THE EMOTIONAL WELLBEING OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Final Report of Phase One of a 'Choose Life' Research Project in Aberdeenshire (March 2004 – March 2007)

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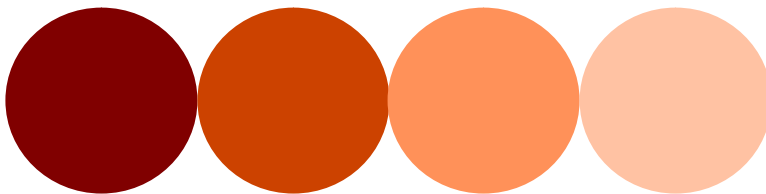
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Introduction

Background

In 2002 the Scottish Executive launched a country-wide initiative aimed at tackling the growing problem of suicide in Scotland; '*Choose Life: A National Strategy and Action Plan to Prevent Suicide in Scotland'*. The strategy and action plan can be understood as part of a much wider policy framework which seeks to tackle need in relation to a range of issues including health (both physical and mental), social justice, children and young people, education, crime, substance misuse and social exclusion in rural areas. Underpinning the initiative is an appreciation that suicide, emotional wellbeing and related issues, must be understood within a multi-dimensional framework that recognises the importance of cultural, community, individual and service factors.

The implementation of the national strategy and action plan is to be effected through a partnership created between the statutory sector, the voluntary sector, community groups and individuals and will make use of the existing mechanisms of the Community Planning process, including the local joint health improvement action plans. With a remit that embraces the health (and related) needs of the whole community, the strategy and action plan will nevertheless target particular 'priority groups', including children, young people (especially young men), those with mental health problems, those who had attempted suicide and people living in rural areas. Accordingly, each local community planning partnership is being called upon to address seven objectives arising out of the strategy and action plan as follows:

1. early prevention and intervention
2. responding to immediate crisis
3. long term work to provide hope and support recovery
4. coping with suicidal behaviour and completed suicide
5. promoting greater public awareness and encouraging people to seek help early
6. supporting the media in its depiction and reporting of suicide and suicidal behaviour
7. knowing what works in terms of information and interventions

Research Aims , Objectives & Methods

The research was commissioned by the Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership in 2004 as part of its *Choose Life* Local Implementation Plan. The research has sought to address objectives 1 and 7 in the national *Choose Life* strategy, focusing on '*Early Intervention and Prevention'* and '*Knowing what works'*.

The study has taken the form of a three-year 'action research' project (extended in March 2006 to a five year study 2004 - 2008). Longitudinal in design, it has combined multiple methodologies including a literature review, ethnography, and a series of surveys, interviews and focus group discussions with young people, parents, teachers and relevant professionals.

It was designed to achieve the following:

1. to provide insight into the relationship between self-esteem, 'emotional literacy' and 'deliberate self-harm' among young people.

2. to inform the development of an 'intervention' in Portlethen that will be available to all children as a means of enabling them to increase their self-esteem and 'emotional literacy' with consequent impact on their involvement in 'deliberate self-harm'.

3. to enable key stakeholders to develop effective ways of joint working to promote emotional wellbeing among young people.

2. Literature Review

- The review of literature identified a range of key concepts that explicated the idea of emotional wellbeing; emotional literacy, mental health, self-esteem, emotional intelligence and resilience. Three related and overlapping themes emerged as the essence of these separate but linked ideas. Firstly, emotional wellbeing was seen as the ability to develop psychologically, socially, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually. Secondly, this ability was 'functional' in that it allowed individuals to recognise, understand, manage and express emotions. Finally, such activity was purposeful, in that it was directed at satisfying both personal and social goals.

- The review of literature identified a three-fold typology of school-based interventions designed to address the emotional wellbeing of young people : universal interventions, selective interventions and indicated interventions. Universal interventions are addressed at a whole population and no attempt is made to target specific 'at risk' groups. Selective interventions focus on a population subset that shares recognised 'vulnerability characteristics'. Indicated interventions target high-risk individuals who already display characteristics and symptoms that suggest mental illness. On occasion, universal interventions, selective interventions and indicated interventions can be combined and used together in complementary ways within a single initiative.

3. School Surveys, Interviews, Focus Groups

Biographical details

- There were two originating surveys of P7 pupils conducted in June 2004 and June 2005. Each of these cohorts was followed by two surveys of S1 pupils in November 2004 and November 2005 respectively, with the latter being surveyed again as S2 pupils in September 2006.
- The sample sizes for each of the surveys were as follows: P7(June 2004): 165, S1(November 2004): 150, P7(June 2005): 160, S1(November 2005): 155, S2(September 2006): 163. Each survey sample had an approximate even mix of boys and girls.
- Nearly 80% of the P7 and S1 pupils surveyed came from traditional nuclear families (i.e. with biological parents), the remainder coming from reconstituted (step-parents and step-siblings), lone-parent and other types of household.
- By the time the pupils had reached S2, the proportion from traditional nuclear families dropped to c. 72% with a corresponding increase in those from lone-parent households from between (14%) and an increase also in those living with other relatives or carers (c.3%).
- About three-quarters of the young people came from dual-income households (both parents earning); around a fifth lived in households which had a single earner, while a handful lived in households in which no one worked.
- Clear gender differences emerged with respect to hobbies and interests of the young people surveyed; boys preferred sport and computer games whilst girls opted for shopping, meeting with friends, going to the cinema, and reading books and magazines.

- Peers were viewed as being slightly more critical than older people by the young people in the survey. About half of the young people were bothered in some way by the negative perceptions of others.
- On the basis of a set of twelve suggested self-descriptors, six of which were positive (e.g. *I have many friends*) and six of which were negative (e.g. *My classmates make fun of me*), pupils in the survey generally had a net positive self-perception.
- Amongst the majority who did think about their physical appearance, most were satisfied with their bodies, considering them to be '*about the right size'*.   Up to a fifth of boys and a third of girls considered themselves '*too fat',* a perception that was consolidated in secondary school, especially for girls.

Important things

- Asked (in an open-ended question) about important things in life (i.e. issues that interested or concerned them) the three most reported issues were family, friends and sport. All were generally considered 'interesting' rather then 'troublesome'.
- Overall, the young people appeared to worry less as they moved from primary school through the early years of secondary school. However increasing tensions at home, especially with parents, and the pressures to conform to societal norms about physical appearance were issues of increasing concern for girls rather than boys.
- Parents and friends were undoubtedly the most confided in people, the latter gaining more importance at the expense of the former, over time.
- Boys appeared to confide in fewer people by the time they reached S2.
- Parents (both mothers and fathers) were regarded as less understanding for girls as they grew into adolescence, but by the time boys reached S2 fathers regain some of the previously lost ground during the transition to S1.

School

- While generally the young people surveyed were positive about school, at most two-fifths found schoolwork interesting. A similar proportion said they liked going to school, and only around a third thought that their friends liked school.
- As the young people progressed from P7 to S2 attitudes to school became more decisive indicating clearly positive or negative attitudes rather than taking a neutral or indecisive ground.
- By tracking the responses given at each stage of the progression from P7 to S2, it was found that there was little variation in the young people's attitudes to school; this would imply that attitudes are already well-formed by the P7 stage of schooling.
- The vast majority of young people, in both cohorts, looked forward to leaving primary school, with around three-quarters of those surveyed reporting this to be the case. However, a sizeable proportion, mainly girls, indicated ambivalence in this respect which on closer examination reflected relational attachments (missing the playground and primary class teachers).
- Schoolwork appears to be a constant source of worry, even in S2.
- Most measures set in place to ease the settling-in process at Portlethen Academy were viewed favourably. In particular, exposure to secondary school (including teachers and pupils) prior to leaving P7 was an important aspect in helping make the transition from primary school easier.
- While the vast majority of pupils reported that they fitted-in well socially, only two-thirds reported a similar feeling with respect to school work (i.e. coping with new subjects and homework).
- Overall, more than two-thirds of the young people in the survey were willing to seek help from sources outwith the family in case of problems at school, home or elsewhere. Girls were more willing than boys to do so. Friends and guidance teachers (class teachers in the case of primary pupils) were important in this respect.

- With increased knowledge of the various support professions, social workers and the Police appear to gain prominence as approachable sources for help with problems by the time the young people reach S2.

Feelings

- The four most reported emotions during the week prior to each survey were feeling happy, excited, confident and (less positively) bored. Girls report a greater incidence of any given feeling than boys, the exception being feeling *in control*.
- In general, there was a wide acceptance of both positive and negative feelings.
- Boredom was becoming an increasingly common feeling in the transition from P7 to S2. Anger also increased steadily amongst the young people in both cohorts.
- On the whole girls appeared more likely than boys to speak to someone about their feelings. This gender difference in communicating feelings was very sharp by the time the pupils reached S2 when girls were more likely than boys to communicate to someone about every one of the sixteen types of feelings asked about, with the exception of feeling *in control*.
- Overall the young people felt it easier to express and share positive feelings with others than negative feelings. The latter were shared more selectively with parents or friends as opposed to other contacts, such as teachers or siblings.
- In terms of recognising emotions in others, almost all of the young people's 'significant others' (i.e. parents, friends, siblings, etc.) were regarded as having 'positive' dispositions characterised by being (mainly) '*happy*' or '*excited*'. Teachers on the other hand were perceived by a large proportion as being '*angry*' or '*bored*'.

Development and Change

- Principal Components Analysis (PC Analysis) performed on all three data-sets of the second cohort (P7-2005, S1-2005, and S2-2006) provided a working quantitative index of emotional wellbeing for each data-set based on all the individual items of information relevant to this concept.
- The PC Analysis also enabled a topology of the sampled pupils to be constructed by revealing two defining characteristics that distinguish pupils within a sample - ability to communicate and self-confidence.
- While the PC Analysis of P7 pupils revealed that girls fare significantly better than boys on the overall index of emotional wellbeing, there is no discernible gender difference in ability to communicate or displaying self-confidence.
- The PC Analysis of S1 pupils showed that gender differences were evident in the ability to communicate and showing self-confidence, girls being more prone than boys towards the former, and boys tending to display the latter more than girls. However, this itself did not appear to give girls the advantage of a higher score on the overall index of emotional wellbeing as in the case of the P7 sample; there was therefore no significant gender difference on the overall index for S1 pupils.
- By the time the surveyed pupils reached S2, the gender-specific differences in emotional wellbeing that emerged in the S1 sample sharpened considerably to the extent that not only did boys have a significantly lower overall score of emotional wellbeing, they also differed significantly from girls in terms of showing lower levels of communication, but combined with higher levels of self-confidence.
- On the whole the transition from primary school to secondary school appears to have been more unsettling for girls than for boys.
- A Repeated Measures Analysis of the results from the PC Analysis confirmed that the emotional wellbeing of young people in the P7 to S2 age groups reflects a fluctuating rather than a static phenomenon.
- While it is true to say that there are significant gender differences in the emotional wellbeing of the young people surveyed, it is more accurate to consider gender difference

itself as a non-static entity for them. This can be seen by noting that the way boys and girls of P7 differed is not the same as the way in which boys and girls of S1 or even S2 differed.

4. Teachers & Agency Staff

Emotional Wellbeing

- Teachers and agency staff understood emotional wellbeing in terms of good mental health, confidence and an ability to manage emotions.
- The emotional wellbeing of young people was perceived to be underpinned by supportive home and school environments.
- Having friends and fitting-in were regarded as the main issues or concerns facing young people.
- Teachers and agency staff considered that young people's self-esteem declined as they got older, with young people in S3 – S4 being particularly vulnerable.
- Factors promoting self-esteem were identified as supportive relationships, achievement, praise and positive parenting.
- Factors undermining self-esteem were the absence of supportive relationships, poor academic achievement, parental problems, bullying and destructive criticism.

Transition P7 to S1

- Asked about issues that might worry young people moving from primary to secondary school, teachers and agency staff identified four concerns; bullying, friends, schoolwork and physical appearance.
- Asked to assess the usefulness of the induction measures put in place to ease the transition from primary to secondary school, teachers and agency staff prized the contact between staff and pupils as a result of visits to the primary schools and Portlethen Academy. In addition, the opportunity to meet with secondary school pupils and guidance staff was regarded as helpful.
- It was considered that as a result of the induction measures in place only a small minority of pupils would have serious problems adjusting to secondary school.

Inter-agency working

- Teachers and agency staff were confronted with a wide range of issues experienced by young people of school age; school work, family concerns, peer group pressure, physical health, emotional health and teachers.
- Emotional health and problems with parents were more effectively addressed by associated agencies than teachers. Peer group issues were highly demanding and tackled by both teachers and associated agency staff.
- Barriers to effective joint working were identified in terms of time constraints, staff turnover and issues around confidentiality.

5. Ethnography

- The purpose of the ethnography, or community study, was to capture the deeper influences that may impact upon the emotional well being of young people by unlocking the 'emotional landscape' in which they live. This was achieved by trying to (1) define what Portlethen is as a place; (2) what levels of community and social capital one finds there and (3) young people's emotional experiences of Portlethen.

To access this information a variety of techniques were used ranging from documentary sources (e.g. parish records and community web logs), observations (including photographically recording the built environment), interviews and speaking less formally with residents of Portlethen, young and old.

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The ethnography has highlighted issues and challenges in Portlethen for young people. However, Portlethen is not an exceptionally problematic place. It is, in many respects, a very 'normal' place and is in no way out of the ordinary in comparison to similar-sized communities across Aberdeenshire and Scotland. The data that has emerged from the ethnography on social capital and community cohesion, in particular, is little different from what is apparent in other research. Both the community and young people are going through transitions in their development. For the community, the rapid expansion has created challenges and a period of stability, where the community can move towards a common sense of identity built on common social institutions and community-wide events, could possibly be of great benefit. Such a development could also create a more 'solid' backdrop for young people to become active and equal participants in (re)creating the place in which they live.

6. Parents' Views

- Parents valued existing induction arrangements for S1 pupils at Portlethen Academy, in terms of meeting teachers and fellow pupils. However further assistance in the form of enhancing young people's organisational skills (i.e. managing multiple teachers, classrooms, lockers, 'smart cards') would be worth considering.
- Parents were aware of the peer listening scheme through literature and publicity at parents' evenings
- Parents were appreciative of the peer listening scheme and felt that it could impact in a number of areas including bullying and conflict mediation.
- Parents were proud of the new school premises (following the move in summer 2006) and supported the wearing of school uniform.
- For parents, emotional wellbeing was understood in terms of happiness and engagement. Young people who were emotionally well were content with their place in the scheme of things (e.g. peer groups, family, school) and able to communicate with others.
- Parents were aware of a number of threats to young people's emotional wellbeing, including the pressures arising from the media
- Asked about who was responsible for a child's emotional wellbeing, parents pointed out that whilst the school could influence a young person's wellbeing, parents ought to have *'the final responsibility'*.
- Parents believed the key to achieving and maintaining emotional wellbeing was linked to open communication between parents and their offspring but also a constructive involvement by parents with teachers to help bridge the gap that sometimes appeared between home and school.
- Parental interest in becoming involved more with the school was circumscribed by a perception of bureaucratic hurdles (e.g. filling in 'disclosure forms) to be overcome.

7. Peer Listening Scheme

- The peer listening scheme *'PPL Are Here'* was launched in Portlethen Academy in November 2005
- Initially 12 S6 pupils underwent training with CHILDREN 1st to become peer listeners. 11 young women and one young man were recruited.
- Subsequently, in 2006, 16 S5 and S6 pupils offered the peer listening scheme. Exceptionally for a peer listening scheme, the Portlethen peer listening scheme was able to recruit an almost even balance of male and female peer listeners, with seven young men and nine young women taking part.
- Training for peer listeners has become 'mainstreamed' thanks to the willingness of Aberdeenshire Council Educational Psychology service to support the scheme.
- Young people were motivated to become peer listeners out of a commitment to help younger pupils and a growing sense of responsibility to the school.
- The peer listening scheme has been offered through a combination of individual appointments and an open 'drop-in'.
- Despite a perception amongst peer listeners that the scheme was not sufficiently well known in the school, fourth-fifths (82%) of S1 pupils in 2005 and three-quarters (72%) of S2 pupils in 2006 reported knowing about the scheme.
- Girls were more likely than boys to know about the scheme
- Asked about what issues the scheme might address, four main topics were considered suitable for the scheme to deal with: bullying, problems with friends, exam stress and feelings
- In terms of use one pupil in 2005 and three pupils in 2006 sought individual help with the scheme. However small groups of S1 and S2 pupils made casual use of the drop-in throughout.
- The peer listening scheme has become a valued and complementary part of the existing pastoral support systems in place at Portlethen Academy, supported by pupils, teachers, and parents.

8. Conclusion

The study was designed to address a range of issues with respect to the emotional wellbeing of young people. In particular, it sought to clarify the meaning of key terms and concepts in the field of emotional wellbeing, describe and evaluate the personal, emotional and social challenges facing young people as they make the move into secondary school, document the social and physical culture within which such experiences were located, inform an 'intervention' that might address the emotional (and other) needs of young people and evaluate the effectiveness of the 'intervention'. Such interests translated into a number of research questions, as follows :

1. To what extent is there shared understanding among key stakeholders with respect to the concept of 'emotional literacy' ?
2. What are the personal, emotional and social challenges facing young people making the transition between primary and secondary school in Portlethen ?
3. What are the significant socio-cultural factors in Portlethen that enable or impede the movement of young people between primary and secondary school ?
4. What are the constituent elements and processes of the 'intervention'?
5. What are the outcomes (intended or otherwise) associated with the 'intervention' ?
6. Why do the outcomes (intended or otherwise) associated with the 'intervention' occur?

The following was found :

1. To what extent is there shared understanding among key stakeholders with respect to the concept of 'emotional literacy' ?

The review of literature identified a range of key concepts that explicated the idea of emotional wellbeing; emotional literacy, mental health, self-esteem, emotional intelligence and resilience. Three related and overlapping themes emerged as the essence of these separate but linked ideas. Firstly, emotional wellbeing was seen as the ability to develop psychologically, socially, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually. Secondly, this ability was 'functional' in that it allowed individuals to recognise, understand, manage and express emotions. Finally, such activity was purposeful, in that it was directed at satisfying both personal and social goals.

For both teachers and agency staff, emotional wellbeing was perceived in terms of (good) mental health, confidence and the ability to manage emotions. It was rooted in a supportive home background and school environment. Such a state could be recognised by pupils' behaviours in terms of their ability to cope with both routine and challenge. Conversely, a lack of emotional wellbeing led to a breakdown in normal functioning which could manifest itself in a mix of aggression, withdrawal and lack of motivation.

For parents, emotional wellbeing was understood in terms of happiness and engagement. Young people who were emotionally well were content with their place in the scheme of things (e.g. peer groups, family, school) and able to communicate with others. However parents were aware of a number of threats to this state, including the pressures arising from the media, not least in terms of norms of physical appearance, (permissive) behaviour and leisure time activities. Asked about who was responsible for a child's emotional wellbeing, it was pointed out that whilst the school could influence a young person's wellbeing, parents ought to have '*the final responsibility*'. Accordingly, achieving and maintaining emotional wellbeing was linked to open communication between parents and their offspring but also a constructive involvement by parents with teachers to help bridge the gap that sometimes appeared between home and school.

For pupils, emotional wellbeing was explicitly understood in terms of moods and peer relationships. In terms of moods, these were strongly influenced by (academic) subject choice and experience in class. As such, pupils reported being bored or excited (or both) by the content and style of teaching offered to them. With respect to peers, they recognised that their ability to manage constantly changing relationships would determine whether or not they were happy or sad. Despite the uncertainty of relationships, pupils emphasised the importance of 'trust' among peers, as the key to developing such supportive relations.

However emotional wellbeing could also be inferred from the responses of the young people to a range of questions that sought to examine self-confidence, self perception, the management of feelings (both positive and negative), attitude towards school, communication and 'connectedness'. As such, using these data a multi-dimensional model of emotional wellbeing emerged characterised by a four-fold typology that described the following sub-groups: firstly a group of young people with high levels of communicability of both positive and negative feelings. Secondly, a group of young people with good levels of self-confidence and a positive attitude towards school. Thirdly, a group of young people with less experience of positive feelings and fewer people with whom they could talk to about important things. Fourthly, a group of young people with low self-confidence, a greater experience of negative feelings and a negative attitude to school. Groups one and two enjoyed greater levels of emotional wellbeing than groups three and four. On balance the majority of young people surveyed were found to be emotionally well, able to communicate a range of feelings, self-confident and well disposed towards school.

2. What are the personal, emotional and social challenges facing young people making the transition between primary and secondary school in Portlethen ?

Pupils, teachers and agency staff were invited to identify and explain the challenges facing young people as they moved from primary to secondary school. For teachers and agency staff five main issues were recognised; peer group pressure, family difficulties, bullying, concern about the future and low self-esteem. Asked to explain such difficulties, teachers and agency staff highlighted the importance of pupils' ability to develop meaningful relationships with peers, including forming friendships, which led to a 'connectedness' that underpinned emotional wellbeing. Also, it was recognised that pupils were going through the process of attaining maturity in which the more 'positive' self-esteem of childhood was giving way to the more 'realistic' self-esteem of adolescence. Notwithstanding the developmental aspects of self-esteem, it was felt nonetheless that pupils' evaluations of themselves could be enhanced by supportive relationships, achievement (i.e. academically, socially and in sport), praise and positive parenting. By contrast it was perceived that relationship difficulties, lack of achievement, an unsettled home life, bullying, negative criticism and inappropriate (media) role models could threaten self-esteem.

With respect to young people's perceptions, the vast majority (in both cohorts) were seen to maintain a positive outlook in the move between primary school and secondary school, with most thinking well of themselves and considering that others thought well of them too. On balance, young people perceived adult approval to be more easily achieved than approval from peers. Further, even if they did think other people thought badly of them, fewer young people were bothered by such negative perceptions especially as they reached secondary school. However, sensitivity to what others' thought of them was a concern for a sizeable proportion of young people, with just under half bothered '*a bit*' or '*a lot*' by what others thought. Body image was a concern for young people too and in particular for girls. As such more than a quarter of girls, at primary school, considered themselves '*too fat'*. By the time they had reached S2 at secondary school, more than a third of girls thought of themselves in this way.

Asked specifically about a range of issues that might concern them, the most reported were personal safety, bullying and drugs, and these three concerns persisted across time. However, it is important to note that in general, fewer young people at secondary school compared with primary school were concerned about any issue. Notwithstanding such a trend, an important gender dimension appeared with respect to issues of concern. As such, girls started to worry more (than boys) about certain issues, in particular '*life at home', 'parents'* and *'my body'* as they moved through the early years of secondary school.

Examining the experience of school, the study found that although the vast majority of young people (in both cohorts) were well disposed towards primary school (in terms of the people, buildings and culture), more than three-quarters were looking forward to leaving primary school and four-fifths were looking forward to going to secondary school. Nevertheless, two-fifths were concerned about schoolwork at secondary school and a third were apprehensive about the size of building they were going to. Three months after the move to secondary school, the second survey found that the vast majority of young people had settled in socially (83%), however only two-thirds claimed to be similarly settled academically.

Asked about a range of feelings, the study found that, on balance, across time (and cohorts) the young people had experienced more positive than negative feelings in the weeks prior to the surveys. In particular they were likely to have been *happy, excited, confident* and (less positively) *bored*. Boredom was a feeling that became more widespread as the young people moved through the early years of secondary school. Likewise feelings of *confusion* and (less commonly) *jealously* and *anger* increased over time. More positively, fewer young people

felt *afraid* as they left primary school and moved through secondary school. Important gender differences emerged. As such, girls were more likely than boys overall to express feelings of any kind. In particular, girls were more likely to report feeling *upset, jealous, bored* and (more positively) *love*. By contrast, boys (in primary school, but not in secondary school) were more likely than girls to feel *in control*.

3. What are the significant socio-cultural factors in Portlethen that enable or impede the movement of young people between primary and secondary school ?

Given the importance of 'context' and setting to understanding complex social behaviours, the study made use of ethnographic data to explore the socio-cultural factors that are embedded in the local physical and social world of the young people of Portlethen. In attempting to 'unlock' this world, the ethnography sought to capture the essence of Portlethen as a place, the level of community present in the area and young people's emotional attachment to this setting. With respect to Portlethen as a place, the study found residents enjoying a complex mix of urban tastes and lifestyles in the context of a semi-rural setting. Socio-spatial differences were evident in this space, with distinct neighbourhoods accommodating particular lifestyles. For example, the oil boom of the 1970's had given rise to a spread of social housing that contrasted with the older and established fishing village of Portlethen and, more recently, with newer housing accommodating those employed in finance, tourism and other service sector jobs.

The link between community and emotional wellbeing is well established and the ethnography evidenced the existence of attitudes and behaviours consistent with the close ties that bind people emotionally and socially to one another. Both young and old reported that *people get on with one another in Portlethen* and activities such as local Fayres suggested a level of shared activity consistent with community. However, threats to community were also evident and the movement of people into and out of the town challenged the settledness upon which community may depend.

Finally, with respect to young people's emotional attachment to the area, the evidence pointed towards variable levels of commitment. Allegiance to nationally recognised football teams over the local football team (Aberdeen FC), participation in (universal) patterns of consumption with respect to clothes (e.g. Black American urban fashions) and the use of language and expressions drawn from American 'hip hop' culture, testify both to an outward looking disposition and a desire to move away from the perceived limitations of north-east culture.

4. What are the constituent elements and processes of the 'intervention' ?

The review of literature identified a three-fold typology of school-based interventions designed to address the emotional wellbeing of young people : universal interventions, selective interventions and indicated interventions. Universal interventions are addressed at a whole population and no attempt is made to target specific 'at risk' groups. Selective interventions focus on a population subset that shares recognised 'vulnerability characteristics'. Indicated interventions target high-risk individuals who already display characteristics and symptoms that suggest mental illness. On occasion, universal interventions, selective interventions and indicated interventions can be combined and used together in complementary ways within a single initiative.

Evidence of the success or otherwise of the school-based interventions was found to be lacking and the field is 'initiative rich but evaluation poor'. Nevertheless examples of schemes that are established suggest the importance of including young people themselves in any intervention promoting their emotional wellbeing. A variety of such 'peer support'

schemes are now in use and range across five models of practice, according to the Mental Health Foundation: peer mentoring, peer mediation, peer tutoring, peer education and peer listening. Such schemes variously describe one-to-one personal support (e.g. buddies), conflict resolution, academic support, the communication of health and social education messages and confidential drop-in / outreach work to address personal and social difficulties.

Taking account of the needs identified and existing systems of induction and support in place, it was agreed to develop a peer listening scheme at Portlethen Academy which would enhance and complement on-going systems of pastoral support in the school. As such a partnership between young people, teachers, other relevant agency staff and the research team worked towards establishing such an initiative.

5. *What are the 'outcomes' (intended or otherwise) associated with the 'intervention'?*

A first step in measuring the effectiveness of the peer listening scheme was to determine how well known it was amongst the young people and what they understood its purpose to be. Accordingly, enquiries were made about young people's knowledge and appreciation of the peer listening scheme. In terms of knowledge, the scheme itself was introduced in the school in November 2005 and four-fifths of S1 pupils (82%), the target group, were aware of its existence around this time. By September 2006, around three-quarters of young people (72%) reported being aware of the scheme. Girls were more likely than boys to know about the scheme. Asked about what the scheme might 'do', four main topics were consistently reported as suitable issues for the scheme to deal with: bullying, problems with friends, exam stress and talking about feelings. In addition, it was felt the scheme might also address a further range of issues, including health, school and family matters. In terms of use of the scheme, only one young person, in S1, sought individual help from the scheme in 2005 (and was referred on to social work for support), while three young people made individual use of scheme as S2 pupils in 2006. However, small groups of S1 and S2 pupils made casual use of the scheme at lunchtime open drop-in sessions throughout. A further 22 young people indicated their intention to use the scheme between 2005 and 2006. Girls were more likely than boys to consider using the scheme. Asked further whether they themselves might consider becoming peer listeners in the future, a third of the young people expressed an interest in ding so, a third were uncertain while a third were disinclined to become involved. In sum therefore, as the peer listening scheme became established at Portlethen Academy, it was generally well known, understood and valued, if underused, by its target group of S1 and S2 pupils.

Offering an early assessment of its usefulness, it would appear that the scheme has become a worthwhile and complementary part of the pastoral support system already in existence for junior pupils at Portlethen Academy. It has provided an extra dimension of care that is both novel and has the potential to be responsive to changing needs of young people in the early years of secondary school. In addition, the peer listening scheme has brought (less direct) benefits to the senior pupils who have worked to provide the service. Offering a channel to direct a growing sense of responsibility and citizenship amongst older pupils, it has also resulted in enhancing the confidence of those pupils in S5 and S6 who negotiated the systematic selection process and successfully completed the training provided by the recognised children's charity CHILDREN 1st. Further, it has provided such senior pupils with a useful addition to their CVs.

6. Why do the 'outcomes' (intended or otherwise) associated with the 'intervention' occur?

The early success of the peer listening scheme can be traced to a combination of factors. Firstly, the scheme had the benefit of being 'evidence' led, and the particular 'intervention' that emerged at Portlethen Academy did so informed by the present research study. Secondly, the intervention was the outcome of partnership working between a highly motivated (and skilled) group of professionals associated with the school. Inter-agency working between strategic development, education, health, social work and the voluntary sector has underpinned any success the scheme may have had. Thirdly, the young people themselves have played a crucial role in facilitating the emergence and sustainability of the scheme. Their willingness to take on additional work (e.g. training for and managing the scheme) and shoulder the responsibility of caring for younger pupils, has been commendable. Of particular note has been the success of the Portlethen peer listening scheme in attracting young men to be peer listeners. Finally, any peer listening scheme relies on a good relationship between pupils and staff at the school. At Portlethen Academy, the peer listening scheme has been well supported by senior management and coordinated by a sensitive and well-respected member of the guidance staff.

In sum, the success of any peer listening scheme relies upon four factors: knowledge, skill, motivation and opportunity. There must be a shared understanding, amongst pupils and relevant professionals, about what the scheme is seeking to achieve. There must be a level of skill amongst staff and pupils equal to the demands that will come from those who will use the scheme. There must be a commitment to the scheme rooted in a desire to improve the circumstances of all pupils and a respect for their needs. There must be resources made available and the practical arrangements made that enable a service to be delivered. At Portlethen Academy, all four factors have gradually come together. The challenge will be to build on what has already been achieved.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

In 2002 the Scottish Executive launched a country-wide initiative aimed at tackling the growing problem of suicide in Scotland; '*Choose Life : A National Strategy and Action Plan to Prevent Suicide in Scotland*'. The strategy and action plan can be understood as part of a much wider policy framework which seeks to tackle need in relation to a range of issues including health (both physical and mental), social justice, children and young people, education, crime, substance misuse and social exclusion in rural areas. Underpinning the initiative is an appreciation that suicide, emotional wellbeing and related issues, must be understood within a multi-dimensional framework that recognises the importance of cultural, community, individual and service factors.

The implementation of the national strategy and action plan is to be effected through a partnership created between the statutory sector, the voluntary sector, community groups and individuals and will make use of the existing mechanisms of the Community Planning process, including the local joint health improvement action plans. With a remit that embraces the health (and related) needs of the whole community, the strategy and action plan will nevertheless target particular 'priority groups', including children, young people (especially young men), those with mental health problems, those who had attempted suicide and people living in rural areas. Accordingly, each local community planning partnership is being called upon to address seven objectives arising out of the strategy and action plan as follows :

1. early prevention and intervention
2. responding to immediate crisis
3. long term work to provide hope and support recovery
4. coping with suicidal behaviour and completed suicide
5. promoting greater public awareness and encouraging people to seek help early
6. supporting the media in its depiction and reporting of suicide and suicidal behaviour
7. knowing what works in terms of information and interventions

In Aberdeenshire, a mainly rural locality, an '*Aberdeenshire Implementation Action Plan 2003*' was drawn up by a multi-agency group (including the local authority, NHS Grampian and the Voluntary sector) the Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership. In line with the national policy, the Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership set out to address the seven objectives of the national strategy and action plan by mapping existing resources to local 'actions' to derive a matrix of needs met and needs outstanding. The assessment identified a need for improved co-ordination of agency working, better training for agency staff and the promotion of more innovative voluntary sector, community based and self-help initiatives. In addition, research was called for to understand the emotional (and other) needs of young people and to offer evidence based 'solutions' to any difficulties found.

1.2 Research Project

Rationale

In calling for research, the Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership has acknowledged a need to better understand the complex issues that underpin the emergence of historically high levels of suicidal behaviour in Scotland as a whole. As such in recent years more than 600 people have committed suicide annually and a further 7,000 people have been treated in hospital following an episode of 'deliberate self-harm' (Choose Life : A National Strategy and Action Plan to Prevent Suicide in Scotland, 2002). With respect to young people

in particular, it is estimated that between 2% and 6.7% of 11-15 year olds have tried to harm, injure or kill themselves, with prevalence rates higher amongst boys and those aged 13-15 years (National Statistics, 2001). Ways of reversing the trend, improving emotional well-being and reducing the incidence of suicidal behaviour must therefore be found.

Aims

The research has sought to address objectives 'One' and 'Seven' (i.e. 'early prevention', 'knowing what works') within the *'Aberdeenshire Implementation Action Plan 2003'* by providing knowledge and understanding of the **emotional well-being of young** people as they make the transition from primary school to secondary school, and establish themselves in secondary school itself. In addition, it has sought to provide evidence based solutions to the challenges that present themselves to young people at this at this stage in their social and personal development.

As such the research has attempted to satisfy three principal aims of the 'Choose Life Steering Group', Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership :

1. to inform the development of an 'intervention' in Portlethen that will be available to all children as a means of enabling them to increase their self-esteem, 'emotional literacy' and resilience with consequent impact on their involvement in 'deliberate self-harm'.
2. to enable key stakeholders (e.g. teachers, health workers, social workers, youth workers, the Police) to develop effective ways of joint working to promote self-esteem, 'emotional literacy' and resilience among young people in Portlethen with consequent impact on young people's involvement in 'deliberate self-harm'.
3. to provide insight into the relationship between self-esteem, 'emotional literacy', resilience and 'deliberate self-harm' among young people in Portlethen such that the lessons learnt in this particular area can be applied elsewhere in Aberdeenshire and beyond.

Study Design

Given the wide remit of the project, the study has employed a multi-faceted research design that includes both quantitative and qualitative research techniques. Set up to explore, describe, explain and evaluate a range of attitudes, dispositions and behaviours and to offer 'solutions' to the problems found, the research is being carried out in the form of a 'case study' and conducted in accordance with the principles of 'action research'.

As such the research has sought to do the following :
- explore the validity of the highly contested concept of 'emotional literacy' with a view to identifying its usefulness and predictive potential
- describe and evaluate the personal, emotional and social challenges facing young people as they make the transition from primary to secondary school (in Portlethen), including the development and maintenance of good self-esteem
- describe and explain the socio-cultural environment within which the young people of Portlethen make the transition to secondary school
- inform the development of an 'intervention' that will address the emotional (and related) needs of young people, increase resilience and offer protection from the possibility of suicidal behaviour (including 'deliberate self-harm')
- evaluate the effectiveness of the 'intervention' in the immediate and medium terms

Methodology

The proposed research has involved multiple sources of data gathering.

- *Systematic Literature Review*
- *Survey of key agency 'stakeholders'*
- *Surveys of young people*
- *Focus Group discussions with Parents / Guardians*
- *Ethnography of local 'setting'*
- *Individual Interviews of key agency 'stakeholders'*
- *Focus Group discussions with key agency 'stakeholders'*
- *Focus Group discussions with young people*

Sample

The study has involved the design of three main samples; a representative group of key agency staff (including teachers and associated professionals in health, social work, community learning), representative groups of parents / guardians and representative groups of young people have been the subject of (repeated) surveys, interviews and focus group discussions.

Using a 'before and after' design, the surveys of pupils have been carried out in five separate 'waves' involving two separate cohorts. **Cohort One** involved **165 pupils** in P7 of the 'associated' primary schools of Portlethen Academy (i.e. Portlethen, Fishermoss, Newtonhill, Banchory Devenick and 'other') who were surveyed in (1) June 2004 and again as S1 pupils at Portlethen Academy in (2) November 2004. Such pupils made the transition to secondary school by means of a 'conventional' induction programme provided by the schools. **Cohort Two** involved **160 pupils** in P7 of the 'associated' primary schools of Portlethen Academy who were surveyed in (3) June 2005. The same cohort was surveyed again as S1 pupils at Portlethen Academy in (4) November 2005 and as S2 pupils at Portlethen Academy in (5) September 2006. The second cohort was 'exposed' to the 'intervention' which was made available to pupils in the second cohort as S1 pupils in November 2005. The 'intervention' took the form of a 'peer listening scheme' (see Chapter Seven of report).

1.3 Process

In 2003 a decision was made by the Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership, through its Aberdeenshire Choose Life Committee, to make available funding to support the development of services for children and young people in the local authority area. Working to national 'Choose Life' guidelines, the Committee identified the geographical location (i.e. Portlethen) for a project that would satisfy objectives 1 and 7 of the national strategy. The intention was to create a 'project' that would impact upon locally identified needs but be sufficiently generic such that any lessons learnt might be applied elsewhere in the local authority and indeed further afield. Through encouraging inter-agency working (initially between health, housing & social work and education & recreation), it was hoped that a service might be developed to support young people vulnerable at the point of transition from primary school to secondary school. Mindful of the dangers of colluding in a field that was '*initiative rich but evaluation poor*', a decision was taken early on to link any intervention to a proper assessment of outcomes. Accordingly, the Committee commissioned an 'action research' project from the Robert Gordon University.

The present project was set up in consultation with a multi-agency research project steering group (comprising representatives from health, education and social work) and wider

'consultation group' (comprising a range of 'stakeholders' from the local community, including Community, Learning & Development, 'associated' primary school head teachers and church representatives) to be both quasi-experimental and longitudinal in design. With respect to the former, the study was designed to measure the impact of an 'intervention' (i.e. a 'peer listening scheme') on a cohort of pupils who made the transition from the 'associated' primary schools of Portlethen Academy in June 2005. Accordingly two groups of pupils were identified and recruited into the study. The first group, a 'control' group, comprised P7 pupils from the 'associated' primary schools of Portlethen Academy in June 2004, who would make the transition by means of a conventional induction to secondary school, while the study group (P7 pupils in June 2005), would do so following exposure to the 'intervention'. With respect to the longitudinal dimension to the project, it was agreed that a 'panel' design be adopted, in which an attempt would be made to track individual pupils as they moved from primary to secondary school, measuring their attitudinal and behavioural changes over time.

Accordingly, with the cooperation of school staff, a series of large-scale surveys (and focus group discussions) was planned as follows. 'Cohort One' (i.e. 'control' group moving to secondary school without exposure to the 'intervention') would be surveyed in June 2004, as P7 pupils in 'associated' primary schools and in November 2004 as S1 pupils at Portlethen Academy. 'Cohort Two' (i.e. the 'study' group moving to secondary school following exposure to the 'intervention') would be surveyed as P7 pupils in June 2005, as S1 pupils in November 2005 and as S2 pupils in September 2006. The surveys took place as planned. However, a delay in implementing the 'intervention' such that it did not become effective in the school until November 2005, partially compromised the original design. The late 'exposure' to the intervention resulted in comparative inter-cohort analyses being possible only for later pupil data, although the intra-cohort (i.e. panel study) remained unaffected. Also, the school itself moved into new premises during the course of fieldwork. As such, the 'old school' buildings were closed in the summer of 2006 and pupils transferred to a new school.

Elsewhere, the study involved a survey, focus discussions and individual interviews with teachers and other agency staff. As such, in February 2005, a survey of 21 professionals associated with Portlethen Academy was carried out, involving 10 teachers and 11 agency staff. In addition, individual interviews were carried out with six teachers and three agency staff. Later in April 2005, a further three interviews were carried out with relevant (health and education) professionals associated with the school.

In addition, attempts were made to engage parents in the study and in October 2005 a general invitation was issued to all 165 parents of S1 pupils at Portlethen Academy, inviting them to take part in focus group discussions about the transition of their children from primary school to secondary school. Unfortunately a poor response rate meant that no focus groups could take place. Again in October 2006, a further attempt was made to involve parents in the study. Adopting a different approach, project team members attended a parents' evening at Portlethen Academy and sought (face-to-face) to recruit parents into a series of focus groups. Only five parents eventually agreed to take part in the study; four participated in a single focus group and one gave an individual interview.

Also, the study sought to contextualise its survey and interview data by carrying out an ethnography of Portlethen. Accordingly, between August 2004 and June 2006, a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods was used (e.g. observations, interviews, documentary analysis) to produce an in-depth description and understanding of the culture of Portlethen. Three themes shaped the enquiry: the emergence of the town of Portlethen, 'social capital' and community in Portlethen and young people and Portlethen.

Finally, the study involved a review of literature. The review sought to explore the concepts of emotional and mental wellbeing. In addition, the review sought to identify recent

examples of school-based interventions aimed at targeting emotional and mental wellbeing amongst young people.

1.4 Outline of Report

The report is divided into eight main Chapters: Chapter One '*Introduction*' outlines the background to the project in terms of the 'Choose Life Initiative' and describes the type of study being carried out. Chapter Two '*Literature Review*' explores definitional issues and outlines a range of school-based 'interventions' targeted at improving emotional wellbeing in young people. Chapter Three '*School Surveys and Focus Group*' reports on the findings of the five surveys of (two cohorts of) young people (i.e. June 2004, November 2004, June 2005, November 2005 and September 2006) with respect to biographical information, 'important things' in life, school and emotions. In addition, findings from focus group discussions with the young people are reported. Chapter Four '*Teacher & Agency Survey and Interviews*' outlines the views of teachers and other (relevant) professionals in terms of the emotional wellbeing of young people, induction to secondary school and inter-agency working. Chapter Five '*Ethnography*' describes the social and physical culture of the town of Portlethen, highlighting the significance of 'place' in emotional wellbeing. Chapter Six, '*Parents' Views*' reports on parents' understandings of the transitional issues facing young people, emotional wellbeing and peer support. In Chapter Seven, '*Peer Listening Scheme*', the intervention informed by the research and subsequently implemented at Portlethen Academy, to complement the existing systems of pastoral support is described. Finally, in Chapter Eight '*Conclusion*' an attempt is made to answer the research questions that guided the study.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The RGU action research project began in April 2004 with a wide review of literature aimed at informing the research team of relevant concepts and theoretical constructs in the broad field of emotional and mental wellbeing. It also sought to provide recent examples of school-based interventions targeting mental health and emotional wellbeing and to explore types of intervention. The overall aim was that the Review would help to select an intervention type suitable for the school-based project that was appropriate for the target age group of pupils (11-13). The Review took place between April and December 2004, with a small number of additional materials gathered in 2005.

2.2 Definitions and Conceptual Issues

Within the literature, definitions are contested and the clarification of definitions and concepts is seen as a developmental priority. The Review had no remit to attempt such clarification, only to review the main definitions. A brief listing of some commonly used definitions follows.

2.2.1 Mental Health / Mental Well-Being

Mental health is quite commonly defined as, 'The ability to develop psychologically, socially, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually' as well as the ability to, 'initiate, develop and sustain mutually satisfying relationships, use and enjoy solitude, become aware of others and empathise with them, play and learn, develop a sense of right and wrong and to face and resolve problems and setbacks satisfactorily and learn from them' (Edwards 2003: v). The remit of the RGU research is to understand and work to improve the 'emotional well-being' of young people and its remit is therefore narrower than that of 'mental health'.

2.2.2 Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is, 'An evaluation of personal worth based on the difference between one's ideal-self and one's self-concept' (Humphrey 2004: 348). This definition describes a person's 'self-concept' as their 'perceived competencies' and the 'ideal-self' as the 'individual's pretensions' (how they would like to be). Self-esteem is differentiated, such that a person may have, say, high self-esteem in relation to academic capability but low self-esteem in relation to physical appearance. A person's 'global self-esteem' or evaluation of personal worth will depend on the relative significance of different self-esteem 'domains'. Self-esteem is also developmental, moving from overly positive evaluations in early childhood to more realistic and sometimes pessimistic evaluations in later childhood and adolescence.

2.2.3 Emotional Intelligence

'A form of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one's thinking and action' (Salovey and Mayer 1990). There are different types of EI in the contemporary literature. One basic distinction in 'types' of EI is that between 'trait EI' and 'ability EI' (Petrides et al 2004). *Trait* EI refers to a variation on personality theory, focusing on 'a constellation of emotion-related dispositions and self-perceived abilities' (Petrides et al 2004: 575). *Ability* EI refers instead to certain cognitive abilities related to emotion management which are measured using performance tests.

2.2.4 Emotional Literacy

'The ability to recognise, understand, handle and appropriately express emotions' (Southampton Emotional Literacy Interest Group 1998). Emotional literacy (EL) is a concept derived largely from academic psychological work on emotional intelligence, together with educational programmes devised in the USA covering 'social and emotional learning' (SEL). The SELIG definition is essentially similar to many definitions of EI, though use of the concept, 'literacy', implies emotional competency can be learned. EL in the UK context is primarily targeted at schools and young people, perhaps because educators are already familiar with the concept of 'literacy'; emotional literacy is more familiar to teachers (Weare 2004: 2).

2.2.5 Deliberate Self-Harm (DSH)

DSH is, 'an act which is intended to cause self-harm, but which does not result in death. The person committing an act of deliberate self-harm may, or may not, have an intent to take their own life' (*Choose Life* 2002). Such acts may include: 'cutting, burning, biting … destructive use of alcohol and drugs, controlling eating patterns, overdosing, indulging in risky behaviours, and mental and emotional self-harm' (Haydock, 2001). Episodes of DSH have been identified as the strongest risk factors for future suicide (Hawton et al 2002).

2.2.6 Suicide

Suicide is, 'An act of deliberate self-harm which results in death' (Choose Life 2002). Definitions of suicide are inconsistent in the international literature though many focus on the question of 'intent'. However, the Scottish Executive's *Choose Life* definition does <u>not</u> concentrate on intent. Rather, it sees suicide as any act of self-harm resulting in death.

2.2.7 Resilience
'The maintenance of competent functioning, *despite* an interfering emotionality' (the clinical definition) OR 'a universal capacity which allows a person, group or community to prevent,

Table 2.2.1   Resilience factors

Resilience factors

The Child	The Family	The Environment
Temperament (active, good-natured)	Warm supportive parents	Supportive extended family
Female prior to and male during adolescence	Good parent-child relationships	Successful school experiences
Age (being younger)	Parental harmony	Friendship networks
Higher IQ	Valued social role (eg care of siblings)	Valued social role (eg a job, volunteering, helping neighbours)
Social skills	Close relationship with one parent	Close relationship with unrelated mentor
Personal awareness		Member of religious or faith community
Feelings of empathy		
Internal locus of control		
Humour		
Attractiveness		

[Source: Newman and Blackburn 2002]

minimize or overcome damaging effects of adversity' (Newman and Blackburn 2002). Resilience research tries to identify risk factors, the accumulation of which makes inappropriate coping behaviours more likely, together with those factors at the individual, family and environmental levels which help to insulate people from turning to inappropriate behaviours during stressful periods of personal adversity.

The literature suggests that resilience is more likely to develop and be sustained where young people have a trusting relationship with at least one constantly available person and the RGU intervention might make use of such a finding in the school context.

2.3   Mental Health and Emotional Problems of Young People

The Review reveals that large literatures exist on mental health and well-being, self-esteem and emotional intelligence, with very little academic research on emotional literacy.

Edwards (2003) reports that one in five children and young people in Scotland will suffer from clinically defined mental health problems during their school career. Ten per cent of children aged between five and fifteen experience clinically defined mental health problems. This breaks down into: 5 % - conduct disorders, 4% - emotional disorders (including self-harm) with 1% likely to be hyperactive. Around 125,000 young people under 19 have mental problems which cause them daily difficulties (Public Health Institute of Scotland 2003). Between 1971-3 and 1996-8, the suicide rate for 15-24 year-olds more then doubled, whilst for females it trebled (Haydock et al 2001), albeit from initially small numbers. It is assumed that there is an unknown 'dark figure' of unreported self-harming behaviour.

The Scottish literature consistently records that the mental health of boys is better than that of girls across the age range for young people. Girls are more concerned with physical appearance than boys at all ages. Both boys and girls use self-harming behaviour as a coping strategy to deal with overwhelming negative feelings, with self-harming behaviour often beginning early in adolescence. In addition, many self-report studies report an unwillingness by both boys and girls to speak to teachers about their emotional problems (Harden et al 2001). A study of one New Community School in East Lothian (Edwards 2001) found that young people said they would talk to family and friends on some intimate issues but were reluctant to speak to guidance teachers due to peer pressure, embarrassment and a belief that their guidance teachers did not really understand them. This finding is consistent with the international literature.

A survey of 4404 Scottish school students aged 11-15 by the *Child and Adolescent Health Research Unit*: University of Edinburgh (2002), found that the mental health of boys was better than girls and that primary school children had better mental health than those in secondary school (Currie and Todd 2003). Self-reported 'happiness' declined with age; 55% of 11 year olds reported that they were 'happy' compared to 44% of 13 year olds and 38% of 15 year olds. In general, self-confidence levels of young people in Scotland have improved since 1994, but since 1987 girls increasingly report feeling under pressure to do well in school.

A survey of self-harming behaviour carried out for The Samaritans by Oxford University's *Centre for Suicide Research* in 2001-02, involved 41 schools in England with 6,020 pupils participating. At least 90 per cent were 15 or 16 years old. Some of the significant findings were:

- 10 per cent of teenagers aged 15 and 16 years old have deliberately self-harmed - seven per cent in the previous year.
- The majority, more than 64 per cent, of those who self-harm cut themselves.

- Girls are nearly four times more likely to self-harm than boys.
- 41 per cent of those who self-harm seek help from friends before acting.
- The most common reasons given by pupils for deliberate self-harm were 'to find relief from a terrible state of mind' or because they had 'wanted to die'. Contrary to popular belief few were 'trying to frighten someone' or simply 'get attention'.
- People who self-harm are also more likely to suffer anxiety, depression and have low self-esteem than others.
- Those that self-harm often have friends who self-harm.
- Those who self-harm believe they have fewer people in whom they can confide compared to other adolescents.
  (Hawton et al 2002)

This survey also usefully distinguished risk factors for suicidal thoughts and DSH.

Table 2.3.1   Risk factors for suicidal thoughts and self-harming behaviour

	Suicidal thoughts		Deliberate self-harm	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
Having friends who have engaged in suicidal behaviour	•	•	•	•
Family member had engaged in suicidal behaviour	-	-	•	•
Smoking	-	•	-	-
Drug use	-	-	•	•
Drunkenness in the previous year	•	•	-	-
Sexual orientation	-	•	-	-
Physical abuse	•	-	-	-
Depression	-	-	-	•
Anxiety	•	•	-	•
Low self-esteem	•	•	•	•
Impulsivity	-	-	-	•

In Meltzer et al's (2001) study of adolescents from across the UK, the prevalence of self-harming behaviour among 11–15 year olds was higher in lone parent compared with two parent families (3.1% and 1.8%); in families with step-children compared to those without (3.7% and 1.9%); in families with five or more children compared to those with less (6.2% and 2%); in families who were social sector tenants (3.7%) or private renters (3.2%) compared with owner-occupiers (1.5%) and amongst those living in Wales (2.8%) and England (2.2%) rather than Scotland (1%). Young people who have learning difficulties of any kind, have chronic physical illness, have experienced physical or sexual abuse or witnessed domestic violence or who have a parent with mental health problems are also more at risk of developing self-harming behaviour (Public Health Institute of Scotland 2003).

2.4   A Typology of School-Based Interventions

Public health interventions can take three forms and it is possible to design an intervention combining some or all of these approaches. However, although schools are 'initiative rich',

the research field is 'evaluation poor'. That is, despite the introduction of many interventions in schools, there have been no long-term evaluations of these. The RGU project aims to begin to address this deficit.

2.4.1 Universal Interventions

Universal interventions are targeted to a whole population group, none of whom have been identified on the basis of individual risk. Some of the reported benefits are relatively high participation rates and the possibility for positively impacting on 'at-risk' groups in an inclusive way. Universal programmes have also been identified as having a *continuing* positive impact as the risk status of individuals changes over time. Such programmes can also have a secondary impact on existing depression and forms of anti-social behaviour. Many universal programmes were also found to produce higher levels of knowledge and a better understanding of suicide and DSH and to dispel some of the existing myths.

2.4.2 Selective Interventions

Selective interventions target a population subset, notably those considered to be in 'at-risk' groups based on existing knowledge. Risk selection aims to work towards preventing the onset of suicidal ideation and self-harming behaviour. Selective programmes use a risk identification tool which can be used in assessment. Once identified, the programmes use skills training for 'at-risk' groups in order to improve coping skills and help-seeking strategies whilst professionals work towards improving sources of support and strengthening the student referral process.

2.4.3 Indicated Interventions

Indicated interventions are, 'targeted to high-risk individuals identified as having minimal but detectable signs or symptoms foreshadowing mental disorder' (Guo, Scott and Bowker 2003). Their aim is two-fold: reducing cumulative risk factors and increasing protective factors. They involve the collection of evidence through screening and monitoring, though these methods may be considered too intrusive for all young people. Positive actions also require adequate levels of funding, support and services within and associated with schools if the intervention is to be successful.

2.4.4 Combinations of Interventions (USIs)

Universal, selective and indicated interventions can be used in complementary ways, described as 'USIs'. The World Health Organisation, the United Nations and much American research supports USIs. Hawton et al's (2002) survey described above concluded that there is a need for school-based prevention programmes focusing on identifying emotional and psychological health problems.

2.5   Promoting Emotional and Mental Well-Being

In spite of the existence of many school-based suicide prevention, self-harm prevention and mental health improvement interventions, evidence for the success of these is weak and exists mainly in small-scale 'snapshot' studies.

A consultation exercise covering health professionals, teachers, young people and parents (Public Health Institute of Scotland 2003 (PHIS)) argued that interventions can be effective when introduced early in the problem cycle and when the child is young. The Scottish Development Centre for Mental Health (2003) reviewed examples of good practice in the field of suicide and self-harm prevention with the wider goal of improving emotional and

mental well-being. Burnfoot Community School in Hawick was identified as amongst the best practice. The school nurse runs a drop in centre, offers information, and provides links to other organisations which support young people. Discussion is encouraged in after-school activities so that mental health is not discussed in isolation but alongside more general health and social issues. This is one example of the Scottish Executive's goal of 'mainstreaming' mental health to reduce stigma and encourage early help-seeking behaviour.

School-based peer support schemes aim to include students themselves in the promotion of emotional and mental health. One survey (Alexander 2002) reports on five case studies in English schools which developed various types of peer support. The survey asked school staff and peer workers to identify their own practice.

- A small semi-rural school had a team of 24 'peer counsellors', trained by *Childline's* London staff. Peer counsellors were encouraged to develop a mature attitude to their work with younger students, thus developing knowledge, increased self-confidence and better interpersonal skills. Teachers reported that the peer counsellors' support for students going through the primary – secondary transition was most appreciated.

- One London comprehensive with 1300 students, introduced a 'peer listening scheme' to develop their anti-discrimination agenda in the attitudes and behaviour of new students. The peer listening scheme was created and delivered by two external agencies. Alexander notes that peer education schemes are typically one part of much broader school-based approaches to promoting emotional and mental well-being.

- In a second large mixed comprehensive, a peer listening scheme was introduced to help tackle the problem of bullying. Relationship counsellors at *Relate* trained peer listeners and teachers who volunteered as 'peer support workers'. Peer listeners were available in the playground at breaks and befriended younger pupils to enhance their perceptions of safety in the school environment. The research reported that peer listening had helped to reduce conflict and helped to create a better atmosphere in the school.

- In one North Eastern school, general peer support training was provided, including listening and communication skills, buddying and anti-bullying strategies. The school reports that students were concerned about levels of bullying and the push for change came from them. The peer support scheme widened its remit to take in anti-bullying, peer pressure, smoking, health education, team building, self-confidence and promoting listening skills. Peer supporters met with staff once every half-term for guidance and support and links were forged with the local medical centre and youth project. In the last, city suburb school (1500 students), 'peer mediators' were trained by the existing school counsellor.

Seven school-based projects funded by the Mental Health Foundation (MHF 2002) also looked at the potential of peer support in secondary school environments. The MHF's evaluation found that the senior management team's support for these schemes was crucial, as was a representative group of 'peer supporters'. However, a clear gender divide emerged. Girls dominated the peer support schemes. Of 50 'peer support' respondents, just six were boys, though the reasons for this were not investigated. The MHF concluded that peer support could benefit both the school and scheme participants, promoting mental health by:
- Giving access to sources of help
- Building confidence and self-esteem in participants and students
- Teaching strategies to deal with bullying and peer pressure
- Promoting confidence and skills in peer supporters
- Teaching students how to relate to others.

Lessons learned from the projects were that:

- Peer support should be part of a whole school approach to guidance.
- Support of senior staff and a group of staff committed to the project is essential.
- A needs analysis should inform the aims and objectives.
- Adequate time should be allocated to maintaining the programme
- There must be clear rules on confidentiality.
- Regular, consistent supervision and monitoring for peer supporters.
- The programmes should be continuously monitored and evaluated.

2.6   Informing the Portlethen Academy Intervention

No existing intervention could be recommended on the basis of measurably effective outcomes. This general finding meant that the Review could only identify some of those interventions and elements within interventions which have been said to 'show promise' with Peer Support schemes offering the closest 'fit' with the project's aims, the targeted pupil cohort and the purported beneficial effects.

Teachers and students see Peer Support Schemes as helpful in whole-school emotional and mental health strategies. Peer educators are trained by outside agencies in a range of skills including listening, communication, assertiveness, anti-bullying, team building and self-confidence and the same agencies train teachers and other adults to become peer support workers. Portlethen Academy has its own peer support initiatives on which to build and strengthening these would have the distinct advantage of providing a long-term intervention which, if demonstrated to be effective, would remain with the School even after the research project itself comes to an end and have the potential to be rolled out across Aberdeenshire, thus adding value to the research findings.
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CHAPTER THREE: SCHOOL SURVEYS & FOCUS GROUP

The present chapter describes the findings from the five school surveys (and focus group discussions) with young people carried out between June 2004 and September 2006. In particular, it reports on the biographical characteristics of the young people surveyed, important things in young people's lives (including issues of worry and concern), the experience of school and feelings.

3.1   BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS

The present section examines on the biographical characteristics of the young people surveyed. In particular, it reports on their socio-demographic characteristics, home backgrounds and interests and hobbies. In addition, it examines the young people's self-perceptions.

3.1.1   Demographic Characteristics

The initial cohort, surveyed as P7s in June 2004, comprised 165 young people drawn from the four 'associated' primary schools of Portlethen Academy. As Table 3.1.1 shows, there was an even spread of young people from across three of the 'associated' primaries (i.e. around a third each from Portlethen Primary, Newtonhill Primary, Fishermoss Primary) with two pupils Banchory-Devenick Primary also taking part in the survey. By the time of the second survey in November 2004, 150 young people remained in the cohort, the reduction in numbers mainly reflecting moves by pupils to other secondary schools.

Table 3.1.1   Primary schools surveyed / Primary school attended

School	P7-2004	S1-2004	P7-2005	S1-2005	S2-2006
Banchory-Devenick	2 (1%)		5 (3%)	5 (3%)	5 (3%)
Fishermoss	56 (34%)	55 (37%)	71 (44%)	65 (42%)	68 (42%)
Newtonhill	55 (33%)	37 (25%)	27 (17%)	28 (18%)	27 (17%)
Portlethen	52 (32%)	51 (34%)	55 (34%)	47 (30%)	53 (33%)
Cove				2 (1%)	
Loirston		4 (3%)		2 (1%)	2 (1%)
Other		3 (2%)		4 (3%)	6 (4%)
Undeclared			2 (1%)	2 (1%)	2 (1%)

In June 2005 a second cohort of young people was recruited into the study. The second cohort comprised 160 young people again drawn from the four 'associated' primary schools of Portlethen Academy. Unlike the initial cohort, the second cohort had a disproportionately high number of pupils from Fishermoss primary school and fewer pupils from Newtonhill primary school, the difference reflecting variability in household types within the respective communities.

Table 3.1.2   Sample sizes of cohorts surveyed*

	P7-2004	S1-2004	P7-2005	S1-2005	S2-2006
Total sample size	165	150	160	155	163
Boys	81 (49.1%)	75 (50.0%)	82 (51.3%)	79 (51.0%)	87 (53.4%)
Girls	84 (50.9%)	74 (49.3%)	75 (46.9%)	72 (46.5%)	76 (46.6%)

* A few cases do not have gender information in the cohorts S1-2004, P7-2005, S1-2005; the sum of the numbers of boys and girls in these cohorts therefore do not add up to the totals shown.

Both cohorts shared similar demographic characteristics with respect to sex, age, ethnicity and household types. As such, the young people surveyed were evenly divided with respect to sex, with boys and girls almost equally represented in both cohorts. These proportions changed little across the various surveys, although by third wave of surveying in September 2006, more than 53% of the second cohort were boys (see Table 3.1.2). With respect to age, the majority of young people had yet to reach their twelfth birthday at the point at which they were first surveyed in the final year of primary school. In June 2004, 55% of the young people were aged 11 years and 45% aged 12 years, while in June 2005, 56% were aged 11 years and 44% aged 12 years. Only one participant described himself as 'black' (Afro-Caribbean), while the remainder described themselves as 'white' (99%) in the initial cohort in June 2004. In June 2005 little had changed in this respect with 98% of the young people describing themselves as 'white'.

Figure 3.1.1   Household type
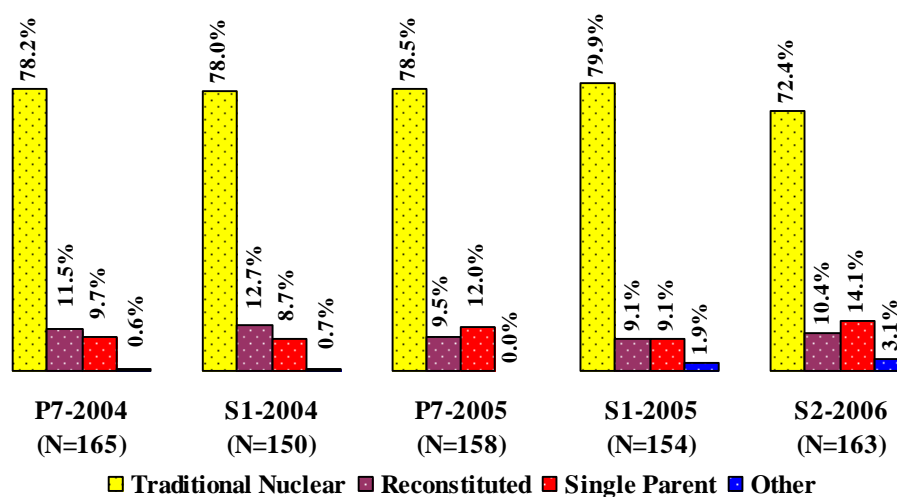
With respect to household type, as Figure 3.1.1 shows, more than three-quarters of the young people from the initial cohort (June 2004) lived in traditional nuclear households (i.e. with their biological parents), around 12% lived in reconstituted households (i.e. with step-parents) while the remainder lived mainly in lone parent households. Amongst the second cohort (June 2005), the spread of household types remained similar however a decline in the proportion of young people living in traditional nuclear family households was noted by the time they had reached S2, alongside a marked increase in the proportion of young people living in lone-parent households, at this time. Of note too, was the emergence of 'other' types of households, with a minority of young people now reporting living with grandparents and other carers, in 'kinship care' relationships.

In line with changes in employment patterns of households elsewhere in the UK, the families of the young people who took part in the present study were mainly dual-earning households. As such, as Table 3.1.3 shows, three-quarters of young people in both cohorts came from families in which both parents worked. Around a fifth lived in households which had a single earner, while handful lived in households in which no-one worked. The latter finding reflects the low levels of unemployment generally in north east Scotland.

Table 3.1.3   Household income

	P7-2004 (N=156)	S1-2004 (N=136)	P7-2005 (N=136)	S1-2005 (N=136)	S2-2006 (N=150)
■ Dual Income	76%	79%	76%	78%	79%
□ Single Income	22%	19%	21%	20%	19%
■ No Income	2%	2%	3%	2%	1%
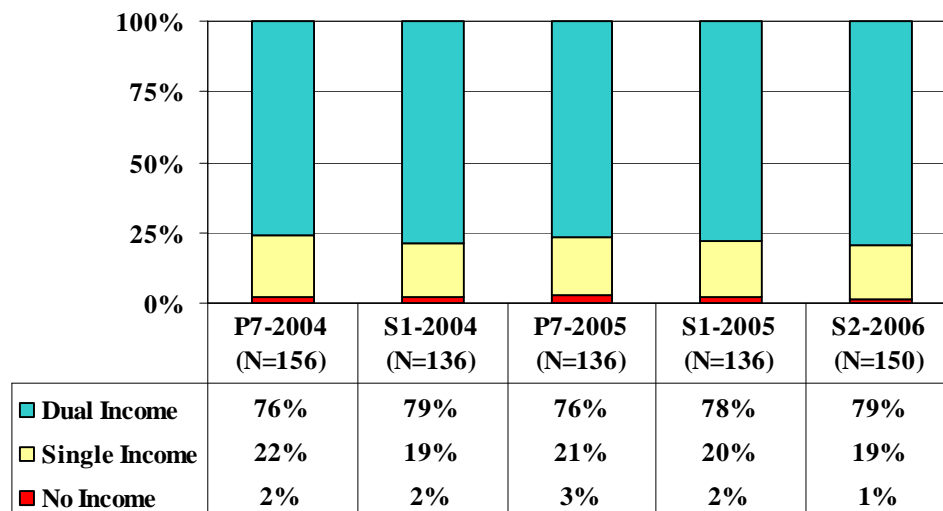
By way of further defining themselves, the young people were asked about their interests and hobbies. There was widespread involvement in range of activities with all of the young people from both cohorts reporting some kind of interest and / or involvement. On average, the young people were involved in 5 interests or activities. The most popular interests were sport, watching TV, meeting friends and listening to / playing music.

Clear gender differences emerged with respect to the hobbies and interests of the young people in both cohorts. Boys showed a clear preference for sport and playing computer games, whilst girls opted for shopping and meeting with friends as favoured pastimes. By S2, amongst the second cohort, girls also showed a strong preference for going to the cinema and reading books and magazines. Likewise attendance at youth clubs was becoming more popular with girls in this cohort at this stage.

Table 3.1.4   Interests and Hobbies

	P7-2004		S1-2004		P7-2005		S1-2005		S2-2006	
	Boys N=81	Girls N=84	Boys N=75	Girls N=74	Boys N=82	Girls N=75	Boys N=79	Girls N=72	Boys N=87	Girls N=76
Uniformed group (Guides / Scouts)	20%	20%	15%	18%	11%	8%	9%	10%	13%	11%
Youth club	27%	25%	23%	15%	13%	23%	8%	13%	**3%**	**21%**
Sport	**88%**	**62%**	**88%**	**58%**	**84%**	**49%**	**82%**	**53%**	**82%**	**57%**
Watching TV	63%	55%	61%	50%	**50%**	**32%**	63%	61%	56%	55%
Meeting friends	58%	69%	**59%**	**76%**	51%	68%	**53%**	**79%**	**60%**	**92%**
Listening to / playing music	53%	63%	57%	72%	52%	59%	**76%**	**90%**	66%	74%
Computer games	**78%**	**26%**	**80%**	**20%**	**62%**	**17%**	**80%**	**26%**	**72%**	**18%**
Reading books / magazines	41%	39%	40%	41%	35%	37%	38%	50%	**31%**	**59%**
Cinema	43%	50%	45%	55%	49%	52%	61%	51%	**48%**	**71%**
Shopping	**6%**	**55%**	**15%**	**69%**	**10%**	**75%**	**14%**	**83%**	**14%**	**84%**

<u>Note</u>:   Figures in bold indicate significant gender differences at a statistical significance of 5% or less.

Finally, the young people were asked to indicate the frequency with which they exercised[1] in their free time (outside school hours), and also the number of hours per week they dedicated to exercise in their free time. Summary statistics for these two variables are shown in the table below Table 3.1.5[2].

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[1] The definition of exercise was till "you get out of breath and sweaty".
[2] For both variables, the options for responses were interval bandings (e.g. "4 to 6 times a week" in the case of frequency of exercise, or "2 to 3 hours per week" in the case of number of hours of exercise per week). The mid-points of each interval band were used as approximate actual values; for example, respondents choosing "4 to 6 times a week" would be assigned a value of 5 as their actual approximate response and so on.

Table 3.1.5   **Frequency and number of hours of exercise per week**

Frequency of exercise (number of times per week)					
	P7-2004	S1-2004	P7-2005	S1-2005	S2-2006
Mean	5.3	5.3	5.5	4.7	5.2
Mode	7.0	7.0	7.0	7.0	7.0
Standard Deviation	2.1	1.9	1.9	2.1	2.0
Minimum	0	0	0	0	0
Maximum	7	7	7	7	7
Number of valid cases	165	149	156	153	161
Number of hours of exercise per week					
	P7-2004	S1-2004	P7-2005	S1-2005	S2-2006
Mean	3.6	3.5	3.8	3.5	4.1
Mode	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5
Standard Deviation	2.6	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.7
Minimum	0	0	0	0	0
Maximum	8	8	8	8	8
Number of valid cases	161	149	152	148	161

The findings show that on average, the young people exercised about 5 times a week and typically spending between 3.5 to 4.0 hours per week on such activity. A slight decrease in the level of sporting activity on entry to secondary school is redressed by the time S2 is reached.

3.1.2   Self-perceptions

To complete the biographical profiles of the young people, enquiries were made about their self-perception. In particular the young people were asked what they believed their peers thought about them, what they believed older people (i.e. parents, teachers, other adults) thought about them and how they felt if others thought badly of them. Later they were invited to describe themselves against 12 statements, six of which were positive and six negative. Finally they were asked to comment upon their own physical appearance. The following was found.

As figure 3.1.4 shows, the vast majority of young people, in both cohorts and across time, considered that people their own age thought '*well*' or '*quite well*' of them (88% -92%,) and only 8% -12 % considered that their peers thought '*not so well*' or '*badly*' of them. Such a positive outlook was also evident, in both cohorts and across time, in their perceptions of how adults regarded them, with 92% - 95% reporting that they considered older people thought '*well*' or '*quite well*' of them and only 5% - 8% suggesting that older people thought '*not so well*' or '*badly*' of them. However the finding that slightly fewer young people believed that their peers thought well of them compared with how they perceived older people thought of them, suggests that peer acceptance may be harder to win than that of adults.

Further analyses were carried out to assess the association between young people's perceptions of what peers and adults think about them. The results indicate a high degree of correspondence between young people's perceptions of peers' opinions and their perceptions

of older people's opinions.[3] In other words, pupils who perceived that their peers thought positively or negatively of them were likely to perceive what older people thought of them in a similar way.

Figure 3.1.2   Perceptions of what others think
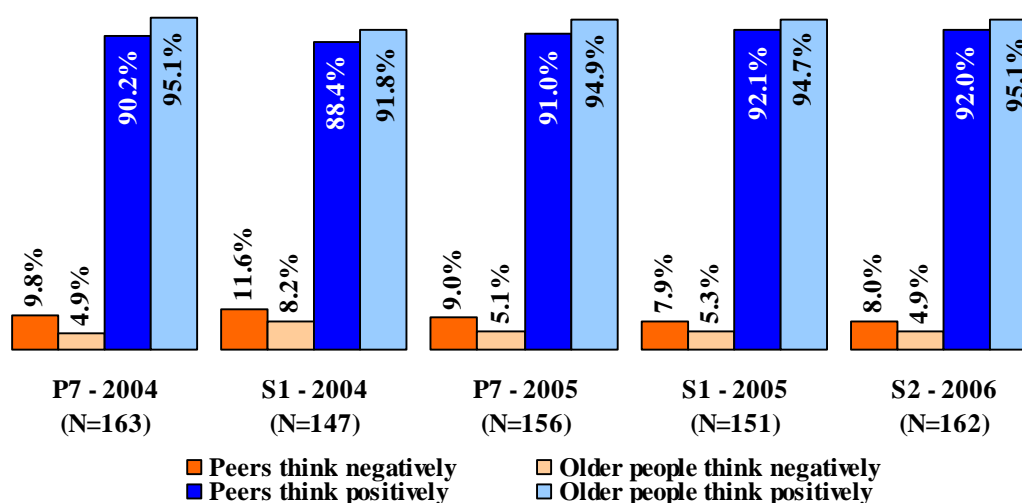
The young people were asked further about how they would feel if others did *think badly of them*. The study evidenced growing self-confidence within both cohorts, such that a greater proportion of the young people at secondary school would not let others' negative perceptions bother them, with 54% of young people in cohort one and between 50% and 56% of young people in cohort two reporting this to be the case (see Table 3.1.6). However, it remains that around half were bothered in some way by such negative perceptions, with a small minority '*bothered a lot*' by others' perceived opinions. Amongst the latter group, the move to secondary school appeared to offer, at least, temporary relief from such sensitivity.

Table 3.1.6   Sensitivity to what others think

	P7 - 2004 (N=148)	S1 - 2004 (N=144)	P7 - 2005 (N=124)	S1 - 2005 (N=121)	S2 - 2006 (N=135)
I don't let it bother me	47.3%	54.2%	43.5%	50.4%	56.3%
It bothers me a bit	44.6%	39.6%	42.7%	43.8%	35.6%
It bothers me a lot	8.1%	6.3%	13.7%	5.8%	8.1%

The study moved on to explore the young people's self-image against an inventory of 12 characteristics; six positive and six negative.

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[3] Pearson's Chi-square, Spearman's rank correlation, Kendall's Tau, and Goodman & Kruskal's Gamma all show statistical significance of less than 5%. Due to large numbers of empty cells in the cross-tabulation of these two variables, exact tests were used.

Table 3.1.7   Self description

SELF-DESCRIPTION	P7-2004 %	P7-2004 N	S1-2004 %	S1-2004 N	P7-2005 %	P7-2005 N	S1-2005 %	S1-2005 N	S2-2006 %	S2-2006 N
My classmates make fun of me	14%	159	11%	150	14%	150	11%	149	14%	160
I cause trouble to my family	10%	157	3%	150	15%	149	11%	149	13%	160
It is hard for me to make friends	13%	159	10%	150	14%	146	7%	148	11%	159
I am lucky	74%	162	65%	150	71%	149	72%	149	67%	162
I am cheerful	92%	162	87%	150	93%	153	89%	149	93%	162
I have many friends	91%	163	91%	150	92%	153	93%	150	91%	160
People pick on me	15%	160	15%	150	12%	148	14%	148	12%	156
I like being the way I am	91%	162	88%	150	89%	154	85%	149	89%	161
My parents expect too much of me	15%	159	13%	150	16%	146	18%	148	22%	158
I am a dreamer	43%	159	46%	150	46%	149	45%	146	45%	159
I often volunteer at school	54%	161	33%	150	52%	149	42%	146	35%	159
I am a leader in sports and games	26%	159	25%	150	26%	149	30%	146	29%	159

As Table 3.1.7 shows, the vast majority of young people regarded themselves in a positive way, considering themselves to be cheerful, to have friends, and to be comfortable with themselves as individuals (e.g. *I like being the way I am*). Such a general, positive self-assessment persisted across the time, for both cohorts, although a slight change in the reporting of particular characteristics suggested self-perception to be a more complex phenomenon and one that was being challenged as the young people moved on from primary school. In particular, an increase was noted, in the second cohort, in the proportions of young people at secondary school who considered that their parents '*expect too much of me',* while a decrease, in both cohorts, in the numbers who volunteered at secondary school was also observed.

To explore the subtlety of the phenomenon and to explicate any changes taking place, further analysis was carried out. An attempt was made to derive an overall score of self-perception by subtracting the total number of negative descriptions from the total number of positive descriptions for each case within a cohort. Summary statistics of the distributions of these net scores of self-perceptions for each cohort are displayed in Table 3.1.8 below.

Table 3.1.8   Net score of self-perception

	P7-2004	S1-2004	P7-2005	S1-2005	S2-2006
Mean	+3.14	+2.93	+3.07	+3.01	+2.89
Median	+3.50	+3.00	+4.00	+3.00	+3.00
Standard Deviation	1.88	1.96	1.87	2.11	1.97
Minimum observed	-4.00	-4.00	-4.00	-4.00	-4.00
Maximum observed	+6.00	+6.00	+6.00	+6.00	+6.00
Number of valid cases	162	149	150	151	160

The results show that generally pupils, have a positive self-perception, based on the means and median values of the self-perception score. The only discernible difference is in the higher median values for the primary pupils compared with the secondary school pupils, amongst young people in the second cohort. Whereas half the of the primary school pupils have a net score of roughly +4.0 or less, half the secondary pupils have a net score of +3.0 or less, indicating a slight decrease from the more positive self-perceptions of earlier childhood.

Finally, given the heightened importance of body-image to young people's self-perception, enquiries were made about how they felt about their own appearance.

Figure 3.1.3 – Feelings about appearance (Boys)
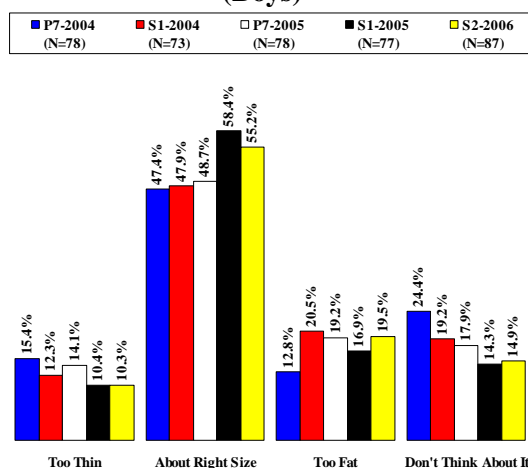
Figure 3.1.4 – Feelings about appearance (Girls)
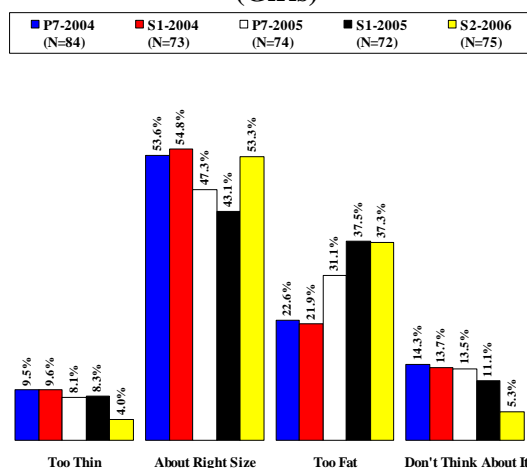
As Figures 3.1.3 and 3.1.4 show, it was a minority of young people of both genders, and across both cohorts, who did not think about their appearance. Boys were more likely than girls to report this to be the case, with the difference most marked amongst young people in S2. As such, appearance was taking on a heightened importance for girls, in particular, as they progressed through secondary school.

Amongst the majority who did think about their appearance, most were satisfied with their bodies, considering them to be '*about the right size*'. Thus between 47% and 58% of boys reported this to be the case, while between 43% and 55% of girls did so. However, girls, in the second cohort, appeared to take longer to reach such an assessment, the first year at secondary school proving more difficult for girls in this respect. Up to a fifth of boys and a third of girls considered themselves '*too fat*', a perception that was consolidated in secondary school, especially for girls. Between 10% and 15% of boys thought themselves '*too thin*', while between 4% and 10% of girls thought likewise.

A subsidiary question on whether the young people were on a diet to lose weight was also put in relation to physical appearance. As expected, there was a close association between the responses given to this question and the previous item on perceptions of appearance.

Those who considered themselves '*too fat*' reported either that they were on a diet to lose weight or that they were not on a diet but needed to lose weight. Almost all of the rest (i.e. all excluding those who think they are too fat) were not on a diet because their weight was perceived as '*fine*'. Between 6% and 11% of the young people were on a diet, while between a fifth and a quarter were not on a diet but considered that they ought to lose weight. In both cases, girls were the more likely to be interested in weight loss.

3.2   IMPORTANT THINGS IN OUR LIFE

The present section examines the issues that young people considered important in their lives. In particular, it explores the matters that interest, concern or trouble them most and who they speak with about such issues. In addition, it examines where they feel '*safest*'.

3.2.1   Important things in life

To begin with, the young people were invited, through an open-ended question, to report on issues that they talked about most, interested them most or troubled them most. The three most reported issues were family, friends and sport. All were mentioned as 'interests' rather then 'concerns'. Such 'interests', as shown in Table 3.2.1, remained constant in all surveyed cohorts from P7 to S2.

Table 3.2.1   Important things in life

P7 - 2005 N = 160		S1 - 2005 N = 155		S2 - 2006 N = 163	
Family	38 %	Family	54 %	Family	56 %
Friends	30 %	Friends	48 %	Friends	47 %
Sport	32 %	Sport	16 %	Sport	29 %
Pets	11 %	Pets	14 %	Pets	6 %
School	8 %	School	11 %	School	9 %
Academy	6 %	Music	6 %	Music	7 %
Health / diet / exercise	8 %	Girlfriends / boyfriends	5 %	Going out with friends	6 %

3.2.2   Issues of worry

The study went on to ask specifically about a range of seventeen issues that might concern the young people. As figure 3.2.2 shows, in general, the young people 'worried a little' or 'worried a lot' about three main issues: personal safety, bullying and drugs. By contrast, the least worrying issues were life at home, parents, school playtime and young people's neighbourhoods.

Over all young people in primary school worried more than young people at secondary school, with the exception of worries in relation to home, school, work, parents, money and the environment, which troubled secondary school pupils more.

Figure 3.2.1   Worry Issues
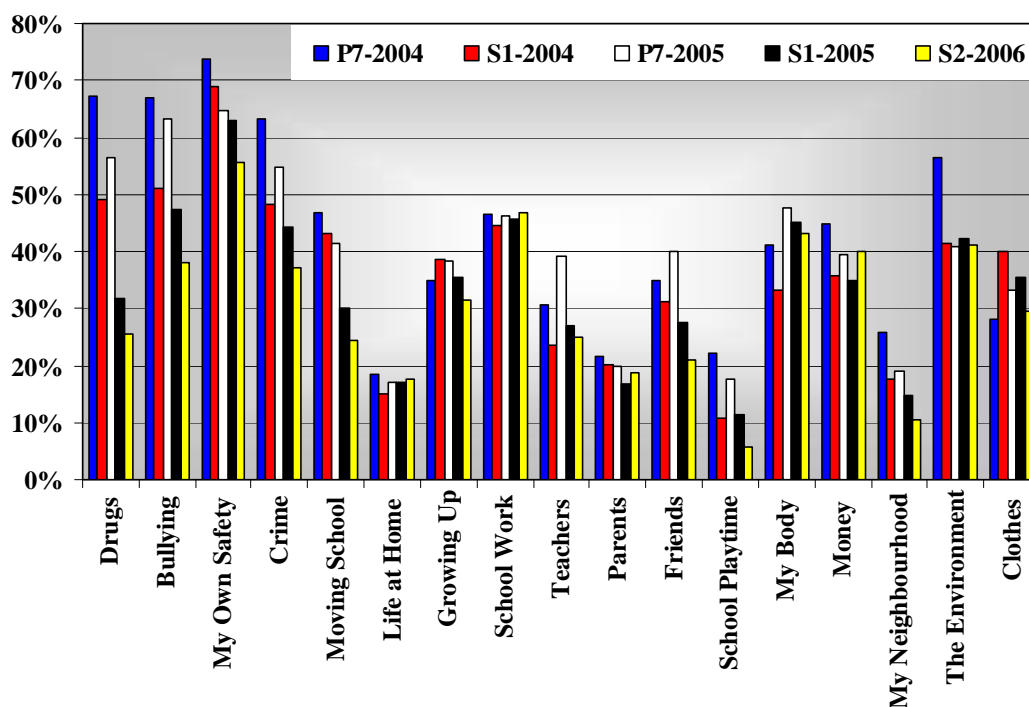
Further analyses were carried out to examine whether the issues that worried the young people were gender related. Table 3.2.2 displays the trends separately for boys and girls for the transitions P7-2005 to S1-2005, and S1-2005 to S2-2006. Unlike the previous graphic (where the intensity of worry is not accounted for), Table 3.2.2 allows for a differentiation between those who are "worried a lot" and those who are "worried a little". As such, the percentages shown in this graphic reflect a "weighting" based on the strength of worry and are therefore lower than would be the case if no such gradation was considered (as in Figure 3.2.1)[4].

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[4] The actual values assigned to the three grades of worry are as follows: "Worried a lot" = 1, "Worried a little" = 0.5, and "Not worried at all" = 0. Counts of responses opting for "Worried a little" would therefore yield totals that are half of what they would be if they were not differentiated from those opting for "Worried a lot".

Table 3.2.2   Gender Differences In Worry Trends*

WORRY ISSUE	Boys			Girls		
	P7 - 2005	S1 - 2005	S2 - 2006	P7 - 2005	S1 - 2005	S2 - 2006
Drugs	35%	20%	15%	36%	22%	17%
Bullying	34%	28%	20%	44%	33%	28%
My Own Safety	40%	37%	33%	41%	42%	35%
Crime	38%	27%	21%	34%	27%	25%
Moving School	18%	14%	14%	30%	28%	16%
Life at Home	8%	8%	6%	**12%**	**13%**	**15%**
Growing Up	21%	13%	13%	24%	27%	23%
School Work	31%	28%	25%	**25%**	**30%**	**28%**
Teachers	22%	14%	16%	22%	17%	11%
Parents	16%	8%	6%	**11%**	**15%**	**18%**
Friends	22%	16%	11%	27%	19%	19%
School Playtime	12%	5%	4%	11%	8%	3%
My Body	29%	23%	19%	**30%**	**33%**	**34%**
Money	29%	23%	25%	**23%**	**24%**	**24%**
My Neighbourhood	11%	9%	6%	11%	7%	5%
The Environment	28%	29%	26%	**23%**	**25%**	**26%**
Clothes	16%	15%	10%	31%	29%	28%

*The percentages shown in this table take account of the <u>strength</u> of worry with "Worried a lot"=1, "Worried a little"= 0.5, and "Not Worried at all"=0.

Overall, the young people appeared to worry less as they moved from primary school through the early years of secondary school. However there were several issues for girls, in particular, where the trend appeared to indicate an increasing level worry. These are highlighted in Table 3.2.2 on the basis that the proportion worrying about an issue in S2-2006 is higher than the proportion worrying about the same issue in P7-2005. "life at home", "parents", and "my body" were the most noticeable categories where the trend for girls was upward whereas for boys it was downward. Increasing tensions at home, especially with parents, and the pressure to conform to societal norms about physical appearance were issues of increasing concern for girls rather than boys. "Money" and "The Environment" were also on a slightly upward trend for girls compared with boys, even though it would appear that roughly similar proportions of boys and girls expressed worry on these issues.

In order to further explore the issue gender in relation to worry, additional analyses were carried out. Table 3.2.3 shows the worry categories for which the proportion of girls is significantly larger than the proportion of boys.

Table 3.2.3   **Issues over which girls worry significantly more than boys***

WORRY ISSUE	P7 - 2005	S1 – 2005	S2 – 2006
Bullying	✓		
Moving School	✓	✓	
Life at Home			✓
Growing Up		✓	✓
Parents			✓
My Body		✓	✓
Clothes	✓	✓	✓

*Significant differences based on two-tailed tests at 5%, except for P7 - 2005 on Bullying which is based on a one-tailed test at 5%.

The gender difference in worries about bullying disappears on transition to secondary school. Also, as before, 'parents' and 'life at home' are confirmed as significantly more worrying for girls than for boys on entry into adolescence. As expected, girls are more self-conscious about their personal appearance as we can see from the significantly higher proportions in almost all cohorts.

With respect to worries about moving school, two separate issues were current at the time of the study and subsequently examined; in the case of P7's (in June 2005), the prospect of moving from primary to secondary, and in the case of the same pupils as S1's (in November 2005), the issue of moving to a new school building, following the closure of the old school at the end of the session, in June 2006. In either case, girls were found to be more worried than boys about moving school.

However, comparing the proportions for S1-2005 with those of S1-2004, it would appear that the gender difference shown in Table 3.2.3 arises from a substantial reduction in worry amongst S1-2005 boys with regard to moving school. Whereas 28% boys in the S1-2004 cohort indicate worry, only 14% (half the proportion) do so in S1-2005. Girls in the S1-2004 cohort on the other hand are consistent with girls in the S1-2005 cohort, with respect to worrying about moving school, with 25% and 28% respectively doing so.

3.2.3   People to speak with on important matters

The young people were next asked who they talked with about important and (sometimes) worrying issues. Parents were undoubtedly the most confided in people, with friends being a close second. This echoes earlier finding with respect to the most important 'things' in young people's lives (see Table 3.2.1). However significant gender differences emerged with respect to young people's confidants. Table 3.2.4 below shows the trend for the P7-2005, S1-2005 and S2-2006 cohorts. It highlights two aspects: a) significant changes from one time-period to the next within each gender, and b) significant differences between each gender for a given time-period.

Table 3.2.4   Trend in importance of significant confidants

WHO DO YOU TALK WITH ABOUT IMPORTANT THINGS?	Boys			Girls		
	P7-2005	S1-2005	S2-2005	P7-2005	S1-2005	S2-2005
Mum or dad, or step-mum or step-dad, or mum's partner or dad's partner	73%	*‡57%	‡51%	81%	‡73%	‡73%
Brothers or sisters or step-brothers or Step-sisters	20%	20%	21%	23%	23%	32%
Friend	‡41%	‡37%	‡39%	‡77%	‡75%	‡82%
Relative	23%	13%	‡14%	30%	20%	‡30%
Teacher	‡8%	7%	5%	‡19%	*5%	*‡16%
Someone else	6%	4%	3%	4%	8%	5%

***Significant change from previous time-period (based on a 5% probability on a two-tailed test).**
‡Significant difference in corresponding gender proportions (based on a 5% probability on a two-tailed test).

With respect to the former (time-trends for each gender) a noticeable change in the case of boys is that, although overall parents remain the people most confided in, their importance drops significantly on moving to secondary school. However, of arguably more significance, is the finding that boys appear to confide in fewer people full stop by the time they reach S2 in secondary school. For girls, there appears to be a significant decrease from P7 to S1 in the importance of teachers as confidants. This appears temporary however since the trend shows teachers regaining their position of importance in this respect by the time girls reach S2.

With respect to the latter (gender differences for a given time period) it was found that, unlike boys, there appears to be no developmental effect (growing up) on girls' confiding in their parents on important matters. Apart from the small decrease on transition to Secondary school, there is no evidence that for girls parents are less confided in. At all stages, friends were far more important as confidants for girls than for boys; the proportions of boys rating friends were roughly half those of girls. While relatives also diminish in this respect for boys as they progress to secondary school, this appears not to be the case for girls. Also, girls appear to be more able to approach teachers to discuss some important matters than boys, except for the exceptional result for S1 girls. Overall, the general trend was for girls to confide more in others than boys.

3.2.4 Most understanding person

The young people were asked further about the most understanding person in their lives, the person they could talk with about important things. As figure 3.2.2 shows, the findings confirm the importance of parents but reveal that, within the family, it is mothers who are not only the prime confidants but are also the most understanding people in young people's lives. Friends came a close second. Generally boys appear to relate more to their fathers than girls do, with the proportions of boys citing fathers as the 'most understanding person' higher than those of girls at all stages.

Of note, however, are the opposing trends of boys and girls as they move from S1 to S2. As such, parents (both mothers and fathers) are regarded as less understanding for girls as they grow into adolescence, but fathers gain some of the lost ground with boys during this transition. Friends are increasingly seen over time as the most understanding. The proportions of boys and girls indicating siblings as their favourite choice on this matter are small; however, by the time girls reach S2, sisters are seen as more understanding (7%) than fathers (3%).

Figure 3.2.2   Most Understanding Person To Talk with
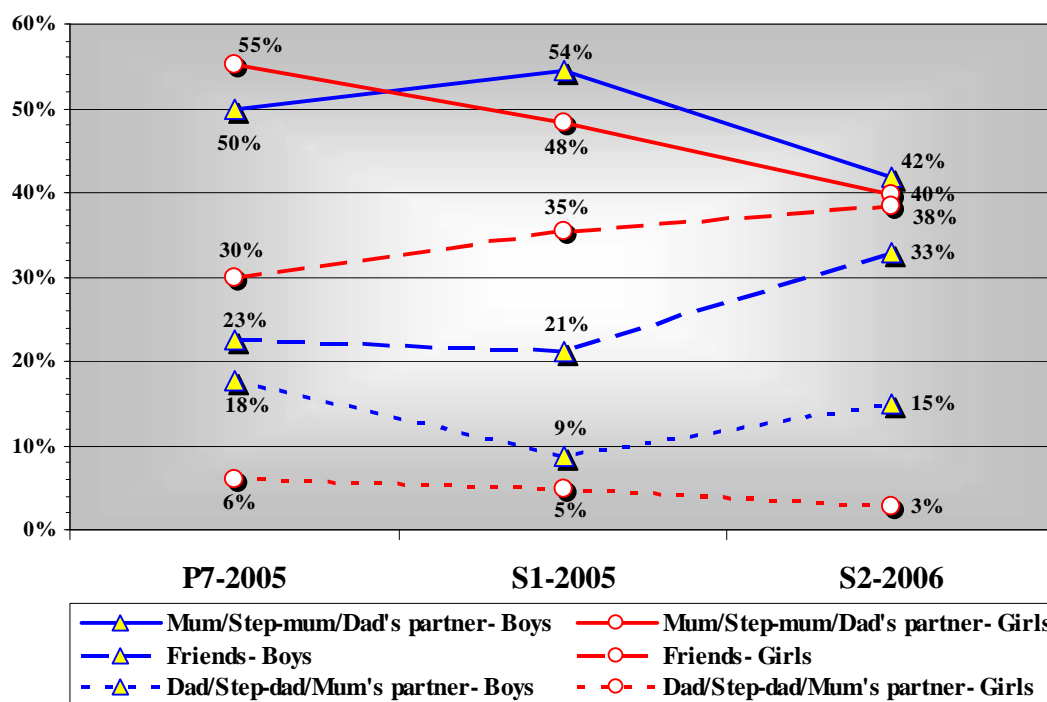
When asked *why* pupils' preferred a particular person to speak to, the primary reasons given were that the person listened, understood, could be trusted, or had had similar experiences and would therefore help.

3.2.5 People who are always there (in the 'good times' and the 'bad times')

Enquiries about the young people's support systems moved on to explore the <u>degree</u> of support available. As such, the young people were invited to report on the types of people (i.e. parents / step-parents / partners, brothers / step-brothers, sisters / step-sisters, friends, grandparents, teachers and someone else) who were there for them in 'good times' and 'bad times', against four types of 'availability': 'always there for me', 'sometimes there for me', 'not often there for me' and 'never there for me'.

Table 3.2.5   Trend in rankings of availability of significant people*

PEOPLE WHO ARE ALWAYS THERE (in the 'good times and the 'bad' times)	Boys			Girls		
	P7-2005	S1-2005	S2-2005	P7-2005	S1-2005	S2-2005
Parents/ Step-parents/ Partners	Always there	Always there	Always there	Always there	Always there	Always there
Brothers / Step-brothers	Sometimes there	Sometimes there	Sometimes there	Sometimes there	Sometimes there	Sometimes there
Sisters / Step-sisters	Sometimes there	Sometimes there	Always/ Sometimes there	Sometimes there	Sometimes/Always there	Always there
Friends	Sometimes there	Always/ Sometimes there	Sometimes there	Always there	Always there	Always there
Grandparents	Always there	Always there	Always there	Always there	Always there	Always there
Teachers	Sometimes there	Sometimes there	Sometimes/Not often there	Sometimes there	Sometimes there	Sometimes there

* Where there is evidence of a bi-modal distribution (two modal ranks rather than one clear mode), both ranks are displayed.

Table 3.2.5 shows the modal rank[5] for each person category. Parents and grandparents are clearly seen as reliable individuals who were always there for the young people. The gender differences in the way friends are ranked reflect previous results that there were closer friendship relationships amongst girls than boys. There was also a tighter bonding between sisters than between brothers and sisters by the time the young people reach S2 (i.e. girls rate sisters as 'always there' whereas boys are not so convincingly positive about sisters). On a similar note, boys were less positive than girls when it came to teachers by the time they had reached S2, regarding them as being available 'sometimes' or 'not often'.

3.2.6   Safest place

Finally, the young people were asked about where they felt safest. The vast majority of young people felt safest at home and only a minority considered school or elsewhere safer. However, these results must be treated with caution as the concept of safety may have differing meanings for the respondents in the samples, referring to a variety of issues not all related to personal safety. Thus, for example, some pupils interpreted safety as being with people they "*loved and trusted*", because they "*lived there*", "*could not be bullied*", or "*no-*

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[5] The modal rank is the rank category with the highest frequency.

one could come and hurt them / get to them". Others however stressed the point of "*familiarity*" that made them feel safe – "*I know where everything is and can relax*".

Figure 3.2.3   Trend in places of safety
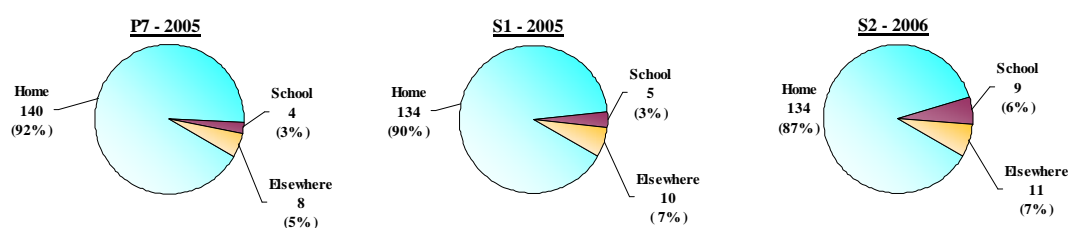
Amongst the minority who did not consider home to be the safest place, an upward trend in proportions who associated safety with school or elsewhere (8%, 10% and 13% for P7, S1 and S2 respectively) was noted. Further analysis revealed that this trend was mainly accounted for by the disproportionate number of girls who no longer regarded home as the safest place to be. As such, the percentages of girls preferring school or elsewhere as places of safety rose from 10%, to 16% to 20% respectively across P7, S1 and S2, while for boys, the corresponding figures were 6%, 4% and 7%.

The role of friends was considerably more significant for those who indicated that home was no longer the place they felt safest. This was markedly so in the case of girls. The proportion within this group (who feel safest outside home) indicating that friends are the most understanding people to talk with about important matters was significantly higher compared with those who felt safest at home. Moreover, friends were also noted as being "always there" for most of these young people. Safety for these individuals therefore rested within the bonds of friendship, and the ability to communicate on things that mattered to them.

3.3   SCHOOL

The present section examines the young people's experiences of primary school, attitudes to leaving primary school, thoughts and concerns about moving to secondary school and settling in to secondary school. In addition, it examines the young people's knowledge, use and hopes for the Peer Listening Scheme (*P.P.L. Are Here*) introduced as part of an expanded pastoral support system in the school in November 2005.

3.3.1   Attitude to school

To begin with, the young people's attitudes to school were explored. As such, they were invited to agree, disagree or say if they were uncertain about 12 statements describing school. The statements were a mix of positive and negative perceptions.

Table 3.3.1 shows, the young people, in the second cohort, were generally positive about school. They found teachers helpful, considered themselves well known at school, felt well liked at school, perceived that their parents were in favour of the school and regarded school as a happy place. Nevertheless, at most two-fifths found school work interesting, a similar proportion said they like going to school and only around a third thought that their friends liked school.

Table 3.3.1   Attitude to school

	Agree			Disagree			Not Sure		
	P7 - 2005	S1 - 2005	S2 - 2006	P7 - 2005	S1 - 2005	S2 - 2006	P7 - 2005	S1 - 2005	S2 - 2006
1. School work is interesting	34% 53	40% 59	38% 61	31% 48	31% 46	30% 48	35% 55	29% 43	32% 51
2. School work is difficult	27% 42	34% 50	36% 58	42% 65	42% 61	31% 50	31% 48	24% 35	33% 52
3. Teachers are helpful	68% 104	70% 102	66% 105	14% 22	14% 20	15% 24	18% 28	16% 24	19% 31
4. I like going to school	24% 36	40% 58	36% 58	54% 82	39% 57	40% 63	23% 35	21% 31	24% 38
5. I am well known at school	67% 102	53% 77	56% 89	11% 17	15% 22	14% 23	22% 34	32% 47	30% 47
6. I would rather be sick than go to school	22% 34	19% 27	18% 28	57% 88	63% 92	64% 101	21% 32	18% 26	18% 29
7. My teachers really know me	63% 94	36% 53	51% 82	17% 26	20% 29	19% 30	20% 30	44% 65	30% 48
8. I am well liked at school	57% 86	60% 87	61% 97	9% 13	10% 15	9% 14	34% 52	30% 43	31% 49
9. My school is too big	1% 2	6% 9	21% 34	93% 143	90% 130	68% 108	6% 9	3% 5	11% 18
10. My parents like my school	71% 109	60% 87	70% 111	5% 7	4% 6	2% 3	24% 37	35% 51	28% 45
11. My school is a happy school	65% 99	43% 62	61% 97	12% 18	19% 27	13% 20	23% 35	38% 54	27% 43
12. Most of my friends like school	27% 41	31% 45	36% 58	46% 71	33% 47	30% 48	27% 41	36% 52	33% 53

Moving from primary to secondary school was found to have an impact upon the young people's perceptions of school. Thus the familiarity enjoyed by young people at primary school, where almost two-thirds felt that their teachers knew them really well and a similar proportion felt generally well known, was lost in the first year of secondary, where only a third considered that their (new) teachers now knew them and just over half felt generally well known. However, by S2 much of this loss had been recovered with over half of the

young people agreeing that their teachers really knew them and half that they were generally well known in school, at this stage. Similarly, the drop in the proportion of young people in S1 who considered school a '*happy place*' or thought that their parents liked the school was reversed by the time they reached S2. In short, moving to secondary school could be unsettling for young people, although the effects of this transition were not necessarily long-lasting.

Differences amongst the young people surveyed suggest that girls at primary school were more likely than boys to consider teachers helpful, perceive that their parents liked the school and had friends who were also more likely to like school. At secondary school, gender was less of a factor influencing perceptions of school, although girls once again had friends who were also more likely to like school.

3.3.1.1 Overall score of attitude to school

An attempt was made to compute an overall score reflecting the young people's attitude to school.[6]

Figure 3.3.1 shows the distributions of the overall scores for young people in the second cohort. As shown, there is a process of "maturation" as the young people progress from P7 to S2. Although these responses are not strictly panel data, it can nevertheless be observed that while the distribution for young people in P7 is almost unimodal (single mode), as they progress to S1 and S2, their respective distributions appear multimodal (two modes for S1 and three in the case of S2). For example the distribution for S2 displays evidence of possibly three sub-groups: those who were moderately negative towards school, those who were moderately positive, and those who were extremely positive. No such clear-cut distinctions can be made for the P7 sample. The implication of this is that attitudes to school are more decisive as young people make the transition into early adolescence by opting for clearly positive or negative attitudes rather than taking a neutral or indecisive ground. This becomes evident when we consider the proportions of respondents scoring a net score of 0 for the three groups: 9.6%, 8.6%, and 4.4% for P7, S1 and S2 respectively. Simultaneously, the proportion of respondents with overall negative scores progressively increases: 15.3%, 19.2% and 20.6% respectively for P7, S1 and S2. The proportions of respondents with overall positive scores are roughly similar for the three groups, around three-quarters (75%).

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[6] In order to compute the score, information from the twelve statements presented for each sampled pupil was combined.. Agreement on a positive statement (items 1, 3-5, 7, 8, and 10-12) was given a code of +1, while agreement on a negative statement (items 2, 6, and 9) was assigned a code of -1. Similarly, disagreements on positive statements were assigned the code -1 and disagreements on negative statements were given a code of +1. All responses to the "Not Sure" category were given the value zero. For each pupil the total score was obtained by summing the twelve assigned values of each being -1, +1 or 0. The lowest possible score is therefore -12 and the highest possible being +12. A total score of 0 would indicate one of two possibilities: that the respondent scored as many positive scores as negative, or that a response of "Not sure" was given to all twelve items.

Figure 3.3.1   Attitude to school
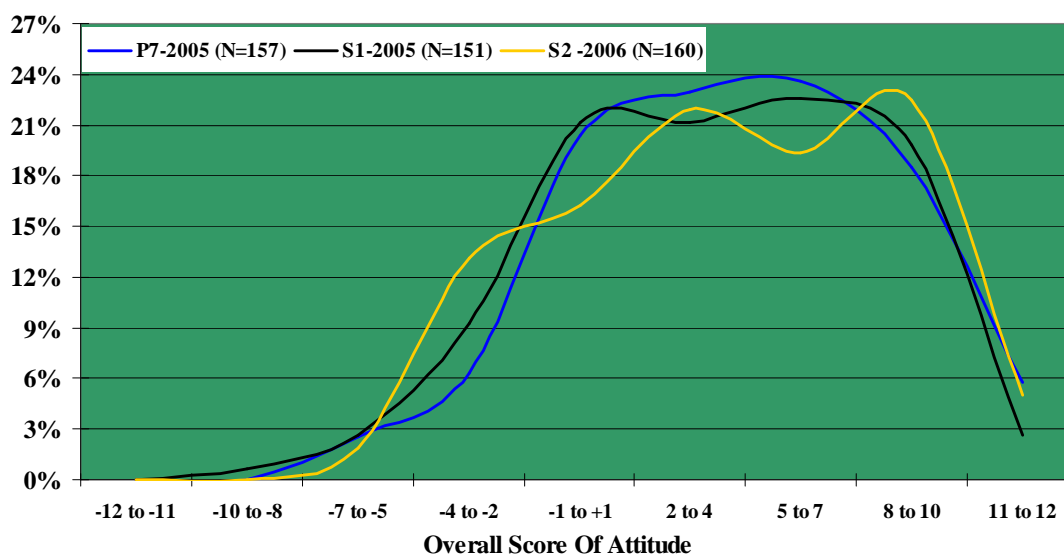
However these differences (which are for groups) should not be taken to mean that attitudes to school change radically for any given individual. To ascertain the stability of individual attitudes to school as young people made the transition to early adolescence, correlations were computed between scores of young people at primary school and the same young people at secondary school. Since this involves comparison of scores for the same individuals while they make their transition, the correlations relate to the longitudinal panel of pupils whose scores can be traced. Both Pearson's and Spearman's correlation coefficients indicate a strong association[7] between school attitudes in successive time-periods (P7 to S1, and S1 to S2), indicating that attitudes to school formed during primary schooling may be consistent with attitudes to school while in secondary school.

3.3.2   Leaving primary school

By way of further exploring attitudes to school, the young people were asked about their thoughts on leaving primary school.

As Figures 3.3.2 and 3.3.3 show, the vast majority of young people, in both cohorts, were looking forward to leaving primary school, with around three-quarters of those surveyed reporting this to be the case. Only a small percentage were not looking forward to moving on, while between 17% and 24% expressed uncertainty about the move. Asked further about what they would miss most about primary school, the most reported concerns were losing friends and no longer being amongst the oldest pupils in school (see Figure 3.3.4)

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[7] P7 & S1:   Pearson's Correlation = 0.629, and Spearman's rho = 0.603 (both significant at less than 1% with 87 degrees of freedom).

S1 & S2:   Pearson's Correlation = 0.644, and Spearman's rho = 0.656 (both significant at less than 1% with 135 degrees of freedom).

Figure 3.3.2

Looking forward to leaving primary school

P7 - 2004

Yes 124 (77%)

No 10 (6%)

Don't know 27 (17%)
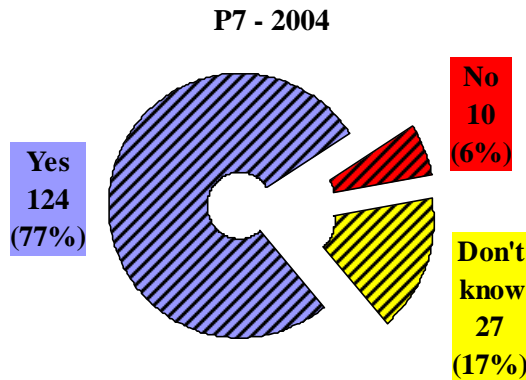
Figure 3.3.3

Looking forward to leaving primary school

P7 - 2005

Yes 110 (73%)

No 4 (3%)

Don't know 36 (24%)
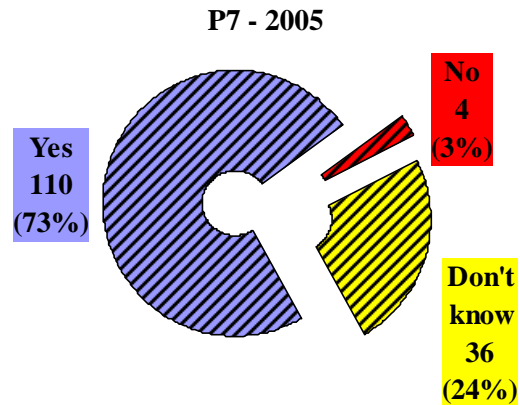
As noted, between 17% and 24% of the young people were ambivalent about leaving primary school (see Figures 3.3.2 and 3.3.3). In order to further explore this uncertainty, the responses of these young people were compared with the responses of the vast majority who did look forward to leaving with respect to the 'things' they would miss about primary school. Two concerns emerged that differentiated the groups; those uncertain about leaving primary were more likely to report that they would miss the '*playground*' and '*(primary) class teachers*'. In both cases, girls were more likely than boys to have such (additional and distinguishing) concerns.

Figure 3.3.4   Aspects of primary school that will be missed

P7 - 2004

Friends	83% (N=161)
Being one of the oldest pupils	66% (N=162)
Playground	41% (159)
Class teacher	38% (N=162)
School building	26% (N=161)
School work	16% (N=160)
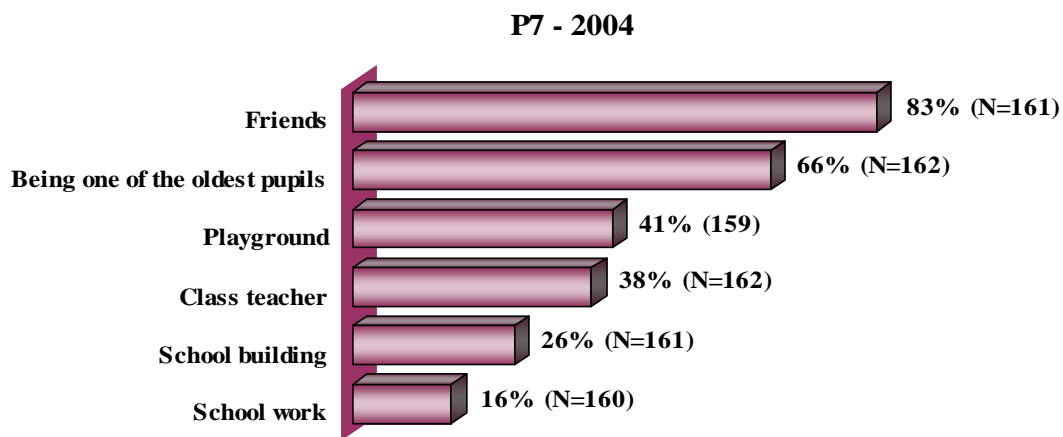
Enquiries were then made about thoughts in relation to moving to secondary school. Asked directly if they were looking forward to going to secondary school, more than four-fifths of the young people, in both cohorts, reported this to be the case, with 86% and 92% respectively doing so in June 2004 and June 2005. Only a handful of pupils were not looking forward to moving to secondary school (3%, 2%), while a minority were undecided on the matter (3%, 5%).

Figure 3.3.5

Anticipated aspects of secondary school

P7 - 2004

New friends	98%(N=160)
Treated as more grown-up	87%(N=158)
Bigger school	85%(N=158)
Having lots of teachers	73%(N=156)
Playground	65%(N=155)
School Work	43%(N=155)
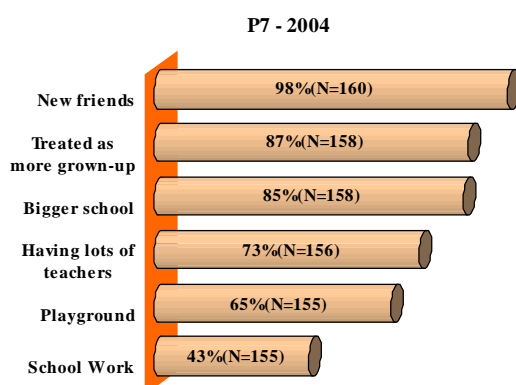
Figure 3.3.6

Anticipated aspects of secondary school

P7 - 2005

New friends	95%(N=153)
Bigger school	91%(N=152)
Treated as more grown-up	87%(N=151)
Having lots of teachers	71%(N=150)
Playground	61%(N=150)
School Work	45%(N=152)
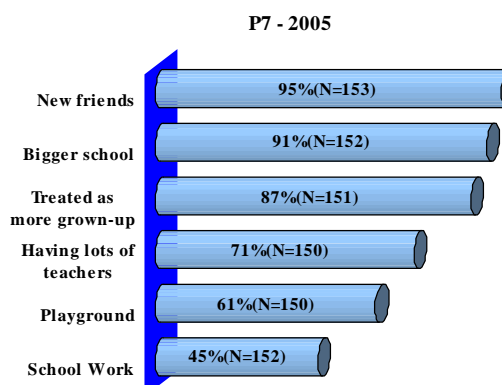
Asked further about what they were looking forward to about moving to secondary school, the most reported attractions, for both cohorts, were making new friends, being treated as more grown up and enjoying a physically bigger school environment (see Figures 3.3.5 and 3.3.6). On average, young people from both cohorts looked forward to at least 4 aspects of secondary school, with between a quarter and a third looking forward to all six features of secondary school asked about (June 2004, 27% and June 2005, 31%).

An interesting correspondence was noted between missing friends at primary school and making new friends at secondary school, and between missing being one of the oldest pupils at primary school and being treated as more grown-up at secondary school. The young people here allude to an important aspect of human emotional balance, namely, the inevitable holding of tension between seemingly contrasting emotions. New friends compensated for lost companions, and despite being one of the youngest pupils at secondary school, the prospect of being treated as more grown-up compensated for no longer being a senior pupil.

3.3.3   Worries about moving to secondary school / being a pupil at PA

The study moved on to consider the young people's thoughts about moving to secondary school and about being at pupil at secondary school. In particular, they were asked about six issues that might be of concern to them at these different stages, including worries about making new friends, having multiple teachers, school work, the playground, the (bigger) size of the school and being treated as more 'grown up'.
 In order to trace the young people's perceptions of these issues over time, longitudinal analyses were carried out on available cases. Table 3.3.2, below, shows the combinations of responses given for two consecutive time-periods: transition from P7 to S1, and transition from S1 to S2. In each case, there were four possibilities:

> 1. *No : No*   (Continued lack of worry),
> 2. *No : Yes*   (Has become a worry),
> 3. *Yes : No*   (Has Ceased to be a worry),
> 4. *Yes : Yes*   (Continued worry).

On a number of issues, the transition from P7 to S1 shows a greater proportion in the (*No : Yes*) and (*Yes : No*) categories than in the S1 to S2 transition. As such, the transition to secondary school was disruptive of young people's lives, resulting in some beginning to worry about issues that they did not worry about before, whilst others overcame previous

worries and became less anxious. This is to be expected as there is more likelihood of facing unexpected realities (both positive and negative) as they enter new surroundings. On the other hand, for young people who are already at Portlethen Academy, the S1 to S2 transition generally emphasises either a continued lack of worry (*No : No*) or a state of continued worry (*Yes : Yes*).

Table 3.3.2 below shows the numbers and percentages who indicate that a given issue has become a worry, or has remained a worry even on transition to the next grade. In other words the numbers and percentages shown represent possibilities 2) and 4) above.

Table 3.3.2   Worries about going to secondary school / Being a pupil at PA

| WORRY ABOUT SECONDARY SCHOOL | HAS BECOME A WORRY / CONTINUES TO BE A WORRY | | | |
| | P7 TO S1 TRANSITION | | S1 TO S2 TRANSITION | |
		N		N
Making new friends	20 (24%)	85	32 (25%)	129
Having lots of teachers	14 (17%)	84	25 (20%)	128
School Work	29 (35%)	84	51 (40%)	128
Playground	7 (9%)	81	7 (5%)	129
Bigger School	22 (27%)	83	26 (20%)	129
Being treated as more grown-up	11 (13%)	84	18 (14%)	128

Note: There are 90 cases that are common to the P7-2005 and the S1-2005 databases and therefore constitute the panel for the results under the "P7 TO S1 TRANSITION" column. Similarly, there are 139 cases that   form the panel for the results shown under the "SI TO S2 TRANSITION" heading.

School work appears to be a source of increasing worry as the young people progress from P7 to S2, as is the experience of having lots of teachers. Surprisingly making new friends appears to be a worry for roughly the same proportion of young people in the S1 to S2 transition as in the P7 to S1 transition. The playground and being in a bigger school are the only aspects that appear to be less of a worry by the time young people move to S2. There is no substantial evidence therefore that there is any noticeable transition effect as young people enter secondary school from primary that is over and above a base level of worry regarding aspects of secondary school.

3.3.4   Settling in at secondary school

On arriving at secondary school, the young people were asked to reflect upon the move itself and how they had settled in to a new school environment. Three-quarters of the young people had not moved school before, although a quarter had experienced moving school prior to coming to Portlethen Academy. Such moves were often linked to moves by parents in pursuit of better housing and jobs, sometimes involving long distance migration from other parts of Scotland, England and abroad. Almost all the young people had anticipated coming to

Portlethen Academy, although 7% stated that they had expected to go to some other secondary school. The vast majority of young people, in both cohorts, already knew other pupils at Portlethen Academy (i.e. brothers, sisters, other relatives and friends) before arriving at the school and most considered that knowing such pupils had made their own move to the school easier. Such contacts were valued for the practical help they could offer (e.g. *'they would show me about and guide me to class.'*) as well as the emotional support they could provide (e.g. *'I knew that they would be there for me')*. In addition, knowing someone at the school was seen as a guard against bullying.

The young people were next asked about their induction into Portlethen Academy. In particular, they were asked about 11 measures put in place by Portlethen Academy and the associated primary schools to ease the transition.

Table 3.3.3   Useful activities that helped settling in to Portlethen Academy

ACTIVITY	Percentage indicating "Useful"	
	S1 - 2004	S1 - 2005
Visit to see Portlethen Academy	97% (133)	96% (141)
Guidance staff at Portlethen Academy	93% (112)	94% (125)
Meeting teachers on visit to Portlethen Academy	92% (118)	87% (132)
Meeting other pupils on visit to Portlethen Academy	91% (127)	93% (129)
Teachers from Portlethen Academy visiting Primary school	89% (99)	90% (108)
Things learned from parents after Parents Evening	81% (96)	74% (86)
Portlethen Academy Smart Start (PASS)	75% (51)	76% (42)
Portlethen Academy Transition Group	73% (37)	Not Applicable
Written information about Portlethen Academy	70% (81)	57% (95)
'Support for Learners' project	70% (40)	65% (40)
'Link' project for Maths	70% (63)	56% (48)

Note: The total number of valid cases applicable to a given item is given in parenthesis.

As Table 3.3.3 shows, all eleven measures were well regarded by the vast majority of pupils from both cohorts, with visits to the school (97%, 96%), guidance staff (93%, 94%), meeting other teachers (92%, 87%) and meeting other pupils (91%, 93%) the most useful measures reported. Targeted activities, aimed at particular groups of young people requiring additional support (i.e. PASS scheme, 'Transition Group', 'Support for Learners' and the 'Link' project), received less endorsement but were nonetheless well thought of by the vast majority who experienced them. Differences were few amongst the two cohorts, although the initial cohort in June 2004 appeared to welcome written information about the school more so that their counterparts in June 2005.

Reflecting later on the move, in a focus group discussion in June 2005, there was a feeling that an extra day of induction activity in school, would have been welcomed.

Clearly exposure to secondary school (including teachers and pupils) prior to leaving P7 is an important aspect in helping make the transition from primary school easier. This is emphasised further when the young people were asked what else could have been done by the schools (both primary and Portlethen Academy) to ease the transition.

Table 3.3.4 Other things that could have been done to make the move easier

ACTIVITY	Percentage responding "Yes"	
	S1 - 2004	S1 - 2005
Meeting more teachers at Portlethen Academy	68% (146)	74% (145)
More visits to Portlethen Academy	66% (148)	72% (152)
Meeting more pupils at Portlethen Academy	61% (146)	60% (146)
Visiting Portlethen Academy earlier e.g. P6	41% (145)	36% (148)
Visits to Portlethen Academy with parent(s)	37% (147)	37% (148)
More information on the web	32% (146)	22% (148)
More written information on Portlethen Academy	21% (146)	15% (149)

Note: The total number of valid cases applicable to a given item is given in parenthesis.

As Table 3.3.4 shows, notwithstanding the recognition of existing arrangements with respect to visiting the school and meeting with teachers and pupils, more activities of this kind would have been welcomed by the young people before moving to Portlethen Academy. Such 'exposure' to people and places was clearly sought as a way of allaying concerns about what secondary school might involve. By contrast, additional written information was not regarded as similarly useful.

By way of closing the enquiry about moving to secondary school, the young people were asked about how well they had settled in after three months at Portlethen Academy. As such they were asked how well they thought they 'fitted in', both socially and academically.

As Figures 3.3.7 and 3.3.8 show, for young people in the S1-2005 and S2-2006 cohort[8], a clear distinction emerged with respect to the two dimensions of settling in, with young people far more likely to report feeling settled socially than academically. As such, while the vast majority of pupils reported that they fitted-in well socially, only two-thirds reported a similar feeling of fitting-in with respect to school work (i.e. coping with new subjects, homework). Between a quarter and a third of pupils felt that they would learn to cope academically in due course. However a small minority felt that they might not fit-in to secondary school either socially or academically.

There is negligible difference between the two cohorts. Both show more tentativeness with respect to fitting in with school work than fitting in socially. However, these results do not indicate the shifts that may take place in the way individual pupils respond at the two different times. In order to assess this, comparisons were made of the responses of a longitudinal panel of 136 young people who appear in both samples. There is an overwhelming correspondence between the responses given at S1 and those given at S2[9].

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[8] Although not included in the graphics, this item was presented to the S1-2004 cohort also. The proportions of responses for each of the response categories for fitting in socially are as follows: I FIT IN WELL – 89%; I WILL FIT IN EVENTUALLY – 7.3%; I MIGHT NOT FIT IN – 1.3%; I WILL NEVER FIT IN – 2.7%. Similarly, the results for fitting in terms of school work are: I FIT IN WELL – 65%; I WILL FIT IN EVENTUALLY – 29%; I MIGHT NOT FIT IN – 3%; I WILL NEVER FIT IN – 3%. The choice of S1-2005 and S2-2006 cohorts for the graphics is based on the rationale of greater commonality of respondents within these two samples, thus making clear any shifts in perception as pupils progress from S1 to S2.
[9] Pearson's Chi-square tests for both fitting in socially and fitting in with respect to school work are significant at less than 1% level of statistical significance, indicating an almost identical response pattern for the two time-periods.

| Figure 3.3.7 | Fitting in socially | Figure 3.3.8 | Fitting in school work |
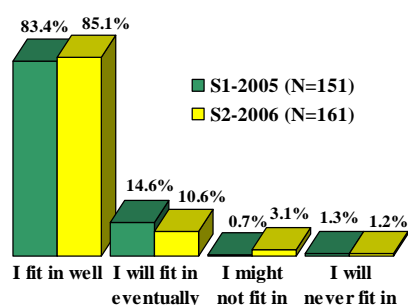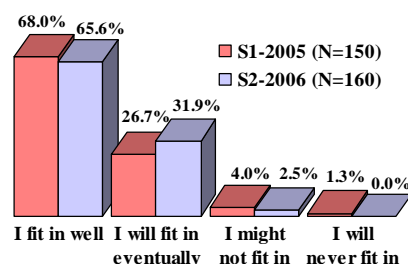
Finally, the young people were asked to sum up their perception of secondary school compared with primary school. The vast majority of young people, in both cohorts, regarded secondary school as better than primary school (85%). Asked to explain such an assessment, the young people highlighted a range of positive secondary school experiences including the greater variety of teachers, better school meals, being treated as more grown up and more freedom to move around the school. For the minority of pupils who considered secondary school worse than primary school, academic work and loneliness were factors which coloured their perception.

3.3.5 Preferred contacts in case of concerns or worries

The study moved on to enquire about the young people's sources of emotional and other support in (secondary) school. As such, they were asked who they would talk with at school if they had concerns or worries.

Table 3.3.5   Preferred contacts in case of concerns or worries

S1 - 2005		S2 – 2006	
Guidance teacher	(**82%;** N=143)	Same-sex friends	(**80%;** N=153)
Same-sex friends	(**80%;** N=142)	Guidance teacher	(**79%;** N=156)
DCT tutor	(45%; N=135)	Opposite-sex friends	(50%; N=149)
Year Head	(45%; N=133)	Year Head	(40%; N=144)
Older pupils	(43%; N=133)	School Nurse	(38%; N=144)
Opposite-sex friends	(41%; N=133)	DCT tutor	(35%; N=145)
School Nurse	(36%; N=132)	Older pupils	(29%; N=143)
Head Teacher	(29%; N=134)	Head Teacher	(23%; N=146)
Subject teachers	(26%; N=129)	Subject teachers	(18%; N=145)
Other adults at school	(6%; N=120)	Other adults at school	(4%; N=135)

<u>**Note:**</u> **Ranked in descending order of importance.**

As Table 3.3.5 shows, the young people's confidants changed over time. With exception of a willingness to consult with friends of the opposite sex and the school nurse, the young people were less inclined to talk with any of the specified groups. Of particular note, was the apparent decline in the willingness of the young people to confide in older pupils by the time they reach S2, given the development of the peer listening scheme at the school.

3.3.6   Portlethen Academy Peer Listening Scheme (PPL)

Enquiries were made about the young people's knowledge, understanding, experience and interest in the peer listening scheme. In terms of knowledge of the scheme, four-fifths of the young people were aware of the scheme, as S1 pupils, in November 2005 (82%, n=116), while around three-quarters were similarly informed, as S2 pupils, in September 2006 (72%, n=111). Girls were more likely than boys to report knowing about the scheme at both time periods. Asked about the usefulness of the scheme, four main topics were consistently reported as suitable topics for the scheme to deal with: bullying, problems with friends, exam stress and talking about feelings (see table 3.3.6). In addition, it was felt that the scheme could help support young people's concerns in relation to a range of other issues including health, school and family matters.

With respect to actual experience of the peer listening scheme, only two pupils in S1 (2005) and three pupils in S2 (2006) reported having used the scheme, although another ten young people in 2005 and twelve young people in 2006 indicated an intention to do so. 62% of pupils in S1 (2005) and 72% of pupils in S2 (2006) suggested that they did not think they would use the scheme while 28% and 19% respectively, were uncertain about future use. Once again, girls were more favourably disposed towards the scheme than boys.

Table 3.3.6   Issues that PPL could help with

S1 - 2005		S2 – 2006	
Bullying	(98%; N=119)	Bullying	(93%; N=139)
Problems with friends	(93%; N=117)	Talking about feelings	(90%; N=133)
Exam stress	(90%; N=103)	Exam stress	(89%; N=132)
Talking about feelings	(90%; N=115)	Problems with friends	(89%; N=137)
Homework problems	(84%; N=110)	Homework problems	(88%; N=133)
Drugs/Solvent/Alcohol problems	(82%; N= 97)	Schoolwork problems	(87%; N=133)
Schoolwork problems	(82%; N=113)	Problems with teachers	(80%; N=127)
Problems with teachers	(77%; N=113)	Drugs/Solvent/Alcohol problems	(76%; N=123)
Truancy	(64%; N= 72)	Family problems	(57%; N=129)
Family problems	(55%; N=105)	Health problems	(54%; N=118)
Health problems	(49%; N=100)	Truancy	(51%; N=117)
Lateness	(44%; N= 96)	Lateness	(50%; N=120)
Other problems	(8%; N= 51)	Other problems	(23%; N= 62)

Note: *Ranked in descending order of importance.*

Enquiries were made about the suitability of pupils from various year groups to act as peer listeners. As Figure 3.3.9 shows, senior pupils from years S5 and S6 were considered the most suitable peer listeners and this preference persisted across time. Few young people (in S1 or S2) considered that pupils from their own year groups would make suitable peer listeners. Later enquiries suggested that '*experience*' and the successful tackling of issues facing junior pupils were qualities sought after in peer listeners, both of which came with maturity. Nevertheless, in both S1 and S2 responses, young people's own peers are rated higher than the expected trend. For example, the declining pattern of S1 - 2005 responses is reversed for the S1 year group (20% for S1 year group as suitable listeners versus only 15%

for S2 year group as suitable listeners). This may reflect the perceived empathy pupils feel they have with their own peers on certain issues, which they may feel cannot be obtained elsewhere.

Figure 3.3.9   Suitability of year groups as Peer Listeners
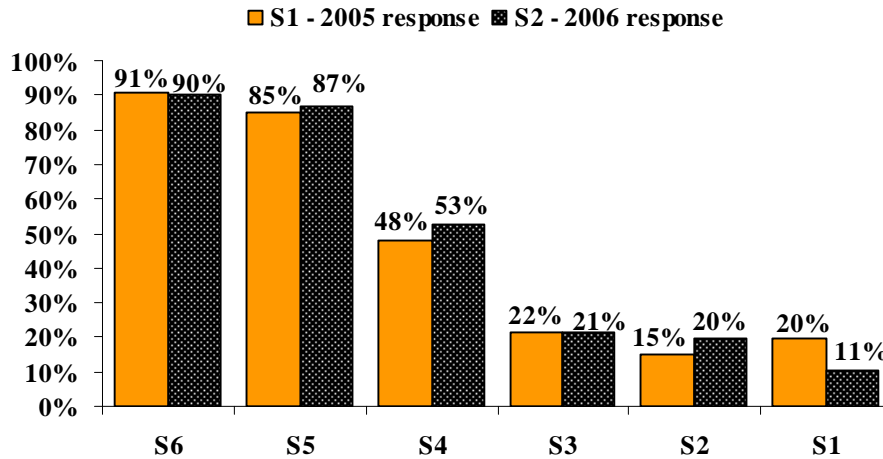
By way of closing the enquiry about the peer listening scheme, the young people were asked whether they themselves would consider becoming peer listeners in the future. Around a third expressed an interest in doing so, a third were uncertain, while the remaining third were disinclined to become involved in this way (see Figure 3.3.10).

Figure 3.3.10   Intention of becoming Peer Listeners
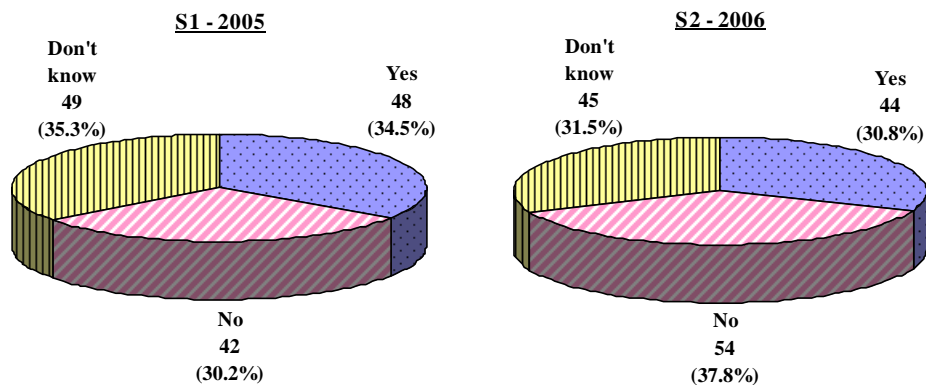
3.3.7   Seeking help outwith family

Finally, the young people were asked if they would ever talk to someone who was not a member of their family in case of problems at school, home or elsewhere and if so, who they might confide in.

Overall, more than two-thirds of the young people were willing to seek help from outwith the family, with 68% (n=104), 68% (n=93) and 71% (n=106) of young people in P7, S1 and S2 respectively, reporting this to be the case. Girls were far more likely than boys to be willing to seek support from outwith the family.

With respect to the types of people you people would turn to for support outwith the family, an attempt was made to rank their responses, over time.

Table 3.3.7   Ranking of non-family confidants

P7 - 2005	S1 - 2005	S2 - 2006
A friend (same sex)	A friend (same sex)	A friend (same sex)
Class teacher	Guidance teacher	Guidance teacher
A friend (opposite sex)	A friend (opposite sex)	A friend (opposite sex)
Head teacher	DCT tutor	School nurse
Playground supervisors	Year head	DCT tutor
Other teachers	School nurse	Year head
A youth leader	Subject teachers	A police officer
A police officer	A youth leader	A youth leader
School nurse	Head teacher	A social worker
A social worker	A police officer	Head teacher
A telephone help-line	A telephone help-line	Subject teachers
School janitor	A social worker	A telephone help-line
Other person	School minister/chaplain	Other person
School minister/chaplain	Other person	School janitor
	School janitor	School minister/chaplain

As Table 3.3.7 shows, in line with previous findings, friends have a prominent place as confidants in the lives of young people. Similarly, it would appear that pupils have an equally valuable rapport with guidance teachers (class teachers in the case of primary pupils). Amongst the other professions, social workers and the Police appear to gain prominence by the time pupils reach S2. This may indicate a greater knowledge by this stage of the particular roles these professions have. It is worth re-emphasising the remarks made earlier with regard to the increasing and prominent role of the school nurse (see Section 3.3.4). At Portlethen Academy she is regarded as an important source of support for the young people. As in the case of the other sources listed here this may be seen as a particular relationship at Portlethen Academy rather than a general finding. Also, the slippage in the ranking of any particular source may not necessarily imply a negative trend. This may be due to the natural course of other sources taking their proper place in being available to pupils as trustworthy confidants (e.g. Head teacher).

3.4   FEELINGS

The present section explores the emotional life of the young people. Accordingly, it reports on the types of feelings young people experienced, responses to such feelings, the acceptability of certain feelings, recognising feelings in other people and the situational dimension of feelings. The following was found.

3.4.1   Experience of strong feelings

To begin with young people were invited to indicate whether or not they had experienced any of 16 specified feelings in the previous week.

Table 3.4.1   Experience of strong feelings during the week before survey

FEELING	P7-2004 %	P7-2004 N	S1-2004 %	S1-2004 N	P7-2005 %	P7-2005 N	S1-2005 %	S1-2005 N	S2-2006 %	S2-2006 N
Afraid	52%	165	**36%**	148	46%	156	**34%**	149	35%	159
Happy	98%	163	96%	149	99%	153	97%	151	99%	159
Angry	60%	163	**70%**	148	62%	154	67%	149	77%	159
Confused	63%	165	71%	148	70%	155	72%	151	**82%**	159
Excited	94%	164	91%	148	94%	155	89%	151	94%	159
Bored	75%	165	**90%**	146	76%	154	**87%**	151	94%	157
Upset	43%	162	42%	146	45%	156	45%	148	47%	158
Content	71%	156	65%	141	73%	142	65%	136	75%	150
Sad	42%	165	40%	148	47%	153	43%	148	48%	154
Worried	54%	164	48%	147	52%	156	43%	147	47%	157
Unwanted	29%	165	27%	147	28%	155	29%	149	30%	156
Love	60%	164	59%	143	58%	154	63%	147	70%	154
Jealous	20%	164	23%	146	23%	153	22%	147	**32%**	157
Hopeful	80%	161	**70%**	148	84%	154	80%	147	80%	156
Confident	93%	164	**85%**	148	89%	154	86%	147	90%	157
In Control	73%	162	71%	146	74%	156	68%	146	76%	157

Note: *Highlighted percentages indicate a significant change over the previous time-period. Significance is based on a two-tailed test at a probability level of 0.05 or less.*

As Table 3.4.1 shows, a wide range of emotions was experienced by the young people, in both cohorts. Across time, the four most reported emotions were feeling happy, excited, confident and (less positively) bored. Variations in such feelings was also noted, with boredom becoming a common feeling amongst the young people as they moved from primary school to secondary school and as they moved within secondary school between S1 and S2. Other significant changes in feelings amongst the young people were the increase in feelings of confusion and jealousy by the time they reached S2, amongst the 2005 intake to Portlethen Academy (i.e. second cohort). Similarly the feeling of anger increased steadily amongst young people in both cohorts. More positively, a reduction in the proportion of young people who felt afraid was noted amongst secondary school pupils.

In order to assess gender variations in the experience of feelings, differences in the proportions of boys and girls indicating experiences of the types of feelings were examined. Figure 3.4.1 shows the gender difference in the range of feelings looked at, by cohort.

As Figure, 3.4.1 shows, most observed differences indicate that girls in general report a higher incidence of a given type of feeling than boys. Hence the significant gender differences shown mostly depict proportions of girls significantly higher than the proportions of boys. With respect to feeling "*upse*t", "*love*" and "*jealous*" proportionally more girls in the P7-2005, S1-2005 and S2-2006 cohorts experiencing these feelings. Similarly, girls were more likely than boys to report feeling "*bored*" although this was the case only for young people in secondary school and amongst the second cohort.   Finally, and contrary to the general pattern that girls were more likely than boys to report experiencing (a range of) feelings, boys in S1, in both cohorts, were more likely than girls to report feeling "*in control*".

Figure 3.4.1   Significant gender differences in experience of strong feelings

FEELING	P7-2004	S1-2004	P7-2005	S1-2005	S2-2006
Afraid			**		
Happy					
Angry	**				
Confused			*		**
Excited	**	*	*		
Bored				**	**
Upset			**	**	**
Content		*			
Sad			**	*	
Worried			**		
Unwanted					
Love		**	**	**	**
Jealous		**	**	*	**
Hopeful	*				
Confident					
In Control	§§		§§		

** = *Proportion of girls reporting experience is significantly higher than that of boys at statistical significance of 5% or less.*

* = *Proportion of girls reporting experience is significantly higher than that of boys at statistical significance of 10% or less.*

§§ = *Proportion of boys reporting experience is significantly higher than that of girls at statistical significance of 5% or less.*

The above results are based on a crude score of the numbers of young people who reported experiencing such feelings either "*a few times*" or "*lots of times*" in the past week. As such each of these alternatives is given equal weighting in the results shown so far. However, in order to nuance the degree of experience of the given types of feelings, an aggregate score that takes account of the gradation implied in the choice of response was calculated for each respondent. The gradation is based on the arbitrary choice of a value of 0.5 for the response "*a few times*", and a value of 1.0 for the response "*lots of times*"[10].

In order to obtain an overall score, two types of aggregates were first computed – one for negative types of feelings (such as "*afraid*", "*angry*", "*upset*"), and the other for positive feelings (such as "*happy*", "*content*", "*in control*"). Since there are nine negative types and seven positive types, the aggregate score on positive feelings was scaled up to a possible maximum score of 9 to correspond to the possible maximum score obtainable for negative types of feelings. These two aggregates were then summed to give an overall net score of experience of feelings. Figure 3.4.2 displays the frequency distributions of overall net scores of feelings experienced for the second cohort as P7-2005, S1-2005 and S2-2006.

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[10] The third possible response to the question about the frequency of feelings experienced in the past week, "*never*", is assigned a zero value.

Figure 3.4.2   Frequency distributions of net score of strong feelings
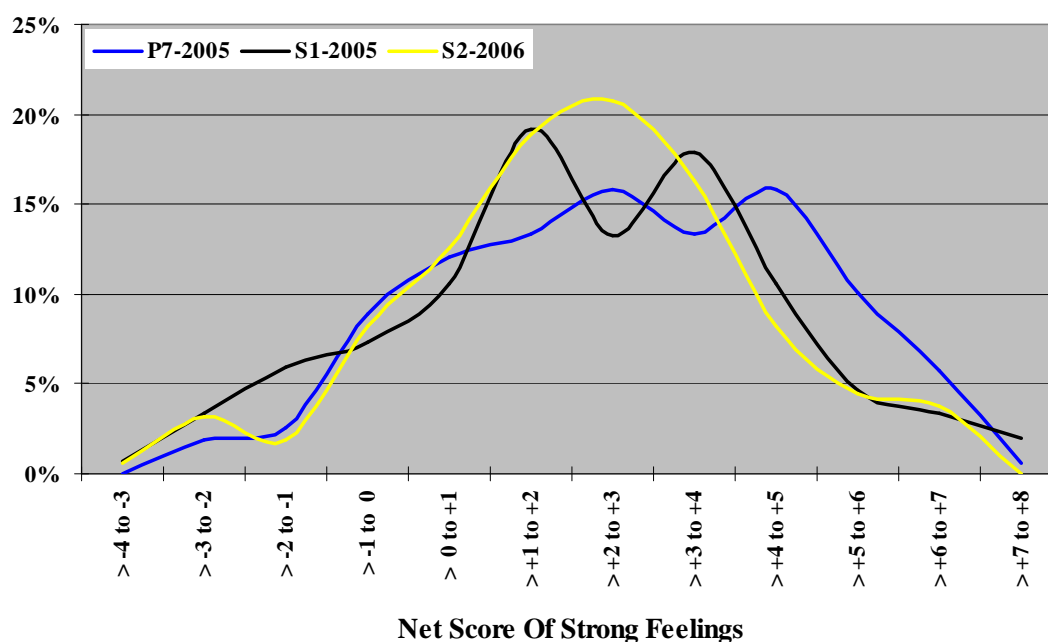
	P7-2005	**S1-2005**	**S2-2006**
Mean	+2.911	+2.295	+2.308
Standard Deviation	2.194	2.477	2.192
Number of valid cases	158	151	159

For all three groups shown here, the average net score of feelings experienced is positive indicating that on balance the young people surveyed have more positive than negative feelings. The reduction in the mean figures at the secondary school stage from the mean of P7-2005 suggests a "maturing" phenomenon when the largely positive experiences of earlier childhood are somewhat tempered by the realities of growing up, part of which is undoubtedly the move to secondary school itself. This is more clearly seen in the graphical presentation in Figure 3.4.3 where the proportions for P7-2005 are higher than those for S1-2005 and S2-2006.

The profile of feelings experienced for young people in S1-2005 is interesting both in its higher variability (the standard deviation for this cohort of higher than for the others), and its bimodal nature. The combination of the settling-in process at secondary school and the developmental aspects of growing up possibly reflect an "in-between" characteristic for this cohort. By S2, the incidences of the various experiences of feelings more or less settle in to a near-Normal distribution with roughly equal balancing of net negative and net positive scores.

3.4.2   Communication of feelings

Enquiries were made about how the young people responded to feelings. In particular, they were asked if they spoke to someone about their feelings or kept their feelings to themselves. The following was found:

Table 3.4.2   Speaking to someone about feelings

| | P7-2005 | | | | S1-2005 | | | | S2-2006 | | | |
| | boy | | girl | | boy | | girl | | boy | | girl | |
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Afraid	45	82	69	72	41	74	57	67	25	84	62	69
Happy	57	81	76	74	54	74	75	69	59	82	85	68
Angry	51	80	74	73	45	75	61	69	44	84	66	68
Confused	64	81	82	73	62	76	74	68	57	84	86	70
Excited	63	81	78	72	51	75	73	67	53	83	79	70
Bored	49	81	53	73	44	75	67	67	49	83	72	69
Upset	46	81	77	73	37	76	72	67	39	84	75	69
Content	35	77	54	74	33	69	49	61	34	80	50	66
Sad	41	80	74	74	37	75	62	65	36	84	72	67
Worried	58	79	81	74	47	75	69	67	43	84	81	67
Unwanted	46	79	56	75	33	73	51	65	27	84	58	66
Love	33	80	43	74	32	74	51	67	30	81	65	68
Jealous	19	79	36	73	16	73	35	66	14	83	31	64
Hopeful	51	80	64	74	43	74	58	67	46	83	64	66
Confident	55	80	61	74	49	75	62	66	52	83	67	67
In Control	38	80	53	74	36	75	35	65	35	84	39	67

Note: Highlighted percentages indicate a significant gender difference. Significance is based on a two-tailed test at a probability level of 0.05 or less.

As Table 3.4.2 shows, across the 16 different feelings asked about the proportion of girls who communicate a given feeling is higher than the proportion of boys for all groups. By S2, this significant gender difference becomes even more marked. As such, girls were more likely than boys to report feeling *afraid, happy, angry, confused, excited, upset, content, sad, worried, jealous* and *in control,* in P7.   In S1, girls were more likely than boys to report feeling *afraid, happy, excited, bored, upset, sad, worried, unwanted, love* and *jealous.* By S2, girls were more likely than boys to report experiencing every feeling asked about, with the exception of feeling *in control,* where no gender difference was found.

Looking further at the experience of feelings <u>within</u> genders over time, boys were less likely to report feeling *afraid* by the time they got to S2 of secondary school. As such, while two-fifths of boys report such a feeling in primary school, only a quarter did so by the time they reached the second year of secondary school. Elsewhere, girls were less likely to report feeling *in control* over time, with just over a third reporting this to be the case in S2 of secondary school compared with more than half doing so in primary school.

Further enquiries were made about how the young people managed their feelings. In particular, they were asked about how easy it was for them to communicate 'bad' feelings (i.e. unhappy, angry, bored, jealous etc.) and how easy it was for them to communicate 'good' feelings (i.e. happy, excited, confident, relaxed). In both cases the questions related to the ease with which they could let a specified range of 'significant others' (i.e. parents, siblings, friends, teachers, other adults etc.) know how they felt. Figures 3.4.3 and 3.4.4 show the relative rankings of the various types of individuals to whom the young people find it easy to confide their feelings, both negative and positive.

Figure 3.4.3   **Figure 3.4.4**

Ease Of Communicating Negative Feelings   **Ease Of Communicating Positive Feelings**
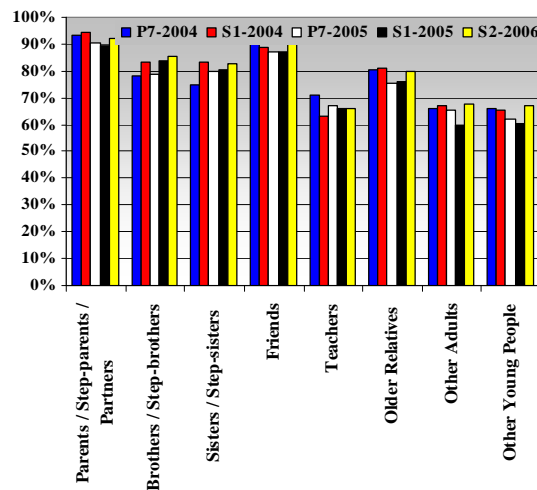
Overall the young people felt it easier to express positive feelings to others than negative feelings. Also, whilst the young people appeared willing to share positive feelings with a wide range of people, they were less inclined to share negative feelings in the same way. As such, they were more selective in sharing negative feelings, preferring to confide in parents or friends as opposed to other contacts such as teachers or siblings.

Further analyses were carried out to examine possible gender differences amongst the young people with respect to the ease of communicating both negative and positive feelings with the specified range of significant others.

Figure 3.4.5   Significant gender differences: Finding it easy to express negative & positive feelings

	Negative Feelings			Positive Feelings		
	P7-2005	S1-2005	S2-2006	P7-2005	S1-2005	S2-2006
Parents / Step-parents / Partners						**
Brothers / Step-brothers						**
Sisters / Step-sisters						
Friends	**		**		**	**
Teachers			*	*	*	**
Older Relatives						
Other Adults	**	**		*		
Other Young People		*			*	**

** = *Proportion of girls is significantly higher than that of boys at statistical significance of 5% or less.*

* = *Proportion of girls is significantly higher than that of boys at statistical significance of 10% or less.*

As Figure 3.4.5 shows, with the exception of communicating (both negative and positive) feelings with sisters / step-sisters and older relatives, girls were more likely than boys at every stage to be able to communicate how they felt with a wide range of others. This heightened ability to communicate suggested that, over time, girls made more use of friends, teachers and other young people to let them know when they felt 'good' and friends and other adults when they felt 'bad'. Also, by the time girls were in S2 of secondary, they were more likely than boys to share positive feelings with parents and brothers / step-brothers.

3.4.3   Acceptability of feelings

The study moved on to explore the acceptability of having certain types of feelings. As previously, the young people were invited to comment upon 16 specified feelings which were ranked (hierarchically) in terms of acceptability thus: 1 = not okay; 2 = probably not okay; 3 = probably okay; 4 = okay.

Of the sixteen types of feelings presented, "*unwanted*" was the least acceptable and "*happy*" was the most acceptable for both cohorts. As such, the young people demonstrated their commitment to wider social norms by prizing happiness above other feelings. In addition, they alluded to the vulnerability of youth in particular by highlighting the unacceptability of not being on the 'outside'. Being included is a major concern of being young.

Attempts were made to define an overall measure of the acceptability of feelings. Given that each young person had assigned one of the four hierarchical codes to each of the sixteen types of feelings, it was possible to calculate (for each respondent) a mean score of acceptability across these sixteen items. Taking a grand average of these individual means, we then have an overall average score of acceptability for each cohort. Figures 3.4.6 and 3.4.7 show these

grand average scores for each cohort separately for negative types of feelings and positive types of feelings respectively.

Figure 3.4.6
Acceptability of negative feelings
(Average Scores)
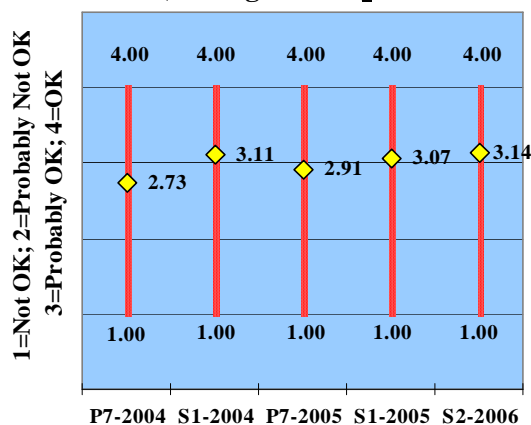
Figure 3.4.7
Acceptability of positive feelings
(Average Scores)
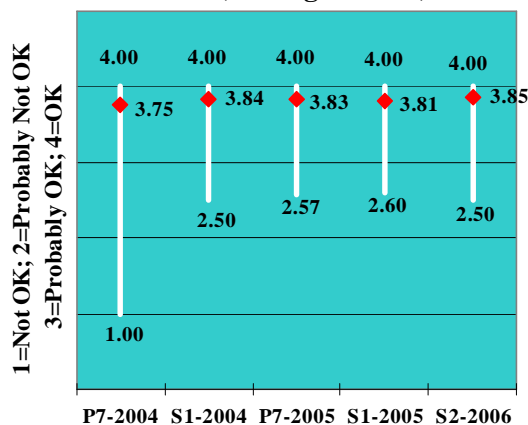
The sample numbers for each cohort are as follows:

(P7-2004: **163**); (S1-2004: **146**[11]); (P7-2005: **156**); (S1-2005: **140**); (S2-2006: **150**).

On average therefore there is evidence of a general acceptance of a range of feelings, including negative ones which get a score roughly equivalent to "*probably okay*" along a continuum that goes from '*not ok*' to '*okay*' (see Figure 3.4.6 where the grand average scores range from 2.73 to 3.14).

Further analyses[12] were carried out on the grand average scores in order to test for differences between boys and girls within a cohort. The only significant differences found were amongst young people in the first cohort S1-2004 for negative feelings, and within the second cohort S2-2006 for positive feelings. In both cases proportionally more girls indicate acceptability of feelings.

3.4.4 Recognition of feelings in others

The young people were next asked to identify the feelings they saw most in other people i.e. happy, sad, excited, bored, angry, worried etc.. The responses were subsequently categorised into perceived 'positive' (i.e. happy, excited etc.) and 'negative' (i.e. sad, worried etc.) dispositions in others. As Table 3.4.3 shows, almost all types of people asked about were regarded as having 'positive' dispositions characterised by being (mainly) '*happy*' or '*excited*'. The only possible exception to this assessment were teachers who were perceived by a large proportion of young people as having 'negative' dispositions linked to being '*angry*' or '*bored*'. Elsewhere, there was evidence that step-parents were less favourably perceived than biological parents, although step-parents overall were regarded as having positive dispositions.

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[11] Excepting the sample for negative feelings which is based on 144 cases.
[12] T-test were performed with differences reported at the 5% level or less

Table 3.4.3   Recognition of feelings in others

	P7-2005				S1-2005				S2-2006			
	Positive Feelings		Negative Feelings		Positive Feelings		Negative Feelings		Positive Feelings		Negative Feelings	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Mum	86	125	7	10	89	114	7	9	85	123	8	11
Step-Mum / Partner	81	17	14	3	86	12	7	1	83	10	17	2
Dad	82	116	7	10	85	106	9	11	82	114	10	14
Step-Dad / Partner	69	18	23	6	84	16	11	2	73	16	23	5
Brothers / Step-Brothers	76	70	16	15	81	64	15	12	81	77	18	17
Sisters / Step-Sisters	76	57	19	14	82	51	15	9	84	58	13	9
Friends	93	136	5	7	90	113	5	6	94	132	4	6
Teachers	57	80	31	44	45	53	40	47	51	69	34	46
Older Relatives	82	113	8	11	82	97	8	10	87	113	7	9
Other Adults	73	97	9	12	77	73	6	6	76	84	7	8
Other Young People	78	104	10	13	80	77	3	3	85	93	5	6

Note: *Positive feelings are "Happy" and "Excited". Negative feelings are "Sad", "Bored", "Angry", and "Worried". The category "Other" is not included in the above table and hence the sum of the percentages for positive feelings and negative feelings do not add to 100%.*

3.4.5   Location of feelings

Finally, recognising that feelings can be situational, the young people were invited to indicate where they were most likely to experience the feelings previously asked about. As such, they were invited to choose between 'school', 'home' or 'elsewhere' as the location where they '*most often*' had those feelings.

As Table 3.4.4 shows, home was the setting in which the majority of young people experienced 'positive' feelings (e.g. happiness, excitement, love). However, home was the place where some of the most negative feelings occurred too (e.g. sadness, anger, upset). School was associated with feeling '*confused', 'bored'* ,'*worried'*, '*jealous'* and '*unwanted'* but, more positively, it was also associated with feelings of '*confidence'*.

Given the previous finding about the unacceptability of feeling '*unwanted'*, it is interesting to note that while the feeling is most commonly associated with school, with half of the (minority) of young people who reported experiencing this feeling doing so in this setting, up to a third of young people who felt '*unwanted'* identified the feeling with home.

Table 3.4.4   **Association Of Places With Feelings**
                         (*h* = **Home**; *s* = **School**; *e* = **Elsewhere**)

	P7-2005				S1-2005				S2-2006			
	h	*s*	*e*	N	*h*	*s*	*e*	N	*h*	*s*	*e*	N
Afraid	18%	32%	51%	108	11%	43%	46%	83	15%	37%	48%	85
Happy	63%	16%	21%	147	76%	15%	10%	123	68%	15%	17%	134
Angry	37%	28%	35%	139	44%	31%	25%	104	39%	38%	23%	122
Confused	11%	77%	11%	140	9%	80%	11%	121	14%	79%	7%	126
Excited	59%	18%	23%	144	67%	16%	17%	123	52%	25%	23%	132
Bored	19%	66%	14%	149	22%	67%	11%	126	25%	68%	6%	139
Upset	38%	31%	31%	123	46%	25%	29%	92	33%	33%	33%	90
Content	57%	19%	24%	115	53%	32%	15%	87	42%	37%	21%	105
Sad	41%	31%	28%	123	49%	21%	29%	89	32%	32%	35%	96
Worried	26%	47%	28%	129	28%	56%	16%	94	19%	55%	27%	108
Unwanted	22%	46%	32%	82	33%	47%	20%	51	32%	44%	24%	66
Love	50%	25%	25%	118	45%	36%	19%	102	42%	32%	26%	113
Jealous	28%	44%	28%	78	21%	40%	39%	57	24%	51%	24%	74
Hopeful	41%	36%	23%	137	52%	32%	16%	111	41%	40%	20%	123
Confident	37%	52%	11%	136	33%	54%	14%	110	35%	49%	16%	131
In Control	41%	31%	28%	110	44%	33%	23%	94	43%	29%	28%	104

Note: *The sum of the percentages for Home, School and Elsewhere may not add exactly to 100% due to rounding.*

3.5   DEVELOPMENT AND CHANGE

This final section attempts to consolidate the various pieces of information pertaining to emotional wellbeing that have been presented in the previous sections with a view to presenting the fundamental structures that typify the samples of pupils surveyed. Emotional wellbeing has been described as a composite construct that includes not only (arguably) innate personality traits but also dimensions that are acquired and nurtured through social interaction. The survey tool used for this study evidently elicits, through self-report, some of the factors that contribute toward emotional wellbeing. Thus far in this chapter these have been presented singly; the following attempts to bring together these disparate measures to construct composite indicators of emotional wellbeing. In addition, these will be further analysed to reveal the underlying taxonomy of the samples.

3.5.1 Measuring Emotional Well-Being

The survey questionnaires elicited several pieces of information which clearly pertain to the notion of emotional wellbeing. However, the number of such measures available from the surveys makes it difficult to have a rounded view of any given respondent's locus on a conceivable space of emotional wellbeing. This necessitates a methodology for reducing the dimensionality of the survey data in order that we may have a parsimonious yet comprehensive picture of how the individuals sampled are spread across such a space. Principal Components Analysis (PCA) was used.[13]

For the three groups that made up the second cohort (i.e. P7-2005, S1-2005 and S2-2006), PCA was performed on thirteen variables from the surveys all of which measure differing aspects of emotional wellbeing. The method identifies the underlying factors by seeking the most optimal combinations of the original variables provided. Moreover, it also indicates a ranking of importance of these new-found factors making it possible to ignore the less important factors.[14] In order to keep interpretation simple and focused, only the two most important factors (more precisely, the first two principal components) resulting from the analyses will be discussed. Table 3.5.1 displays (for the three cohorts of P7, S1 and S2 pupils) the coefficients needed to produce these two factors from the original variables used.

Table 3.5.1   Coefficients for the two most important Principal Components

	SURVEY VARIABLES	1st Prin. Component - Overall size index of Emotional Wellbeing			2nd Prin. Component - Primary shape index of Emotional Wellbeing		
		P7-2005	S1-2005	S2-2006	P7-2005	S1-2005	S2-2006
1	Self-confidence	0.12	0.13	0.11	-0.29	-0.15	-0.30
2	Perception of self	0.21	0.22	0.17	-0.24	-0.17	-0.32
3	Attitude to School	0.18	0.24	0.19	-0.26	-0.11	-0.16
4	Ability to talk on important issues	0.14	-0.03	0.15	0.09	0.26	0.21
5	Experience of negative feelings	-0.07	-0.14	-0.07	0.38	0.20	0.37
6	Experience of positive feelings	0.16	0.20	0.18	0.17	0.05	0.11
7	Acceptability of negative feelings	0.08	0.08	0.04	0.24	-0.26	-0.13
8	Acceptability of positive feelings	0.11	0.13	0.10	0.28	-0.16	0.07
9	Ability to share negative feelings	0.22	0.16	0.22	0.13	0.30	0.15
10	Ability to share positive feelings	0.23	0.18	0.19	0.06	0.23	0.13
11	Number of confidants for negative feelings	0.11	0.12	0.17	0.24	0.17	0.06
12	Number of confidants for positive feelings	0.16	0.13	0.16	0.07	0.20	0.05
13	Number of sources of help outside family	0.17	0.06	0.11	-0.05	0.27	0.16

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[13] Principal Components Analysis (PCA) is a statistical method that allows not only data reduction, but also provides value-added interpretive power by making apparent the factors that underlie the data which would otherwise be difficult to detect.

[14] In theory there can be as many new factors as there are original variables. Given that the whole objective of the method is to reduce dimensionality of the original data, only the few most important factors are used. Using all possible factors would be pointless since there would be no reduction in the dimensionality.

Each Principal Component is a simple linear combination of the original variables using the coefficients shown in the table above.[15] Consequently a small coefficient indicates a lower impact of the corresponding original variable on a given Principal Component. Conversely, variables with larger coefficients indicate their greater importance in the final value of a Principal Component. For example, in the case of the first Principal Component for the June 2005 cohort (P7-2005), "Ability to share positive feelings" contributes much more than, say, "Self-confidence" (coefficient values of 0.23 versus 0.12 respectively) to the final value of the component. By the same reasoning, variables with coefficients close to zero, such as experience and acceptability of negative feelings (variables 5 and 7) contribute next to nothing towards the first Principal Component.

The clues with regard to how one may interpret a Principal Component lie in the magnitude and direction of the coefficients themselves. Excepting one or two, the majority of the coefficients for the first Principal Component are positive. Therefore cases with large values on all the original variables will have a correspondingly large value for this Principal Component. Similarly, the opposite is also true – small values for the original variables will yield small values on the derived Principal Component. A plausible interpretation therefore is that this component measures "size". Since all the variables used can be seen intuitively as having something to do with emotional wellbeing, this Principal Component appears to measure the size of emotional wellbeing to the extent that the latter is encapsulated in the thirteen variables used for the derivation.

In the case of the second Principal Component, the final value of this index is a combination of positive and negative coefficients. Again a plausible suggestion is that this component appears to portray a certain "shape" of emotional wellbeing.[16] More specifically, we note that for all three cohorts the three variables that have common negative coefficients are "Self-confidence", "Perception of self", and "Attitude to School". Cases with large values on these variables (combined with low to moderate values on the other variables) will obviously end up towards the lower end of the spectrum of the second Principal Component. Likewise, those with large values on all the variables with positive coefficients (combined with low to moderate values on those with negative coefficients) will tend towards the upper end of this index. The second Principal Component therefore appears to contrast cases according to whether pupils display more of their personality characteristics (self-confidence, sensitivity to others' perceptions of themselves, disposition towards school), or more in the way of experience and communication of feelings. The former would tend towards the lower end of the scale of this component while the latter would be located towards the higher end.

Interestingly, for the S1-2005 cohort, both measures of acceptability of feelings (variables 7 and 8) have negative coefficients on the second Principal Component and therefore must be seen as having something in common with perceptions (of self and of others') and attitude to school for this cohort. The comparison with the coefficients of variables 7 and 8 for the P7-2005 cohort indicates that at the stage of S1, consciousness of how one accepts negative and positive feelings merge with aspects of confidence and disposition. By S2 there is another change where only consciousness of how one accepts negative feelings is part of the set of personality variables (indicated by the continued negative sign on variable 7, whereas how

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[15] Thus, for example, the 1st Principal Component for the P7 – 2005 cohort is constructed as [0.12 (Self-confidence) + 0.21 (Perception of self) + ……+ 0.17 (Number of sources of help outside family)]. Since the original thirteen variables use different units of measurements, they are standardised to z-scores before this exercise is performed.

[16] As mentioned before, in theory there are in total thirteen principal components. Only the first two are discussed here. The remaining components also describe various "shapes" of emotional wellbeing; however, the methodology is such that these are of decreasing importance (third component is less important than the second, the fourth is less important than the third and so forth). The second Principal Component is therefore the most important of all the "shape" indicators.

one accepts positive feelings is neither here nor there (indicated by the near-zero coefficient on variable 8).

The chart below (Figure 3.5.1) shows a scatterplot of the first two Principal Components for the S2-2006 cohort, identifying gender by use of the usual gender symbols. The horizontal axis depicts the first Principal Component (Overall Index of Emotional Wellbeing), and the vertical axis depicts the second Principal Component (Disposition versus Management of Feelings). Using the previous generic descriptors, the former is a "size" axis whereas the latter is a "shape" axis.

Figure 3.5.1   Size and shape of emotional wellbeing (S2, 2006)
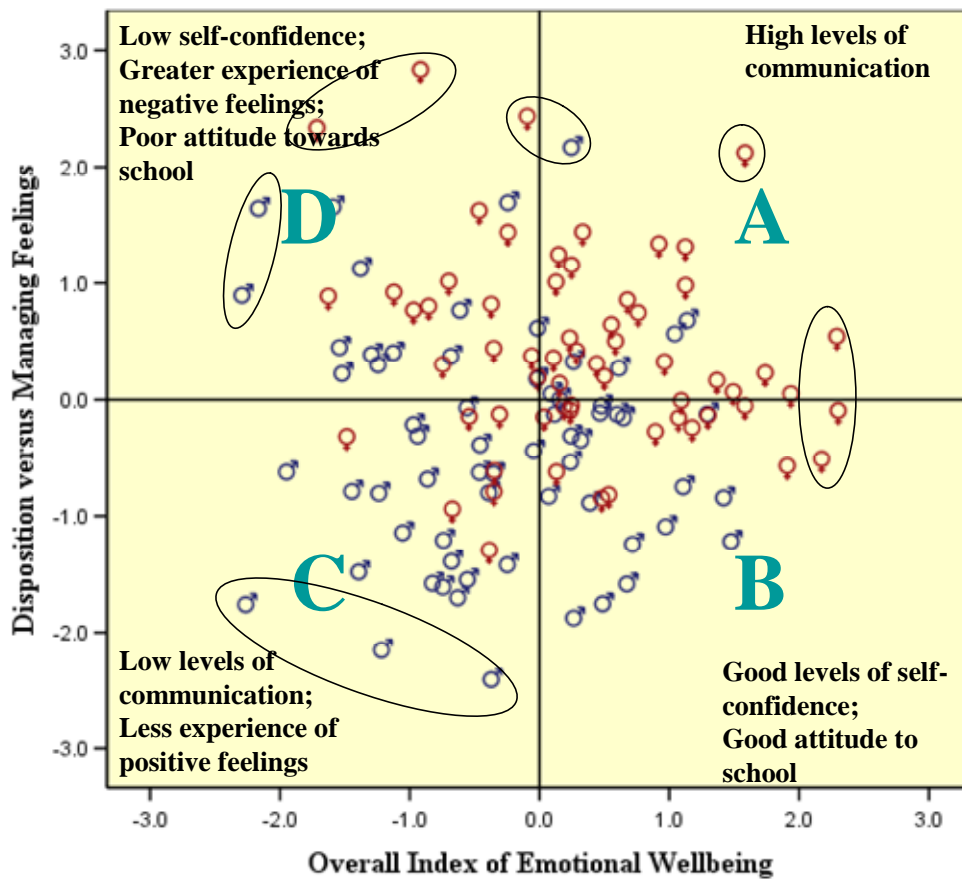
The two Principal Components shown here define a certain "space" over which we may depict the emotional landscape for the S2 pupils. As explained previously, the positive and negative ends of the horizontal axis depict good and poor states of emotional wellbeing respectively; on the vertical axis the lower end depicts a bias towards good disposition (high levels of self-confidence, good attitude to school) but poor communication, while the upper end indicates good communication but low levels of self-confidence and poor attitude to school. The range of values for each of the components is such that it becomes possible to divide this "space" into four quadrants (numbered on the chart). Given that it is known how these two axes are constituted (as described previously), it is possible to infer the nature of the subgroups within each quadrant thereby providing a kind of taxonomy for the sample of S2 pupils. These rough descriptors are shown for each quadrant in the chart above. Although similar graphics are not shown for the P7-2005 and S1-2005 groups, the pattern is much the same as that shown here; the quadrant descriptors shown in the above chart are therefore also applicable to those groups.

It must be borne in mind that these quadrant labels carry a certain "extremity" in the meaning they convey. They are based on the average values of the thirteen original variables for each of the sub-groups in the four quadrants; as such they typify extreme cases within each quadrant which are highlighted by ellipses.[17] Thus, for example, in quadrant C, there are three cases (all boys) who display the characteristics for that quadrant (low communication and experience of positive feelings) to an extreme degree compared with others in that quadrant. A large proportion of cases have scores close to the average value on both axes (i.e. close to zero) indicating that a majority of pupils are evenly balanced on the criteria of the thirteen variables used to visualise this "space" of emotional wellbeing.

3.5.2 Change over time

The literature review discussed earlier in this report suggests that emotional wellbeing is not a static entity but is one of a shifting landscape. This is especially so when we consider young people of the formative age as those considered in this project.[18] Moreover, an obvious gender dimension, which has been shown to be significant in the results shown elsewhere in this chapter, must play a part in the shaping of the map shown in the chart above. In order to test for these two effects - a "transition and growth effect" measuring changes in emotional wellbeing over time, and a "gender effect" measuring differences between boys and girls – a repeated measures analysis of variance was performed on the first two Principal Components for the three time-periods corresponding to the P7, S1 and S2 cohorts.

Results from this analysis indicate that *ceteris paribus* there are no significant changes in emotional wellbeing per se over time. In other words, if gender was not a consideration, there are no expectations of significant changes over time in the loci of emotional wellbeing for a given sample of pupils. However, there is a reasonably significant gender effect[19] indicating that emotional wellbeing depends on gender. In addition, the analyses also indicate that it is not sufficient only to say that there is a gender difference when we consider changes in emotional wellbeing. There is evidence of a strong interaction between gender and emotional wellbeing <u>over time</u>. This implies that not only does the level of emotional wellbeing depend on gender, but that gender difference itself depends on the particular stage of development. This parallels to a certain degree with the common understanding that differences between men and women in a certain age-group are not the same as differences in men and women of a different age-group, thus reflecting the assimilation of different cultural norms present at different periods of time. In the case of the sample of pupils considered here, it would appear that for their age-groups, even a year is a significant time lapse, producing differing patterns of the gender difference itself.

Table 3.5.2 below displays the average values of the two Principal Components for all three cohorts, showing points of significant gender differences.

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[17] A case is deemed to be "extreme" on a statistical basis of more than two standard deviations from the average on either axis.

[18] Saarni, C, 2000, "Emotional Competence: A Developmental Perspective", in Bar-On, R & Parker, J D A, Editors, 2000, *The Handbook of Emotional Intelligence*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, pages 68 – 91.

[19] Statistical significance level of less than 10%.

Table 3.5.2   Change effects of emotional wellbeing

A V E R A G E	P7 - 2005		S1 - 2005		S2 – 2006	
	SIZE (Index of Emotional Wellbeing)	**SHAPE** (Disposition / Managing Feelings)	**SIZE** (Index of Emotional Wellbeing)	**SHAPE** (Disposition / Managing Feelings)	**SIZE** (Index of Emotional Wellbeing)	**SHAPE** (Disposition / Managing Feelings)
Boys	**-0.24**	-0.05	0.05	**-0.45**	**-0.32**	**-0.49**
Girls	**0.32**	0.04	-0.04	**0.38**	**0.40**	**0.46**

Notes:
1. *Negative average values of the "shape" index indicate tendency towards dispositional factors (good self-confidence and good attitude to school, but poor communication); positive values indicate a tendency towards management of feelings (good communication but lower self-confidence and poorer attitude to school).*
2. *Figures in bold indicate a significant gender difference.*

While in primary school it is evident that boys and girls differ on the overall index of emotional wellbeing (boys indicating lower values than girls), on arrival at secondary school this difference vanishes. Instead we observe that the gender differences are found more in the particular nuances of emotional wellbeing. Boys at this stage show more self-confidence but lower communication and experience of feelings than girls; girls, on the other hand, communicate their feelings well but display less self-confidence. Progressing to S2 sharpens the gender contrast to the extent that boys and girls differ in both the "size" and the "shape" of emotional wellbeing. The transition from P7 to S1 therefore appears more of an issue for girls as their overall index of emotional wellbeing drops from 0.32 to -0.04; boys on the other hand improve from -0.24 to 0.05. At this stage the difference in the "shape" indicator merely points to boys and girls displaying different pathways of emotional wellbeing, without these affecting the overall scores for either gender. However, by S2 these pathways become sharper and appear to produce a more favourable overall score of emotional wellbeing for girls than boys.

CHAPTER FOUR: TEACHERS AND AGENCY STAFF

This chapter presents data relating to three main topics, namely emotional wellbeing, induction to secondary school (transition from P7 to S1), and inter-agency working. An understanding of emotional wellbeing is essential to working with young people, which is why data for this chapter were collected from two distinct cohorts, namely teaching staff at the Portlethen Academy and its associated primary schools, and key agency staff affiliated to a variety of organisations in the fields of education, health, social work, youth work and the police. Information presented in this chapter has been triangulated by data from focus group discussions with pupils.

4.1   Data collection and sample characteristics

An initial survey questionnaire, designed to collect baseline information relevant to the longitudinal character of this enquiry, was distributed to teachers and agency staff. Questionnaires were returned anonymously and generated a response-rate of 14% and 55% respectively. Participants had also been invited to take part in follow-up discussions and, if they wished to do so, supply their contact details. Positive feedback resulted in a subsequent focus group discussion with teachers and some face-to-face interviews with agency staff.

Teachers who participated hold a variety of positions such as principal-, head-, guidance and class-teachers and, except for five participants, have been in their professions for between 15 and 35 years. Two thirds of them work with pupils attending P7 to S2, spanning the age range from about 10 to 14 years of age. Among the other relevant professionals taking part were a local GP, schools sports co-ordinator and senior youth worker. Although two thirds of the data were supplied by female respondents, one cannot conclude that the caring professions are still occupied predominantly by women; it may just mean that women were more amenable to completing survey questionnaires and to taking part in interviews and focus groups.

4.2   Emotional Well-Being

Terms such as mental health, emotional health, mental wellbeing and/or emotional wellbeing tend to be used interchangeably by a variety of professional disciplines. A review of literature indicated that the notion of 'emotional wellbeing' was ascribed various meanings, a practice which has been referred to as 'definitional and conceptual pluralism' (Sutton 2005 p.13). Within that, however, some level of consensus does seem to exist. For example, teachers' and agencies' descriptions of emotional wellbeing included *being of sound mental state, having stability of thought, being able to deal with emotions in a balanced way,* and *being able to cope with everyday challenges in their lives.* These definitions are broadly consistent with those provided by the Public Health Institute of Scotland (2003) and by Edwards (2001; 2003), and delineate the core elements of emotional wellbeing.

When teachers and agency personnel were asked how they knew when a young person lacked emotional wellbeing, they referred to core factors such as behavioural change. This included children being unable to concentrate, seeking attention through overtly negative behaviour, underachieving academically and exhibiting either withdrawal or aggressive behaviour.

The main issues and/or concerns facing young people as reported by teachers and agencies include:
- Peer group acceptance; Peer pressures; Fitting in
- Family difficulties
- Bullying
- Low self-esteem

These indicators are taken across the age-groups from P7 to S2 and confirm findings as presented in Section 3 of this report.

The key elements of emotional wellbeing are closely related to a child having balanced and positive relationships and to feeling secure both at home and at school. The statement that relationships and interaction with parents and peers have a significant influence on the development of a young person is consistent with the wider literature on that topic and was confirmed in discussions with teachers and agency personnel held subsequently to the initial survey. While the pressures of having to 'fit in' are significant, agencies indicated that families were not always in a position to assist a young person in achieving a healthy balance between seeking peer acceptance and avoiding being bullied due to not fitting in. Agency staff indicated that disrupted family lives and fragmented environments may result in a lack of such social safety-nets, which increases young people's anxieties of being rejected by peers and/or family, should things go wrong, even further. One does need to remember though that the data collected from agencies are based on children who have been referred once other options had been exhausted.

The importance of supportive home and school environments was emphasised also in relation to a young person's self-esteem. As indicated in Table 4.2.1, teachers and agency staff considered young people's self-esteem to be higher at a younger age. As a young person progresses through secondary school, high and medium levels of self-esteem appear to decrease, while low levels of self-esteem increase. This trend could be indicative of peer pressure becoming more intense at secondary school. Pupils in S3 – S4 seemed to be particularly vulnerable. The main factors reported to be promoting and /or inhibiting self-esteem are shown in Tables 4.2.2 and 4.2.3 respectively.

Table 4.2.1   Teachers' and agencies' observations of self-esteem

	HIGH self-esteem %	MODERATE self-esteem %	LOW self-esteem %
P6 – P7	63	30	7
S1 – S2	39	45	16
S3 – S4	31	46	23
S5 – S6	41	44	15

The factors which either promote or inhibit self-esteem are not new, but it is important to recognise that the age of children who have to deal with such a range of social and emotional problems may be getting younger. The crucial question therefore is: Could young pupils' emotional wellbeing be managed more successfully, particularly prior to, during and after the sensitive transition from primary to secondary school? The following section discusses issues relating specifically to the transition period from P7 to S1.

Table 4.2.2   Factors promoting self-esteem

Factor	Explanations given	Responses
Positive, supportive relation-ships and friendships	The importance of being part of and/or supported by various social groupings was emphasised	N = 12
Achievement	At school (academically), at home, at sports	N = 9
Praise	From parents, teachers, peers	N = 7
Positive, supportive parenting	Secure family background; successful parents	N = 7

[Source: Teachers /agencies]

Table 4.2.3   Factors inhibiting self-esteem

Factor	Explanations given	Responses
Lack of (social) relationships; lack of friendships; broken relation-ships	Lack of emotional security; undermines self-worth; produces a sense of isolation / exclusion; not being part of a group	N = 12
Poor academic achievement; pupils' (perceived) lack of success	Makes them feel worthless; sense of disappointment; feel social pressure to do well;	N = 9
Parental problems; uncaring home life, unsettled home life; divorce	They think it's their fault; they feel unloved; isolation, feeling unwanted and unloved; child torn between parents	N = 8
Bullying; emotional abuse	They pick on weak areas; destroys self-worth; produces fear	N = 5
Destructive criticism, negativity	Feeds negative view, reinforcement of negative feelings / feelings of failure	N = 4
Media	Young people can start to act as they are labelled; social mores	N = 3

[Source: teachers / agencies]

4.3   Transition from P7 to S1: Induction to secondary school

The transition from P7 to S1 can be a somewhat vulnerable time for some pupils. Teachers and agencies were asked to indicate the extent to which they thought that P7 / S1 pupils, particularly prior to, during and after their transition from primary to secondary school, worried about certain issues. Their perceptions are reflected in Table 4.3.1.

Table 4.3.1   Teachers' and agencies' perceptions of P7/S1/S2 pupils' worries

Worries / anxieties	Yes, pupils do worry	No, pupils don't worry
Bullying	18	0
Friends	17	1
School work	17	1
Their bodies	17	1
Moving school	15	3
Life at home	15	3
Parents	15	3
Clothes	15	3
Growing up	14	4
Teachers	14	4
Playtime at school	13	5
Their own safety	12	6
Drugs	10	8
Crime	9	9
The environment	9	9
Money	8	10
Their neighbourhood	7	11

As shown in Table 4.3.1, staff considered that young people had multiple concerns at this stage in their lives but were particularly worried about bullying, friends, schoolwork and their physical appearance. Teachers' and agencies' general perceptions concur with those of the pupils surveyed, which are shown in much greater detail in Figure 3.2.2 in Section 3.2 of this report.

To help pupils to settle in to Portlethen Academy and to ease their transition-related anxieties, various programs have been established. There was considerable contact between Portlethen Academy, primary school head teachers and other primary school staff. For example, the Support for Learners (SFL) Project uses the same type of workbooks for the 'Maths-scheme' and the 'English-scheme' in P7 and in S1; although the content will become more challenging, pupils can continue with an already familiar format. Many aspects of the 'transition system' were designed to achieve continuity, including the learning provided through the activities organised by the Academy's Sports-Coordinator. Further, a two day visit of P7 pupils to the Academy, where P7 pupils meet most of their new teachers, went to classrooms and were exposed to the wider environment, was part of the formal induction process. Parents were part of this process and had opportunities to meet with teachers and raise questions.

Teachers were then asked to evaluate the perceived usefulness of formally organised activities aimed at easing the transition of P7 pupils to S1.

Table 4.3.2   Perceived usefulness of induction-related activities

	Useful	Don't know	Unaware of this
	N	N	N
Teachers from PA visit pupils at primary school	10	0	0
Pupils going on a visit to see PA	10	0	0
Written information about PA	9	1	0
Things pupils learned from parent(s) after 'parents evening'	6	4	0
Meeting with teachers on visit to PA	10	0	0
Meeting with other pupils on visit to PA	10	0	0
The 'link' project for Maths	4	4	2
Guidance staff at Academy	10	0	0
The 'Support for Learners' Project	9	0	1
The PA Smart Start (PASS) scheme	6	3	1
The 'Transition Group' (at Portlethen Primary school)	5	2	3

As Table 4.3.2 shows, teachers particularly prized the social contact between staff and pupils brought about through organised visits to the primary schools (by staff) and to Portlethen Academy (by pupils). In addition, the opportunity for P7 pupils to meet with secondary schools pupils and the work of guidance staff were equally highly regarded. Again, teachers' perceptions are similar to those expressed by pupils as shown in Figures 3.3.4 and 3.3.5 in Section 3.3 of this report.

As a result of the induction system in place, teachers considered that most S1 pupils developed good relationships with pupils and staff, seemed to mix well, and had formed new friendships. As regards coping with new subjects and homework, some teachers thought that a few of the lower-ability children struggled to keep up, but the majority worked well and enjoyed their new subjects. It therefore appeared that only a minority of children experience serious problems. To ease post-transition, peer support mechanisms had been put in place.

4.4   Peer Support Mechanisms

Portlethen Academy has a system referred to as PALS, whereby S6 pupils look after S1 pupils by actively 'buddying' them and showing them around. The Academy also has a 'House System'. Each guidance teacher was the head of a House and, due to great familiarity with the pupils belonging to 'his/her' House, s/he was able to identify students who, based on ability and character, are then asked to offer unstructured peer support where needed. There was also an Anti-bullying Committee, designed to handle complaints that come from pupils

and staff. Further, there was an ad-hoc New Pupils Forum through which senior pupils identified younger ones who had some kind of difficulties; referrals were then made to an appropriate member of staff.

Reportedly, the weakness inherent in such schemes is the difficulty of maintaining them. Specific problems identified were the degree of commitment required (pupils would have to attend regularly to be able to write up reports and talk to Heads), S6 pupils leave (and new pupils have to be trained continually) and older pupils have priorities such as exams. In addition, one needs to be aware of the fact that 'older' young people may be under-prepared for some of the issues raised, that friendships change fast (a teenager might be supported today but be perceived as an enemy tomorrow) and that younger pupils are rather dependent on the nature of the peer supporting them. Indications were that inter-agency-working, as is planned for Integrated Community Schools (ICS) becomes increasingly important in the face of such challenges.

In addition to existing induction programs and peer support mechanisms, the Portlethen Academy has since established the Portlethen Peer Listening (PPL) Scheme, which will be discussed in considerably greater detail in Chapter 7 of this report.

4.5 Inter-Agency working

Teachers and agencies stated that they had to deal with a range of issues, problems and anxieties experienced by pupils in all cohorts, from S1 to S6. To what extent did schools and associated agencies think they were more or less effective in dealing with the range of issues they are presented with?

Table 4.5.1 Organisations' perceptions of their effectiveness in dealing with issues

	Agencies	Teachers
Dealing with school work issues	54%	90%
Dealing with family issues	45%	20%
Dealing with peer-group issues	81%	80%
Dealing with physical health problems	54%	40%
Dealing with emotional health problems	72%	20%
Dealing with problems with teachers	63%	70%

Emotional health problems and parental problems appeared to be addressed more effectively by associated agencies than by teachers, whereas concerns relating to peer-group issues were highly demanding on both types of organisations. Health education, in particular, was seen as an area in which young people required additional support. Portlethen Academy therefore ran a drop-in clinic which has been termed '...*an open-chat clinic in which the school nurse has been doing teenage contact as part of her job for many years and is now supported by a local Medical Consultant*'. The importance of the role of the School Nurse was stressed repeatedly and regarded as absolutely crucial. '... *she has been doing teenage contact as part of her job for many years... ...she often has children coming to her who are unhappy who are*

not going to classes and who want to talk about things; ...they don't go to professionals, they see them as threatening; *conditions for which advice is sought range widely'.* Collaboration among associated agencies was seen as vital and particularly significant in isolated cases where specific professional attention had been sought.

Barriers to effective joint agency working as perceived by teachers were time constraints, change of agency staff and lack of clear structures. In addition, '…*collaboration can become unwieldy when there are 13 professionals around a table concerning one child'!* Barriers mentioned by associated agencies were rigidity concerning roles, availability of time and personnel, and confidentiality issues.

CHAPTER FIVE: ETHNOGRAPHY

5.1   Introduction

As the review of literature described, much of the research into emotional resilience and emotional intelligence has been located within 'closed systems' such as workplaces, offices and schools. Whilst this research provides many useful insights, what is perhaps lost is an understanding of how emotions are located within the wider dynamic fluid and 'open' context of everyday lived experience. In short, the existing literature de-contextualises emotional experience and does not adequately appreciate the mixture of factors that contribute to overall emotional well-being.

The ethnographic component of this project seeks to contribute to a wider understanding of emotional experience and in doing so, augments the statistical and interview data by offering insights into how the emotional aspects of young people's lives are (re)produced and embedded in a particular place and time. The discussion below analyses the various facets of the local community in which the young people live and describes how their emotional selves emerge from the interplay of the community structures and young people's own personal agency. The main conclusion is that in Portlethen we find both young people and a young community going through a difficult, and potentially problematic, phase of their respective development.

The discussion takes place across three central themes. First, we explore how Portlethen has developed over time. The focus here will be on how the various events and contingencies that shaped the expansion and growth of Portlethen, created specific issues and problems that may affect the emotional lives of young people. Second, we turn to issues of 'social capital' and community cohesion, which exert an influence on young people. This theme draws on the social capital thesis, in particular making use of the ideas of Wilkinson (1996), who has drawn attention to how poor community cohesion leads to negative emotional states, which, in turn, can lead to poor physical and mental health. Third, attention will be paid to young people in Portlethen, both from the perspective of the wider community and, crucially, from young people themselves. Before we proceed to the themes however, a brief summary of the research methods used will be outlined.

5.2   Methods

A mixture of methods was employed during the ethnography and these are summarised as follows.

Field work
This involved observational work in Portlethen, used to gain familiarity with the built environment. Field work also enabled contacts to be made for future interviews and to provide conduits to information and groups of people.

Documentary analysis
A systematic hand and database search of community resources was carried out. This included local newspapers (*The Press and Journal, The Mearns Leader*), the Portlethen community newspaper (*The Clochandighter*), books and pamphlets on local history, a newspaper cuttings file held by the local library, the Church of Scotland parish magazine, and Community Council minutes. In addition to such printed media, web-based sources were also analysed.

Visual Data
Gathered during the field work, a bank of 262 images has been collected using a digital camera. The images are intended to act both as illustration of the community – literally, a snapshot in time – and as data. Images were taken in accordance with Suchar's (2004) principles of capturing representations of dominant issues, themes and structures of a locality. Throughout, consideration and respect was given to issues of privacy, being non-obtrusive and not recording the faces of residents (unless otherwise approved).

Semi-structured Interviews
Twelve people were interviewed, selection was based on information gathered that they represented an aspect of either community life in Portlethen (such as being involved in organising community-wide events) or were indicative of a particular type of resident (for example, longstanding or new resident) (Table 1). Interviewees were identified via personal contacts (their name appearing in public documents, for instance) or by snowball or convenience sampling during part of the ethnography. All interviews were conducted in a situation that was familiar and non-threatening (typically their workplace or local pub). A semi-structured conversational approach was used, where interviewer's prompts were kept to a minimum so as to allow the person to express their own views. The majority of interviews lasted approximately forty-five minutes each.

Table 5.2.1   Community Status of Interviewees

Identifier*	Gender	Age	Descriptor
PL01	M	40's	Community estate representative
PL02	M	20's	Community salaried youth worker
PL03	F	60's	Long term resident
PL04	M	60's	Long term resident
PL05	F	50's	Long term resident
PL06	F	30's	New resident
PL07	M	30's	New resident
PL08	M	40's	Community organiser
PL09	F	40's	Community organiser
PL10	F	40's	Community organiser
PL11	M	30's	Community volunteer youth worker
PL12	M	40's	Community volunteer youth worker

Focus Group

A focus group consisting of four males and four females, aged between 17 – 19 years old was also conducted. All participants had left Portlethen Academy within the last year and were either at, or about to go to university or were in full-time employment. This group was gathered through personal contact with one member, who then recruited others from the peer group. The focus group was held in the personal contact's house and the session lasted ninety-minutes.

5.3   Brief Social History of Portlethen

Despite the presence of some older, mainly mid-nineteenth century buildings - such as the prominent Kirk on an elevated site - and other early twentieth century buildings, the bulk of Portlethen is recently built with many buildings dating from very rapid expansion of the community from the 1970's onwards. This led to a marked expansion of the population from just 150 in 1956 to 4,000 in the mid 1980s and 6, 748 in 2005 (P & J, Aberdeenshire Council, 2005). The reasons for Portlethen's growth and expansion are mainly external, including the

arrival of the railway in the late 1800's, dealing with the housing needs of homeless people after World War II and the workforce needs of the 1970s oil industry.

Rapid expansion from the 1970's onwards has seen Portlethen grow beyond the small cluster of Victorian buildings near the station

The rapid development of Portlethen over the last thirty years has, arguably, produced a built environment that has helped to create some of the issues currently facing residents of all ages. In large measure, this development has taken place on a 'piece-meal' basis, with the construction of housing estates within Portlethen occurring as and when land became available. This has lead to Portlethen having a fairly random street layout with many individual estates becoming self-contained and unconnected to other estates, in spite of these being physically close to each other. This rapid development was financially-led, focusing on house-building, with provision for community spaces and facilities apparently a secondary consideration.

Table 5.3.1 provides a useful demographic description of Portlethen. The population in 2004 was 6,748 and is predicated to rise to 7,355 by 2011. Currently there are 2,539 housing units in Portlethen, but 800 new units are scheduled to be built on Hillside, close to an industrial estate over the dual carriageway from the existing town. Unemployment in Portlethen is very low, just 0.9 %, with the majority of residents working outside Portlethen.

Table 5.3.1   Places of work

Place of work	No.	% of pop.
Portlethen	808	19.7
Aberdeen City	2,627	64
Rest of NE Scotland	567	13.8
Other	104	2.5
Totals	4,106	100

Source: Aberdeenshire Council (2005)

5.4   Social Capital and Community Cohesion

This section focuses on levels of social capital and related instances of community cohesion in Portlethen. It will highlight two main, related findings. Firstly, that levels of social capital in Portlethen 'ebb-and-flow' over time and that the current low levels of social capital may just be the present manifestation of that trend. Secondly, it is problematic to describe Portlethen as a unified community, with the residents subscribing to a shared sense of identity. It is perhaps more accurate to describe Portlethen as consisting of different communities, though what constitutes a community, in this instance, is highly contingent depending on symbolic attachments to place.

A focus on social capital and community is important for developing a wider, contextualised understanding of emotional well-being. Putnam has argued that a variety of positive social goods and outcomes are visible in communities and societies, which are high in social capital. His powerful - though much debated - social capital thesis focuses on, '… features of social life – networks, norms (including reciprocity) and trust – that enable participants to act

together more effectively to pursue shared objectives' (Putnam 1995: 664). In terms of health, Wilkinson's (1996) application of social capital theory argues that health is influenced by psycho-social factors generated by levels of community cohesion. It is the emotional experiences (mainly stress, but also shame, frustration and hopelessness) that people have of their social circumstances that, in turn, translate into poor mental or physical health.

Turning firstly to the 'ebb-and-flow' of social capital in Portlethen, a dynamic and changing history is evident from both the interviews with long-established residents and in the documentary archives.

Three residents recalled and discussed life in Portlethen, most notably in 'Old Portlethen', prior to the rapid expansion from the 1970's and 1980's, as being one of high community integration and cohesion. Very strong affective bonds and reciprocal relationships between neighbours were reported. One respondent eloquently summarised community life in the 1950's and 1960's as being *'A'body ken't a'body'* (Everybody knew everybody). Indeed, Old Portlethen still currently appears to retain such strong community bonds. Two newer residents reported that they experienced a sense of community in Old Portlethen that was more intense than other places in which they had lived.

One distinctive feature of Portlethen is the many lanes that run between the various housing developments

Throughout the 1980's, in the newly built private housing estates, other instances of social capital emerge. Regular street parties were organised by a local charismatic minister, though they did not continue after he left the Presbytery. In the early 1990s (this time on a Portlethen-wide basis) a strong and vibrant gala became a popular fixture in the social calendar. From interviews and reports in the local press, the gala appears to have been very popular, with each one organised around a distinct theme - such as, 'outer-space' or 'insects' - involving local children dressed accordingly. The gala also involved a parade of floats and on some occasions, aerobatic and motorcycling displays. At one gala, a marquee was erected for local bands to provide a venue in which they could perform; a development that was very popular with the young people of Portlethen.

An overview of the area (often ironically) referred to as 'The Ghetto'
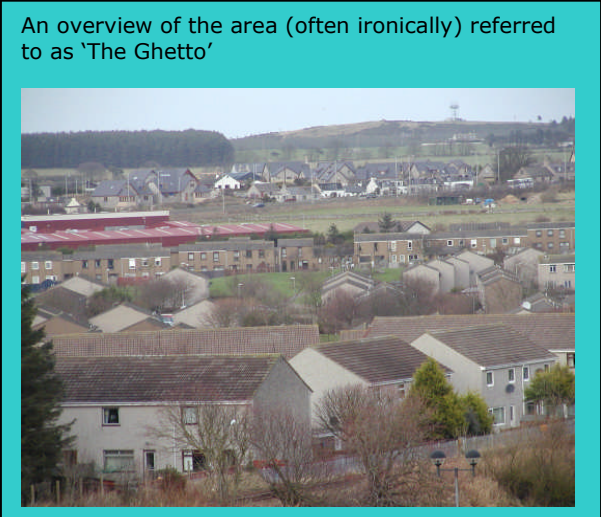
From the late 1990s onwards, examples and instances of social capital appear to decline quite rapidly. The aforementioned gala has been suspended, as has the Portlethen and District Community Council (PDCC). Both are examples of what is referred to as 'bridging' capital; a form of social capital that reaches out to and involves many different sections of a particular place. Such forms are important as they bring about community-wide social cohesion, providing a common sense of occasion and identity. The loss of the

PDCC is of particular relevance as it had made strenuous attempts to include young people in its activities.

In trying to explain how the current low level of social capital has occurred, three main reasons were identified from the research.

Firstly, the built environment is, in many ways, disadvantageous for developing a common community identity. As outlined in section 3, the rapid and 'piece-meal' development created a space more inclined to be fragmented rather than unified. From the interviews and field work it became clear that many residents did not hold a unitary Portlethen identity and that the town itself was *informally* seen to consist of different 'communities'. The most notable effect of this is the 'divide' between the social housing to the north and the private housing to the south of Portlethen. The private housing also appeared to be conceptualised as itself a series of estates, each consisting of 30 – 50 houses, effectively self-contained. These form tight spatial units that are not directly linked to each other. In interviews with residents from the private south of Portlethen it was notable that they held a closer affinity with their estate than with Portlethen as a whole. Interestingly, interactions with other residents in the estates appeared to be more instrumental than affective. For example, residents would be keen to cooperate on maintaining pathways in 'their' estate but not on cooperating to organise a street party or Fun Day. The various attachments to and perceptions of space identified above, could be a product of what Savage et al. (2005) have termed 'elective affinity', this is where strong or weak identification with place is based on *voluntary* attachment irrespective of length of residence.

Secondly, one of the key features of social capital – volunteering (engaging in reciprocal activity) - was not always evident and its absence was reported in interviews and printed media. The following quotation from the *Clochandighter* (Sep, 2004) by one of the gala team concerning problems in running the event is highly apposite:

> For a community event to be worthwhile and survive, it has to be supported by the local community. Not just by attending the day but by groups of associations taking a stall, putting on a showpiece or by participating in the organisation of the event.

The concept of social capital implies that communities are more cohesive, healthier and crime free when a dense network of interaction brings individuals into contact with each other on a reciprocal basis. A local example of this is the Fisher Moss Spring Fayre where residents volunteer to staff stalls and organise events that bring people together.

In interviews, this lack of volunteering, of people in the community receiving but not providing 'social goods', was highly apparent. It was felt that a more consumerist attitude was visible in Portlethen, with residents not perceiving a need for them to engage in the setting up and organising of events. One respondent commented that in the last few years of the gala there were many complaints, but no offers of help.

Finally, some wider points are also instructive for this discussion on the decline of community-wide social capital in Portlethen. Crow et al (2004) have identified general processes (such as globalisation, individualisation and detraditionalisation), which are inimical to the continuation of neighbourliness and community generally, and may also have an impact on social capital in Portlethen. Several people in interviews identified the strains, long working hours and increased demands on their time of

contemporary society as being one reason why there may be a lack of people wishing to involve themselves in community life. Or as one interviewee aptly put it, 'it's the facts of modern living.'

In sum, it can be noted that for community cohesion, there are certain challenges for Portlethen. The loss of community-wide events and organisations are of concern, with the dissolution of the PDCC and the suspension of the gala, indicating that all is not what it could be in terms of social cohesion. However, it should be emphasised that we are *not* suggesting a complete breakdown of all affective and community bonds, but perhaps a 'downturn' in the social capital history of Portlethen. What the interviews and documentary analysis also indicated is that there are a number of people who remain active in trying foster good community cohesion across Portlethen. Support given to them could prove propitious in energising a greater community spirit. For the time being though, following the principles identified in the wider social capital and social cohesion research, fragmented communities have issues in engendering healthy and safe environments populated by emotionally resilient individuals. This could explain or account for some of the issues that are discussed below.

5.5   Young People: Perceptions and Place

This section will explore how the wider community and particularly young people perceive both each other and their lives in Portlethen. What emerges is a highly complex and contradictory set of impressions, judgements and insights. These range from how certain elements of the wider community cast young people as 'folk devils', to how young people highlight the issues involved in trying to develop their emotional selves and social identities in a place with limited recreational and cultural resources.

Beginning with the wider community's perceptions of young people, the dominant depiction in official documents, such as the local press and community council minutes, is generally negative. Much of it reports examples of vandalism, aggressive or disruptive behaviour involving hanging around public spaces while drinking alcohol (usually phrased as 'youth annoyance'). Examples in the local press include:

> The town was filled with the sound of broken glass last month as youths went on a window-smashing spree . (*Mearns Leader*, 16 Jan. 2004)

A similar representation of young people is present in PDCC minutes. Again there is frequent mention of youth annoyance, such as:

> Youth annoyance was at the fore-front due to snowballing activities. (PDCC, 4th Feb 2004)

On a more emphatic note, the chairman expressed this point on one occasion:

> The chairman said the community felt harassed by the youths. (PDCC, 7th April 2004)

Overall, there is frequently a very negative depiction of young people, which posits them as the cause of many problems within Portlethen connected to 'anti-social' behaviour. Young people appear as 'folk devils' engaged in disruptive or malicious behaviour. This raises the question of how much this discourse relates to the data gathered during the study and the views expressed by those interviewed. Some level of deviant activity is undeniable. During the course of the ethnography, instances of low level petty crime and 'youth annoyance' were either directly observed or their consequences noted. These ranged from the dropping of litter (a notable problem in winter), the street use of cannabis (three occasions), graffiti and vandalism involving breaking the windows of a disused shop and the glass panels on a bus

shelter.   One interviewee reported that two local youths were disruptive within their estate and that young people playing football had damaged a garden fence and an area of grass. There was also one observation of a group of some twenty young people in their early and mid-teens walking around the streets drinking alcohol, while noisily kicking a plastic object of some kind. Also, on most occasions of walking around Portlethen, groups of young people were observed around the ASDA store, outside the shops on The Green or gathering in the alleyways and lanes. Though they were not necessarily committing any offences, their overall bodily and verbal posturing *could* be interpreted as aggressive or threatening.

In many respects, these are legitimate causes of grievance and no doubt cause anxiety and problems for local residents. However, the deviant activities outlined above are generally of a low level nature. Three examples may be instructive here: graffiti, vandalism and drug use. Even though graffiti does exist in Portlethen, the examples recorded in the image bank were the only examples over an eighteen-month period, with the exception of one example at the school and one at The Green. Much of the other graffiti was fading, giving the impression of having been there for some time. Similarly, examples of vandalism were restricted to the two examples summarised above. No other examples were observed during the study and overall the built environment in Portlethen appears to be free of any substantial damage to property. Finally, young people's drug use appears to be mainly restricted to soft drugs such as cannabis and is consistent with drugs use by young people across Scotland. Various places such as back alleyways and other areas hidden from general view were investigated for evidence of drug paraphernalia (such as syringes or pieces of tin foil blackened in and burnt during the process of smoking of heroin) but nothing was ever found. The focus group of young people also indicated that in their experience and the experiences of their peer groups, hard drugs such as heroin, were not part of the general 'leisure-pleasure' landscape. Cannabis was the preferred illicit drug but was mainly used on an occasional arbitrary 'take-it-or leave-it' basis. This is not to say that harder drugs were not available or used, but examples of their use were *extremely* rare. This should be contrasted with the one drug that was frequently (mis)used: alcohol. Often alcohol was obtained by asking older siblings to purchase it for them or by taking it from their parent's alcohol supplies, there was also weak indication that parents would purchase alcohol for their underage children. Lager, cider and vodka were the preferred types of alcohol.

It is instructive to take into account the voices of young people in Portlethen. As with older peers, their narrative concerned aggregations of young people in public places but, from their perspective, for quite different reasons. In the focus groups, the street emerged as the main focus for a variety of social interactions and as a space in which to pursue the development of self-identity. The main appeal of the street for the young people is that it provides a space outwith adult surveillance and a space over which the young people themselves have some power and control. One of the main symbolic practices of the street, for example, was connected to music and sub-cultural youth identities, where style, music and experimenting with a sense of self was rehearsed. In Portlethen, there is also the additional feature of many lanes and alleyways between the various estates, as outlined above. This provides not only a symbolic resource, as mentioned, but also a spatial resource, further increasing the separation of young people from the parental home and adult supervision. Thus, young people tend to occupy and invest their emotional energies in many of the marginal, non-defined and 'fluid' spaces in Portlethen that lie between the 'fixed' spaces of school (their main space during the day) and the parental home (their main space at other times).

Interestingly, young people in the focus group stressed that the reasons for gathering on the street were quite mundane (mainly a mechanism for meeting friends, for example) rather than for any intentional anti-social behaviour. On one occasion, for example, the researcher encountered a group of three young males in their mid-teens 'hanging-out' on the street. Again, their appearance and demeanour (in this case, baggy clothes and what is often demonised by the popular media as being the badge of the anti-social: a hoodie top) were

open to negative interpretation. Their conversation, however, was about putting in extra work at school in order to increase their chances of going to a prestigious university. Indeed, when approached, other groups of young people in the streets in the evening, were generally polite and friendly.

In terms of offering an analysis of why there appear to be such divergent perceptions between young people and the wider community, there appears to be some form of deviance amplification, or courtesy stigma. As the above discussion outlined, there exists a perception which conflates all young people with 'anti-social behaviour', but as the evidence gathered during the study so far indicates, the overall picture is more nuanced and complex. There is an undeniable level of deviant activity but it is of a generally low, and very minor level, possibly only involving a very small number of young people, who may engage in such activity on a regular or occasional basis.

Concerns about exaggerated levels of anti-social behaviour are evident in this comment in the PDCC minutes, from the police liaison officer, responding to questions of youths causing disturbance in public places:

> …play parks – are just that – somewhere for youngsters to play… (PDCC. Sep 2004)

Another example of possible amplification can be seen in this example related by one of the interviewees. There were complaints about young people gathering outside the church in the evening, however, the young people in question, were a bible class following an evening's study. One newer resident was surprised to hear that there were any problems with young people. Comparing it to his previous home in a large urban conurbation in northern England (where young people were involved in serious, sometimes armed, crime), Portlethen was described as, 'paradise'. During the semi-structured interviews, there was an overall sympathy for young people. Most comments suggested that most of the perceived 'bad' behaviour could be explained as the normal 'high jinks' associated with young people.

Interestingly, when the focus group of young people was asked what they wanted, as a place in which to socialise, the reply was for 'a coffee shop'. However, this was not a 'youth worker type place' but 'a proper coffee shop', such as the type presented in popular American sit-coms such as *Friends*. This indicates another issue that faces young people in Portlethen: the absence of the mainstream consumerist leisure resources that they expect as being a normal part of contemporary life.

5.6   Concluding comments

This chapter has highlighted issues and challenges in Portlethen for young people. However, Portlethen is not an exceptionally problematic place. It is, in many respects, a very 'normal' place and is in no way out of the ordinary in comparison to similar-sized communities across Aberdeenshire and Scotland. The data that has emerged from the ethnography on social capital and community cohesion, in particular, is little different from what is apparent in other research. Both the community and young people are going through transitions in their development. For the community, the rapid expansion has created challenges and a period of stability, where the community can move towards a common sense of identity built on common social institutions and community-wide events, could possibly be of great benefit. Such a development could also create a more 'solid' backdrop for young people to become active and equal participants in (re)creating the place in which they live.

CHAPTER SIX: PARENTS' VIEWS

Having discussed transitional issues, emotional wellbeing and peer support from pupils', teachers' and agencies' points of view, this chapter reports how *parents* see such issues in relation to their children. Four parents participated in a focus group discussion and an individual interview respectively. The questions asked were similar to those put to children, teachers and agencies in order to obtain an indication of similar or divergent views. For each of the parents this was their first child entering secondary education.

6.1 Transitional issues

Parents felt that Portlethen Academy's induction program, usually carried out over three days, was sadly missed this year (2006). This was due to the move into the new building in the summer of 2006, which had been accompanied by the usual array of problems and delays associated with such a move. Still, prior to the move parents of P7 pupils had been invited to meetings at which they were given reading materials, were informed about the anti-bullying campaign and had heard about the Portlethen Peer Listening Scheme (PPL), variously referred to as 'children talking to other children' and as 'listening ear'. Parents had also been reassured that P7s would have at least a few familiar faces in class and that older pupils would be at hand to show them around for the first few weeks. Preparatory activities therefore were carried out as usual, with the exception that children did not know who their teachers were going to be until their first day at the new school. Yet, '…*certainly from the academic side the children knew what they were going to, and we as parents did too', there wasn't any confusion or worries*'.

In addition to remembering who their daily class teacher, their subject teachers and their guidance teacher were, the new S1s had to get used to '...*having books for every subject, home work books, text books, a locker, a locker key, a smart card and two different lots of PE kit*'. Parents agreed that there had not been a day yet when a child had '…*not left something at home or left something at school, and come five past nine, there is a whole lot of us up at the school to bring the smart card and the wallet and the home work and things'*. While parents felt that the children had been academically prepared for S1, it soon became evident that the kids lacked organisational skills. Parents suggested that this might be an issue worth addressing at P7, as teaching children organisational skills might ease certain aspects of the transition.

6.1.1 Lunchtime

Some concern was expressed about children having to cope with the newly found freedom of being allowed off the school-premises at lunchtime. It was felt that '*going to ASDA*' presented a challenge '...*that 12 year old kids, who found themselves in the midst of a transition, could do without'*. While parents recognised that one does need to allow teens such choices it was felt that, for many 12 year old children, the peer-pressures related to going out at lunch time was a bit too much in addition to facing significant adjustments during the transition period at the same time.

Suggestions were made to either allow children to leave school premises at lunch-time towards the end of P7, so that by S1 '*lunchtime at ASDA*' might have lost some of its appeal. Alternatively, parents thought that children should perhaps be allowed out only after the end of their first term at S1, once they had had a chance to settle in a bit and were better able to handle the changes and challenges involved in a transition.

The issue of 'going to ASDA' was also linked to the current 'canteen routine' at the academy. Reportedly, packed lunches were not allowed to be eaten in the canteen but had to be taken to

the locker area. '*I was surprised that my son no longer wanted packed lunches, but no wonder because they don't get to eat it with their friends in the canteen...they have to sit amongst their lockers...and eat it there, which is a real problem; no tables....*'. Children therefore face a choice between paying +/- £ 3.00 daily for lunch that may then be eaten in the canteen, going to ASDA to buy food that's more affordable but less healthy, or having to sit in the locker area to eat their home-packed lunches.

However, apart from the lack of space in the canteen, parents and children alike are proud of the new building. Reportedly, children take pride in their new surroundings and are happy to wear a school uniform complete with tie. Overall, parents stated that their children had settled in well, were adjusting to having more than one teacher, enjoyed the variety of their subjects, got used to the wider school environment, were making new friends and generally had matured considerably within a short period of time.

6.2   Emotional Well-Being

Parents thought that their children's emotional wellbeing was influenced by their exposure to an ever increasing array of pressures conveyed by the media which '*treat children as adults*', particularly in terms of physical appearance (dress and looks), the modelling of patterns of permissive behaviour (boyfriend/girlfriend relationships) and leisure time activities. Parents also stated that the availability of drugs and alcohol became increasingly easy and thought that teenagers had a lot to contend with.

When asked how much of their child's emotional well-being they saw as the schools responsibility, parents stated unanimously that, while the school might of course influence their children's emotional wellbeing, the final responsibility for it rested with themselves as parents. As regards responsibilities located within the school, the following issues were addressed:

i. Parents appreciated the fact that teachers made clear to children who they should to go to if there was a problem (particularly if the problem was within their family perhaps), whether that was an adult, an older pupil, a subject teacher or the guidance teacher. Structures (daily class teacher, guidance teacher, house captains, vice captains, peer support via PPL) which offer opportunities for approach and discussion of problems are in place. Pupils are well aware of these structures and there is not much more any academy could do.

ii. Such structures, however, and the rules and regulations attached to them, could also be counter-productive. One parent mentioned a case in which a school nurse knew about a child's problem, but was not allowed to tell the teachers or the parents. Only the child was in a position to decide who should know and who should not. Parents felt that a parent's right to be informed should prevail since, in the absence of parental authority, parental responsibility cannot be assumed fully.

iii. Similarly, while parents stated that discipline was part of a child's wellbeing, they recognised that teachers have little authority to apply disciplinary measures, although they are charged with the responsibility of looking after pupils in their care. Such issues were seen not as a matter that required additional training, but a matter of '*...misguided policy around 'confidentiality'* and as a call for '*...a balance between responsibility and authority*'.

6.2.1 Points for consideration

- S1s were using a 'diary' and were supposed to note what they had to do for homework and such items, but some children did not do that (reference was made again to a lack of organisational skills). As one parent remarked: *'I ask her [my daughter] where is your homework' ....nothing ..... 'let's see your diary'..... there is nothing in there. But she then tells me that she has Spanish vocabularies to do'*. Parents were wondering whether teachers could check that kids in fact *do* make notes in their diaries otherwise *'the system falls down there and then'*.

Parents felt that this point could easily be addressed and, if handled properly, could make a significant contribution to children's emotional wellbeing.

6.2.2 What could *parents* do to promote pupils' Emotional Well-Being?

Parents stated that they generally knew when their children were not happy or when something was wrong. Reportedly, changed patterns of behaviour include withdrawal and a lack of communication; conversely, a child might seek to talk about something specific. Open communication with one's child was therefore perceived to be crucial. The importance of '*just talking*' and '*being there to ask and to listen*', were mentioned repeatedly.

Constructive involvement between parents and teachers was considered to be a contributing factor to a child's emotional wellbeing, particularly since children sometimes behave very differently at home compared to how they behave at school. One parent cited a friend who '*…always goes to parents' night and always comes back saying: I'm sure that's not the same child..... I'm sure I'm sitting down with the wrong teachers and they are talking about somebody completely different'*.

The general lack of parental involvement in the wider life of the academy was mentioned by all interviewees. In some instances this was a case of '*parents having problems and they don't want to be contacted'*. However, parental involvement is necessary to run and/or supervise many of the activities on offer, such as the drama studio, the dance studio and the recording studio at the Portlethen Academy. However, as with most activities now, parents are asked to complete a 'disclosure form' and obtain some clearance before they are allowed to work with children. This has the effect that, '*instead of committing to a Saturday morning at the football pitch, parents now stay away*'. It was pointed out that '*…the parents who come here [who attend evenings and events at the school] are the ones who are interested in what goes on*' and that '*the school is speaking to the converted*'. Parents reported that the requirement of having to complete disclosure forms often hindered parental involvement, particularly since such forms have to be renewed each year. Parents (present company excluded) felt that the system treated them as '*a guilty party*' rather than as a trustworthy parent willing to help out with children's activities.

6.3   Peer support

Parents indicated that they had been well aware of a 'peer support system', as this had been mentioned in literature given to them, promoted at parents meetings and evening talks, and advocated by pupils involved in the Portlethen Peer Listening (PPL) support group on some such occasions. The Peer Listening Scheme will be discussed in detail in Section seven of this report, but a brief introduction is necessary at this point: **P**ortlethen **P**eer **L**isteners (PPLs) are pupils in S5 and S6, who make themselves available voluntarily to listen to younger pupils. This happens on a bi-weekly basis where, on a rota basis, some pupils are 'on duty' during lunch time. The PPLs have been trained to undertake such listening support.

Parents were appreciative of this scheme, with the proviso that PPLs were involved on a strictly voluntary basis only, that they were selected by experienced staff on the basis of their character and ability, and that they had been trained appropriately. Parents felt that, since S5s and S6s had elected to continue with their education, one would assume that they were sufficiently mature and sober-minded to exert a good influence on younger kids. It was also felt that, as older peers would have been through similar issues fairly recently, they could relate to a variety of concerns younger pupils might have. Consequently, younger kids would probably feel quite confident to chat to them about a range of issues. Peer support was welcomed in the areas of dealing with bullying, helping with questions related to homework (particularly where parental support might not exist), conflict mediation and perhaps knowing when to refer a serious problem to an adult. Although S5s and S6s were perceived as providing valuable support, parents thought that the PPL system should not be extended downward to S4s and S3s. It was thought that teenagers in this age group went through a transition themselves and were not yet ready to take on advisory roles.

When asked whether there could be a role for adults other than teachers to offer wider support to pupils at the academy, parents agreed that such support would be very welcome indeed. For example, a young policeman had been identified as having been particularly helpful in speaking about 'stranger-danger' to Beaver Scouts and it was suggested to invite him to the school to speak to youngsters about a range of issues. This was discussed in the context of teens as young as 13 or 14 '*hanging out at the shops, unsupervised, after dark*'. Reportedly, many adults are scared to go through such crowds to get into the shop (unless they know some of the kids) while, reportedly, police simply drive past.

While groups such as the Scouts, Guides, Brownies, Rainbows, and activities ranging from athletics and martial arts to soccer, facilities such as a drama studio, a recording studio and a dance studio, and events at the local Jubilee Hall are offered, they do need to be led by parents and/or other interested parties. Focus group participants felt strongly that it was the 'leadership' that was lacking. Simply providing 'things' might not be terribly effective. An example given was the drop-in-centre in Portlethen which was thrashed.

Integrated peer support, strong parental support and interest and support offered by the wider community were felt to go a long way to establishing and maintaining young people's emotional wellbeing. The Peer Listening Scheme will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

CHAPTER SEVEN: PEER LISTENING SCHEME

Promotion of pupils' emotional wellbeing can be facilitated through a variety of school-based interventions. Types of interventions as identified earlier in Sutton's (2005) review of literature are either 'universal', 'selective' or 'indicated' in their approach. Peer Listening Schemes have been classified as a *universal* type of intervention that provides an informally structured forum for pupils to support their peers.

The present chapter examines the development of the peer listening scheme '*PPL Are Here*' at Portlethen Academy. In particular, it looks at definitional issues, membership, selection and training for the scheme, awareness of the scheme amongst young people and the usefulness of the scheme.

7.1   Definitions and key features of Peer Listening

While peer listening can take a range of different forms, its key feature is that young people are trained to support their younger peers. This does not mean that young people *counsel* younger pupils, but rather that they use "active listening skills to support peers in distress" (Cowie & Hutson 2005 p.40). Peer support can be delivered as part of a variety of models and/or interventions such as befriending schemes, buddying schemes, playground-pal schemes, anti-bullying frameworks and peer listening models. The selection process for prospective peer-listeners usually includes criteria such as a certain level of emotional and intellectual maturity, a strong interest in wanting to help others, and a willingness to commit to the training as well as to the actual program for a certain period of time (NSPCC 2006). Another key feature of such interventions is that peer-listeners are supported, at all times, by adults, i.e. teachers, a school nurse, school counsellors or professionally trained staff who have been dedicated to such roles. Based on a recommendation made in the Choose Life Interim Report (Love *et al* 2005), a Peer Listening Scheme was developed at the Portlethen Academy. The following information is based on a focus-group interview held with young 'peer listeners'.

7.2   Membership, selection and training

At Portlethen Academy, 12 young people were initially recruited to become Portlethen Peer Listeners in the autumn of 2005; eleven young women (from S6) and one young man (from S6). They did so because '*it seemed a decent thing to do for the school*', in order '*to make a contribution*' and because they '*just enjoy younger kids*'. All of them had previously assisted with the Academy's summer-school-scheme (PALS) and general S1 induction activities.

CHILDREN 1st, one of Scotland's leading child charities, provided the Peer-Listening-Training, which comprised two introductory sessions at Portlethen Academy and activities at CHILDREN 1st's offices over a period of two days. Training activities included a discussion on which 'services' the PPls thought would be needed, the drawing up of a confidentiality agreement, and role play. While acknowledging that the agency had '*prepared them as best as they could have',* PPLs felt that role-playing was rather artificial in that they had to 'make up' cases among themselves, both in the role of client and in the role of supporter. Initially they thought that this was '*a bit of a joke*'; however, when asked whether they would have liked to have observed a 'real' situation, they voiced concerns about ethics, acknowledging that '*it would not have been as easy on the actual people*', and that '*this might not have been very practica*l'. PPLs' comments indicated that they were not only aware of ethical issues surrounding contact with vulnerable people, but also of the limitations of hands-on-training. Still, the peer listeners felt that '*they could have done with a bit more role-play*'. While having been prepared to possibly having to listen and respond to issues such as unplanned pregnancies and drug abuse, the main concern for the S1 pupils who then did attend the

sessions was '*friendships*' and '*how to deal with having fallen out with a friend*'. PPLs felt that they had been somewhat over-prepared. All in all, however, they enjoyed the training experience and thought it had benefited them '*for the most part*'.

Training took place during August / September 2005, and PPLs had their first 'real' encounter with S1 pupils after the October holidays. Peer Listening drop-in-sessions were held twice weekly. On a rota-basis, three PPLs were on duty for each session. The intention was not to have them function as a group, but to cater for the eventuality of more than one pupil needing attention at any one session. Contrary to what might have been expected, the few S1 pupils attending the sessions arrived in groups rather than seeking individual attention. One might surmise that S1 pupils felt more comfortable *with* their friends that without them, at least when visiting the PPL drop-in. However, reportedly the PPLs '*sensed that the S1s did not open up*' and '*knew that they were not telling*'. This could have been due either to having had to face three PPLs, or to having been *with their* friends. When prompted on why the PPLs thought that S1s had turned up in groups, one Peer Listener responded, half jokingly: '*maybe they thought it was a good idea to get free food*'. As for the practical arrangements, the rota worked well in terms of frequency, the actual times set, and rotation.

As far as record-keeping was concerned, the setting up of computer user-ID's seemed to have been '*a bit slow*', '*and then sessions became so informal*' that PPLs 'did not feel the need' to complete any formal paperwork for reporting purposes. They felt that there was no need for PPLs to be debriefed after sessions either, since the S1 pupils had not '*opened up*'. Only one case was different, and that case was referred to social work. The room in which the PPLs met the S1s was described as cosy, light and '*pretty much an ideal place*'. However its location within the school building did create some difficulties for prospective users (see below).

7.3   Awareness

For the peer listeners themselves, it seemed that a general awareness of the purpose of the program was missing amongst pupils. However as the survey findings showed, the scheme was in fact well known in the school, with fourth-fifths of S1 pupils aware of the scheme in November 2005 (82%, n=116) and just under three-quarters of S2 pupils aware of the scheme in September 2006 (72%, n=111). Peer Listeners reported that '*after two or three weeks, groups of five or six, and then even eight or nine S1s appeared, and smaller groups started coming too*'. This seemed to have been due to curiosity and to '*people wanting a place to go to at lunchtime*', rather than the need to seek out a sympathetic Peer Listener. Another reason for 'group arrivals' might have been the location of the room, since '*bigger kids hung around there and the S1s had to get past them*' - an undertaking which was perceived as being somewhat intimidating for some S1s. Groups were comprised of either boys or girls; there were no 'mixed groups'. At the time of this focus group discussion, the PPLs were still in the 'old' Portlethen Academy building.

Reportedly, most of the discussions revolved around friendships and '*having fallen out with friends*'. No mention was made of problems related to home-situations or serious personal issues; only one pupil mentioned bullying. PPLs expressed a minor disappointment in the lack of substantive content to the sessions by stating that '*...that was kind of the point what we had all been trained up for....to deal with personal issues....so we were like: "Okay then, you fell out with your best friend...*'. PPLs felt that S1s '*just wanted reassurance more than anything.....they wanted to be a bit more clear on how you can be friends again.....whether to just start speaking again.....I don't know what they expected but I think they expected what they turned it into, which was informal....and we expected a lot more formal stuff...*'. However, Peer Listeners did recognise that, for younger teens, 'falling out with a friend and not knowing how to make up' might be a serious issue. With the exception of the one pupil

referred to social work for support, there was no need to refer any S1 pupils to staff for counselling.

7.4   Usefulness

When asked what had 'worked well', Peer Listeners stated that '*the kids thought they could trust us.....that there was always someone there at Peer Listening...*'. When asked what had 'not worked so well', Peer Listeners felt that the Scheme had perhaps '*not been publicised as much as it should have been*'. PPLs felt that they themselves should have focussed on that a bit more and perhaps have gone to S1 / S2 classes, providing some more information about the Scheme and encouraging pupils to use it. PPLs felt that they would not have wanted to extend the Scheme to listening to 4th years; keeping it at S1 / S2 level was fine. Since this was the first time such a scheme was run, no feedback had been invited from S1s. At the end of the year, Peer Listeners were presented with a Certificate of Award. Although the PPLs were pleased about that, they felt that '*they had not done anything special or particular to deserve it'*.

Peer Listeners' experiences were fed into the design and structure of training sessions for Portlethen's 2nd generation of Peer Listeners. As such the 16 new peer listeners recruited in June 2006 would benefit from the pioneering work of the initial providers of the service. It is also worth noting that unlike peer listening schemes elsewhere, the Portlethen peer listening scheme, second time round, was able to recruit an almost even mix of male and female peer listeners, with 7 young men and 9 young women becoming peer listeners in 2006. Also, recruitment involved 7 young people from S5 and 9 young people from S6. Such a widening of the recruitment base (to include S5 pupils as well as those from S6) reflected a need to maximise the investment in training of the peer listeners. In addition, it was recognition of the wishes of younger pupils who indicated support for the idea that peer listeners be drawn from both senior year groups.

The initial PPLs suggested that the training should perhaps be based on dealing with more '*trivial things'* rather than on '*serious*' issues such as drug-abuse. They also recommended that S1s and S2s be better informed about the Scheme (not only during assembly but also in their respective class-rooms) and to encourage them more to attend the PPL sessions. Such (self) publicity would ensure a better return on the efforts of all concerned. Their advice to future PPLs was to '*let yourself be known*'.

7.5   Concluding comments

The experiences of the Peer Listeners interviewed were not dissimilar to those indicated in literature published on this topic. Although Peer Listening Schemes share certain key features, they develop according to the particular needs of a school and evolve into structures that are as unique as the school that creates them. Generally speaking, if pupils' emotional wellbeing can be strengthened at an early stage, heightened vulnerabilities during the later stages of adolescence might be reduced significantly. The information gathered in the focus group discussion with PPLs can now be used as baseline data for the further development of Portlethen Academy's Peer Listening Scheme.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION

8.1 Introduction

The study was designed to address a range of issues with respect to the emotional wellbeing of young people. In particular, it sought to clarify the meaning of key terms and concepts in the field of emotional wellbeing, describe and evaluate the personal, emotional and social challenges facing young people as they make the move into secondary school, document the social and physical culture within which such experiences were located, inform an 'intervention' that might address the emotional (and other) needs of young people and evaluate the effectiveness of the 'intervention'. Such interests translated into a number of research questions, as follows :

1. To what extent is there shared understanding among key stakeholders with respect to the concept of 'emotional literacy' ?
2. What are the personal, emotional and social challenges facing young people making the transition between primary and secondary school in Portlethen ?
3. What are the significant socio-cultural factors in Portlethen that enable or impede the movement of young people between primary and secondary school ?
4. What are the constituent elements and processes of the 'intervention'?
5. What are the outcomes (intended or otherwise) associated with the 'intervention' ?
6. Why do the outcomes (intended or otherwise) associated with the 'intervention' occur?

By way of concluding this final report of phase one of the research, an attempt will be made to answer the six research questions that guided the study. In doing do, it is hoped that insight will be offered into the emotional wellbeing of young people as they experience the move from primary school into secondary school and make their way through the early years of secondary school itself. In addition, some early insight will be offered into the working of the 'intervention', the peer listening scheme. Upon the completion of the second phase of the research, it will be possible to fully evaluate the 'intervention' itself.

8.2 Research Questions – Answered

1. To what extent is there shared understanding among key stakeholders with respect to the concept of 'emotional literacy' ?

The review of literature identified a range of key concepts that explicated the idea of emotional wellbeing; emotional literacy, mental health, self-esteem, emotional intelligence and resilience. Three related and overlapping themes emerged as the essence of these separate but linked ideas. Firstly, emotional wellbeing was seen as the ability to develop psychologically, socially, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually. Secondly, this ability was 'functional' in that it allowed individuals to recognise, understand, manage and express emotions. Finally, such activity was purposeful, in that it was directed at satisfying both personal and social goals.

For both teachers and agency staff, emotional wellbeing was perceived in terms of (good) mental health, confidence and the ability to manage emotions. It was rooted in a supportive home background and school environment. Such a state could be recognised by pupils' behaviours in terms of their ability to cope with both routine and challenge. Conversely, a lack of emotional wellbeing led to a breakdown in normal functioning which could manifest itself in a mix of aggression, withdrawal and lack of motivation.

For parents, emotional wellbeing was understood in terms of happiness and engagement. Young people who were emotionally well were content with their place in the scheme of things (e.g. peer groups, family, school) and able to communicate with others. However parents were aware of a number of threats to this state, including the pressures arising from the media, not least in terms of norms of physical appearance, (permissive) behaviour and leisure time activities. Asked about who was responsible for a child's emotional wellbeing, it was pointed out that whilst the school could influence a young person's wellbeing, parents ought to have '*the final responsibility*'. Accordingly, achieving and maintaining emotional wellbeing was linked to open communication between parents and their offspring but also a constructive involvement by parents with teachers to help bridge the gap that sometimes appeared between home and school.

For pupils, emotional wellbeing was explicitly understood in terms of moods and peer relationships. In terms of moods, these were strongly influenced by (academic) subject choice and experience in class. As such, pupils reported being bored or excited (or both) by the content and style of teaching offered to them. With respect to peers, they recognised that their ability to manage constantly changing relationships would determine whether or not they were happy or sad. Despite the uncertainty of relationships, pupils emphasised the importance of 'trust' among peers, as the key to developing such supportive relations.

However emotional wellbeing could also be inferred from the responses of the young people to a range of questions that sought to examine self-confidence, self perception, the management of feelings (both positive and negative), attitude towards school, communication and 'connectedness'. As such, using these data a multi-dimensional model of emotional wellbeing emerged characterised by a four-fold typology that described the following sub-groups: firstly a group of young people with high levels of communicability of both positive and negative feelings. Secondly, a group of young people with good levels of self-confidence and a positive attitude towards school. Thirdly, a group of young people with less experience of positive feelings and fewer people with whom they could talk to about important things. Fourthly, a group of young people with low self confidence, a greater experience of negative feelings and a negative attitude to school. Groups one and two enjoyed greater levels of emotional wellbeing than groups three and four. On balance the majority of young people surveyed were found to be emotionally well, able to communicate a range of feelings, self-confident and well disposed towards school.

2. What are the personal, emotional and social challenges facing young people making the transition between primary and secondary school in Portlethen ?

Pupils, teachers and agency staff were invited to identify and explain the challenges facing young people as they moved from primary to secondary school. For teachers and agency staff five main issues were recognised; peer group pressure, family difficulties, bullying, concern about the future and low self-esteem. Asked to explain such difficulties, teachers and agency staff highlighted the importance of pupils' ability to develop meaningful relationships with peers, including forming friendships, which led to a 'connectedness' that underpinned emotional wellbeing. Also, it was recognised that pupils were going through the process of attaining maturity in which the more 'positive' self-esteem of childhood was giving way to the more 'realistic' self-esteem of adolescence. Notwithstanding the developmental aspects of self-esteem, it was felt nonetheless that pupils' evaluations of themselves could be enhanced by supportive relationships, achievement (i.e. academically, socially and in sport), praise and positive parenting. By contrast it was perceived that relationship difficulties, lack of achievement, an unsettled home life, bullying, negative criticism and inappropriate (media) role models could threaten self-esteem.

With respect to young people's perceptions, the vast majority (in both cohorts) were seen to maintain a positive outlook in the move between primary school and secondary school, with most thinking well of themselves and considering that others thought well of them too. On balance, young people perceived adult approval to be more easily achieved than approval from peers. Further, even if they did think other people thought badly of them, fewer young people were bothered by such negative perceptions especially as they reached secondary school. However, sensitivity to what others' thought of them was a concern for a sizeable proportion of young people, with just under half bothered '*a bit*' or '*a lot*' by what others thought. Body image was a concern for young people too and in particular for girls. As such more than a quarter of girls, at primary school, considered themselves '*too fat*'. By the time they had reached S2 at secondary school, more than a third of girls thought of themselves in this way.

Asked specifically about a range of issues that might concern them, the most reported were personal safety, bullying and drugs, and these three concerns persisted across time. However, it is important to note that in general, fewer young people at secondary school compared with primary school were concerned about any issue. Notwithstanding such a trend, an important gender dimension appeared with respect to issues of concern. As such, girls started to worry more (than boys) about certain issues, in particular '*life at home', 'parents'* and *'my body'* as they moved through the early years of secondary school.

Examining the experience of school, the study found that although the vast majority of young people (in both cohorts) were well disposed towards primary school (in terms of the people, buildings and culture), more than three-quarters were looking forward to leaving primary school and four-fifths were looking forward to going to secondary school. Nevertheless, two-fifths were concerned about school work at secondary school and a third were apprehensive about the size of building they were going to. Three months after the move to secondary school, the second survey found that the vast majority of young people had settled in socially (83%), however only two-thirds claimed to be similarly settled academically.

Asked about a range of feelings, the study found that, on balance, across time (and cohorts) the young people had experienced more positive than negative feelings in the weeks prior to the surveys. In particular they were likely to have been *happy, excited, confident* and (less positively) *bored*. Boredom was a feeling that became more widespread as the young people moved through the early years of secondary school. Likewise feelings of *confusion* and (less commonly) *jealously* and *anger* increased over time. More positively, fewer young people felt *afraid* as they left primary school and moved through secondary school. Important gender differences emerged. As such, girls were more likely than boys overall to express feelings of any kind. In particular, girls were more likely to report feeling *upset, jealous, bored* and (more positively) *love*. By contrast, boys (in primary school, but not in secondary school) were more likely than girls to feel *in control*.

3. *What are the significant socio-cultural factors in Portlethen that enable or impede the movement of young people between primary and secondary school ?*

Given the importance of 'context' and setting to understanding complex social behaviours, the study made use of ethnographic data to explore the socio-cultural factors that are embedded in the local physical and social world of the young people of Portlethen. In attempting to 'unlock' this world, the ethnography sought to capture the essence of Portlethen as a place, the level of community present in the area and young people's emotional attachment to this setting. With respect to Portlethen as a place, the study found residents enjoying a complex mix of urban tastes and lifestyles in the context of a semi-rural setting. Socio-spatial differences were evident in this space, with distinct neighbourhoods

accommodating particular lifestyles. For example, the oil boom of the 1970's had given rise to a spread of social housing that contrasted with the older and established fishing village of Portlethen and, more recently, with newer housing accommodating those employed in finance, tourism and other service sector jobs.

The link between community and emotional wellbeing is well established and the ethnography evidenced the existence of attitudes and behaviours consistent with the close ties that bind people emotionally and socially to one another. Both young and old reported that *people get on with one another in Portlethen* and activities such as local Fayres suggested a level of shared activity consistent with community. However, threats to community were also evident and the movement of people into and out of the town challenged the settledness upon which community may depend.

Finally, with respect to young people's emotional attachment to the area, the evidence pointed towards variable levels of commitment. Allegiance to nationally recognised football teams over the local football team (Aberdeen FC), participation in (universal) patterns of consumption with respect to clothes (e.g. Black American urban fashions) and the use of language and expressions drawn from American 'hip hop' culture, testify both to an outward looking disposition and a desire to move away from the perceived limitations of north-east culture.

4. What are the constituent elements and processes of the 'intervention' ?

The review of literature identified a three-fold typology of school-based interventions designed to address the emotional wellbeing of young people : universal interventions, selective interventions and indicated interventions. Universal interventions are addressed at a whole population and no attempt is made to target specific 'at risk' groups. Selective interventions focus on a population subset that shares recognised 'vulnerability characteristics'. Indicated interventions target high risk individuals who already display characteristics and symptoms that suggest mental illness. On occasion, universal interventions, selective interventions and indicated interventions can be combined and used together in complementary ways within a single initiative.

Evidence of the success or otherwise of the school-based interventions was found to be lacking and the field is 'initiative rich but evaluation poor'. Nevertheless examples of schemes that are established suggest the importance of including young people themselves in any intervention promoting their emotional wellbeing. A variety of such 'peer support' schemes are now in use and range across five models of practice, according to the Mental Health Foundation: peer mentoring, peer mediation, peer tutoring, peer education and peer listening. Such schemes variously describe one-to-one personal support (e.g. buddies), conflict resolution, academic support, the communication of health and social education messages and confidential drop-in / outreach work to address personal and social difficulties.

Taking account of the needs identified and existing systems of induction and support in place, it was agreed to develop a peer listening scheme at Portlethen Academy which would enhance and complement on-going systems of pastoral support in the school. As such a partnership between young people, teachers, other relevant agency staff and the research team worked towards establishing such an initiative.

5. What are the 'outcomes' (intended or otherwise) associated with the 'intervention'?

A first step in measuring the effectiveness of the peer listening scheme was to determine how well known it was amongst the young people and what they understood its purpose to be. Accordingly, enquiries were made about young people's knowledge and appreciation of the

peer listening scheme. In terms of knowledge, the scheme itself was introduced in the school in November 2005 and four-fifths of S1 pupils (82%), the target group, were aware of its existence around this time. By September 2006, around three-quarters of young people (72%) reported being aware of the scheme. Girls were more likely than boys to know about the scheme. Asked about what the scheme might 'do', four main topics were consistently reported as suitable issues for the scheme to deal with: bullying, problems with friends, exam stress and talking about feelings. In addition, it was felt the scheme might also address a further range of issues, including health, school and family matters. In terms of use of the scheme, only one young person, in S1, sought individual help from the scheme in 2005 (and was referred on to social work for support), while three young people made individual use of scheme as S2 pupils in 2006. However, small groups of S1 and S2 pupils made casual use of the scheme at lunchtime open drop-in sessions throughout. A further 22 young people indicated their intention to use the scheme between 2005 and 2006. Girls were more likely than boys to consider using the scheme. Asked further whether they themselves might consider becoming peer listeners in the future, a third of the young people expressed an interest in ding so, a third were uncertain while a third were disinclined to become involved. In sum therefore, as the peer listening scheme became established at Portlethen Academy, it was generally well known, understood and valued, if underused, by its target group of S1 and S2 pupils.

Offering an early assessment of its usefulness, it would appear that the scheme has become a worthwhile and complementary part of the pastoral support system already in existence for junior pupils at Portlethen Academy. It has provided an extra dimension of care that is both novel and has the potential to be responsive to changing needs of young people in the early years of secondary school. In addition, the peer listening scheme has brought (less direct) benefits to the senior pupils who have worked to provide the service. Offering a channel to direct a growing sense of responsibility and citizenship amongst older pupils, it has also resulted in enhancing the confidence of those pupils in S5 and S6 who negotiated the systematic selection process and successfully completed the training provided by the recognised children's charity CHILDREN 1st. Further, it has provided such senior pupils with a useful addition to their CVs.

6. Why do the 'outcomes' (intended or otherwise) associated with the 'intervention' occur?

The early success of the peer listening scheme can be traced to a combination of factors. Firstly, the scheme had the benefit of being 'evidence' led, and the particular 'intervention' that emerged at Portlethen Academy did so informed by the present research study. Secondly, the intervention was the outcome of partnership working between a highly motivated (and skilled) group of professionals associated with the school. Inter-agency working between strategic development, education, health, social work and the voluntary sector has underpinned any success the scheme may have had. Thirdly, the young people themselves have played a crucial role in facilitating the emergence and sustainability of the scheme. Their willingness to take on additional work (e.g. training for and managing the scheme) and shoulder the responsibility of caring for younger pupils, has been commendable. Of particular note has been the success of the Portlethen peer listening scheme in attracting young men to be peer listeners. Finally, any peer listening scheme relies on a good relationship between pupils and staff at the school. At Portlethen Academy, the peer listening scheme has been well supported by senior management and coordinated by a sensitive and well respected member of the guidance staff.

In sum, the success of any peer listening scheme relies upon four factors: knowledge, skill, motivation and opportunity. There must be a shared understanding, amongst pupils and relevant professionals, about what the scheme is seeking to achieve. There must be a level of

skill amongst staff and pupils equal to the demands that will come from those who will use the scheme. There must be a commitment to the scheme rooted in a desire to improve the circumstances of all pupils and a respect for their needs. There must be resources made available and the practical arrangements made that enable a service to be delivered. At Portlethen Academy, all four factors have gradually come together. The challenge will be to build on what has already been achieved.

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