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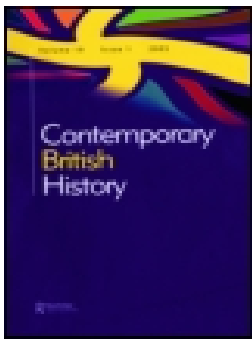
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## Pathways to the 1946 Curtis Report and the post-war reconstruction of children's out-of-home care

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### ABSTRACT


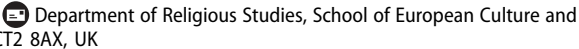
The publication of the *Report of the Care of Children Committee* in 1946 was a pivotal moment for the out-of-home care of children in Britain. With its key recommendations implemented in the 1948 Children Act and the creation of bodies such as the Central Training Council in Child Care and the Home Office's Advisory Council on Child Care, the report also had wider public significance in associating progressive approaches to child-care with the emerging post-war welfare state. This article argues that the creation of the Curtis Committee was far from inevitable and resulted from the inter-play of the growing recognition of the problems associated with a fragmented legislative and administrative framework for children's care and a successful public campaign to reform standards in residential child-care which created the political conditions in which the Labour Government felt obliged to establish a formal Committee of Inquiry. The degree of interest that these processes generated in the Committee's work led to its final report receiving substantial public attention. Although its effects as a mechanism of policy change were uneven, the context through which the report was produced meant that it became a significant benchmark for child-care standards in the emerging post-war welfare state.

### KEYWORDS

Children Act; child care; child psychology; Curtis; Poor Law; secular; welfare state

### Introduction

The *Report of the Care of Children Committee*, more commonly known as the Curtis Report, was the first of its kind in Britain to offer a comprehensive review of the care of children 'deprived of a normal home life with their own parents'. Presented to Parliament on 13 September 1946, it played a pivotal role in shaping the ethos and institutional frameworks for children's out-of-home care in the post-war welfare state.<sup>1</sup> The report's recommendations were substantially implemented by the 1948 Children Act—one of four major pieces of health and welfare legislation that came into effect on 5<sup>th</sup> July of that year.<sup>2</sup> The passing of the Children Act had symbolic as well as practical significance. In her letter to the Home Secretary accompanying the submission of the report, the Committee's chair Myra Curtis expressed its hope that any legislation arising from the report would be presented as a separate Act, rather than as a part of wider legislation dealing with the winding down of

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Public Assistance. This was highly preferable, Curtis argued, so that the approach to the care of children advocated by the report would be publicly recognised as ushering in a clear break from the old legacy of the Poor Law.<sup>3</sup>

In line with a number of recommendations from the Curtis Committee, the 1948 Act introduced a major administrative restructuring of children's out-of-home care. Primary responsibility for the care of children outside the family home was consolidated with the Home Secretary, and the Home Office Children's Department, for England and Wales, and for Scotland with the Secretary of State for Scotland, and the Scottish Home Department.<sup>4</sup> Local authorities—upon whom new duties for receiving and monitoring children in need of care beyond the family home were placed—were now required to appoint a senior Children's Officer who would be responsible for ensuring these duties were discharged and who would report to newly constituted Children's Committees. An interim report by the Care of Children Committee on future needs in training for child-care workers, also led, in 1946, to the creation of a new Central Training Council in Child Care responsible for the approval of course curricula, selecting residential institutions to provide practical training, overseeing the selection and funding of students and developing more advanced training for those with supervisory and management responsibilities.<sup>5</sup> The report's recommendations on the need for more regular and integrated inspections of children's care led to the creation of a newly-constituted Home Office Children Department Inspectorate, overseen by a Chief Inspector, with Superintending Inspectors in charge of six regional offices (two in London, the others in Birmingham, Leeds, Manchester and Cardiff).<sup>6</sup> An Advisory Council on Child Care was also established to advise the Home Secretary on discharging their responsibilities under the 1948 Act in line with current understanding of good practice in childcare, with a similar body created in Scotland.<sup>7</sup>

The influence of the Curtis report went beyond the substantial restructuring of government structures for the administration and oversight of children's out-of-home care, with it also becoming closely identified with approaches to care attentive to the child's individuality and emotional life. Although its original remit was to comment on current standards in children's residential care, the report went further than had been expected in Government circles by advocating a clear shift away from older forms of institutional care to environments better resembling the 'normal family home' in which 'security of affection' could be provided. Adoption was seen by the report as the preferred form of care, followed by boarding out with foster carers. If residential institutions were still to be used for children, at least until national capacity in adoption and foster-care was sufficient to meet the numbers of available children, then such institutional care should no longer be based on old 'barrack-style' homes but on smaller grouped or scattered homes, with no more than 10 children under the care of each 'cottage mother'. The report's conclusion that material standards of care in the 451 residential homes that the Committee members visited were generally good was tempered by its argument that there was insufficient attention to the individual child, often inadequate resources for play and institutional environments that did little to foster a child's sense of creativity.

The notion that the old, rigid attitudes of containment of children in Poor Law institutions needed to give way to more progressive, psychologically informed

approaches was, by 1945, far from original. From the late 1920s, popular books such as *Oliver Untwisted* by Muriel Payne and Susan Isaacs' popular columns under the pseudonym, 'Ursula Wise', for the magazine, *Nursery World*, had contributed to a sense both of a need for reform in children's out-of-home care and the value of attending to children's emotional worlds.<sup>8</sup> In this sense, the Curtis Report did not usher in new understandings of the child but became a significant public document for those already sympathetic to broad insights from psychoanalytically informed child psychology. The influence of such ideas on the Committee's report was, in reality, complex. Although both Donald Winnicott and John Bowlby both gave evidence before the Committee, its members showed little interest in Winnicott's clinical ideas in their session with him and focused their questions far more on Clare Britton's experience of managing war-time hostels for children.<sup>9</sup> Bowlby—whose influence grew after the publication of the Curtis report—was diffident in his evidence to the Committee and careful not to argue too widely from the initial study on the effects of maternal deprivation that he had undertaken before the war. As Myra Curtis put it, his evidence to the Committee was reduced to the general principle that 'affection and stability is really what all the children with whom we are concerned need'.<sup>10</sup> Susan Isaacs' ideas were engaged with more substantially by the Committee.<sup>11</sup> However, the Committee's findings were ultimately not shaped by sophisticated clinical concepts but by a more popularised understanding of the emotional needs of the child, rooted in part by some of its members' discomfort from their observations of the emotional effects of institutionalisation on children during their visits to residential homes.<sup>12</sup>

The Curtis report was, then, not simply a technical policy intervention but a public text used to advocate for change in children's out-of-home care. As government officials had anticipated, the publication of the Curtis report generated considerable public pressure for action.<sup>13</sup> Whilst citing some of the most dramatic (and, in the view of the report, atypical) examples of poor institutional conditions, *The Spectator* lambasted the Labour Government for failing immediately to bring forward legislation to implement its recommendations, commenting that 'there are occasions when, if a Government does not lead public opinion, public opinion will drive the Government. It will be very surprising if this is not one of them'.<sup>14</sup> Whilst adopting a more measured tone than *The Spectator*, an editorial in the *Economist* also commented that the report's accounts of standards of care in residential homes had clearly demonstrated the need for 'a complete change of attitude on the part of many local government officials and others... and a great many more of the right sort of workers'.<sup>15</sup>

Such influence on the part of the Curtis Committee was, however, far from inevitable. There had never been any intention on the part of the war-time coalition Government to create such a public Committee of Inquiry, with the assumption being instead that the integration of the fragmented legal and administrative systems for children's out-of-home care could be managed through internal government policy-making processes. As this article will argue, though, the public significance of the Curtis Committee arose out of the interplay between the fragmented systems of child-care of that period and the efforts of campaigners—notably Lady Allen of Hurtwood—to create a sense of moral urgency over the need to reform residential care for children.

Despite wider recognition of the significance of the Curtis report for children's out-of-home care in the post-war period, the historiography on the process by which the Curtis

Committee came to be established is relatively limited.<sup>16</sup> This current article seeks to make a substantial contribution to this literature through discussion of a more extensive range of primary sources than this previous work. By understanding these pathways to the Curtis report, it is possible to understand its influence as both a policy document, setting out a number of administrative ideas that had already been developed within government, and as a public document, symbolising the growing influence of the 'psychological' care of the child as a marker of the new settlement of the post-war welfare state.

### **Beyond the Poor Law and towards greater integration in children's out-of-home care**

The creation of the Curtis Committee arose out of a longer-term policy context in which an increasing number of public services for those affected by poverty since the turn of the twentieth century had been developed in parallel with the Poor Law. Two early notable examples of this were the establishment from 1908 of non-contributory old age pensions and the extension of access to social insurance schemes for the unemployed after 1918, both of which were developed as provisions for alleviating poverty that operated separately from the Poor Law's system of outdoor relief.<sup>17</sup> The 1906 Education (Provision of Meals) Act, which empowered local authorities to provide school meals for children in need, and the 1907 Education (Administrative Provisions) Act, which introduced a free medical inspection service for schoolchildren, similarly constituted initial steps towards addressing social problems specifically associated with child poverty outside of Poor Law provisions.<sup>18</sup> In 1944, the Ministry of Health noted that the statutory provision of welfare outside of the Poor Law had also been significantly developed through the 1929 Local Government Act, the 1934 Unemployment Act and further powers given to the Assistance Board in 1940 in relation to supplementary pensions for the elderly.<sup>19</sup>

These developments reflected a growing tension between continued support for the principles of the Poor Law in discouraging pauperism in some public and voluntary bodies and developing approaches to welfare that sought to avoid the stigmatising ethos of the Poor Law and operate more on the principle of civic entitlement to basic standards of living. In the midst of these tensions, welfare provision in the pre-war British State continued to develop in fragmented ways. As the Beveridge Report noted:

in all this change and development [in the context of social insurance and allied services], each problem has been dealt with separately, with little or no reference to allied problems... [S]ocial insurance and the allied services, as they exist today, are conducted by a complex of disconnected administrative organs, proceeding on different principles, doing invaluable service but at a cost in money and trouble and anomalous treatment of identical problems for which there is no justification.<sup>20</sup>

The sense of moral judgment and stigma associated with the Poor Law persisted through these evolving systems, keeping it at odds with pragmatic and ideological pressures towards reconceiving fundamental health and welfare provisions as civic rights.<sup>21</sup> The recommendation of the Beveridge Report in 1942 that the Poor Law be

brought to an end can therefore be understood as the culmination of a long process in which its centrality as the public policy mechanism for addressing poverty, and the influence of its moral assumptions about the poor and pauperism, had gradually eroded over a number of decades.<sup>22</sup> Whilst it was far from the case that moral judgments about poor families had disappeared from public and policy discourse,<sup>23</sup> by the 1940s a tipping point had been reached in which the continuation of the Poor Law no longer seemed practically or ethically desirable. As an internal Home Office note put it, in 1944, 'it is manifestly wrong that poverty alone should lead to separation of the child from his normal home'.<sup>24</sup>

The decision to end the health and welfare provisions of the Poor Law presented significant challenges in relation to the future structure of the out-of-home care for vulnerable children, not least because tens of thousands of children in the mid-1940s were still provided for by Public Assistance authorities whose future was now unclear.<sup>25</sup> In addition, there was a growing belief within government that as many as up to 10,000 children might not have families to return to when war-time evacuation schemes were wound down—a figure which later proved to be a considerable over-estimate.<sup>26</sup> An interim report about such evacuee children was produced by a committee within the Ministry of Health in 1943. This noted the lack of clarity over which public authority should assume responsibility for them and that 'public opinion will be opposed to the transfer of evacuees to the care of the Public Assistance Authority because of the stigma traditionally attached to the Poor Law'.<sup>27</sup> Recommending that decisions be made as soon as possible about which public body should be made responsible for these children, the report also noted that there was an urgent need for a decision more generally regarding the out-of-home care of children and adolescents.<sup>28</sup> The initial response within the Home Office and Ministry of Health was that an inter-departmental enquiry should be established to examine this issue, following the model of an inter-departmental conference on the care of children that had been established in 1938 but lapsed with the onset of the war.<sup>29</sup>

In the early months of 1944, the Ministry of Health sought to shape these inter-departmental discussions by producing a report on *The Break-Up of the Poor Law and the Care of Children and Old People*.<sup>30</sup> This recommended a series of changes both to administrative structures and to available provision that set out many of the key recommendations subsequently made by the Curtis report. It proposed that the out-of-home care of children now be delivered through local authorities by dedicated Children's Committees with national oversight for this work being given to the Ministry of Health. Responsibilities of the Ministry would include providing regulations for the boarding out of children, the certification of residential homes and the direct inspection, or supervision of inspection, of children's out-of-home care. The delivery of the Children's Committees' responsibilities should be undertaken by newly funded welfare officer posts, aimed particularly at women who had completed some form of relevant training, and paid support staff. Part of the value of this new structure, it was argued, was that it would allow for a more effective and consistent approach to inspection of residential homes than the fragmented system of over-sight which operated between a number of government departments. Provision should also be made to ensure that all local authorities provided receiving homes for the reception of children prior to longer-term placements, residential nurseries for the under-5s and other forms

of residential care for older children, which could include the use of residential homes run by voluntary organisations. In recommending that the new Children's Committees not be given powers to allow them to create separate schools (as had been allowed for public assistance authorities), the report noted 'the desire to encourage boarding-out rather than institutional care [which] obviously arises from the belief that orphans and other homeless children should be brought up as far as possible in the ordinary family atmosphere and mix with children more fortunate than themselves'.<sup>31</sup> Specific measures to support capacity building in foster care were also proposed, such as the development of a register of people wanting to provide foster care and an extension of a registration scheme for foster carers originally developed in Birmingham tied to the incentive of the local authority acting as guarantor of the payment of foster fees. In sum—aside from the fact that it was the Home Office that was eventually made the lead department for children's out-of-home care rather than the Ministry of Health—there was little in this document that was not subsequently reflected in the Curtis Committee's own recommendations.

The Ministry of Health's recommendations about locating central responsibility for the out-of-home care of children within a single department ignited ongoing disagreements within Government about which department this should be. The lack of clarity on this issue reflected the complex legal framework at that time through which children could come into public care.

The Ministry of Health assumed responsibility for children who were accommodated in residential institutions or boarded out under the terms of the 1930 Poor Law Act, set out the regulatory framework within which these provisions operated and over-saw the inspection of residential institutions and foster homes receiving children under these provisions.<sup>32</sup> The Ministry of Health also had primary responsibility for children falling under child life protection provisions of the 1936 Public Health Act, which included children under five years of age who might be in need of residential nursery care and children under nine who were boarded out for 'reward' under private arrangements.<sup>33</sup> At a local authority level, these responsibilities could be further devolved to Public Assistance Committees, Education Committees, Public Health Committees or Maternity and Child Welfare Committees depending on the local area and the specific provisions being delivered.<sup>34</sup>

Alongside this, the Home Office was responsible for overseeing the welfare of children removed from parental care through 'fit person' orders made through juvenile courts under the terms of the 1933 Children and Young Persons Act. Children coming under these provisions included those being removed from the family home because they had committed an offence, were deemed to be uncontrollable or were considered to be in need of protection. In individual cases, it appeared to be the arbitrary result of local circumstances as to whether children deemed in need of care or protection would be taken into care through this 1933 Act, or through the provisions of the Poor Law.<sup>35</sup> The Home Office's responsibilities under the Children and Young Person's Act included the regulation and inspection of residential institutions and foster homes receiving children under the provisions of this Act and the need for the Home Secretary's consent to exceptional measures in their care (including the authorisation of the overseas migration of a child).<sup>36</sup> Under the terms of the 1933 Children and Young Persons Act,



the Home Office also undertook the registration and inspection of children's homes run by voluntary organisations that were funded wholly or in part by public donations.<sup>37</sup>

Central government responsibilities for the out-of-home care of children further extended to the role of the Board of Education in over-seeing residential schools for those considered to be educable whilst also having a mental or physical handicap, and that of the Ministry of Pensions for the welfare of children requiring care for whom a pension or allowance was being paid as a result of the death of a parent in the war. Internal disputes within government as to whether primary responsibility for the out-of-home care of children should be given to the Ministry of Health, Home Department, or the Ministry of Education (who came later to the fight) continued until a final decision was made by the Cabinet in March 1947 to give this role to the Home Office.<sup>38</sup>

Through the war years, there was, therefore, a clear understanding in Government of the problems associated with the generally fragmented ecology of provision in children's out-of-home care. As the Ministry of Health's 1944 memorandum on 'The Break Up of the Poor Law', and its subsequent discussion with the Home Office and Board of Education demonstrated, however, the assumption within Government was that necessary changes in the light of the end of the Poor Law could be agreed simply through internal policy discussions between Government departments. By the end of 1944, public opinion on the need for wider scrutiny of children's care had shifted, though, forcing the Government to pursue these reforms in the context of more intense public scrutiny.

### **Lady Allen and the campaign against institutionalisation in children's out-of-home care**

Both the inter-war period and war years witnessed a significant growth in psychologically informed approaches to child-care, including progressive education, child guidance clinics, nursery education and playgroups.<sup>39</sup> The influence of professionals and voluntary societies associated with these developments on public discussions of children's out-of-home care became particularly acute in 1944 and 1945 through a campaign led by Marjorie Allen, Lady Allen of Hurtwood, on standards of residential care. Allen is quite correctly attributed with playing a leading role in this campaign, with her influence a reflection of the profile and personal contacts she had, including with both Labour politicians and newspaper editors. However, Allen's significance in this period was not simply as an individual and well-networked campaigner, but her role as a public placeholder representing the expression of critiques of institutionalised care that many others shared and had also previously publicly expressed.

Allen had already begun to develop a significant interest in child-care through her work from 1940 in co-ordinating the national development of nursery centres for evacuee children.<sup>40</sup> This work, facilitated both by her social and political contacts and her membership of the executive for the Nursery School Association, was underpinned by the notion already established in nursery education that 'children's mental and emotional development is just as important as their bodily health'.<sup>41</sup> Through this work, Allen became quickly aware of the lack of co-ordination between a wide range of government and voluntary organisations involved in providing services for children under five, as well the highly variable standards within this diffuse provision. In 1941, she submitted a memorandum to the Ministry of Health, Board of Education and Ministry of

Labour identifying what she saw as deficiencies in the care of under-fives arising from insufficient inter-departmental co-operation.<sup>42</sup>

Allen later recalled that her interest in residential child-care arose as an unexpected result of her efforts around nursery education. As she spent time visiting schools, she became increasingly aware of unhealthy, listless and marginalised schoolchildren whom she was informed by the teaching staff were residents of voluntary or local authority children's homes.<sup>43</sup> In her memoirs, Allen described how her concerns about children's residential institutions were then deepened by her experience of an impromptu visit to a home run by a religious order in which the children lived in a sparse, repressive environment in which bed-wetting was punished ultimately by a public caning in the chapel. In her oral evidence to the Care of Children Committee, however, Allen described this particular visit as having taken place in the spring of 1945. This was sometime after she had begun her campaign on the out-of-home care of children, and it appears that her initial concerns may have been based far more on others' reports and her sense of inefficient government administration than her own direct inspection of children's homes.<sup>44</sup> Myra Curtis herself appears to have been doubtful as to the extent of Allen's direct knowledge of conditions of residential institutions,<sup>45</sup> and the Curtis report appeared to make oblique reference to Allen's campaign when it noted that its own extensive programme of visits to residential institutions and foster homes, as well as reviews of children's case records and inspection reports, 'has given us a firmer basis for conclusions about actual present day conditions'.<sup>46</sup>

In February 1943, Allen first publicly raised her concern in a letter to *The Times* that many residential children's homes fell short of standards that might be expected in terms of 'modern child psychology'.<sup>47</sup> Such a view was far from isolated. A conference convened by the Women's Group on Public Welfare and the National Council for Maternity and Child Welfare in February 1944 was reported to have been 'greatly stirred' by an impassioned speech criticising large residential homes for children by Lucy Fildes, the Chief Psychologist of the Child Guidance Training Centre, who was herself later to be appointed as a member of the Curtis Committee. Fildes argued that such institutions, whilst focusing on material standards of care for children, failed to address their 'prime essential needs' for 'stability and affectionate security'. In so doing, these institutions were 'wasting lives of great value to the community' and storing up problems of future anti-social behaviour from those whose mental health in them had been completely overlooked.<sup>48</sup>

By March 1944, Allen had produced a memorandum on 'children deprived of a normal home life' that she sent to relevant government departments as well as to *The Times*.<sup>49</sup> Making arguments that were already familiar to the Home Office through Leila Rendel's booklet, *The Insecure Child*,<sup>50</sup> Allen's eight-page document called for a commission of inquiry to undertake a substantial fact-finding exercise concerning current standards in residential child-care, investigate the value of making one body within local authorities responsible for this provision, and encourage initiatives to raise standards. In a similar vein to Fildes, Allen argued that children's residential homes often failed to provide the emotional nurture, continuity of care, practical experience of household life and opportunities for wider social interaction that were necessary for preparing these children for their future responsibilities as parents, house-holders and citizens. Anticipating broad criticisms that were also later reflected in the findings of the

Curtis Report, Allen noted that poor care arose in a context of badly selected, untrained and poorly supported staff, a system of oversight of residential institutions that was split between different government departments, and an incomplete and inadequately resourced system of inspections.

The Home Secretary Herbert Morrison, whom Allen knew well, initially acknowledged her contact and then only sent a fuller response on 4 July stating that the issues raised by Allen would be duly reviewed in the context of wider discussions about social reconstruction and that he was unconvinced that a separate commission was necessary.<sup>51</sup> Whilst Morrison's response appeared dilatory, he had since early March been requesting briefings from his civil servants about the nature and extent of Home Office inspections of voluntary children's homes and pressed for an inter-departmental meeting about standards in voluntary homes with the Ministry of Health which Morrison himself was to chair.<sup>52</sup> This set in train further discussions between government departments on future administrative arrangements for the out-of-home care of children that ran concurrently with Allen's campaigning work in 1944, but of which she does not seem to have been made aware.<sup>53</sup> Amongst proposals given serious consideration at this point were the formation of a new Children's Department with its own Minister shared jointly between the Home Office and Ministry of Health.<sup>54</sup>

Unimpressed by Morrison's response, Allen pressed ahead with a letter that she had already discussed with *The Times*, which was then published in the newspaper on 15<sup>th</sup> July. Summarising the arguments presented in her memorandum, Allen's letter to *The Times* made the case for a public inquiry into whether public and voluntary organisations were providing appropriate out-of-home care for children and how effective systems of child-care might be developed that would make it possible to avoid the use of large residential homes.

Allen's letter elicited a high volume of responses to *The Times* letters page (which were duly noted in the Home Office).<sup>55</sup> On 18<sup>th</sup> July, letters endorsing Allen's were published from the Conservative MP, Edward Keeling, and Susan Isaacs, who wrote that 'it is an established fact, not a matter of sentiment or opinion, that "mothering" and close human contacts are as necessary for full welfare in childhood as are proper diet and medical care'.<sup>56</sup> Supporting Allen's criticisms of staffing in residential institutions, Isaacs called for 'a systematic training in all aspects of child development and child welfare' to be given to those working in children's homes. Subsequent letters included one from a member of staff at the Tavistock Clinic who noted that current concerns about delinquency had not yet led to sufficient support for child-care interventions that might prevent future problematic behaviour. In some instances, her letter commented, there was an unwarranted assumption that 'if children are given what is called a "sound religious upbringing" little else can be wrong'. The letter then went on to give emotive examples of poor treatment of children in residential care. These included her observation of a 'boy of four, crouching in terror in his bed in the afternoon, left in the dark in a room with completely bricked up windows, because he had wet his bed the night before'.<sup>57</sup> As the correspondence developed, clear divisions began to emerge between those involved in the delivery and management of residential child-care who sought to defend the records of their organisations by arguing that Allen's claims were unwarranted or over-generalised<sup>58</sup> and those supporting Allen who claimed that large-scale residential child-care was incompatible with what child psychology had revealed about

children's emotional needs.<sup>59</sup> Responding in *The Times* to this initial wave of correspondence, Allen noted that she was aware that standards varied in residential institutions, but that where there was good practice this was usually as a result of staff who were both suited to the work and who were either well-trained or widely experienced. Despite this variation, children from residential homes were still too easily disadvantaged and there was a risk that local authorities were using residential care as a quick solution for deprived children rather than exploring possibilities of adoption, allowing a 'sacred trust' to develop with the residential institution that precluded any further thought of placing that child in a family home.<sup>60</sup>

On the same day as Allen's response, *The Times* published a lengthy leader article that strongly supported her position.<sup>61</sup> Noting the exceptionally large volume of correspondence that it had received following Allen's initial letter, the newspaper claimed that the 'virtual unanimity with which children's magistrates, child psychologists, education experts, workers in, and officers responsible for, children's homes... have written to support the demand for a public inquiry is too impressive to be ignored'. Whilst the sample of letters published in its letters page in the previous fortnight suggested rather less than virtual unanimity, the range of professional opinion supporting Allen clearly weighed more heavily in *The Times'* view than objections raised by staff and supporters of voluntary organisations involved in residential childcare. The leader article went on to note that there was a substantial weight of opinion that too many residential children's homes 'have failed to keep abreast with modern knowledge of child psychology and modern standards of childcare'. As a consequence, too little attention was being paid to the emotional needs of children in care and there remained too strong a separation of children in residential institutions from 'normal life', such that these children's ability to grow into 'healthy, well-balanced and useful citizens' might not be realised. After this leader, the paper continued to receive a high volume of correspondence, summarised in regular round-ups. Amidst the continued support for Allen's call for an inquiry came a growing number of letters critical of current standards in some residential institutions from those who had worked in them, known children released from them or who themselves had been raised as children in residential homes.<sup>62</sup>

Alongside the high profile that her campaign had achieved through this press coverage, Allen continued her lobbying of the Government. On 28<sup>th</sup> July, Allen wrote to Lord Woolton, the Minister of Reconstruction in the new Labour government, inviting him to take action on this proposed inquiry as part of his wider remit for post-war planning.<sup>63</sup> This initiated a further round of discussion between Government departments about how the issue of an inquiry might be addressed.<sup>64</sup> There was little enthusiasm within the Government for such an inquiry directly addressing the question of which central department should be allocated responsibility for the out-of-home care of children, as this was felt to be a matter for decision by the Government itself. There was also wariness at embarking on a substantial review of standards in the out-of-home care of children at a time when the government departments involved were dealing with many other demands. As correspondence from the Home Office to the Minister of Reconstruction put it, 'it would be very desirable to postpone for a time, if possible, the enquiry which Lady Allen advocates into the methods of dealing with homeless children. This will be a lengthy and troublesome enquiry, causing a lot of work to Government Departments, local authorities and voluntary organisations at a time

when all of us are understaffed and overworked'.<sup>65</sup> Nevertheless, it was understood that 'the Home Secretary feels that in view of the correspondence in *The Times* and of the pressure which will no doubt be exerted in Parliament when the House meets again, it will probably be impracticable to avoid taking early action'.<sup>66</sup>

The Home Secretary's view proved prescient. From August, whilst letters continued to be received and published about Allen's campaign by *The Times*, supportive Members of Parliament began to ask questions of Ministers on Allen's behalf. Ministerial answers to these inspired little confidence about the thoroughness or consistency of the inspection of residential homes or children's after-care once they had left them.<sup>67</sup> During the autumn, an attempt by Allen and a small cross-party group of MPs to table a Parliamentary motion calling on the Government to appoint a committee of inquiry drew increasing support, with around 200 MPs eventually signing this.<sup>68</sup> Whilst the process of establishing this inquiry was slowed by inter-departmental discussions about its focus and process of approval, a joint memorandum supporting its creation was agreed by the Home Secretary, Ministers of Health and of Education and the Secretary of State for Scotland by the end of November. On 7<sup>th</sup> December, the Home Secretary, Herbert Morrison, announced in the House of Commons that a Committee of Inquiry would now be appointed as soon as possible that would both consider existing methods to the out-of-home care of children and 'what further measures should be taken to ensure that these children are brought up under conditions best calculated to compensate them for the lack of parental care'.<sup>69</sup> Morrison also informed the House that the Government was also actively considering how administrative responsibility within central government for the out-of-home care of children might best be organised, and would liaise about its views on this with this Committee of Inquiry once its view on this had been reached.<sup>70</sup> In practice this meant that Curtis was later told privately that her Committee was not to make any recommendations as to which central government department should become the lead for children's out-of-home care, although the majority of its members shared the view that this responsibility should be given to the Home Office.<sup>71</sup> Whilst the Government would inevitably have had to have addressed these administrative issues as the abolition of the Poor Law drew nearer, Allen's campaign therefore helped to ensure that this decision would take place in a context in which the wider ethos of out-of-home care of children would also receive detailed public scrutiny.

The composition of the committee's membership was confirmed by Morrison in the House of Commons on 22 February 1945. By then, the widely publicised publication of a pamphlet, *Whose Children?*, by Lady Allen<sup>72</sup> and the concurrent request for an all-women delegation of MPs to meet with the Home Secretary to discuss recent allegations of poor child-care in residential institutions,<sup>73</sup> had already led to criticisms about the perceived delay with the inquiry. 'A week ago', declared a *Daily Mail* editorial on 8<sup>th</sup> February, 'we reminded Mr Morrison that he promised nearly two months ago to set up a committee of inquiry into that conduct of all of these homes, but he has not yet done so. Why this continued delay in a matter which brooks no delay?' Articles soon appeared carrying Government reassurance that the inquiry would quickly be established, with the *Sunday Graphic* announcing that Morrison was 'convinced that the investigation must be thorough and nothing must be shirked'.<sup>74</sup>

At the same time, public attention was vividly drawn to issues of child neglect and cruelty by widespread national press coverage of the inquest following the death of 13 year-old, Dennis O'Neill, and the subsequent criminal proceedings against his foster carers.<sup>75</sup> O'Neill, who had been boarded-out at a remote farm in Shropshire, died on 9 January 1945, less than seven months into this placement from suspected cardiac failure having been beaten violently on the chest and back by his foster father. Post-mortem inspections showed that he was under-nourished and suffering from untreated septic ulcers on his feet and legs. Soon after the conviction of his foster carers, Herbert Morrison commissioned an inquiry into O'Neill's death, led by Sir Walter Monckton, whose report was submitted to Morrison before the end of May.<sup>76</sup> The O'Neill case had clearly played no part in the initial decision to establish the Care of Children Committee. However, the litany of organisational failings described in the Monckton report contributed to the context in which the Curtis Committee reviewed issues of the administration of boarding out, with particular regard to the processes through which placements were selected, the training of staff involved in this process and the inspection of children after placement.<sup>77</sup> The substantial shortcomings in administrative collaboration between the two local authorities involved in the O'Neill case also once again threw into sharp relief the risks of a fragmented system of out-of-home care for children. The extensive press coverage of the O'Neill case also gave yet further prominence to public concern over standards of child-care, helping to set the context for the public reception of the Curtis report on its publication the following year. The prominence of the O'Neill case in the public imagination was such that it was later misattributed as the cause of the creation of the Curtis Committee.<sup>78</sup>

When the membership of the Care of Children Committee was finally announced, it included three MPs representing each of the main political parties, four representatives from local government (including the chairman of the London County Council, Dr Somerville Hastings, the Public Assistance Officer for Kent, John Moss, and the chair of the Maternity and Child Welfare Committee for the City of Birmingham, Helen Murtagh, who also informally represented the Roman Catholic Church), a trade union representative, a barrister, a senior paediatrician, a headmaster of a local authority-run camp school that had received evacuees, and Frances Temple, widow of the late Archbishop Temple, who had previously served both as a JP and a member of the board of visitors for a borstal institution. Two further members represented voluntary organisations: Revd John Litten, who had written to *The Times* implicitly discouraging Allen's call for an inquiry,<sup>79</sup> was appointed in his role as honorary secretary to the Council of the Associated Children's Homes and Lettice Harford, a social worker, was appointed in her capacity as Chief Woman Officer for the National Council of Social Service.<sup>80</sup> Two other members brought experience of work in child psychology: Sibyl Clement Brown, who was responsible for training of psychiatric social workers at the London School of Economics and had been involved in two separate surveys of the psychological effects of war-time evacuation on children,<sup>81</sup> and Lucy Fildes, now representing the Provisional National Council for Mental Health.

The appointment of Myra Curtis as Chair was not without controversy. Curtis had very recently co-led an inquiry on conditions in London County Council remand homes, in response to widely publicised allegations made by a senior juvenile magistrate, John

Watson.<sup>82</sup> Published little more than a week before her announcement as Chair of the Care of Children Committee, its report was based on evidence received in closed hearings, and its mild criticism of the remand homes and stronger censure of Watson was received by some sections of the national press as a 'whitewash'.<sup>83</sup> Her appointment to the Care of Children Committee faced immediate criticism in the House of Commons, with Morrison relying on the support of other Labour MPs to defend her suitability for the role.

To her great disappointment, Lady Allen was not included on the committee and later claimed that Herbert Morrison personally told her that she was not appointed because she was perceived to have fixed views about care provided by voluntary organisations and would not be able to be objective.<sup>84</sup> This decision also appears to have reflected more general scepticism within the Home Office about how recent or widespread were the reported shortcomings about institutional care that Allen had collated in *Whose Children?*<sup>85</sup>

Although after its publication Allen commented that there was a 'fine feeling for children running like a thread throughout the Curtis Report', she expressed private and public disappointment in its recommendations, even though it recommended most of the changes for which she had advocated in *Whose Children?*<sup>86</sup> One of Allen's main criticisms was that the report gave too little scrutiny, and too much support, to the quality of child-care provided by voluntary organisations compared to its criticisms of local authorities. In confidential correspondence to Allen, Mary Rosling, one of the Secretaries to the Curtis Committee and later an Assistant Secretary in the Home Office Children's Department, subsequently sought to reassure her that the Committee's recommendations did put sufficient safeguards in place for protecting the welfare of children in voluntary homes.<sup>87</sup> Whilst the report did give greater attention to failings of voluntary organisations than Allen acknowledged, she did nevertheless identify two significant failings in its recommendations and implementation. First, she noted, whilst the Curtis Committee clearly favoured adoption and boarding out over institutional care, no powers were set in place to compel voluntary organisations to board children out if they refused to do so as a matter of policy. This was to prove significant as some voluntary organisations, such as Catholic diocesan child rescue societies, failed to move significantly away from older forms of institutional care in the first decade after the Curtis Committee was established.<sup>88</sup> Secondly, she argued that the report accepted too readily the continued use of 'grouped' homes, even as a less preferred form of institutional care, and failed to see the ways in which these inevitably cut children off from normal social contacts with the wider community. This was to prove salient for children who continued to be placed in such socially isolated institutions after the War, including British child migrants sent to farm schools based on the grouped home model in Canada, Australia and the former Southern Rhodesia. Allen's public objections to the Curtis Report had little influence, however. Although later appointed to the Home Office's Advisory Council on Child Care, Allen's contribution to post-war policy on children's out-of-home care was ultimately one of playing a significant role in the creation of the Curtis Committee, rather than shaping the content or implementation of Curtis policies in any distinctive or detailed way.

## **Conclusion: the Curtis report as public benchmark of progressive approaches to children's out-of-home care**

As this article has demonstrated, the Curtis Committee was created as a result of contingent social and political processes which ensured that the post-war restructuring of children's out-of-home care took place in the context of a broader public debate about standards of care and not simply through a largely administrative discussion between central government departments. As a consequence, discussions within and between central and local government departments and voluntary organisations about policy and operational matters in children's out-of-home care in the emerging post-war welfare state were framed in terms of the standards and approaches advocated by the Curtis report.<sup>89</sup>

In practice, the effects of the Curtis report as a mechanism of policy change were uneven. Although the statutory restructuring of children's out-of-home care was achieved relatively quickly through the passing of the 1948 Children Act, and other governmental orders anticipating the legislative changes in the Act, the report's effects on standards on the ground were slower and more inconsistent. Some voluntary organisations continued to provide care through large residential institution rather than scattered or grouped cottage homes, and the proportion of children boarded out rather than placed in residential care increased gradually rather than radically. In 1949, 35% of the 55,255 children in care were boarded out. By 1952, this had risen to 41% of the 64,682 children in care. By 1963, 52% of the 64,807 children in care were boarded out with the Home Office noting that whilst some local authorities had no more children suitable for boarding out, others were still continuing to place children in residential homes because of a lack of supply of suitable foster carers.<sup>90</sup> The concentration of psychoanalytically informed child psychologists around London meant that there were considerable regional variations in students' degree of exposure to lecturers with expertise in child psychology on advanced courses approved by the Central Training Council.<sup>91</sup> Central government policy decisions did not always adhere to Curtis standards either, with the Home Office, for example, approving overseas residential institutions for receiving British child migrants despite little or no evidence that they met levels of care recommended by Curtis.<sup>92</sup>

Progress in developing the trained workers advocated by the Care of Children's Committee Report was also slow. By the end of the academic year in 1949, only 140 people had successfully completed Council-approved childcare certificates (of whom only two were men). In the same period, training courses for house-parents had similarly only been completed by 186 women and 28 men, from an estimated 7,000 people employed as residential childcare workers.<sup>93</sup> In part, this appears to have been a consequence of the limited availability of training places, with only one in six applicants to the Council's childcare certificate programmes being accepted for places on a course in 1947, 1948 and 1949.<sup>94</sup> By the mid-1950s, however, the numbers of those completing training had grown significantly. By November 1955, 538 people (501 women and 37 men) had completed university-level child-care officer training courses and the Council's certificate in children's residential care, aimed at house-mothers and house-fathers, had been awarded to 1,350 people (1,168 women and 182 men). Even with this growth, however, significant numbers working in children's



out-of-home care had not completed Council-approved training, with estimates in 1955 indicating that this had been undertaken by only around 40% of those working as childcare officers and 50% of those working as house-parents.<sup>95</sup> Even by the late 1950s, only a small minority of local authorities had a staff of fully trained childcare officers, many had staff with only some trained members and some local authorities had no trained childcare staff at all.<sup>96</sup>

Although its effects as a mechanism of policy change were gradual and uneven, the Curtis report's status as a public document that was conceived and received with substantial press and political attention meant that it nevertheless became a benchmark of standards and approaches to children's out-of-home care. The report was incorporated into the curricula of courses approved by the Central Training Council and was integrated into the professional self-understanding of post-war social workers and Children's Officers. Internal documents within the Home Office's Children's Department regarded it as an authoritative point of reference in defining good standards of childcare and even, on occasion, quoted directly from the report itself.<sup>97</sup> Having been created, in part, as a result of correspondence in *The Times'* letters page, the report continued to be referred to approvingly as an authoritative source by editorials and correspondents into the early 1960s.<sup>98</sup> Reception of the report indicated that for many readers its significance lay not in its proposals for administrative restructuring, but in articulating an awareness of the importance of the emotional care of the individual child as a fundamental feature of progressive approaches to childcare. This status was significant not simply in marking the importance of broad principles of child psychology as aspired standards in childcare, but in setting these principles up as having a greater claim over childcare practice than the devotional claims of particular religious denominations. As the report itself suggested, the quality of emotional care for the child was ultimately more important than them being formed in the particular religious denomination into which they had been born—a view contested in minority opinions published at the end of the report by religious members of the Committee including Helen Murtagh, Frances Temple and John Litten.<sup>99</sup>

The extent of the influence of the Curtis report on the actual childcare practices of governmental and voluntary organisations was inevitably complex, given regional variations, the differences in ethos between organisations providing children's services, limited resources and the compromises of policy-making processes. However, the pathways through which the report came to be produced meant that it acquired an authoritative status on children's out-of-care which constructed the emerging post-war welfare state as a new era in children's care.

## Notes

1. Care of Children Committee, *Report*.
2. Other legislation coming into effect then was the National Insurance and National Health Service Acts of 1946 and the National Assistance Act of 1948, see Parker, 'The gestation of reform'.
3. Note, 5 October 1946, UK National Archives, Kew (henceforth TNA): MH102/1391.
4. Comparable legislation for Northern Ireland was introduced with the 1950 Children and Young Persons Act (Northern Ireland).
5. Care of Children Committee, *Training in Child Care*, paras 7–25.

6. See 'Note on the organisation of the Children's Department of the Home Office', May 1953, TNA: MH102/1790. This constituted an extension of the Home Office's existing responsibilities and powers of inspection under the 1933 Children and Young Persons Act, see 'Machinery of Government Committee, The Care of Children Who Are Deprived of a Normal Home Life: Home Office Memorandum', December 1944, Appendix III, paras 4,8, TNA: MH102/1379. Inspection reports produced by this inspectorate are held in TNA series BN62 and HO366.
7. For reasons of administrative convenience, the membership of the Central Training Council and the Home Office's Advisory Council were made the same in 1953 (see TNA: MH102/1790). Minutes of the Home Office Advisory Council are held in TNA series MH102 (see files 1501-03, 1761ff.).
8. Payne, *Oliver Untwisted*; also Isaacs, *The Nursery Years*. A collection of Isaacs' writing as 'Ursula Wise' was later published as Isaacs, *Troubles of Children and Parents*. On the wider influence of Isaacs' work, see Willan, 'Revisiting Susan Isaacs', Graham, 'Susan Isaacs and the Malting House School', Shapira, "'Speaking Kleinian'".
9. See TNA: MH102/1451B/69 and MH102/1451D/C48.
10. See TNA: MH102/1451B/22 and MH102/1451D/C18.
11. See TNA: MH102/1451D/C32.
12. See, e.g., questions raised by Committee members to Isaacs and Bowlby about how they might make sense of their experience of children's overwhelming wish to touch them and their belongings and to receive some kind of physical affection. On the wider influence of popularised psychology on public policy and professional practice in this period, see Thomson, *Psychological Subjects*.
13. 'National Assistance Bill, Memorandum by the Minister of Health and the Minister of National Insurance', April 1946, TNA: MH102/1389, para 5.
14. See, e.g., Paul Winterton, 'This campaign is humbug', *News Chronicle*, 11 December 1946, and 'The Government and the Children', *The Spectator*, 22 November 1946, both in TNA: MH102/1396.
15. 'Common-sense on Curtis', *The Economist*, 30 November 1946, TNA: MH102/1396.
16. On the importance of the Curtis report, see, e.g., Hendrick, *Children, Childhood and English Society, 1880–1990*. Both Parker, 'The gestation of reform' and Cretney, *Law, Law Reform and the Family* and 'The State as parent' provide valuable analyses of the development of the Curtis report and its subsequent influence on which this article draws. The wider context and significance of Marjorie Allen's work, including its role in the formation of the Curtis Committee, is also valuably discussed in Mathew Thomson, *Lost Freedom*, which also notes the limited historical work on the pathways to the Curtis report. Other relevant studies include Holman, 'The Curtis and Clyde Reports', Parker, 'Getting started with the 1948 Children Act', and Stewart, 'The most precious possession' (on the Clyde report).
17. Fraser, *Evolution of the British Welfare State*, pp. 180–182, 216–220.
18. Fraser, *Evolution of the British Welfare State*, pp. 177–179.
19. See 'The Break Up of the Poor Law and the Care of Children and Old People', para 1, TNA: MH102/1378. On the recognition of the risks of such fragmented provision, see Pinchbeck & Hewitt, *Children in English Society, vol.II*, pp. 638–656.
20. Beveridge, *Social Insurance and Allied Services*, para 3.
21. Marjorie Allen makes this point about the 'taint' of public assistance in the context of her evidence to the Care of Children Committee about decisions made by mothers of illegitimate children regarding their care (in 'Notes of a meeting held at the Home Office, on 11<sup>th</sup> June 1945', pp. 13–14, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick (henceforth MRC): MSS.121/CC/3/4/53/1).
22. See *Social Insurance and Allied Services*, paras 161–165; also the earlier critique of Poor Law institutions made in 1909 Minority Report on Poor Law (Woodroffe, 'Royal Commission on the Poor Laws').

23. See, e.g., Women's Group on Public Welfare, *Our Towns*, also Macnicol, 'The evacuation of schoolchildren; and in post-war public health services, Welshman, 'In search of the "problem family"'.
24. Confidential memorandum, p. 1, no date, TNA: MH102/1378.
25. 'The Break Up of the Poor Law and the Care of Children and Old People', TNA: MH102/1378, para 5, stated that 37,952 children were under the care of public assistance authorities on 1 January 1939, but that by 1944 it was estimated that this had fallen to 27,089 children. The *Report of the Care of Children Committee* (para. 32) stated that approximately 32,885 children were still being accommodated in residential institutions or foster homes under Poor Law provisions on 1 May 1946. The 'Machinery of Government Committee: The Care of Children Who Are Deprived of a Normal Home Life—Home Office Memorandum', para 1, December 1944, TNA: MH102/1379, also makes it clear that the Home Office understood the problem of how to centralise administration for the out-of-home care of children as arising from the end of the Poor Law and not as the result of any external public pressure.
26. See Roy Parker, 'The gestation of reform', 196–197. See also the discussion of the challenge of children made homeless during the war in Burlingham and Freud, *Infants Without Families*.
27. Ministry of Health, Interim Report, s.4, 10 August 1943, TNA: MH102/1157.
28. Ministry of Health, Interim Report, ss.5,7,8, 10 August 1943, TNA: MH102/1157.
29. Memo: 'Need for inter-departmental machinery for co-ordination of arrangements for Children and Young Persons in need of care', 12 January 1944, TNA: MH102/1157.
30. 'The Break Up of the Poor Law and the Care of Children and Old People', TNA: MH102/1378.
31. In 'The Break Up of the Poor Law and the Care of Children and Old People', TNA: MH102/1378, para 29.
32. See *Report of the Care of Children Committee*, paras 12–32. A briefer overview of this fragmented statutory framework is also given in 'The Break Up of the Poor Law and the Care of Children and Old People', TNA: MH102/1378, paras 8–11, also in 'Machinery of Government Committee, The Care of Children Who Are Deprived of a Normal Home Life: Home Office Memorandum', December 1944, para 3, TNA: MH102/1379. A summary is also provided in 'Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Break-Up of the Poor Law', Jul 1946, Appendix I, paras 3–18, TNA: MH102/1390.
33. *Report of the Care of Children Committee*, paras 64,70–75.
34. Report of the Care of Children Committee, paras 14,74.
35. Myra Curtis herself reflected on the Care of Children Committee's awareness of the arbitrary processing of children's cases through this system in an address on its report delivered to a Magistrates' Association Conference at Central Hall, Westminster on 23 October 1947 (MRC: MSS.121/CC/3/7/10).
36. See, e.g., the Home Office's Children and Young Persons (Boarding Out) Rules, 1933 (London: HMSO), also Report of the Care of Children Committee, paras 37–63.
37. *Report of the Care of Children Committee*, paras 65–69; also Maxwell to Maude, 13 July 1944, TNA: MH102/1378.
38. See 'Extract from Conclusions of a Meeting of the Cabinet 29(47) held on Tuesday 18 March 1947, TNA: MH102/1393; also Parker, 'The gestation of reform', pp. 197–205. The Ministry of Pensions was able to maintain its particular over-sight of children who had lost one or both parents through the war, having argued that their responsibilities were 'concerned mainly with the normal type of child who requires nothing more than a normal home life, and in providing this we have of course had one great advantage in that we have been able to enlist a kind of sympathy which would not be extended so readily to the general body of children. It would seem to us most unfortunate if this special sympathy was lost merely for the sake of technical uniformity in administration' (Cunnison to Barlow, 12 March 1945, TNA: MH102/1381).
39. See, e.g., Burbury et al., *Child Guidance*; Gardner, *The Children's Play Centre*; Rogerson, *Play Therapy in Childhood*; Stewart, *Child Guidance*; Wills, *The Barns Experiment*.
40. Allen, *Memoirs of an Uneducated Lady*, 150–159.

41. Allen, *Memoirs of an Uneducated Lady*, 152.
42. Allen, *Memoirs of an Uneducated Lady*, 164–165.
43. Allen also provided an account of how she became interested in this issue and the development of her campaign in her oral evidence to the Care of Children Committee ('Notes of a meeting held at the Home Office, on 11<sup>th</sup> June 1945', MRC: MSS.121/CC/3/4/53/1).
44. See Allen's account of conditions in this particular institution as the 'worst type of Home' in 'Notes of a meeting held at the Home Office, on 11<sup>th</sup> June 1945', p. 3, MRC: MSS.121/CC/3/4/53/1.
45. See 'Home Office, Care of Children Committee, Notes of a meeting held at the Home Office, Whitehall, on 26<sup>th</sup> March, 1945', pp. 1–4, in which Curtis appears satisfied by evidence from Home Office staff that they did not believe any children's homes were still adopting some of the forms of bad practice that had been alleged in *Whose Children?*, despite Home Office evidence immediately preceding this on the limitations of their system of inspection (TNA: MH102/1163). On Morrison's scepticism about claims made by 'do-gooders' like Allen and Watson, see Cretney, *Law, Law Reform and the Family*, 211, n.66. Allen directly addressed the criticism that case examples in *Whose Children?* were out of date in her oral evidence to the Care of Children Committee ('Notes of a meeting held at the Home Office, on 11<sup>th</sup> June 1945', MRC: MSS.121/CC/3/4/53/1), claiming that 70 out of the 90 quotations from letters referred to in her pamphlet concerned issues and experiences after 1940, 48 of which referred to issues in 1944. It is clear that some committee members in this session, including Curtis, were keen to establish the extent of Allen's direct experience of these institutions. Curtis herself questioned whether some of the memories of those whom Allen cites in *Whose Children?* who had left institutions were very fresh.
46. Report of the Care of Children Committee, para 418.
47. Allen, *Memoirs of an Uneducated Lady*, 170–176.
48. Fildes' comments were given particular attention in a report on the conference by Home Office staff who attended, 'Post-War Provision for the Care and Education of Children up to Seven Years of Age', 1 March 1944, TNA: MH102/1158.
49. Lady Allen of Hurtwood, 'Provision for Children Deprived of a Normal Home Background with Special Reference to Residential Homes: the State's Responsibility', MRC:MSS.121/CC/3/4/1-58.
50. See Memo: 'Need for inter-departmental machinery for co-ordination of arrangements for Children and Young Persons in need of care', 12 January 1944, TNA: MH102/1157.
51. Parker, 'The gestation of reform', p. 199. Allen also received a response from the Minister for Education, 'Rab' Butler, which sought to deflect her pressure for an enquiry on to the Home Office and Ministry of Health (Butler to Allen, 12 April 1944, TNA: HM102/1161).
52. See memoranda in TNA: MH102/1159.
53. Correspondence and memoranda relating to this discussion is located in TNA: MH102/1378-1398 inclusive.
54. See 'First thoughts on the Pooling of the Childrens' Problem', TNA: MH102/1378.
55. See cuttings of *The Times* correspondence in response to Allen's letter in TNA: MH102/1160 (*The Times* correspondence on this issue is also noted in MH102/1378). This file also contains clippings of sympathetic coverage of Allen's campaign in the *Daily Mirror*, including one editorial piece on 16 August 1944, which commented on how Allen's claims about institutional care of children were borne out by the paper's own coverage of the poor treatment of children at the Bradford Social Welfare Institution.
56. See *The Times*, 18 July 1944, 5.
57. Letter from Gwendolen E. Chesters, *The Times*, 19 July 1944, 5.
58. See, letters in *The Times* from F.H. Clayton, treasurer of the Shaftesbury Homes and Arethusa Training Ship, 18 July 1944, 5; A.G. Evershed, an orphanage superintendent, 19 July 1944, 5; Charles Baugh, Chief of Staff of the Salvation Army, 21 July 1944, 5; Beatrice Picton-Turbervill, 24 July 1944, 5; John Keep, 25 July 1944, 5; summaries of letters from Mr E.R.C. Roberts, the Hull Seaman's and General Orphanage, and Revd

- J. G. Brunskill, chaplain to a Waifs and Strays Society home, and letter from Dr J.V.C. Braithwaite, medical officer for the Waifs and Strays Home in Leicester, all in 5 August 1944, 2; and summary of letter from Kenneth Adams, general manager of the Allied Schools, 15 August 1944, 2.
59. In addition to the examples given above, see also the supportive letter in *The Times* from the psychiatrist, J.R. Rees, 21 July 1944; members of the Child Guidance Council/Provisional National Council for Mental Health 27 July 1944, 5; D.W. Brogan, Professor of Political Science at Cambridge University, 22 July 1944, 5; and a summary of a supportive letter from Dorothy Gardner, Head of the Department of Child Development at the Institute of Education, 28 July 1944, 2. Two members of staff at a war-time nursery unit in Berkshire wrote that the model of nursery units run in houses for four to ten children, if properly staffed, provided a much better system for the 'mental and spiritual care' of children than impersonal residential homes (*The Times*, 15 August 1944, 2). Unusually, this letter emphasised the religious, as well as psychological, development of children, arguing that '[T]he great truths of the Christian faith, which can be taught by a mother from the moment her child begins to talk, are not brought near enough to these unfortunate little children [in residential care], who need, more than any others, to learn the Gospel story of love and tenderness.
  - 60. Letter from Marjory Allen of Hurtwood, *The Times*, 31 July 1944, 5.
  - 61. 'Homeless Children', *The Times*, 31 July 1944, 5.
  - 62. See, e.g., summaries of letters in *The Times*, 10 August 1944, 2; and letter from Alun Price, a former resident of a children's home, 23 August 1944.
  - 63. Allen to Woolton, 28 July 1944, TNA: MH102/1161.
  - 64. Parker, 'The gestation of reform', p. 200–201. Correspondence on this issue between the Home Office, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Reconstruction can be found in TNA: HM102/1161.
  - 65. Maxwell to Brook, 22 August 1944, TNA: MH102/1161.
  - 66. Maxwell to Rucker, 10 August 1944, TNA: MH102/1161.
  - 67. Allen, *Memoirs of an Uneducated Lady*, 182–184.
  - 68. A copy of the document 'Children in "Homes"' sent by Allen to elicit initial support from Parliamentarians for this motion is available at MRC:MSS.121/CC/3/4/54. MP's support for this motion was the subject of an article in *The Times*, 'Care of Children in Homes', 4 November 1944, p. 6. See also Extract from Minutes of the War Cabinet Reconstruction Committee, 4 December 1944, TNA: MH102/1161.
  - 69. Commons Sitting of Thursday 7 December 1944, *Hansard*, Fifth Series, Volume 406, cc.732–735.
  - 70. The Home Office hoped that this issue could be resolved before the Care of Children Committee began its work (see 'Machinery of Government Committee: The Care of Children Who Are Deprived of a Normal Home Life—Home Office Memorandum', para 1, December 1944, TNA: MH102/1379).
  - 71. See 'Homeless Children' memorandum, 1 April 1946, TNA: MH102/1387, and Rosling to Allen, 24 October 1946, MRC: MSS.121/CC/3/7/1-17.
  - 72. The *Evening News* included a full page article by Allen to publicise the launch of her pamphlet, with supportive coverage of its publication also given in editorials by *The Observer*, 4 February 1945, the *Manchester Guardian*, 5 February 1945, the *Daily Mail*, 8 February 1945, and *The Times*, 12 February 1945; copies of all of these articles are held in TNA: MH102/1160. An original copy of the pamphlet is held in MRC: MSS121/CC/3/4/52/2 that includes annotated notes, apparently by Allen herself, identifying the specific residential homes to which its claims applied.
  - 73. See *Daily Telegraph*, 7 February 1945, *Daily Mail*, 7 February 1945, *The Times*, 8 February 1945, *Manchester Guardian*, 12 February 1945.
  - 74. *Daily Graphic*, 11 February 1945, see also articles on the imminent establishment of the enquiry in *The Times* and the *Daily Herald*, both 8 February 1945; copies held on TNA: MH102/1160.

75. See, e.g., the initial story of the findings of the inquest, 'Underfed boy beaten with stick', *The Times*, 6 February 1945, 2.
76. Monckton, *Report by Sir Walter Monckton*.
77. Explicit reference is made to the O'Neill case and the Monckton Report in Care of Children Committee, *Report*, paras 347, 365, 441.
78. See, e.g., 'The Government and the Children', *The Spectator*, 22 November 1946, TNA: MH102/1396.
79. Letter from John Litten, *The Times*, 29 July 1944, 5.
80. An oral history interview with M.L. Harford is available at the MRC (<https://warwick.ac.uk/services/library/mrc/explorefurther/speakingarchives/socialwork/interviews/>). Harford was also a member of the Women's Group on Public Welfare.
81. See Stewart, *Child Guidance in Britain*, 114.
82. Watson was regarded as one of the few people outside of Government who could usefully be consulted on the issue of which central department should be made responsible for the out-of-home care of children (Maxwell to Barlow, 26 January 1945, TNA: MH102/1379). His standing as a progressive figure relating to the treatment of children in the justice system was consolidated by the publication of his book, *The Child and the Magistrate*, in 1942, which had been reprinted five times by 1945 and substantially revised for republication in 1950. See also his letter supporting Allen's call for an inquiry in *The Times*, 20 July 1944.
83. Cretney, *Law, Law Reform and the Family*, 210–212.
84. Allen, *Memoirs of an Uneducated Lady*, p. 189. Allen's appointment to the committee had also been expected by some parts of the national press (see *Evening News*, 2 February 1945, TNA:MH102/1160).
85. Accounts of life in children's homes in *Whose Children?* had been based on around 600 letters received by Allen following her letters to *The Times* in July 1944 (see *Memoirs of an Uneducated Lady*, pp. 184–185) rather than her own direct knowledge. Allen justified her use of this secondary material on the basis that there were sufficient similarities between many separate accounts of institutional life to render their claims plausible *Whose Children?*, p. 3, MRC: MSS121/CC/3/4/52/2.
86. 'Some criticisms of the Curtis Report, by Lady Allen of Hurtwood', MRC: MSS.121/CC/3/7/1-17.
87. Rosling to Allen, 24 October 1946, MRC: MSS.121/CC/3/7/1-17. The safeguards Rosling noted were the requirement that local authority Children's Officers should ensure that appropriate inspections took place of children in voluntary homes as well as the power of the lead Government department to de-register voluntary homes providing inadequate standards of care.
88. Minutes of meeting at Home Office, 22 March 1955, Archives of Archdiocese of Westminster.
89. See, e.g., Fink, 'Inside a hall of mirrors'.
90. See Home Office, *Children in the Care of Local Authorities in England and Wales*, November 1952, cmd.8910 (London: HMSO, 1952); Home Office, *Children in Care in England and Wales*, 1963, cmd.2240 (London: HMSO, 1963).
91. See, e.g., curricula for approved courses in London, Cardiff and Leeds at TNA: MH102/1438,1439.
92. See, e.g., Heyes to Longland, 15 October 1951, Smith to Heyes, 7 November 1951, Davey to Secretary, Department of Immigration, 5 February 1952, National Archives of Australia, Canberra (henceforth NAA), J25, 1958/3052.
93. See statistical summaries of training outcomes for Central Council for Training in Child Care, TNA:BN29/234.
94. See TNA: MH102/1429; Parker, 'Getting started'.
95. See statistical summaries of training outcomes for Central Council for Training in Child Care TNA: BN29/234.
96. Younghusband, *Social Work in Britain, Vol.1*, p. 42.
97. See, e.g., 'Emigration Of children who have been deprived of a normal home life', Home Office memorandum, September 1947, NAA: K403, W59/63.

98. See, e.g., Donald Winnicott, 'Neglected children', *The Times*, Saturday 11 March 1950; Editorial, 'Care of Children', *The Times*, Tuesday 15 May 1951, p. 5; Editorial, 'Deprived children', *The Times*, Friday 24 September 1954, p. 9; J.M. Tamblyn, 'Children in London', *The Times*, Saturday 2 June 1963, p. 11.
99. See Report of the Care of Children Committee, pp. 183–184; see also the emphasis on the safeguarding of children's faith in evidence given by members of the Catholic Child Welfare Council to the Curtis Committee, TNA: MH102/1451D/C14.

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