

Chapter 6 (In 'Cabbage Syndrome': The social construction of dependence, Colin Barnes (1990) The Falmer Press, pp. 127-156)

Participation and Control

This chapter focuses on the level of user participation and control within the context of the Contact group in relation to structured activities, the organization and general running of the group, and social control. Attention will be drawn to the environmental limitations on the amenities available, particularly as reflected in 'swamping' by other user groups, the differing needs of the Contact members, and the tension inherent in the philosophy of social rehabilitation within an expressly voluntarist atmosphere in explaining the relatively low level of participation by users in formal activities. At the same time the data illustrate how staff encourage involvement in each of the areas of potential user participation. The evidence shows that the limited user involvement in formal mechanisms of policy formulation is largely due to the social divisions among Contact users and a belief by some that such involvement is futile because of the environment in which the group operates.

There is no formal constitution within the Contact format and control is exercised by senior staff through 'orchestration' or, when necessary, through supervisory means. The study shows that senior Contact staff are discretionary in their use of power to restrict user activity outside the day centres during opening hours and that this is an area of concern for several Contact members. Nonetheless discipline is not considered a problem within the group because, it will be argued, of users' socialization and their relative autonomy within the centres compared with the constraints imposed on them outside.

The level of user involvement in the provision and delivery of services for people with disabilities is now considered central by most writers concerned with the experience of impairment. The chapter begins with a brief overview of the recent research in this area.

User Participation and Day Centres

The origins of the growing demand for higher levels of user participation and control of services for disabled people is generally associated with the emergence of the Independent Living Movement (ILM) in the United States in the late 1960s. The central issue for this movement's advocates was,

and remains, how to achieve effective control over their own lives. The movement does not deny the limitations imposed upon individual activity by impairments, but maintains that those limitations are worsened by environmental 'factors and by those who provide required services. The ILM does not suggest that impaired people do not need help, but maintains that they should control the form that such help takes.

The first Centre for Independent Living was set up in Berkeley, California, in 1972 by a group of severely physically impaired individuals who took responsibility for the organization of the services they needed. By 1983 there were 135 similar institutions established throughout America, each offering a wide range of services from telephone advice lines to care attendants (CAs). Wedded to the 'traditional' American ideologies of radical individualism and consumer sovereignty, the political demands of the movement quickly found favour with the American Congress. In 1973 legislation was passed which provided services for individuals for whom vocational rehabilitation was not a realistic proposition. The Act also accorded priority to those 'most severely disabled', provided affirmative and anti-discriminatory programmes, and stipulated that there should be corporate compliance in architecture and transport (Williams, 1984). However, a number of authors have shown that these positive changes have not been spread evenly throughout American society and that they favour specific sections of the impaired community (Goodall, 1988). Partly due to the universalistic policies of the British welfare state and the fact that its central philosophy traditionally viewed consumers as passive recipients rather than active participants, no national equivalent of the ILM has emerged in this country, albeit self-help and consumerism have become cornerstones of new right philosophy and recent government policy (Clode *et al.*, 1987). British writers in the field, the late Paul Hunt, Finkelstein, Davis and Oliver, for example, have directed their attention toward the prevailing attitudes of the non-impaired population, who, they argue, view the impaired as needing care and protection. Hence the idea that people with impairments should be active participants and take control of their own lives has been slow to catch on (Goodall, 1988).

From an essentially Marxist perspective, Oliver (1983b) has discussed the politics of disability within the British context and concludes that because of the divisions within the disabled population in terms of age, social class, impairments and the reluctance by many to identify with disabled organizations, the emergence of a coherent political movement is unlikely. For Oliver these divisions are exacerbated by successive government policies, such as tax concessions to the blind but not to the deaf, mobility

allowance to those unable to walk but denied to those who can, and higher pensions for those impaired at work. By adopting these strategies the state keeps in check the collective interests of the disabled population and their demands for more resources. Oliver accepts that the impaired have made considerable gains under Labour administrations, but following Walker (1982) contends that social policy from the left has been consistently imposed from the top down by those in power rather than from the bottom up by those who need it. The much venerated Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act of 1970 is seen less as a 'charter for the disabled' as liberal writers suggest (Topliss and Gould, 1981), than as a charter for professionals.

Like other writers from the left, Oliver views the traditional alliance between social democracy and liberal professionalism in a negative light, since it has hitherto failed to solve the problems of the working classes. From the perspective of the impaired, the radical critique of the professionals as applied to the caring industry is complicated by the fact that the vast majority of professional helpers are able-bodied and therefore open to the accusation that they can never understand what it is like to be disabled. It is argued for this reason that the 'enlightened guardian' approach is inappropriate and needs to be replaced by 'disabled action', involving full participation and control, or full participation in the administration of services for people with disabilities by people with disabilities. Because of the divisions outlined above, however, any foreseeable gains are only likely to be small-scale and at the local level (Oliver, 1983b).

Although progress has been slow, some tentative moves in this direction have taken place. Probably the best known example is the Derbyshire Coalition for Disabled People. Adopting the philosophy of the collectivist approach rather than the individualistic American variant, because the latter may lead to the monopolization of limited resources by impaired individuals, the coalition works in close collaboration with the statutory authorities to provide improved services for people with disabilities. After some preliminary difficulties emanating from the conflict of attitudes between the coalition members and the local authority, the Derbyshire Centre for Integrated Living has gone from 'strength to strength' (Oliver, 1987a). Although Derbyshire seems to be far ahead of other local authorities, there have also been developments elsewhere resulting from the shift toward community care. For example, some authorities have set up inter-departmental social services and health authority partnerships with the Community Volunteers Organization to coordinate and finance the latter's independent living schemes. These are consumer-orientated

programmes which supply volunteers to work in the homes of disabled individuals. A pioneering Community Aids programme is flourishing in the London Boroughs of Islington and Wandsworth (Goodall, 1988) and the Cambridge Health Authority funded an experimental project where the primary aim was to set up a domiciliary care service for young disabled people living in the community, to improve their quality of life (Owens, 1987). Moreover, a recent survey by Crawley (1988) has shown that there has been a substantial growth of user participation and self- advocacy in Adult Training Centres (ATCs) and similar organizations for people with learning difficulties.

This general shift of emphasis has not gone unnoticed by those involved in the provision of day services for the younger physically impaired. The recent Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation (RADAR) report on this subject states:

Day centres should encourage and assist users to develop physical, social and intellectual skills, including the ability to organize their own lives, make their own decisions and function as members of their own community. Skills and knowledge will have to be imparted to users in areas such as the management of handicap, claiming welfare and other rights, social competence and emotional maturity (Kent *et al.*, 1984, p. 18).

From this perspective the role of day centres is essentially rehabilitative. The authors point out that any formal instruction should be carried out with a 'minimum didactic content' and that users should be 'encouraged' to participate fully in the planning and running of services. It is clear that Kent *et al.* place great emphasis on the type of activities provided by day centres in the drive toward heightened user participation and control, but they are somewhat vague as to what is meant by 'minimum didactic content' or how users should be 'encouraged' to get involved. These concerns provide the starting point for the next section which looks at the structured activities available to the Contact users and the methods used by staff to stimulate user participation.

Structured Activities and User Participation ill the Contact Group

In a recent analysis of social control in a therapeutic community, Bloor (1987) referred to a collection of such practices as the relinquishment of direct supervision, the encouragement of patient autonomy, the provocation of patient dissent and the mobilization of patient culture as a 'treatment

'resource' by professionals as 'orchestration'. I shall now show that day centre staff utilize similar strategies to encourage user involvement in structured activities. Since any such user participation is relatively low, I shall argue that the strategies employed remain largely ineffective because of the contradictions inherent in the notion of didactic activity in an explicitly unfettered atmosphere. And although environmental factors contribute to this phenomenon I shall suggest that these activities are largely inappropriate for the users' needs since the majority view the centres as a social rather than a rehabilitative setting and that for those who do not, the formal activities offered are inadequate.

As noted in Chapter Four, the three day centres used by Contact originally were restricted to social/recreational-type activities and that it is only since Contact's inception that the shift toward services with an explicitly rehabilitative component really took hold. While senior staff have undoubtedly been influenced by the recent change of emphasis in social service provision, both Jayne and Jackie maintained that much of the stimulus for the activities offered within the Contact framework stemmed from the users themselves. Two notable examples were literacy/numeracy and music and drama. The desirability of the former within day centres for the younger impaired has been acknowledged since the Warnock Report on Special Education (1978) over a decade ago, but it is only recently that the value of the latter has been recognized in this type of establishment (Carter, 1988). Although they are still not available in many units, the Contact group has had access to both since 1985. The range of regular structured activities available during the study period is shown in Table 16.

Table 16 Structured activities available to the Contact Users

Note: Swimming and weight training were held at local sports centres, not in the day centres.

Source: official timetable for the period September 1986/July 1987

Woodwork, cookery and sewing were offered at the Alf Morris centre on Wednesdays and Fridays. There was also opportunity for an individually structured bridging course to prepare day centre users for further education, organized in conjunction with a local college. Also at this centre there were periodic visits from representatives from Disability Information and Advice Line (DIAL) to discuss benefits and changes in social services procedures etc. There were also occasional visits to local places of interest, art galleries, exhibitions and shopping centres, as well as annual outings to the coast and a Christmas lunch. Finally, there were the semi-formal spontaneous pastimes such as quizzes, organized games, listening to music, watching television or socializing. While there is little consensus on what constitutes rehabilitative activity and there were substantial gaps in this timetable, these activities represent more than simply 'tea and bingo'.

According to Jayne and Jackie recent changes in the general approach to day services for the younger physically impaired have had specific implications for the two senior roles within the context of the Contact group. While the traditional functions of senior activity organizer (SAO) and activity organizer (AO) have been the conceptualization, organization and coordination of user activities, social or otherwise, there is now mounting pressure, albeit predominantly implicit, to 'encourage' activity in particular areas, notably those normally perceived of as heightening individual independence and self-help. This pressure comes from at least three sources – Mrs B, the Residential and Day Care Officer (RDCO) in charge of the centres; an increasing number of parents; and some of the users. With respect to the users' families, other studies have focused on the concern expressed by parents over the services provided in day centres for impaired adolescents (Anderson and Clarke, 1982). The change of emphasis towards independence and self-help presents substantial difficulties for staff since it is generally agreed that Contact members spend three-quarters of their time socializing, either sitting around chatting or playing games, and that the voluntarist nature of the group should be maintained.

Strategies of encouragement were most visible when senior staff were attempting to orchestrate user involvement in explicitly educational activities. The techniques used can be related to the three ideal types devised by Hargreaves (1975) in his analysis of teacher/pupil relations -the 'lion tamer', the 'entertainer' and the 'new romantic' approaches. The most typically used method resembled Hargreaves' 'entertainer' model. The central assumption of this strategy is that motivation is latent and ready to be tapped. Hence the teacher motivates the student by making learning fun

or appealing to the eventual usefulness of what is being offered. In the day centre situation, however, where there were no sanctions involved, it is important to have a comprehensive knowledge of users' biographies if the method is to work, since staff have to capitalize on users' interests and must avoid making rash statements about the advantages of what is being offered.

An example of how staff try to make learning fun occurred when Jayne was encouraging users to join the literacy and numeracy classes. These subjects had initially been requested by two group members who wanted to improve their skills in these areas. Jayne chose a popular member of subgroup B, Millie, who she knew was interested in the subjects, elicited her compliance and then systematically went round her friends telling them Millie was taking part. If they showed any reluctance she emphasized Millie's enthusiasm and suggested it was bound to be more enjoyable than being left out. Similar approaches were made by Jackie when collecting names for swimming and weight training sessions at the local gym, although clearly here knowledge of users' physical abilities was imperative since some individuals were unable to take up these options because of their impairments. These techniques were used by Benjamin, the tutor from the local college of further education, to stimulate interest in the bridging scheme when he got Andy and Spike onto the course. Since neither was interested in education 'per se' he emphasized the social aspects of attending an able-bodied college, particularly the opportunities to meet girls.

After joining the group in January 1987, Patrick, Contact's AO after Jayne's departure, employed the same methods, but complemented them with techniques resembling the 'new romantic' approach, which suggests that students are naturally motivated and will participate if interested. Playing upon users' natural motivation he looked for areas of interest and turned them into didactic activity. Several of the lads had complained about the legs on the snooker table so rather than send them to the Carpentry Workshop for repair or put in a request for new ones, he set about repairing them himself and in the process elicited voluntary help from Billy, Andy and Matthew. The entire enterprise lasted eight weeks. Clearly this technique is limited, especially in view of the environmental and monetary constraints under which the group operates.

The models devised by Hargreaves also typify the strategies used by the four main tutors responsible for presenting formal activities to the group. Here, however, there was evidence of the traditional 'lion tamer' approach

where students are literally told what to do and how to do it. Hilary, the arts and crafts teacher, used these techniques in her classes on Tuesdays at the Engineers' day centre. She has been at the unit since it opened and her ideas reflected those of the Officer in Charge (OIC), Mrs W, who held the view that 'idle hands make idle minds'.*

'People need guiding or they'll do nothing. I don't believe that's good for them. They need stimulus. Everybody needs stimulus. Nobody's ever told them, you see, that they can do anything well, so they don't do anything at all. So I provide the stimulus. I know some of them don't like it but...' * -Hilary

The arts, and crafts classes began as soon as the users arrived and continued throughout the day. Although 'compulsory' was not a term used in the day centres, there was no alternative other than to sit and do nothing. In 1985, five users were coached to GCE O level standard and sat the exam, but many of the group resented Hilary's approach and saw the subjects as a waste of time with little point to them despite the fact that some of the finished artefacts, such as teapot stands, plaster of Paris ornaments and the like were sold to supplement the group's amenity fund. As a result of general disinterest Tuesday was the lowest attended day of the week apart from Friday when there was a deliberate policy in the system generally of limiting user numbers so that staff could spend time on routine paperwork and maintenance. Of the moderately impaired only Billy and Matthew went to the Engineers' on Tuesdays, the former because there was no one at home and his parents preferred him not to be in the house alone and the latter because he had to attend in order to do weight training later in the day. When weight training changed days in February, Matthew stopped going to the Engineers' .

It is notable that the Engineers' centre and arts and crafts were popular with the girls in subgroup B, although they did not like Hilary's methods.

'It's alright there, there's always something' to do. I like art, but you shouldn't be told what to do, it shouldn't be like school should it?*' - Margaret.

Senior Contact staff appeared to have little control over the situation at the Engineers'. They were aware that it was unacceptable to many of the group but consoled themselves with the fact that it was productive in terms of tangible results.

The ability to achieve visible results was the main reason why a more traditional approach was also adopted by David and Prudence, the two tutors responsible for the music and drama group. In this case, the pressure for its adoption did not come from management, as was the case at the Engineers', but from some of the users. Originally when music and drama instruction started in 1985, the two teachers opted for the relaxed technique of the 'new romantics'. The principal activities were loosely structured, usually involving individual and collective discussions, and there were group renderings of favourite pop songs using a multitude of percussion instruments. Roger, who first suggested Contact include this facility, used it as an opportunity to practice his electric bass guitar. In 1986, however, when the group was opened out to all Alf Morris users, it was joined by three members of Insight, the group serving those 25 to 45, who wanted to perform a 'proper play' or revue in front of the entire centre. This idea appealed to the majority but a formal play was out of the question since many of the original members could not read. After much disagreement the two tutors took control and decided upon a semi-improvised fantasy revue involving music and mime based on Peter Pan. This was unacceptable to the newcomers so they left. After six weeks, three of the Contact members, including Roger, also left because they were 'fed up' doing the same things week after week. In the event the remaining five members along with David and Prudence planned, produced and performed a twenty-minute show in front of the entire centre at Easter and repeated it in a local nursery school one month later. This achievement was unimagined six months earlier when the idea was first suggested. -

Such methods are not appropriate, however, for other activities provided in the centres. Maggie, who took the literacy and numeracy classes on Friday mornings, adopted the more relaxed individually structured approach because of the nature of the subjects she taught and the fact that if she exerted any pressure students walked out.

'You can't push them, their concentration is very poor. The group I have on a Monday at evening classes [able-bodied] are also young and not an unsimilar age group to this group. But these youngsters seem to have difficulty sitting down and getting on with it. They want more breaks, they're distracted much more so than the able-bodied ones that I know. It's very rare that they'll start something at the start of the class and plod their way through it. They'll do a bit, then it's gone.'*

The relaxed atmosphere of Maggie's classes achieved success in the sense that they are regularly attended, but often individuals would not bother to go in if they did not feel like it. The classes were held in the smaller Contact room and averaged between six and ten regular students each week. They included all the girls in subgroup B and usually Karen, Amy and Richard from subgroup C. There were ten on the official register. Often there was scant evidence of academic activity. Books were got out but little work was done. Students would sit around chatting, leave if they felt like it and not come back if they found something more interesting to do. Rather than a forum for serious didactic activity these classes resembled a relaxed social gathering of close friends. Matthew, who had been to a normal school, described the classes as follows,

'Well I don't know what it is they're supposed to do in there. I think it was supposed to be English but they were just sat about talkin', an' some of 'em were drawin' when I went in. Well that's not English to me, they don't do owt in there. '*'

Inspection of some of the users' books showed that work was actually done. Some users had written letters to pop stars and others were doing elementary arithmetic. But because they were individually structured and proceeded at the students' own pace, the classes appeared disorganized and the results paltry, particularly from the perspective of someone who had had a 'normal' education. However, considering the subjects, the lack of literacy skills amongst the majority of users, their antipathy to formal controls and school in general, it is doubtful whether the classes could or should proceed in any other fashion.

While these examples can be interpreted in a number of ways they do illustrate the problems facing teaching staff in a voluntary situation with students having varying expectations and abilities. In order to stimulate user participation, Hilary, the arts and crafts tutor, had adopted traditional methods which proved relatively productive but unpopular with the majority of users. The second example of the music and drama classes shows how similar methods were deemed necessary to solve the conflict of expectations among participants. The strategy produced results in this case as well, but user participation diminished. The final example illustrates a different strategy which besides stimulating achievement can secure prolonged user participation because it is individually structured and the user sets her/his own pace. A major factor in the explanation for the success of this latter technique is that it can accommodate didactic interaction within a social environment.

Participation in vocational activities at the centres was limited by environmental factors and 'swamping' by the elderly. Although senior staff were aware that several Contact users saw moving around as beneficial since it prevented boredom, some felt that travelling from centre to centre each day inhibited the development of interest and concentration. Individual or group projects could not be continued the following day, equipment and materials had to be limited to what could be carried from unit to unit and there was no area in any of the centres where the group could leave work unfinished. Even at Alf Morris the two rooms used by the group were used by others when Contact was not there.

'Swamping' by the elderly was particularly relevant to activities such as woodwork, sewing and cookery. These three subjects were open to all day centres at the Alf Morris centre. But since the facilities for each were limited, only accommodating ten users at a time, competition for places was intense. Inclusion in the woodwork group, for example, was determined on a first come, first served basis. A waiting list was posted outside the carpentry workshop and prospective candidates were expected to enter their names on it. Several Contact users said they would like to do woodwork, and this included a number of females, but they chose not to because the carpentry workshop was always full of 'old men'. A number of girls said they would like to do sewing but only if they could do it within the confines of the Contact group and with their friends. Cookery was provided exclusively for Contact members during the long summer school holidays (July to September), at the insistence of Jayne, because of its importance in relation to independent living. But even here enthusiasm was often low unless the weather was poor and there was little else going on, despite the fact that only seven user respondents said they could cook.

Although there was a difference of opinion among the respondents as to the reasons, users also appeared to have little interest in the sort of discussion groups generally seen as furthering mutual support and understanding among impaired adolescents. The more able in the group felt they 'couldn't tell us anything we don't already know' or they were 'depressing', while the remainder said that they did not like them because they made them feel inadequate. For example,

'I don't like discussions, 'cos I never know what to say an' I feel stupid.' * -Henry

These divisions were also evident when the centres organized the two visits by the representatives from DIAL to discuss the future changes in social security benefit payments due to come into force in April 1987. Although Jayne and Jackie stressed their importance on several occasions, only nine Contact members attended, and three of those were the most impaired members of the group, who were pushed in by staff. Among those who did not, some said their parents looked after their benefits while others claimed to know about the changes already.

Based on the data provided in the user interviews, it is clear that the majority of Contact users saw the day centres as a social setting rather than a site for rehabilitative activity or training. As shown in the last chapter, many of the group entered the units purely for social reasons. They represented 'somewhere to go' to get 'out of the house' rather than somewhere to learn. Social interaction with peers was characteristically more important for the user respondents than educational or vocational activity. Although only eleven were happy with the activities offered, most of the remainder's comments concerned the limited resources rather than the type of activities provided. Major concerns for many of the males related to the relatively poor quality of the pool and snooker tables and the need for more sports facilities. A minority of both male and female respondents said there should be more computers. Everyone wanted more trips and outings.

Only eight respondents suggested that the centres should provide more activities which were specifically concerned with independence training or rehabilitation. Only one of these, Tony, was non-ambulatory and not from subgroup D. Along with Joyce, Andy, Jamie and Matthew, he felt that the centres should provide more educational facilities and structured independence training.

None of these four wanted these activities for themselves. Tony felt he did not personally need them as he was still at residential college, only using the day centres in the holidays. The other three considered themselves independent already. But they all believed that such activities were important for the rest of Contact and that the staff should take a more prominent role in promoting them.

'I think they should have more independence courses, not for people that have been on 'em like me, but to make people realize they can do things for themselves. I mean this place hasn't got to be the end of their universe.' * -Joyce

'There should be a mixture of the facilities what they've got already but more on the independence side. To push the people who get mollycoddled, them who are mollycoddled by their parents. Like they're not grown up. I don't think they should be pushed into it but they should be encouraged by staff.' * -Jamie

These views were shared by the other three in this group, Marilyn, Roger and Spike, but they believed that the activities should also be organized around the needs of the moderately impaired as well. Spike suggested that there should be facilities for learning to drive and car maintenance and Marilyn felt that the centres should do more to help the younger impaired find work. None of these users, however, could offer any advice as to how staff should encourage users to participate in the type of activities suggested. Like the rest of their Contact peers, they were adamant that 'people shouldn't be forced to do things'.

This section has focused on some of the problems associated with the implementation of structured rehabilitative activity within an unreservedly voluntarist atmosphere. I have shown that Contact users have access to rehabilitative and social activity and that there is some pressure on staff to direct users toward the former. Since user involvement in these areas is low, staff utilize their knowledge of users' biographies and employ strategies which allow them to emphasize the social element of the activity rather than its didactic content. This is important as shown by the three examples taken from the formal activities. Although environmental considerations may be significant and the preponderance of the elderly is a crucial factor in the explanation for low user involvement in vocational activity, it is clear that most of the Contact members see the day centres as sites for social rather than didactic activity. This may be explained with reference to the users' life experiences before entering the centres and their motives for entry (see Chapter Five). The work ethic, deferred gratification and independence are outside the frame of reference for the majority of users, the lifestyle and activities available in the centres represent an extension of what they experienced at school and/or in further education. For them rehabilitation in the literal sense is inappropriate. For the remainder who consider themselves independent already, the structured activities available are incompatible with their needs. Rehabilitation therefore can only proceed on an individual basis. If, however, the central function of the Contact group is to become more rehabilitative than social, then there will have to be a radical reformulation of group and day centre policy generally.

User Participation in Policy Formulation in the Contact Group

It is often argued that one of the major factors explaining apparent passivity and apathy among day centre users is that they are not involved in the planning and running of the services they need. For example,

Day to day management of the centres seems in many instances to proceed without regard to the aims and aspirations of the users. Often lip service is paid to participation in the planning and running of services when in fact participation is limited to peripheral issues such as trips and social events (Kent *et al.*, 1984, p. 15).

Kent *et al.* maintain that although the official rhetoric of organizations sponsoring day services often espouses a desire to achieve maximum consultation between users and staff, the internal regimes of centres usually conform to traditional bureaucratic procedures, similar to those discussed by Weber (1948), where communication is essentially one-way and policies are fairly intransigent. One of the principal reasons for this is undoubtedly economic. Organizations which run day services, particularly local authorities, have since the 1970s come under increasing pressure from central and local government to control costs. This is invariably reflected in the policies of senior day centre staff, whose primary loyalty will be to their employer rather than to users. Hence the majority of centres offer few opportunities for user participation.

There are a few notable exceptions such as the Primus Club in Stockport where the users control the budget and hire and fire the staff and the Wigstone Centre in Leicestershire which has a committee composed of staff and users. The committee is responsible for the general running of the centre, albeit the control of the budget remains with the local authority (Kent *et al.*, 1984). But the most frequently quoted example of user participation in day centre management is the Stonehouse at Corby (Tuckey and Tuckey, 1981; Anderson and Clarke, 1982; Oliver, 1983a, Kent *et al.*, 1984). Bob and Linda Tuckey, the social workers responsible for setting up the unit in 1973, which was originally planned as a centre for the handicapped and elderly, developed what was in effect a community centre. While concentrating on the needs of the physically impaired, Stonehouse adopted an open door policy toward others in the community, including relatives and friends of users, parents of handicapped children

and people with special needs, providing that they were below 50 years of age and intellectually capable of organizing their own lives in the centre.

For policy-making the Tuckeys developed a system of 'community meetings' with little formal structure where everyone was involved. But as more people began using Stonehouse this type of system proved unworkable.

When the numbers grew what tended to develop was a sort of factionalism with groups of members veto-ing initiatives from others through self interest rather than rationality. As it was impossible to achieve consensus for a period the direction of the centre was lost (Carr, 1987, pp. 1-2).

In response a formal constitution was drawn up and the principle of user participation was incorporated into it. The management committee is now composed of at least nine annually elected users and has control of the centre's finances and internal policy. Committee meetings are held at least once a month and the committee is responsible for the convening of the six annual community meetings, where all Stonehouse users are present, as well as the yearly general meeting where the committee's annual report and the audited statement of accounts are presented (Stonehouse Association Constitution, 1985; Carr, 1987).

In an earlier paper concerned with user participation in day centres for the elderly, Jewell (1973) identified the principal difficulties he encountered when setting up a similar structure. The first, which he referred to as 'misrepresentation', concerns the situation where committee members fail to understand that they represent the whole user body and only put forward their own ideas. The second problem relates to the tendency for committee members to view themselves as privileged members of the day centre community. They become the 'committee elite'. The third focuses on the interaction between committee members and the rest of the users. Jewell contends that user committee membership can aggravate existing rivalry and conflict between users. Finally, he points to the dangers of staff manipulation, where staff use their 'professional expertise' to impose their own ideas rather than implement those of the users thus rendering user participation meaningless. He highlights the level of skill needed by staff to avoid these difficulties and concludes that there is considerable pressure--on staff to avoid them altogether and run the centres themselves. The following shows that user participation in policy formulation in the three centres where the research was carried out was primarily concerned with

'peripheral issues' and was characterized by factionalism, misrepresentation and aggravated divisions within the user body. Consequently 'enlightened guardianship' rather than 'disabled action' retains its prominence within both the centres and the Contact group.

Excluding the Contact group, in each of the three day centres studied there were five separate users' committees, one for each of the unit's principal user groups. Each committee had its own formal constitution and was independent of the others. Committee members were elected annually and meetings were held daily at the Alf Morris and Engineers' centres and monthly at Dortmund Square. Senior staff involvement was not compulsory unless requested by members. The length of the meetings varied depending upon the agenda, although according to most observers the average was between thirty minutes and an hour. The minutes of each meeting were recorded by appointed members and submitted for the OIC's signature, in order to ensure that any complaints, comments or suggestions were duly noted by those in authority in the event of their absence.

On the basis of general discussions with senior staff and several users as well as a brief appraisal of the committee's minutes, it was evident that the main subjects discussed at these meetings were 'peripheral issues' such as trips, social events, day centre meals, the younger staff, the amenity funds and how they were spent. Generally it was felt that there were not enough outings organized by the centres. There were constant references as well to the poor quality of the food provided in the day centres and occasionally committee members complained about the conduct and demeanour of some of the younger CAs, usually those on government training schemes. At Alf Morris disquiet was expressed over how the amenity fund was allocated. As with Contact each user group collected amenity funds for the 'little extras' to make day centre life more comfortable and supplement the cost of outings, but these subscriptions were submitted to a communal fund for the benefit of the whole centre. And although access to the accounts was available to all users, as were the benefits of the funds, some of the user groups, notably Insight, felt that each group should be responsible for raising and spending their own money. Although reasonable in principle, this presents a problem for management as the funds are topped up by the proceeds of activities organized by each user group and the sale of products made in the centre's workshops. Since some groups, such as the younger relatively fitter Insight group, are more capable of raising finances than others, autonomous control of funds would inevitably produce inequalities. This problem was still unresolved when the study concluded.

Based on informal conversations with users (excluding Contact members) it seemed attitudes concerning the value of the committees varied considerably. While some felt that they did a fairly good job, a substantial minority pointed out that the same people were on the committees year after year and argued that they were unrepresentative of the users as a whole and looked after their own interests rather than the users generally. This group did concede, however, that most people were not interested in the committees or committee membership. Some suggested that their activities were irrelevant as the real power base lay outside the centres in the social services central offices. They also felt that even if the committees had more influence, it would make little difference to the majority's attitudes towards participation.

It was significant that in none of the centres were there any representatives from Contact on these committees despite the fact that the group constitutes nearly a third of the overall number of users at Alf Morris on Mondays and Wednesdays, and almost half at both the Engineers' and Dortmund Square on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Any contribution to centre policy from the Contact members had to be made either by senior Contact staff or individually. This is explained by staff with reference to the group's history.

'Because of the way it's developed, it's a unit in a unit if you like. It comes down to the organization of the Contact group and us. They're autonomous in that they have their own staff, their own budget, their own transport etc. and that's why none of them sit on our committees.' - Andrew, OIC at Alf Morris

Contact has had its own users' committee in the recent past. Only the newcomers Paul and Clive knew nothing about it. There was some confusion, however, as to what form the committee had taken and what function it had performed. There had never been a formal constitution and like the other committees in the centres, it had never had access to or control of the group's budget, or control over the staff. Its primary role seems to have been the formulation and development of group activities, social events and the provision of a forum for committee members to air their grievances. It is clear that although others who have since left the group had sat on the committee, its principal members had been the most independent, notably Joyce, Marilyn, Andy, Jamie and later Billy. All five cited the general lack of interest by other users as the main reason for the committee's demise.

After his formal interview, when this subject had been discussed, Billy twice attempted to resurrect the committee' in order to get a few things sorted out'. + His primary concerns were the poor condition of the snooker tables and the need for more outings. The first meeting, on 21 January 1987, was conducted with the full cooperation of both senior staff, and all the group, both users and staff, were present. It was opened by Patrick who introduced Billy and asked the assembly to listen carefully and consider seriously what he had to say. Billy told the group that he thought it was a good idea to get a new committee together since the old one had all but disappeared. He offered no other reason for this proposal than his complaint about the snooker tables. After some persuasion on his part he managed to scrape together four reluctant nominees besides himself. These were Joyce, Andy, Gavin and James. The latter two accepted their nomination with extreme reluctance. 3 There was no policy statement, mention of a formal constitution, or even an agreed date for the first committee meeting. Little more was heard of the committee until almost six months later.

On 1 July 1987 Billy again asked for a group meeting but gave no specific reason why, other than vague statements about' gettin' things movin'. + Of the nineteen users who were present that day only twelve attended. Norman, Angela, Sally, James, Millie, Margaret and Karen elected to stay sitting outside in the sun. When I asked why they were not participating, Margaret replied,

'It's only Billy, we don't want to listen to 'im, 'e's only called it so's 'e can tell us what' e thinks we ought to do'. +

James added,

'I don't want to sit in there listenin' to Billy ... nobody else will say any thin'. It's only Billy that wants it. It 'ad been Jackie or Patrick who'd' ve called it, it'd be different. It's only Billy 'an we 'ear enough of 'im the rest of the week'. +

The meeting was held without these users. It lasted three-quarters of an hour and when it broke up there was much animosity between its organizer and the people who did not join in.

Because of non-participation by the majority of users, factionalism and the general failure of the users' committee, regular group meetings were

initiated shortly before this study began. There were three between July and December 1986 and four between January and July 1987. These were open forums chaired by one of the senior staff and were usually attended by the entire group. They were all held on Wednesdays at Alf Morris since this was the best attended day of the week. The main subjects discussed were forthcoming activities or outings and various comments, suggestions and complaints made by users.

The subjects discussed at the first meeting I attended (2 July 1986) related to the forthcoming arrangements for the annual trip to the coast and the centre's closure during the holiday period. The second (3 September 1986) covered the programme of structured activities for the coming session and the proposals for the Christmas outing. At the third (22 October 1986), staff outlined the final arrangements for the Christmas festivities, including the annual Christmas lunch. Normally at these meetings there was little user involvement other than to pass comment on what staff had said. There was seldom any reference to the group's finances unless a user suggested buying a particular game or record with the amenity fund. In this case the suggestion was offered for approval.⁴ At the last of these meetings conflict erupted when Jamie suggested an alternative venue for the proposed Christmas outing.

On the basis of several informal conversations with users, Jayne and Jackie suggested that the group use the same hotel as the year before since it had good facilities (such as disabled toilets and few steps) and the cost was the same as the previous year (£5.00 per head for a four-course meal). At the beginning of October each user had been given a letter for her / his parents outlining this idea and no one had proposed any alternative.

At the meeting Jackie outlined the proposal, pointed out that no one had voiced any objection and asked for comment. After approximately one minute's silence she stated,

'Do I take it everyone's happy with this idea then?' +

Several people nodded and began quietly talking amongst themselves. Then Jamie interjected,

'We don't want to go to the G. ...Hotel again. Why can't we 'ave it on a night at a place with a proper disco?' +

Jackie replied,

'But they had a proper disco last year+

Jamie,

'That disco was rubbish. Why can't we go somewhere like the B. club?' +

Turning to the rest of the users who had remained silent throughout Jackie enquired,

'Does anyone else want to go to the B. club?' +

Jamie replied,

'Me, Joyce, Marilyn an' Billy think we ought to do somethin' different this year.' +

Joyce interjected sharply,

'Don't bring me into it, I know nothing about it.' +

Marilyn agreed that Jamie's suggestion was a good idea. Billy said he 'wasn't bothered' and turned to Spike who looked at Jackie and said it did not matter to him either as long as there was a bar. But Jamie continued,

'They won't say owt but I know they'd like a change. +

Jackie restated that the hotel was well suited to the physical needs of the group, the cost of the lunch was low and there was no charge for transport since the outing would be during the day and users could use that provided by the day centres. Without these considerations some of the group would not be able to go. Jamie protested that since the event was only once a year users could afford a little more and that if they couldn't, then the money could come from the amenity fund. Jackie pointed out that there was insufficient money in the fund to supplement everyone and it would be unfair to subsidize some and not others. The two argued for several minutes while the rest of the ensemble remained silent. Jackie then concluded by stating that the Christmas lunch was for the entire group and that for the reasons stated it was probable that not everyone would attend if the venue and time were changed. She proposed that the arrangements

stay as they were and that Jamie organize an evening function for those who wanted it. No one else offered any comment and some of the group began to move away.

The general feeling among all the users immediately after this meeting was that Jackie's plans were fine. Some of the group were sure that they would not be able to attend an evening outing, either because they could not get helpers or because of parental restrictions, and said that Jamie was just 'showing off'. Whether or not he was trying to elevate his status in front of the rest of the group (and myself) by challenging Jackie's proposals is open to interpretation. Certainly his friends and the two CAs Annie and Pete said that they would go to both events if he organized an alternative, but he never did. Jackie was reluctant to comment but pointed out that Jamie had not mentioned it earlier although he had known about the planned Christmas lunch for some time.

Assuming that Jamie's intentions were real, this example illustrates the dangers of both factionalism and misrepresentation within this type of setting. It is clear that he had not considered whether the change of plan would be acceptable to the rest of the group or whether it would be practical. Although he had a specific venue in mind he had made no preliminary enquiries if the club could, or would, accommodate thirty or so impaired people immediately before Christmas, or how much it would cost. This type of incident not only aggravates the significant divisions between Contact users, but draws attention to the centrality of the staff role in policy formulation. These points are reflected in the data from the users' interviews.

Seventeen users felt that group committees and meetings were an ineffective method for influencing policy. Non-participation was attributed to their domination by a vocal minority, and some of this group were clearly intimidated by that minority. Consequently they preferred to go directly to senior staff. The remainder believed that they were ineffective because the majority of the users did not appear to them to care what happened in the centres. Joyce, Andy and Jamie attributed this to socio-psychological factors, arguing that the majority had not been taught to think for themselves by either their parents or their schools. Marilyn took a similar view but suggested that the situation was made worse by chronic boredom after protracted periods in the day centres. Billy, who was relatively new to the group, took a less charitable view suggesting it was because 'most of 'em are thick'.^{*} The remainder believed that mechanisms for user representation were simply cosmetic and/or unnecessary. Spike, for

example, whose mother and father were on separate committees at Alf Morris, said that their only function was 'to make the members feel more at home'.^{*} Others such as Robert and Charles believed that staff were well trained and did their best to accommodate everyone's needs. Any limitation on what was available was due to the economic constraints on the system as a whole.

It is clear that the limited user participation in formal mechanisms of policy-making within the Contact group, if not the centres as a whole, is largely due to the significant social division within the Contact user body rather than staff manipulation. As a result of the tendency toward factionalism, misrepresentation and the aggravation of existing differences between users, these mechanisms appear to discourage user involvement in policy formulation instead of stimulating it. This situation could be improved 'by the implementation of a formal constitution and more direction from staff, but this might be viewed in a negative light by users since it could be interpreted as an infringement of their individual autonomy. In the meantime senior staff were endowed with both the legitimacy of their official role within the group and the popular support of the majority of users.

Social Control in the Contact Group

The previous section has shown that the variation in personality, impairments and attitudes among the Contact users is a major factor in preventing 'disabled action' or power becoming a reality within the context of the Contact group and the day centres generally. As a result, power, which is an embedded feature of day centre life, as in all social life (Sharpe, 1975) rests firmly in the hands of senior day centre personnel. This is important as it is often suggested, particularly since the ascendance of the 'new criminology' during the 1960s and 1970s (Downes, 1978), that agencies concerned with the treatment and care of deviant or disadvantaged groups, including the physically impaired, maintain 'hegemonic and manipulative control' of their 'clientele' in the normal process of daily interaction. This is sometimes referred to as the social control thesis. However, in an analysis of social control in a therapeutic community for the mentally ill, Bloor has shown that although power cannot be ignored, its impact need not be intentional (Lukes, 1974) and that although frequently associated with the manipulation of interaction, social control is not an embedded feature of social life. Rather it is

a particular attribute of a given superordinate status which may or may not be asserted in interaction as the superordinate chooses (Bloor, 1987, p. 319).

Following this train of thought I shall show that within the context of the Contact group and the day centres generally, social control was not a significant component of staff/user interaction. It was only one among staff's repertoire of tasks and when necessary was exercised through a combination of orchestration and supervision. Discipline was not considered a problem but this was attributable to external factors rather than the activities of day centre staff. I shall begin by looking at the constraints on user activity in the centres and the strategies used by staff to maintain order.

I have already stated that the principle of individual user autonomy is sacrosanct within the day centres and the Contact group. It follows that apart from implicit and occasionally explicit constraints on the younger users' movements, which are imposed by other users rather than the staff, and the pressure to participate in 'constructive' activity on Tuesdays at the Engineers', every effort is made by staff to ensure that an unfettered atmosphere prevails. This was particularly visible in relation to the delivery of services. It is an important consideration because for people with impairments the body is the principal site of oppression, both in form, since a disabled person is seen as disabled first and a person second, and in respect of what is done to it (Abberly, 1987).

The general practice in all three centres adheres closely to this principle wherever possible. There were no bathing or toileting routines for the convenience of the staff. Under normal circumstances it was up to users to decide as and when these services were necessary. This policy could only be frustrated by extreme staff shortages but this never occurred during the study. Users were responsible for the administration of any drugs they needed, although it was not uncommon for staff to be told by a parent or guardian to remind individuals not to forget to take them. Since April 1987, each user has had access to any files or documents kept by the social services which concerned them as individuals.⁵ Contact users, however, gained access to such data several years earlier because a number of them, notably Joyce, Andy, Jamie and Marilyn, expressed concern over the right of staff to keep this type of material. Sharpe (1975) reported the same concerns among similarly aged residents in a therapeutic community for the mentally ill a decade earlier. Contrary to the practice prevailing in 1985, senior Contact staff gave them access to this information. But according to

Jayne, as was the case with the residents in Sharpe's study, they were more interested in the principle of the right of concealment than in the actual documents.

The policy regarding transport was less flexible for other day centre users than it was for Contact members. The service provided for the former conformed to the 'traditional' model, which has been subject to criticism for its inflexibility (Kent *et al.*, 1984). Individuals requiring transport were collected from their door by a specially adapted social services vehicle at a specified time (between 8.30 and 9.30 a.m.), brought to the centres and then taken home in the afternoon (at approximately 3.30 p.m.). Users were faced with one option, and obliged either to take it or leave it.⁶ Transport was arranged through consultation with senior day centre personnel.

The situation was less rigid in relation to the Contact group. Because of its ad hoc development, its peripatetic policy and the recent economic and political constraints on social services spending, it had never been assigned a permanent transport facility. Consequently Contact subcontracted to local taxi firms for this service. Apart from the fact that travel by taxi carries no stigma, unlike travel in social services' vehicles, they gave users a greater sense of control, were individually radio-controlled, and only carried one or two users and their wheelchairs at a time, whereas social services' minibuses carried up to eleven. Although initially organized by either Jayne or Jackie, once in operation users had direct access to the taxi firm via the telephone if they wanted it. They also allowed greater flexibility in terms of collection times. Joyce and Marilyn, for example, preferred to use the centres only in the afternoon, which would not have been possible had they used social services' vehicles. There was also a rehabilitative function to this policy in that it enabled users to become more familiar with commercial transport other than that 'provided' by the Local Authority.

There was no evidence of a general policy statement or constitution outlining a set of rules and procedures relating to users' behaviour in the centres. None of the staff interviewed said they had ever seen one. Directives relating to internal policy seem to have been issued on a purely ad hoc basis and were dependent on the interpretations of the senior staff in each unit. A good example concerns their views regarding users' freedom to leave the centres as and when they chose. While it was clear there was some official policy in this area there was confusion as to what form it took. Two of the OICs, Andrew from Alf Morris and Sandra at Dortmund Square, held the view that users were not free to leave the

centres temporarily unless accompanied by a member of staff. Since there was rarely a surfeit of staff this was seldom possible on an individual basis. Consequently users were effectively confined to the centres during the day.

'This applies to everybody. This is a clear directive from above if you like. We are not a drop-in centre, So that means necessarily. .., that if somebody's down on our register say, Tuesday, then by and large, we expect them to be here on a Tuesday. They have, or are expected to, show that commitment.' * -Andrew

His explanation for this policy was as follows,

'If people were allowed to come and go as they please, administratively it would be a terrible headache, because of the constraints of the building if you like. You're talking about insurance, fire risk, all those sorts of things.'*

It is clear that these two OICs put other considerations above user autonomy as far as this issue is concerned. One probable reason is that if users go out alone and anything goes wrong, such as a road accident for example, then senior staff are held responsible by the social services department. Andrew and Sandra clearly prefer to contain users rather than take the risk. Despite the fact that she is subject to the same constraints, however, Mrs W at the Engineers', who is reputed to be a 'stickler' for regulations, adopted a more flexible approach.

As long as they pop their heads round the door and tell me where they're going and when they come back. Because we're held responsible for them while they're here you see. If they don't turn up at home at night, someone's going to ring up and say, "Oh but they were left in your care for the day". You see we're also responsible to their families.* - Mrs W

Clearly Mrs W puts user autonomy before other considerations. Her statements brings into focus a further dilemma regarding this issue which is particularly pertinent to those working with the younger day centre users living with their parents or guardians. Who should they be accountable to, the users or their families? The problem is made worse when staff are acutely conscious of the former's need for autonomy and the latter's concern for their offsprings' welfare.

In a discussion about this Jayne stated,

'It's been put to me that if anyone goes out of the day centre and anything goes wrong it's on my head, nothing's been written down mind you. But it's a difficult one because there's the families as well. You see I don't think we should have any say in it really. I mean in most cases we're talking about twenty to thirty year old people.'*

There was no clear policy in Contact with regard to this issue. Although officially the group was subject to the policies favoured by the OICs in the host centre, Jayne and Jackie adopted a flexible approach in response to the demands of the more able Contact members, which gave individual users considerably more freedom. In general those not reliant on social services' transport used all three centres as and when they felt like it. As for the remainder, several often went out without a member of staff. The only apparent rule concerning this group was that those wanting to leave the units should tell staff when and where they were going. Although this policy is inconsistent in that it allows some users more freedom than others, there was little objection to it by the majority of Contact members.

This can be attributed to a number of factors. Firstly, because several of the group were dependent upon wheelchairs for mobility, travelling any distance without transport or an ambulate companion who can push was almost impossible.⁷ As the social services' transport facility, whether a specially adapted minibus or a subcontracted taxi, only included travel to and from the centres, users wanting to go out during the day had to pay for transport themselves. Since taxis were expensive and mobility allowances were grossly inadequate (Disability Alliance, 1987), few could afford it. Secondly, a number of the group stated that they would not leave the centres unless they were accompanied by a member of staff. Some of these respondents, Margaret, Sally and Angela, for example, said in separate interviews that they would not trust other users to push them due to the fear of being 'tipped out' of their chair by accident. Barry and Henry, both with unsteady gaits, maintained they would not go out without staff because of the 'dangerous roads'. Four others said they could not go out owing to their disabilities. These included Billy, Paul and Karen because they couldn't walk very far without help, and Bruce because he 'takes fits'.^{*} In answer to the question 'who said you can't go out?' Billy and Paul said they just took it for granted. Karen and Bruce said they had been told by their respective parents. Nancy also stated that day centre staff had been told by her father that she was not to go out unless accompanied by one of the staff. This was later confirmed by Jayne. When asked if she would

inform parents if any of the users went out alone, she said she would avoid it at all costs because it would damage relations within the group. Since none of these users left the centres during the study unless with a member of staff, it is fair to assume that the knowledge that parents might be informed if they did was enough to prevent it occurring.

A third point relates to the practice of informing staff when leaving the building. All those who used day centre transport felt it was a legitimate request, some because they were aware of the responsibility senior staff bore regarding this issue, and others because they felt certain people in the group were not capable of looking after themselves and therefore staff should provide guidance.

'I think we should ask staff. It should be up to them whether people go out or not, 'cos some people might think they can go out and really they can't. It should be up to staff whether they think you're capable of doin' it. I think if staff let people do what they like outside, I think there'd be a lot of accidents. There's gotta be some control over it. If they can let you go out they will.'* -Curt

This view was not shared by those individuals not dependent on social services' transport who used the centres as and when they pleased. They felt it was childish to have to tell staff when they were going out and what time they expected to be back. For example, Molly, who is keen on art and got on well with Hilary, the arts and crafts tutor at the Engineers', stopped attending on Tuesdays because she objected to being' treated like a little kid' * by Mrs W who reminded her to inform someone in authority when she was leaving the building one lunchtime.

Within the context of the Contact group these differences, in terms of some users' apparent freedom to go out at will while others were not, provoked a degree of animosity from a minority within the group. It was not, however, directed toward staff but at those who

'just seem to do what they like' * - Margaret

The issue of whether or not users should be allowed to leave the day centres at will is a critical one since it is central to any philosophy which purports to encourage user independence and self-determination. Although there is some confusion concerning official policy on this issue, the interpretation of senior staff at Alf Morris and Dortmund Square clearly involves a denial of user autonomy and a negation of that philosophy.

While it is likely that this view is determined by external factors, such as limited resources and family considerations, it is patronizing to users in that it assumes they are unaware of those considerations. The interview data show that they are not. It is unlikely, however, that the flexible policy adopted by Contact staff on this issue was conceived without knowledge of these factors. By allowing users to define their own situation it may be said that they are encouraging user independence. The principal difficulty is that such a policy re-emphasizes the significant differences among Contact members.

The maintenance of social order in the day centres was considered a non-issue by most of the staff respondents. There was no formal disciplinary code relating to users and there were no official sanctions other than contacting users' families, where applicable. If an individual was consistently disruptive they could be referred to another institution where there were enough staff to cope with such behaviour. This was rationalized with reference to the predominantly social atmosphere in the day centres and the principal social characteristics of the majority of users they catered for, namely, that they were elderly and/or lonely and that they came because they wanted company, not to cause trouble. All three OICs interviewed suggested that their primary concerns in this area were preventing individuals from smoking in spaces where it was supposedly proscribed or trying to uphold appropriate standards of table manners and personal hygiene. When necessary the responsibility for this function fell on the shoulders of the SAO / AO in charge of each section. Neither of these issues presented much of a problem in the Contact group. Only one of the users, Jamie, smoked, and although it was reported that there had been difficulties with specific individuals and hygiene in the past, they were infrequent and did not occur during the study.

Behavioural norms in the day centres were subject to abstract principles of 'common sense', or what Jackie referred to as 'the general rules of society,' * which were said to be determined by the users themselves. However, in the Engineers' and the Dortmund Square day centres, what was viewed as acceptable was clearly determined by the elderly and was a constant source of consternation for both Contact users and staff. Within the Contact format, all the respondents agreed that certain types of behaviour were unacceptable. These included shouting, swearing, overt rowdiness and fighting. Since some of those within the group were occasionally prone to this type of activity, notably the lads in subgroup D, senior Contact staff employed a number of techniques to control it. In the broadest sense these involved disruption avoidance strategies, or orchestration, and crisis

management, or supervisory control. These techniques were not mutually exclusive but inter-related and implicit in the rehabilitative and supervisory components of senior staff's roles discussed in Chapter Four.

The first of these strategies refers to the tactics employed by senior staff to stimulate, motivate and perpetuate user participation in particular activities analogous to those referred to earlier in this chapter. This involves educational and vocational as well as social activities. Consequently this function is also performed by CAs and VWs when they are organizing what I have termed semi-formal social activities such as quizzes and organized games. Senior staff employ a number of techniques to control unacceptable behaviour. Disruption or crisis management involved one of three distinct but related tactics depending on the nature and the gravity of the misdemeanour. These were straightforward requests, reference to a higher authority, and exclusion.

The first, straightforward requests, was the most commonly used technique and was applied when relatively minor infringements of social norms occurred. These requests were usually legitimized with appeals to abstract moral principles rooted in common sense and culture, collective interests and group loyalties - usually those of the Contact group as a whole rather than subgroup affiliations or the day centres generally. A common example, which does not relate to general disruption or to one of the lads, concerns the problem of congestion in the ladies toilet and the corridor outside the Contact rooms at Alf Morris. As noted in the last chapter, users, notably the girls from subgroup B, would frequently congregate in one of these locations, causing problems of access for users and staff. Usually this meant Jayne or Jackie pointing to the inconvenience caused by it and asking those responsible to move elsewhere. For example,

'Come on girls, you can see nobody can get past. I thought you had a bit more common sense than this.' +

Such requests normally met with protestations about the limited space available to Contact users but usually it was enough to get the girls to move.

Patrick utilized appeals to an abstract masculine moral code when asking male users to curb their language.

'I usually get 'em on one side and speak to 'em man to man. Say if it's about swearing for example. I just tell 'em if they're going to use language like that, an' we all do, then they should keep it down, especially in front of girls. '*

Boisterous behaviour was not unusual within the Contact areas at Alf Morris, albeit it was uncommon on Tuesdays at the Engineers' and on Thursdays at Dortmund Square. This is attributable to the spatial constraints and the general atmosphere at these latter centres which results in the more disruptive members of the group not attending or, when they do, only staying for a short while. Staff saw users' boisterous activity as a normal part of adolescence, something that should be expected, especially when considered in relation to the constraints placed on most of the group at home. Such activity, however, occasionally became unacceptable, such as when the usual noise levels increased and/or when other users began to leave the immediate vicinity where the incident was occurring. A number of the group, normally those with low status, Karen, Richard or Amy for example, sometimes told staff when proscribed activity was taking place.

The most common location for disruptive behaviour was around the pool table in the smaller room at Alf Morris and more often than not involved one or more of the lads from subgroup D, Billy, Andy, Jamie or Spike. Arguments often erupted over who was to play next, despite staff's efforts to organize a rota system, or whose shot it was. Most of these disputes were sorted out fairly quickly by those involved, but occasionally they broke out into open conflict which invariably involved swapping insults or threats and, inevitably involved swearing at a higher volume than normal.⁸ When this happened CAs sometimes intervened using references to senior staff as a deterrent. For example,

'Can't you shut up, you'll have Jayne in here'.

Normally these or similar appeals fell on deaf ears because of their peer group status and lack of authority. However, such requests were not usually ignored when they came from one of the senior staff, although they were rarely addressed to individuals. Most requests of this nature appealed to the collective interest and/or group loyalties, such as,

'Can you tone it down in here please, you'll get us a worse name than we've got already, we have enough trouble as it is.'

Sometimes one of the protagonists would attempt to elicit staff's help to sort out any conflict or protest their innocence, but usually these interventions stifled the disorder. Compliance may be attributable to a desire to please staff or a respect for commonly held values, as is likely with the first example involving the girls. But I believe it is more often because further disruption would provoke further involvement from staff. It resembles what Hargreaves has referred to as 'expedient compliance' (Hargreaves, 1975). Although members of subgroup D adopt what resembles a 'delinquent orientation' in that they present an overtly rebellious stance toward formal authority, all were aware of the sanctions available to day centre personnel. Both Jamie and Spike claimed that they had been both threatened with exclusion because of their overt aggression prior to my joining the group.⁹ While the effects of exclusion from the centres were important, in terms of loss of friends etc., I suggest that their compliance was also due to their awareness of the importance of senior staff as a readily available professional resource which they could not afford to alienate.

If an individual was continually disruptive, staff took the view that there was some underlying cause and the miscreant was invited to account for her / his behaviour in a semi-formal setting, usually in the Contact office with only one or other of the senior staff present. This action was not rationalized by staff as part of the control mechanism but as part of the rehabilitation process. It occurred twice during the study, first, when Jamie's verbal aggression became an almost regular feature of his personality, and secondly, when Billy became sullen and argumentative. After one counselling session Jamie's behaviour was ascribed to socio/economic factors, specifically relating to housing and financial worries associated with his impending fatherhood. In the event Jackie contacted a social worker on his behalf and his anti-social behaviour declined. Billy's problems were explained in socio/psychological terms relating to his loss of able-bodied friends when he left school, his worsening impairment and his lack of knowledge concerning his disease. Staff attempted to resolve these difficulties, firstly by contacting his parents, so that he could discuss his illness with them, secondly, by organizing a series of individual counselling sessions, and thirdly, by the formulation of group projects with him in mind, namely, the snooker table project and a lengthy indoor games and sports tournament. This involved all the group, males and females, where each user played everyone else in the group at every indoor game available. Billy was in fact the overall winner. In this instance orchestration was the result of crisis management rather than a disruption avoidance strategy.

The second technique for crisis management, reference to a higher authority, was used for more serious norm infractions, two instances of which occurred during the study period. Both involved the same individual, Andy, and because of the seriousness of the misdemeanours, both involved the OIC at Alf Morris. The first arose because one of the girls accused Andy of interfering with her sexually against her will. Because this is a serious accusation both parties were asked to give an account of the incident in the manager's office. What actually happened is open to speculation since at her interview the girl changed her story and Andy denied the whole incident. In the event staff took the view that something had occurred but because the girl did not wish to make a fuss no further action was taken other than Andrew, the OIC involved, giving Andy a warning that any future incident would warrant investigation. The second example took place six months later and followed a similar pattern but involved a users' family. Nancy's father rang the OIC at Alf Morris because he said his daughter had told him Andy extorted money from her by force. In the subsequent office confrontation she maintained that her father had misunderstood and that she had lent Andy had the money, following which the matter was closed.

The ritual of being asked to account for behaviour in a formal setting performs at least three specific functions. Firstly, it emphasizes that certain types of behaviour are considered more serious than others. Secondly, it acts as a formal reaffirmation of staff's superordinate status within the day centres. This is important because most senior staff deliberately try to foster a social relationship with users. And thirdly, it is a confirmation that in the last analysis there is an unequal distribution of power within the system and that staff can, if necessary, use that power to impose sanctions on users. It is important that this ritual act as a suitable deterrent since both the main sanctions available to staff, contacting users' families and exclusion, have negative implications for both parties. For example, contacting users' families on a regular basis not only causes unpleasantness for the individual concerned but also damages the carefully nurtured staff/user relationship and social atmosphere in the centres. With regard to exclusion, the fact that the miscreant uses the centres through choice has obvious implications. From the staff perspective, because this process involves a protracted process of consultation with the RDCO, other agencies and professionals, and the careful scrutiny of all the relevant data, internal policies may be seen wanting and senior staff viewed as incompetent. Consequently it is in their interest to avoid it where possible.

This section has shown that in the day centres generally and the Contact group in particular social control, or the manipulation of interaction by day centre personnel, was not a prominent feature of the staff/user relationship. This was evident in the internal policies relating to the delivery of services. User control was restricted with regard to transport although here Contact members had more flexibility than other users. This was due largely, however, to accident rather than design. One area of concern, since it is central to the ethos of user autonomy, relates to users' freedom to leave the centres at will during opening hours. Official policy on this issue appeared arbitrary and subject to interpretation by senior staff. Only one of the three OICs concerned adopted a flexible approach to this issue. The other two advocated containment. In contrast, Contact staff favoured a discretionary approach which allowed users to take responsibility for their own actions. The result was that some users were able to take advantage of this freedom while others were not. This highlights the external environmental, economic and social constraints imposed on the majority of Contact members, and the significant differences among users in terms of impairments, abilities and attitude. This disparity could easily be minimized by an input of resources into the centres, such as more transport and staff for example.

Social order in the centres and also within the Contact group, was based on commonly held values and norms. Control in both was subject to normal power relations inherent to the division of labour. Authority rested in the superordinate status of senior personnel and was dispensed when necessary through a subtle combination of orchestration and supervisory control. Boisterous social activity was not unusual in Contact but discipline was not considered a major problem. It was apparent that socially disruptive behaviour was usually perpetuated by the lads in subgroup D and was normally controlled by staff through appeals to abstract moral values and common sense. But while these appeals may have carried weight with particular individuals I suggest that compliance was based to some degree on mutual reciprocity, since senior staff represent a valuable resource for Contact users. Staff generally attributed excessive anti-social behaviour to external force. In response staff orchestrated rehabilitative activities which partially resolved individual problems and alleviated further disruption within the group. When 'serious' crises occurred staff employed tactics which re-emphasized their authority before exercising negative sanctions. This is important since the two main sanctions available to staff, contacting users families and exclusion, have negative effects for both parties.

Conclusion

The first section of this chapter has shown that user involvement and control of services for disabled people is now considered central to contemporary thinking. It is suggested that progress in this direction is inhibited by traditional professional attitudes and the significant divisions within the disabled population. Consequently any advances are likely to be small-scale and at the local level. In relation to day services for the younger physically impaired, recent research has recommended that institutions provide rehabilitative activities which encourage user participation and control. The empirical data show that although the structured activities offered to Contact users were limited by environmental and other factors, particularly swamping by the elderly, they fell broadly in line with this philosophy. User participation, however, was low despite staff's efforts to orchestrate it. This was due to the explicitly voluntarist policy in the centres since users appeared to prefer social rather than didactic activity. While the environmental limitations of these activities clearly contributed to this phenomenon, the users' lack of motivation in these areas is due to earlier life experiences, so that for the majority rehabilitation was inappropriate, and for the remainder the facilities offered were inadequate. This highlights the contradiction inherent to a policy which encompasses both social and didactic activity within an expressly voluntarist framework.

Discussion of user involvement in the formal mechanisms of policy formulation in the system has highlighted the user committees which existed in the three day centres studied. Their power did not include the control of finances or staff. Rather, they were primarily concerned with social issues and relatively minor complaints. These bodies were prone to factionalism and misrepresentation which aggravated the social divisions between users. As a result their value was undermined. Although a users' committee existed in the Contact group before the study began it was abandoned in favour of semi-formal group meetings which included all the Contact members. However, a tendency for factionalism and misrepresentation by a vocal minority within the group remained and extended to these group forums. As a result existing antagonisms between Contact members were exacerbated and the authority of senior Contact staff remained unchallenged.

The principle of user autonomy and control was given precedence in relation to the delivery of services within the centres by senior staff but was limited with regard to transport and freedom to leave the building during opening hours. Although this policy may be rationalized in a number of

ways with reference to administration, family constraints or the users' best interests, it involves an explicit denial of user autonomy and a negation of any philosophy which purports to encourage social rehabilitation. Contrary to this policy Contact staff adopted a discretionary approach which allowed users to make their own decisions. This policy highlights a number of points which include, firstly, users' awareness of the external constraints on their mobility outside the day centres, secondly, the extent of these constraints, environmental, economic and social, and thirdly, since some of the group were able to leave the units as and when they chose, the differences in terms of impairments, abilities and attitudes among Contact members. While this policy facilitated higher levels of user freedom, it further accentuated those differences.

Behavioural precepts within the centres were kept to a minimum and while there were some environmental constraints on Contact's activities, social order was not considered a major problem. Disruptive behaviour was sometimes evident within the group but was normally controlled by staff through a combination of orchestration and supervisory control. During the study period anti-social activities were only perpetrated by the most independent male members of the group. These were interpreted by staff as caused by external socio-psychological factors and controlled through the orchestration of rehabilitative activities. In the case of 'serious' misdemeanours staff resorted to strategies which emphasized their superordinate status and authority rather than the imposition of negative sanctions. This was due to the fact that the principal sanctions available to staff have negative implications for both them and the users.

In the final analysis it is clear that higher levels of participation and control by Contact members were inhibited by a number of environmental and social factors which I believe can only be resolved by a radical reformulation of internal policies that clarify the social and rehabilitative function of the centres. This may mean abandoning voluntarism within the units and the imposition of some form of formal constitution which demands a greater degree of commitment from users.¹ Whether or not such controls would be acceptable is open to speculation since individual autonomy is one of the principal attractions of day centre use. This may be more understandable with reference to the following chapter which looks at the constraints on that autonomy outside the centres in the community at large.

Notes

- 1 Representatives of DIAL visited the day centres twice during the study period.
- 2 Shortly after Paul joined Contact Jayne was visited by his parents who wanted to make sure he did not waste his time during the day.
- 3 Jamie was absent from the centres on this occasion because he had just become a father and Marilyn refused to join the proposed committee although she was nominated.
- 4 The amenity fund accounts were posted on the unofficial noticeboard immediately above the tea trolley in the main Contact area at Alf Morris, but few of the users ever looked at them.
- 5 It is likely that this is one of the reasons why some referral agents, for example social workers, are reluctant to provide substantial information on day centre referrals.
- 6 Those who could use public transport were given the full cost of the bus fare to and from the centres.
- 7 Research shows that at best about 25 per cent of wheelchair users can push themselves more than 200 yards in an average urban environment (Segal, 1986).
- 8 Although it was reported that fights have ensued after this type of incident, none occurred during the study period.
- 9 This was denied by senior staff, notwithstanding that both Jamie and Spike had been warned about their aggressiveness by senior day centre personnel.