their decision making and professional judgements'*). BASW also reported the guidance was going beyond being useful (*'empowering'*).

BASW challenged the extent to which the statutory guidance gave adequate focus to promoting the rights of children and families or, what BASW described, as the shared commitment of its membership towards supporting principles leading to good outcomes for children. In relation to the BASW and international definitions of social work, these challenges were consistent with these two statements. For example:

'This chapter reads very much as 'what we do to children and families'. A proper concept of 'partnership' would identify how children's rights, the empowerment of adults as parents and carers and the role of the community have a major impact on achieving change for children. Instead the chapter often reads as a publicity leaflet for the benefit of government policies. (i.e. 'Implementing government policies on working with children and families').'

'BASW members share a collective commitment to those values and principles that will secure the best possible outcomes for children and young people, adults, families and communities.'

The statement BASW makes about the chapter was ambiguous. While it could have been a reflection on current practice (*'what we do to children and families'*) in this context it was more likely a criticism of the drafting of the guidance. The emphasis here was on the 'do to' but BASW also made no distinction between their organisation and the professionals in practice ('what we do'). BASW distanced themselves (*'the chapter often reads'*) from their assertion about the motivation behind the guidance (*'publicity leaflet for the benefit of government policies'*). Their statement about the commitment of their members (*'BASW*

members share a collective commitment’) contrasted with their allegation regarding the motivation of government.

BASW described the challenges social workers face in relation to delivering effective safeguarding. While the previous comments related to the positive articulation of the value of the profession, the next comments pointed to the dilemma professional social workers faced when trying to practice in accordance with the values of their profession but within a set of circumstances that made that incredibly difficult.

‘Sadly, it is our contention that the issues blighting good practice are much broader and wider than the size of the statutory guidance. BASW conducted a survey of its members earlier this year called ‘The State of Social Work’ (http://cdn.basw.co.uk/upload/basw_23651-3.pdf) which was published in May 2012 and received 1,100 responses. The main issues that came up were high caseloads, excessive administration demands as backroom support was being cut, inadequate supervision, high vacancy rates, a bullying culture and low morale.’

The comment BASW made regarding the size of the issues as they saw them in relation to that of the guidance was ambiguous. On the one hand, BASW may have been using the size of the guidance as a comparison to the wider issues. More likely in this context, BASW were suggesting that the size of the guidance was irrelevant as the real issues were different and more important. BASW presented the authority underpinning their comments by reference to their survey.

Body of knowledge was the area of control with the greatest number of coded references across the consultation responses and that BASW would make use of these controls was expected. The comments by BASW coded to this control covered a range of areas. While all fell within the general theme of challenging and suggesting ways to improve the

guidance for use by social workers and other professionals there were three areas where there were a number of similar comments. The first of these related to challenges by BASW about the extent to which the proposed guidance adequately addressed some specialist areas of social work practice. The second, where BASW saw a lack of connection to other policy areas. For example:

'Neglect should be covered in more detail. Disability is not covered in sufficient detail.'

'..is not an adequate reference to CAF and indeed the document as a whole has very little on CAF. If CAF is to continue to be a central plank of social policy towards intervention in the lives of children and families this is an omission because safeguarding is not just about child protection it is also about early intervention to prevent problems building.'

BASW criticised the guidance in two specific areas ('*Neglect*' and '*Disability*') but chose different language ('*more*' and '*sufficient*'). Where '*more*' denoted a general deficit, '*sufficient*' indicated BASW had some idea of what a fuller piece of guidance in that area would be, again, signalling their own understanding of the work. The 'If' in relation to CAF was rhetorical although the overall statement was also ambiguous. If BASW were supportive of CAF for the reasons stated then the statement was critical but necessary in order to correct the omission. If BASW were not supportive of CAF then the reference to 'central plank of social policy' was ironic.

The third area of challenge related to the status of the principles of the statutory guidance to other sectors and providers that appeared to be being drawn in to the audience for this statutory guidance but without any clear statement that those other bodies were required to apply the principles of the Working Together guidance and framework. For example:

‘..the statement that “Households in financial difficulty, at risk of repossession and threatened with homelessness should seek advice from their lender in the first instance” implies that these institutions should be aware of the principles of ‘Working Together’.’

‘..whilst it is helpful to have reference to the work and recommendations of the Social Work Taskforce, it is not clear if WT is now saying that such principles should be applied to the wider set of agencies and practitioners that deliver safeguarding services to children.’

‘Sport and cultural services occupy an ambiguous position in the panoply of services for children and families. Due to re-organisations over the years they are now delivered by a range of organisations, 3rd sector, private, local authority etc with further regulation and overview by sports governing bodies. This section does not recognise the issues faced by LSCBs in engaging with such bodies.’

BASW provided qualified support (*‘whilst it is helpful’*) to the guidance by opening with a positive statement but then continued to challenge (*‘it is not clear’*). While BASW did not detail the issues of context for LSCBs, the reference to ‘the issues’ signalled that BASW was aware of them, again to display the knowledge and understanding of BASW and by implication, which the government did not.

BASW also made comments in relation to the way in which the guidance could be used in support of the delivery of children’s social work. BASW described the importance of culture and leadership in supporting the delivery of best practice. They also viewed one of the benefits of the guidance as being to achieve some national consistency in services.

‘Best practice will not happen just because training has taken place. It is also about the culture of practice and the leadership shown on this issue throughout the organisations and across the LSCB. ‘Working Together’ should reflect this.’

‘...we think it is right that there are some common standards around what constitutes a child in need or at risk of significant harm so that there is a much greater consistency in approach by children’s services across the country.’

BASW suggested (*'should reflect'*) the guidance needed to reflect how factors beyond training enabled the delivery of best practice, although BASW did not explicitly state the guidance was asserting training alone would give rise to best practice. Rather they implied that this was the case in how they set out that best practice did not follow training alone (*'just because'*).

Finally, in relation to controls over the body of knowledge, BASW noted the complexity of child protection social work and how this can be overlooked during serious case reviews.

'It is important to point out that when child abuse tragedies occur there is a tendency to ask why things were missed with of course, the benefit of hindsight and all the pieces of the jigsaw or at least, a great number of them. Our retort is that child protection is a complex activity that cannot simply be reduced to fit a linear model of understanding and so employing a 'minimalist' approach to statutory guidance does not make sense in this context.'

BASW reinforced their familiarity with the issues (*'with of course, the benefit of hindsight'*) including through metaphor to describe the review process (*'pieces of the jigsaw'*). BASW indicated this was a topic on which they had previously commented (*'Our retort'*) and had an established position. BASW provided no information about what they meant by a *'linear model of understanding'* other than it being linked with the same criticisms of hindsight bias. BASW argued that statutory guidance should not be overly reduced (*'minimalist approach'*) but it was unclear what aspects of guidance provided the most support to professionals, if the opposite of minimalist was not simply volume.

BASW used their consultation response to refer to the recent work by Professor Munro who conducted a review of social work on behalf of the government. This review made

recommendations including the need to enable social workers to exercise more professional judgement, free from unnecessary bureaucracy. BASW endorsed this and highlighted the ongoing problems social workers faced in a number of other government mandated areas including the Integrated Children's Services electronic case record system, the OFSTED inspection framework and the setting of key performance measures. These were viewed as barriers to good practice and represented a set of measures that were not aligned with good social work practice.

'This certainly resonates with the aspirations of BASW members who feel constrained and frustrated by the obstacles that they are presented with in the current system that are sadly not conducive to the promotion of a confident, competent and well supported workforce.'

'This has undoubtedly led to a 'dumbing down' of professional practice as social workers are required to complete numerous, often unintelligible forms that do not allow social workers to tell the child's story as the exemplars restrict the flow of information by rigidly compartmentalising aspects of a child's life.'

BASW identified the consistency of the views of Professor Munro with that of their members (*'This certainly resonates with'*) and so layed claim on behalf of its members to the same profile and legitimacy of the recommendations of the Munro review. BASW used metaphors (*'obstacles'*) and the passive voice (*'presented with'*) to emphasise the negative impact of the system suggesting additional effort was then needed by social workers to do their work. In describing the impact of the system on their members, BASW avoided a direct assertion of the negative impact but rather pointed out these were unhelpful (*'sadly not conducive'*). BASW presented the negative impact, through a metaphor (*'dumbing down'*) of the system as irrefutable (*'undoubtedly'*). BASW's description of the specific issues faced included both volume and poor design (*'numerous, often unintelligible forms'*) although both were generalisations. BASW then attributed problems with the capture of information to these poorly designed forms (*'exemplars restrict the flow of information'*)

rather than the recording of that information and that further they resulted in the 'compartmentalising of aspects of a child's life' where again, it was not the life itself that was affected but rather the recording of information.

A number of responses were given on the matter of skills and experience of those being identified in the statutory guidance document at consultation stage as taking on or retaining responsibilities for particular actions or decisions. These included a challenge by BASW as to whether the identified professional within the guidance would have the skills to meet the requirement. For example:

"Whilst we can understand some of the logic for arguing for a single point of contact in terms of the referral process, concerns have been raised by our members that by dispensing with the LADO role in these circumstances there is a risk that an important check and balance is removed from the system given that a LADO is a senior post usually occupied by an experienced child protection social worker with specialist knowledge whose brief is to quality assure. "

Similarly, BASW expressed their resistance to additional responsibilities being passed to its members on the grounds of existing workload and capacity. For example:

'Those working at the forefront of child protection services are likely to need additional training to undertake this task and in the current climate, this could feel quite burdensome given that the system is very much under pressure and so the focus on these issues subsequently could become a lot weaker.'

Conclusion

Across the three consultation responses, BASW challenged using both managerial and professional control arguments. Similarly to the ADCS, BASW highlighted areas where the proposed guidance was not sufficiently clear about roles and responsibilities. Unlike the

ADCS however, BASW challenged whether the guidance adequately reflected the values and principles underlying work with children and their families and in particular, children's rights. BASW highlighted areas of specialist social work practice that were not well enough addressed in the draft guidance. They also set out the case for balancing the need for guidance to give clarity and a consistency of practice across councils, allowing social workers to arrive at their professional judgements in the context of complex work and free of unnecessary bureaucracy.

Chapter 11: Social Workers

The analysis of the interviews with social workers reported on here examines how much control social workers believed they had over their frontline social work practice with children and their families. Research question 3 is concerned with how social workers react to the controlling influences of central government and managers. Sub section 11b reports on the examples presented by social workers during their interviews of the challenges of casework in the context of the statutory guidance. Sub section 11c reports on the results of a survey of social workers of their experiences of the impact of managerial and professional control on their day to day work.

11a. The role of the values of the social work profession and the local authority on social workers' practice

BASW has defined three values that its members are expected to promote and practice (social justice, human rights and professional integrity). This analysis of social workers responses examines the extent to which values do influence their day to day practice of social work and how the social workers define these values for themselves.

Sympathetic exercise of power

Social Worker (RS1/1) had reflected on their years of experience to come to show sympathy for families becoming involved with social services, as well as possibly a number of other agencies. The Social Worker (RS1/1) took care to confirm they would not

inappropriately collude with the family as a result of the Social Workers sympathy. The Social Worker (RS1/1) stated that they would very open and honest with the family.

'And um I suppose over the years it's about also you know you're dealing with people who already feel as though they've been got at and that the authorities are clamping down on them.' [RS1/1].

Social Worker (RS1/2) described wanting the best for the children they were working with in the same way as the Social Worker would want for their own children. Social Worker (RS1/2) explained personal values, such as political views, were not appropriate for a social worker to bring into conversation with families.

Social Worker (RS1/5) explained how social workers needed to keep in check their personal values where those personal values conflicted with the values underpinning social work practice. Social Worker (RS1/5) gave an example of when they had been supervising an ASYE social worker. The ASYE social worker experienced a conflict between with their own personal beliefs about the role and obligations of the family and the intervention arising from the ASYE social worker's professional assessment. Social Worker (RS1/5) said this was a conflict for which the ASYE social worker was not prepared, in common with other AYSE and student social workers.

The Social Worker (RS1/5) stated it was the nature of social work that social workers would experience conflicts between their own personal and professional values. The Social Worker (RS1/5) believed practicing without social work values was undermining of practice itself.

'Those values always sit at the forefront of the work that I do. Otherwise I might as well not do it. Can conflict with other people's values, I will say that. That's just the way social work is.' [RS1/5].

Social Worker (RS2/5) described how they applied the value of respect in their work with families, as well as being clear with the family why the Social Worker was involved and what the Social Worker was trying to achieve with the family. The Social Worker (RS2/5) described their approach being one of working in partnership with the family rather than the Social Worker imposing their own expectations on the family. While this social worker (RS2/5) acknowledged the need to follow official policy and procedures, the Social Worker (RS2/5) also described themselves as *'old school'* which the Social Worker described as keeping the child at the forefront of their mind when the Social Worker was determining which course of action to take while at the same time meeting the requirements of the official policy and procedures.

Social Worker (RS2/7) described the difficulty of applying professional values when working with hostile families. The Social Worker (RS2/7) described how talking through these difficulties with colleagues or ad hoc supervision between the Social Worker and their supervisor could generate additional ideas and suggestions about how to take a case forward.

'I'd like to say they are embedded but there are times where you have to challenge yourself, particularly with hostile families. It's about being open and honest with them but also trying to get them to engage with you as well. So from the offset it's about building that relationship and relationship base but ensuring, amongst that, you're being honest about the worries and trying to get them onboard'. [RS2/7].

The Social Worker (RS2/7) made a number of references to building relationships with the family but also the effort required to achieve that (*'trying to get them to engage'* and *'trying to get them on board'*).

Social Worker (RS2/6) described the potential conflict of values where a case had been referred to a social worker warranting immediate protective action. The Social Worker (RS2/6) questioned how a social worker would be able to reconcile immediate protective action with social work values of collaboration and empowerment.

'It's quite hard to go into a family and say, "We want to work together and we want to be really supportive and to be really non-oppressive," whilst also saying, "Hi, I'm here with the police and we've got a worry." But, again, that is the nature of the job and that is a significant part of those values, the protection and the safeguarding; the child welfare is paramount above all else.' [RS2/6].

A number of social workers from both councils confirmed they were aware of the statements the councils had put out about broad council wide official values. Social Worker (RS2/5) described how social work was a frontline facing service and so the Social Worker was very clear they were a representative of the council and needed to be professional when meeting members of the public (*'introducing yourself, showing your id'*) and acting in a manner consistent with the official council values.

Social workers considered social work values to be of greater significance to their work than the official council values published by their employers. A number of social workers tried but were unable to recall the council values in the way they had been able to recall social work values. The social workers had however reflected on the official council values

sufficiently to form a view the official council values were consistent with social work values.

Effect of central government funding cuts

The subject of central government funding had not been raised by the researcher explicitly in any interview questions but was a subject volunteered by a number of social workers as a cause of conflict for the social workers in being able to work in accordance with their social work values. While the social workers believed a lack of adequate central government funding for social work in their council limited how much time the social workers had to spend on their cases, the social workers weren't however suggesting their professional decision making was compromised as a consequence. While the work of the social workers may not be of the quality they would like, none of the social workers ventured their decisions may actually have been unsafe in terms of protecting children.

Social Worker (RS1/3) believed high workloads compromised their ability to practice social work values and so do their best for their families. The Social Worker (RS1/3) had calculated the amount of time available within the working week to spend on each case which the Social Worker felt was not enough. The Social Worker explained they would have to work excessive hours trying to do their best for all the families on their caseload which the Social Worker was not prepared to do. The Social Worker (RS1/3) said they had reached the conclusion that the fault was with the system and not with themselves.

'I have to come to terms with the fact that its not my fault. It's the system we work in and you've just got to do the bare bones of what you can get by.' [RS1/3].

Social Worker (RS1/3) described how competing demands had led the Social Worker to develop practices to be able to concentrate on particular pieces of work by ignoring the phone which the Social Worker felt was disrespectful but at the same time a necessary technique to be able to tackle the most urgent work.

'And I'll ring them later when I'm done I've finished doing this. You think that person's rung me because they want something dealt with and they want to talk to me and I'm having to just sort of phase it out and think I will deal with that eventually but I can't do it now. And I think if it's really really urgent they'll come through the switchboard and they'll get a message to me. If it's life and death situation a message will get to me.' [RS1/3].

Referring to and reflecting with the social worker's supervisor

A number of social workers linked practicing social work values with reflection and the importance of being able to reflect most often with their supervisor but also with colleagues. Social Worker (RS2/6) found this reflection helpful for example to resolve a conflict within the case.

'But, again, it is a value issue because it's about a family's right to say yes or no to something and the conflicts that can create in "Well but I need to do my assessment and I need this," but at the end of the day if they are lawfully allowed to consent and it's not causing further issues they can say no and you have to accept that as the value, and that's where those sort of professional demands conflict with the values.' [RS2/6].

Social Worker (RS2/7) explained how the strength of the relationship between the social worker and their line manager was key to how potential conflicts of values could be aired

by the social worker and discussed and in particular, how judgemental the manager might be perceived by the social worker to be. The Social Worker (RS2/7) explained that where the relationship with the manager in the past had not been strong then the peer group and team colleagues became more important as a resource for the social worker to have those conversations with. The Social Worker (RS2/7) also highlighted that multi agency working presented the social worker with opportunities to get input from both internal and external sources.

Social Worker (RS2/9) had carried out a home visit on behalf of another colleague but to a family who were known to the Social Worker (RS2/9). The conditions of the home were such that the Social Worker doubted the impact they had been able to make with the family through their previous involvement. The Social Worker (RS2/9) had reflected on this and reaffirmed their professional goals to keep the children and family together where safe to do so and that changing the parents' lives wasn't always possible.

'It does yes, yes. And you do a lot of ... well I do a lot of reflection in this job. You're always reflecting and reflecting what could I have done different, was that the right thing to do? That's a massive part of the job, yes'. [RS2/9].

The extent to which the social workers felt valued and supported had a bearing on their confidence in their work. Social Worker (RS1/5) described the council as one where there was a focus on the safety of the social worker which in turn impacted on the Social Worker's confidence and sense of support in carrying out difficult work. The supportive environment of the council also made the social worker feel safe in their work where safety in this context included the Social Worker's own experience that their views were taken into account in the formal case decision-making processes and meetings. The Social

Worker (RS1/5) contrasted this with their experience in other local authorities where the focus of managers on meeting performance targets came at the expense of the work that could/should have been done with families. The Social Worker (RS1/5) described being allocated cases while working at another council based on the social workers physical characteristics including gender. The Social Worker (RS1/5) contrasted this with the current council where the Social Worker believed managers understood the skills and experience of the social workers they managed and allocated cases based on those skills and experience.

Social Worker (RS2/7) drew confidence from applying the standards of work set out by the local authority. The Social Worker believed the council's managers communicated its high expectations of the standards of work required of staff which gave the Social Worker confidence their own work was of good quality. The Social Worker (RS2/7) believed part of the building of that confidence was also the use of serious case reviews to reflect on the local procedures and implement changes as needed. Seeing this happen seemed to provide assurance to the social workers that the risk of something happening within their employing local authority was being actively reduced by the arrangements managers had put in place.

11b. Placing boundaries on knowledge-based work

Guidance as an invisible hand

Social Worker (RS2/5) described '*knowing in their head*' what they needed to do when preparing for the first meeting with a family. The Social Worker attributed this knowledge to

their own experience but the Social Worker also made use of official information sheets with the family, which explained the council services the family were currently using and what was likely to happen next. The Social Worker (RS2/5) suggested the use by social workers of reflective practice embedded official procedures into day to day practice such that the social worker may no longer be deliberately looking to the guidance in their decision making.

Social Worker (RS2/6) described statutory guidance as '*an invisible hand*' in as much as the Social Worker believed everything they did fitted within that guidance and that the contents of the guidance were generally embedded in the Social Worker's day to day work and was also covered in training within the department. The Social Worker (RS2/6) would refer to the guidance and also to the Social Worker's manager when looking to clarify queries, for example whether the Social Worker had the necessary authority to share information and also when the Social Worker thought it necessary to encourage the exercise of official roles and responsibilities by other agencies.

Compliance leading to excess of contact

Social Workers (RS2/5 and RS1/2) believed government guidance was visible and actively being followed within their employing council's, for example by social workers being required to follow assessment checklists and related official forms. The computerised case management system in use within one of the council's also reinforced the steps of the official procedures (Social Worker RS2/5).

'That's standard. That's just bog standard. That's the first you know check the home. Well, first of all meet the child if at all possible. That's the best thing. See what's what. And then the the next'll be checking who who's providing care. I mean, that's your focal point isn't it and what impact on the and whatever the contact. So, there's a process. I suppose when you do it day in day out you don't even think I just automatically do it.' [RS2/5].

Social Workers (RS1/6 and RS1/3) explained the application by social workers of the statutory guidance could also come at the expense of the social worker using their common sense. They gave the example of frequency of visits to see children where social workers would continue to visit in accordance with the official guidance even where in the social worker's view the frequency of visits was not necessary.

While appreciating the need for scrutiny and intervention by their manager, Social Worker (RS1/2) also experienced this at times as micromanagement. The Social Worker went on to give an example where they had assessed and considered the young person as settled and therefore in need of less frequent visiting but where the Social Worker's line manager still required visits in accordance with the official procedures.

Dealing with ambiguity in the guidance

Social Workers [RS1/1 and RS1/6] highlighted the presence of ambiguity in the guidance around definitions of terms such as 'significant harm'. The Social Workers described using internal training along with their own experience and common sense to resolve areas of ambiguity.

'So in isolation I wouldn't say government legislation greatly influences our work it informs it but we work mainly from experiences and learning that we get outside of that legislation. [RS1/1].

'So whilst this legislation is great to say significant harm so what is that significant harm? So what we kind of like become like the judiciary where we're trying to interpret that legislation and to say what is that significant harm. That's where common sense comes in and training and experiences we've had.' [RS1/6].

Social Worker (RS1/2) referred to their use of gut and instinct as playing a part in their decision making in casework.

'A lot of the time I feel like I'm going on my gut instincts of what I know. About you know court proceedings child protection measures you going you are going on your instincts. ... So I said what the child protection plan's not going to do anything. It's not good enough for this child.' [RS1/2].

Social Worker (RS1/5) also referred to using their gut instinct when first starting work on a case. They described taking a 'middle line' when first visiting a family, the Social Worker suggesting other social workers might be more judgmental about the family's home, for example. The Social Worker (RS1/5) also believed social workers needed to understand a number of fields including health and psychology to better assess the situation the child may be in. The Social Worker referred to a situation where they might visit a young person and want to take immediate action because of the circumstances they found, but that in making a decision a social worker needed to acknowledge the fact this young person may have been in that situation for a long time and that any intervention by the social worker could cause greater distress.

Social Worker (RS2/7) saw the need to use skills and prioritise the family's needs over official processes and also for a social worker to recognise when the circumstances of the family may be changing and where timescales may need to change where there was an increase in the risk to a child, but equally there could be a reduction in risk.

'And I think that's where your professional kind of 'skills', if you like come into play on trying to not necessarily be process-driven but actually relationship-based practice and pulling on that and recognising and going back to your manager, saying, "Actually this family, we need more time with this family." And I think that's where, you know, you've got to think outside of the box really and not be defined by process.' [RS2/7].

The upside to official procedures

Social Worker (RS2/6) described their own transition from studying and training in social work to becoming a practitioner and how this necessitated for the Social Worker the availability of some practical guidance to be able to translate the legislation and statutory guidance into practical day to day work (eg length of reports to court).

Social Worker (RS2/5) described their experience working in a local authority where compliance of social workers with official procedures had not been a priority for managers as one of '*an accident waiting to happen*'.

'So as much as you're working and feeling uncomfortable in [Council name] more so than any other local authority that I've worked in you can lean back and you will be caught by the procedure. You don't have to go home worried about it.' [RS1/5].

Social workers were able to link the requirements of the statutory guidance with good professional practice. Social Worker (RS1/2) viewed as positive that the official timescales for completion of pieces of work being set by the council were shorter than the government guidance. The Social Worker (RS1/2) also recognised the frequency of visits by a social worker to a family should reflect the needs and wishes of the child. The Social Worker used the example of adoption cases where the children were now settled so the official frequency of visits by the social worker may be too often and likewise with older children who may be more settled.

'They have brought it in but to be fair I really think when I was 'cos I've worked all the way through that as well. I've been here six years. But when I have my cases to actually get a feel of what's happening whether they're on child ... what they're... seeing them once a month on a CP plan is not enough actually. So if you're wanting to do some um work with the family. You don't want to keep the family on a CP plan if they don't need to be on a CP plan for to delay drift. Once a month's not enough. Need to get out there now finding out what the reasons are and then start doing the work. So I I did that anyway.' [RS1/2].

Social Worker (RS2/6) saw social workers following the requirements of the official guidance helped mitigate the risk of drift and delay in case work which the Social Worker (RS2/6) had heard from colleagues had been the practice of the department before the focus by management on compliance with the official timescales and deadlines were introduced.

'...the evidence shows that the delay and drift that causes for the child is not acceptable, and if that is going to be our core value and the child's welfare is paramount then it's balancing that.' [RS2/6].

Social Worker (RS2/5) suggested a number of ways in which having official guidance was helpful to social workers including multi agency working where previously the respective responsibilities of each agency had not been clearly defined. The Social Worker (RS2/5) believed the official guidance supported a process of mutual holding to account between the various agencies working with the family. The Social Worker also viewed as positive the obligation placed on the council within the guidance to make provision for specialised services such as those for children with a disability [RS2/5].

'Sharing the information. There used to be a lot of concerns about that, you know, the police knew one thing, we knew, there wasn't we didn't have the big the whole picture. That's really, how can you work with a family, if you haven't got the whole picture. We're doing them a disservice.' [RS2/5].

Oversight of the line manager

Social Worker (RS2/8) was very positive about their experience of the support of their line manager in the early days of coming in to practice and the Social Worker describes feeling *'scared'* when allocated work by their manager in their own name for the first time. The Social Worker said having the importance of the work they were doing explained by the manager was more helpful than a focus on which of the department's policies were being put in place.

'So it wasn't so much that I felt that it was about putting in those policies, but explaining to me in a way that I would understand why it was important. So obviously you said about values and ethics, diversity, all these different things as part of your ASYE, and you evidence how you've done that.' [RS2/8].

Social Worker (RS2/8) went on to describe that as they became more experienced, their line manager would look to ensure that the Social Worker was accessing training on new legislation along with internal briefings and continuing with the practice of reflection between the Social Worker and the line manager. The Social Worker (RS2/8) explained how they took comfort from reporting back to their manager the work they had done, even where this was not with the specific aim of seeking approval for an action or decision the Social Worker was proposing, but rather the process of sharing was reassuring for the Social Worker.

'But it's such a responsibility, and we're really mindful of that all time. But as you become more experienced, you become more confident in your decision making, and you're able to switch off more I suppose. Yeah when you finish work, you're able to put it to one side a lot more. I think when you're newly qualified, it's going a lot more around your head.' [RS2/8].

Social Worker (RS2/5) saw it as the responsibility of their line manager to ensure the work of the social workers reporting to them was conducted in compliance with the statutory guidance using mechanisms to do this including regular supervision. The Social Worker described this as working in a professional capacity so that where the social worker was completing work within the timescales prescribed, that prevented drift for the family. Social Worker (RS2/5) believed doing the above ensured they worked in a responsible way and were answerable for what they did.

Social Worker (RS2/9) relied on team meetings to pick up new information of the most importance to their practice saying they did not have enough time during the working day to be able to read the latest updates on government guidance.

'I think sometimes personally I don't probably look at things enough unless it's relevant and I think oh my God I need to know about that, so I'll have a look at that, because sometimes I think we don't get time in the day to do that sort of thing, so you tend to scan over it and then when you get home at night you're actually thinking well it's 7:00 now, I'll have my tea and I want to switch off from work.' [RS2/9].

Social Worker (RS2/6) described what they believed was a conflict for managers where the best way forward for a family in practice may not be the outcome from strict compliance with the official procedure [RS2/6].

'And managers can struggle with this as well because what can we do to make things more effective for us to do our job whilst meeting those statutory requirements. And I know it's one that gives a lot of social workers a headache and I think you do have to appreciate the other argument as well which is timescales exist for reasons. I know that can be quite controversial in terms of what they are and should they exist or should they more flexible but working to timescales, working to deadlines certainly can be a hindrance to the work.' [RS2/6].

11c. Controlling how social work is performed

Working within performance management frameworks

Social Worker (RS2/7) described how formal procedures were contained within an official council manual which formed part of the induction for staff coming into the department.

The procedures also sat within the departmental performance management framework so that data was reported at multiple levels of managers to show the extent of compliance within the work.

' So if you've gone out on something, "What can we do? We need to put protective time in your diary," and that's all derived from those policies really to keep a real tight... and make sure there's no delay for the children that we're working for and with.' [RS2/7].

Social Worker (RS2/8) explained how the performance management framework was aligned to the official guidance and from this system regular updates were provided to social workers about deadlines within the social workers' cases that were falling due or passed. This performance information was sent to managers so the managers could see the performance of their teams. The Social Worker (RS2/8) believed the reporting of performance information provided assurance to managers that the practice of the department was being maintained to a good standard.

Social Worker (RS2/9) considered the way in which they worked was target driven sometimes, despite statements by management to the contrary where failure by a social worker to meet targets such as official timescales could then in turn trigger even greater scrutiny of the social worker's work by the manager. The Social Worker (RS2/9) explained how achievement by the social worker of compliance and meeting targets influenced managers in discussions about pay progression so while achievement by the social worker of the targets may not be awarded with additional pay, doing so was a condition for the award of increments by the manager to the social worker.

'Sometimes it feels a little process driven and I understand that we're meeting these targets, we're this within the county and we've done these many assessments and we've got 93% of all of ours in on time and then the next breath they tell you it's not target driven but sometimes you can feel like that.' [R2/9].

Social Worker (RS2/8) described a difference between compliance with timescales to complete stages of their work on cases and putting information about their cases into the

case management system. The Social Worker went on to explain that if the social worker did not have all the information to fully complete an assessment then the assessment would be completed as far as possible but would then be updated when the missing information was found. The Social Worker explained the act of completion of the assessment was achieved and so the relevant official timescale for doing the assessment would show as having been met, even though there was missing information that would be updated by the social worker later.

Social Worker (RS1/2) believed managers had become much more concerned with compliance with policy and procedures following the council's last OFSTED inspection. The Social Worker described the period before the OFSTED inspection as chaotic with assessments and visits by social workers not being completed in a timely way. The Social Worker said now managers regularly looked at performance data and followed up with social workers where timescales or other activities were not being completed. This also applied to the quality of the work where scrutiny was carried out by the manager of both the completeness and the content of the social worker's case notes.

'You know we get lists of case notes drifting into the red and an expectation of a case must have a case note on every fifteen days. If that's not done you'll be getting an email saying why why are there no case notes what's going on with this case? So that is from there from that awful Ofsted review and the period leading up to that to now I do see a sense of coordinated management.' [RS1/2].

Supervision and reflection with line managers

Social Worker (RS2/7) saw the role of the managers oversight of their work as not only to ensure the social worker was compliant with official procedures but to also keep under

review the complexity of casework individual social workers had been allocated by the manager so additional support or guidance could be put in place by the manager for the social worker to ensure compliance was maintained. The Social Worker described the approach of their manager to following the statutory guidance as 'very robust' and included the manager ensuring the milestones for completion of certain activities on cases were within the social worker's diary. The Social Worker (RS2/7) also considered their line manager to be flexible where targets had not been met, due to caseload pressures for example.

Social Worker (RS1/1) was very positive about being able to talk to their manager about how the social worker might want to take their cases forward. The Social Worker went on to describe how the ability of the Social Worker to talk through casework with their manager was an opportunity to have another view on the case. The process of talking through the case was also viewed as a chance for the Social Worker to validate with their line manager the decisions they had taken.

'So I'm always glad to have somebody else's view on that. So I think that's a helpful part of the way we work you know that those decisions usually are checked.' [RS1/1].

Social Worker (RS2/8) felt they had a 'huge' level of control over the way in which they did their work and the opportunity to have their say. The Social Worker also valued the reflective conversations with their manager on matters where the Social Worker had concerns. In this way the Social Worker felt their decisions were not being made in isolation but at the same time the Social Worker was respected as a practitioner by their manager.

'.....but I do feel that as a practitioner, I'm the one that's out there, I'm the one that's visiting the families, I'm the one that's liaising with all the professionals.' [RS2/8].

Social Worker (RS1/3) similarly viewed their control over decision making within their allocated cases as high and that the Social Worker's expertise was valued by their line manager who was generally supportive of the decisions taken by the Social Worker.

'I feel like I have control in terms of decisions that are made within a case and how we choose to sort of manage manage them and what work we're gonna do.' [RS1/3].

While social workers spoke about being able to exercise day to day control over their work they also spoke about being able to access their manager for advice and support. Social Worker (RS1/3) described being able to present an argument to their manager for use of discretion on a case and the Social Worker believed their manager trusted in the Social Worker's judgement.

Similarly, Social Worker (RS2/6) felt they could have a conversation with their manager about changing an approach to a case allocated to them even if that change was outside of official procedures. The Social Worker (RS2/6) also accepted their manager's decision would be final.

The physical colocation of the managers with the social workers was viewed by social workers as relevant for the development of those relationships and supported ad hoc case conversations. Social Worker (RS2/7) explained the benefit of co-location to be able to ask for assistance from a more senior experienced colleague, in the absence of the Social Worker's own manager. The Social Worker (RS2/7) thought there was a negative impact

on the morale where staff who were required to be office based, in contrast to the morale of staff who worked in more flexible remote ways.

'So I feel that it's really pertinent that we are within the same building and we have other colleagues to really reflect and kind of "Is this underpinning me? Are my values in the right place? Are my judgements, where am I pulling these from?" Because sometimes you can get stuck. Sometimes they can tell you where you're pulling these judgements from but ultimately it's about testing those out as well.' [RS2/7].

Social Worker (RS2/9) described how when they had a query for their manager, the approach of their manager would always be to encourage the Social Worker to try and answer their own question first and for the Social Worker to share their analysis and reasoning behind that decision. While the Social Worker felt they would be able to challenge their line manager on a particular point, at the end of the day the Social Worker recognised the manager's authority and so would not look to override the managers decision.

'..... again it does go back to good supervision and not being told what to do because I think that just stops you from developing. Because at the end of the day it is decision making and we are making some quite crucial decisions sometimes just on the doorstep or in the house with parents. So it can be really hard, so yes.' [RS2/9].

Many social workers said they felt they had a level of control over their day to day work for example ranging from 'high' [RS1/1] to 'quite a bit' [RS1/2]. Examples of the types of activities the social workers said they had control over included managing their diary, deciding on visits and convening multi agency meetings [RS1/2].

Social Worker (RS1/5) believed they were able to work autonomously because their manager recognised the Social Worker's experience. This autonomy enabled the Social

Worker 'to practice' which the Social Worker described as being able to think about the most appropriate way to work with families, accepting those families were all different. The Social Worker contrasted this with not being able to work autonomously which the Social Worker described as being 'micro-managed'. The Social Worker (RS1/5) believed this sense of control over their own work extended to the manner in which the Social Worker felt confident to be assertive with the families they were working with, something the Social Worker thought other social workers were nervous about doing.

'It allows me to be able to practice. And that's the key word. I didn't do a psychology and then social work degree and have years of experience to be micromanaged because that doesn't work in social work. A lot of social workers go in quite I'll say horses for courses a low end approach.' [RS1/5].

The relevance of experience and its relationship with day to day control was raised by Social Worker (RS2/5) and how this influenced the intensity of supervision given by the Social Worker's line manager and the type of work the line manager would allocate to the Social Worker. The Social Worker (RS2/5) explained how newly qualified social workers would not be allocated child protection cases for example and social workers would have to demonstrate to their manager over the course of their supervision that the social workers were meeting the requirements of the department in terms of their skills and experience, which would then in turn allow the social workers to progress. Social Worker (RS2/5) explained that social workers with more experience would be allocated higher risk cases by their manager but monthly supervision sessions between the social workers and their manager would focus on reviewing the decision making in those cases as well as compliance with official procedures.

Social Worker (RS1/3) understood their manager would be placed under pressure from their manager's own line manager to account for any failure to comply with official

procedures across the team. The Social Worker believed this made it difficult for their line manager to grant discretion to social workers on their cases. The Social Worker (RS1/3) felt all of the demands placed on them might lead them to conclude the job itself may become one the Social Worker felt unable to continue to do.

'this is when you get into the I'm doing a fifty hour week God because you're having to like jam everything in.' [RS1/3].

Social Worker (RS1/1) accepted when they were not fully in agreement with a decision on a case taken by their manager they nonetheless viewed the managers decision as final after the Social Worker had had the opportunity to talk through the areas of disagreement with their manager. Publicly the Social Worker might attribute the decision to '*the Local Authority*'. [RS1/1].

Loss of control within court proceedings

While Social Worker (RS1/1) felt able to exercise control over their day to day work they qualified control in relation to the volume of work asked for by the court and the extent to which this work had to be completed and the Social Worker having to do whatever was needed to ensure the work was completed.

'So you've got to do it. So then you've got no control when it's in proceedings you've got no control you've just got to do it. At personal cost.' [RS1/1].

Social Worker (RS2/6) viewed their sense of '*freedom*' to control their day to day work was constrained by the timescales within the statutory guidance. These constraints in turn

created pressure on the Social Worker to complete work within those set deadlines, including updating case records and report writing. The Social Worker (RS2/6) believed these activities came at the cost of their being able to spend with the family they were working with. The Social Worker (RS2/6) also thought decisions by the court on how quickly actions could be taken were sometimes unrealistic for the family to achieve.

Social Worker (RS1/2) explained their own sense of loss of personal control over their work once the case had reached court. Part of the loss of control related to the timescales which the court worked to, and whether the Social Worker felt a case was taking too long to progress which they thought was detrimental to the family. The Social Worker (RS1/2) also thought the court process itself could feel like a repetition of the work that had already been done by the Social Worker as part of arriving at their assessment and recommendation to the court. The Social Worker viewed this as a lack of belief by the court in their work. This was further exacerbated when a conflicting recommendation was made by an Independent Social Worker which the court then supported [RS1/2].

'And if then you've completed an assessment and an ISW they do an assessment and think the child should go home then we have to agree to that. That can be really hard. Really hard.' [RS1/2].

Further frustration during the court stages arose when Social Worker (RS1/2) had tried unsuccessfully to engage with a family, but where the court directed further work should be attempted, notwithstanding the view and experience of the Social Worker that these further attempts were certain to fail.

11d. Applying limits to the jurisdiction of social work

Local work with statutory partners

Social Worker (RS2/6) described challenging another professionals (in different organisations) for taking a decision that failed the statutory guidance standard of safeguarding a child and the Social Worker had escalated the issue to their manager who in turn was pursuing the matter with the other organisation. This fitted with what the Social Worker saw as a broader role for social workers to be promoting and upholding safeguarding policy [RS2/6].

'And I do think a big part of the social work role is encouraging other agencies and sometimes giving them sort of support and advice on kind of safeguarding policy because, whilst it is everyone's responsibility (inaudible 00:50:17) working together, it is our absolute bread and butter on our day to day.' [RS2/6].

As an example of the discomfort and lack of confidence some other professionals felt with their safeguarding role, Social Worker (RS2/6) described the process at case conferences where the individual professionals were asked to state their assessment of the safety of the child and where this assessment was previously left to the Social Worker, the other professionals were now challenged to state their assessment before the Social Worker with resulting comments from those other professionals along the lines of *"Oh I hate scaling first."*

Social Worker (RS2/9) found in multi-agency settings an assumption by the other agencies that the Social Worker would always have the answers and in particular the other agencies

were nervous when the Social Worker was recommending a step down of the multi-agency group on the basis the level of risk to the child had been managed down. The Social Worker (RS2/9) explained this could lead to some professionals assigning an inflated level of risk in their own assessment with the aim of keeping the same multi agency forum working together with the family. The Social Worker (RS2/9) challenged the inflated risk assessment by explaining the Social Worker's own analysis of risk in order to achieve the outcome the Social Worker wanted. The Social Worker (RS2/9) had also observed that their presence on multi agency forums could act as an incentive to the families who were the subject of these multi agency forums to stay engaged in the work but where the Social Worker was concerned however that this incentive could be masking the true level of commitment of the family to change.

Social Worker (RS2/8) explained how the different professionals involved in a case all wanted to get to the same outcome for the family, even if there were differences of opinion on how to get there. In relation to which professional should do a piece of work with a family, the Social Worker (RS2/8) explained their own assumption it should be the professional with whom the child felt most comfortable to take the lead, which may not be the social worker [RS2/8].

A number of social workers described having to clarify to other agencies what the role of the social worker was, where other agencies had unrealistic expectations of what the social worker would do [RS1/1].

Tackling the bigger sector issues

One of the two research sites were formally involved in the DfE Improvement Programme. Social Worker (RS2/7) saw this as an opportunity to contribute to thinking on new ways of working with families. The Social Worker felt the views of the social workers in the council were listened to both in relation to these specific calls for contributions to the Improvement Programme but also through a [internal] monthly staff forum in which examples of good practice were shared.

This was echoed by another social worker from the same council who also referred to opportunities to be involved in forum and activities to examine and develop practice. This included the chance to become involved in research which Social Worker (RS2/7) saw as *'really vital to how we change things going forward'*. The Social Worker (RS2/7) also thought the approach of the council to supporting professional training was important and a substantial attraction to the Social Worker for working there. The Social Worker described how in the early years of work, for a new social worker, the experience they have within any given council can then have a significant influence on how they develop and the basis from which they build their practice.

Social Worker (RS2/6) thought being able to challenge the legislation itself would require involvement of the Social Worker with organisations such as BASW who the Social Worker considered as a body that would take on campaigns on issues like that. While the Social Worker thought there may be some opportunities in the work setting, such as discussing external surveys, to debate broader issues of the social work remit, generally this was left to a personal choice with no formal 'corporate' position on broader remit reform.

'Because, again, if you signed up to HCPC standards and these are your values then it should be somewhat involved but in terms of your day to day work I don't think it's a thing that we do consider and I don't think it's particularly looked at. ' [RS2/6].

RQ3a - Do social workers draw on the values of professional social work in their reflection and practice?

RQ3b - Do social workers draw on their professional knowledge to arrive at decisions on the actions that support the best interests of the families they are working with?

RQ3c - Do social workers seek advice from their manager where there is a conflict between the guidance and the social worker's own recommendation?

Professional values were expected to play a role in social workers' reflection and practice. Accepting the very individual and personal definition of values, social workers spoke of their importance and presence in their day to day work. Reflection provided the means for social workers to explore with their supervisor or peers how their values were impacting on their decision making and influencing their work. Undoubtedly their ability to maintain values based practice was compromised by the pressures brought about by funding cuts and rising workloads.

The responses of the social workers made little if any reference to the knowledge acquired during professional training. While the social workers generally described their work with families as one of getting to know them and building a relationship, they were doing so fully aware of the need to conduct their work in accordance with the roles and responsibilities in the official guidance and procedures. These procedures were often reformulated by the social workers and their managers as statements of good practice.

The social workers were consistent in their responses as to the need to follow statutory guidance. For the most part social workers felt they were in control of their day to day work. Even though much of what they were doing was governed by the official procedures of the department. The strongest examples of where control was felt lost related to the conduct of the case once court proceedings had started which in turn then imposed timescales and ordered activities.

Key findings

Social work practice imbued with values

Social workers described how values played a role in their professional practice (Evetts, 2011). Social workers expressed empathy with families in situations giving rise to the social worker's involvement while being clear about the needs and safety of the child being central to the focus of their work. They viewed building relationships as important and difficult to do at times, but also recognised the rights of the family to reject the social worker's support. This right to reject support was one of a number of conflicts the social workers encountered. The social workers were aware of value statements issued by the local authority but the values impacting their work were profession driven (Evetts, 2011 and Svelby, 1997). Conflicts between child-centred practice and official procedures (Hjorne et al, 2010) together with the compromising effect of budget cuts in the department were the two other main areas of conflict. None of the interviewees ventured such compromises impacted on the safety of their decision making, but rather the extent of the resources that could be put into the work with the children and their families. Access to supervision and reflection were common responses as to how such conflicts might be resolved in their decision making.

Professional knowledge neither seen nor heard

The responses of the social workers made little if any reference to the knowledge base acquired during professional training (Freidson, 1986). Those interviewed included both newly qualified social workers and those with many years' experience. The closest responses in meaning to the use of professional knowledge were given where previous experience was a resource where official guidance was ambiguous. Similarly, very little reference to relevant research was made (Larsson, 2013). The influence of official guidance was significant throughout interviewee responses, where the guidance was either so embedded no explicit reference was made during day to day practice or the guidance was used as a checklist (Hoybe-Mortensen, 2013), in one particular case helpfully as a transition into work from training. Timescales within the guidance were rationalised as good practice by a number of interviewees and there was a consensus that the role of the line manager was to help follow the guidance and explain its importance (Evetts, 2011 and Brock, 2006).

Professional competence or procedural compliance

Performance management frameworks were in place in both research sites to be able to track and report on compliance levels (Noordegraaf, 2007 and Taylor and Kelly, 2006). Similarly, all the social workers across both sites were positive about having access to their managers to talk through any issues arising on their cases. The expectation of when that referral would take place was in instances where there may be a conflict between the guidance and the recommendation of the social worker. The interviews revealed a much higher level of general contact and discussion between social workers and their managers,

not solely at points of difficulty, which had not been expected. In this way social workers' professional anxieties on decision making blended with an assessment of their performance through these conversations with their managers (Wong, 2015).

Neither the time nor the place

In reflecting on the role of social work and where, as a profession, they might seek to extend their remit or even withdraw, on the whole there was little engagement by the social workers in these broader profession level questions. Within their cases, the social workers were frequently involved in discussions with other professionals about role boundaries, typically clarifying to other agencies their role was narrower than assumed and so performing some institutional work (Currie et al, 2012) although questionable whether on behalf of their employer or the social work profession.

Chapter 11 Sub section 1: Case recording and practice

The social workers were asked to provide case examples to show the influence of government guidance and how social workers took this into their day to day practice.

These examples revealed the extent to which the statutory guidance was visible in decision making as well as the extent to which decision making at case level was subject to other influences. These case examples were analysed against the following themes across the two theoretical frameworks of managerial and professional control: the role of values and beliefs, placing boundaries on knowledge-based work, the way in which work was performed and applying limits to the jurisdiction of social work.

Did these cases show social work values underpinning the decision or actions?

Conflicts of values with and within the family

Social workers faced confrontation to their professional as well as personal values as a consequence of the complexity of the decisions they faced. The social worker below described the conflicts that could arise when considering social work value based practice in support of individual family members, where these gave rise to conflicts of interests between them. Reflection and discussion with the line manager helped the social worker recognise and separate these.

'I think that would actually be quite a significant oppressive decision for that child and the family but I am aware that it is something we have to consider and have to look at..... And I just I talked to her about it and why don't we get you some help with some storage then which to me that seems like the more pragmatic approach than sort of kind of turning it into a child protection concern.' (RS2/6)

'And then I'm then a bit torn because of the impact it would have on the eldest child because of the attachment she has with mum, and actually is it going to be more harmful her going into foster care? And also, taking into account, mum has made some really positive changes and actually she's demonstrated an ability to make positive change and it is tiny steps, and do we work in mum's timescales or do we work in the child's timescales? How do we work it? So you're always unpicking things and trying to make the best decisions for that child, taking into account parents as well, of course you have to.' (RS2/8)

These conflicts also arose between those of the social worker as an individual and the values based practice they felt they should and needed to deliver.

'And on one occasion I did actually go to the hospital with a young girl who had no parents that were supportive and did the best that I could do for her even though my values are different to what hers were, but you have to leave those behind because that's what your role is to support families whatever ethnic backgrounds, whatever their views are, so that's kind of an example of what I mean by that, so yes.' (RS2/9)

'I literally came back after my placement and I went out on a visit to a family that I'd worked with like two years ago and this is the only time this has ever happened. And when I went out to the family I'd done an early morning visit for another colleague and the home conditions were appalling, really appalling. And I found myself when I'd done the visit actually getting in the car and questioning what have we really done to that family?'
RS2/9

This example below illustrated the manner in which it became difficult for social workers to do social work values driven practice when the behaviours of families were inconsistent and contradictory. On the one hand angry and resentful of the involvement of the social worker, and then not wanting the social worker to stop working with them.

'I took a family to a unit. And I've been battling with this family for over a year and a half.we had a nightmare on the way Dad screaming shouting a flat tyre 'dah dah dah dah'.And then I was leaving and Mum's like oh I'll miss you.' (RS1/2)

Conflicts of values between different professionals

The influence of the professional and personal values of different non-social work professionals' (Teachers) interpretations of family situations led to their having different views about intervention. These non-social work professionals considered the family's situation warranted intervention at lower thresholds than the social worker working with the family.

'And um they'd only literally just moved and the school visited there because there's attendance issues and they were absolutely horrified because she hadn't unpacked. And they were sort of emailing me and this is this is not acceptable..... And I just I talked to her about it and why don't we get you some help with some storage then which to me that seems like the more pragmatic approach than sort of kind of turning it into a child protection concern.' (RS1/3)

Similarly, in this example the social worker challenged the Teachers interpretation of the Children Act and local authority duties where the teacher had assessed the risk to the child as higher than the social worker's assessment.

'And I was saying 'But it's not safeguarding and actually that's voluntary. If mum doesn't want to do that I can't force that'. And it was interesting because when we came to the scaling what professionals will often do is they will scale a little bit lower. ' (RS2/9)

Did these cases show where the social worker's professional judgement about a decision or activity has conflicted with the official guidance?

The significance of experience and skills

Social workers provided a number of examples where their experience of applying broader principles of social work practice in their decision making on cases proved more effective resources for decision making than the formal guidance itself. The complexity of individual cases could require the social worker to draw not only on formal procedures and guidance but the broader principles of social work practice.

'Worked with a 17 year old male homosexual and he did have that as a big part of his identity because he'd only recently come out because of where he used to live he felt that he couldn't, so when he moved into [Council name]... huge part of the identity, huge part of what he wanted to be identified as and how he wanted to be seen. So when I came as a referral that was a child protection one due to child sexual exploitation concerns (inaudible 00:22:40) he was involved in. So you immediately go, "Oh right, I've got some quite significant steps I need to look at in terms of protection, what can I do to actually learn about this young man?"' (RS2/5)

'For example I've got a fifteen year old boy, sorry fifteen, he's a 17 year old boy who has been street homeless for seven months and I've just got him into some supported accommodation and when we went to the accommodation he is now a (s.l. LAC 00:22:30) but initially he wouldn't agree to be. And I wanted a safety plan for him, because he was saying 'I'm not coming in at 11:00, I'm not doing this and I'm not doing that. I will bring drugs into the property'. And I said, "That can't happen, you're going to lose it if you do". So I said, "Give me a plan" and he gave me three things and literally it was 'I will be respectful to the staff, I won't smoke in the property, I won't bring drugs in, I'll be in at 11:00' that was his safety plan.' (RS2/9)

In depth case reviews then provided an opportunity to explore how well official government guidance and procedures supported working in more specialist cases.

'I've got a case on Monday, and it's in relation to a teenager, and it's looking for teenagers that display risky behaviours. I've got like a three-hour meeting with a case that's been really looked at in terms of what services have been put in for that young person and what the risky behaviours were and actually what did we do to ensure this young person was safe.' (RS2/8)

Sometimes the consequences of the application of procedures were not properly thought through by a multi-disciplinary group of professionals, particularly where the situation was

exceptional or knowledge about how another area of regulation may have impacted on the situation was not well understood by that group of multi-disciplinary professionals.

'So I attended that meeting and the plan was that she went on a child protection plan..... I said this to me this isn't going to work because a child protection plan doesn't give us any means to make decisions about this child. If the parents don't get charged or the bail conditions are lifted we've got nothing to say that this child can't go back and live with them. So I said what the child protection plan's not going to do anything. It's not good enough for this child.' (RS1/3)

Working across other agencies and decision making

Decisions involving professionals from other occupations also gave rise to a wider range of options and services being explored and commissioned by the multi-disciplinary team than the social worker thought useful. The statutory responsibility of the multiple agencies to work together in this way meant decisions followed the majority view even if that was not the view of the individual agency with the most relevant experience and knowledge.

'I had a case where it was pre- proceedings and the decision was this lady should go to a residential for an assessment. It cost thousands and thousands and the assessment said she couldn't do it where she was but you see our test ought to have been out in the community and her CPN said at the time she should never have been sent there it was the wrong place for her.' (RS1/1)

Did these cases show where the social worker has implemented a decision based on their professional judgement rather than the way required in the official guidance?

The use of escalation

Referring a decision to a more senior manager was used in a number of different ways.

Where the social worker's assessment that thresholds for legal proceedings had been met and that action needed to be taken sooner than the lawyer within the council's legal team thought, they challenged and escalated the concern. Proceedings were brought forward by the council's legal team.

'So I did sort of challenge and said, I disagree. I would appreciate if that you speak to the LADO manager in the legal team because I think that solicitors wrong. And she did and she was and we went into proceedings so. And that's about again making sure children are kept safe.' (RS2/5)

In this example approval was secured by the social worker from the line manager to explore further family options for care where official council guidance was ambiguous or to secure an extension to manager's timescale to make an alternative decision including agreement by the manager to the resulting commitment of resources.

'Oh I've been supported by the managers to go further, go beyond a decision that I was unsure or unable to make," because I wasn't sure that the policy and the guidance was on my side in this case.' (RS2/6)

'And I was in agreement that we need to give him some time because he has been on the street seven months and we need to just ... so in the end we compromised and it was like okay you've got a week, we'll give you a week (inaudible 00:35:57) to kind of work with him and turn it around. And we did and I had other professionals on board.' (RS2/9)

'But I will do my best to try and evidence that she's worth a mother and baby placement and just having a go, just give her the opportunity.' (RS2/9)

Compliance for compliance' sake

While the social worker's assessment of risk in this example was clear that further visits were not necessary, the fact the case was still open meant compliance by the social worker with the official guidance was still required.

'But I was still getting emails this child needs to be seen this child needs to be seen. But we didn't have any we didn't hold PR for that child anymore. An adoption order had been made and I had to race out to visit this child. The child I knew was perfectly safe and happy and fine.' (RS1/3)

Creativity and collaboration in multi-agency working

Agencies working together could create a solution that met their individual and collective interests to support the family. The social worker with the support of their manager worked with other agencies involved with the family to create the situation.

'You've got the midwife the probation officer the police being really concerned about this unborn baby.....But it was the only way that we could get her to get the healthcare she needed for this unborn baby.' (RS1/2)

Did these cases show where the social worker has taken an action based on their professional judgement but outside of their statutory remit?

Challenging another professional's assessment

This social worker described a situation where a mental health professional had conducted an assessment. The social worker's own assessment of the condition of the young person

had been clear that action needed to be taken but where the psychiatrist disagreed, they challenged and escalated the concern.

'And I was abundantly clear right there's been this this and this so can I just clarify, are you clearly saying then that this young person hasn't got mental health and that your you've got, he doesn't meet your criteria. And if that's the case can I have that in writing please because I obviously have got a different view.....And I just did say, you know, unfortunately, I disagree. If you could please put your report together as soon as possible us, obviously we will be taking it further. I'm really concerned.' (RS2/5)

Challenging the adequacy of a professional's safeguarding response

Separate to the professional assessment another agency may make, in this example the social worker challenged the teacher where they felt there had been a failure to safeguard a child, despite the child having made a disclosure of significant risk.

'And so obviously our view is that is not safeguarding and that is not following the guidance and I felt very able to challenge that, both initially with the school saying, "Well I am quite concerned about what's happened here," and discussed it with my line manager who said, "Yeah, okay, I will help you raise this and do this,"' (RS2/6)

Key findings

Navigating values based conflicts and dilemmas

The social workers provided examples that showed how they frequently encounter conflicts and dilemmas in their attempt to follow social work professional values within a framework of statutory guidance (Evetts, 2011 and Svelby, 1997 and PCF The Professional Capabilities Framework, BASW Resources, 2016). These conflicts and

dilemmas arise through the social worker reflecting on the families' situation, on the social workers own personal values and also when working with other agencies including teachers, lawyers and mental health specialists. The social workers describe how their personal values (cleanliness of a home, teenage pregnancy) give way to professional values where the needs of the child and family are paramount. Likewise, the social workers assert their professional values when confronted with a different profession's response. The more challenging situation is one of conflicting interests of different members within a family which cannot be resolved without compromise.

Critical application of knowledge, skills and experience

The social workers provided examples of the complex nature of the situations families present and how the social workers draw on a range of resources to assess and consider how best to support them (Liligrén, 2012). The social workers inevitably drew on their taught professional knowledge base (Svelby, 1997) but also reflected on previous experience to look for transferable approaches. Social workers' critical reflection (PCF The Professional Capabilities Framework, BASW Resources, 2016) was as important in multi agency settings to ensure decisions were safe although they may ultimately not have the authority to prevent another agency taking an action which the social worker may not feel worthwhile.

Multiple routes to resolve case dilemmas

Social workers evidence the following range of routes that might be taken in order to arrive at decisions on cases. The social workers described a form of work to rule or soldiering (Taylor, 1914 and Gillespie, 1993) where the need for compliance with official guidance

prevailed over the merits of the task itself in particular where official guidance required the social worker to maintain visits to families but where the social worker considered them no longer necessary. In contrast the social workers also described the use of creativity working with the police, health and probation services in order to ensure the birth of a child took place in a safe environment. Escalation to the line manager was raised by the social workers to resolve conflicts between official council procedures and the needs of the family (Thompson, 2008) and provide an opportunity for the social worker to consult with their line manager (Scott, 1969) on the options being considered by the social worker.

Assertive professional integrity

The social workers provided examples where they found themselves having to remind other agencies of their statutory safeguarding responsibilities (teachers) and choosing between separate but conflicting professional (medical) advice. These included the holding to account of an agency who had defined responsibilities under the statutory guidance and was thus clearly part of its implementation (Hjern and Porter, 1981). In another case the social worker was left unconvinced by the recommendation of another professional and so pursued further advice until satisfied.

Chapter 11 Sub Section 2: Surveying social workers and managers

Sample characteristics

The survey was completed by 86 participants whose roles are shown in the table below together with the number of questions attempted. The response rates as a percentage of the numbers in those roles in the national workforce (DfE, 2018) are given by role in the table below. The manner of distribution of the survey through the PSW network through Twitter did not target the differently roles separately. The response rate is therefore expressed across the total respondent group and calculated based on the reach of the network (calculated as the number of followers of the network and the researcher).

Participant Role	N	Workforce	Response Rate	Survey Reach	Response Rate	Available Questions	Questions attempted
Director	2	152*	1.32%	-	-	16	16
Manager	39	4180	0.93%	-	-	213	312
Social Worker	37	16060	0.23%	-	-	296	295
Not answered	8	-	-	-	-	64	57
Total	86	-	-	1851	4.65%	-	-

Table G: Survey Sample Characteristics

*Count of number of local authorities

Appendix I contains the detailed survey responses.

Using values and beliefs to guide decisions and behaviour

Questions 1 and 2 asked about the application of professional social work values to everyday practice and their influence relative to that of official statements of values by the employing organisation. The questions were presented in the same terms as addressed

during interviews at the two research sites (Chapters 9 and 11 above). These questions were based on the professional ideology present in the theoretical frameworks of professional control in Chapter 4. The view on professional values was then being compared to the role of beliefs in statements by managers to guide the actions of staff as addressed in Chapter 3 as a tool of managerial control.

The majority (N=79, %=92) of respondents agreed and strongly agreed that social workers do apply professional social work values in their day to day practice. This was the case for all of the manager respondents and the DCS. While the majority (N=32, %=86) of social workers also rated at least agree, three were neutral and two disagreed. The results indicated three respondents had chosen not to answer the question on their role, and who each gave a response lower than agree, including one strongly disagree. Overall the dominant view among the respondents was that social workers are applying social work values and beliefs in their day to day practice. With a Fisher's Exact Test value of $p=0.006$ the differences between social workers and managers were not significant at the $p<0.05$ level.

When comparing the relative strength of influence of professional social work values compared with the official statements of values of the local authority, overall responses were more mixed. The DCS response was to believe professional social work values were more influential. Where 8% (N=3) of managers disagreed, 27% (N=10) of social workers disagreed and strongly disagreed. 69% (N=27) of managers believed social work values would be more influential where 46% (N=17) of social workers thought this the case. With a Fisher's Exact Test value of $p=0.015$ the differences between social workers and managers were not significant at the $p<0.05$ level.

Applying limits to the activities workers carry out

These questions again reflected those asked during the earlier interviews. These were in turn based on theories about professionals having autonomy over their work, as a characteristic of professional control (Chapter 4). This in contrast with the intention of managers to control the work of their staff (Chapter 3).

On the question of whether day to day practice reflects the cumulative academic and professional social work training, 26.8% (N=23) of all respondents disagreed with the statement and 48.8% (N=42) agreed with the statement. 59% (N=23) of the management group of respondents thought that practice was reflective of academic and professional training. 37.8% (N=14) of social worker respondents thought practice was reflective of academic and professional training. With a Fisher's Exact Test value of $p=0.011$ the differences between social workers and managers were not significant at the $p<0.05$ level.

87.2% (N=75) of respondents agreed that day to day practice was following government guidance. With a Fisher's Exact Test value of $p=0.058$ the differences between social workers and managers were marginally significant. In particular, 59% (N=23) of managers agreed practice followed government guidance with 36% (N=14) strongly agreeing so. 54% (N=20) of social workers agreed this was the case with 30% (N=11) strongly agreeing.

72.1% (N=62) of respondents believed managers required compliance with government guidance at all times. All DCS respondents agree with the statement. 74% (N=29) of the managers agreed, but 10% (N=4) did not agree with the statement. 70% (N=26) of social workers agreed with the statement. With a Fisher's Exact Test value of $p=0.081$ the

differences between social workers and managers are marginally significant at the $p < 0.05$ level. In particular, 54% (N=21) of managers required compliance with the guidance at all times with 21% (N=8) strongly agreeing so. 43% (N=16) of social workers agreed this was the case with 27% (N=10) strongly agreeing.

Controlling the way in which work is performed

Theories on professional control in Chapter 4 identified discretion as an attribute of professional work. This contrasts with the ways in which management might try to define the ways in which staff work (Chapter 3). These survey questions examine this conflict and are consistent with earlier interview questions also draw from the literatures above.

48.8% (N=42) of respondents believed social workers were able to exercise control over the way they carried out their work with a further 22% (N=15) neither agreeing or disagreeing. The DCS response was agreement with the statement that social workers did exercise control. 61% (N=24) of managers also agreed. 35% (N=13) of social worker respondents agreed they were able to exercise this control with 27% (N=10) neither agreeing nor disagreeing. With a Fisher's Exact Test value of $p = 0.004$ the differences between social workers and managers was not significant at the $p < 0.05$ level.

51% (N=44) of all respondents agreed that managers controlled the way in which social workers do their work. This was the case for all the DCS respondents. 41.1% (N=16) of the managers and 59.4% (N=22) of social workers agreed this was the case. With a Fisher's Exact Test value of $p = 0.001$ the differences between social workers and managers were no significant at the $p < 0.05$ level.

Defining the jurisdiction of children's social work

The ownership by the profession of a body of knowledge and control over how that is developed was a key characteristic of the profession in Chapter 4. This survey question is consistent with earlier interviews in seeking the views of respondents as to whether they consider this to be the case for social work.

There was broad disagreement (N=55, %=64) across all respondent groups except the DCS as to whether social work as a profession was in control of its own destiny. The DCS group agreed with the statement. 59% (N=23) of managers disagreed and 81.1% (N=30) of social workers disagreed. With a Fisher's Exact Test value of $p=0.017$ the differences between social workers and managers are not significant at the $p<0.05$ level.

Overall summary

RQ2a – Do the managers with social work qualifications expect the social workers to comply with the statutory guidance but also apply their professional knowledge where there is a conflict between the guidance and the social worker's own view?

The dominant view of managers was that day to day practice followed the statutory guidance and the managers also viewed themselves as being consistent as a group of managers in expecting social workers to follow that guidance. Likewise, the dominant view of managers was that social workers were able to exercise control over their day to day work, a view not shared by the majority of social workers. The dominant view of social workers was that much of the control was appropriated by and to the managers.

RQ3a - Do social workers draw on the values of professional social work in their reflection and practice?

The dominant view of all respondents was that social workers do apply their professional social work values in their practice. Likewise, there was a consistency of view that the social work values would have more influence over day to day practice than any official statements of values issued by the employing organisation.

RQ3b - Do social workers draw on their professional knowledge to arrive at decisions on the actions that support the best interests of the families they are working with?

The dominant view of social workers regarding their practice being reflective of academic and professional training is that it was not with fewer than half of all respondents believing this to be the case. This would suggest the greater influence on decision making in cases is the observance of the statutory guidance rather than the result of reflection on professional knowledge. Although the difference was not significant a higher number of managers who responded believed day to day practice was reflective of professional knowledge.

Conclusion

This chapter reports on social workers' views about the impact of managerial and professional controls on their day to day practice, through interviews, case examples and a survey. The implications of these findings are now considered in the concluding Chapter

12, alongside the content analysis of the statutory guidance and the views of managers of social workers.

Chapter 12: Discussion and Conclusion

Introduction – the research and the researcher

This thesis reports on research into the control over children's social work in England. The overall aim of this research was to identify the key components and combinations of managerial and professional control theoretical frameworks in the design and implementation of safeguarding children social work and to answer the research questions detailed below.

As a qualified Chartered Accountant, with no social work background, the researcher's focus has been on the way in which professionals and managers work together, not on the social work practice itself. This differs to many studies conducted by researchers from within the social work profession. The researcher's interest stems from their own role as a senior manager in an organisation whose principal activity is children's social work and so not a shared professional base. At the same time the researcher is in turn managed by a senior manager without an accountancy background. So how do the managers and the managed overcome these differences in authority derived from position and knowledge?

The Research Questions

RQ1 To what extent and in what ways is the content of government policy and guidance on safeguarding children social work in England underpinned by managerial or professional control theory or a combination of both?

Central government relies almost exclusively on managerial controls to set out the direct controls over what work professionals and organisations should carry out and the indirect controls of systems and records they should create to monitor and show the work that has been carried out (Chapter 8, Content Analysis of the Policy Documents). Central government statutory guidance is silent on the values and principles held by the social work profession about working with children at risk. At the same time however, much of the government's focus on better co-ordination of multi-agency services, the subject of repeated criticism through recent inquiries into serious case reviews, shows there remains work to do to within those other agencies to secure the same level of commitment to working with these values across the different professions.

Similarly, there is no encouragement within the guidance document for professionals and organisations to be creative or to look for other ways to achieve the same outcomes. The guidance offers very limited discretion to do other than follow the actions specified within. So, for now, the approach by government is to tell the organisations and professionals within them what it (central government) wants them to do, leaving it to those organisations to work out how to get it all done (see Director 1, Council 2 Chapter 9).

For local authority managers the guidance document sets out clearly what actions the local authority managers need to put in place. A continuing issue for the local authority manager to resolve is one of resourcing and whether the actions require additional resources to meet them and if so how these resources can be secured which includes freeing up resources by re-prioritising existing work (see Manager 1 Council 1, Chapter 9). Decision making on casework also requires collaboration with other agencies where managers are frequently involved in defending the role of the social worker but also holding other

agencies to account (see Manager 4 Council 2, Manager 1 Council 1 as examples, Chapter 9).

Managers must also establish systems to monitor and report on the activities required in the statutory guidance but where the design of such a system is left to the managers discretion. In reality local authorities collaborate through an external agency to standardise internal procedures and share information on what OFTSED have passed as acceptable. (see Director 1 Council 1, Chapter 9). Inspections by OFSTED provide an external view on the safety of arrangements made by management and the work of Safeguarding Partners provides some further scrutiny of the same. Neither of these however carry any formal enforcement lever to hold the local authority and any individuals within it to account for the decisions they have taken about arrangements made to deliver children's social work.

For social workers the statutory guidance document states at the outset the professionals and organisations to whom it applies. This explicitly places an obligation on every social worker to examine the guidance and make appropriate changes to their own practice. In practice the local authority managers run formal processes to implement statutory guidance to assure themselves all their staff have been furnished with the latest guidance (see Manager 1 Council 1, Manager 1 Council 2, Chapter 9). What the social worker takes from the implementation process is therefore largely dependent on the approach taken by the local authority management, although the position their own professional manager takes, including their own professional background and training, has a bearing on how much of the managerial versus professional influence is brought to bear.

RQ2 To what extent and in what ways do each of the managerial and professional representative bodies promote the use of managerial or professional control over frontline children's social work?

The professional response

All three consultation responses used arguments based on professional control. This study found no references to managerial control (see Chapter 10). BASW adopted the position of the social worker as the recipient of the guidance, having to use this in day to day practice. Thus, the responses were based on the professional's point of view rather than the managers.

The majority of comments across all three of the consultations were in respect of the language of the guidance, and whether it was sufficiently clear and comprehensive. Little if anything was said by the respondents about the practice being described in the guidance. Rather than using the consultation process to advocate for greater freedoms or flexibility in the social work role, the outcome that the focus of the responses did take, was that this was a reasonably competent piece of statutory guidance to follow.

Aside from tackling the language of the guidance itself, there were a very small number of references to the use of research within the guidance. Perhaps more substantively, a challenge was made by the respondent in the responses on the grounds of competence, to a proposal to assign responsibility for a particular activity to another professional and so defend social works' professional jurisdiction.

The Executive response

Unlike BASW, the ADCS responded to the consultations on the three revisions to the statutory guidance with arguments based around both managerial and professional control (see Chapter 9).

The main areas of focus for the ADCS response on managerial controls was to look to ensure the guidance was specific enough on setting out the roles and responsibilities of the different agencies involved in working with families. This gives the Directors within the local authority the ability to then use the guidance to hold those other agencies to account. These revisions of the statutory guidance were also very focused on trying to improve the way in which the different agencies worked together, following a number of highly publicised child deaths. So the starting point for some of the ADCS challenge in the guidance was an awareness that not all agencies will have a history of co-operative working and may themselves be resistant to having a formal, legal, responsibility for child protection work. A piece of statutory guidance that set out those respective responsibilities very clearly would provide an important lever for the local Director to hold those other agencies to account.

The nature of the challenges around professional controls dealt with the usefulness of the guidance which from the ADCS perspective was based around the association's experience of delivery social work at the local authority level. Their challenge would thus be informed by what worked practically within the existing guidance and how well the proposals could be incorporated within that. These responses don't however represent a

call for substantial increases in social workers' discretion. But rather the establishment of a clear and transparent statement and containment of the roles and responsibilities of the social workers and other professionals.

RQ3 How is this combination of managerial and professional control understood and acted on by the social workers who safeguard children?

Implementation of statutory guidance – the view of management

The existence of a set of council level and then a separate set of departmental values was consistent in both research sites. These were understood and recognised by the managers in each. For one site the departmental values had been deliberately created as part of an improvement programme following a poor OFSTED inspection and helped define the shift of culture (see Director 1 Council 1, Chapter 9).

Social work values were believed by all informants to exert more influence over social workers than council values. Managers across both sites talked about their own role as sense makers and moderators. For one site this sense making related to getting greater compliance with performance standards but being supportive of staff where missing a target could be justified. For the other site, sense making was as much about seeing practice follow formal guidance as it was being a visible leader and role model for other staff in the department.

Informants across both sites asserted a need for statutory guidance. The existence of the guidance gave clarity in roles and responsibilities for not only the council but other agencies too. Its importance was also acknowledged with compliance being part of the OFSTED inspection programme. Performance against the guidance was measured through performance management systems (principally measuring processes) and for one site, provided an evidence base for their efforts to improve on their previous OFSTED inspection outcomes. Multiple channels were used by both to publish, train and brief on the guidance and updates to it. Quality assurance systems included audits of individual social workers' cases.

The role of the managers in this system was notable in several different points. Initial direction would be given on a case by a manager when first received by the department. If a social worker proposed a course of action not consistent with the guidance, managers reported this would have to be cleared by the manager or rejected. While these control points were part of an assurance process against the statutory guidance itself, the managers also performed the role of sense maker, translating the requirements of the guidance into examples of good social work practice. Attention was also paid in one site to making sure there was a consistency of behaviour among the management group, so further ensuring consistency of compliance with the guidance.

There was a difference of emphasis between the two sites on the extent to which compliance with statutory guidance was framed. For the site with a focus on improving on their previous OFSTED inspection outcome (Manager 1 Council 1 Chapter 9) the senior management were consistent in the need to follow the guidance with any easing off tied to improved inspection outcomes and an assurance that the necessary improvements were

now embedded. Straying outside of procedures was thought to put social workers at professional risk but in exceptional cases, approvals would have to be escalated to managers. The management of the second site were also starting from a point of expectation of compliance but viewed the statutory guidance as offering flexibility and also the ability of the department to set out its own operating model. Workload was however acknowledged as a factor that could compromise compliance. Both shared a comprehensive approach to briefing and training on new and changing guidance.

Managers considered the remit of social work was sufficiently broad to enable social workers to utilise their range of skills, including to challenge and hold other agencies to account for their responsibilities. While one site viewed social work as heavily governed by central government, this nonetheless made possible the use of external organisations to produce the practice manuals that support each iteration of the statutory guidance, and associated risks of organising for compliance rather than the interests of the child.

The remit and guidance were considered to be aligned but generally managers viewed other agencies as overstating the range of duties the social workers should perform. Likewise, the courts could place great demands on the council but both sites agreed that resources would be found to ensure statutory duties were met. The existence of clearly defined guidance and remit did enable both the management of the service and clarity of accountabilities.

In summary, both councils had issued statements of official values (management's use of value statements to guide employee behaviour, Chapter 3) applicable across the council

but all informants believed the professional social work values prevailed. Statutory guidance provided clarity of roles and responsibilities between agencies and the basis of a performance management framework within the council. Decisions not within the guidance could only be taken by the social worker with the prior agreement of the manager. The role of social workers was regularly overstated by other professionals

Implementation of statutory guidance – the view of social workers

Social work values were seen by social workers as both a draw in to the profession and having influence over the social workers day to day practice. One social worker (RS2/9) differentiated social work beliefs from personal ones, where the latter should not be brought into day to day work. Where values were established through previous professional training these were still considered relevant and a resource to draw on when facing new challenging family situations. But values were a combination of those individuals carry and those built up through academic study and professional training.

Generally social workers were aware of statements of values at council level but very few were able to recite these. There was a general consensus however that these were consistent with social work values but agreed it's the latter than impacts on day to day practice. But many social workers expressed sympathy for the council having to respond to funding cuts imposed by central government. The loss of local services and high workloads were seen as compromising the quality of work. The pressure of the latter was made more intense knowing their manager had access to data about how well they were complying with the guidance.

A degree of empathy was expressed (Social Worker RS1/1, RS2/5, Chapter 11) with the families finding themselves working with social services but taking care not to stray into collusion with the family. The contradictory behaviours of families were also pointed out by one social worker where they could be both aggressive and rude to the social worker, but then express regret when the case was finished and they may lose contact with the social worker. Handling the dilemmas like this that value based work can present was often through discussion with the supervisor using reflective practice. But where a social worker still felt conflicted by a decision they were comfortable attributing the official decision to the local authority. The role of the supervisor as a source of advice and guidance played a key part in whether the social workers viewed the conditions as safe to practice within. According to Nestler (2016) conditions for improved performance are enhanced where the worker feels the organisation is looking out for them in respect of which the support of the supervisor is an important aspect.

When starting work on a new case efforts to get to know the family through what was already known and written about them as well as visiting them was the most common response from social workers. Direct references to steps within the formal guidance were also offered so the starting point was a link directly into guidance rather than a step back and think about the family. Cases also appeared to be allocated with a level of management direction already given so this already set out a course of action. Meeting the family was seen as both a fact finding opportunity but also a chance to test the authenticity of what had been written about them and their willingness to engage and attempt the changes that may be required.

Reverting to common sense as well as using gut instinct were mentioned as a starting point but also a response when the guidance available appeared ambiguous and some interpretation was needed. Others handled such situations by reference to their supervisors for guidance and support.

Compliance with the guidance was the working assumption, acknowledging that on occasion the guidance didn't fit well with the particular circumstances of the case. Explicit references to the guidance became less and less as social workers became more experienced working with them, and so embedding them in their day to day practice, and even reformulating them as good practice. The systems the managers put in place to keep staff up to date on the guidance were important, particularly for new social workers struggling to translate theory teaching and practice teaching on placement in to day to day practice but also these systems and access to managers created an environment where staff felt safe to practice. According to Munro (2011) however practice delivered predominantly through following procedures leads to a passive mindset and for the social worker a reducing motivation to become more skilled.

There was a dominant feeling by social workers of them having control over day to day work with access to supervisors for guidance and support where needed. This support was also felt to be proportionate to the level of skill and experience of the social worker. At the same time as feeling control was being exercised there remained a working assumption that the guidance had to be complied with. Workload had a compromising effect on whether social workers felt they had sufficient time to spend on cases. This along with the court, who took over control once the case had entered proceedings, were the main threats to control.

Social workers consistently reported defending their remit against what other agencies assumed would be the role of the social worker. This also extended to some extent to having to hold other agencies to account to fulfil their own responsibilities. Escalation to managers was a route used when back up was required. But going the extra mile was considered by social workers to be part of the make-up of the social worker but formally extending the existing remit into other professional tasks was simply not feasible within current capacity. The arrangements within the department impacted on the extent to which social workers did or could engage with broader internal or external debates on social work. Both sites were offering opportunities for development within existing roles although the loss of some duties through restructuring was raised. Assistance with translating social work as taught, into social work as practiced was important to the social workers (see Social Workers RS2/6 and RS2/8 Chapter 11).

In summary social work values were still critical in driving people into the profession and how they tried to practice social work day to day. These values were challenged constantly by the situations of the families they were working with and also the sheer volume of work. The importance of the role of a supportive supervisor could not be overstated. While all the social workers saw getting to know the family as an early priority working with a new case, for a number this was described in terms of the procedural guidance rather than the objective. Few references were made to the use of gut instinct and experience. Compliance with the statutory guidance was both implicit and explicit and fully embedded in the way social workers were tackling their caseload. At the same time, the sense of control over day to day work was unanimous, even if there were constant battles with other professionals over the limits of their respective roles and responsibilities.

Case Work

The professional value base of the social worker was confronted in this study with increasingly challenging family situations and behaviours. This is consistent with a broader commentary across the children's social work sector. To counter this, access to supportive supervisors and line managers was critical to enable reflection and discussion about the dynamics of the case and the social workers perspective on it. The complexity of contemporary casework tested the formal statutory guidance to its limits and also required social workers to call on their knowledge of social work practice and principles, to come up with appropriate options. Focusing on the outcomes for the child and family could lead to truly creative work and provided the confidence for assertive practice that challenged the shortcomings of other professionals, and their work with the family.

Survey

The dominant view of all respondents was that social workers do apply their professional social work values in their practice. Likewise, there was a consistency of view that the social work values would have more influence over day to day practice than any official statements of values issued by the employing organisation. The dominant view of social workers regarding their practice being reflective of academic and professional training is that it was not with fewer than half of all respondents believing this to be the case. This suggests the greater influence on decision making in cases is the observance of the statutory guidance rather than the result of reflection on professional knowledge. Although the difference was not significant a higher number of managers who responded believed day to day practice was reflective of professional knowledge. The very small size of

respondents limits the ability to generalise from these results across a larger population. Nonetheless, the responses regarding social work values are consistent with earlier interview responses reported in Chapters 9 and 11. Likewise, the expectations of managers and social workers that the social workers practice complies with the statutory guidance. The responses of the social workers to the survey around management oversight of their work is also consistent with interviewees who reported the need to seek a managers approval to take any decision that may be at odds with the statutory guidance.

RQ4 What are the implications of the above for safeguarding children social work policy development and implementation?

The statutory guidance is a set of detailed instructions about what central government wants local children's social work services to do so presenting within the guidance a replica of these activities in their mature state (Majone and Wildavsky, 1979). These instructions represent standardised procedures (Timmermans and Berg, 2003) rather than standardised outcomes and so set up a tension for the social worker following the standard procedures in a dynamic environment to which the standard procedures may be ill suited (Petersen and Olsson, 2014). The local authority managers expect professional values to be influential over practice, more so than council defined beliefs. The government pay little attention to those professional values. Managers find clarity of roles and responsibilities helpful in governing their own work and in holding other agencies to account for theirs. Government make minimal references to the knowledge that underpins the professional social work qualification. Managers want to explicitly sign off any departures from the official procedures and social workers understand they need to seek

out their managers oversight when their own professional assessment appears in conflict with the official guidance. The confidence of the managers in handling dilemmas is influenced by the managers previous experience as a street level bureaucrat themselves (Gassner and Gofen, 2018). In those instances where the manager and social worker agree the interests of the children and family are better served by departing from the statutory guidance (but not legislation itself), then the guidance gives way to the values and knowledge base of the social work profession. This research presents the views of management on the role of statutory guidance and how they oversee its implementation and work with the social workers to achieve compliance with it. This perspective is largely absent from existing studies into social work delivery and reports acceptance by managers of the need for compliance and how they use their authority of both position and knowledge to achieve this.

RQ5 What are the implications of the above for theories of professionalisation, in particular as applied to social work?

Government instructs social workers, through statutory guidance, on their roles and responsibilities. Social work qualified managers will implement the official guidance but indicated their preparedness to apply professional judgement in areas where there is a conflict between the needs of the child and family and the requirements of the guidance (but staying within the legislation itself). The professional body promotes professional values and knowledge while the executive body promotes clarity of own and others' responsibilities, also wanting to retain some room for professional judgement. Social workers draw on the professional value base, professional knowledge and their managers guidance where they see a conflict. The clear application by social workers of values and

specialist knowledge supports the argument social work is a profession. This is despite the social workers also being subject to official value statements by their employer which also are intended by management to guide the behaviour of staff (Quick and Nelson, 2013).

The obligation to be qualified (and registered) to practice as a social worker also supports the argument of a profession. Controlling this element of professionalism is further strengthened by statutory guidance reinforcing that the work is reserved to social workers. The detailed prescription of roles and responsibilities within the statutory guidance does however place substantial limits on the extent to which social workers are in control of how their work is done and, according to Munro (2011) the combination of rules and monitoring create even more obstacles in the way of social workers. But this does not necessarily constitute a reduction in control over the division of their labour but rather the standardisation of the work, which is not the same as saying the work is predictable and so able to be subject to managerial control. Conflict between managerial and professional control arises where the professional application of knowledge is at odds with the standardised procedure in the official guidance. While standardisation of procedures appears to conflict with the professional's control over the division of labour, the fundamental task remains application of professional knowledge in complex and unpredictable situations.

This research has seen the evidence of a set of managerial controls – hierarchy of authority, defined roles and responsibilities, performance management systems – examined earlier in Chapter 3. The interviews in Chapters 9 and 11 describe the operation of these. The aspect of professional work that remains resistant to managerial control however, in this context, is the relationship between the social worker and the family they are working with and the assessments and judgements that social worker is making about them and what may be in their best interests. The manager can ask about this relationship

and even observe interviews and examine case records of contact between the social worker and the family. But even that relationship is dynamic and unpredictable. So the professional judgement of the social worker is paramount but in turn is contingent on the social workers own skills and experience. The strength of feedback from all participants through this research about the influence of social work values creates a set of goals for the social worker for the family they are working with that extend far more than the managerial aims for compliance with timescales and an affordable social work intervention. The tension for the manager is to give account of their use of resources to their own line manager knowing this 'accountability' conceals the extent of compromise – or not – in the quality of practice and its impact on the children and families allocated to the social workers in their team. There isn't a managerial control that can make fully transparent the content of the relationship between the social worker and the family they are working with.

Limitations to the study

There had been a number of previous revisions to the statutory guidance on which the content analysis had been based (and a further revision during the course of this research). The responses of the professional and executive representatives to the 2015 revision were in themselves small documents, with comments focused around the very particular changes in the 2015 version compared to the previous one. In order to be able to analyse a more substantial response by both, the responses to the 2015 and previous two revision consultations were brought together. This creates the potential that points made in the previous consultations may relate to content no longer within the 2015 version of the guidance.

Access to managers and social workers in two separate research sites provided some opportunity to compare and contrast responses between the two sites, rather than recruiting from one research site only. Nonetheless, there were differences between the two sites in terms of their geographical profile and their performance in OFSTED inspections. The latter potentially drives more difference in response where the local authority with an inadequate inspection outcome was working through a significant programme of performance improvement. The consequences of this situation on interview responses was more noticeable in discussion with the managers, less so across the social worker interviews. The managers of the council working through an improvement plan were focused on the measurement of compliance through regular reviews of data and following up with social workers where targets were not being met. In contrast, the managers in the other research site made less reference to monitoring data and more to challenges in the broader management of social work practice and involvement in external programmes to improve sector wide practice.

Connections between social worker interviews and examples of casework were made through the social workers providing examples of cases to illustrate their point, rather than the researcher being able to gain access directly to the case record to conduct a separate analysis of how cases were being controlled. The cases do however provide further illustration of the ways in which social workers are managing compliance with the statutory guidance alongside the application of specialist knowledge, in consultation with their line managers.

The response levels to the survey are small in relation to the population (0.42%). The proportion of managers (53%) in the respondent group is also higher than the estimated number of managers in the overall social work population (21%). The purpose of the survey was to test for empirical generalisability of responses to the themes emerging through the interview stage. Such a small sample however limits the extent to which findings can be generalisable across the children's social worker population.

The limitation on generalisability derives also from the working with two research sites, each with different characteristics, in particular where there is limited consistency in response. This does not however prevent the research providing a level of greater understanding about how children's social work is currently being managed and delivered. The two research sites are similar to other English councils in their organisational and occupational structures.

It was also beyond the scope of this research to examine the perspectives of the judiciary and children and their families, about their relationships with, and extent of control over their own working with children's social workers.

Emergent empirical findings

There are few existing studies that examine the range of perspectives on the control of children's social work within a single study and in particular that of managers of social workers. The findings here in relation to the content of government guidance are consistent with broader empirical work on the exercise of control by central government

over local government (Grubnic and Woods, 2009) through a focus on procedures and the ability to check whether these are in place.

The local authority managers interviewed described how they translated and reframed the statutory guidance so that social workers would understand the practice objective behind the requirement, even though the managers had no hand in the drafting of the guidance. The social workers describe a positive relationship with managers seeking out the manager's view in cases. This is unlike studies that have found the outcome of this tension being in turn tension and mistrust between the manager and social worker (Brown et al, 2011). Acknowledgement that part of management's role was to ensure compliance with the guidance led to anxiety for some practitioners (Wong, 2015).

The impact of workload on how social workers would like to practice, in particular the amount of time spent with the family, was found here and is consistent with other studies (see Malhotra et al 2006, Trevithick 2014 and Van Berkel and Kniesl 2016) examining the alleged rise in bureaucracy at the expense of professional judgement and a narrowing of the role. What is different in this study is the degree of sympathy the social workers feel towards their employer viewing central government as the origin of the problem. In step with their line managers, the social workers in this study stood by the influence their professional values played in their day to day practice over which, despite all the above, they still exercised a level of control.

The definitions managers and social workers gave of social work values differed between the research sites though. The site regarded as performing well in OFSTED inspection

related more to the social justice values while the site working to improve its performance focussed on values relating to professional performance (integrity).

Theoretical Implications

The findings of this study support the applicability of the two chosen theoretical frameworks within a public policy context. Regarding Simons' managerial control framework, the elements of boundary, diagnostic and belief controls were strongly present in the two study sites. Interactive controls were less relevant in the context of statutorily defined and government funded services.

Throughout the research the other boundary, diagnostic and belief controls were demonstrably present and applied by managers to social workers and social work. The implementation of elements of Simons' control levers involved technology, where electronic case management systems are both receptive to information but also informative in managing workflows. This technology strengthens the oversight (Manager 1 Council 2 Chapter 9 and Social Workers RS2/7 and RS2/8Chapter 11) and overall control of management over the status of work (but not the face to face work of the social worker with a family for eg) who also have compliance with the statutory guidance in their sights.

Similarly, the framework of professional control derived from the work of Freidson was empirically applied throughout this study and the four key domains were able to be compared and contrasted with the four within Simons' managerial control framework. Division of labour as one of the four domains required some contextualising given the level

of standardisation that the statutory guidance inevitably gives rise to. While the application of specialist knowledge by the social workers creates a specialisation in their labour that is in part discretionary (Friedson, 2001), there is also mechanical specialisation through the statutory guidance amendable to bureaucratic control. This does not detract however from the complexity of the work and the need to apply professional specialist knowledge in each and every decision. For the purpose of this study control over the decision which may then lead to adoption of a standardised response under the statutory guidance was still found to be the exercise of professional control.

The lack of conflict between the official values of the council and the professional values of the social worker was unexpected where at both the senior and middle manager levels there was no surprise this should be the case and likewise no question on the part of the social workers. Chapter 3 describes the role managers statements about general beliefs have in guiding the work of the organisation. The presence of strong professional values as described in Chapter 4 exercised a far greater influence on the social workers almost to the exclusion of the official managerial statements. This extends our understanding about the impact of the presence of a strong set of professional values within a bureaucracy and framework of managerial controls.

A further finding that links the work of both managerial and professional control was in the way the professionally qualified managers reframed the managerial requirement into one that would resonate with the professional frontline workers interests (including time limits preventing work with a family being delayed (RS2/5) and how social workers did this for themselves (following standard in turn gave the social workers confidence their own work was of a good standard (RS2/8) see Chapter 11b)). Overall the study found the

managerial controls effective in the delivery of frontline practice consistent with the requirements of the guidance.

Working with two frameworks has also revealed the extent to which both are active in the setting for the study but also how each varies in differing parts of the system from central government through to frontline practice and between individuals working within it. In particular, the absence of the professional framework in central government guidance. The promotion of both frameworks was evident by the non-professionally qualified senior managers, including the role of social work values by Directors and operational managers. The professional body placed most emphasis on the need to allow social workers to use their professional knowledge, to which little reference was made by the social workers themselves. Social workers responses adopted both theoretical frameworks.

While the overall role of managers to provide both professional oversight as well as ensuring compliance has previously been found (Purcell and Cho, 2011) the expectation by managers that the professional values form an important part of social workers day to day practice has not previously been explored through empirical studies. Likewise, while the role of ensuring compliance has been previously explored (Hoybye-Mortensen 2013, Dehart-Davis & Pandey 2005), the findings here lay out very clearly the expectation of managers that social workers may have occasion to find a conflict between their own professional judgement and the official guidance, which they should then bring to their line manager to discuss. Likewise, the social workers in this study understood and accepted this was the way to resolve the conflict. This is not the same however as previous studies that report on the loss of discretion in professional decision making (Palermo et al, 2010) in the context of broader managerial reforms across public services. This does however

reflect an environment in which practice is driven by a framework of rules and monitoring, a picture largely unchanged from the one described by Munro in 2011, arguably even more so.

Implications for further research required

A further area of research would be to examine in greater detail the areas of commonality and difference between the descriptions attached to professional values by managers and social workers, given the consistency of views expressed by managers and social workers as to their importance and influence over professional work.

This research has also focused on three roles (Director, Manager and Social Worker). There are a number of other roles including Senior Practitioners, Principal Social Workers and Practice Teachers, who all play distinct roles in the support of social workers and their practice. Their experiences of the tension between professional best interests decision making and the statutory guidance and how they see their own role in the frameworks of control in the local authority would be of interest.

This study has also not explicitly examined the role of organisational culture on the way social workers and managers are working and how they feel about that. The two research sites were in different positions in relation to their performance in recent OFSTED inspections which set the tone for what each department was focused on – innovation versus performance improvement. There were also some individual insights where social workers referred to experiences in other local authorities. While the role of values was

deliberately explored in this research, the role of organisational culture would be a useful further study.

Policy implications

The first implication is the resilience of professional values on the frontline of service delivery. The managers and social workers in this study consistently talked of the importance of these values and their influence on practice without any reference being, or needing to be, made to them within the statutory guidance.

A further implication arises from recognising the feasibility for standardisation of procedures (Timmermans and Berg, 2003) to co-exist with professional decision making in unpredictable situations and social uncertainty and so continue the debate on the relevance of evidence based – or guided – practice (Glitterman and Knight, 2013).

Finally, that while central government guidance continues to include contents that are either ambiguous or in conflict with the judgement of those professionals required to follow the guidance, then the government must accept the gap left by this ambiguity will be filled by the exercise by the professional of their discretion but that this will be in consultation and agreement with their line manager.

Appendix A

The statutory basis of child protection social work: Children Act 1989, sections 17, 31 and 47

17 Provision of services for children in need, their families and others.

(1) It shall be the general duty of every local authority (in addition to the other duties imposed on them by this Part)—

(a) to safeguard and promote the welfare of children within their area who are in need; and

(b) so far as is consistent with that duty, to promote the upbringing of such children by their families, by providing a range and level of services appropriate to those children's needs

(10) For the purposes of this Part a child shall be taken to be in need if—

(a) he is unlikely to achieve or maintain, or to have the opportunity of achieving or maintaining, a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision for him of services by a local authority under this Part;

(b) his health or development is likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired, without the provision for him of such services; or

(c) he is disabled,

and "family", in relation to such a child, includes any person who has parental responsibility for the child and any other person with whom he has been living.

31 Care and Supervision

(1) On the application of any local authority or authorised person, the court may make an order—

(a) placing the child with respect to whom the application is made in the care of a designated local authority; or

(b) putting him under the supervision of a designated local authority F1. . .

(2) A court may only make a care order or supervision order if it is satisfied—

(a) that the child concerned is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm; and

(b) that the harm, or likelihood of harm, is attributable to—

(i) the care given to the child, or likely to be given to him if the order were not made, not being what it would be reasonable to expect a parent to give to him; or

(ii) the child's being beyond parental control.

47 Local authority's duty to investigate.

(1) Where a local authority—

(a) are informed that a child who lives, or is found, in their area—

(i) is the subject of an emergency protection order; or

(ii) is in police protection; F323. . .

(iii) F323.

(b) have reasonable cause to suspect that a child who lives, or is found, in their area is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm,

the authority shall make, or cause to be made, such enquiries as they consider necessary to enable them to decide whether they should take any action to safeguard or promote the child's welfare.

Appendix B

Search criteria for selection of empirical studies

The analysis of case studies was based on a review of papers published since 2010 in journals covering:

- public administration,
- policy administration,
- social services and social work, and
- local government studies.

Articles were selected in part through a review of the indexes of journals in these particular fields and also based on their being returned through a search against a number of electronic databases, using search terms:

- managerial control,
- managerialism,
- professional control, and
- professionalism

Results were filtered to those having a focus on the management and organisation of children's social work and not papers on theories of social work practice itself.

Appendix C

Survey of Managers and Social Workers

Information for Participants on this research project

Purpose of the study: My name is Julie Brown and I am undertaking a Doctorate at Plymouth University. I am doing some research to explore how managerial and professional control impact on safeguarding children social workers and their practice. My research so far has involved an examination of a variety of statutory guidance and related documents. I have also conducted interviews with social workers, their managers and the Directors of Children's Services in two local authorities. I am looking for volunteers to take part in this final survey stage of the study. This survey is targeted at safeguarding children social workers, their managers and Directors of Children's Services. Before you decide whether or not to take part, I would like you to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you.

What will I be asked to do? You are being asked to complete this survey. This survey should take no more than a few minutes of your time.

Why have you been asked to take part? You have been asked because you are a social worker, social work manager or Director of Children's Services involved in an English Local Authority safeguarding children social work.

Do you have to take part? It is up to you to decide to complete the survey. If you submit a completed survey on line, then I will take this as you providing informed consent to participate in this study. You are free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason.

What are the possible advantages and disadvantages of taking part? You may find there are no direct benefits for you personally in taking part, beyond making a contribution to the research itself. This is an opportunity for you to think about your experiences of exercising professional control within a framework of guidance that features a high degree of managerial control, written and issued by central government. The main disadvantage is of course the giving up of some of your time to complete this survey, and I acknowledge the tremendous pressures that accompany working in children's social services.

Will your participation in the study be kept confidential? No clues to your identity will appear in the written study.

What will happen to the information which you give? Any hard copies of data will be kept securely in a locked cabinet. Digital data will be password protected and encrypted. The information will be kept securely for a minimum of 10 years in line with Plymouth University policy.

What will happen to the results? The findings will be written up as a thesis and for publication and presentation at research conferences. A brief summary of the findings can be made available on request.

Who has reviewed this study? Approval has been given by Plymouth University Faculty of Health and Human Sciences Ethics Committee. Reference Number: (16/17)-651.

Any further queries? In the event that you have any queries or complaints about this research, please contact the principal investigator (Julie Brown, Telephone number 07557 002230).

If you want to make a complaint about the conduct of the research then you can also contact the Research Administrator for the Faculty of Health and Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee, Telephone 01752 585339 or email hhsethics@plymouth.ac.uk.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information. This survey closes 17.00pm Sunday 3rd June 2018.

The survey questions

Using values and beliefs to guide decisions and behaviour (Page 2)

Question Title

1. Social workers apply social work values and beliefs to their day to day practice.

Question Title

2. Social work values and beliefs are more influential over social work than the local authority's own values.

Applying limits to the activities workers carry out (Page 3)

Question Title

3. Day to day practice reflects the cumulative academic and professional social work training.

Question Title

4. Day to day practice follows government guidance.

Question Title

5. Managers require compliance with government guidance at all times.

Controlling the way in which work is performed (Page 4)

Question Title

6. Social workers have control over the way in which they carry out their work.

Question Title

7. Managers control the way in which social workers do their work.

Defining the jurisdiction of children's social work (Page 5)

Question Title

8. The social work profession is in control of its own destiny.

My role in children's social services (Page 6)

Question Title

9. My current position working in children's social services is as a

Director of Children's Services

Manager of children's social work team or service

Children's social worker

Appendix D

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Appendix C: Further sources of information

Supplementary guidance on particular safeguarding issues

Supplementary guidance to support assessing the needs of children

Supplementary guidance to support the Learning and Improvement Framework

Appendix E

Analysis of Coding of Statutory Guidance

Description	Code	Code Cluster	Type of Control
Managerial Control			250
1.0 Belief System		2	
1.4 government requires that the work carried out should be informed by the views and wishes of the children (and their families)	2		
2.0 Diagnostic System		43	
2.2.1 government requires the inclusion of certain fields and information in the case record as an outcome	4		
2.3 government specifies numerical targets to be met in implementing the instructions in the statutory guidance document	8		
2.4 government requires implementation of systems to monitor and report performance	8		
2.1.1 government requires that particular actions are carried out and kept under review	9		
2.3.2 government requires that the LSCB implement systems to monitor and report on performance	11		
2.4.1 Use of supervision to provide management oversight of decision making	3		
3.0 Boundary System		205	
3.4.12 government defines activities but not whose responsibility it is	4		
3.4.6 government sets out an action that should be taken but does not specify by whom	1		
3.4.15 government requires compliance unless exceptional circumstances	1		
3.4.16 government defines the principles underpinning effective work	28		
3.4.21 government defines a range of services that should be available	1		
3.4.23 government defines areas to be included within locally developed guidance	5		
3.4.3 government sets out the type of support the service users should receive	3		
10.1 definition of terms, regulations or legislation	12		
3.4.17 government sets out roles and responsibilities for action by all professionals	16		
3.4.18 government specifies an action for the LSCB to take	17		

3.4.19 guidance sets out roles and responsibility of local agencies	43		
3.4.20 government sets out roles and responsibilities for any professional (including lay persons)	7		
3.4.22 government defines an activity that the social work manager should take	1		
3.4.24 guidance sets out the roles and responsibilities of the social worker	8		
3.4.25 government sets out an action for the local authority's social care to take	9		
3.4.26 government describes a risk to the child and how any professionals should deal with it	2		
3.4.27 government sets out the roles and responsibilities of the Chief Executive	1		
3.4.40 Responsibilities and activities required of both the social worker and their manager	14		
3.4.8 government describes an action for the local authority to take	10		
3.025 government defines the areas of policy and practice for agency and individual involvement	2		
10.2.5 authorities under which the guidance is issued	8		
3.022 government specifies areas of policy or practice for the social worker	3		
3.12 government specifies other guidance that the social worker must consider	4		
3.10 government defines the agencies to whom the guidance applies	5		
Professional Control			8
6.0 Body of Knowledge		8	
6.3.2 the importance of research into social work is recognised through its use in government policy making	3		
6.6 there is a body of knowledge relevant to the professional field an understanding of which is relevant to practice	5		

Appendix F

Analysis of Coding of ADCS Consultation Response

Description	Type of Control	Theme of Control	Code Cluster	Code
2015 Consultation				
Managerial Control	7			
3.0 Boundary Systems		7		
3.4.30 government specifies activities that should be carried out			7	
3.4.19 guidance sets out roles and responsibility of local agencies				1
10.1 definition of terms, regulations or legislation				1
3.4.7 government describes a risk to child and how the local authority should deal with it				1
6.7.4 implementation of guidance is inconsistent or misunderstood				3
6.7.8 challenge to the utility of guidance				1
Professional Control	10			
6.0 Body of Knowledge		10		
6.6 there is a body of knowledge relevant to the professional field an understanding of which is relevant to practice			4	
6.4.1 changes in government guidance incorporating research are subject to public consultation including professional associations			6	
6.7.9 government guidance lacks sufficient transparency				2
7.1.5 challenge existing guidance as potentially detrimental to effective professional practice				1
6.7.7 guidance not sufficiently comprehensive				3
2013 Consultation				
Managerial Control	17			
3.0 Boundary Systems		17		
3.4.30 government specifies activities that should be carried out			17	
3.4.19 guidance sets out roles and responsibility of local agencies				14
3.4.18 government specifies an action for the LSCB to take				1
6.7.8 challenge to the utility of guidance				2

Professional Control	27			
6.0 Body of Knowledge		27		
6.4.1 changes in government guidance incorporating research are subject to public consultation including professional associations			27	
6.3.1. guidance fails to recognise relevant research				1
6.7.1 guidance is criticised for its ambiguous language				4
6.7.2 guidance contains language that conflicts with other existing guidance				2
6.7.7 guidance not sufficiently comprehensive				9
6.7.6 more definitions needed to bring greater clarity to guidance document				11
2010 Consultation				
Managerial Control	7			
3.0 Boundary Systems		7		
3.4.30 government specifies activities that should be carried out			7	
3.4.19 guidance sets out roles and responsibility of local agencies				3
6.7.8 challenge to the utility of guidance				4
Professional Control	29			
6.0 Body of Knowledge		29		
6.6 there is a body of knowledge relevant to the professional field an understanding of which is relevant to practice			5	
6.6 there is a body of knowledge relevant to the professional field an understanding of which is relevant to practice				3
3.6.1 instruction for managers to observe guidance but to also look to other unspecified guidance and good practice				2
6.4.1 changes in government guidance incorporating research are subject to public consultation including professional associations			24	
6.7.1 guidance is criticised for its ambiguous language				4
6.7.6 more definitions needed to bring greater clarity to guidance document				2
6.7.7 guidance not sufficiently comprehensive				6
6.2.1 guidance offers no additional value				4
6.3.1. guidance fails to recognise relevant research				4
6.7.2 guidance contains language that conflicts with other existing guidance				4

Summary				
Managerial Control:				
Boundary	31			
Professional Control:				
Body of knowledge	66			
Total	97			

Appendix G

Analysis of Coding of BASW Consultation Responses

Description	Type of Control	Theme of Control	Code Cluster	Code
2015 Consultation				
Managerial Control	1			
Boundary Controls		1		
3.4.30 government specifies activities that should be carried out			1	
6.7.4 implementation of guidance is inconsistent or misunderstood				1
Professional Control	11			
5.0 Labour Market		3		
7.1.2 the professional association rejects appropriateness of government guidance on basis of skills of the nominated professionals to do this			3	3
6.0 Body of Knowledge		7		
6.6 there is a body of knowledge relevant to the professional field an understanding of which is relevant to practice			1	
6.4.1 changes in government guidance incorporating research are subject to public consultation including professional associations			6	
6.3.1. the professional association challenges government guidance as failing to recognise relevant research				2
6.7.1 the profession (BASW) challenges government to remove or improve ambiguous language in existing and proposed statutory guidance				3
6.7.2 the professional association challenges the government to remove language that conflicts with other existing guidance				1
9.0 Ideology		1		
9.1.1 the professional association challenges government over adequacy of funding as a barrier to providing effective support			1	
2013 Consultation				
Managerial Control	4			
3.0 Boundary Systems		4		

3.4.30 government specifies activities that should be carried out			4	
3.4.19 guidance sets out roles and responsibility of local agencies				2
3.4.24 guidance sets out the roles and responsibilities of the social worker				1
6.7.8 challenge to the utility of guidance				1
Professional Control	10			
5.0 Labour Market		1		
5.1 the social work remit is defined and reserved for those who hold the qualification			1	
6.0 Body of Knowledge		5		
6.4.1 changes in government guidance incorporating research are subject to public consultation including professional associations			5	
6.4.1 changes in government guidance incorporating research are subject to public consultation including professional associations				2
6.7.5 BASW challenges removal of or reduction in statutory guidance				3
7.0 Division of Labour		2		
7.1.3 social workers exercise control over the way in which their work is carried out			2	
9.0 Ideology		2		
9.2.1 the professional association cites funding shortfalls as responsible for existing inadequate provision of support			1	
9.1.2 commitment to the best outcome for children			1	
2010 Consultation				
Managerial Control	4			
Boundary Controls		4		
3.4.30 government specifies activities that should be carried out			4	
6.7.4 implementation of guidance is inconsistent or misunderstood				4
Professional Control	15			
6.0 Body of Knowledge		15		
6.6 there is a body of knowledge relevant to the professional field an understanding of which is relevant to practice			1	

6.4.1 changes in government guidance incorporating research are subject to public consultation including professional associations			13	
6.7.1 guidance is criticised for its ambiguous language				4
6.7.6 BASW calls for more definitions to bring greater clarity to guidance document				2
6.7.7 guidance not sufficiently comprehensive				7
3.4.5 government sets out the areas of knowledge that workers should possess and how this should be used in their work			1	
9.0 Ideology		1		
9.2.5 the professional association challenges government over the absence of the concept of partnership with families and communities			1	
Summary				
Managerial Control:				
Boundary Controls	9			
Professional Control:				
Labour Market	4			
Body of Knowledge	27			
Division of Labour	2			
Ideology	4			
Total	46			

Appendix H

Extract from Policy Documents Showing Coding

2.2.1 government requires the inclusion of certain fields and information in the case record as an outcome

The plan should set out what services are to be delivered, and what actions are to be undertaken, by whom and for what purpose.

2.2.1 government requires the inclusion of certain fields and information in the case record as an outcome

54. Many services provided will be for parents or carers (and may include services identified in a parent carer's or non-parent carer's needs assessment).¹⁸ The plan should reflect this and set clear measurable outcomes for the child and expectations for the parents, with measurable, reviewable actions for them.

2.1.1 government requires that particular actions are carried out and kept under review

55. The plan should be reviewed regularly to analyse whether sufficient progress has been made to meet the child's needs and the level of risk faced by the child. This will be important for neglect cases where parents and carers can make small improvements. The test should be whether any improvements in adult behaviour are sufficient and sustained.

3.4.40 Responsibilities and activities required of both the social worker and their manager

Social workers and their managers should consider the need for further action and record their decisions.

2.1.1 government requires that particular actions are carried out and kept under review

The review points should be agreed by the social worker with other professionals and with the child and family to continue evaluating the impact of any change on the welfare of the child.

2.4.1 Use of supervision to provide management oversight of decision making

56. Effective professional supervision can play a critical role in ensuring a clear focus on a child's welfare. Supervision should support professionals to reflect critically on the impact of their decisions on the child and their family.

3.4.40 Responsibilities and activities required of both the social worker and their manager

The social worker and their manager should review the plan for the child. Together they should ask whether the help given is leading to a significant positive change for the child and whether the pace of that change is appropriate for the child.

2.4.1 Use of supervision to provide management oversight of decision making

Any professional working with vulnerable children should always have access to a manager to talk through their concerns and judgements affecting the welfare of the child.

2.1.1 government requires that particular actions are carried out and kept under review

Assessment should remain an ongoing process, with the impact of services informing future decisions around action.

6.6 there is a body of knowledge relevant to the professional field an understanding of which is relevant to practice

57. The timeliness of an assessment is a critical element of the quality of that assessment and the outcomes for the child. The speed with which an assessment is carried out after a child's case has been referred into local authority children's social care should be determined by the needs of the individual child and the nature and level of any risk of harm faced by the child.

3.4.40 Responsibilities and activities required of both the social worker and their manager

This will require judgements to be made by the social worker in discussion with their manager on each individual case.

6.6 there is a body of knowledge relevant to the professional field an understanding of which is relevant to practice

Adult assessments, i.e. parent carer or non-parent carer assessments, should also be carried out in a timely manner, consistent with the needs of the child.

2.3 government specifies numerical targets to be met in implementing the instructions in the statutory guidance document

58. Within one working day of a referral being received, a local authority social worker should make a decision about the type of response that is required and acknowledge receipt to the referrer.

3.4.26 government describes a risk to the child and how any professionals should deal with it

59. For children who are in need of immediate protection, action must be taken by the social worker, or the police or NSPCC if removal is required, as soon as possible after the referral has been made to local authority children's social care (sections 44 and 46 of the Children Act 1989).

2.3 government specifies numerical targets to be met in implementing the instructions in the statutory guidance document

60. The maximum timeframe for the assessment to conclude, such that it is possible to reach a decision on next steps, should be no longer than 45 working days from the point of referral. If, in discussion with a child and their family and other professionals, an assessment exceeds 45 working days the social worker should record the reasons for exceeding the time limit.

3.4.16 government defines the principles underpinning effective work

61. Whatever the timescale for assessment, where particular needs are identified at any stage of the assessment, social workers should not wait until the assessment reaches a conclusion before commissioning services to support the child and their family. In some cases the needs of the child will mean that a quick assessment will be required.

6.6 there is a body of knowledge relevant to the professional field an understanding of which is relevant to practice

62. The assessment of neglect cases can be difficult. Neglect can fluctuate both in level and duration. A child's welfare can, for example, improve following input from services or a change in circumstances and review, but then deteriorate once support is removed. Professionals should be wary of being too optimistic. Timely and decisive action is critical to ensure that children are not left in neglectful homes.

3.4.24 guidance sets out the roles and responsibilities of the social worker

63. It is the responsibility of the social worker to make clear to children and families how the assessment will be carried out and when they can expect a decision on next steps.

3.4.23 government defines areas to be included within locally developed guidance

64. To facilitate the shift to an assessment process which brings continuity and consistency for children and families, there will no longer be a requirement to conduct separate initial and core assessments. Local authorities should determine their local assessment processes through a local protocol.

3.4.23 government defines areas to be included within locally developed guidance

65. Local authorities, with their partners, should develop and publish local protocols for assessment. A local protocol should set out clear arrangements for how cases will be managed once a child is referred into local authority children's social care and be consistent with the requirements of this statutory guidance. The detail of each protocol will be led by the local authority in discussion with their partners and agreed with the relevant LSCB.

3.4.23 government defines areas to be included within locally developed guidance

66. A local protocol should set out and clarify how statutory social care assessments will be informed by, and inform, other specialist assessments (for example, an assessment for an Education Health and Care Plan, or an assessment by adult services).

3.4.19 guidance sets out roles and responsibility of local agencies

67. The local authority is publicly accountable for this protocol and all organisations and agencies have a responsibility to understand their local protocol.

3.4.23 government defines areas to be included within locally developed guidance

The local protocol for assessment should:

- ensure that assessments are timely, transparent and proportionate to the needs of individual children and their families;
- set out how the needs of disabled children, young carers and children involved in the youth justice system will be addressed in the assessment process;
- clarify how agencies and professionals undertaking assessments and providing services can make contributions;
- clarify how the statutory assessments will be informed by other specialist assessments, such as the assessment for children with special educational needs (Education, Health and Care Plan) and disabled children;
- clarify how assessment will address the issue of female genital mutilation; • ensure that any specialist assessments are coordinated so that the child and family experience a joined up assessment process and a single planning process focused on outcomes;
- set out how shared internal review points with other professionals and the child and family will be managed throughout the assessment process;
- set out the process for assessment for children who return home from care to live with their families;
- seek to ensure that each child and family understands the type of help offered and their own responsibilities, so as to improve the child's outcomes;

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- set out the process for challenge by children and families by publishing the complaints procedures;19 and

- require decisions to be recorded in accordance with locally agreed procedures.

Recording should include information on the child's development so that progress can be monitored to ensure their outcomes are improving. This will reduce the need for repeat assessments during care proceedings, which can be a major source of delay.

Appendix I

Survey Responses and Descriptive Statistics

			Apply values					Total	
			Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree		
Role	Director	Count	0	0	0	1	1	2	
		% within Role	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%	
		% within Apply values	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.7%	2.4%	2.3%	
	Manager	Count	0	0	0	21	18	39	
		% within Role	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	53.8%	46.2%	100.0%	
		% within Apply values	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	56.8%	42.9%	45.3%	
	Social Worker	Count	0	2	3	13	19	37	
		% within Role	0.0%	5.4%	8.1%	35.1%	51.4%	100.0%	
		% within Apply values	0.0%	100.0%	75.0%	35.1%	45.2%	43.0%	
	Not stated	Count	1	0	1	2	4	8	
		% within Role	12.5%	0.0%	12.5%	25.0%	50.0%	100.0%	
		% within Apply values	100.0%	0.0%	25.0%	5.4%	9.5%	9.3%	
Tot- al		Count	1	2	4	37	42	86	
		% within Role	1.2%	2.3%	4.7%	43.0%	48.8%	100.0%	
		% within Apply values	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
			More influence					Total	
			Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree		
Role	Director	Count	0	0	0	0	2	2	
		% within Role	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
		% within More influence	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	16.7%	2.3%	
	Manager	Count	0	3	9	21	6	39	
		% within Role	0.0%	7.7%	23.1%	53.8%	15.4%	100.0%	

		% within More influence	0.0%	27.3%	42.9%	55.3%	50.0%	45.3%	
	Social Worker	Count	3	7	10	14	3	37	
		% within Role	8.1%	18.9%	27.0%	37.8%	8.1%	100.0%	
		% within More influence	75.0%	63.6%	47.6%	36.8%	25.0%	43.0%	
	Not stated	Count	1	1	2	3	1	8	
		% within Role	12.5%	12.5%	25.0%	37.5%	12.5%	100.0%	
		% within More influence	25.0%	9.1%	9.5%	7.9%	8.3%	9.3%	
Tot- al		Count	4	11	21	38	12	86	
		% within Role	4.7%	12.8%	24.4%	44.2%	14.0%	100.0%	
		% within More influence	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
			Follow guidance						Total
			Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Skipped question	
Role	Director	Count	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
		% within Role	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
		% within Follow guidance	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	4.1%	0.0%	0.0%	2.3%
	Manager	Count	0	0	2	23	14	0	39
		% within Role	0.0%	0.0%	5.1%	59.0%	35.9%	0.0%	100.0%
		% within Follow guidance	0.0%	0.0%	28.6%	46.9%	53.8%	0.0%	45.3%
	Social Worker	Count	1	1	4	20	11	0	37
		% within Role	2.7%	2.7%	10.8%	54.1%	29.7%	0.0%	100.0%
		% within Follow guidance	50.0%	100.0%	57.1%	40.8%	42.3%	0.0%	43.0%
	Not stated	Count	1	0	1	4	1	1	8
		% within Role	12.5%	0.0%	12.5%	50.0%	12.5%	12.5%	100.0%
		% within Follow guidance	50.0%	0.0%	14.3%	8.2%	3.8%	100.0%	9.3%
Tot- al		Count	2	1	7	49	26	1	86
		% within Role	2.3%	1.2%	8.1%	57.0%	30.2%	1.2%	100.0%
		% within Follow guidance	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

			Reflects training						Total
			Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Skipped question	
Role	Director	Count	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
		% within Role	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
		% within Reflects training	0.0%	5.0%	5.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.3%
	Manager	Count	0	8	8	19	4	0	39
		% within Role	0.0%	20.5%	20.5%	48.7%	10.3%	0.0%	100.0%
		% within Reflects training	0.0%	40.0%	42.1%	61.3%	36.4%	0.0%	45.3%
	Social Worker	Count	2	11	9	8	6	1	37
		% within Role	5.4%	29.7%	24.3%	21.6%	16.2%	2.7%	100.0%
		% within Reflects training	66.7%	55.0%	47.4%	25.8%	54.5%	50.0%	43.0%
	Not stated	Count	1	0	1	4	1	1	8
		% within Role	12.5%	0.0%	12.5%	50.0%	12.5%	12.5%	100.0%
		% within Reflects training	33.3%	0.0%	5.3%	12.9%	9.1%	50.0%	9.3%
Total		Count	3	20	19	31	11	2	86
		% within Role	3.5%	23.3%	22.1%	36.0%	12.8%	2.3%	100.0%
		% within Reflects training	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
			Require compliance						Total
			Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Skipped question	
Role	Director	Count	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
		% within Role	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
		% within Require compliance	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	4.5%	0.0%	0.0%	2.3%
	Manager	Count	0	4	6	21	8	0	39
		% within Role	0.0%	10.3%	15.4%	53.8%	20.5%	0.0%	100.0%
		% within Require compliance	0.0%	57.1%	42.9%	47.7%	44.4%	0.0%	45.3%
	Social Worker	Count	1	3	7	16	10	0	37

		% within Role	2.7%	8.1%	18.9%	43.2%	27.0%	0.0%	100.0%
		% within Require compliance	50.0%	42.9%	50.0%	36.4%	55.6%	0.0%	43.0%
	Not stated	Count	1	0	1	5	0	1	8
		% within Role	12.5%	0.0%	12.5%	62.5%	0.0%	12.5%	100.0%
		% within Require compliance	50.0%	0.0%	7.1%	11.4%	0.0%	100.0%	9.3%
Total		Count	2	7	14	44	18	1	86
		% within Role	2.3%	8.1%	16.3%	51.2%	20.9%	1.2%	100.0%
		% within Require compliance	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
			Control over work						Total
			Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Skipped question	
Role	Director	Count	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
		% within Role	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
		% within Control over work	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	5.4%	0.0%	0.0%	2.3%
	Manager	Count	0	8	7	23	1	0	39
		% within Role	0.0%	20.5%	17.9%	59.0%	2.6%	0.0%	100.0%
		% within Control over work	0.0%	36.4%	36.8%	62.2%	20.0%	0.0%	45.3%
	Social Worker	Count	2	12	10	10	3	0	37
		% within Role	5.4%	32.4%	27.0%	27.0%	8.1%	0.0%	100.0%
		% within Control over work	100.0%	54.5%	52.6%	27.0%	60.0%	0.0%	43.0%
	Not stated	Count	0	2	2	2	1	1	8
		% within Role	0.0%	25.0%	25.0%	25.0%	12.5%	12.5%	100.0%
		% within Control over work	0.0%	9.1%	10.5%	5.4%	20.0%	100.0%	9.3%
Total		Count	2	22	19	37	5	1	86
		% within Role	2.3%	25.6%	22.1%	43.0%	5.8%	1.2%	100.0%

		% within Control over work	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
			Managers control						Total
			Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Skipped question	
Role	Director	Count	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
		% within Role	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
		% within Managers control	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	5.3%	0.0%	0.0%	2.3%
	Manager	Count	0	10	13	15	1	0	39
		% within Role	0.0%	25.6%	33.3%	38.5%	2.6%	0.0%	100.0%
		% within Managers control	0.0%	76.9%	48.1%	39.5%	16.7%	0.0%	45.3%
	Social Worker	Count	0	3	12	17	5	0	37
		% within Role	0.0%	8.1%	32.4%	45.9%	13.5%	0.0%	100.0%
		% within Managers control	0.0%	23.1%	44.4%	44.7%	83.3%	0.0%	43.0%
	Not stated	Count	1	0	2	4	0	1	8
		% within Role	12.5%	0.0%	25.0%	50.0%	0.0%	12.5%	100.0%
		% within Managers control	100.0%	0.0%	7.4%	10.5%	0.0%	100.0%	9.3%
Total		Count	1	13	27	38	6	1	86
		% within Role	1.2%	15.1%	31.4%	44.2%	7.0%	1.2%	100.0%
		% within Managers control	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
			Control of destiny						Total
			Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Skipped question	
Role	Director	Count	0	0	0	1	1	0	2
		% within Role	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	100.0%
		% within Control of destiny	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%	50.0%	0.0%	2.3%
	Manager	Count	6	17	9	6	1	0	39
		% within Role	15.4%	43.6%	23.1%	15.4%	2.6%	0.0%	100.0%
		% within Control	42.9%	41.5%	47.4%	75.0%	50.0%	0.0%	45.3%

		of destiny							
	Social Worker	Count	8	22	6	1	0	0	37
		% within Role	21.6%	59.5%	16.2%	2.7%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
		% within Control of destiny	57.1%	53.7%	31.6%	12.5%	0.0%	0.0%	43.0%
	Not stated	Count	0	2	4	0	0	2	8
		% within Role	0.0%	25.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%	100.0%
		% within Control of destiny	0.0%	4.9%	21.1%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	9.3%
Total		Count	14	41	19	8	2	2	86
		% within Role	16.3%	47.7%	22.1%	9.3%	2.3%	2.3%	100.0%
		% within Control of destiny	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

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