# The influence of organisational culture on decision-making and Corporate Parenting.

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I Lynn Hatch declare that this thesis is my own work and that no material contained in it has been submitted for another academic award.

A full list of references has been included.

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**Abstract**

This small scale study explores whether organisational cultures influence the decision-making of professionals, from different agencies, who have had the roles and responsibilities of corporate parenting imposed upon them. Using a phenomenological approach, exploring how the beliefs, cultures and attitudes of their organisations might influence their opinions and, in turn their decisions, the aim is to gain some understanding of the social and psychological perceptions of situations as viewed by each of those corporate parents participating in this research.

A qualitative study was conducted using email vignettes following a young care leaver through three scenarios. The participants were from the police, social work, health and Children's Panel members, all of whom were affiliated to organisations named as corporate partners. The themes emerging through the analysis process were collaborative working; organisational cultures; decision-making; assessment and, finally, the similarities and differences in responses from a professional viewpoint and as a parent. The expectation of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 is that corporate parents should treat young care leavers as if they were their own child. Whether 'parenting' in this arena could also be influenced by the organisational culture of the respondents was also explored.

My research found that organisational cultures do influence the decisions made by corporate parents and that, although collaborative working was mentioned by some of the participants, they appeared to focus only on their specific function. The findings explore whether there is a collective understanding of collaborative working and the roles and responsibilities of corporate parenting throughout the named partners. This research also questioned whether corporate parents could respond to young care leavers as if they were their own child and indicated a need for joint training as to what is expected as the parent of a young care leaver.

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**Chapter 1: Introduction**

This introduction provides an overview of the thesis and introduces the need for this research, exploring the influence of organisational cultures, in the current policy and research climate, on the decision-making of some of those individuals affiliated to the corporate parenting partners. The partner agencies are set out in Schedule 4 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, with the concept of promoting the interests of children and young people being central to corporate parenting (App 1). This builds upon an earlier definition of what is expected of corporate parents, as outlined by the *Quality Protects Programme*, placing a legal and moral duty on corporate parents to provide the same level of support for those children and young people who are, or have been, looked after as any good parents would offer to their own children (UK Parliament in 1998).

Corporate parenting, care leavers and care experienced are terms that are used throughout this research and, for the sake of clarity, care experienced, formerly defined as "looked after children" in section 17 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 and the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011, is defined as:

> "A child or young person who is cared for by the government in various types of care, which are: foster; residential; kinship (relatives or friends); looked after at home; and secure care".

Although only a slight difference between care experienced and care leavers, the different levels of supports provided are significant. Care experienced, as defined above, need only have been in the care of the local authority for a short time. However, if this extends to their 16th birthday or beyond, they are known as care leavers and entitled to an aftercare or throughcare service until they reach the age of 26 years (Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014). Care leavers and the way they are corporate parented is the focus of my research.

**Literature Review**

The current notion of corporate parenting, which was perceived to be a protective factor, appears to have been led by policies and legislation including the Children (Scotland) Act 1995, the Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001, Support and

Assistance of Young People Leaving Care (Scotland) Regulations 2004. More recently, the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 naming, for the first time, the partners involved in corporate parenting (App 1). This study explores how some of the participating stakeholders make sense of the roles and responsibilities placed on them as corporate parents and what might influence decisions made in this crowded policy and legislative framework.

Although the concept of corporate parenting exists throughout the United Kingdom and internationally, this research focusses on corporate parenting in Scotland. The reason for this being the scale of this study, time and access constraints and my own professional knowledge of the Scottish Leaving Care legislation, including an understanding of the Children's Hearing System, which is unique to Scotland. For those children and young people who have been in the care system, it is likely that they will have had some experience of Children's Hearings, therefore, this chapter explores the role of Children's Hearings, Panel Members and Compulsory Supervision Orders. Prior to and during their time in care, children and young people are likely to have had traumatic and chaotic experiences and the impact this may have on their future is an issue that will also be discussed (Couper and Mackie, 2016; Felitti et. al., 1998).

The literature in relation to the history and development of corporate parenting, where the concept evolved and the changes over time, will also be explored, including social developments and theories relating to the notion of childhood and adolescence (Cregan and Cuthbert, 2014; Lesko, 2012; Zelizer, 1994). International theories of parenting and the transition of young people from care to adulthood is also discussed, including the legislation and guidance in England and Wales (Adinlofu, 2009; Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000; Degbey, 2012; Stein and Munro, 2008).

The need for collective, collaborative working between the named partners is emphasised in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. However, different agencies working together with very different roles can result in some conflict between the professionals involved and possible differences in opinions. The importance of understanding the roles and responsibilities of those agencies

named as corporate parents will be considered, as will their understanding of the responsibilities of the other stakeholders.

The intention of this study is to explore whether organisational cultures may influence the decision-making of some of those individuals from the different agencies named as corporate parents. Therefore, organisational cultures and management structures are discussed (Baxter, 2011; Fenwick, 2014). By comparing and contrasting the participant's responses to scenarios from a professional and parental viewpoint, this will explore organisational, professional and personal conflicts that may present themselves.

The rationale for this study is also described emphasising the importance of best value research, highlighting some of the barriers in conducting research with vulnerable participants (Bound, 2012; Ward et al., 2004). Given these barriers, I also draw on findings of research by agencies involved in advocating for young people in the care system and any literature that gives some insight into the views of care leavers (Baker, 2017).

**Methodology**

This chapter begins by outlining the aims of the study before going onto explain the methodological approach used in my research and explains why a phenomenological approach was deemed suitable. There is also some exploration of different research methods considered and justification for the methods I chose. The reader is then led through the research process, including how the sample was populated, access negotiated and ethical issues.

There is then some discussion on gathering and storing the data and identifying themes before moving onto the analytic approach (Hycner, 1999). Details of the analysis process and the justification for the methods used is discussed, as is my use of self, as a practicing social worker (Groenwald, 2004). The themes of the research are outlined before the final stage of this chapter explains how and why the findings might be disseminated.

**Findings**

This chapter follows a long period of reflection and commences by outlining the questions to be asked each of the respondents. There then follows some responses from participants under the identified themes; collaborative working; organisational cultures; decision-making; assessment and parental and professional decisions. In between each of these sections there is some analytical discussion before concluding that organisational cultures do influence decision-making for corporate parents. However, the findings of this research also raise other questions regarding the perception of some participants on collaborative working and the expectations of being a corporate parent.

**Discussion and Implications**

This thesis concludes by, again, explaining the need for support and guidance for young care leavers and the need for collaborative working at a much higher level, including policy makers and organisational management. It questions whether corporate parents can meet the expectations of the relevant legislation by treating young care leavers as if they were their own child.

The strengths and limitations of the study are also discussed as are the implications of the findings for policies, practice and further research. The chapter concludes by suggesting the issues that might be addressed by further training, including a better understanding of the typologies of care leavers, to encourage more sympathetic and effective responses from professionals. The expectation of how a corporate parent should 'parent' is also a subject for further research as is a fuller understanding of how organisational cultures might not only influence decision-making but also impact on the process of collaborative working.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter takes the reader through my journey during this literature review and is built upon the foundations of several years of professional knowledge and experience gained as a practicing social worker engaging with young care leavers as they attempt to transition onto independence. This included familiarising myself with relevant legislation and research on the subject of care leavers and corporate parenting, to include where the term corporate parenting derived from and how children's rights and the notion of childhood has changed. As this research focusses on the influence of organisational cultures on decision-making, literature on these topics were also explored as was the assessment framework used by the different agencies involved in corporate parenting. The internet was another valuable source of information and involved using search engines such as ResearchGate; ResearchLEAP; Academia; IgentaConnect; Social Science Citation Index; and accessing UK and Scottish Government website. Search terms included corporate parents; organisational cultures; decision-making; risk-taking; care leavers and multi-agency working. Searches for other expressions that might be used to replace the term corporate parenting on a national and international basis proved to be unsuccessful and will be discussed further in the Discussion chapter. The process then evolved further to include some exploration of parenting styles and how this related to organisational cultures, collaborative working and, in turn, parenting.

## Concepts of Parenting

The adults we become is shaped by our childhood experiences. This includes family, what happens in the home, at school, play and ultimately, how we are parented (Uprichard, 2008). As there are different organisational cultures (Bradley and Parker, 2006; Harrison, 1993) and typologies of care leavers (Stein, 1997), there are also different styles of parenting. These are many, often complex and sometimes overlapping as the same parenting methods may not be used consistently by one or more parents (Kuppens and Ceulman, 2019). For the purpose of this review, only two broad dimensions of parenting styles, will be considered: parental support and parental control. Parental support involves the relationship between the parent and child demonstrating involvement, emotional availability, acceptance, responsivity and warmth (Cummings er. Al. 2000). This

support model has been linked to positive outcomes with a decrease in depression and delinquent behaviour (Bean et al, 2006).  The concept of the parental support model is closely linked to the support orientated and rational models of organisational cultures which are more common in welfare based agencies such as social work and health professionals (Bradley and Parker, 2006; Harrison, 1993).

Children, and often young people, are financially dependent on their parents or carers which, in itself, places parents in a position of power as they make decisions regarding meeting the needs of their children.  This parental control can take other forms including behavioural and/or psychological.  Behavioural control, involving managing and regulating behaviour by reinforcing rules, discipline, rewards for good behaviour and supervision (Barber, 2002).  This could be likened to a child being made the subject of a Compulsory Supervision Order, as imposed by a Children's Hearing and removed from the family home.  In this situation it would be expected that behaviour would be managed by appropriate level of supervision, rules and boundaries imposed and good behaviour rewarded (Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011).

When used appropriately and proportionately, this type of parenting can have a positive effect, however, if there is insufficient supervision or excessive control, this can have a negative effect on child development (Galambos et al, 2003).  Psychological control, by its very nature, is intrusive and manipulative, and has been related to negative developmental outcomes for children and young people such as problems with relationships, anti-social behaviour and mental health issues (Barber et al, 2005., Kuppens et al, 2013).  Both types of parental control have similar connotations to power orientated and internal organisational cultures which are hierarchical and involve the reinforcement of rules (Bradley and Parker, 2006; Harrison, 1993).

Theories regarding different parenting style between mothers and fathers include McKinney and Renk (2008) who suggest that this could be due to the mother often being the primary attachment figure in early years while the father may be more distant   This could also be the result of one parent compensating for the other's parenting and whether they view this as too harsh or too lenient (Meteyer and Perry-Jenkins, 2009).  When parenting is shared between various different organisations,

as in corporate parenting, the issue of gender and compensating styles of parenting may also be present and is an issue for further exploration as is the appropriate use of power and control in care settings.

In a study of couples parenting styles, Kuppens and Ceulman (2019), found that, there were greater similarities in parenting styles than differences.  This could be a result of individuals, perhaps subconsciously, seeking out others who share their views and opinions and have had similar experiences of being parented (Larsen and Buss, 2010).  For those involved in corporate parenting, this is not an option as the organisations and agencies have this role imposed upon them.

Whatever the method, there is no doubt that no one is perfect and the same is true of parents.  The evidence shows that parents make mistakes but should be allowed to do this, learning from and addressing any deficits in their parenting (Choate and Engstrom, 2014).  This "good enough" parenting should not be influenced by the rule of optimism as described by Kettle and Jackson (2017), where those making decisions regarding child protection issues may look for positives in parenting behaviours and, in doing so, overlook possible detrimental practices.  If the parenting is deemed to be damaging and past the point of recovery, this is not good enough parenting and other measures must be taken (Reeves, 2012).

The focus of my research is decisions made regarding young care leavers and the likelihood is that they will have been assessed as having had either excessively controlling parents or insufficient supervision.  These parenting styles would have contributed to inefficient parenting and negative developmental outcomes for the young person.  If the child being parented then went onto display behaviours which resulted in several different moves of placement when in care, this could impact on their future expectations, placing them in the "struggler" typology of care leavers (Stein, 1997).

The very concept of corporate parents is that those agencies and organisations named in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 (App.1) work together. However, the spectrum of personal views and organisational cultures of those deemed to be corporate parents may influence or dictate their parenting styles, creating some inconsistency (Kuppens and Ceulman, 2019). This may be further compounded by changes of care staff, shift patterns and the systems and

procedures of the agencies deemed to be corporate parents. Whether this inconsistency encourages learning from previous mistakes is questionable, suggesting that corporate parents may not be "good enough" and instead, result in negative consequences for the child or young person (Choate and Engstrom, 2014; Dominelli et., al (2005). To explore this further it is important to understand the concept of corporate parenting and how the term evolved over time.

**History of corporate parenting**

For the majority of young people making the transition into adulthood, they have the support and guidance of parents and other family members. Unfortunately, for those young people who have been in the care system, they may be lacking the support of their families, making the move into adulthood more challenging. Low levels of engagement with education combined with backgrounds of loss, instability and trauma can contribute to homelessness and poor mental health leading to rates of self-harm and suicide being higher than the general population (Furnivall, 2013). On leaving the care system, some young people may fall through the gaps in services and receive little or no support or direction, regarding employment, benefits and basic independent living skills. In the past, the responsibility for enhancing the welfare of these young people and keeping them safe was the responsibility of local authorities, often social work, as the corporate parents (Children (Scotland) Act 1995). However, the introduction of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, changed this by naming 24 agencies and organisations as partners in the corporate parenting of looked after children and care leavers. The expectation being that, by working in collective collaboration, the duties of corporate parents would be met.

The role of corporate parenting is outlined in the Scottish Government's Guidance on Part 9 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, the definition being:

> "An organisation's performance of actions necessary to uphold the rights and safeguard the wellbeing of a looked after child or care leaver, and through which physical, emotional, spiritual, social and educational development is promoted". (Scottish Government, 2015a).

With the aim being to improve how organisations as a whole support looked after children and care leavers (Scottish Government, 2015a). But where did the term corporate parent come from? According to the UK parliament, the concept of corporate parenting came into being with the launch of the *Quality Protects* programme in 1998. The intention of this programme was not only to keep children safe but also to enhance the quality of their lives (UK Parliament, 1998). This was in response to a critical study of the care system by Sir William Utting and was a Department of Health initiative to transform the management of children's social services (Utting, 1997). The aim of this programme was that the local authority was the corporate parent of children in care, having a legal and moral duty for the provision of support as any good parents would provide for their own children.

Wright (2014) revisited this principle when discussing changing the culture of professionals working with children and care leavers, including their over-representation in unemployment, mental health statistics and criminality. A local council in England emphasised the importance of starting from the perspective of treating this group as if the professionals involved were their parent rather than viewing the child or young person as a service recipient (Wright, 2014). Mendes and Moslehuddin (2004) previously discussed this by recommending that those involved in corporate parenting should not only provide care as a good parent but they should compensate for the negative and damaging experiences before entering care. Being the victims of emotional, physical and sexual abuse may have led to the child being removed from their families. Research suggests that the longer this abuse continues the more damage can be done resulting in an increasing number of adolescents with complex and disturbing difficulties being received into care (Buchanan, 1999; Green and Jones, 1999**).** More recently, *The Promise*, a report resulting from an independent care review in Scotland, reflected the views of over 5,500 care experienced children, adults and families including paid and unpaid carers. The aim of the report was to recommend what should be done to ensure that Scotland's most vulnerable children would feel loved, safe, respected and have the childhoods they deserve. However, it also acknowledged that legislation cannot guarantee parental love and the feeling of being cared for. In that report some young people described their experience of time in care as cold and professional (Independent Root and Branch Care Review, 2020). *The Promise* suggested that, where possible, more

support should be given to families to keep children at home and, if not possible, care staff should be encouraged and supported to form meaningful, lasting relationships with children and young people.

The Utting Report (1997), which prompted the *Quality Protects* programme, was commissioned as a result of revelations, over a 20 year period, of widespread physical, sexual and emotional abuse of children living away from home. The findings of this report indicated that some of the most vulnerable children in society were being failed at all levels. It included children whose home circumstances were perceived to be so bad that the authorities removed them from their families. According to Utting (1997), the failures of the whole system led to many children being harmed rather than helped as physical and emotional abuse took place while in the care of the authorities.

However, Bullock et al., (2006) explain that in relation to parenting, the word corporate was first used to describe the care of children who were the responsibility of large charitable organisations and other non-governmental agencies in 1980. In order to include these organisations and agencies, the word corporate was used. They explain that, in the late 1970s, to consider the care of children separated from their families, the National Children's Bureau, London, set up a working party. This resulted in a Working Party Report being published in 1980 by Professor Roy Parker (Parker, 1980). In this report it is stated that, to promote healthy psychosocial development, parenting should include:

> "affection, comfort, nurture, the provision of role models, exerting control, stimulation, protection and meeting the child's need to be needed"
> (Parker, 1980, pp 67-68).

Effective parenting, Parker (1980) suggests, is bonded by lifelong ties, affection and obligations. However, for those children living in care, these roles and responsibilities may be provided by different individuals and agencies which contradicts the concept of bonding and lifelong relationships. Parker's (1980) Working Party Report, *Caring for Separated Children*, acknowledges that this leads to partial and disruptive attachments as children and those individuals responsible

for their care move on.  The report also indicates that these negative attachment experiences can cause conflict and erode new relationships causing tensions for the children and young people involved (Parker, 1980).

The state's intervention in parenting, however, began much earlier than 1980.  In 1618, 100 children were transported from London to America with more following in 1622 (Child Migrant Trust, 2012).  This appears to have set a precedent for poor, marginalised, abandoned, and criminalised children to be transported from Britain to the colonies (Kershaw and Sacks, 2008).  Advocating for the rights of former child migrants, the Child Migrant Trust, established in 1987, suggested that transportation of children had been used for centuries as a social welfare option for the management of poor children (Child Migrant Trust, 2012).  This belief that children and young people had to be managed stemmed from the fact that their views were often dismissed as insignificant as they were perceived to lack any sense of agency or capacity to make their own rational decisions or choices (Esser, 2016).

I would argue that this view is reflected in the corporate parenting process when decisions are often made for care leavers rather than with them.  This contradicts the best interest principle introduced in 1989 by the United Declaration on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989), underpinning the 1989 Children Act which compiled and simplified existing legislation relating to the care of children.   This United Kingdom-wide Children Act shifted the legislative focus towards keeping families together, and valuing children as individuals with their own interests and rights. In Scotland, these provisions to strengthen protection for children were reinforced by the Children (Scotland) Act 1995.  At that time the emphasis was on the entitlement of the child suggesting that young people had the ability to make conscious decisions (Alanen, 1988).  However, while in the care system decisions are often made for children in an effort to protect them, thus denying them the opportunity to make decisions while in a supportive care setting and giving them no sense of agency (Alanen,1988).  This has to change as only by giving children a voice and listening to them can they challenge any power imbalance that may be present.  In turn, they should be included in any plans for their future and services available to them rather than decisions being made by policy makers directed by budgets and legislation (Independent Root and Branch Care Review, 2020).

However, these developments in children's rights are further confused by the changing notion of childhood and definitions of the term child, increasing the age at which an individual is expected to be in education and when they move from childhood to adulthood.

**Developing concept of children's rights and the changing notion of childhood**

This lack of capacity to make decisions was reflected in The Genevan Declaration of the Rights of the Child (League of Nations, 1924).  While referring to the rights of the child, this declaration was embedded in a welfare framework which placed responsibility on adults to meet the needs of all children, similar to the much later Kilbrandon Report (1964).  However, the Genevan Declaration suggested that a child has no agency but is at the mercy of adults with the term "a child must" repeated in all five articles (League of Nations, 1924). This mirrors the developmental approach suggesting that children cannot make decisions regarding their future but are in need of protection (Esser, 2016; Foucault, 1975).

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child (UNDRC, 1959) goes into more detail than the 1924 document and includes principles on education, medical and developmental checks, rights to identity and citizenship and of the psycho-social needs of children.  The needs of children with disabilities are also acknowledged (UNDRC, 1959).  Introducing the best interest principle, the wording changed from "a child must" to "the child is entitled".  This suggested that children and young people were actors in their own right and had the ability to act consciously and make decisions (Alanen, 1988).

Even after the 1959 United Nations legislation, children continued to be viewed as instruments by transporting and receiving nations, with the last mass transportation of children from Liverpool to Australia taking place in 1967 (Child Migrant Trust, 2012).  In their own country those British children were viewed as economically problematic, in Australia they were perceived to be the answer to the shortage of labour (Kershaw and Sacks, 2008).  Yet another indication that the value of children is not universal and the notion of childhood not static.

Historically, Aries (1962) proposes that, when the rates of infant mortality were high, there was less emotional involvement between parents and children. Although disputed by some historians, including Pollock (1983) who suggested that, historically, it was normal for parents and children to have loving relationships, Aries suggests that only when the likelihood of the child surviving, would emotions be invested in them, and a parent child relationship be allowed to develop. Given the literature on attachment theories indicating that a repeated and positive relationship between the care-giver and baby lays the foundations for the ability to form close relationships in later life, this lack of emotional investment could have a negative impact on the adult the child becomes (Bowlby, 1973).

Reflecting on some young care leavers, their negative experiences of being parented, prior to being received into care, may already have negatively impacted on their ability to form relationships. This, combined with those professionals with corporate parenting responsibilities having no emotional investment in the young person, suggests that the prospect of viewing that individual as their own child is not realistic.

The notion of chronological age being linked to the different stages of childhood progressing into adulthood was not always the case. Aries (1962) suggested that before the eighteenth century, there was no need for individuals to record their date of birth, therefore it was normal not to be aware of age. This resulted in the concept of childhood not being based on age but on stature, physical appearance and characteristics with no knowledge of differing stages of development (Aries, 1962). Previously childhood, as we know it, ended when education finished. Until the seventeenth century, in Western Europe, children were often sent to work in other households from the age of seven (Bishop, 1982). Others entered into a trade between the ages of ten and thirteen, when their schooling was over, suggesting that only infancy, education and employment were the recognised stages of development with no acknowledgement of adolescence (Heywood, 2001).

From a sociological perspective there is an argument that adolescence is a societal invention as, in a pre-industrial society, children were seen as parental property progressing into the workplace (Griffin, 1993). This, again calls into question the value of a child at that time, indicating that they became useful when working and

financially contributing to the household (Zelizer, 1985). The term adolescence emerged to describe the transition from childhood to adulthood as, after leaving education, adolescents, were expected to enter into apprenticeships which it was hoped would teach them roles and responsibilities of adulthood. (Griffin, 1993).

This then brings into question the value of children in society – are they useful or useless (Zelizer, 1985). Zelizer (1985) explains that the worth of children is dependent on whether a sentimental or economic approach was preferred in a historical or cultural context. Children would either be viewed by parents and communities as an object of sentiment or as a means of productivity. The value of children and the age at which they are expected to contribute financially is also dependent on the economic, social, political and geographical characteristics of where they live. In underdeveloped countries, the age at which children enter work and the value of education may differ from the practice in developed countries influencing whether, and at what level, they are valued.

This concept of children being valued or classed as problematic relates back to 1798, when Thomas Malthus, an economist and demographer, linked the levels of population growth to economic growth, if the population was too great to be economically viable then efforts were made to constrain it, suggesting that the value of children is closely related to a country's economy. In China when the growth of the population was deemed to be detrimental to the country's future, the one child policy was introduced, restricting the size of families (Anderson and Leo, 2009). Although this was only in urban areas, it has now been withdrawn to cope with the ageing population. While in Malaysia and Romania in the 1980s, the population growth was considered to be too low to promote economic growth. This resulted in sanctions being introduced against families, mainly women, who were found to use methods of birth control as they were perceived to be hindering the growth of the population (Jones, 2013; Kligman, 1998). While these examples encourage the restriction or promotion of the levels of babies born, historically in Britain, when the population was deemed to be economically draining, one of the solutions was to decrease the population by transporting children from Britain to Australia. This practice began in 1618 and indicates that, in Britain, those children who were

transported had no value and were viewed as problematic (Kershaw and Sacks, 2008).

In this modern day society, child trafficking, both internally in the United Kingdom and from other countries, is illegal and frowned upon but, is it so unlike Britain's solution to solving their welfare problems when children from poor backgrounds were seen as problematic?  Those individuals arranging and transporting these children are benefitting financially as are the "employers".  Reflecting the views of Bruckert and Parent (2002), Kershaw and Sacks (2008), suggest that trafficking is linked to the demand for cheap labour within wealthy countries, thus reinforcing the previous suggestion that, in these cases, children as viewed as a means of productivity and economic gain (Zelizer,1985).  While this may be true when discussing migrants, there is also a concern identified in the United Kingdom of children reported missing from local authority care with little knowledge of their whereabouts or experiences while absent (Bokhari, 2008).  As highlighted by Baker (2017), for young people within the care system, the lack of consistency of care staff often impacts on their ability to form trusting relationships, resulting in no real sense of belonging or experience of being effectively parented.  On discussing the state as a parent/grandparent to young females, Dominelli et., al (2005), concluded that being cared for by the state was a very negative experience, reflecting previous parenting experiences.  This could indicate that, having little or no positive experiences of being parented, the cycle of ineffective parenting is more likely to continue, indicating that the parenting provided by the authorities is not "good enough" and can even cause more harm to the child (Choate and Engstrom, 2014; Reeves, 2012).

In order to avoid this Dominelli et., al (2005), suggest that if young females, in state care, were valued and respected as individuals, they might not feel the need to get pregnant at an early age but, instead delay the birth of their first child.  However, for those who have had their child at an early age, the negative cycle of parenting could be avoided if relevant universal resources and supports, to promote stability were readily accessible with the flexibility to meet the young mother's needs.  In order to give young mothers an opportunity to be a good parent, resources, including financial, emotional and practical supports, must be available and should include those with corporate parenting responsibilities (Dominelli et., al,2005).

Already vulnerable, children and young people in, and having left, the care system may be more at risk of exploitation as, linking back to Parker's (1980) definition of what parenting should include, meeting the child's need to be needed, may not be met (Reid, 2012).  Although the media has tended to focus on the sexual exploitation of young women and girls brought from abroad, there is also evidence of internal trafficking.  This involves young people being taken to nearby towns or other areas outside their normal place of residence in order to be sexually exploited, often in return for alcohol, drugs or the means to purchase other goods (Cusick and Hickman, 2005).  After a day or two these young people may be returned to their home or care placement, often with no further investigation (Marie and Skidmore, 2007).  Only by giving children a voice and sense of agency by enabling them to explain the underpinning reasons for them absconding from their home or care setting can similar situations be avoided in the future (Bessell, 2004; Bokhari, 2008; Dottridge, 2004).

Relating back to the rights of child and the use of the word "entitled" (UNDRC, 1959).  There were those who resented the notion of entitlement for their children and this was viewed by many parents as an interference and an erosion of parental authority (Cregan and Cuthbert, 2014).  In some ways this was similar to the views of some individuals on the proposal of the no smacking legislation in Scotland.  Organisations, such as Be Reasonable Scotland, implied that this would make criminals of good parents.  They also suggested and that police and social work services would be so busy dealing with, what they perceived to be "trivial cases" that they would struggle to deal with "genuine child abuse" (Be Reasonable Scotland, 2019).  Despite these challenges, in November 2020, physical chastisement was made illegal in Scotland with the Children (Equal Protection from Assault) (Scotland) Act 2019 coming into force.

Another example of the mistrust of parents when legislation introduces a new process or provision for their children is the controversy which resulted from the introduction of the "Named Person" in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.  Building on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), the Getting it Right for Every Child framework sought to ensure that the best interests of the child were considered in all policy and practice decisions (Scottish

Government, 2012).  Central to this policy was the Named Person scheme which provided a clear point of contact for all children under the age of 18 years.  However, in July 2016, a Supreme Court judgement required a change to the statutory provision to one aspect of the Named Person Service.  Greater clarity was required on the sharing of information between professionals.  This necessitated a review of this section, to adhere to the protection of rights to a "private and family life" according to Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights and also to improve the Named Person service (Scottish Parliament, 2017). This resulted in John Swinney, in his role as Education Secretary, setting up a panel of experts to address the identified issues, including information sharing plans as to how named persons would share details about children with other organisations or professionals including health, social work and education, where they believed it was likely to help safeguard the child.

The experts concluded that, while it was possible to come up with a set of rules, the level of detail that would be needed would not be able to be applied in practice in a user friendly manner.  Data protection law had also changed since the process of the named person had commenced, decreasing confidence in the ability to deliver an authoritative draft code under the new rules.  The way in which information could be shared by named persons and others was ruled non-compliant with the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and that the Scottish government must provide greater clarity about how health visitors, teachers and other professionals, as Named Persons, would share and receive information in their role (Supreme Court, 2016).

In conjunction with the changes in the data protection law, this resulted in John Swinney MSP, in September 2019, conceding defeat and repealing the named person parts of the original act (Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014).

While this may be viewed by some as beneficial, it could also lead to other agencies avoiding making decisions regarding welfare and other concerns of children and young people.  This could result in shifting accountability to social work as opposed to shared roles and responsibilities of all corporate parents, including Children's Hearings Scotland.

But for those children and young people in, and having left, the care system, many do have parents whom they will return to live with. Parents may struggle to acknowledge the impact their ineffective parenting might have had on their child. They may blame the care system for their child's negative behaviour, with no recognition of why the child may have been removed from their care in the first place. Given this, work should be undertaken to repair relationships in preparation for a return home. In *The Promise*, the emphasis is on keeping families together where possible, however, if children are removed from their care, the same levels of family intervention as would have been available to avoid removing the child, should be provided to families to encourage a positive environment for the young person's return home (Independent Root and Branch Care Review, 2020). This could include working with families of origin, kinship, foster and adoptive families and supports should take a universal approach involving all agencies as required. For example, if the housing is inadequate, more appropriate housing should be sourced, financial assistance considered if required, education and/or training should be explored for the young person and support put in place for the family to become involved in their own community.

Given that the majority of young people leaving care will have had personal experiences of Children's Hearings, a process that is unique to Scotland, it is important to understand the legislation and underpinning principles of this system.

**Children's Hearing System**

In Scotland, as a result of the Kilbrandon Report (1964) the Children's Hearing System came into operation in 1971. This paper highlighted the similarities between children who offend and those in need of care and protection, recommending an integrated approach to decision-making in Scotland (Buist and Whyte, 2004; McGhee and Waterhouse, 2007). Before 1971, cases regarding the care and protection of children and dealing with children who had displayed offending behaviour had been dealt with by the courts.

The Scottish Children's Reporter Administration arranges Children's Hearings and ensures they are conducted appropriately and that decisions made are legal. There

is also an emphasis on the need to work in collaboration with partners and facilitate the Getting it Right For Every Child agenda (Scottish Government, 2012). This approach reflects the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) but also respects the rights of parents under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), which is embedded in the Human Rights Act 1998. While these parental rights must be respected, as corporate parents, Children's Hearings, Children's Reporters and the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA), incorporating panel members, must also treat the child or young person as if they were their parent. This must present challenges to panel members as they struggle with their role as corporate parents while also considering the views of the birth parents.

The Children's Hearing System centres on the welfare of the child, with their needs being paramount. Parents and children's rights are protected by the legal framework which provides for decisions made by a panel of three lay people, panel members. These panel members are guided by eight standards; that children and young people are at the centre of what they do; Panel members are well equipped and supported to undertake their role; Practice is consistent across Scotland; Children's Hearings are managed fairly and effectively; Children's Hearings make decisions based on sound reasons in the best interests of the child or young person; Area Support Teams are well equipped and supported to undertake their roles; Communication and information sharing across the Children's Panel is clear, appropriate and purposeful; Functions, roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and understood within the system (Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011).

The effectiveness of decision-making and the outcomes was the focus of a report commissioned by the Scottish Government and published by SCRA (2019). In this report, Children's Reporters and social workers acknowledged the importance of discussion in Children's Hearings. They also noted that, during these discussions, panel members can, in some cases, struggle with the emotions of parents, resulting in decisions being made that contradict the evidence provided by professionals and ignore their opinions. The importance of Children's Panel members being aware of the possible consequences of some of their decisions on the children and their

families will be discussed further in this chapter.  This is crucial given the volume of referrals made to the Children's Reporter (see table below).

**Table 1. Scottish Children's Reporter Administration Statistics 2019/20**
**Gender of Children and Young People referred to the Children's Reporter**

| Non-offence Grounds | | Offence Grounds | | All Grounds | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Females | Males | Females | Males | Females | Males |
| 5083 | 5734 | 679 | 2161 | 5505 | 7338 |

\* Some children and young people were referred on both offence and non-offence grounds.  These totals count every child or young person referred to the Reporter during the year.
(SCRA, 2019/20)

While for welfare, or non-offence grounds, the figures are similar for males and females, on offence grounds, the statistics show that males had over three times more referrals than females.  Whether this is a true reflection of the gender divide or influenced by other factors is unclear.  These factors could include the decisions of local communities in reporting offences perpetrated by females and police and social work responses to different genders.  What is recognised is that females are often regarded as needing moral protection due to their risk-taking behaviour, including substance and alcohol misuse, which can often manifest itself as perceived promiscuity, and may be linked to sexual exploitation (Cusik and Hickman, 2005; Langer et al., 2016).  In these cases, any referral to the Children's Reporter would likely be made on welfare grounds.  This raises the question of whether females are treated differently to males in similar situations resulting in them being protected as opposed to criminalised. In some way this contradicts Foucault's (1975) developmental approach suggesting that children (in this case females) cannot make decisions regarding their future but are in need of protection as opposed to the males who are perceived to be capable of making decisions and should take responsibility for their actions (Alanen, 1988).  The scenarios in my research placed young people, a male or a female, in identical situations and the issue of gender, perhaps, influencing decision-making for corporate parents is discussed in chapters three and four.  When referrals are received, the decision of whether to arrange a

Children's Hearing lies with the Children's Reporter.  If a Hearing is arranged, the responsibility for making decisions regarding the child or young person and their family, shifts to Children's Panel members.

If it is agreed by a Children's Panel that a child needs compulsory measures of care, a Compulsory Supervision Order may be imposed.  This places a duty on the local authority to ensure that any conditions of the Order are complied with and can include where the child will reside.  It can last until the child reaches the age of 18, unless discharged at an earlier date and must be reviewed by a Children's Hearing at least once a year when it can be continued, varied or discharged (Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011).

If a Compulsory Supervision Order is discharged when a child reaches the age of 16 years, they can only be returned to the Children's Hearing System by a Court for offence grounds.  If this is the case the child must be aged no more than 17 years and six months of age, been prosecuted by a criminal Court and either pled or been found guilty.  The Court may then dispose of the case using criminal jurisdiction or request that the Reporter calls a Children's Hearing to ask for advice.  Only on these conditions can a young person aged over 16 years be returned, or enter, the Children's Hearing System (Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1995., S49; Norrie, 2013).

Defining the criteria for entering or returning a young person who has not yet reached their 16th birthday to the Children's Hearing system contradicts the Getting it Right For Every Child approach.  This approach was reaffirmed by the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, defining someone under the age of 18 years as a child.  This would suggest that it should be possible for someone before the age of 18 years to be referred to the Children's Reporter on welfare or offence grounds which could avoid the child or young person entering the Criminal Justice System and address any issues at an earlier stage, thus adhering to a whole systems approach (Scottish Government, 2015b).  This approach aims to address offending behaviour and underlying issues at an earlier stage, before the age of 18 years, with the intention of avoiding, or delaying, any involvement with the Courts.  Although there is currently a consultation process in progress, seeking views on raising the

age for referral to the Children's Reporter to 18 years of age, the current definition of a child in terms of the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011, remains as under the age of 16 years. Therefore, decisions regarding the future of children, young people and their families who appear at Children's Hearings will be made by 3 lay people on the Children's Panel.  For some, the importance of these decisions can provoke anxiety and heightened emotions which, among other factors including organisational cultures, can impact on the decision-making process.

**Decision-making**

Making decisions can be a complex issue involving gathering and processing information which may have cognitive and/or emotional implications for the decision maker, whether that be as a corporate parent or a young care leaver (Payne and Bettman, 2004).

*Young People*

For the young people involved, while the decisions of the adults around them will have implications for their future, they also have choices to make and many of these decisions involve risk-taking.  Young people taking risks is a normal and important part of adolescent development (Coleman and Hendry, 1999).  However, research shows that this risk-taking behaviour is often increased in care experienced young people.  This can include substance misuse, self-harming and, combined with mental health difficulties, even suicide (Vinnerljung et al., 2006). In a study by the Centre for Social Justice, using statistics from the Department of Health's 2012 figures, it is stated that care leavers are over four times more likely to commit suicide than the general population (Centre for Social Justice, 2014).

When in care, children often struggle to form relationships and, when they leave care, this contributes to the social isolation and loneliness they often experience (Baker, 2017).  This loneliness and lack of social networks may have been further compounded by the social distancing restrictions imposed for COVID 19.  The enforced boundaries and social and economic disadvantages already faced by care leavers, may increase vulnerability and be detrimental to already fragile mental health (Rogers et., al, 2020).  It is hoped that, when those named as corporate parents make decisions, regarding care leavers the possibility of mental health

difficulties should be considered if a holistic approach is to be taken, adhering to the Getting It Right For Every Child guidance (GIRFEC), and the young person is to be treated as if they were their own (Scottish Government, 2012).

Like adults, young people make decisions based on the information they have and can be impacted upon by their cognitive abilities and emotional state (Dumontheil, 2016).  Social information, such as social influence and social motivation also influence decision-making, although research suggests that this is greater in young people but declines as they progress to adulthood (Haddad et al., 2014; Reiter et al., 2019).  This would seem to support Steinberg's (2008) earlier suggestion that young people are influenced by their peers in almost all areas of their lives. This includes decisions they make regarding taking risks and research indicates that being in the presence of their peers increases this risk-taking behaviour (Pfeifer et al., 2011; Smith et al., 2014).  However, if they surround themselves with prosocial peers, this form of social influence can result in positive behaviours (Van Hoorn, et al., 2017). Given that those young people who have care experience are likely to have had negative and traumatic experiences in their lives, the relationships they make are often with those with similar backgrounds and difficulties.  This can result in reinforcing negative social influences.

Often the most important social goal for young people is to be accepted by peers and, to fulfil this goal, the young person can display risk-taking behaviour, as, in their particular peer group, this type of behaviour may be viewed as having high social value (Ruff and Fehr, 2014).  Being part of a peer group can lead to social arousal which, in turn, can result in poor self-control and a decrease in cognitive control which will impact on their decision-making process and can result in offending behaviour as they make poor choices (Dumontheil, 2016; Starke and Brand, 2012). Schofield et al., (2012) attributed the high numbers of care experienced young people in youth justice systems to various factors including exposure to criminal behaviour, abuse and neglect and parental abandonment.

Not all care leavers progress to offending behaviour as explained by Stein (1997) who created three typologies of care leavers; strugglers, survivors and those who were moving on.  The strugglers and survivors were those young people who had

experienced placement instability before leaving care and negative experiences prior to entering care. The survivors accepted and engaged with support during their transition from care and were motivated to achieve positive outcomes. The strugglers, however, refused to accept supports and became dependent on welfare benefits with no positive future expectations. Those who remained in placements and education until at least the age of 18 years, were the movers on, with planned transitions to independent living. Using these typologies, this thesis focussed on decision-making of corporate parents for those young people who would be described as strugglers (Stein, 1997).

*Corporate Parents*

In exploring decision-making processes used by police, Lee and Cummins (2004), suggest that rational decision-making is the result of considering all of the information available, assessing and integrating this and then making appropriate decisions. However, in time pressured environments with complex and often emotional information, it may not be possible to make rational decisions. In these situations, intuitive decisions can be made as there may be a limited amount of information. As a result of this, some decision makers may have a limited, yet efficient, cognitive system that allows them to make judgements in the noisy environment that surrounds them. Whether this intuitional approach meets the procedural processes and needs of an organisation such as police is unclear. There is no doubt that police professionals are often placed in such situations and it may not be realistic to expect them to always make rational decisions (Snook and Cullen, 2008).

In the case of health professionals, their ethos and legal duty involves promoting shared decision-making with the patient participating in their care plan (National Health Service Act 2006 (as amended by the Health and Social Care Act 2012). In many ways this is closely linked to both social work and Children's Panel members as, using wellbeing indicators, this includes the child or young person and their carers in the planning process. This type of decision-making could be described as resulting from a support-orientated culture (Harrison, 1993).

All professionals, in terms of how well they assess and respond to risk, are often judged and judge themselves. In social work practice, and most other agencies, the focus is to improve the nature and transparency of decision-making, however, the concept of risk cannot be ignored.   For several years risk assessment and risk management were deemed key components for social workers (Milner, 2020).  If serious incidents occur, the frontline staff, often social workers, are frequently blamed, resulting in anxiety from both the professionals and the public.  Kemshall (1998) supports this view stating that, when making decisions regarding risk, these are made in a climate of fear.  The resulting anxiety suggests that professional expertise is no longer enough to justify potentially life-altering decisions, reflecting Ayre's (2001) view that, at times, decisions can be made to protect the organisation or system as opposed to the child (Beddoe, 2010).  Therefore, social work involves not only making the right decision but also taking a defensible stance.  More recently, however, one of the Key concepts highlighted as being crucial when undertaking social work assessments which would inform decisions, was intuition. This involves responding to gut instincts and exploring the triggers and reasons for these feelings (Brown et al., 2012). This instinctive approach is linked to professional curiosity, when the professional has concerns or feels that they might not have the information needed when assessing children, their families and others who may be vulnerable.  Using professional curiosity can result in challenging the views and accounts of others and, for some, can be difficult if they feel that they lack the skills, training and support to do this (Burton and Revell, 2018).

Cantrill (2009) emphasised the importance of intuition in a Serious Case Review exploring a series of failures of professionals involved with a family where, over a period of 25 years, a father continually raped and abused his two daughters. Although professionals, from all agencies, had involvement with the family, over a 35 year period, some appeared to be afraid or intimidated by the perpetrator.  With no clear evidence or disclosures from victims, they were reluctant to challenge the family and fearful of complaints being made against them.  Had the professionals trusted their instincts and been tenacious in following their concerns, the abuse may have been stopped at an earlier stage.

There are also time pressures and errors in judgement can be made, not only from delaying decisions, but also rushing them (Simon, 1955). In a Children's Hearing, for example, decisions are made which could have life changing implications for the child or young person and their family. These decisions are made after consideration of available information, the levels of risk posed and also the age of the child with regard to attachment, resilience and their ability to express their views (SCRA, 2019). In these circumstances, emotions can be heightened as families may become angry or tearful as they struggle with possible consequences of decisions being made. In a report by SCRA (2019), exploring the effectiveness of decision-making and outcomes when Children's Hearings make decisions regarding Compulsory Supervision Orders, social workers suggested that during discussion, panel members may focus on parental views. These views, taken over only a snapshot in time, they felt, could reduce objectivity and deflect from months of work gathering evidence and informing the social work recommendation and lead to rushed decisions. The same time constraints involved in making these decisions may result delays which might have negative consequences, for example, deferring a decision to remove a child from their family on welfare grounds. During this period of deferment, more physical and emotional damage and harm might be inflicted on the child.

If emotions run high this can, in turn, impact on cognitive performance and interfere with the decision-making processes (Hancock and Warm, 1989). In such cases, individuals, of all ages, may find different ways of coping with emotion. These include refusing to make decisions or letting someone else make them (Anderson, 2003; Luce, 2005). This could be likened to passing the process to another organisation to assess the best course of action. Another strategy is avoiding the information they find most distressing when making the decision (Beresford and Sloper, 2008). Whatever the individual's coping strategy may be this can be over-ridden by the type of organisational culture they are affiliated too. Power-orientated and role-orientated cultures would direct the decision with the role of the agency influencing the process (Harrison, 1993). What should also be recognised is that legislation and organisational processes can place restrictions on professionals which could impact on their ability to make ethical and professional decisions when assessing different situations (Okitikpi, 2011). Other factors which might contribute

to a young person's negative behaviour should also be considered when making assessments, including adverse experiences during childhood, peer and societal influences and support networks, (Pfeifer et al., 2011; Smith et al.,2014; Steinberg, 2008). Combining often conflicting, personal, professional and organisational cultures and expectations of each of the named partners may have implications for corporate parents when making difficult, and often emotionally charged, decisions regarding young care leavers and should always be informed by relevant and appropriate assessments.

**Assessment**

When making decisions, assessment of as much information available is crucial. This could involve reading and listening to material gathered and provided or being involved in the situation. In order to encourage some consistency in the way different organisations assessed risks, needs and strengths of children and young people, the Scottish Government took a child centred approach. This approach, adhering to the Getting It Right For Every Child literature (Scottish Government, 2012), used an Assessment Framework consisting of wellbeing Indicators. The use of this framework was reaffirmed by the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, applying to all agencies working with children and young people. Therefore, all corporate parents have a duty to consider the framework when assessing a young person's situation, any supports needed and making decisions regarding them.

Known as SHANARRI, the wellbeing indicators, outlined in legislation, are made up of eight factors; Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible and Included (Burns and Grove, 2001; Police Scotland, 2016-2020; SCRA, 2019; Scottish Government, 2012). Encouraging a common language and understanding of the expectations on each agency, this wellbeing approach draws upon the literature on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE).

The effects of ACE on the lives of children and young people into adulthood was justified in an American survey from 1995-1997. Over 17,000 patients were asked questions about current health status, family dysfunction and childhood maltreatment (Felitti et. al.,1998). The ACE study observed associations which could be divided

into four categories; injury and death during childhood; premature mortality and suicide; disease and illness; mental illness.  Each of these categories were informed by scoring the number of adverse childhood experiences the individual had encountered, including witnessing domestic violence, familial substance abuse and experiencing sexual, physical and/or emotional abuse, thus increasing their scores.  These higher ACE scores indicated greater risks of poor educational and employment outcomes linking this to mental health difficulties, involvement in violence and chronic health conditions (Couper and Mackie, 2016).  The ACE study also indicated that, for those with scores of four or more, they were five times more likely to suffer from depression, twelve times more likely to make suicide attempts and seven times more likely to develop alcohol addictions than the general population (Couper and Mackie, 2016; Felitti et. al., 1998).

These findings have been consistently replicated over the years supporting the association between ACE scores and binge-drinking, depression and premature death (Bellis et., al, 2015; Brown et al., 2009; Chapman et al., 2004).  A paper published by the Scottish Parliament in 2018, collected information from Freedom of Information requests to all local authorities in Scotland.  This report explored the life chances of the care experienced community and the effectiveness of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.  Although all authorities did not respond, the findings from those that did, suggested that care experienced young people were twenty times more likely to die before their 25th birthday than those in the general population (Dugdale, 2018).  While still concerning, previous research in England recorded less probability of death indicating that care leavers were four times more likely to commit suicide than the general population (Centre for Social Justice 2014).  Higher instances of suicide among care leavers are reflected in other countries, in Sweden research was undertaken suggesting that care leavers are at increased risk of mortality associated with mental health difficulties, suicide and lack of educational attainment (Vinnerljung et al., 2006).

Other studies, in England and Wales found that, for those individuals who scored four or more ACEs, they were between eight and fifteen times more likely to have been involved in violence, either the victim or perpetrator, than those with no adverse childhood experiences (Bellis et al, 2015).  It is perhaps then, no surprise that Fox et,

al., (2015) found that with each additional adverse childhood experience the risk of becoming a serious, violent or chronic offender increased by 35%. These findings mirrored the results of earlier research indicating that there is a positive relationship between the levels of mistreatment and the risk of offending (Stewart et al., 2002). Although physical abuse and neglect may be more predictive of violent offending, the indications are that experiencing this type of maltreatment during childhood is less likely to result in offending behaviour than those experienced in adolescence (Stewart et al., 2002; Verrecchia et al., 2011).

Rahamim and Mendes (2015) build on the notion that many care leavers will have had negative and harmful experiences prior to then being received into care, suggesting that similar occurrences may have continued when in the care system. Often challenging behaviours such as damaging property and assault can become established prior to entering care and reinforced while in residential care. Shaw (2014) raises concerns that this can result in criminalising children and young people. Perhaps linked to this, Police Scotland, in their Annual Police Plan 2020/21, acknowledged the importance of the whole systems approach, reinforcing Early and Effective Intervention in an effort to prevent young people being criminalised as outlined in Scotland's Youth Strategy for Scotland, for 2015-2020 (Scottish Government, 2015b). This report also placed some emphasis on their ongoing commitment not only to 16 – 18 year olds but to extend this to 18 – 24 year olds (Scottish Police Authority, 2019). The same Police Plans outline an explanation of the SHANARRI indicators as do nursing research articles, guidance from the Scottish Children's Reporter's Administration, the Getting It Right For Every Child literature and the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 (Burns and Grove, 2001; Police Scotland, 2016-2020; SCRA, 2019; Scottish Government, 2012).

The SHANARRI indicators draw on years of research acknowledging that care leavers are one of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups in society (Buchanan, 1999; Green and Jones, 1999; Mendes et., al. 2016). Baker (2017) published a selective review of literature and policy documents which contained young care leavers' own views and spanned the 15 year period between 2002 and 2017. This review included 67 books, journal articles and research reports, drawing on other studies including interviews and surveys with young people by Action for

Children, Barnardos, Coram Voice and many others.  In Baker's (2017) review it was evident that those young people leaving the care system, at the age of 16 years often had no practical, emotional or financial supports.  This had resulted in some care leavers losing their homes and highlighted the need for continuing support and direction as they moved into adulthood.

Some of the young people in Baker's (2017) review highlighted how lonely and socially isolated they felt, and some perceived the trust issues they had to be linked to disrupted relationships while in care.  This suggests that the involvement of previously absent parents when young people leave the care system can lead to similar tensions as the young person struggles with any positive relationships they may have formed with professionals and carers in an effort to remain loyal to their birth parents. The findings suggested that leaving care had resulted in a rise in mental health problems.  This is a view reflected by the report, previously mentioned, commissioned by Dugdale in 2018, *Falling through the cracks*.  Dugdale (2018) cites National Health Survey figures indicating that 22% of those young people with care experience are more likely than their peers to try to self-harm or commit suicide (The Scottish Parliament, 2018). However, as mentioned above, adverse childhood experiences before entering care could also have contributed to mental health issues (Couper and Mackie, 2016).

Dugdale's (2018) review also detailed reports of young people raising concerns regarding their social isolation and mental health difficulties. In the current climate of Coronavirus restrictions on social distancing, the possibility of social isolation, anxiety and vulnerability will have increased (Rogers et., al. 2020).  For some corporate parents, their organisational restrictions regarding the virus, including limited physical contact with others, may have limited support for young care leavers to only phone or virtual contact.  This could have been problematic for some young people as they may not have had access to the technology needed.  In some cases, the young people who could not afford internet services had previously accessed these by visiting public buildings such as libraries and local offices, however with Coronavirus restrictions, these buildings were closed.

When making decisions regarding many areas in life and, in this study, regarding young care leavers, good assessments are important to inform those decisions and a shared focus for corporate parents when assessing different situations is essential, despite the different purposes aims and roles of the named partners. On entering an organisation, the individual has to learn the organisational culture. This is done by sharing knowledge, including values, attitudes, beliefs, the history of the organisations and also acquiring a shared language resulting in a sense of belonging (Brown, 1998). This thesis aims to explore whether using a shared language, the wellbeing indicators, for assessments made by corporate parents, aids their decision-making processes. Given the increased risk-taking behaviours of care experienced young people, including the mortality rate, and the heightened level of mental health difficulties, the wellbeing indicators considered most relevant in my research were.

Safe - "Protected from abuse, neglect or harm at home, at school and in the community".
and
Healthy - "Having the highest attainable standards of physical and mental health, access to suitable healthcare, and support in learning to make healthy, safe choices".

The use of this shared assessment framework should have encouraged consistency in each of the corporate parenting partners' approach to care leavers and promoted the expectation of corporate parenting that the agencies named would work in collective collaboration (Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014). However, collaborative working also presents challenges as there may be conflict between, not only the organisational cultures of each agency, but also their different purposes.

Negative, sometimes, traumatic experiences of children and young people and the impact this can have on their mental health, social isolation and risk-taking behaviour is clear (Mendes et al., 2014). Offending behaviour and possible homelessness, as young care leavers struggle with the responsibility of adhering to pro-social rules and boundaries either in their own tenancy or other accommodation, may increase the risk of self-harm or suicide, often combined with substance misuse. These factors

suggest that more support, both emotional and practical, while in the care system and after leaving care, is crucial to improving outcomes for this group of children and young people.  This emphasises the importance of corporate parents and the influence their different organisational cultures may have on the decisions they make.

**Organisational Cultures**

Arnold (2005) defines organisational culture as giving different establishments their distinctive characters, suggesting that the beliefs, principles and attitudes of different agencies distinguish them from other organisations.  Johnson (1990) likens this culture of an organisation to the personality of an individual.  In addition to sharing principles, beliefs and norms, Brown (1998) states that each organisation will have a common language, all of which, influences the way members of the organisation behave and may be responded to.  Each corporate parent will use a language specific to their own organisation and profession linked to the role and purpose of the individual agency.  For example, police, social work and health may quote legislation such as the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1995, the Mental Health Act (1983), with which they are familiar.  Terminology used may be procedural, relating to systems and processes of the organisation that different agencies or individuals may be unfamiliar with or take exception to.  This was commented on in *The Promise* where young people objected to the jargonistic nature of the professionalised language used (Independent Root and Branch Care Review, 2020).  One example given was when having family time, social work referred to this as "contact" as opposed to just the young person just being with their parents and/or siblings.

The opposing needs of the different partner agencies may cause some confusion as the differing aims and objectives will influence the agency and organisational cultures (Papadodimitraki, 2016).  Legislation and organisational processes can also place restrictions on professionals, impacting on their ability to make ethical and professional decisions (Okitikpi, 2011).  For social work, this can present other difficulties as their professional identity can change to fit their practice with working between families, other agencies, and the legislation and the policies of their organisation (Daly and Kettle, 2017).  Building on theories of different organisational

cultures, Harrison (1993) developed a descriptive model which broke organisational culture into four dimensions:

- **Power-orientated culture**
  This type of culture is described as being hierarchical, having a dominant head surrounded by dependants who are either intimates or subordinates.
- **Role-orientated culture**
  As the name implies, this type of culture focuses on the function and specialities of the organisation with a small group holding the power, taking on a pillar type culture.

- **Achievement-orientated culture**
  This type of culture (sometimes referred to as task culture) is based on competence and knowledge and is dependent on team working.
- **Support-orientated culture**
  This type of culture places people as central to the organisation, making decisions while considering the impact on individuals.

These cultures can overlap, for example the police, with one person dominating the organisation and having a specific function, could be described as a combination of both power and role orientated cultures (Harrison, 1993). To professionals from different organisations their own cultures may be accepted as normal with no thought given to the cultures of partner agencies. Different dimensions may cross over as, a role-orientated culture would be led by a small group of individuals each having different responsibilities, however, each of these individuals may use their power in a different way, possibly taking a hierarchical approach, thus combining role and power orientated cultures (Harrison, 1993).

Building on Harrison's work, Bradley and Parker (2006) also identify dimensions of organisational culture which are very similar. They refer to the internal process model, which is hierarchical involving conformity and the reinforcement of rules which would reflect the organisational culture of the police. The human relations model which promotes teamwork through trust, participation and encouragement, could be linked to health professionals who often play different roles within a team.

The model which may be most suited to the organisational cultures of social work professionals and children's panel members is the rational model. This model emphasises goal setting and planning which is pivotal to social workers in every discipline as, the goal of both of these agencies is to make decisions which are informed by plans (Bradley and Parker, 2006).

Whatever the label, these organisational cultures will have been established over time and, although having a very powerful impact on decision-making, may be invisible. Schein (1990), mentions the culture iceberg, explaining that there will be observable symbols, such as uniforms and procedures, however, there may also be underlying values, beliefs and assumptions which will be less visible. This raises the question of whether culture places constraints on the behaviour and beliefs of individuals within their different organisations (Schein, 2004). Individuals in the different partner agencies may feel under pressure to make decisions which are fitting with their organisations beliefs and culture as opposed to their professional or personal values. In order to gain some understanding of how the participants interpret their social world, the world of those around them, and the influence of their organisational cultures in making decisions, my research took a phenomenological approach as will be explained in chapter three (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Mason, 2002; Welman and Kruger, 1999). This approach, linked to intuition, or tacit knowledge, explores the influence of personal commitment, feelings and opinions on the decision-making process (Brown et. al, 2012; Polanyi, 1966). Whatever the complex and different influences, it is important that the relevant named corporate parents communicate with each other and work in collective collaboration when considering the welfare of children and young care leavers. Whether the organisational cultures of the named partner agencies encourage collaborative working or influence decisions made by different professionals is a thread that ran through my research.

**Collaborative Working**

In order to reach the best outcomes for service users, in this case, young care leavers, there is an expectation that organisations and agencies will work collaboratively (Christie, 2011). Schedule 4 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, for the first time named the partners responsible for Corporate Parenting. This comprises of 24 different individuals, organisations and groups who

have a range of statutory duties and responsibilities to looked after children and care leavers (App 1). These include, not only the agencies participating in this research, but also the fire and prison services, education, housing, and other bodies. By including a wide range of organisations and individuals the expectation is that, collectively, corporate parents can give real meaning to the duties set out in section 58 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. Section 58 acknowledges the differing functions of each of the partners but also urges corporate parents to take appropriate action to improve the way they exercise their roles with regards to care experienced children and young people. Placing collective parenting responsibilities, for the wellbeing of young care leavers, on all named partners. However, each of the named partners have different purposes and organisational cultures which might impact on their ability to parent in collective collaboration.

Collective parenting is a concept practiced by some cultures identified in South American and African countries, suggesting that communities and villages take responsibility for caring for children (Amos, 2013). In certain African cultures, the expression "family" is not the nuclear family but the extended family. This is composed of several generations of relatives often occupying different, but nearby, homes (Adinlofu, 2009). The responsibility of caring for a child is not only that of the biological parents, but the extended family, providing children with a variety of role models. In these cultures, the dominance of elders is linked to the degree of social control in their villages and communities. This level of control will be dependent on relationships that have been built up over years, particularly with young people (Degbey, 2012). In Britain, if a child has been received into the care system, there is likely to be no positive familial social control, instead this responsibility may remain with the collective corporate parents.

As early as 2003, The Green Paper *Every Child Matters* (HMSO, 2003), emphasised the need to break down organisational boundaries. In the Christie Commission (2011) on the future delivery of public services, one of the main threads was the need for services to work together in order to achieve positive outcomes. The suggestion is that, to address inequality, and protect the vulnerable, the integration of service provision, is essential. The Scottish Government's Guidance on Part 9 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, acknowledges that the way

corporate parenting duties will be fulfilled may be constrained by the other functions of the partner agencies, indicating that, in some cases it may be difficult to combine individual, professional and organisational concepts of parenting.  If this results in internal conflict, decisions may be made that fulfil the expectations of the organisation but are not in the best interests of the children and young people involved (Fenwick, 2014).  The expectation, as outlined in the guidance, is that by working in collective collaboration, the duties of corporate parents will be met.  Police Scotland's 2016/20 Approach to Children and Young People emphasises the importance of working with other professionals quoting the definition of corporate parenting as defined in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 as:

> "the formal and local partnerships between all services responsible for working together to meet the needs of looked after children, young people and care leavers".

In her research on applying the Christie Commission Principles to the delivery of partnership working and integration in Scotland, Bennet (2018), recognised that effective partnership working requires intensive resources.  However, she concluded that in order to deliver this, those in positions of power in the different professional groups must listen to each other and this can be dependent on the organisational culture of their agencies.  This can be difficult as different procedures and processes of the partners will have been developed for their individual organisational needs and purposes taking into consideration economic, political and social dimensions on institutional and individual levels (Hafferty and Levinson, 2008).

These differences in organisational cultures can result in conflict between the values of different professionals and may lead to individuals challenging and contradicting each other (Wright, 2014).   Baxter (2011), when exploring the evolving role of professionalism in the public sector, suggested that the move towards multi-agency working was open to tensions between the different priorities, aims and values of the professions involved.

Although the diversity of ideas and opinions could be viewed as a strength leading to creative solutions, the resulting tensions may be detrimental to any decision or

outcome (Easen, 1998; Machell, 1999). However, in order to be effective, it is important to emphasise the need for communication as opposed to dominance. Those organisations and individuals who consider their roles and responsibilities take priority, may seek to dominate discussions. Any power imbalance can then influence other professionals who, in an effort to avoid conflict, defer to the dominant individual and/or agency (Atkinson et al., 2002). If the organisational culture is role orientated, focussing on the function and specialities of the organisation, this might be contrary to legislation and guidance emphasising the importance of collaborative working (Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014; Scottish Government, 2012).

For some, the reluctance to share knowledge and skills may be a means of protecting their professionalism by promoting and safeguarding status and power thus acquiring some form of occupational dominance (Larkin, 1983). This domination and professional control is touched upon by Evetts (2012) who suggests that even within organisations tasks are processed and controlled to suit occupational interests, suggesting a role-orientated culture. As each of the professionals and agencies involved come with their own purpose and identities, it is to be expected that some form of conflict would be present.

In discussing the values, ethics and principles of social services in Scotland, social service workers must promote independence and respect the rights of service users (Scottish Government, 2015c). However, legislation and organisational processes can place restrictions on practitioners which may impact on their ability to make ethical and professional decisions (Okitikpi, 2011). There is also some suggestion that organisational needs may be prioritised in the delivery of training, both within the organisation and by educational institutions, as opposed to the skills and knowledge needed by the profession thus shifting from occupational to organisational control of professions (Evetts, 2012; Harris et al., 2008). Although the partner agencies named as corporate parents should have the welfare of the young person as their focus, the different priorities and ethical understanding of their agencies can result in further challenges (Oliver, 2006).

In some instances, these challenges may result in decisions being made, by professionals, which lead to the young person seeking additional, independent, support to challenge decisions which they may perceive to be unjust. In these cases, the support of advocacy services may be necessary who, adhering to advocacy standards and, will ensure that the young person has their voice heard and views considered (Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance, 2019). Ward et al (2004) explain that, in order to give best value, users views must be considered in evaluating the provision of services. Although the proposed sample of young people sought for my research were over 16 years of age, they were considered to be vulnerable and, according to, ethical guidance, should be accessed through gatekeepers, in this case some of the agencies advocating for children and young people.

Gatekeepers are those individuals or organisations who have the power to grant or withhold access to people or situations for the purpose of research (Burgess,1984). When seeking the views of those young people who have been involved in the care system, there can be a succession of gatekeepers. These can include local authorities, parents, carers and other agencies. While they have the responsibility to safeguard the welfare of children and young people, they also have a duty to listen to their views, while also considering their age and level of understanding. However, despite several attempts to access this group it became clear that those agencies advocating for young people were reluctant to consider identifying possible participants for my research. This prompted a brief review of the literature detailing the experiences of other researchers who had encountered similar barriers.

In their evaluation of mentoring schemes for care leavers, Clayden and Stein (2002) achieved only half of their target sample of interviews. The reason for this shortfall, they thought, was due to the reluctance by a number of projects they approached to participate in their study and identify possible participants. Harwin et al (2003), had a similar experience when trying to interview children in relation to care orders. They found that, in the majority of cases, it was the carers who refused to allow the children to participate. In these instances, the projects and the carers acted as gatekeepers.Neuman (2000), suggests that those who initially identify possible participants can influence the course of the research path. Therefore, the role of the

gatekeeper can be a powerful one as they are representing vulnerable populations. Bound (2012) suggests that being vulnerable includes any individual whose condition, status, or circumstances, make them susceptible to the negative influence of others. This includes those who may be economically, socially, culturally and physically or mentally vulnerable. In my research the vulnerability was linked to the possible participant's care experienced background.

Murray (2005), explored young people's participation and non-participation in research, based on a review of the 2004 Quality Protects database which comprised of 182 studies, since 1991, of which 72 were relevant to adoption and fostering. Of these studies, only 38 involved children and young people. She found that in most of the findings the target sample number of participants of children and young people were not achieved. The indications were not that this was due to a poor response rate from possible participants but rather that there were several other factors, one of the most fundamental to emerge was that of gatekeepers. Murray (2005) also suggests that this an issue to be further explored as there is the possibility that gatekeeping can involve filtering of groups including the disabled and young people with Black, Asian, and minority ethnic heritage and also gender.

In discussing what might motivate the gatekeeper, Bound (2012) explores how ethical violations by gatekeepers including manipulation of access to participants and possible coercion could, in turn, influence and bias data gathered. This could then affect not only direct participants (those who engage directly with the researcher) but also indirect parties as the findings of the research may inform legislation or funding and have an impact on their welfare, in this case young care leavers. This reflects a much earlier suggestion that gatekeepers, by only identifying and including particular participants in research who are in agreement with their own or organisation's views, can direct the findings and recommendations of studies (Lee, 1993). I would suggest that, for research either commissioned or undertaken by the organisations they represent, gatekeepers have no difficulty identifying possible participants. Unless recruitment of research participants form a representative group with a range of views and experiences, it might call into question the validity of the findings of some of these studies and have implications for any funding or legislation informed by them. This is an issue that must be discussed and debated further and raises the

question, when the only way to reach vulnerable groups is through gatekeepers, whose views and voices are actually being heard?

Despite these challenges, the expectation of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 is that all of the named partners will work in collaboration to provide effective parenting to children and care experienced young people.  The importance of treating young care leavers as if the professionals involved were their parent rather than viewing them as service user is also emphasised (Wright, 2014). As a parent, one would expect some level of understanding of the impact of bad experiences on their child's behaviour.  Therefore, those responsible for corporate parenting should also consider the negative and damaging experiences of these young people both prior to and, often after, being received into care.  Conversely, can the positive love and care experiences of a family be replicated by organisations as dictated by legislation or are they directed by their organisational cultures and views (Independent Root and Branch Care Review (2020).

**Why corporate parents?**

Whatever shape corporate parenting may take, there is no doubt that access to support for young care leavers is essential as, the problems facing young people who have had care experience often relate, not only to the trauma they may have experienced before being received into the care system, but also their experiences while in care.  Studies cited by Mendes and Moslehuddin (2004) in both Australia and the United Kingdom suggested that, rather than babies or infants entering the care system, an increasing number of adolescents with complex and disturbing difficulties were being received into care (Buchanan, 1999; Green and Jones, 1999). Poor mental and physical health of care leavers was also highlighted, indicating that they are one of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups in society.  These vulnerabilities are compounded by the growing numbers of young people, leaving care, with little or no family support (Furnivall, 2013; Scottish Government, 2018).

According to social work statistics, since 2012, the percentage of those young people leaving care and returning to their families has consistently fallen (Scottish Government, 2018). This suggests that the provision of support and direction for care experienced young people as they transition into adulthood may not be in place.

Of the estimated 6109 young people who were eligible for After Care services, only 62% were recorded as receiving such a service (Scottish Government, 2018). With the introduction of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, the criteria for eligibility for aftercare services was extended to include those young people up to the day before their 26th birthday. The addition of this older age group now meeting the criteria for aftercare will result in these figures rising in the future, begging the question, what about those care leavers who, for whatever reason, are not receiving a service. This increase in numbers will have an impact on those agencies responsible for decision-making in corporate parenting. This thesis aims to explore whether decisions are based on the individual's professional values, their organisational culture, or their individual parenting views and are in the best interests of the young person. The internal conflict that the individual may experience as they also struggle with their own personal values may be further impacted upon as they strive to adhere to relevant legislation.

The Children (Scotland) Act 1995 may have been a reactive response to international guidelines and legislation, including the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (1989). Prompting the Scottish Government to take, what they believed to be, a child centred approach. This approach was reinforced by the Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) literature which has been used and tested across Scotland since 2006. Using this early intervention and holistic approach, the focus is on the welfare of the child or young person and to avoid situations and behaviours deteriorating (Scottish Government, 2012). The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 reaffirmed this approach and also defined someone under the age of 18 years as a child. This definition was further reinforced with the recent introduction of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill, placing children's rights at the heart of Scots Law (Scottish Parliament, March 2021).

Although looked after children and care leavers have been a priority for some years, the responsibility for corporate parenting continued to be that of the local authority (Children (Scotland) Act 1995, S17). This appeared to lead to the perception that social work should be solely responsible for care leavers with no mention of any other agencies. Perhaps as a means of addressing this issue, the Scottish

Government, through the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, named those agencies who, working collectively, are all corporate parents thus placing responsibility for the wellbeing of young care leavers on all partners (App.2). Legislation, incorporating the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 and the more recent United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill, clearly states that those under the age of 18 years of age should be defined as children. This is yet another example of the changing notion of childhood over time including increases in the school leaving age in the United Kingdom. In 1947 this was extended from 14 to 15 years of age, again in 1972 from 15 to 16 years of age. When concerns were subsequently raised regarding 16 to 18 year olds not in education or employment, the expectation became that young people should remain in some form of education or training until at least the age of 18 years (Department of Education, 2016).

Expecting that all young people to remain in education for longer, reflects Scott's (1999) previous recognition of youth as a phase and described how these young people developed and behaved became an issue to be controlled by the state. This element of control, under the current legislation, has now extended with the role of corporate parenting to the day before a young person reaches the age of 26 years (Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014). In itself, this change may contribute to challenging behaviour of young care leavers as they object to, what they perceive to be, the continuing unwelcome interference of the authorities as opposed to support offered by parents. Collecting young people's views of their time in care, *The Promise* indicated that the care they were given was often cold, uncaring, professionalised and stigmatising (Independent Root and Branch Care Review, 2020). Given their previous experiences of being parented, this lack of professional warmth and loving care is concerning and prompted my previous exploration into different types of parenting (page 10) and how these might relate to corporate parenting and the different organisational cultures (Harrison, 1993; Kuppens and Ceulman, 2019).

**Rationale for my Research**

The Scottish Government launched an Independent Review of Scotland's Care System in 2017 which was ongoing until February 2020. The conclusion of this Root and Branch Review resulted in the publication of seven reports including *The Promise*, setting out rules reflecting the need for a holistic understanding of children and family lives. This set of rules addressed five foundations.

- Voice: giving children a voice that would be listened to
- Family: giving families support to ensure that the child is safe and nurtured
- Care: that, where possible siblings should be cared for together in a loving home for as long as needed
- People: children in care should be supported to develop relationships with their carers and the wider community
- Scaffolding: children, their families and carers should be supported by a scaffolding of help, support and accountability when required

The aim is to have the right practice, culture and resources to guarantee that all children in care, and their families, have access to their entitlements. There should be assurances that, when aspects of the care system go wrong, children and families are aware of their rights and understand how and where to access legal advice and representation if required (Independent Root and Branch Care Review, 2020).

While the findings of this Independent Review should benefit those children and young people still in the care system, what of those who have left care? In the past, they were dependent on supports offered through social services, which were often limited due to resource constraints and reliance on other organisations. However, this was to change with the introduction of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 which named the agencies and organisations sharing collective responsibility for the corporate parenting of young care leavers (App 1). The publication of *These Are Our Bairns* in 2008 challenged this approach emphasising that there should be a shift in the concept of corporate parenting, placing the importance on parenting as opposed to corporate (Scottish Government, 2008). This is reflected in the literature

suggesting that consideration should be given to the child or young person as if they were your own child and not viewed as a service user (UK Parliament, 1998; Wright, 2014). While, in an ideal world, the benefits of this approach are obvious, this would surely be dependent on the different expectations of the individuals, both personal and societal and their experiences of being parented. The age and life stage of the corporate parent should also be considered as they may have no knowledge of how to parent, if they have no children of their own. In a blog published by the Children's and Young People's Centre for Justice (2019), a care experienced young person highlights the fact that, for corporate parents, this is part of their employment for which they are paid. They also suggest that there is some pressure on professionals to form relationships, even if the young person does not particularly like them. Parker (1980) explains that the roles and responsibilities of parenting involves lifelong bonding and affection. When corporate parents engage with young care leavers, it is unlikely that relationships will have been long lasting enough to allow the bonding process that Parker (1980) mentions. This suggests that it will be difficult for different individuals and agencies, to effectively parent care experienced young people. At the time of writing, there appears to be a void of literature discussing this issue.

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 appears to take a top–down approach with the legislation dictating what frontline workers should do. However, when struggling with resource limitations and trying to achieve the goals and performance indicators, workers may adapt by changing, and possibly lowering, their expectations. They may adopt coping mechanisms that can be contrary to the goals of the legislation and, in turn, their organisation. In doing this, workers may recreate policies through their everyday actions. Parker (1980) suggests that to promote healthy psychosocial development of children, exerting control may be necessary. However, as with panel members, residential childcare staff, to avoid conflict and aggression, may resort to an element of collusion to placate both the child and, on occasion, their families (SCRA, 2019). It is unlikely that those who legislate have been faced, on a daily basis, with a troubled, angry and aggressive child or young person who threatens harm to themselves, other residents, care staff or property or have experienced threats from emotionally charged parents (Cantrill, 2009; SCRA, 2019). This then becomes a ground-level approach, as described by Hudson (1997). Whether this is an issue as individuals struggle to balance their organisational aims

and processes with their own personal and professional values is explored in this research, as is the understanding of their roles and responsibilities as corporate parents.

How the care system meets the needs of children and young people while in their care and after leaving care, is a very current topic (Barker, 2017; Independent Care Review, 2020). Therefore, the main focus of this research involved engaging with participants from some of the named partners to gain insight as to their understanding of roles and responsibilities of corporate parenting in the context of complex decision-making and organisational cultures. This is important as Atkinson et al., (2002) highlight that, in multi-agency working, it is necessary to appreciate the roles and responsibilities of all involved.

This chapter has provided a critical review aimed at examining the available literature and legislation regarding the roots and role of corporate parenting, an overview of the Children's Hearing System and the role of Panel Members. There was also some discussion on the changing notion of childhood, child trafficking, different organisational cultures, decision-making processes and consideration of collaborative working. Consideration was given to literature giving the views of young care leavers, however, how these young people were accessed is unclear and it is likely that they were already known to advocacy agencies. This would suggest that they were acceptant of some form of support which would suggest that they were not in the category of strugglers as defined by Stein (1997), who would be unlikely to engage with any services. Strugglers are likely to be the most vulnerable group of care leavers and, while it will be difficult, more innovative ways of gathering their views should be explored.

To my knowledge there is little, or no, literature regarding the views of corporate parents and how easy it is for professionals, affiliated to the named partners, to reconcile their professional and organisational values with responding to the care leaver as if they were their parent. This is a stipulation of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, reinforced by Nicola Sturgeon, Scotland's First Minister who, at a Who Cares? Conference in Glasgow, 2019, described herself as Scotland's "chief corporate parent". My research has identified a gap in the current

research exploring how, and if, professionals from the named partners manage the concept of parenting care leavers as if they were their own child.

The next chapter will identify the aims of my research and detail the methodological theories considered for this study.  There will also be an explanation of the methods used, the recruitment process, data collection, data analysis and some of the challenges associated with conducting this research.

**Chapter 3: Methodology**

Focussing on young people who left the care system after their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday and are entitled to an aftercare service, this study explores the way the named corporate parents view and understand their roles and how their different organisational cultures may influence their decision-making. Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative study will be threefold:

- To compare and contrast the perception of the roles and responsibilities of corporate parenting held by some of the partners as named in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 and how this compares with individual parenting expectations.
- To gain an understanding of the influence that the cultures, beliefs and attitudes of the different organisations involved may have on the views of their professionals on their roles and responsibilities as corporate parents.
- To explore whether collaborative working is in practice and also if the Getting It Right For Every Child approach is being adhered to (Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014).

The aim of this chapter is to describe the research methods used in this study, including the rationale for using such methods to fulfil the aims of this research. The methods used will be the tools deemed most effective to ensure that the research aims can be met (Matthews and Ross, 2010). This will include consideration of practical issues such as time constraints, for both myself and participants and talk the reader through the research process.

The approaches used in this qualitative study are introduced, including the process of the Literature Review, and why vignettes, emailed to participants, were deemed the most suitable methods of gathering data for this study. The research process, including ethical approval, populating the sample and methods for gathering and storing data, are explained as well as the analytical process used to interpret and identify emerging themes. Some of the challenges that arose during this process will be described, including the barriers to accessing young people in order to gain consent to participate and the role of gatekeepers. The quality and rigour of this research is enhanced by the transparency of the research process. A clear sampling

framework was developed using purposive sampling, ensuring that the participants would have some experience of the phenomenon to be studied (Tuckett, 2004). Being reflective throughout the process also added to the rigour of the research, which were improved by the recognition that my own experiences and preconceptions could influence the findings of my research, encouraging further reflection on my role as researcher (Jasper, 2005., Finlay, 2002., Hand, 2003., Horsburgh, 2003). In my case, my professional practice and knowledge of assessment, the childcare system and other processes involved in corporate parenting, allowed me to better understand the research subject and increase transparency. Throughout this chapter, my intention was to be open and honest about decisions I made and the actions taken. This chapter ends with a description of the themes which generated the findings of this study (Chapter 3) and the methods used to disseminate the findings.

**Methodological approach**

This study is concerned with understanding the social and psychological perceptions of situations as viewed by each of those corporate parents participating in this process. Namely how the beliefs, cultures and attitudes of the different groups might influence their opinions and, in turn their decisions. Given this, the research design encompasses a phenomenological approach (Mason, 2002; Welman and Kruger, 1999).

From a phenomenological perspective the indications are that the social world is built from multiple and complex typologies. How people perceive the intentions of others is crucial to how they make sense of situations and, in turn, behave. This form of social construction, which individuals then refer to in everyday life, can be greatly influenced by the opinions, attitudes, shared cultural assumptions, theoretical and organisational boundaries and negotiated beliefs of different groups (types) or agencies (Helm, 2013; Weick et al, 2005). The phenomenological approach helps to understand how participants from different corporate parenting partners interpret their social world and that of those around them, interpreting their roles and, in turn,

making decisions influenced by organisational or group, beliefs, values and cultures (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Mason, 2002; Welman and Kruger,1999).

While each of the agencies involved in this research; police, social work, Children's Panel members and health services, may consider that their cultural preconceptions are shared by other agencies, this might not be the case as values and perceptions of hierarchy might differ (Atkinson et al, 2002).  On an individual level, Fenwick (2014) suggests that professionals are often faced with compromises and must try to balance the expectations and regulations of their professions with the obligations to their employers.

Unlike positivists, who suggest that only knowledge, which is measurable and gained through observation, is trustworthy and believe that researchers should be detached from their own presuppositions, phenomenologists consider that this is not the case (Hammersley, 2000).  As a practicing social worker, I am aware that my understanding of the world may be influenced by my own organisational and professional culture and beliefs and, as such, I cannot pretend otherwise. Therefore, this research will also take an interpretivist approach as I engage, albeit by emails, with participants in gathering, and analysing, the data from of all the parties involved in this study while having some understanding of their role as corporate parents (Groenwald, 2004).  Benton and Craib (2001) draw on Weber's (1978) interpretivist approach which suggests that the culture in which one lives influences one's views and, in turn, their actions.  Linked to the ethos of tacit knowledge, this involves using intuition, which is influenced by strong personal commitment, opinions, feelings and past experiences and can impact on decisions and actions (Polanyi, 1966).  Schutz (1972) took this a stage further by suggesting that we can expect certain behaviour/actions by types, or groups, of people with shared knowledge and understanding resulting in a common ground being determined by similar learning episodes.  In essence, organisational cultures, which also bring a shared tacit knowledge, forming a background for understanding and establishing explicit knowledge to that type or organisation.  Examples of these types could be family members, friends and colleagues.  When this is then extended to organisations, Schutz (1972) refers to these as second-order typology or organisational cultures.

**Rationale for choice of research methods**

Starting with the literature review, the legislation, studies and texts explored evolved over the period of this research, the methods used throughout this critical review were based on the four stages outlined by Matthews and Ross (2010):

- Background reading
- Detailed searches
- Reading and evaluation
- Structuring and producing the review (through reflection and further reading)

This review was also informed at an earlier stage by my own additional professional knowledge and experience, as a practicing social worker, engaging with young care leavers as they attempt to transition onto independence.   Unfortunately, not all care leavers manage this progression well and some may struggle with basic living skills, such as budgeting, cooking and personal and environmental hygiene often resulting in homelessness and unemployment, further increasing anxieties and often contributing to, already present, mental health difficulties.

These problems, I would suggest, reflect previous literature on care leavers and can be the result of complex mental health difficulties combined with disrupted relationships, attachment issues and negative experiences both prior to and while in care (Buchanan, 1999; Green and Jones, 1999; Parker, 1980).  My professional position also allowed me access to, and exploration of, available, relevant, literature and legislation which, had I been a researcher without this professional knowledge and status, may have proved more difficult.  My reading included literature on parenting, multi-agency working and other research on the experiences of young care leavers.  A more detailed search of the current and previous legislation and the history of corporate parenting followed including some organisational policies, journals, books and visiting various websites.  At this reading and evaluation stage, the importance of partners working collectively to increase positive outcomes for young people, became evident, as did my own experiences of multi-agency decision-making and the impact, both positive and negative, on outcomes for young care leavers.  This resulted in the subject matter of the literature review being broadened to include participants perceptions of collaborative working.

When making policies and legislation regarding the future of any service users, they should be included and involved (Ward et al., 2004). In this case my research should have included young people who had experience of being corporate parented, however, while professionals involved in the decision-making processes for young people who have been corporate parented have participated, it was not possible to gather the views of young care leavers. Agencies advocating for young people were approached with the request to pass on the information regarding my research to possible participants. Only one of those advocacy agencies responded and, after several discussions, they refused to pass on the information I had provided as, they advised, the young people were too vulnerable to participate. Literature suggests that in other studies, children and young people may have been denied the opportunity to make informed decisions as to whether they participate or not (Bound, 2012; Carver, 2017; Clayden and Stein, 2002; Harwin et al., 2003; Murray, 2005). This will be further discussed in the section on populating the sample. Given this, I also drew on literature providing some insight into the views of care leavers (Baker, 2017). However, one of the aims of this research is to gain some understanding the ways in which individuals from different organisational cultures construct their perception of professional responsibility in their role as corporate parents. Therefore, the focus is on the responses from professionals affiliated to some of the named partners.

Klein et al., (2006) argue that only by making sense of the connections of our social world can we anticipate situations and act accordingly. By exploring how each participant might respond to different situations, from their organisational viewpoint and if they were the parent of the young person being discussed, this would give some insight into any differences or similarities between, not only the individual's views, but also highlight any variances between the different named partners. In order to do this several methods of gathering information were considered.

While individual interviews to gather the information were considered, this would have been time consuming for both the researcher and participant as most of those involved are busy, professional people. My own caseload, working with often very complex and needy young people who initially could be reluctant to engage resulting in time being spent trying to build supportive working relationships, also influenced

my choice of gathering data.  Interviews would also necessitate a degree of involvement of the interviewer which can distort the information gathered as there may be issues of power, gender, age and status (Robson, 2001).  Therefore, this type of data gathering was deemed unworkable given the time constraints and other methods were considered, including questionnaires.

Questionnaires as a means of gathering information would be less time consuming, however, they are reliant on self-reporting, which gives no assurance of a true reflection of views and opinions or seriousness of response (Robson, 2001).   In order to gather the data via this option, it would be important to be non-directive and use open questions as opposed to dichotomous yes/no questions.  Unless these questions were focused on a central theme the aims of the research could become diluted or lost.  However, it is also important to be vague enough to allow participants to define the situation in their own terms and offer additional information as to what might influence their decisions (Finch, 1987).  Given this, a more focused type of questionnaire taking the form of a vignette was considered.

Vignettes can be used in social research for three main purposes:  to give the opportunity to explore actions in context; to explore sensitive subjects in a less personal and threatening way; and to allow the participant to define the situation as they perceive it (Barter and Renold, 1999).  This method of information gathering asks participants to respond to a specific situation, often involving some form of moral dilemma, by advising what they would do or how they might imagine someone else would respond (Finch, 1987).  In this research the participants were asked to respond from two perspectives; what their organisation's response might be and how they might respond as a parent.  They were also asked which agency might take responsibility for the situation.  In order to encourage honest responses, the respondent should be familiar and able to engage with the type of scenario being presented (Barter and Renold, 1999).  To this end, the participants were all affiliated to some of the organisations named as corporate parents and should have been familiar with the types of situations being described.

As this research took a phenomenological approach, exploring the perceptions, beliefs and how the participants might make sense of situations, the use of vignettes

was considered to be the most effective and valuable technique for the purpose of my research.   The use of vignettes in qualitative research is described by Hill (1997) as.

> "Short scenarios in written or pictorial from, intended to elicit responses to typical scenarios" (Hill 1997:177).

Although using scenarios was still reliant on the honesty of the participants, using this method to gather data allowed some exploration of the similarities and differences in the constructions of social problems by different agencies.  The use of vignettes also avoided issues of sensitivity as commenting on a story may be perceived as less personal than sharing direct experiences (Barter and Renold, 1999).  Nygren and Oltedal (2015) cite Kriz and Skiveness (2013), suggesting that vignettes have been recognised as a means of investigating the beliefs, attitudes and perceptions of professionals regarding professional decision-making and the emerging emotions.  Therefore, I decided on the use of scenarios following the young person through three different, progressive situations.

Using emails as opposed to interviews and hypothetical scenarios encourages a true reflection of the views and opinions of the participants.  The three scenarios were brief with only three short, open, questions on each.  The length and depth of the responses was left to the participants, taking into consideration their possible time constraints.  This method of gathering the data also made the process of analysis manageable for myself as the sole researcher.  Given my own time constraints, the responses were already recorded by the participants saving me the need to transcribe.

Many young people who face difficult situations encountering stress and adversity, fare well. Their resilience can be attributed to possessing certain strengths and protective factors that help them overcome adverse conditions (Zolkoski et.al,2012). These protective factors are provided at an individual, family and community level, and include appropriate self-regulation and secure parent-child relationships. Unfortunately, for the young people described in the research scenarios, they would have poor self-regulation, little or no positive familial support or relationships, and an

increased possibility of social isolation.  The likelihood is that they would have had several care placements, attachment and trust difficulties resulting in a reluctance to accept any form of support offered. Stein (1997) would have described the young person in the scenarios as a struggler, moving from one crisis to another, with no positive future expectations.  While this label may be perceived as detrimental and demeaning to the young person, the description suggests a lack of resilience and may give some insight as to the underpinning reasons for their behaviours.  In a corporate parenting capacity, understanding the reasons for negative behaviours could result in responding to situations differently and might, in turn, improve outcomes for the young person.

While, over time, effective and trusting relationships can be built between care staff, social workers and children and young people, this can also present difficulties as workers may leave, children are moved to different care placements or transition to other age appropriate services.  This can result in a further lack of trust and reluctance to form relationships as individuals. Both children and professionals involved may question why they should invest in relationships that they have no control over and may be short-lived.   However, there is no doubt that building an effective working relationship with young people should encourage them to seek and accept support and direction offered.

The scenarios for my research were developed by drawing on my own professional experiences of working with young care leavers and those of some of my colleagues. I focused on the problematic situations the care leavers have found themselves in over time.   My engagement with young care leavers has involved supporting them through, not only the transition into independence, but also, in some cases, their journey through the criminal justice system.  One of the biggest challenges with this client group is the frustration at the time needed to build any form of professional, trusting relationships as their transition process can involve moving from a Children and Families Social Worker, whom they have known for years, to a new worker. This can be problematic as the young person may feel rejected by the previous worker, be experiencing feelings of loss, and be reluctant to invest in another relationship.

The vignettes took the form of three separate situations following the same young person as they progress from 16 to 17 years old. Khoo et al., (2003) suggest using several new phases in scenarios that demands some form of intervention. In this study the vignettes followed one of two young people as their situation changed. Each scenario had the same three, open, questions focussing on what the participants think should be the response to each situation, who would be responsible and why (App 3, 3a, 4, 4a, 5, 5a). The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 builds upon the notion that corporate parents should care for children and care leavers as if they were their own child (Ward, 2014). This allowed some exploration as to how the participants thought that the young person should be dealt with as a professional in their organisation and compare this with their response if they were the parent of the young person.

The first scenario (App. 3 and 3a), when the young person is aged 16 years and, with the support of their mother, has persuaded Children's Panel members to discharge their Compulsory Supervision Order. This allowed them to return to the care of their mother but the relationship quickly broke down resulting in the young person being accommodated in a homeless project. Struggling to cope, and with no budgeting skills, the young person then commits a theft, blaming their behaviour on, what they perceive to be, the failings of social work. The situation this young person finds themselves in is not uncommon as they may not have developed the skills and coping strategies to move into independence. Although Children's Panel members will no longer be involved with the young person, this scenario should encourage some reflection on the possible consequences of decisions they may have made.

In the second vignette (App. 4 and 4a), the same young person is 17 years of age, presents as having mental health difficulties and is at risk of self-harming. Social work become involved but the situation deteriorates resulting in the police also becoming involved as the young person places themselves and others at risk of harm. This scenario reflects the mental health problems and risk-taking behaviours of many young care leavers.

The third scenario (App. 5 and 5a) follows the young person from scenario 2 as they are taken to hospital. Their attempts at self-harm become more serious and

concerns are increased when they leave hospital and run towards a main road. Building on the problems mentioned in the second scenario, this vignette describes how a situation can escalate and the possible consequences when this happens. It is hoped that, following all three scenarios, the participants may question decisions made and if this situation could have been avoided.

After discussing my research proposal with my own Head of Service, consent was given for me to speak to colleagues and some care experienced young people to conduct the pilot study. Using convenience sampling saved time and ensured that those involved had a knowledge of care leavers, the situations they might find themselves in and the choices they might make (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). Volunteers were sought and five social work professionals agreed to participate. Colleagues also spoke to young people, 16 years of age and over, and went over the Information and Consent form (App. 2) with those interested. In total four young people consented to participate. The main aim of this pilot was to gather feedback as to any confusion over the content of the vignettes and confirm that the language would be understandable to both professionals and young people, with no phrases used that might be affiliated, or alien, to any of the organisations taking part in the main study (Brown, 1998). The results were very positive with no concerns raised regarding any of the above or the believability of the scenarios.

As the information gathered focussed on the beliefs, experiences and feelings of the participants, both as individuals and as part of an organisation, it was important to give respondents the opportunity to express their views using open questions rather than dichotomous yes/no questions, giving the opportunity for more description and information to be gathered (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). The questions were short and clear encouraging full answers, beginning with What, Which and Why, allowing participants to express their views and opinions while encouraging some comment on their organisational expectations (Welman and Kruger, 1999).

The reason for individual participation via email was to address any contamination or power issues when discussing the role of corporate parenting that could be present in mixed agency groups (Smithson, 2000). This could be detrimental as my research was not only interested in the understanding of the role of corporate parenting, it was

also an exploration of the influence that different cultures, beliefs and organisational norms may have on this perception.

The next decisions to be made were developing the research process, identifying the study site, securing consent and negotiating access to participants.

**Research process**

The research instrument took the form of a set of questions based on different scenarios that might be present in a young person's journey into adulthood. These included accommodation, financial, mental health difficulties, offending behaviour, risk-taking and rejection of supports offered. When the initial scenarios and questions had been formulated, a pilot study took place with colleagues and some care experienced young people within my local authority participating (as described above).

The use of language was also incorporated and considered in the responses as, I was aware that different partners might be more familiar with some phrases (Brown 1998). I was careful not to include words and phrases that might be familiar to some of the professionals involved, but unfamiliar, or confrontational, to young people. Therefore, the language was simple but explanatory, avoiding quoting legislation or being too descriptive or dramatic. The comments from colleagues and young people were positive with no confusion with regards to either the scenarios offered, the questions asked, or language used.

Reflection was continuous during this process and, although not commented on by anyone in the pilot study, I realised that by making the young person in the scenarios male, I would not have the opportunity to compare whether the decisions made by corporate parents might be influenced by the gender of the young person, particularly regarding offending and risk-taking behaviour (Langer et al., 2016). I then decided to introduce a female (Jenna) into the study. When participants had been identified and consented, the vignettes they would receive followed either John or Jenna, through identical scenarios and questions. Using a list of participants, the male and female subjects were allocated alternately, and the participants followed the same young person throughout the research process.

Each of the participants received, by email, the same vignette/questionnaire at the same time with the remaining two being sent at monthly intervals. This spread the time implications of participating over a three to four month period and allowed for themes to emerge and be identified as the data from each scenario, emailed back to the researcher, was analysed. In order to discourage discussion with others and also capture initial responses to the scenarios, it was envisaged that responses would be submitted within only a few days. However, this proved to be unworkable as work commitments, shift patterns and leave impacted on response times.

**Identifying the study site and negotiating access to participants**

Although my research included several partner agencies named as corporate parents, as this included social work, it was important to acknowledge my insider status as a practicing social worker with a local authority Leaving Care Team. This was made clear to all participants prior to gaining their consent. While there can be considerable advantages to being an insider researcher there can also be a number of disadvantages. As an insider, I had already established contacts to enable access to possible participants. However, a disadvantage could include the possible difficulty in maintaining objectivity and a tendency to assume a shared understanding, not probing deeply enough where colleagues or concepts are familiar (Bryman 2001).

Populating the sample with colleagues from my local authority and also other local services would have been the simpler option, however, using this form of convenience sampling, where the respondents are easy to access, could also distort the findings of this study (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). While it can be advantageous to have a rapport between the researcher and the participants, having worked closely with colleagues and other professionals for several years they would have some insight as to my own views on specific issues. Bryman (2001) suggests that, in an effort to gratify the researcher, information gathered can be biased leading to

distorted findings.  Therefore, although this form of convenience sampling was used in the pilot study, it was not used in the main study.

I had hoped to include some care experienced young people in the research as their participation would have added another important dimension to the findings as they are the focus of decisions made by corporate parents which can impact on their future.  The duty to consult children in relation to legislation was introduced in the Children (England and Wales) Act 1975.  This focus on the right of children to be heard increased with the adoption of Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989 and was reinforced by the introduction of the Children Act in England and Wales in 1995, the Children (Scotland) Act of 1995 and the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995.  These Acts emphasised the importance of children's views being heard and taken into account in the legal decision-making process.

This then led to good practice guidelines for research with children, one of those being an online Research Ethics Guidebook by the Economic and Social Research Council.  This sets out guidelines, which take into consideration the need to prevent and reduce harm to children and young people while also being aware of the risks of silencing and excluding them from research.  By excluding them from research this also discounts their views and experiences.  Indeed, Best Value requires that service users' views should be taken account of in all evaluation of service provision (Ward et. Al., 2004).

In seeking informed consent for young people to participate in my research, and who had experience of being corporate parented, I had to identify those agencies in a position to identify the sample group, gatekeepers.   These gatekeepers have the power to grant or withhold access to people or situations for the purpose of research (Burgess,1984).  While they should protect the vulnerable from participating in damaging research, they are also in a position to suppress, or influence, their views (Masson, 2000).

For the purpose of my research, the best route appeared to be to approach some of those agencies promoting themselves as advocates for young people. The primary

focus of these agencies appeared to be giving children and young people a voice. With their vision statements and plans including using the views of young children to tell the government what is important to them, speaking out for children and families when the government or society fails to hear them and, ensuring that the voices of care experienced children and young people are heard by the people that have the power to positively influence their lives (Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance, 2019).

In my experience, contacting advocacy agencies proved to be fruitless resulting in either no response or, perhaps more concerning, refusal to consider identifying young people who might participate (aged 16 years and over) as, they advised, they were concerned regarding their vulnerability.  When I explored this further and advised of the outcome of the pilot study involving young care leavers identified by colleagues, which raised no concerns, I was informed that the scenarios might upset young people.  This was despite the fact they were not being asked to share direct experiences but, instead, comment on the scenario provided which is perceived to be less sensitive and personal (Barter and Renold, 1999).  I also emailed the University of Stirling's contact for care leavers but received no response.

This then begged the question of why these young people were being denied the opportunity of giving their views in independent research when some of these agencies appear to include them in government and other funded research (Baker, 2017).   Lee (1993) indicates that by identifying particular individuals to participate in research who are in agreement with their agency's aims, this can direct findings.  I would suggest that this method of filtering participants can also have implications for future funding of those organisations.

However, filtering may begin at a much earlier stage and can involve excluding groups due to their ethnicity, gender and other factors (Murray, 2005).  In the case of my research those young people, described as strugglers, who actively reject support and direction and would be unlikely to engage with advocacy services (Stein, 1997).  For those young people not receiving services they are a hidden, unheard, population, often denied the opportunity to voice their opinions and, in not doing so, unable to influence legislation and the provision of services that might impact on their

future.  An example of this is the Continuing Care provision which entitles young people to remain within their care placement until the age of 21.  This provision, introduced by the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, was informed by young people's views, but only those identified by some form of gatekeepers.

It would appear that, not only in my research but also in other studies, children and young people may have been denied the opportunity to make informed decisions as to whether they participate or not (Clayden and Stein, 2002; Murray, 2005; Neuman, 2000).  There is no doubt that vulnerable people must be protected, however, they also have a right to have their views and opinions heard.  Whether denying them that right is a result of the possible over protectiveness of gatekeepers or some other motivation is unclear and concerning and will be discussed further in the final chapter.

Due to the refusal of the advocacy agencies to engage or pass on information to young care leavers, this research focussed on some of those agencies with corporate parenting responsibilities as named in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 (App 1).  Identifying those who could give consent for those affiliated to their organisations also proved to be problematic and, early in 2018, I contacted colleagues in four other local authorities in order to identify the Heads of Service.  Only two of those contacted responded.  As a practicing social worker, I had facilitated training new panel members and had access to a panel member who also sat on the Learning and Development Team for Children's Hearings Scotland. For police consent I was directed to the Scottish Institute for Policing Research (SIPR).  Contacting the correct person in the Health Service proved to be the lengthiest part of this process.  Eventually, I was directed to a Research Coordinator who, patiently, explained the ethical consent process for their agency through the Integrated Research Application System (IRAS).  Unfortunately, even after having gained ethical consent, I struggled to identify someone who could assist me in identifying possible participants from health.  This resulted in my attendance at a local Corporate Parenting Board meeting, discussing my proposed research and appealing to those attending from the Health Service, leading to a contact being identified.

**Identifying potential participants for the research**

In order to identify those participants who could best contribute to this study, a criterion or purposive method of populating the sample was used (Mason, 2002). This type of non-probability sampling based on my judgement and the purpose of the research focussed on those who had experience of the phenomena to be researched, namely colleagues from some of the agencies named as corporate parents (Groanwald, 2004). The next step was to email the Information and Consent forms (App 2) to those identified as contacts in each of the agencies requesting that they either identify possible participants or distribute these forms to colleagues who might wish to volunteer their services. Both the identified contacts in each of the partner agencies, and the possible participants, were advised that further discussion on the nature, method, purpose and future use of the research could take place if requested. Some of the identified contacts did take advantage of this opportunity and they were assured that this research would be non-biased with the study being self-funded and intended to inform future practice for all agencies involved and, in turn, benefit young care leavers.

In many ways, whether identified by those who have granted consent in organisations or by peers is irrelevant as, when one person is identified they take on the role of gatekeeper as they identify others, this is also referred to as snowball sampling (Neuman, 2000). This informal method of reaching target populations is used primarily in qualitative, and explorative studies, when some degree of trust is needed for initial contact. Snowball sampling involves using a pyramid model of identifying individuals who then recruit others who may share social factors or common characteristics (Faugier and Sergeant, 1997; Vogt, 1999). For ethical reasons and to ensure some confidentiality, the possible participants should ideally then contact the researcher themselves. However, this form of sampling should not be considered representative of the population studied as it is not a random selection and is, instead, dependant on the subjective choices of those initially identified. Therefore, the researcher cannot make claims of generality as this method is based on the inclusion of those in particular social circles, suggesting that the emphasis is on the cohesiveness of those circles and misses those who are not included in these networks (Atkinson and Flint, 2001). The aim of this study is to explore the influence of organisational culture in decision-making, however, by identifying

participants from within their groups, in essence, gatekeeping, findings can be distorted as the views of those outwith the group would be unheard. On reflection, even if I had been given access to young people for my research, I was aware that those identified would already have been accepting some form of support, given their involvement with an advocacy agency.  Those described by Stein (1997), as strugglers, refusing support or direction, would have had no opportunity to participate in my research, therefore, denying a broader framework of views.

As discussed, gatekeepers can influence the course of the research path (Neuman, 2000).  They may also be protective towards those who might be identified, and it is important that participants can be assured of confidentiality in order to avoid. Another point to note is that it is beneficial to have several smaller chains or groups, in this case the participants from different organisations, for a broader range of opinions rather than one large group from only one of the named partners who organisational culture would involve shared beliefs values and opinions.  This links to the phenomenological approach of this study which seeks to understand how participants from different corporate parenting partners interpret their social world, their roles and make decisions influenced by their organisational beliefs, values and cultures (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Mason, 2002; Welman and Kruger,1999).   In some way this reflects the ethos of snowball sampling which relies on shared assumptions of social groups and is dependent on characteristics considered most important (Atkinson and Flint, 2001).

**Ethical considerations**

In order to conduct this study ethical approval was required from the University of Stirling's General University Ethics Panel (GUEP).  Consent was also sought from several Local Authorities, Children's advocacy organisations (to identify young people, aged sixteen years and over, as possible participants), the Children's Hearings Organisation, Police Scotland and Health, through the Integrated Research Application System (IRAS).  Ethical codes and guidelines were adhered to, ensuring that ethical standards were not only met but maintained in research.  Resnik (2015) summarised some of these codes which included, honesty, objectivity, integrity, openness, legality, respect and responsibility.  While these codes are useful and provide a checklist tool, they are merely a starting point and no matter how well

devised, due to uncertainties, they do not always lend themselves to practice (Cree et al., 2002; Horton, 2008).

Although the advocacy agencies I contacted refused to identify or pass on information to allow young care leavers, aged 16 years and over, to make an informed decision as to whether or not to participate in my research, they have identified young people to participate in research undertaken by their own agencies. It was from some of this research that Baker (2017) compiled her review of care leavers views on the transition to adulthood. Due to my inability to include young people as participants in my research, some of the views taken from these resources were considered in my literature review (Baker, 2017). However, I am aware that by considering the views of young people chosen to participate in previous research, this could bias findings and should be questioned when such research is used to support requests for funding and other resources.

If, during the course of this research, any information was shared that might raise my concerns as to the practice of any participants, or the risk of harm to young people, this would have been discussed with my supervision team and, if deemed appropriate, addressed with the participant and/or the relevant professionals within the lead organisation.

This study is self-funded with no financial, or other, input from any of the partner agencies which ensures impartiality thus avoiding bias.

## Informed consent

Informed consent is a key principle of research ethics and comprises of four key features; an explicit act such as a written or spoken agreement; consent can only be given when the participants have the relevant information and understand the key aspects of what is entailed in the research and the expected outcomes; it must be given voluntarily and be open ended, meaning that the participants are aware that they can withdraw at any time (Gallagher, 2009). Consent is an ongoing process and researchers must repeatedly ensure that participants wish to continue with the process (Kirk, 2007).

Although the possible participants should have read the Information and Consent forms (App 2) as emailed to those in their agency who distributed and identified them, they were again emailed the information sheets and consent forms which they were asked to sign and return. Participants were given the opportunity to discuss this information and ask any questions prior to their participation and they were made aware that they could withdraw from the research at any time. Had they requested it, any withdrawal could exclude any of the data they had provided being used.

**Confidentiality and Anonymity**

The importance of confidentiality and anonymity cannot be overstated and could have been an issue for participants should their agencies have been able to identify individual responses. Had their identity not been anonymised, participants may have tailored their responses to meet the organisational aim of their agency, giving socially acceptable answers to present themselves in a favourable light rather than reflecting their true views, thus distorting the findings of this study (Collins et al., 2005). Confidentiality avoided the attribution of comments to an individual and anonymity meant that, other than to myself, the identity of participants would not be divulged (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). To ensure that data cannot be traced back to any individual, all participant information has been removed when recording the findings. It was also intended that any references to particular locations or specific local authorities would have been removed, however, as none were mentioned in the responses, this proved not to be necessary. As different and similar themes that emerged from each of the partner agencies involved were essential to the findings of this study, their agency is identified by a letter (for example P for police; PM for panel members) followed by a number as allocated to each of the participants. Initially, I had concerns that some of the organisations involved might be reluctant to be identified and linked to responses from participants within their agencies. One of the possible reasons for this was that they would have no control over the replies, and some might cast, what they perceive to be, a negative view on the practice of their specific organisation. However, this proved not to be the case and there were no issues regarding this throughout the study.

How the recorded information was stored was another issue that required some thought and steps were taken to ensure that information, of any kind, would not compromise confidentiality or anonymity, and was securely stored. The email responses were stored on one computer hard drive and a removable device, all password protected. Printed copies of the responses and any reflective notes were stored, without identifying marks, in a locked filing cabinet. Data was anonymised at all stages, stored and recorded using only the identification as to the agency or group the participant is affiliated to as this will be relevant to the interpretation of the data.

**Recruitment**

While a larger study exploring the understanding of corporate parenting of all partners would be beneficial, the time constraints made this unworkable and would have presented difficulties in gaining consent from all agencies. Therefore, I focussed on four chains of the partners; social work; health professionals; panel members and police. I had initially aimed to recruit five participants from the four named agencies. Unfortunately, perhaps due to work commitments and shift rotas of the potential participants this proved to be optimistic. This research used the smaller chains approach in order to gather a broader range of opinions rather than focussing on only one organisation's views and is shown in the table below (Atkinson and Flint, 2001).

**Table 2. Purposive sampling framework**

|  | Identified/volunteered | Consented |
|---|---|---|
| **Social Work** | 5 | 2 |
| **Health Professionals** | 5 | 5 |
| **Children's Panel Members** | 4 | 3 |
| **Police** | 5 | 3 |
| **Total** | 19 | 13 |

Each of the agencies contacted had their own methods of identifying possible participants.

**Social Work**

Heads of service were asked to distribute the Information and Consent forms to team managers requesting that they discuss the possibility of participating at team meetings. Although five workers contacted me and were emailed Information and Consent Forms, only one signed consent form from each of the two consenting authorities was received.

**Health professionals**

The identified contact discussed the proposed research with colleagues and distributed the Information and Consent forms. Five signed consent forms were received but only two participated in the study.

**Children's Panel Members**

Information and Consent forms were shared with several panel members and three responded with signed consent forms. All participated in the research.

**Police**

Unlike the other partners, the police identified potential participants. Five were identified and emailed the Information and Consent forms of which, three participated in the study.

**Gathering the data**

In order to generate the data to be analysed this research took an inductive approach with concepts and theories emerging from the information gathered which resulted in the research being flexible and sensitive to emerging themes (Mason, 2002; Robson, 2001). This was done by emailing the vignettes to the participants asking for their responses to three questions related to that particular scenario. Using this means of gathering data allowed some exploration of the similarities and differences of the perception of social problems by different agencies and how these might be addressed. The use of vignettes lessened issues of sensitivity as rather than sharing direct experiences, the participants were responding to hypothetical situations (Barter and Renold, 1999).

**Sample population**

The initial aim was to try to have each agency identify ten possible participants with the hope that this would lead to five participants from each organisation. However, this was not to be the case which, with hindsight, proved to be more manageable given that this is a small scale study and I had underestimated the time data analysis would take. The reasons for the drop in numbers were not always given however, some professionals from the police, indicated that work commitments and position changes were responsible.

There was also some level of drop out through the research process with a few participants only responding to some of the scenarios. From the beginning of the process, I had created spreadsheet tracking those who consented, participated and when they had been emailed the progressive scenario. The date of response was also recorded, and reminder emails were despatched, sometimes resulting in a response. I made a point of only sending a total of two reminder emails per participant as I was aware that they may have decided to withdraw from the research process. However, no correspondence confirming this was received. Whether this attrition or differential dropout rate, differed between the participating partner agencies, resulted in any attrition bias is unclear (Nunan et al., 2018).

From consent to the completed responses of all three vignettes, the police participation was 100%. The completion rates of social work and health, although with less participants than the police, was 83% with Panel members following with 77% completion rate (see table below).

**Table 3. Those participating and levels of responses to different Scenarios**
(App, 3, 3a, 4, 4a, 5 and 5a)

| | Identified | Consented | Participants | Scenario 1 | Scenario 2 | Scenario 3 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Police** | 5 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| **Social Work** | 5 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| **Panel Members** | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 |
| **Health Professionals** | 5 | 5 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| | 19 | 13 | 10 | 10 | 9 | 7 |

Had the ten participants completed all three scenarios, answering three questions on each this would have totalled ninety responses to be analysed. Ten participants completed scenario one, only nine participants completed scenarios one and two only, with seven participants completing all three Scenarios. Therefore, 26 of the possible 30 scenarios were responded to, with 78 of the possible 90 questions answered.

**Analytic approach**

Although an ongoing process as each of the scenario responses were received and themes emerged, the responses were revisited several times as analysis took place. An example of this was the language used and how this differed in some of the participants from partner agencies and also in responses from a professional and parental viewpoint. This entailed re-examining responses focussing on language and phrases used. Another theme that involved reconsidering some of the data was the respondents understanding of their roles and responsibilities as corporate parents. Throughout the analytical process, as themes emerged and overlapped, this was reflected on and discussed with my supervision team.

As the phenomenon to be explored is the influence of organisational culture, beliefs and expectations on decision-making in relation to the roles and responsibilities of corporate parents, the concept of analysis can be problematic. Analysis involves

breaking information into parts and, as such, contradicts the concept of phenomenology where the phenomenon should be viewed as a whole.  Hycner (1999), suggests that using explicitation as opposed to analysis, overcomes this issue.  Explicitation has 5 steps; Bracketing and phenomenological reduction; Delineating units of meaning; Clustering of units of meaning to form themes; Summarising each interview (in this case responses), Validating information and, where necessary, modifying it; Extracting general and unique themes from all the interviews and making a composite summary.

Following these five steps was the initial analytical approach taken by this research study as, according to Groenwald (2004), understanding phenomenology cannot be assisted by a computerised programme.  To explore the experience of the participant it is important to dig down through the data gathered to develop new ideas and test theories. This proved to be particularly relevant as it was possible to track the responses of individual participants and identify themes unique to them.  Although aims had already been identified, this research took an inductive, thematic approach with concepts and theories emerging from the information gathered which resulted in the research being flexible (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Mason, 2002; Robson, 2001). This ongoing process allowed me to consider language used in responses and involved discussion with my supervision team and revisiting themes several times until they were defined.

Defining the themes and patterns in the data involved identifying quotes and grouping them together before further discussion and reflection as some appeared to overlap.  There then began the task of discarding information that did not appear to be relevant.  These unusable quotes, sometimes referred to as "dross" were stored elsewhere to be revisited when, and if, required (Morse and Field,1996). By the end of this lengthy process the themes had been identified, however, writing the findings chapter provided further opportunity to reassess these themes and present them in a comprehensible manner (Braun and Clarke, 2006).  Therefore, the final themes to emerge were Collaborative working; Organisational cultures; Decision-making; Assessment and the expectations of how to address the given situation from a Parental and Professional standpoint.

These themes and their emerging relevance and importance led to the aims, as defined at the beginning of this chapter, being presented in a different order. The first aim was to compare and contrast the perception of corporate parenting by participants from an organisational perspective and their individual parenting expectations. This was considered throughout the findings and overlapped with the main aim; to gain an understanding of the influence of organisational cultures on the decision-making processes of corporate parents. The third aim was to explore whether collaborative working was in practice and if the assessment framework, outlined in the Getting It Right For Every Child literature, was being considered. This, again, overlapped with the first aim and the perception of the role of corporate parents.

**Dissemination**

As with all projects, it is important to have a plan and dissemination of research findings is no different. Using a dissemination plan as outlined by the University of Regina (2011) there are several questions that must be asked:

- What are the goals and benefits of disseminating this research?
- Who will find this research beneficial?
- How can dissemination be tailored to specific needs of the target audience?
- Which methods of communicating findings would be most effective?

With these questions in mind, the findings of this research will be beneficial to academics seeking to explore the influence organisational cultures may have on decision-making. Policy makers should also consider the effectiveness of collaborative working when there is one aim shared by several different agencies. By reflecting on the outcomes of this study professionals may be encouraged to reflect on their own practice and what impacts on their ability to make sense of situations. Advocacy services for young people may also find the conclusions interesting, particularly regarding respecting the right of young people to make their own decisions.

The findings of this research will be disseminated using both passive and active methods (Keen and Todres, 2006). To date, passive dissemination has included the

publication of an article in the University of Stirling's interdisciplinary, online journal of postgraduate research (Hatch, 2019). I have also presented papers on some of my findings at the International Social Work Conference (Dublin) 2018 and the Scottish Institute of Policing Research in December 2018.  Examples of active dissemination involving tailoring findings to reach a target audience has included presenting at Stirling University's Post Graduate Research Lunchtime Seminars and presenting at a Local Authority Forum.  The findings of this research will be shared with the organisations of those who participated and should also build upon the work of the Independent Root and Branch Care Review which resulted in their publication of *The Promise* (2020).  This document took into consideration the experiences of children and young people in care and care experienced adults in an effort to make positive changes to the care and aftercare system (Independent Root and Branch Care Review, 2020).

**Chapter 3: Findings**

This chapter explores the findings of the research and how they relate to the emerging themes. The study considered the possible influence of organisational culture on the decision-making process of professionals from some of the agencies who have had the roles and responsibilities of corporate parenting imposed upon them. These agencies were, for the first time, named in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 (App 1), with the understanding that all named partners would have the welfare of the young person at the centre of their assessment and decision-making.

Although 13 individuals consented to participating in my research, only 10 of those took part. These were professionals from some of the organisations named as corporate parents including Police, Social Work, Health professionals and Children's Panel members. Corporate parents, as outlined by the UK Parliament in 1998, have a legal and moral duty to provide the same level of support for those children and young people who are, or have been, looked after as any good parents would offer to their own children (UK Parliament, 1998). This concept, and the aims of this research were explored by providing the participants with three, separate, scenarios following one young person as they left the care system and the situations that followed (App 3, 3a, 4, 4a, 5 and 5a). For each of the three scenarios, three questions were asked:

1. What would your agency's view be of John's/Jenna's situation?
2. Which agency should take responsibility for resolving John's/Jenna's situation and Why?
3. What would you want to happen if John/Jenna was your son/daughter?

The respondents were allocated either John or Jenna as the young person in each scenario. This was to explore possible differences between the way each professional might respond to different genders. Whether the gender of the young person influenced decisions will be discussed later in this chapter.

The expectation of corporate parenting as defined in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, is that the agencies named work in collaboration, thus placing

responsibility for the wellbeing of young care leavers on all of the partners. This support, if required, is available until the young person reaches their 26th birthday. However, the guidance on Part 9 of this legislation also acknowledges that the way these duties will be fulfilled may be constrained by the other functions of the partner agencies. Whether these other functions and organisational cultures of the different named partners impacted on decisions made as corporate parents was explored, as was the participants understanding of the need for collaborative working in order to fulfil their roles and responsibilities as corporate parents.

**Collaborative working**

Section 58 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 urges corporate parents to take appropriate action to improve the way they exercise their roles regarding care experienced children and young care leavers. The expectation is that, collectively, they can give real meaning to the duties set out in the 2014 Act, thus placing responsibility for the wellbeing of young care leavers on all partners.

Throughout this research the concept of collaborative working as corporate parents has highlighted some very different views. These have ranged from placing full responsibility on social work to mentioning working collaboratively but with no apparent explanation of how this might manifest itself.

This response from a police participant views social work as Jenna's corporate parents and makes it very clear their understanding of what they perceive the police role would be. This is despite the police, in their *Scotland's Youth Strategy for Scotland,* emphasising the concept of Early and Effective to prevent young people being criminalised (Scottish Government, 2015b). Whether this is the overarching corporate parenting approach of all participants from the police is discussed further in this chapter.

> *"social work should be putting something in place to support her as she is a care leaver therefore they have a duty under the corporate parenting legislation. Police will be dealing with the crime element only".*
> (P2)

This is in stark contrast to the legislation and to the following responses, from a health professional and a different police participant, who appear to recognise the importance of joint working.  There is also some acknowledgement that that the agencies may have different aims and roles and that some may be better suited to particular situations:

> *"agencies to work together in a calm, clear boundaried manner".*
> (NH1par)

> *"If Jenna has a diagnosed mental health condition then the mental health teams in NHS should lead on the matter, but all agencies have a joint responsibility to resolve the situation within the terms of their own areas of responsibility and in a multi-agency manner".*
> (P3)

Not all responses reflected these views regarding all partners sharing responsibility as, the majority of participants indicated that social work and health services should take lead responsibility for the young person, perhaps a result of the organisations and, in turn the professionals affiliated with them, reverting back to previous guidance published by the UK Parliament (1998).  The principle of the 1998 guidance was that the local authority was the corporate parent of children in care, negating responsibility of agencies other than social work and, where relevant, health.  If this is the case it indicates a lack of knowledge of the roles and responsibilities of the named corporate parents in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act, 2014.  Given the different individuals, organisations and groups named as corporate parents, it is important to note that only two responses, from health and social work professionals, acknowledged that other services should share some responsibility.

> *"In this case, it would be a multiagency approach (health, education, possibly housing) though likely best led by social work young people's team".*
> (NH1)

*"I would anticipate that the lead responsibility for supporting John would fall to the allocated TC/AC Worker (SW) [Throughcare/Aftercare]. However, a range of other professionals would be included in meeting the young person's support needs including a dedicated Housing Officer……….. and potentially third sector/voluntary organisations".*
(SW2)

Some of the respondents, including police and social work professionals, recognised that there is a need for collaborative working, as is the expectation of corporate parents set out in section 58 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. However, there also appears to be an understanding that the police will deal with the immediate situation, with no suggestion of any ongoing police involvement with regard to multi agency discussion or future planning.

*"Police will take immediate responsibility for tracing Jenna and ensuring that she is safe and well".*
(P3)

*"clear role for Police Scotland as Police Officers should have capacity to halt oncoming traffic relatively rapidly to reduce the prospect of John sustaining injuries if traversing the road chaotically".*
(SW2)

*"Police should transport John to the nearest hospital".*
*(SW1)*

These indicate a clear procedural approach and may have been prompted by the immediacy of the situation, environmental factors and the level of risk posed to the young person and others. These factors could impact on decision-making, and it may have been easier to revert to the procedures and purpose of the organisation as opposed to considering their corporate parenting role (Snook and Cullen, 2008). The negative effect of this procedural approach is reflected in some of the comments on corporate parents by young people in *The Promise* who describe relationships

with those caring for them as cold (Independent Root and Branch Care Review, 2020).

While this may have been the easiest route for the decision makers, for the young person, displaying concerning mental health difficulties and probably without the support of a parent or carer, using a parental approach may have resulted in better co-operation from the young person. The vignettes have already established that the young person is a struggler, refusing any support or direction and, by taking an authoritarian approach, this could escalate the situation (Stein, 1997). For social work professionals, using their intuition by responding to gut instincts and exploring the triggers is one of the identified key concepts when making assessments (Brown et al., 2010). Perhaps, due to the nature of the scenarios, and the possible risks presented, there was no evidence of this type of tacit knowledge in any of the responses.

The same procedural approach is reflected in the next responses from police participants who appear to have processed tasks to suit their own occupational interests (Evetts, 2012; Hafferty and Levinson, 2008). There is no indication as to any other role the police might take as corporate parents, despite some recognition of their legal obligations outlined in Part 9 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. There may even be a hint of professional dominance as police take immediate control before handing over to social work or mental health professionals without any apparent consideration of the roles and responsibilities of other partner agencies and how they (police) might contribute to future planning for the young person (Evetts, 2012). This also indicates that, for some professionals and partner agencies, the challenge of fulfilling their corporate parenting role may be contrary to their organisational culture and purpose. There does not appear to be any communication between the different agencies but instead, adhering to the role of their organisation, by police citing legislation and the term "detained". Should this be the case, this power imbalance can result in other professionals agreeing with the dominant organisation in order to avoid conflict which will not encourage an effective collaborative working environment (Atkinson et al., 2002).

> *"Due to Jenna being in public it is the responsibility of police who would*
> *………….. attempt to return Jenna to hospital and remain with her until she is*
> *left in the care of a medical professional".*
> (P2)


> *"Once traced, it will be difficult for the Police to return Jenna to a safe*
> *environment unless emergency mental health powers can be utilised".*
> (P3prof)

This next response reflects the view that police need to keep Jenna safe and some knowledge of mental health procedures but, using the word "detained", takes a more procedural approach using language familiar to their organisational culture (Brown, 1998).


> *"police should take the lead to keep her safe ……………... detained under the*
> *mental health act and taken to a place of safety where support could be given*
> *via trained mental health officers".*
> (P2)

Respondents from all agencies involved in this research evidenced some understanding of legislation and processes that may be used should detention be considered. These included mention of voluntary or statutory admission to a mental health facility and evidenced some shared knowledge and use of language (Brown 1998). Not surprisingly given the scenarios, in general, participants from all agencies indicated that, after police had dealt with the immediacy of the situation, health should take the lead role. This was echoed by police respondents but in a less authoritarian manner by evidencing concern for the young person's safety and welfare, however, it is important to note that these responses were not a reflection of their professional or agency's view, but from a general perspective or that of a parent (App. 5, questions 2 and 3). They acknowledge the presence of deteriorating mental health and also mention multi agency and collaborative working. However, again, there is no suggestion that the police might be involved in future planning for the young person.

> *"Health would have the lead responsibility………. given his apparent mental health issues, however, a multi-agency response is necessary".*
> (P1)

> *"Police will take immediate responsibility for tracing Jenna and ensuring that she is safe and well, however it remains the responsibility of mental health professionals (both NHS and SWD) to lead on a sustainable long term solution to Jenna's situation, supported by other partners in a collaborative multiagency forum".*
> (P3)

Respondents from social work and panel member participants also acknowledge John's deteriorating mental health and that health professionals should be the initial responsible agency.

> *"John has been taken to hospital ……………... is an indication that he was felt to need medical attention".*
> (SW2prof)

> *"I would want him to be kept safe and receive care and treatment from a young person's mental health specialist".*
> (PM3par)

In the last response the panel member recognises the need for age appropriate services to become involved, rather than being admitted to an adult facility, which would have no age limit and might increase the young person's vulnerability and anxiety.  If possible, they suggest, a service for adolescents would be preferable.  If such a service is accessible, the professionals involved would have a better understanding of the mental health issues of young people, especially those with care experience (Baker, 2017).

A view shared by one health professional, a panel member and police participants, suggested some of the agencies that should be involved.   While the importance of corporate partners working together was acknowledged, none of these participants

suggest the inclusion of housing, education or other professionals and agencies also named as corporate parents in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, and who might be involved in forward planning discussions for the young person.

> *"a multi-agency approach involving Police, Social Work and NHS/Health, most likely the Psychiatry Emergency Team or staff from A & E".*
> (NH1 – 2)

> *"……. the responsibility of mental health professionals (both NHS & SWD) to lead on a sustainable long term solution to Jenna's situation, supported by other partners in a collaborative multiagency forum".*
> (PM2)

> *"Health and Social Care Partnership would have lead responsibility due to his issues being mental health and capability to live independently".*
> (P1)

The language used suggests a shared understanding of multi-agency or collaborative working by different agencies, using these terms and also mentioning a joint approach while another participant deems the situation necessitates more than a single agency response (Brown, 1998). There is no suggestion as to how this might happen and who might be involved. This indicates a possible training need, jointly with representatives from all corporate parenting agencies to gain some understanding of the roles of each of the partner agencies and how they might overlap and work together. This is important as, in order for effective multi-agency working to take place, each of the agencies must have some understanding of the roles of the other corporate parents (Atkinson et al, 2002).

The following responses from police and health professionals, evidence some knowledge of differing roles and responsibilities and how they can support each other but, again, these views are from a general perspective, not the response from their agency's view. This suggests that these are their own personal or professional views which may be at odds with their different, more procedural, organisational cultures.

*"If Jenna's condition is undiagnosed (perhaps classed as a behavioural issues as is often the case) then SWD should lead, supported by both mental health professionals and the wider agencies, again in a multi-agency manner".*
(P3)

*"requires a joint approach, with the police supporting John's social worker to stop putting himself at risk and seek further help".*
(NH1)

There is no doubt that at different stages throughout the scenarios the young person's situation changes, as does their age.  The next response, from a social work professional, recognises the dynamic nature of the young person's circumstances.  However, the same participant also indicates that corporate parenting responsibilities would fall to the local authority which had, until the introduction of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, historically been the case.  This suggests that, in the local authority this respondent is familiar with, social work would be expected to take on the corporate parenting role, contradicting the concept of working in collective collaboration.

*"there is a collective responsibility upon the human services professionals present to try to work in a collaborative fashion, in what is a fluid and challenging situation, to endeavour to reach a satisfactory resolution for John.*
(SW2)

*"Ultimately the local authority bears responsibility for John as his Corporate Parent".*
(SW2)

These next responses, from panel members and police professionals are of the view that the lead role is that of social work.  While this may be the case, corporate parenting is the responsibility of all named partners and, although social work may take the lead role, the outcome for the young person will be dependent on the relevant partners working together.  The responses from panel members suggest

that only social work is responsible for the young person, one indicating that this should include social work contacting health professionals.  While, as lead professionals, this might be the case, there is no reason why both agencies, in collaboration, or at different times, might not work together as the situation changes.

> *"Social Work should take the lead and refer Jenna to the medical authorities (NHS) as it is unclear if she has seen her own doctor".*
> (PM2)

> *"The local authority, through social work, has a responsibility for him.  He is very young still and needs support".*
> (PM3)

This evidences a misunderstanding of the roles and responsibilities of the different partners. While this view is reflected by participants from the police, there is also an acknowledgement that all partners should remain involved in some aspect.

> *"Police Scotland would expect Social Work to take the lead role due to his issues being financial and social"*
> (P1)

> *"Social Work should lead, however all agencies must take responsibility and play an involved and active part in resolving Jenna's situation, not simply by sharing all relevant information, but committing to actively support agreed measures".*
> (P3)

The same participant (P3) builds on the last response evidencing a clear understanding of section 58 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, placing the welfare of all young care leavers as the responsibility on all named partners, as collective, corporate, parents.  While alluding to the statutory obligations of each of the agencies named as corporate parents, there is also mention of moral and legal obligations but no explanation of how these might overlap or contradict

each other.  This respondent also highlights the importance of all relevant agencies being involved.

> *"As Jenna is care experienced, then, in addition to our normal statutory obligations, a number of agencies will have legal as well as moral obligations as corporate parents to work with Jenna and her family to find the best outcome.  Whilst the natural place in this for some of these agencies may not be immediately apparent, it is only by playing an active part in discussions that this may become obvious, and agencies should be open to such requests".*
>
> (P3)

It has to be acknowledged that each of the named partners have their own role, purpose and organisational culture and the way corporate parenting responsibilities are fulfilled may be constrained by these (Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014).  If the purpose and aim of the agency differs from the role and expectations of corporate parenting this can cause conflict, not only for the individual but also for partners trying to work together.  As different processes, procedures, structures and organisational cultures have to be considered by each of the corporate parents, this can impact on decisions made (Arnold, 2005).

**Organisational Cultures**

Each of the agencies involved can have different organisational structures and cultures which may direct any decisions made, particularly if this is a power and or/role orientated culture (Bradley and Parker, 2006; Harrison, 1993). Different procedures and processes of the partners will have been developed to suit their organisational needs and purposes, taking into consideration economic, political and social dimensions on institutional and individual levels (Hafferty and Levinson, 2008). For the police, the organisational culture could be described as a combination of power and role orientated cultures as described by Harrison (1998).  These models are hierarchical while involving conformity and the reinforcement of rules which reflects the function and purpose of the police as indicated in the following response.

> *"…. the Police have a duty to respond to these incidents from a public safety (including Jenna) and a wider public safety perspective,"*
> (P3prof)

Responses from professionals in health and in social work suggest a dimension of organisational culture which appears to be shared by both organisations. This dimension known as support-orientated, places people as central and considering the impact on individuals when making decisions (Harrison, 1993). The similarities between professional and parental responses are reflected by focussing on people and individuals, as opposed to systems and processes. Concerns are raised regarding John's welfare and mental health as opposed to focussing on organisational procedures.

> *"I would want John to be safe………. want him to be cared for………… want to know what is happening to him as soon as it is realistically possible to be informed".*
> (SW2par)

> *"John appears to be in crisis at this time and is in need of intervention to ensure his and others' safety".*
> (NHS1prof)

> *"I would want John to receive the help that he needs to manage his mental health……."*
> (NHS1par)

The next response, from a Panel member, also evidences concern for John's safety. Considering the impact on the individual, mirrors their support orientated culture and acknowledges possible mental health difficulties.

> *"John may need to be sectioned as an emergency, and they have the skills and protocol to make that decision in his interests".*
> (PM3prof)

Panel members would not be required to take action in this type of situation, however, the decisions they have taken at a previous stage in the young person's life may have impacted on the current behaviour.  In this case the decision to discharge John from his Compulsory Supervision Order has denied him the support offered through the Children's Hearing System.  Although a consultation process, seeking views on raising the age for referral to the Children's Reporter to 18 years of age is ongoing (Scottish Government, 2020), the current definition of a child in terms of the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011 is under the age of 16 years. John is now 17 years of age and the level of support he would have received if still on his Compulsory Supervision Order might be harder to access, and take longer, now he is viewed as an adult, hence the mention of "sectioning".

Again, drawing on Harrison's (1993) description of organisational dimensions, coming to a decision could be described as achievement orientated.  This type of culture (sometimes referred to as task culture) is based on competence and knowledge and is dependent on team working.  The fact that a young person can be in the Children's Hearing System until the age of 18 but not referred to this system after the age of 16 years appears to cause some confusion for panel members.  Once discharged from the Children's Hearing System and, if they have reached their 16th birthday, only the court, on offence grounds, can remit to the Children's Hearing System under Section 49(6) of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1995.  The decision to discharge John and Jenna suggests that they are no longer viewed as children and questions their need to be parented, despite legislation defining a child as under that age of 18 years (Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill).  The following responses have not recognised that fact that both young people are no longer in the Children's Hearing System and are now 17 years of age.

> *"Social Work should refer Jenna to the Reporter's office and ask that a hearing be arranged to ensure that provide her with the protection she requires".*
> (PM2)

*"a Children's Hearing might become involved.  However, this would be further down the line and John would have had legal advice as well as medical treatment and assessment by then".*
(PM3)

*"Once the emergency is addressed, John may come to Children's Panel to address his longer term needs. The panel can consider where he should live and whether residential or even secure care is needed – he does seem to meet the criteria for this, …………".*
(PM3par)

With regard to the last response, the respondent appears to have overlooked that John is no longer in the Children's Hearing System and, if accommodation was required, this would be explored through a care leavers route, if available, or adult homeless accommodation. This evidences a lack of knowledge when making decisions regarding the welfare of the young person and, perhaps, confusion as to their role as corporate parents and that of the other named partners.

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 states that corporate parenting responsibilities should continue until the young person reaches the age of 26 years. However, in the Annual Police Plan 2020/21, there is some emphasis on their ongoing commitment to not only 16 – 18 year olds but to extend this to 18 – 24 year olds (Scottish Police Authority, 2019).   From their professional standpoint, participants from the police, evidence their role orientated culture and their duty to uphold the law and protect the public by suggesting criminalising Jenna, taking precedence over their corporate parenting responsibilities (Bradley and Parker, 2006).

*"Jenna is an adult and needs to take responsibility for her actions with support from the correct services".*
(P2prof)

> *"Jenna has committed a criminal offence and this has to be addressed through the criminal justice process".*
> (P3prof)

As professionals, when discussing Jenna, the emphasis is on Jenna being a responsible adult, with no acknowledgement of her being only 17 years of age, and having no emotional, financial or social support from family (Cashmore and Paxman, 2006). As corporate parents, the police should share responsibility to recognise this lack of support when considering progressing the matter through the criminal justice system or diverting through other routes. This does not appear to reflect the views shared in the Annual Police Plan 2020/21 which emphasised the importance, where possible, of using interventions to prevent young people being criminalised as evidenced in the last responses (Scottish Police Authority, 2019).

Neither is there any evidence, in this research, of Jenna being treated any differently to John because she is female and, therefore, less likely to be criminalised. Due to their risk-taking behaviour, including placing themselves in situations which can leave them vulnerable to sexual exploitation, females are often regarded as needing moral protection and welfare support (Langer et al., 2016). This contradicts figures of those attending Children's Hearings (2018/2019) which indicated that for welfare grounds, the numbers of males and females were similar. However, on offence grounds, referrals for males were three times higher than those for females (SCRA, June 2019). The same participants emphasise the importance of support and safety with no mention of criminality indicating that, as a parent, they would view the situation differently.

> *"My feeling that support should have been put in place from an early age".*
> (P2par)

> *"I would wish that Jenna is taken to a place, kept safe and given the support she requires".*
> (P2par)

*"I would hope that Jenna could be found supportive accommodation locally, within easy reach of friends and family…….."*

(P3par)

Contradicting their professional response indicates that their view may be strongly biased by their organisational role and culture, and, in turn, influence decisions made. This clear difference in the answers from a professional and parental standpoint and could result in different outcomes for the young people involved. The parental view is that the young person should be supported whereas the professional perspective is to criminalise them. This suggests that the organisational culture of the named partner does impact on decision-making regarding outcomes for young people and can cause further ethical compromises as the individual may struggle to balance their own personal values with the organisational expectations and regulations of their professions (Fenwick, 2014; Okitikpi, 2011).

This raises the question of whether the agency's culture places constraints on the behaviour and beliefs of individuals within their different organisations (Schein, 2004). Suggesting that, if the organisational culture is welfare based, the conflict between personal and professional may lessen as the focus of corporate parents, and birth parents where appropriate, should be the wellbeing of the young person (Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014). Whatever the label, these organisational cultures described by Schein (1990) as the culture iceberg because they can be visible, for example uniforms, identity badges, or invisible, such as opinions and beliefs, are likely to influence decision-making. It is important that those acting as corporate parents have a clear understanding of their roles and consider the impact on young care leavers when making decisions regarding them.

**Decision-making**

The above responses evidence that decision-making can be influenced by many factors including organisational cultures and personal opinions. The level of understanding of relevant legislation and the role of corporate parents can also impact on decisions. If the individual or agency has no clear perception of the expectations and responsibilities of their organisation, this would also influence decisions made.

Making decisions may seem a simple process involving gathering and processing information.  However, there can also be pressures resulting from time constraints, and the process can have emotional implications.  Errors in judgement can be made by rushing decisions and also delaying them (Payne and Bettman, 2004; Simon, 1955).  By not taking the time to process and assess all of the information this can lead to decisions which do not consider possible risks, resulting in harm as the decision-makers look for, and focus on, positives in the parenting behaviour (Kettle and Jackson, 2017).  The same could be true of delaying decisions which might lead to someone being harmed in the interim period as they are left with "not good enough" parents (Reeves, 2012). Time constraints can cause anxiety and raise emotions which can, in turn, impact on cognitive performance and interfere with decision-making processes (Hancock and Warm, 1989).

Panel members are expected to make decisions that can result in changing the lives of children and their families and emotions may run high.  This can impact on cognitive performance and inhibit the decision-making process (Hancock and Warm, 1989).  At Children's Hearings, although information will have been provided in reports from social work and other relevant agencies, the child themselves and the family also have an opportunity to give their views. The resulting emotions and responses, as children and families may display feelings such as anger, frustration and helplessness can also evoke emotional responses which might influence decision-making (SCRA 2019).  Discussion with families during Children's Hearings may be brief but can influence decisions as opposed to considering the information gathered and produced, by professionals, in reports.  Some acknowledgement of this was reflected by a participant from social work who indicated some frustration with decisions made by panel members.

> *"…whilst the theory behind the panel is fantastic, I often struggle that despite the expertise of the professional involved, the panel members have the final say and can be 'persuaded' at times by families"*
> (SW1prof)

This element of persuasion can be linked to the rule of optimism as described by Kettle and Jackson (2017) where the panel members decision-making may have been

directed by considering only positive aspects of the parenting behaviour, overlooking the negatives. Although professional expertise is important, this can be overshadowed, in all professions, by the need to be transparent in the decision-making process. This may be perceived to be protecting the organisation the decision maker is affiliated too (Ayre, 2001; Beddoe, 2010). Therefore, this process may, at times, involve not only making the right decision but also taking a defensible stance. Although, there was no evidence of this in this study, the following response explains what the participant thinks should happen and why, thereby justifying their stance. The acknowledgement that John might refuse support also confirms that he is a struggler as described by Stein (1997).

> *"Social Work should remain the lead role for this case as John is 16 years of age and previously looked after by the authority therefore he remains entitled to supports. ….these will be on a voluntary basis and therefore he may refuse".*
> (SW1)

All of those involved in making decisions concerning the future of others may experience the same sense of trepidation as they consider the possible impact on the life choices of those affected. This is evident in the following response from a panel member who appeared to be worried about making, what they perceive to be, the wrong decision.

> *"made the wrong decision (as an agency) especially as it was against social work's advice …………..John now needs help to get his life back on track".*
> (PM3prof)

This also indicates that judgements regarding others, in particular those involving risk, are made in a climate of fear (Kemshall, 1998). Cantrill (2009), reinforces this suggestion in a Serious Case Review which found that decisions can be influenced by an element of fear and reluctance, by professionals, to challenge families when there is no clear evidence or disclosures from victims.

In a perfect situation, rational decision-making depends on consideration of the information available, then making an appropriate judgement (Lee and Cummins, 2004).  Again, if fear of intimidation or grievances is present this can inhibit the ability to make informed decisions on both an individual and organisational level.  This can result in young people being left in unsafe circumstances rather than the professionals questioning the actions of young people, adults and other partners. While it is important to consider and respect the young person's views, in some cases this may be detrimental to their welfare and challenging this may cause conflict as their perception of the situation may be different and could be influenced by other factors such as peers (Steinberg, 2008).

There are other factors that can impact on the decision-making process such as time constraints when intuitive decisions may have to be made.  The police are often placed in such situations and making rational decisions may not be realistic (Snook and Cullen, 2008). The response below evidences the immediacy of such decisions, taking safety into consideration.

> *"Police will take immediate responsibility for tracing Jenna and ensuring that she is safe and well".*
> *(P3)*

Any decision may be directed by the organisational culture of the decision-maker, particularly if this is a power and or/role orientated culture (Harrison, 1993). The need for urgency and adhering to their role of upholding the law is also evident in the next response from police professionals.  However, this is tempered with some empathy as the participant recognises how vulnerable the young person is and indicates a need for compassion and understanding.  This could impact on their ability to make ethical and professional decisions given the restrictions of organisational processes and legislation while also causing some internal conflict (Okitikpi, 2011).

> *"Whilst the Police have a duty to respond to these incidents from a public safety (including Jenna) and a wider public safety perspective, from a criminal perspective, and potentially with a view to exercising public place emergency*

*powers under the mental health act, they need to do so with an understanding of and a compassion for Jenna's situation and in addition to dealing with any criminality, ensure that her vulnerabilities and the circumstances of each incident are reported to partners through the local Concern Hub".*
(P3prof)

The Concern Hub is a means of advising other agencies of the circumstances of the person, who is at risk.  There is acknowledgement of Jenna's vulnerabilities and emphasis on the need to include other agencies.  Emergency powers are mentioned which would be influenced by the role of the police and, given the time constraints and possible environmental factors, the professional's own intuition (Snook and Cullen, 2008).  However, after the initial decision has been made, reporting Jenna's circumstances to partner agencies suggests further assessment should be undertaken.

As previously mentioned, making decisions can be influenced and impacted upon, either positively or negatively, by emotions (Hancock and Warm, 1989).  The implications of making the decision to discharge a child or young person from the Children's Hearing System can be profound as, supports that may still be required by both the young person and their family, may be withdrawn.  This could include the loss of their allocated social worker, and other professionals, who they have built a good, trusting relationships with and they may be the only person that the young person feels listens to them.  Parents or carers being aware that statutory visits by professionals would be ongoing while on a Compulsory Supervision Order, may be enough to deter them from inappropriate or harmful behaviour, therefore offering the child or young person some level of protection.  However, while being aware of this is essential, it might increase the anxiety of panel members and further impact on their decision-making.  In order to deal with these, the decision-maker may find other ways of coping with such situations, including refusing to make a decision and/or letting someone else make the decision and could be likened to passing the process to another organisation to make an assessment of the best course of action (Anderson, 2003; Luce, 2005).  The resulting delays can increase risks to children and young people as more damage can be done by prolonging periods of abuse and

can produce more complex and disturbing difficulties (Buchanan, 1999; Green and Jones, 1999).

As corporate parents, delaying decisions, due to anxiety regarding perceptions of risk both to and from the young person, could impact on the future of a young person.  This could include prolonged separation from their family, peers and deny them possible employment and training opportunities within their own community.  It could be argued that this results in more damage to the child or young person when in the care of the authorities with no real modelling of good (enough) parenting (Choate and Engstrom, 2014; Dominelli et, al, 2005). The following responses, from panel members, evidence a reluctance to make a decision or deal with their concerns by passing onto another agency.

> *"panel members would only be involved if there was a CPO (Child Protection Order) application made to keep this young lady safe".*
> (PM1)

> *"As a panel member I have no professional knowledge of mental health issues.  There will be an emergency mental health team on call who will have experience in supporting and treating John in this crisis".*
> (PM3prof)

> *"John would have had legal advice as well as medical treatment and assessment by then".*
> (PM3)

> *"Social Work should take the lead here. They should refer Jenna back to the Reporter's office and ask that a hearing be arranged to consider what is in Jenna's best interests to provide her with the protection she requires.*
> (PM2)

By proposing that social work should refer to the Children's Reporter, this shows a lack of knowledge of the legality of the situation as, in the second and third scenarios, John and Jenna have reached the age of 17 years and are no longer in

the Children's Hearing System.  It could also indicate an avoidance of the facts, which may allow the decision maker to better cope with their own anxiety (Beresford and Sloper, 2008).  Prioritising their own emotional needs as opposed to the needs of the child, could be detrimental to the young person's welfare. The suggestion that other agencies should undertake assessments may be a way of absolving them of the responsibility of making a difficult decision.  If a common assessment framework is available to all of the partners, this should make any appraisal more understandable to the other agencies involved.

**Assessment**

When making decisions, assessment of as much information as is available is crucial.  To encourage some consistency in the way different organisations assess risks, needs and strengths of children and young people, the Scottish Government took a child centred approach.  This approach, adhering to the Getting It Right For Every Child literature (Scottish Government, 2012,), was reaffirmed by the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.  This legislation applies to all agencies working with children and young people.  Drawing on years of research acknowledging that care leavers are one of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups in society, all corporate parents have a duty to consider the wellbeing Indicators known as, SHANARRI (Buchanan, 1999; Green and Jones,1999; Mendes et al. 2016).  This Assessment Framework should be used when assessing a young person's situation, any supports needed and making decisions regarding them. (Burns and Grove, 2001; SCRA, 2019; Police Scotland, 2016-2020; Scottish Government, 2012).

Reflecting the literature on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE), this wellbeing approach found that the presence of these experiences was associated with; injury and death during childhood; premature mortality and suicide; disease and illness; mental illness.  (Felitti et. al.,1998).  Although not relevant to my research, Rogers et., al. (2020) suggest that the current Coronavirus restrictions on social distancing, will increase social isolation, anxiety and vulnerability.  At the time of conducting my study, these restrictions were not in place, however, the implications for the deteriorating mental health of current care leavers have yet to be established.

Having negative experiences can result in young people having a decreased ability to self-regulate and keep themselves, and others, safe. They may also refuse support which is common in this group of care leavers defined as strugglers (Stein, 1997). The is highlighted by the following participant who also recognises that the young person refused medical treatment.

> *"left the hospital without having received medical attention after an apparent attempt at self-injury suggests that the presenting health concerns have not been addressed and, if anything, have become more serious".*
> (SW2prof)

The next responses from health and social work professionals acknowledge the negative experiences John is likely to have suffered and how this may impact on his mental health, his decisions and, in turn, his actions. This evidences some knowledge of the ACE literature and an understanding of the developmental stages of childhood development (Dumontheil, 2016 Felitti et al., 1998). The participants reflect a support orientated role by focussing on the impact on the individual.

> *"… as a young person formerly in care he will likely have experienced trauma which will impact on his emotional wellbeing and mental health, which in turn is likely to be expressed in his behaviour".*
> (NHS1prof)

> *"I would want members of the public and professionals to understand that John's behaviours stem from mental and emotional health difficulties which will be alarming to those who have never observed/been exposed to them before. I would want the least restrictive option possible to be used to meet his needs".*
> (SW2par)

However, the organisational cultures of some of the partner agencies may not easily lend themselves to using the SHANARRI framework. For example, if the culture is role orientated as opposed to support orientated, it may be difficult to consider issues such as mental health and adverse childhood experiences. In this next response,

there is no recognition of John's past adverse experiences or that he is care experienced by this police participant. The response is very procedural, influenced by their organisational culture and shared language, reflecting the purpose of the organisation (Brown, 1998; Independent Root and Branch Care Review, 2020). There is no recognition of their corporate parenting role, instead evidence of adhering to the very different role of police, to uphold the law and protect the public (Bradley and Parker, 2006; Harrison, 1993).

> *"as John is now 16 and is no longer subject to a Compulsory Supervision Order, due to the nature of the offence he would be referred to COPFS (Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service)"*
> (P1prof)

This response contradicts the Annual Police Plan 2020/21, extending their responsibilities for corporate parenting to 24 year olds (Scottish Police Authority, 2019). It is evident that by stating John's age and no apparent legal status, this participant does not view him as a child. The definition of a child being someone under the age of 18 years will be further reinforced if, and when, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill becomes law, meaning public authorities will have to comply with children's rights.

Young people taking risks is a normal and important part of adolescent development and can include self-harming behaviours and a lack of understanding, or care, for their own safety or that of others (de Winter and Noom, 2003; Erikson, 1968). Research shows that this risk-taking behaviour is often increased in care experienced young people who may be struggling with their sense of identity and belonging and their need to seek acceptance from peers (Ruff and Fehr, 2014). The following responses from health professionals indicate an understanding of the possible mental health issues and risk-taking behaviours that can be displayed by care experienced young people.

> *"Presentation at A&E for assessment by Psychiatry may be indicated with a plan being agreed then about how best to keep John safe. If he continues to*

*pose a risk to himself and others it may that he requires admission to*
*hospital".*
(NHS1)


*"John continues to be a risk to himself and possibly to others as a result of his*
*behaviour, which itself is an indication of his mental state".*
(NHS1prof)


The increased risk of mental health difficulties and risk-taking behaviour in young care leavers can be intertwined and impact upon each other.  In turn, this can increase the risk of self-harming and an inability or unwillingness to keep themselves safe (Bellis et al. 2015; Vinnerljung et al., 2006).  Therefore, the use of two of the SHANARRI wellbeing indicators, encompassing both of these, factors were considered in this study (Scottish Government, 2012).  Safe; described as protecting the child or young person from abuse, neglect or harm, which would include placing themselves at risk, and Healthy; covering access to suitable healthcare, attaining the highest standards of physical and mental health and support in learning to make healthy, safe choices (Scottish Government, 2012).

Literature suggests that corporate parents should not only provide the level of care that a good parent would, but also compensate for previous damaging and negative experiences (Mendes and Moslehuddin, 2004; Wright, 2014). Incorporating safe and healthy in the assessment process is essential as, in conjunction with other factors such as support available; possible homelessness and lack of structure and routine, often resulting in chaotic and nomadic lifestyles, these are issues that, as a parent, would be considered when making decisions which could impact on their child's future.  Therefore, as a corporate parent these, and any other problems, should also be considered when making assessments and decisions regarding young care leavers.

**Safe and Healthy**
Throughout this research the use of the words "safe", "risk" and "protect" were used by most of the participants.  Whether using these words evidences knowledge or use of the Wellbeing Indicators is unclear.  However, consideration was given to the

inclusion of these words as they convey some sense of recognition of risk-taking behaviour and possible mental health issues. A response from a social work professional emphasised the urgency of the situation and the need to keep the young people safe.

> *"my assessment and that of my agency would be that John's behaviour is placing him at significant risk of harm and that the risk is imminent and serious".*
> (SW2 prof)

This view is reflected in the following answers and there is also some recognition of the presence of mental health difficulties. In the next two responses there is some indication that Jenna's mental health may be impacting on other aspects of her life. This suggests that the respondent has some knowledge of how traumatic experiences can affect mental health which may, in turn, impact on decision-making and their lives in general (Baker, 2017; Rahamim and Mendes, 2015). There is also some indication that Jenna resorting to offending behaviour may be linked to her lack of self-regulation and increased risk-taking due to her past trauma (Couper and Mackie, 2016).

> *"There is grave concern for Jenna's safety and she requires urgent mental health assessment".*
> (P2prof)

> *"to ensure that Jenna and the wider public were kept safe and that measures would be put in place to improve Jenna's mental health issues and therefore her wider circumstances".*
> (P3par)

> *"a risk to both herself and others and is committing some criminal acts as she struggles with her condition".*
> (P3prof)

From a parental standpoint, the same participant (P3) suggests a more holistic approach and links Jenna's deteriorating mental health to her overall situation. This evidences the influence of organisational culture on decision-making, language from a professional perspective, and the very different view as a parent.

> *"………………………... measures would put in place to improve Jenna's mental health issues and therefore her wider circumstances".*
> (P3par)

Different situations may allow the corporate parent to shift between their organisational and parenting role, suggesting that circumstances can also influence the decision-making process (Lee and Cummins, 2004). The urgency of the situation is emphasised in the following responses and indicates that, when making urgent decisions, the coping strategy of these participants is to take a procedural approach. Driven by the organisation's demands as opposed to their own values and those of their profession, they may revert to organisational processes as opposed to their specific occupational stance (Evetts, 2012).

> *"immediate risk assessment ………… and police response initiated to trace John and ensure his safety".*
> (P1prof)

> *"Police should transport John to the nearest hospital".*
> (SW1)

> *"posing a severe danger to herself and others".*
> (PM2prof)

The above responses focus on the young person's behaviour with no real mention of any other complex problems, instead alluding to the fact that some form of support may be needed to keep John safe. The following response evidences a recognition that the young person may not be willing, or in a position, to accept any assistance or guidance, again, confirming that John fits Stein's (1997) typology of a struggler.

> *"he would need help to keep himself safe, ………. not keen to avail himself of this help".*
> (NHS1prof)

The need for intervention in order to keep the young person and other members of the community safe becomes clearer in the following responses with police and social work professionals suggesting that that the young person's behaviour has to be restricted in some way.

> *"John appears to be in crisis at this time and is in need of intervention to ensure his and others' safety".*
> (NHS1prof)

> *"This is an unsafe situation where Jenna can harm herself or others, Jenna cannot be left and the situation needs to be controlled for the safety of Jenna".*
> (P2prof)

> *"John requires to be detained for his own safety"*
> (SW1prof)

By "doing to" rather than including John and Jenna in decisions on how to decrease the risk of harm, the suggestion is that neither young person can take responsibility for their actions (Esser, 2016). Whether the young person can make appropriate decisions regarding their behaviour and subsequent safety is questioned in the following responses, indicating some concern with regard to the young person's state of mind, their ability to make decisions and the steps that might need to be taken. Mentioning "criteria" could imply reverting to processes in order to justify their decision (Anderson, 2003; Luce, 2005). The language used by police professionals emphasises the need for intervention, under the relevant legislation, which could involve taking the young person's liberty (Brown, 1998).

*"They (mental health team) will have the criteria for making appropriate decisions about whether his liberty and rights need to be suspended to keep him safe".*
(PM3prof)

*"If Jenna does not attend voluntarily then she would be required to be detained under the mental health act and taken to a place of safety, which includes hospital".*
(P2)

The last response could be described as procedural, using language pertaining to their organisation, while from a parental viewpoint, another police professional appears to be more concerned with Jenna's welfare.

*"If that meant that Jenna's liberty was restricted temporarily, then I would understand that this was appropriate in the wider context of her safety and care arrangements…….".*
(P3par)

The above responses suggest that the young person's liberty may have to be curtailed, even on a temporary basis. However, detaining the young person may lead to other decisions having to be made.  As this is the third scenario, John has reached the age of 17 years and, no longer in the Children's Hearing System.  This system defines the criteria for entering or returning to this system as not yet having reached the age of 16 years and, unless under the age of 17 years and six months, can only be referred to the Children's Hearing System by the court on offence grounds.  This contradicts the Getting It Right For Every Child literature, taking a child centred approach by defining someone under the age of 18 years as a child (Scottish Government, 2012, 2015a; Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011).  The following quote indicates that the respondent is facing a moral dilemma in considering where to place a young person of John's age.

> *"Given his age, careful consideration would need to be given as to whether admission to an adult ward would be appropriate, or whether he would need specialist adolescent in-patient unit".*
> (NH1)

This is similar to the next response in which the participant appears to continue to view Jenna as a child, evidencing a child centred approach (Scottish Government, 2012).

> *"urgent need of compulsory measures of care and clearly fulfils the criteria for secure accommodation"*
> (PM2prof)

The accommodation this panel member refers to is a Children's Secure Residential Unit. However, Jenna is no longer looked after and, at 17 years of age in these circumstances, cannot be accommodated in children's residential accommodation. This suggests a possible training need regarding the legal status of young care leavers when discharged from the Children's Hearing System and the implications for those young people.

These responses combine some knowledge of risk and possible mental health difficulties while also evidencing the role of the organisation. Using language, which would be commonly used by police such as "committing criminal acts" reflects the need to uphold the law and their organisational culture (Brown 1998). While there is no evidence to suggest that these responses are not the result of rational decision-making, there is some emphasis on "high risk" and the immediacy of the situation in the following response. This suggests that the environment and time constraints may impact on decisions made (Snook and Cullen, 2008).

> *"Jenna will now be the subject of a Police 'Concern' call and will become a high risk missing person if not traced immediately, with significant Police resources allocated to tracing her safe and well".*
> (P3prof)

All participants acknowledged the complex mental health difficulties that may be present in all of the scenarios.  Some have also evidenced an awareness of the links between traumatic experiences and the possible increase in risk-taking and criminal behaviours, as highlighted by the Adverse Childhood Experiences literature (Couper and Mackie, 2016).  Other respondents from all of the organisations, were more explicit in mentioning their concerns regarding the young person's mental health.  From a professional standpoint these replies from panel members focus on the danger posed while the parental response emphasises the need to protect the young person.

> *"She is absconding and is posing a severe danger to herself as her mental health situation appears to be much worse".*
> (PM2prof)

> *"I would want him to be kept safe and receive care and treatment from a young person's mental health specialist".*
> (PM3par)

A similar concern, linking John's actions to his state of mental health, is mentioned by a health professional.

> *"John continues to be a risk to himself and possibly to others as a result of his behaviour, which itself is an indication of his mental state".*
> (NHS1prof)

The response from social work and police professionals indicates that further assessment is required, however, there is no mention of risk.  The focus here appears to be on ensuring that John receives the service he requires and one that would meet his needs.  The second response alludes to different agencies offering this support.

> *"seen by a mental health officer and a decision made as to whether John requires to be detained within hospital for a period of further assessment".*
> (SW1)

> *"I would hope he would receive medical treatment …….. mental health …….. support from all relevant agencies".*
> (P1par)

Participants from all agencies also evidenced taking an organisational approach when suggesting what should be done regarding the mental health issues that both young people appeared to be displaying. This was clear from police and panel member participants who, in responding from a professional stance, mention actions that can be taken under the relevant legislation.

> *"Once traced, it will be difficult for the Police to return Jenna to a safe environment unless emergency mental health powers can be utilised".*
> (P3prof)

> *"Jenna may require to be sectioned under the mental health act".*
> (PM2prof)

While also referring to assessment, responses from social work professionals, from a parental viewpoint, indicate a knowledge of processes within the health system,

> *"hope that John would be seen by the appropriate services in terms of assessment and planning".*
> (SW1par)

> *"John to be assisted in this time of crisis, returned to the hospital, assessed and provided with whatever support he might require to enable him to recover".*
> (SW2par)

All of these responses, from both professional and parental stances, recognise that the mental health needs of both young people must be assessed and, hopefully, addressed before any other issues can be considered. While there is some evidence of the use of the wellbeing indicators, safe and healthy, there is little

evidence of including the young person's views in the assessment and decision-making process.

All agencies involved evidenced some knowledge of the roles and responsibilities of the partner agencies, such as health professionals, indicating the type of support needed.  This is essential for agencies to work collaboratively, however, how different agencies understand their roles and responsibilities within this multi-agency context may differ. In nearly all responses, it was suggested that, primarily, health should undertake assessments. While some participants focussed on risk and danger when responding as professionals, from a parental standpoint, the emphasis is on protection, indicating some conflict between these two stances.

The use of procedural language, often specific to the organisational cultures of the agency, is also evident from all the partners involved in this research.  The negative effect of using this type of procedural language by all professionals is reflected in young people's comments in *The Promise* (Independent Root and Branch Care Review, 2020).  The difference in language was also evident when comparing professional and parental responses from all participants.

**Parental or Professional**

The overarching factor in this study is that of decision-making for corporate parents and how this process might be influenced by the organisational cultures of each of the named partners.  As early as 1998, the *Quality Protects* programme emphasised that corporate parents had a duty to provide the same level of support that to children and care leavers as they would for their own children (UK Parliament, 1998). This is a principle that has been reflected in literature throughout the years (Mendes and Moslehuddin, 2004; Utting, 1991; Wright, 2014).  However, given the different functions of each of the named partners which, in turn influences their organisational cultures, is it possible to corporate parent as a natural parent would?  To explore this issue further, the responses to questions 1 and 3, professional and parental views on each scenario were considered and compared.  This included some of the language used and how this might relate to organisational roles (Brown, 1998).

It became evident that some responses indicated similarities between the views of participants made from a professional standpoint and those from a parent's perspective.  These responses are from one police and one social work participant.

> *"There is grave concern for Jenna's safety and she requires urgent mental health assessment".*
> (P2prof)

> *"I would like the best care for Jenna and would be of the opinion that medical staff were the best people to assist".*
> (P2par)

Although similar, the responses from police participants use very different language. The professional view expresses their "grave concern" for Jenna's safety with no mention of care for Jenna.  The parental response appears to be more concerned with meeting Jenna's care needs.

> *"John requires to be detained for his own safety"*
> (SW1prof)
> *"I would want services to ensure John's safety".*
> (SW1par)

These responses show an awareness of mental health difficulties by suggesting the involvement of health professionals and emphasising the need for something to be done to keep the young person safe.  The similar responses suggest that, for these participants, the levels and types of support and assistance they would expect as professionals would equal their provision as parents (UK Parliament, 1998). However, the different language contradicts this as the parental response from the police professional mentions wanting the "best care" for Jenna as opposed to her safety.  Using the word "detained" from the social work professional suggests a more procedural approach citing legislation as, under the Mental Health Act 1983, you can be detained in hospital and treated against your wishes.  However, from the parental response, there appears to be a less formal and restrictive approach.  These

differences in approach are reflected in the following responses from health professionals.

> *"does he need to be admitted to hospital, or indeed detained under relevant sections of the Mental Health Act".*
> (NHS1prof)

> *"I would want John to receive the help that he needs to manage his mental health, with a joint approach from the right services in the right place at the right time".*
> (NHS1par)

Although more restrictive, from the professional standpoint, both responses acknowledge the need to meet John's mental health needs.  This reflects the knowledge base and organisational culture of the professions through the language used. The use of this shared language contributes to the role and expectations of their organisation (Brown, 1998).  In the following responses, the use of the word "arrested" in the first quote gives some indication of the organisational role taken as it describes a task undertaken by police. However, as parents the focus is needs led, focussing on support and protection as opposed to meeting the needs of the organisation.

> *"Apparent mental health condition would be arrested in terms of Section 297 of the Mental Health Care and Treatment Act 2003 in order to convey him to a Place of Safety".*
> (P1prof)

> *"I would want him to receive support to address his offending behaviour, living situation and his employability".*
> (P1par)

*"if John were my son, I would expect agencies to take immediate action to protect him and for him then to get required support and attention from mental health professionals".*

(P1par)

These opposing views from professional and parental standpoints indicate that the power and role orientated cultures of the police and, in some cases social work, may direct their professional decision-making (Harrison, 1993). Responding as professionals, participants concentrated on the processes of their organisation as opposed to the same respondents, as parents, who seemed more focussed on the individual and accessing support for the young person. This suggests ethical issues for the respondents as they grapple with the expectations and demands of their organisation and their own personal and professional values (Fenwick, 2014). By placing emphasis on processes this could result in a shift from occupational values to organisational professionalism (Evetts, 2012). Should this be the case, the expectation that corporate parents, from all of the named partners, should respond to young care leavers as if they were their own child and make decisions accordingly, becomes less likely. This also strengthens the argument that the feeling of being cared for and parental love cannot be dictated by legislation (Independent Root and Branch Care Review, 2020).

**Conclusion**

According to the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, professionals from those agencies named as corporate parents should have the welfare of the young person at the centre of their assessments and decision-making. They have a legal and moral duty to provide the same level of support that any good parent would offer their own child. However, each agency has its own specific role and may have very different structures, with the procedures and processes developed to meet the needs of that organisation and their culture. There is no doubt that those differences within each of the agencies can influence decisions made.

By their very nature, the police are a hierarchical organisation with their role focussing on conformity and the reinforcement of rules. This was clear from some of the participants, who had very different responses to the scenarios as a parent and

as a professional.  In the examples given, participants from the police, were supportive from a parental perspective, often taking a protective stance with consideration for the other complex issues the young person may have in their lives. In their professional role, the focus was on the behaviour as opposed to the individual and, at times, criminalising the young person.   In this research, it was evident that, from a professional perspective, priority was given to their organisational role and following the procedures of their agency. There were also indications that time constraints also influenced decisions made by police professionals as the immediacy of the situation, in relation to risk, was often mentioned.

When responding to the risks posed to and from John and Jenna, from a professional perspective, participants from all agencies used procedural language, some quoting legislation, and focussing on restricting the behaviour.  As a parent, in answer to the same scenarios, a more holistic, welfare approach was evident.  For social work, health and panel members the organisational cultures of each of their agencies appear to be similar, focussing on support for the individual, where possible, as opposed to processes and systems.  However, the organisation's need for transparency and defensible decision-making can lead to ethical struggles between occupational and organisational cultures.  While the findings of this research identified some parallels in the responses from both a professional and parental standpoint, the language was very different.  It was evident that, even when the replies were similar, the language from their professional perspective was often procedural and related to the role of their specific organisation.

There are several factors involved in making informed and rational decisions including the possible conflict from their very different parental and professional values which could influence the decisions made as corporate parents.  There was evidence of some anxiety from panel member participants as they were fearful of making the wrong decisions.  Whether this fear was due to a lack of confidence in their own knowledge, or due to the impact of heightened emotions is unclear. However, as outcomes are dependent on the decision makers competence and knowledge, this research identified a training need for some of the participating organisations.  This should include providing clarity on the legal status of both John

and Jenna, given their ages, and the possible consequences to the young person should this not be considered.

This confusion regarding the age a young person should be responded to as a child is evident from some police participants and panel members. The definition of a child as being under the age of 18 years is stated in legislation, including the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, and, more recently the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill. However, despite young people being allowed to remain in the Children's Hearing System until their 18th birthday, the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011 defines a child as someone under the age of 16 years. The 2016/20 and 2020/21 Police Plans emphasised the importance of extending the age range for corporate parenting responsibilities from 18 to 24 years of age. Despite this, it is clear that for some respondents, the organisational and cultural role of the police took priority over their corporate parenting responsibilities. As the young person was aged 16 years or over, they were treated as an adult and referred into the adult criminal justice system. The duty to uphold the law is evident in responses regarding both John and Jenna indicating that, in these scenarios, gender had no influence on the decisions made regarding criminalising their behaviour.

Using the Wellbeing Indicators (SHANARRI) should have promoted the concept of shared language and expectations for those agencies named as corporate parents. In considering the use of this assessment framework, words such as safe, protect and risk were mentioned by participants from all agencies involved. All respondents acknowledged the presence of mental health difficulties and the need for some form of assessment from health professionals, showing some level of understanding of possible negative and harmful childhood experiences and the impact these could have on current risk-taking behaviour and mental health. However, there appeared to be no discussion of how, or why, this recognition might influence decisions made by corporate parents and the possible impact, of these decisions, on the young person.

Throughout this research, collaborative and multi-agency working was suggested by participants. However, to work effectively in this forum an indepth understanding of

the roles and responsibilities of the other professions and agencies involved is crucial.  Although the participants appeared to be aware of their own agency's roles, there was no clear evidence of any understanding of the other organisation's responsibilities as corporate parents.  What was very clear was that police should take immediate action and be responsible for managing the risks while health would then take responsibility for John and Jenna's mental health.  Most participants perceived that social work would, ultimately, be accountable for corporate parenting. This contradicts the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, naming 24 different individuals, organisations and groups who, working collectively, are all corporate parents responsible for the wellbeing of young care leavers.

This was reflected in the findings as, other than the organisations participating in this study, there was little mention of the other partners and their possible involvement in the current and future planning for John and Jenna.  Only one police professional recognised that all agencies should be approachable to discuss their corporate parenting responsibilities.  This was in direct contrast to another police participant who, although acknowledging that there was a duty to corporate parent the young person, was very clear that police would deal only with criminal behaviour.

In the scenarios explored, my research found that organisational cultures did influence decision-making for some of those involved.  However, the reasons for this are complex and dependent on the type of organisational culture which will have been developed over time to meet the needs and roles of the different agencies. The support orientated cultures of social work, health and panel members are very much welfare based with the individual at the centre, incorporating Harrison's (1993) support orientated model and Bradley and Parker's (2006) goal setting model, focussing on making plans.  Responses from participants from the police evidenced their role orientated culture as following the power, or internal, model which is procedural and focussed on their task of upholding the law and protecting the public, as opposed to the welfare of the individual (Bradley and Parker, 2006; Harrison, 1993).  For some, this must lead to moral and ethical dilemmas for individuals as they struggle with their personal and occupational values.  While the needs and roles of the partner agencies have to be met, if the organisational culture does not focus

on the welfare of the individual, the organisational culture may be at odds with the principles of corporate parenting.

**Chapter 4: Discussion and implications of this research**

This thesis has presented the findings from emailed responses to progressive scenarios experienced by fictional young care leavers. The participants were from some of the partner agencies responsible for corporate parenting, namely, police, social work, health and Children's Panel members. These organisations, and others who were not included in the study, have the same roles and responsibilities towards young people who have left the care system on or after their 16th birthday.

While in the care system children and young people may be overprotected, denying them the opportunity to make decisions while in a supportive care setting and giving them no sense of agency (Alanen,1988). When they leave care, they are often alienated from their birth families and lacking support and direction from adults around them to improve their future expectations and opportunities. In these cases, they are dependent on corporate parents to guide and advise them, even in difficult circumstances. The recent Independent Root and Branch Care Review report, *The Promise* (2020) indicated that, when professionals are working with children and young people, decisions should be made with the individual and their families as the focus as opposed to organisational priorities. If the different professionals involved in a situation have opposing organisational cultures, can collaborative working be effective in achieving the same aim or does the agency's culture override their personal and professional values? As evidenced in my findings, responses offered from participants affiliated to agencies named as corporate parents, showed that they can be influenced by their very different organisational cultures.

In order for individuals from agencies and organisations involved in any forum that necessitates collaborative working, to work effectively, cohesively and seamlessly, those responsible for legislation and organisational plans must also work in collaboration to avoid confusion. An understanding of the resources available and the way in which their legislation and guidance is interpreted is necessary. Without this, it may be necessary for frontline workers to cope with unfamiliar and challenging circumstances by recreating policies through their everyday actions as they adopt coping mechanisms that may be contrary to the goals of their organisation and legislation (Hudson, 1997).

An example of this could be the current care crisis for individuals who need, and have been assessed as requiring, some level of care at home. Until policy makers and those assessing and co-ordinating this care work collectively with a true understanding of the problems that care staff may face as they struggle to fulfil the expectations of the organisation, the efficacy of any service is depleted. Compounded by the added demands of the current Coronavirus restrictions, this has resulted in frontline staff shortages as they become disillusioned or suffer from illness and has led to concerns for client safety and the sustainability of the, already struggling, services (Clark, 2021). Therefore, collaborative working necessitates each of the agencies and individuals involved having an understanding of, not only their own roles and responsibilities, but also those of the other professionals involved.

When the expectations are that several, different, professions work collaboratively, consideration must be given to organisational cultures as, differences in functions, beliefs and understanding of roles can prove challenging, resulting in conflicting decisions being made which may negatively impact upon any outcomes. Using the above example, this can then have implications for other services as those needing care may have to be admitted to hospital, blocking beds that might otherwise be available. This lack of knowledge, or confusion, regarding other partner agencies functions and roles and how these might impact, either positively or negatively, on their ability to work together in future planning for care leavers was evident in my findings.

For those organisations who have had corporate parenting responsibilities imposed on them, the situation can become even more complex as the different agencies struggle to adhere to budgets, procedures and legislation. Even when the professionals are affiliated to the same organisation, such as local authorities, different disciplines can raise tensions. For young people who have left care but are still under the age of 18 years, they will be viewed, by some as children who need to be supported, but by others, perhaps those tasked with finding them tenancies or other accommodation, the same individual may be viewed as an adult with no consideration of their complex needs, difficulties and, possible, immaturity.

The expectation that corporate parents should respond to young care leavers as if they were their own child, was explored with my findings identifying differences between the participants responses as a professional and as a parent. This suggested that, for some respondents their organisational function and culture would take priority as opposed to being able to "parent" the care leaver indicating that this might not be a realistic expectation.

**Can corporate parents be "real" parents?**

According to Parker (1980), a good parent should provide affection, comfort, nurturing, control, stimulation and protection in order to meet the child's need to be needed, he also suggests that parenting relies on lifelong bonds. Given this, is it realistic to expect corporate parents to treat the young person as if they were their own children when they may have had no previous relationship with the young person and be engaging with them only in a professional capacity with no emotional investment? Also, would it be feasible to expect someone to treat a young person as if they were the parent when they might have no knowledge of being a parent themselves or may have had negative experiences of being parented. For the care experienced young person, while they will have had some involvement with social services and care staff, due to changes in organisational structures, movement of staff and other factors, they may never have had the time, or opportunity, to build a trusting relationship with those who are making decisions regarding their future (Gaskell, 2010). As 'strugglers' they may also refuse any attempt at building relationships and, research shows, they are likely to refuse to make connections with those seeking to be their corporate parents (Baker, 2017; Stein, 1997).

Many young people who have care experience have the perception that they have been negatively labelled and having corporate parents can prolong this negativity as they are identified as having been cared for by other organisations, including education and employment (Hiles et.al., 2013). I would suggest that some young care leavers object to the concept of corporate parents as they often have their own birth families and are drawn towards them on leaving the care system, particularly their mothers and siblings (Wade, 2006). *The Promise,* as published by the Independent Care Review (2020), emphasised the importance of support for families. However, is it supportive to replace birth parents with corporate parents?

As with the previous introduction of the "named person" in the Children and Young People's (Scotland) Act 2014, the concept of corporate parenting was intended to ensure that the best interests of the child or young person would be considered in all policy and practice decisions, encouraging information sharing. However, could it also be considered that by imposing corporate parents on young people and their families that this could be perceived to be an intrusion of their rights to "private and family life" (Article 8, European Convention on Human Rights, 2013).

The very term "corporate parent" emphasises the organisational and procedural function as opposed to the "parenting" aspect and may be deemed by young people to have negative connotations. I have trawled through literature and internet searches in an effort to seek out another term that might be used with no success. This included approaching, by email, national and international care leavers associations. I was informed that they had no knowledge of any other term being used and suggested I contact CELCIS, Centre for Excellence for children's care and protection (celcis@strath.ac.uk). On communicating with CELSIS, I was advised that they were unaware of any other term being used. Given this, I would suggest other more appropriate and positive terms be explored. Perhaps the use of "guardian", not in the legal sense as appointed by the court, or "safeguarder" as both terms suggest offering protection.

Organisational cultures place importance on professional boundaries, but I would argue that by suggesting that corporate parents treat young care leavers as if they were their own child, this could erode their professionalism by maintaining that a "good parent" would make better decisions for that young person. The type of organisational culture and the parenting style is another area of interest as, research suggests that those who are affiliated to a power orientated culture may exert excessive control when taking on their corporate parenting role resulting in negative consequences for the young person (Galambos et al, 2003). My findings indicated that perhaps decisions made by corporate parents can cause more damage to the child or young person, suggesting that they may not be "good enough" parents (Choate and Engstrom, 2017; Reeves, 2012).

**Strengths and limitations of the study**

Smithson (2000) emphasizes the importance of considering why each of the participants consented to participate. Whether they had been instructed, by someone in authority in their organisation to participate or, if their involvement was their own individual decision, may also give some insight into the dimensions of organisational culture within different partner agencies. This was not a question asked by my research and, therefore, cannot be confirmed, however, the hierarchical culture of the police suggests that participants may have been instructed to participate. While, throughout my research, there was no indication of attrition being influenced by organisational culture, participants from the police were the only respondents who completed all three scenarios (Table 3). This could have been attributed to their hierarchical, power orientated culture. Support and achievement orientated cultures, including social work, health and panel members, based on competence and knowledge and placing the individual at the centre of decisions would indicate that, after being given the information regarding my research, the decision to participate would be an individual one.

The value of young care leavers views being included in this research would have been invaluable but the route I took to access this sample of participants proved not to be successful. Had they been included, this would have given some insight into what they perceived were the responsibilities of corporate parents and what they expected from them. Their like or dislike of the term corporate parent could also have been explored.

There is no doubt that a larger scale study, including participants from all of the named partners would have produced far more information regarding organisational cultures and their influence on the decision-making processes of corporate parents. Some knowledge of the length of time each of the participants have been in their particular agency would also have been beneficial as organisational cultures may become more entrenched through time.

Although the research involved views regarding a male and female young person, there was no evidence of any difference between the way participants might respond to the scenarios. However, consideration was not given to the gender of the

participants.  Had this information been available, it would have allowed some exploration of whether, from both a professional and parental standpoint, female respondents views may have differed from the male participants responses as, literature suggests, that there may be different parenting styles displayed by mothers and fathers (McKinney and Renk, 2008)

The possibility of the young person having a physical or cognitive disability was not explored in this study, neither was the ethnicity of the young person or the participant.  While this research was primarily concerned with whether organisational cultures could influence decision-making, the cultures of the participants and their experiences of being parented might also have influenced their decisions.  If from a culture where collective parenting was encouraged, the acceptance of working collaboratively with the welfare of the young person as the focus, would, perhaps, be a concept better understood (Amos, 2013., Degbey, 2012).

Despite these areas identified as limitations which could be incorporated into future research, this research did manage to take a novel look at an issue that is to the fore following the publication of *The Promise* (Independent Root and Branch Care Review, 2020) and the current consultation on the National Care Review.

**Implications of the findings for policy and practice**

The findings of my study have some potential implications for policy and practice, not only within the field of young care leavers and corporate parenting, but also for those considering legislative changes.   When collaborative working is necessary, the organisational cultures and professional values of each of the agencies involved should be reflected on and it is important that legislation, while directing practice, does not override it.  This could have implications for the practice of frontline workers as they strive to meet the expectations of their profession while also adhering to organisational needs and processes, resulting in less than satisfactory services being offered and delivered.  This reflects the findings by the Independent Root and Branch Care Review (2020) which indicated that it is not possible to legislate for parental love and care as expected of corporate parents.  My findings confirmed this evidencing cold and procedural responses and language of the participants,

particularly when responding to the scenarios as professionals, giving consideration to the expectations of their organisation.

This research will add to the global discussion around children's rights and who has the right to make decisions regarding their future.  In my research I had intended to include care experienced young people aged 16 years and over.  However, the advocacy agencies I contacted to identify possible participants either did not respond or refused to pass on information about my study to allow the young people to make their own informed choices regarding participation.  By making that decision for them, and not allowing them a voice, this contradicts the findings of the Independent Root and Branch Care Review (2020) which resulted in the publication of seven reports.   One of these, *The Promise*, outlined the foundations that form the plan for Scotland's future regarding children and families, including giving children a voice. The recommendation being that children, and young people, must be heard and involved in decision-making about their care and future, with all involved listening and responding to what they want and need.  Is this really happening or are the young people being listened to reflecting the views of the agencies they are engaging with?  What of the views of those care leavers who refuse support from any services, who hears them and how can they be included in making plans for their futures?

Whether regarded as vulnerable or not, the views of those individuals who are entitled to support and services should be included in consultation and discussion when legislation and policies are being discussed.  It is hoped that these voices were heard during the National Care Review Consultation earlier this year (2021), setting out proposals to improve the way social care is delivered in Scotland.

**Implications of the findings for future research**

While there is an abundance of literature exploring the views of young people both in the care system and after leaving care, to my knowledge there are no other studies exploring the influence of organisational culture on decision-making of corporate parents.  This is surely an area that must be further explored as is the effectiveness of the named partners working collaboratively with the welfare of the young care

leaver as their focus and is crucial to address why some of the issues in *The Promise* arose (Independent Root and Branch Care Review, 2020)

Future research on multi-agency and collaborative working to explore their different organisational cultures and how the aims roles and purposes shape these cultures would be beneficial. This would give some insight into the efficacy of different agencies working together and inform, and perhaps direct change in, some organisational cultures and procedures as they strive to improve practice and become more transparent in their decision-making processes.

There is no doubt that when making policies and legislation regarding the future of young people they should be included and involved. Given this there is scope for further research gathering young care leavers views on corporate parenting including questions such as; does it work for you and do you want to be corporate parented? Some exploration of alternatives to the term corporate parent might also be beneficial and care leavers views on this should be considered as they carry the label of being corporate parented with them for some time. A better understanding of the typologies of care leavers should also be considered as those who perhaps need the most support, the strugglers, might be the group most reluctant to engage with advocacy and other supports. Unless this is understood by all of those with corporate parenting responsibilities, these strugglers may be dismissed as non-compliant young people not needing support. Further research exploring more innovative ways of engaging with, not only hard to reach care leavers, but all vulnerable groups is essential to gather data from a representative sample as opposed to the possible manipulation of access to participants which could influence data and call into question the validity of findings.

My research has highlighted the possible conflict faced by participants as they struggle with their personal and professional values, and their organisational culture which would have been developed over time to fulfil the function and needs of their agency. If the culture of the organisation is hierarchical, involving conformity and reinforcement of rules, this may be viewed, from a parenting style perspective as excessively controlling (Galambos et. al., 2003; Harrison, 1993). A human relations or rational orientated culture would focus on the individual, encouraging their

participation in making plans and could be likened to a supportive parenting style (Bean et. Al., 2006; Bradley and Parker, 2006).  If this inconsistency in parenting styles is evident it can have an impact on the efficacy of collaborative working resulting in  damaging consequences for the young person.  This again raises the question of whether the state can provide "good enough" parenting.  If the parenting provided by local authorities and other care givers is as damaging as the child and young person's previous experience of being parented, the cycle of "not good enough" parenting will continue (Choate and Engstrom, 2014; Dominelli et. Al., 2005; Reeves, 2012)

A larger scale study involving participants from all named corporate parents would enrich future research as would gathering information on gender of participants, length of time in organisation and their experience of parenting and being parented. As young care leavers are central to this research topic, what they expect of corporate parents is crucial if the service and support they receive is to be improved. Only by exploring innovative ways of reaching and engaging with them can they be included in future research. This could include social media or contacting young people through homeless projects as this is likely route that most strugglers would take (Stein, 1997).

The findings of my research questions whether it is realistic to expect frontline workers, who may have limited time and be directed by procedural and professional constraints, to take on the role of parenting the young person as if they were their own child (Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014).  Whether this is possible is an issue for further research as is the necessity for legislators and policy makers to consult with frontline workers to ensure that the aims and expectations they impose are realistic and workable.

This research provided evidence that decisions made by corporate parents can be influenced by their different organisational cultures.  My findings indicated that many of the respondents had little or no understanding of the expectation on them as a corporate parent or the roles other professionals from affiliated organisations should take.  This suggests a training need including participants from different partners as opposed to single agency training.  Only by encouraging discussion and a greater

understanding of the influence of personal, professional and organisational cultures, values and constraints, can collaborative corporate parenting, result in the best outcomes for young care leavers.

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## Statutes and Legislation

1989 Children Act

Children Act (England and Wales) 1975.

Children (Scotland) Act 1995

Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995

Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000

Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011

Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014

Children (Equal Protection from Assault) (Scotland) Act 2019.

Council of Europe's Guidelines on Child Friendly Justice (2010).

Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1995

European Convention on Human Rights

Genevan Declaration of the Rights of the Child (1924) League of Nations.

Human Rights Act (1998)

Law on Prevention and Eradication of Social Exclusion (2002)

Mental Health Act (1983)

National Health Service Act 2006 (as amended by the Health and Social Care Act 2012.

Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001

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Support and Assistance of Young People Leaving Care (Scotland) Regulations 2004

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1959, 1989)

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, (1989), Article 12.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) Scotland Bill

SCHEDULE 4

CORPORATE PARENTS

(Introduced by Section 56 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014)

1. The Scottish Ministers
2. A local authority
3. The National Convener of Children's Hearings Scotland
4. Children's Hearings Scotland
5. The Principal Reporter
6. The Scottish Children's Reporter Administration
7. A health board
8. A board constituted under section 2(1)(b) f the National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1978
9. Healthcare Improvement Scotland
10. The Scottish Qualifications Authority
11. Skills Development Scotland Co Ltd (registered number SC 202659)
12. Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland
13. The Scottish Social Services Council
14. The Scottish Sports Council
15. The chief constable of Police Service Scotland
16. The Scottish Police Authority
17. The Scottish Fife and Rescue Service
18. The Scottish Legal Aid Service
19. The Commissioner for Children and Young People in Scotland
20. The Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland
21. The Scottish Housing Register
22. Bord na Galdhlig
23. Creative Scotland
24. A body which is a "post-16 education body" for the purposes of the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 2005

**The influence of organisational cultures on decision-making in Corporate Parenting**
**(Information Form for partner agencies participating in the study)**

I am a practicing social worker in a Scottish local authority with many years of experience of both the criminal justice system and working with young people who have been in the care system and/or display offending behaviour.  This involvement with young people who have left the care system has reinforced my belief that many struggle with a sense of identity, are socially excluded and may face discrimination from some of the professionals who are named in legislation as their corporate parents.

I am currently undertaking research as a part time Doctorate student at Stirling University.   This research aims to explore the influence organisational culture has on the decision-making of individuals from the named organisations who share corporate parenting roles and responsibilities.

For the majority of young people making the transition into adulthood, they have the support and guidance of parents and other family members.  Unfortunately for those young people who have been in the care system, the move into adulthood can be even more challenging.  Low levels of engagement with education combined with backgrounds of loss, instability and trauma can contribute to homelessness and poor mental health leading to rates of self-harm and suicide being higher than the general population (Furnivall, 2013).  On leaving the care system some of these young people appeared to be cast adrift as they fall through the gaps in the processes with no accommodation available to them, and no support or direction with regard to benefits, employment and basic independence skills.  As a means of addressing this issue, the Scottish Government, through the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, named those agencies who, working collectively, are all corporate parents thus placing responsibility on all of the partners.

This research aims to explore the influence organisational culture has on the decision-making of individuals from the named organisations who share corporate parenting roles and responsibilities. This study will also include the views of young people involved who have been, or still are, corporate parented.

There is no doubt that multi-agency working can bring with it issues of power, dominance, and conflict, caused by the tensions created through the, often, differing dimensions of organisational cultures involved.  Only by being aware of the influence the phenomena of the culture, beliefs and attitudes of these organisations can the impact on decision-making be understood.

Using a phenomenological approach, identifying emerging themes throughout the three stages of this study, focus groups and vignettes will be used to gather the views of professionals in partner agencies and young people who have been/are corporate parented.  This should provide the opportunity to compare and contrast the data gathered with regard to the influence of organisational/group culture on decision-making.

You have been identified as a professional from one of the partner agencies named as having corporate parenting responsibility.  Given this I would like to invite you to take part in a study to gather your views on 3 different scenarios.  These will take the form of vignettes and will be emailed to you leaving a specified time (yet to be agreed but probably within 5 working days) for you to

respond.  The 3 vignettes will be emailed at monthly intervals and should take no longer than 20 minutes of your time per scenario.  Your views, both personal and from a professional stance, on 3 scenarios will be sought.

There is a possibility that at the beginning and end of this process, you may be invited to attend a focus group to discuss the findings of the research and the information recorded there shall also contribute to the final findings of this research.  Focus groups will be at a place and time which is convenient for those involved and it would be useful if you agree for the group discussion to be recorded, transcribed and analysed for the purpose of the research.  The information gathered at these groups will highlight only the partner agency to which you are affiliated and any other information that may identify you will be anonymised.  What is discussed at these groups is confidential and should there be any issues raised through discussion, individual participants may be directed to the appropriate support services.

Although initial consent will have been given in order for you to be invited to attend a focus group, additional consent to attend the groups will also be sought on the day of the group.

The report will be anonymised and names and other identifiable material will be removed from transcripts and other data gathered.  However, given the nature of the research, professions will be retained for the final report. A copy of any transcripts can be made available for you to check and withdrawal from the research process is possible until the data has been analysed.

Copies of the final research will be made available to you and the information gathered may be used in reports and other publications.

I hope you will agree to be part of this research project – if you want to know any more, please contact myself or my Supervisors at the University of Stirling

**It should be noted that you do not have to agree to participate in any part of this research and there is no stipulation to explain why.  You will also be able to withdraw from this study at any time up to the point of analysis.**

**In agreeing to participate in this part of the study does not, in any way, bind you to taking part in the focus groups as consent to participate in the groups will be sought separately.**


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**Consent Form for email participation in this study**

**The influence of organisational cultures on decision-making in Corporate Parenting**

Could you please tick the boxes and sign the form below if you agree to participate in this research

- o  I have read and understood the information sheet and agree to participate in this research by email.

- o  I agree to have the information I provide analysed for the purpose of this research.

- o  I understand that I can choose to withdraw at any point during the research process.

- o  All information disclosed by participants is confidential and will be anonymised.

It should also be noted that the information gathered from this study may be used in reports and other publications.

Signed:

Name:

Email address:

Organisation/Agency:

Date:

**Scenario 1 (Agency)**

**Jenna (1)**

Jenna is16 year old who, with her mother Tracy, convinced panel members that her Compulsory Supervision Order should be discharged and she could return to reside with her mother, against Social Work recommendations.  Jenna returned home but within 2 weeks the relationship had broken down and Tracy has told her that she can no longer live there.  Tracy maintained that this was due to Jenna's unacceptable behaviour.

Jenna has been accommodated, on an emergency basis, in a homeless project for young people.  However, she has told staff at the project that she has no money for food or toiletries and will have to resort to theft. This is despite being in receipt of a maintenance allowance from social work.

Jenna has now been arrested and charged with stealing a purse from a woman at a cash machine.  She has told the police that it is the fault of social work as she had no food and had been in care.

**Questions**

1. What would your agency's view be of Jenna's situation?
2. Which agency should take responsibility for resolving Jenna's situation and Why?
3. What would you want to happen if Jenna was your daughter?

**Agency:**

(e.g., Social Work, Police, NHS, Panel Members)

**Scenario 1 (Agency)**

**John (1)**

John is a16 year old who, with his mother Tracy, convinced panel members that his Compulsory Supervision Order should be discharged and he could return to reside with his mother, against Social Work recommendations.  John returned home but within 2 weeks the relationship had broken down and Tracy has told him that he can no longer live there.  Tracy maintained that this was due to John's unacceptable behaviour.

John has been accommodated, on an emergency basis, in a homeless project for young people.  However, he has told staff at the project that he has no money for food or toiletries and will have to resort to theft. This is despite being in receipt of a maintenance allowance from social work.

John has now been arrested and charged with stealing a purse from a woman at a cash machine.  He has told the police that it is the fault of social work as he had no food and had been in care.

**Questions**

1. What would your agency's view be of John's situation?
2. Which agency should take responsibility for resolving John's situation and Why?
3. What would you want to happen if John was your son?

**Agency:**

(e.g., Social Work, Police, NHS, Panel Members)

**Scenario 2 (Agency)**

**Jenna (2)**

Jenna is now 17 years old and she has a history of mental health difficulties often presenting as emotional and behavioural issues. These can result in Jenna trying to harm herself and, when this happens the police are often called by members of the public.

Jenna's social work team was called by a member of staff at another local office who advised that she was presenting as mentally unstable and requested that someone come to collect her – this was against Jenna's wishes.

However, Jenna's situation has deteriorated. She is threatening to kill herself and refuses to come with the social workers who have arrived. The police are also present as members of the public and staff in the office were becoming frightened and alarmed by Jenna's behaviour. Jenna is running back and forth across a busy road resulting in cars having to brake and swerve to avoid her.

**Questions**

1. What would your agency's view be of Jenna's situation?
2. Which agency should take responsibility for resolving Jenna's situation and Why?
3. What would you want to happen if Jenna was your daughter?

**Agency:**

(e.g., Social Work, Police, NHS, Panel Members)

**Scenario 2 (Agency)**


**John (2)**

John is now 17 years old and he has a history of mental health difficulties often presenting as emotional and behavioural issues.  These can result in John trying to harm himself and, when this happens the police are often called by members of the public.

John's social work team was called by a member of staff at another local office who advised that he was presenting as mentally unstable and requested that someone come to collect him – this was against John's wishes.

However, John's situation has deteriorated.  He is threatening to kill himself and refuses to come with the social workers who have arrived.  The police are also present as members of the public and staff in the office were becoming frightened and alarmed by John's behaviour.  John is running back and forth across a busy road resulting in cars having to brake and swerve to avoid him.

**Questions**

1. What would your agency's view be of John's situation?
2. Which agency should take responsibility for resolving John's situation and Why?
3. What would you want to happen if John was your son?


**Agency:**

(e.g., Social Work, Police, NHS, Panel Members)

**Scenario 3 (Agency)**

**Jenna (3)**

Police and social work have finally managed to get Jenna to hospital (A & E). Hospital staff have asked SW to sit with Jenna and observe her behaviour. Jenna states that she is going to the toilet and is found by Social Work staff with something tied around her neck. She is freed but then proceeds to run off towards the main road.

**Questions**

1. What would your agency's view be of Jenna's situation?
2. Which agency should take responsibility for resolving Jenna's situation and Why?
3. What would you want to happen if Jenna was your daughter?

**Agency:**

(e.g., Social Work, Police, NHS, Panel Members)

**Scenario 3 (Agency)**

**John (3)**

Police and social work have finally managed to get John to hospital (A & E). Hospital staff have asked SW to sit with Jenna and observe his behaviour. John states that he is going to the toilet and is found by Social Work staff with something tied around his neck. He is freed but then proceeds to run off towards the main road.

**Questions**

1. What would your agency's view be of John's situation?
2. Which agency should take responsibility for resolving John's situation and Why?
3. What would you want to happen if John was your son?

**Agency:**

(e.g., Social Work, Police, NHS, Panel Members)