

The London School of Economics and Political Science

**Working Together to Protect Children;
A Case Study of Policy Implementation in Greece.**

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Declaration

I certify that the thesis I have presented for examination for the MPhil/PhD degree of the London School of Economics and Political Science is solely my own work other than where I have clearly indicated that it is the work of others (in which case the extent of any work carried out jointly by me and any other person is clearly identified in it).

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Abstract

This is an exploratory case study aiming to describe the current state of the child protection system in Greece by examining both policy interventions and service responses targeted at all the stages of the phenomenon, ranging from detection and investigation to the provision of support or out of home care.

This thesis is embedded in EU and international mandates for protecting children, embracing the Convention for the Rights of the Child as the starting point and value base of any developed, contemporary system designed to deal with this complex phenomenon. The main objective is to paint a picture of policy implementation in conjunction with front line interagency and multidisciplinary working. Data is collected and analysed in regards to all three levels; the macro, or policy level; the meso, or organisational/structural level and the micro, or frontline, professional, case specific, grassroots level.

The researcher uses first-hand knowledge of the systems of both England and Greece in order to position Greece within the EU continuum of approaches based on the long-standing dilemma of support versus protection. As a result, the study concludes by offering suggestions on how to overcome barriers and improve the current situation in Greece so as to ensure that vulnerable children and their families receive appropriate and adequately designed services that would potentially enhance their life chances and enable better outcomes. This is achieved by distilling lessons to be learned from other more developed systems and adopting them to the Greek reality. This is an opportune moment for such a study as there is significant international movement towards convergence, which advocates unifying responses to such complex social phenomena and utilising international evidence of good practice.

Acknowledgements

“Sometimes a scream is better than a thesis” states Ralph Waldo Emerson as the LSE has been reminding us, but sometimes a thesis is a scream in disguise, wearing many layers of academic illustration but aiming just the same to disturb those who have fallen asleep on their watch and voice injustices or societal troubles and capture the world’s attention and direct it to a specific aspect of a particular phenomenon, shedding light and, if an optimist, even provoking change.

A thesis is made of screams one could argue and a researcher screams or feels like screaming very often whilst engaging with a thesis; a roller coaster ride (as a colleague of mine called it) with many bumps that translate into screams, both out of pleasure and pain, interest and fatigue or even exhaustion.

Thank you all who stood by me along the way, first of all my vigorously guiding and supportive, supervisors; Professor Eileen Munro and Dr Gill Bridge, who at times appeared to have more faith in me than I had in myself with the wish that they will continue to encourage the many who will follow this path, parents; the late Mr Alexander Athanasiou who left me with a vision and Mrs Denomache Athanasiou who stayed behind and patiently helped keep it alive and saw it through. A special teacher and guide, Mrs Aggeliki Klotzari who was there during all major life transitions and made me understand the glory of teaching, as colours of her shining qualities seem to have rubbed off and brought me where I am today. Also teachers, colleagues, friends and co-travellers whose advice, kind words and encouragement compelled me to carry on, at times helped generate ideas, but most importantly made this journey a more positive one. Furthermore, I would like to voice my great appreciation to IKY, the provider of Greek State scholarships and the LSE for their financial support, without which there could not have been a thesis. And last, but by no means least, thank you to the people who helped this project materialise, the participants of all phases of this study, people who gave their time and insight and as such are the voices behind this study.

May this scream reach far and wide and evoke the winds of change for the children in need of protection in Greece.

Thank you all again

Helen Athanasiou

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In Homer's *Iliad* (circa 8th century BC), Hephaestus, one of the twelve ancient Greek gods, reveals how he was thrown twice from the top of Mount Olympus, Greece's highest mountain, believed to be the home of the gods. In the first instance, his mother, Hera, who at birth was embarrassed by his weak appearance, dropped him. He landed at sea where the goddess Thetis rescued him. She and Eurynome, mother of the Graces, hid Hephaestus from the wrath of his own mother after his fall. He worked secretly with the two goddesses for nine years perfecting his craft before reclaiming his rightful place among the gods. (Book xviii, verses 394-490) Later on, after having reconciled with Hera, Hephaestus took his mother's side in defiance of Zeus. He dared to attempt to rescue her after Zeus had hanged her by her wrists from heaven because she had disobeyed him. The Olympian, in his rage, caught Hephaestus by the foot and threw him from the top of Mount Olympus to the earth far below. After falling for a whole day, at sunset Hephaestus landed on Lemnos, broken and nearly lifeless. This time around the islanders came to his rescue. However, after this second incident he could only walk with a cane. (Ibid, Book I, verse 586-594).

This was one of the first incidents, though clearly not the only one, of physical abuse to be recorded in Greek mythology, where gods had human characteristics and frequently displayed anger, hatred, envy, etc. Not only was Hephaestus cast from Olympus due to his weak appearance, which was considered shameful by his own mother, but he was also disabled as a result of Zeus's inability to control his anger whilst trying to intervene in what would nowadays be called an incident of domestic violence. Hephaestus was the victim, or a survivor, as is the currently preferred term, of both parents on separate occasions. This myth clearly reveals the presence and, at least during the poet's time, the likely societal tolerance of physical chastisement that in the aforementioned narrative is synonymous with what would today be indisputably recognised as physical abuse. A disability, it would seem, triggered physical abuse and so did domestic violence. If gods were behaving in such ways then, what could one expect of mere mortals? Additionally, supposing that the situation today is not the same as in Homer's time, the comparison highlights the attitudinal variance over time, showing how practices that used to be accepted have become outlawed and vice versa. Social sciences are full of examples

of changes through time and place of what are considered acceptable and unacceptable terms and practices. Finally, the myth highlights the role of the community in dealing with violence in the family by identifying the inhabitants of Lemnos as the ones who came to Hephaestus' rescue the second time round.

Has there been a shift in the way Greeks recognise and deal with the maltreatment of children in the past approximately 3,000 years? Or are Olympian traits still to be found? This is one of the pertinent questions that this thesis will explore focused on the here and now rather than approaching it from a historical perspective. The ultimate aim of this case study will be to attempt to describe the phenomenon of child abuse and neglect in Greece, explore community responses by presenting service provision, policy and implementation, whilst looking at current trends and international influences. The researcher will use her experience working within the English and the Greek child protection systems, as well as her familiarity with Greek culture, to analyse the situation in Greece.

Nowadays, the protection of children is the responsibility of the welfare state as well as the family. What used to be considered a highly sacred, private space is now supported, subsidised, monitored, investigated, and even at times, substituted by the state. In other words, each country, through an established system, interferes to ensure their children's protection. Greece seems to be a long way behind Britain and other developed countries in terms of both the degree of awareness of the problem and the development of responsive policy and service provisions for shaping available interventions. Thus, it would be useful to examine – within an overarching ideology of sharing good practice and plans for integration or convergence between member states- to what degree systems developed in other European Union – hereafter EU – countries might be adopted by Greece and more appropriately how the Greek system could be improved or updated accordingly by taking into consideration successful, evidence-based advancements in practice and/or practice-based evidence and policies developed in other European Union countries with well-developed child protection systems. Consequently, the researcher as an extremely informed observer will look for necessary changes in social work practice and policy with the ultimate aim of improving services for vulnerable children and their families within the broader context of positioning Greece on the support versus protection service orientation dilemma faced internationally when dealing with cases of child abuse and neglect. Establishing and operating a sufficient and efficient child protection system is, as was

already hinted above, not an aim in itself but a vehicle for guaranteeing the protection of children through timely, holistic and evidence-based interventions.

Although Greece has officially pledged a commitment to dealing with child maltreatment as a member of the United Nations (UN), the EU and other relevant international bodies and ratifying conventions, such as the Convention for the Rights of the Child (CRC) (1989), there is little information available on how all this is being translated and implemented, or what the reality is for children and families in need of support and/or protection. What differences, if any, have the twenty-five years, 1989-2014, of the CRC made to abused and/or neglected children and their families in Greece? Has viewing children as bearers of rights rather than as being 'owned' and fully represented by their parents who always know best caused shifts in policy, law, service provision and professional practice? The study of Greece will therefore be anchored to relevant multinational perspectives and initiatives, exploring lessons to be learnt and how the current situation can be improved using advances in other countries as sources of wisdom. **In order to achieve this, the essential ingredients of a developed child protection policy will be established, based on international guidelines and relevant literature.**

A brief examination of the Greek child protection services immediately revealed to the researcher a rudimentary level of formal structures and procedures available, which in turn lead to the intentional inclusion of an investigation of non-governmental initiatives and accessible, informal models of service collaboration in the thesis, so as to paint a more detailed and balanced picture of the situation. When faced with an incompetent official system, not-for-profit organisations that may have the necessary flexibility as well as sensitive, experienced professionals, more often than not partly trained abroad and thus exposed to more sophisticated systems, seem to take leading roles in moving things forward or finding new and/or innovative ways of making the most out of, or working around, the existing system. In a system that appears somewhat inadequate, initiatives of this kind must be considered when painting the whole picture, the reality for children and families, whilst simultaneously evidencing the need for change and indicating ways forward already accepted by the professional community.

During the life of this project Greece and the EU have been hit by a severe financial crisis that gravely affected the public purse thus impacting on welfare spending. According to a report by Eurochild (2011:1)

“Two years after the crisis broke out its impact on the daily lives of millions of families, children and young people is clearly perceptible. Although the impact of the crisis is by no means uniform across the EU, evidence suggests that children and families are being disproportionately affected.”

In conjunction with internal trends, other external pressures were and still are present, like the children’s rights movement, for example, which further accentuated the need for improvement in service provision for vulnerable children and their families. In addition, evident trends to compare and contrast systems within the EU in order to promote and combine best practices may be assisted through the unique accumulation of pertinent information within this thesis that recognises both the strengths and weaknesses of the existing situation in Greece.

This introductory chapter will begin to set the scene by presenting internationally acceptable definitions of the complex phenomena of child abuse and neglect. Subsequently, it will explore understandings of and responses to maltreatment, thus highlighting the complexity of the phenomenon under study. Finally, it will conclude by introducing the contents of the remaining chapters of this thesis.

1.1 Defining Child Abuse and Neglect

Attempting to define child abuse and/or neglect is a far more complicated task than one would initially imagine. A variety of definitions exist that more often than not mainly rely on value-laden terminology that is open to interpretation and can thus significantly fluctuate in accordance with different people’s perceptions and frames of reference.

Defining child abuse and neglect is however a prerequisite for exploring the pertinent issues in the child protection arena. Although coming up with an undisputable and detailed definition appears straightforward in theory, in reality, it proves to be quite an impossible task. This inconsistency can be explained, as hinted on above, by considering that all related concepts are value-based. If, for instance, the opposite of maltreating a child, or in other words, the optimum goal towards which intervention in such cases is geared, is what professionals and guidelines in England tend to refer to as “good enough parenting” rather than expert or positive or ideal parenting, it is clear that all these aforementioned concepts are open to interpretation and vary from professional to professional, from culture to culture and through time. The

concept was originally introduced by Winnicott (1965) to imply that no parent can meet the children's needs in the best possible way at all times, as his or her own needs and external factors may affect the equation. Evidence exists that practitioners working within the child protection field over time tend to lower their standards in relation to what they consider acceptable parenting in comparison with other citizens. A study by Rose and Meezan (1996) comparing standards held by practitioners to those held by mothers in relation to neglect revealed that mothers judged incidents as more serious than the workers. Time and exposure to various forms of poor parenting, it would seem, shift the understanding and tolerance of various behaviours and alter the borderline between what is considered acceptable and what unacceptable behaviour. Thus, behaviours such as those described at the beginning of this chapter, found in Greek mythology, even if still observable, are nowadays no longer acceptable. In addition, place, interpreted here as geography and culture, plays a leading role in shaping attitudes and approved or tolerated practices towards children. Even the length and notion of childhood itself is ever changing and rights and responsibilities are acknowledged and attributed differently around the world. As a result, in parts of our modern world one can find child labour that can on occasions scarily resemble child slavery, child exploitation, child weddings, and child soldiers, to name but a few of the extreme examples of the discrepancy that exists and is attributed to culturally acceptable or culturally encouraged customs and traditions. This volatility of tolerable terms and conditions would explain the term "socially constructed", which is often used when talking about abuse and neglect and similarly applies to an array of terms in the realm of the social sciences. It is mainly in this light that the term "social construct" appears in the related literature. (Munro, 2002) Thus, each and every community may be seen as either a risk or a protective factor. Especially so given the fact that, according to WHO (2002), maltreatment can also be viewed as part of a greater typology of violence that includes 'self-directed violence', 'interpersonal violence' and 'collective violence'. Consequently, one would anticipate that preventing child abuse and/or neglect within a society that exhibits a high incidence of all other forms of violence would prove a much greater challenge.

Concerns about the lack of operational definitions of types of abuse to be used for both research and practical purposes are evident in the literature. For instance, the UNICEF Report (2003) describes inconsistencies in the categorisations used in various countries that significantly affect the quality of data collected internationally. Depending on how maltreatment is defined and what categories are recognised under this umbrella term, the number of instances classified

varies, thus impacting, among other things, the international picture of the incidence of the phenomenon.

This study will use the terms child abuse and/or neglect interchangeably with the term child maltreatment. The operational definition that will be adopted is the one provided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, chosen due to its international nature and the fact that Greece, like all other countries apart from the USA and Somalia, has ratified the Convention. This is interpreted as an acceptance of and agreement with its principles, which translates into its inclusion in Greece's respective national legislations and consequently its use as a guide to social policy planning and implementation. Within the Convention, Article 19 refers to child maltreatment as follows:

“State parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other persons who have care of the child.

Such protective measures should, as appropriate, include effective procedures for the establishment of social programmes to provide necessary support for the child and for those who have the care of the child, as well as for other forms of prevention and for identification, reporting, referral, investigation, treatment and follow-up of instances of child maltreatment described heretofore, and, as appropriate, for judicial involvement.” (UN, 1989:318)

It is exactly these measures that the researcher went in search of during the fieldwork of this research. Another definition of the phenomenon that is accepted internationally and offers a more detailed definition of the sub-groups of types of maltreatment stems from the World Health Organisation (WHO), an undisputed authority on public health matters, and is meant to be applicable to all countries throughout the world:

“Child abuse or maltreatment constitutes all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.”

This definition is more detailed in that it names all types of abuse and it also introduces the notion of taking into consideration not only “actual” but also “potential” harm. In addition, the WHO presents a group of more detailed definitions that provide a breakdown of the general term “violence against children” into categories as follows:

“Physical abuse of a child is that which results in actual or potential physical harm from an interaction or lack of an interaction, which is reasonably within the control of a parent or person in a position of responsibility, power or trust. There may be single or repeated incidents.

Emotional abuse includes the failure to provide a developmentally appropriate, supportive environment, including the availability of a primary attachment figure, so that the child can develop a stable and full range of emotional and social competencies commensurate with her or his personal potentials and in the context of the society in which the child dwells. There may also be acts towards the child that cause or have high probability of causing harm to the child’s health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. These acts must be reasonably within the control of the parent or person in a relationship of responsibility, trust or power. Acts include restriction of movement, patterns of belittling, denigrating, scapegoating, threatening, scaring, discrimination, ridiculing or other non-physical forms of hostile or rejecting treatment.

Neglect or negligent treatment is the failure to provide for the development of the child in all spheres: health, education, emotional development, nutrition, shelter, and safe living conditions in the context of the resources reasonably available to the family or caretakers and causes or has a high probability of causing harm to the child’s health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. This includes the failure to properly supervise and protect children from harm as much as is feasible.

Sexual abuse is the involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the child is developmentally unprepared and cannot give consent, or that violate the laws or social taboos of society. Child sexual abuse is evidenced by this activity between a child and an adult or another child who by age or development is in a relationship of responsibility, trust or power, the activity being intended to gratify or satisfy the needs of the other person. This may include but not limited to:

- the inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity,
- the exploitative use of a child in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices,
- the exploitative use of children in pornographic performances or material.

Exploitation is the commercial or other exploitation of a child refers to use of the child to work or other activities for the benefit of others. This includes, but is not limited to, child labour and child prostitution. These activities are to the detriment of the child’s physical or mental health, education, or spiritual, moral or social-emotional development.”

From a feminist perspective, child abuse occurs when a person in a position of power and/or authority that inspires trust misuses that trust and causes harm to a child. The emphasis here is on power, the power of an adult over a child, as well as the additional power that results when the abusing adult is a parent, guardian or teacher, a person a child would, under normal circumstances, turn to for help and guidance. Furthermore, the incidence of male perpetrators, mainly in reference to sexual abuse, warrants links to male power or male dominance (Stark and Flitcraft, 1988; MacLeod and Saraga, 1988; Hanmer and Itzin, 2001).

From a Greek perspective, Agathonos-Georgopoulou (1997), a Greek social worker, established scholar and researcher who has written extensively on child abuse and/or neglect, suggests the use of a definition of abuse by Garbarino and Gilliam (1980), “Any acts of commission or omission by a parent or guardian that are judged by a mixture of community values and professional expertise to be inappropriate and damaging”. The use of terms such as “community values” or, as in the previous page, “social taboos of society” proves yet again the subjectivity of the definitions and strengthens the argument regarding the complexity of agreeing on what constitutes abusive behaviour in a variety of settings.

Unfortunately, definitions are not the only ambivalent area within child protection; they are more the initial confusion as they become closely attached to theories surrounding the causation of the phenomenon. These theories yet again appear to similarly alter over the course of time and in turn affect the policies, services and interventions designed and implemented in developed countries.

1.2 Societal Responses to Child Abuse

This section discusses the way societies conceptualise the problem of maltreatment and respond to it and how responses change over time. As a result, it highlights how complex it is as a concept to study and how the way maltreatment is looked at greatly affects the chosen ways to respond.

Parton, discussing the history of child maltreatment in England, argues that child abuse was initially viewed as a medico-social problem when it emerged as a major social problem in the 1960s, but later became seen as socio-legal. Important decisions about the future of vulnerable children and their families were at times taken in a doctor’s office or a welfare office rather than the courts. He presents three approaches according to their respective foci: the legal or penal, the medical or deterministic, and the social or humanistic, which he in turn divides into traditional or treatment oriented and radical or politically oriented (Parton, 1985; Parton, 1991). Perceiving child maltreatment as a legal phenomenon translates into an emphasis on identifying perpetrators of abuse and/or neglect and ensuring that they are punished accordingly. The abuser is consequently viewed as a criminal. On the other hand, a medical approach prioritises a perception of abuse as an illness completely attributable to individual issues or pathologies,

thus exonerating society as a whole and identifying mainly therapeutic interventions. The abuser is sick. Finally, the social or humanistic way of thinking promotes a more holistic and humane approach to the phenomenon, exploring the characteristics of the child, the parent, the family, the community and society as a whole and focusing on how all these interact. The abuser is analysed as a social construct, in that it is the interface between the individual and humankind, or the person and his/her environment that somehow interrelate, and therefore intervention needs to take this intricate mechanism into account.

A consensus has formed around the view that it is a multi-factorial phenomenon, where the needs and characteristics of the child and the parents as well as wider environmental, societal and cultural issues are intertwined (Gil, 1970; Freeman, 1983; Parton, 1985; Jones et al, 1987, WHO and ISPCAN, 2006; etc.). Causation can thus be understood as a very complex issue, warranting a multi-faceted approach or intervention that requires a case-specific combination of expertise that cannot be found in one profession.

“No single factor on its own can explain why some individuals behave violently towards children or why child maltreatment appears to be more prevalent in certain communities than in others. As with other forms of violence, child maltreatment is best understood by analysing the complex interaction of a number of factors at different levels – an understanding that is vital for dealing effectively with the problem of child maltreatment.” (WHO and ISPCAN, 2006:13)

The starting point of this study is that, given the consensus about causation being multi-factorial, the relationship between cause and effect cannot be treated as linear when it comes to child abuse and neglect thus requiring a variety of interventions, “...effective child protection is a collective responsibility, involving the participation, to a greater or a lesser extent, of a wide range of different agencies and professional groups” (Lupton et al, 2001:1; Buckley, 2003). This envisaged partnership must respond to “wicked issues” (Clarke and Stewart, 1997) that transcend any restructuring solution. These issues are considered “wicked” due to the fact that they appear hard to resolve, a complexity linked to the reality that they prove tricky to define, as the causal relationships involved are densely knit and entail thick interdependencies. Such issues demand alternative ways of working, starting with awareness that “understanding is incomplete”. Therefore, “thinking holistically is vital” and so is “working from various perspectives respecting different approaches and styles”. The key is “involving a vast amount of organisations and interests through learning supporting experimentation and reflection”. Clarke and Stewart’s work together with Lupton and associates’, reveal the complexities and the many fronts or facets of the phenomenon. These require multiple expertise and complicated

solutions that in turn necessitate that various professions dealing with abused and/or neglected children and their families work in unison. “A multi-disciplinary approach should ensure not only an integrated strategy to respond to violence effectively, but as importantly, a consistent and evidence-based strategy to prevent it” (WHO and ISPCAN, 2006: VI).

1.3 Ecological Approach

As discussed in the previous section, theories of the causes of child maltreatment have moved from a psychopathological to a psychosocial understanding, with an ecological framework now being dominant.

“The ecological model builds on the assumption that the causes of violence are complex and involve the interaction of factors at many levels of the social system, ranging from the individual through to national and international forces. The model discerns four causal levels, each of which is embedded in the next: 1) Individual; 2) Family; 3) Community; 4) Structural.”

“Each level of the ecological model represents a level of risk and a key point of intervention, and experience has shown that interventions, which target several levels at the same time, are more effective than single level interventions.” (The WHO, 2001: 6)

This approach stems from the work of Bronfenbrenner (1977; 1979; 1995; 2001; 2005), who approached child development by identifying five systems or layers that impact his/ her growth.

These systems were the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, the macro system, and the chronosystem. The systems describe significant influences in a child’s life that start from the parents and the immediate family (micro), move on to include the school, the church, the neighbourhood (meso). They also incorporate the community, parents’ employment and available resources (exo) and finally the global situation, legal frameworks, culture, etc. (macro). The chronosystem joins the child’s developmental stage with the timing of various external events and changes.

The ecological approach has been the prevailing trend in service provision. Inter-agency and inter-disciplinary collaboration have been advocated as the best way forward in response to the phenomenon of child abuse and neglect in particular, as well as the overall service provision for children and families. This approach reinforces the idea that multi-factorial phenomena require multi-level interventions that in turn call for the involvement of various professionals and an array of services in accordance with each case.

In an attempt to relate the ecological perspective to a child protection system the researcher was aided by a significant development for this study. UNICEF's Child Protection Strategy -adopted in 2008- describing Child Protection Systems as

“a set of laws, policies, regulations and services, capacities, monitoring, and oversight needed across all social sectors -especially social welfare, education, health, security, and justice- to prevent and respond to protection-related risks.”

This framework will be used in studying how child maltreatment is dealt with in Greece.

One task is to clarify the main components of a child protection system. As a result of the description of the key ingredients, the researcher has integrated these components into Figure 1. In clarifying the system depicted above, the foundations are national legislation and guidelines clearly influenced, and even at times directed, by international

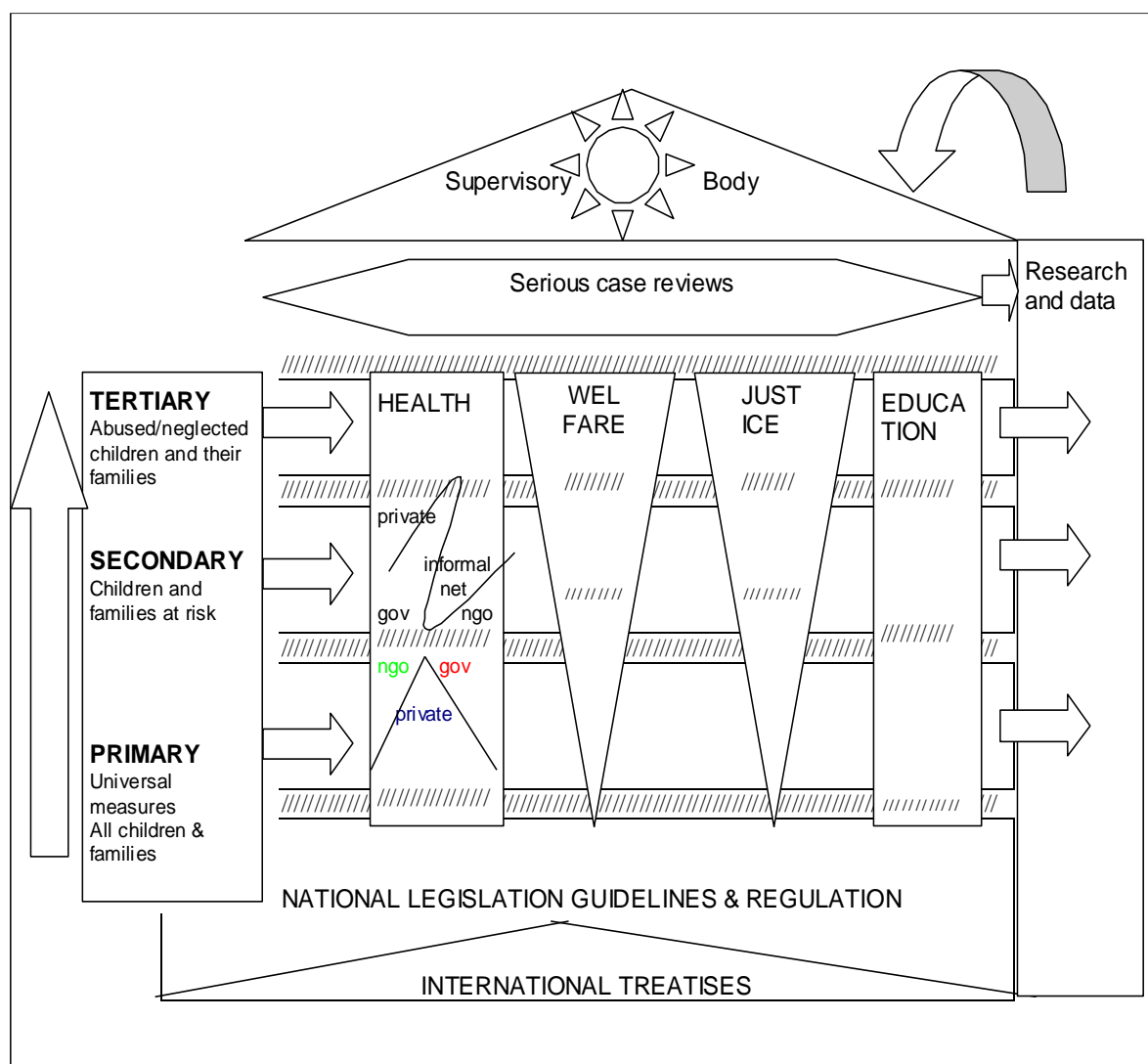


Figure A Child protection system

agreements and commands. The main pillars of the system are health, welfare –or social services-, the judicial system, and education, presented in no particular order. As all three levels of prevention appear within the system, universal (information, awareness, support, and/ or reinforcement) as well as specialist services (to detect, register, monitor, and respond to child abuse and neglect) are included across all four service groups. The variation in shape attributed to the welfare services and the courts- the inverted triangles -were chosen to illustrate the greater involvement of these two agencies as cases progress from universal to specialised, whilst the involvement of the remaining two, i.e. education and health, were seen as largely unaltered. Having established this, it could also be argued that greater demand would also be placed on the resources of the health system as remedial action, emergency and therapeutic services would likely be needed at the point when specialist assessments and interventions are required. Within the dimension of health services, an attempt was made to demonstrate the potential mix in service provision, i.e. to depict the fact that different parts may be provided in the public, private or voluntary sectors. This mapping is, in the researcher’s opinion, useful when scrutinising a system as it may imply clear access or funding variations, which can be portrayed with the use of different shading or colouring for different areas. In the second mapping instance, informal networks were also included, as they are believed to play a significant role in keeping children safe and/or supporting families. These patterns would appear in all shapes and levels. Obviously, all these pillars of a child protection system would have to work together in order for any system to be successful and achieve positive outcomes of the children and the families involved. Additional components are the borders between the levels of prevention, which have been depicted as nets or webs or fences dividing each pillar, in that the services provided in each and every part of them aim at offering enough in order to contain a case or cases and prevent it /them from escalating to the next level. When holes or gaps in these nets, which are bound to exist, are aligned, then there is a risk that a case or cases might go through all layers undetected and a tragedy might occur. Shown as the “roof” of the structure, a supervisory authority needs to be in charge of the whole system, continuously monitoring, overseeing and reviewing it. Nonetheless, in order for the body to be efficient, a constant stream of data is required and should be routinely made available by all services included in the system, thus forming the basis of any restructuring or reshaping, or reprioritising services and practices. Finally, an even larger structure, a super or hyper system, surrounding and affecting

the child protection system should be visible. This hyper system would include the welfare state as a whole, government and governance, policy and politics, the economy, etc.

It is of extreme importance not to forget culture, a strong component that affects each and every part of the system and as such colours any attempts to understand a system or adapt it. Culture can provide extremely useful information when exploring the possibility of convergence and good practice sharing between countries. This can take the form of identifying any adjustments required to fine-tune a policy, service or practice transfer from one country to another in order to ensure increased chances of a well-targeted and well-received intervention. Such detail is of extreme significance and may even be the key to eventually guarantee successful cross-country reforms.

This model also brings to mind “network policy”, as levels of cooperation that influence each other and as such require holistic consideration.

1.4 A ‘Policy Network’ Approach and ‘Inter-Organisational Analysis’

This section explains the theoretical concepts deployed to investigate partnership working within this thesis.

In the first instance, a “policy network” approach is examined as presented mainly by Marsh and Rhodes (Marsh and Rhodes, 1992; Rhodes, 1997; Marsh, 1998). Policy networks are defined as “... (more or less) stable patterns of social relations between interdependent actors, which take shape around policy problems and/or policy programmes” (Kikert et al, 1997:6). Marsh describes networks as “structures of resource dependency” and recognises the “dialectical nature” of the relationship between network structure and individual behaviour. (1998:11 & 70 respectively) These networks are seen to be located at the “meso level” but are susceptible to external processes (macro level) as well as members’ behaviour (micro) (1998:195).

Secondly, Benson’s “inter-organisational analysis” is explored to further illuminate the process. (Benson, 1975 & 1983) The definition presented by Benson in 1975 describes “...a number of distinguishable organisations having a significant amount of interaction with one another” (1975:230). The analysis of these networks is focused on two “sets” of concepts: patterns of interaction that derive from collaboration in the performance of their core

functions and factors related to the participant's own organisational objectives. Within the first concept, balance can be achieved across four categories:

1. Domain consensus (agreement regarding the role and scope of each agency)
2. Ideological consensus (agreement in relation to the nature of tasks and the best way to approach them)
3. Positive evaluation (views of the workers of one agency about the work of another)
4. Work coordination (alignment of working patterns and culture)

The second concept includes the following: the main service delivery objectives, ensuring or enhancing public legitimacy and support for the service agenda, ensuring adequate funding, and the organisational/professional paradigm (i.e. the technological-ideological commitment to certain ways of working). Whilst network analysis focuses on policy formation, Benson's approach may be more useful to understanding policy delivery or implementation networks and the relationship between the two (p24).

In addition, Benson describes three possible states of imbalance or disequilibrium. He initially names forced coordination (high on work cooperation but low on domain or ideological consensus and positive evaluation). The second state is what he refers to as consensual inefficiency (low levels of work coordination but strong on domain and ideological consensus and positive evaluation). Evaluative imbalance is the third and final state (high on work cooperation and strong on domain and ideological consensus, but low on mutual positive evaluation).

To the aforementioned typology the author suggests adding "the theoretical possibility of other states", namely, high positive evaluation but low ideological and domain consensus and weak coordination (evaluative inefficiency); high levels of ideological and domain consensus but poor work coordination, negative evaluation (forced consensus); domain inefficiency (strong domain consensus but weak ideological) or vice versa and lastly ideological inefficiency. This typology may prove useful in assisting the analysis of not only the networks as a whole but also the relationships between different agencies within the network as the imbalances encountered may vary.

Hallett (1995) presented evidence of a network operating in four layers, namely the main or core layer, a second more generic layer, a case-specific layer, and finally a peripheral layer. In a similar manner Sanders et al (1997) undertook research on Area Child Protection Committees' membership and described three tiers, starting from full membership, through significant involvement, to peripheral involvement. Similarly, in 1999 Webb spoke of a continuum of intensity of involvement with two ends: from "routinised" to "radical". The first level is described as being characterised by close and regular contact assisting in the development of a mutual appreciation and understanding, and the latter with infrequent contact that may impair communication and foster misunderstandings and poor evaluation. These distinctions may prove valuable to bear in mind when observing the Greek networks in terms of classifying the level of involvement of each agency and the frequency of contact with the network.

It would also be relevant to critically observe the power balance as "...the relative power of medical professionals may be seen to have colonised many areas of health and social care provision and constrained the role of other professionals..." (p18). Both Greek networks appear to have been initiated by medical professionals who have on one occasion informally assumed a supervisory role. This arrangement may be the trigger for further conflict since, according to Birchall and Hallett in 1995, profession was the most significant issue impacting professionals' opinions about how different cases should be dealt with.

A systems-theory approach is therefore advocated and supported in so far as the dimensions contributing to the quality of networking are interrelated and if something changes in one direction it is highly likely that it will affect the bigger picture. It is also viewed by Benson as a system within a system, or a mini "political economy", with both internal and external dynamics.

The following is an initial attempt to explore the current situation in England whilst using the different levels of network policy as an analytical tool. This will be re-examined later in comparison with or in contrast to the Greek findings emerging from this study. The following figure clearly demonstrates England's effort to translate international directives into day-to-day practice arrangements across all levels.

	ENGLAND
Macro level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ International mandates (Children’s Rights; EU Strategy) ➤ Legislation (Children Act 1989; 2004) ➤ Guidelines (Working Together, 1988; 1991; 1999; 2006; 2015) ➤ Child Abuse Inquiries (Serious Case Reviews) ➤ Re-organisation (New Public Management, Third Way)
Meso level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Established, fairly regular networks (Child Protection Conferences, Core groups, Looked after Reviews) ➤ Some shared resources and training
Micro level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Individual members’ behaviours make or break the partnerships and create a fluctuation in strength but repeated exposure fosters a degree of complementarity.

Figure 2 A Policy Network Approach to analyse England

Reder and Duncan (2003) present the factors that have been highlighted in previous research to influence interagency relationships as: territorialism, role identifications, status and power, competition for resources, professional and organisational priorities, stereotypes, value systems, mutual unfulfilled expectations, and last but not least, disrespect for the other’s expertise (Stevenson, 1989; Blyth and Milner, 1990; Morrison, 1998). These factors would appear to fall within the broader categories presented above from Benson’s “inter-organisational analysis” and Marsh and Rhodes’ levels presented earlier in this chapter.

Hudson and partners see the difficulties regarding interagency collaboration as stemming from different terms of employment and accountability, various and ever-changing roles, professional boundaries and organisational cultures. They describe cooperation as “fragile”

requiring “nurturing” and can only be accomplished locally on a basis of trust and respect (1997:4). In addition, they present a framework to serve as an organising tool to assist in understanding several reoccurring themes. The first theme identified is an organisational shift in contrast to what they term individual entrepreneurialism, thus highlighting the danger of relying on individuals rather than agreements, which seems to be the case in one of the Greek networks examined in this study. Secondly, the authors raise the excellence versus equity theme, which is concerned with organising scarce resources across a locality at the expense of the rest of the country. Thirdly, issues related to costs in comparison to perceived benefits (are ventures cost effective and what about the alternatives?), which had been also flagged as an important issue to be taken into consideration when evaluating such ventures. The fourth theme is related to the focus of the adopted model, whether its emphasis can be seen to be medical or social, and the fifth, to explore any compromises between flexibility and formality of agreements. Following this, the type of management is examined, for example project management versus mainstream management. Issues of co-location or non-co-location are also considered pertinent. In addition, one must explore and take into account where members’ loyalties lie, whether with the team or the organisation. The distinction between social work and care management requires consideration, too, and finally, the broader picture within which cooperation is taking place and whether this could be characterised as a hierarchy, a market or a network (1997:27-29). All of these issues must be tackled in order to understand, evaluate and reinforce a partnership, as they appear to be significant enough to make or break an initiative for collaboration. Again these concepts pair well with inter-organisational analysis and the systems approach selected by the author and as such they will be taken into consideration in chapter six, where the Greek networks are analysed.¹

In addition, in 1992 Hardy and colleagues presented what they perceived as being barriers to achieving collaboration. They divided these into: structural (complexity, non-coterminosity and fragmentation), procedural (differences in planning and budgeting), financial (differences in funding and resources), and professional barriers (differences in ideologies and values, threats to job security, conflicting views about user interests and roles), as well as barriers related to status and legitimacy (organisational self-interest, potential threats to autonomy and domain,

¹See also Hudson, 2004 that re-examines Benson’s analysis, as well as Ranade and Hudson (2003).

and differences between elected and appointed agencies).² These notions fit in well with Benson's typology and will also feature in chapter six.

In 1998 Glisson and Hemelgarn undertook research in the US that concluded that best results were accomplished within a positive organisational climate where staff were supported and highly committed and that, surprisingly enough, uncoordinated services achieved better results for children than coordinated ones. Could this suggest that bad or messy coordination is worse than no coordination at all? Coordination is definitely not a way to mask other shortages and calamities. In addition, it is important to take into account that causal relationships between interventions and outcomes are always problematic (Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002:19), and that partnerships were introduced whilst other approaches continued to exist (e.g. hierarchies and markets). The same is obviously true for Greece, as the networks there exist mainly within large hierarchical bureaucracies.

Having explored some pertinent themes in relation to collaboration that fit with the chosen framework, it will now be linked back to the idea of the need to deal with child maltreatment holistically, as established earlier on, based on the complexity and high interdependence of the forces at work.

1.5 The Structure of the Thesis

This subsection will briefly explain the content of the remaining chapters of this thesis and will serve as an outline of what is to follow.

To begin with, the second chapter focuses on literature related to multi-disciplinary and interagency working. The aim is to define the vast array of terms and collaborative arrangements that exist in order to facilitate an understanding of the impact such ways of working have on services, professionals and service users, as well as pertinent issues enhancing or hindering synergy. Later, the Greek networks are located and analysed within this literature.

The subsequent chapter, chapter three, presents the findings of the initial phase of the study based on bibliographical searches combined with the first set of unstructured interviews and the researcher's observations. The Greek child protection system is introduced and the occurrence of child maltreatment in the country established and explored on the basis of

² Figure 2:241

available statistics and published research. This is included among information about the greater picture including the welfare state and other existing formal arrangements such as out-of-home care, as well as non-governmental organisations (NGOs), demographical trends, ethnic diversity and the relevant legislation that are seen as directly linked to child protection. The topics covered within this chapter mirror those identified within international reports as significant ingredients of any developed child protection system.

In Chapter four the researcher deals with methodology and aims to clarify how this study was undertaken and what the central research questions at the heart of it are. It examines the favoured choice of case study methodology together with the selected ways to assure quality of results. Sampling and interviewing at all three phases is included. Furthermore, it investigates ethical issues and presents the topic guides devised for the interviews together with some socio-demographic data regarding the respondents of the first and the second phases of this study. Chapter four concludes by highlighting the analytical process, or, in other words, the course of action followed to arrive from the available data to the end results.

Having clarified the methods, Chapter five fully presents the two Greek professional networks studied during phase two and phase three of this project using interview quotes. Findings from the semi structured interviews and non-participant observations conducted by the researcher are examined through the lens of the relevant literature highlighted in the previous chapter and the findings from a study compiled in the UK that bears some important similarities in terms of its design. This chapter portrays the interaction between the practitioners that brings the system to life.

The next chapter, chapter six, is a second findings chapter. It presents in detail the three, three-staged vignettes used during the interviews. It discusses findings arising and explains how these were analysed. This adds to the previous chapter by completing the picture of issues discussed with the practitioners and network members.

Finally, chapter seven discusses all findings and concludes with recommendations whilst acknowledging strengths and limitations of the work and suggesting future research directions. This final chapter begins by revisiting all research questions and regrouping all arguments contained in this thesis. It uses international frameworks and guidelines published by the WHO, the UN, and the EU to examine ways of developing the Greek system further, whilst bearing in mind any prevailing cultural differences. The thinking is that having collected all

available information on child protection in Greece, and having established the essential ingredients of a developed system as well as good practice pointers through reports, guidelines and literature, identifying gaps and duplications through constructive critical analysis will be fairly uncomplicated. Finally, what is or is not there with what should arguably be there – is combined to generate well-targeted recommendations for policymakers, managers and practitioners to guide Greece to an efficient and effective system for protecting children from parental maltreatment in any form.

1.6 Conclusion

Bringing the first chapter to an end, it is important to summarise and regroup all pertinent issues that serve as an introduction to this thesis. When it comes to child abuse and/or neglect, Greece is no exception as such instances are even visible in its mythology. Having recognised the phenomenon, Greece eventually joined most other countries in accepting the responsibility to protect its children by taking all suitable measures. This thesis will attempt to explore all the laws, policies, and services currently in place in Greece with the aim of protecting children from abuse and/or neglect. To this end, observations and interviews will enhance the picture and offer a realistic portrait of how the system works. Finally, by recognising with the aid of international guidelines and movements what is significant, it will go on to suggest what is missing in the Greek system and how existing approaches can be ameliorated in order to ensure the greatest degree of protection possible across the country.

As already considered earlier in this chapter, the remit of child abuse and/or neglect, like many other phenomena within the realm of the social sciences, shifts continuously through time and space and as such is extremely difficult to define unquestionably. Consequently, though maltreating children is generally considered wrong, the spectrum of what is thought of as abusive behaviour varies and so do theories trying to account for the causes of the phenomenon. Such variations are of significance for this study as they heighten or amplify the complexity of the situation and can considerably impact the choice of approaches when designing interventions.

Having previously clarified the exact structure of the thesis, the overall intention of this study is to focus on exploring the current situation in Greece through a looking glass

constructed and coloured by international movements as well as the English experience. Overall, the focus of this study is interagency and multidisciplinary collaboration as the preferred approach for the prevention of child abuse and/ or neglect.

Chapter two begins by presenting the literature examined in relation to the two networks studied during the second, main phase of this research. Concepts from this literature review will be used later to interpret findings, with the overall aim of assisting in understanding the results and drawing useful conclusions.

Chapter 2

Multidisciplinary and Interagency Working; Review of the Literature

This chapter introduces the literature reviewed regarding partnership working and interagency and multidisciplinary collaboration, which will be of significant importance when presenting and analysing the main set of this study's findings. Data gathered during the second phase consists of the interviews of sixteen professionals based in two different localities in Greece and involved in child protection who are members of the two networks observed. Initially, an attempt will be made to untangle the definitions of these terms in order to aid clarity, and then the rest of the chapter will follow the macro, meso and micro level of organisation in order to present the pertinent issues described in the literature that are of relevance to this particular study as they tie networking into the greater picture of the Greek welfare state and child protection system to be presented in chapter three. The presence of this chapter is methodologically justified when considering the cyclical and flexible nature of its design, as is described in the fourth chapter, which was chosen to respond to any findings generated during the explorative process, which is the very nature of case study research.

This will be followed by an exploration of the impact of collaboration as reported by various research projects in order to be able to compare views of the participating professionals recorded by this project with other previous research findings and to establish links or contrasts. Finally, ways of enhancing collaboration will be presented coupled with factors that are considered obstacles to working together. This information will serve the researcher and the readers when in subsequent chapters, chapters five and six, findings from the second round of observations and interviews will be presented.

This review is mainly based on four previous reviews, namely, "Coordination and Child Protection; A Review of Literature" compiled by Christine Hallett and Elizabeth Birchall in 1992, "Learning in and for interagency working. Interagency Collaboration: a review of the literature" in 2004 by Paul Warmington and partners, "Multi-agency working and its implications for practice: A review of literature" by Mary Atkinson and colleagues in 2007, and "Supporting theory building in integrated services research", published by NFER in 2008. These four reviews cover a sixteen-year interval that presents the main body of literature

produced on the topic before, during and immediately after the fieldwork. It is of great interest to investigate whether terms and approaches have shifted over time, and if so, how the discourse has evolved and if any of the original issues have been resolved and or replaced by new ones. Other significant more recent works will be quoted throughout this chapter to enhance the picture of collaboration³ and how it is conceived in so far as it is a significant feature of any developed child protection system. As Lupton and partners argue, “...effective child protection is a collective responsibility, involving the participation, to a greater or lesser extent, of a wide range of different agencies and professional groups”. (2001:1) In this light, the two networks discovered in Greece during this project are viewed as exactly that, individual grassroots initiatives aiming to make the Greek “unsystematic” system more effective and as such a better place not only for the children and families involved but also for the professionals called to work within it.

2.1 Definitions; an Elusive Attempt to Put the House in Order.

The related terms coordination, collaboration, cooperation, and integration often appear to be used interchangeably, as if synonymous, thus creating great ambiguity. The unruly employment of prefixes co-, multi-, trans-, inter-, and intra- adds to the perplexity. This apparent confusion in the use of terminology obviously impacts research in general but particularly attempts to compare different studies or to generalise findings. At the same time, it can also be seen as a testament to the natural complexity of working together, which could in turn help explain the difficulties inherent in translating policy into practice. The majority of attempts to counteract this issue have led to various albeit tentative descriptions of a continuum evident in the relevant literature. The range described covers everything from isolation or loose coordination to full integration and partnership working or even merger, usually linking the different terminology to breadth or depth of joint working as well as to the structures set up to support it.

Percy-Smith, in 2005, provided the following definitions whilst exploring models of partnerships for children, which may clarify the plethora of relevant terms. These are presented as cited in Atkinson and partners (2004), but additional references are also included when similarities emerged during the researcher’s examination of supplementary sources. As a result,

³ More recent works are also available in Chapter 5, 6 and 7 that present and discuss findings.

Joined-up working: involves deliberate and coordinated planning and working, takes account of different policies and varying agency practice and values. Reference can be found to joined-up thinking, practice or policy development (Lloyd et al, 2001).

Joint working: professionals from more than one agency working directly together on a project (Kennedy et al, 2001).

Multi-agency/cross-agency working: more than one agency working together. A service is provided by agencies acting in concert and drawing on pooled resources or pooled budgets (Lloyd, 2001 and Atkinson et al, 2002).

Multi-professional/multi-disciplinary working: staff of different professions, backgrounds and training working together (Gregson, 1992 cited in Leathard, 2003).

Interagency working: more than one agency working together in a planned and formal way (Lloyd et al, 2001 and Warmington et al, 2004).

Cross-boundary working: agencies working together in areas, which extend beyond the scope of any one agency.

Cross-cutting: Cross-cutting issues are those that are not the ‘property’ of a single organisation or agency. Examples include social inclusion, improving health and urban regeneration, or child protection.

Integration: agencies working together within a single, often new, organisational structure (Leathard, 2003 and Fox and Butler 2004).

Networks: informal contact and communication between individuals or agencies. A concept originally derived from mathematics that has been used extensively throughout the years in sociology, policy and management (Whittington, 1983 and Payne, 2000).

Collaborative working/collaboration: agencies working together in a wide variety of ways to pursue a common goal while also pursuing their own organisational goals (Armitage, 1983 and Williams, 1986). Additionally, collaboration is described as “a structure or process of concerted decision-making wherein the decisions or actions of two or more organisations are made simultaneously in part or in whole with some deliberate adjustment to each other” (Warren et al, 1974:16).⁴

⁴ Cited in Hudson et al, 1999.

Cooperation: informal relationships between organisations designed to ensure that organisations can pursue their own goals more effectively (Westrin, 1987; Harker et al, 2004; and Fox and Butler, 2004).

Coordination: more formal mechanisms to guarantee that organisations take account of each other's strategies and activities in their own planning.

In addition, a definition from a different source, (Hall et al, 1977; Mulford and Rogers, 1982; and Fox and Butler, 2004)

Partnership: when 'two or more people or organisations (are) working together towards a common aim' (Leeds Health Action Zone 2002, cited in Townsley et al 2004) also (Dickson et al, 2004) and (Fox and Butler, 2004). In a similar manner partnership is defined as "involving two or more organisations, groups, or agencies that together identify, acknowledge and act to secure one or more common objective, interest or area of interdependence; but where the autonomy and separate accountability arrangements of the partner organisations are in principle retained" (Glendinning, 2002). Finally, another interesting concept in the related literature, defined by Engestrom and partners in 1999, appears to be that of

Knotworking: 'a rapidly changing, distributed and partially improvised orchestration of collaborative performance that takes place between otherwise loosely connected actors and their work systems to support clients. In knotworking various forms of tying and untying of otherwise separate threads of activity take place' (cited in Warmington et al 2004). They also introduce the term **co-configuration**, as an alternative to professionals working in closely linked teams, where practitioners work with each other loosely in ever-changing combinations or coalitions in spite of differences in backgrounds, or values (cited in Atkinson et al, in 2007). These ideas seem valuable when exploring ad hoc instances of cooperation and will prove useful when thinking of the Greek networks examined in this study.

Payne in 2000 also attempted to shed light on the different uses of the various prefixes. His approach explores their connotation by identifying "**multi**" as professionals working with each other without crossing any boundaries, thus retaining their respective roles, knowledge and agency responsibilities. The prefix "**inter**", on the other hand, is seen as entailing some adjustment of roles, knowledge and responsibilities in order to fine-tune these in relation to each other. Finally, "**trans**" is presented as transference of roles, knowledge, and responsibilities, which exists hand-in-hand with what is termed as "role release", implying that

facets of one professional's role may at times be undertaken by another within the group. Furthermore, Payne argues that "professional" is more centred on various tasks undertaken by specific professional groups, whilst "disciplinary" is more focused on skills and knowledge, and "agency" is fixed on responsibilities within various organisations and the wider area of service provision as a whole (Payne, 2008:9).

A degree of equality between partners (the "Third Way") is evident in all definitions mentioned above rather than the uneven relationships involved in commissioning or contracting that characterised markets and quasi-markets (New Public Management), or the clear lines and powers in hierarchies (bureaucracies). However, they do not incorporate the range of joint activities, the structures necessary, or the rationale behind them, which are all useful notions for an evaluation as they point to types of evidence that need to be included (p. 370).

In all the aforementioned definitions the notion of a gradual strengthening of ties between professionals and the agencies they represent is evident, which could be visualised as a ladder that signifies greater interaction, connection and even co-funding and co-production each and every step along the way. It appears that treating the neighbouring terms as a continuum is a longstanding approach. As there appears to be no consensus on the definition, in 1999 Hall presented a continuum conceptualised by Sutton in 1997 that consists of communication, consultation, collaboration, joint planning and joint commissioning. Hall's continuum is characterised as more applicable to service planning and development rather than to day-to-day interactions amongst different agencies (p. 216). He then goes on to introduce another continuum developed by Hudson and colleagues in 1997 that begins with isolation and passes through communication and collaboration to end with integration. Each step along the way, starting with communication, is seen to be leading to the next. For example, professionals communicate with each other on individual cases with the aim of working together, i.e. collaboration, indicating that time is needed to gradually build integration and that the roots of such integration lie in communication between the professionals involved. Huxham (2000) also notes that a variety of terms are used: alliance, collaboration, cooperation, networking, joint working, etc. These terms refer to an array of activities along a continuum, from plain exchange of information to full service integration, and are occasionally used interchangeably. The same stance is also apparent in all four reviews examined here, viewed mainly as a cyclical process, a journey or a ladder of participation (Atkinson et al, 2007). For example, from the

work of Davidson in 1976, Bond et al in 1985 (based on Armitage, 1983) to Westrin in 1987, the continuum is from isolation through to collaboration throughout an organisation, or from “working separately” to “being part of a true team” (Gough et al, 1987:101), or Gaster and partners’ succession from “information exchange” to “full partnership” in 1999. (cited in Percy-Smith, 2005:28-29) More recently, Himmelman in 1992, Shinnars in 2001 and Fox and Butler similarly argue for definitions based on levels of engagement from cooperation through coordination to integration. (Fox and Butler, 2004:39)⁵ In the same vein, Townsley and partners presented a three-tier model in 2004.

Nonetheless, a certain degree of overlap between definitions is observable that impacts on the overall clarity of the terms used, as some of the lines drawn to distinguish the various levels of co-working are arbitrary, on the one hand possibly aiding mental compartmentalisations, but on the other creating many grey areas that have the potential to cause a certain degree of confusion. Weiss argued: “...the definitional ambiguity which makes co-ordination a handy political device has led to chasm between rhetoric and operationalization. Co-ordination is discussed in the political arena as though everyone knows precisely what it means, when in fact it means many inconsistent things and occasionally means nothing at all.” (1981:41).⁶ Lack of definition is seen by some as positive because they translate the lack of clarity into greater “flexibility, responsiveness and adaptability” to local circumstances and modern societal needs (Clarke and Glendinning, 2000:117). However, even though the absence of definition could be seen as a way to foster flexible and responsive relationships, it is nonetheless important for evaluations and it remains to be seen whether vagueness equals locality and needs-specific adjustments.

Some of the models of integration put forward in the literature are one-dimensional, focusing on information sharing, or co-planning, for example, some depict the extent of collaboration and others how co-working is organised. Yet others approach the topic from multiple aspects, thus exploring integration at different levels and/or distinguishing processes and structures. A recent example of this is the Every Child Matters’ “onion” model, which depicts integration across all layers or levels, from the macro through the meso to the micro, thus arguing for the need to merge activities on every level in order to achieve the highly

⁵ See also, Frost, 2005 and Hill, 2005 as cited in Canavan et al, 2009: 380.

⁶ Cited in Hudson and Henwood, 2002:154.

desirable optimal synthesis. A valid criticism of this model raised by Robinson and partners in 2008 is that even though it appears to place service users at the heart of the model diagrammatically, it only raises outcomes for children and families rather than highlighting them as co-workers or co-participants within the integration process. (See diagram below from www.everychildmatters.gov.uk)

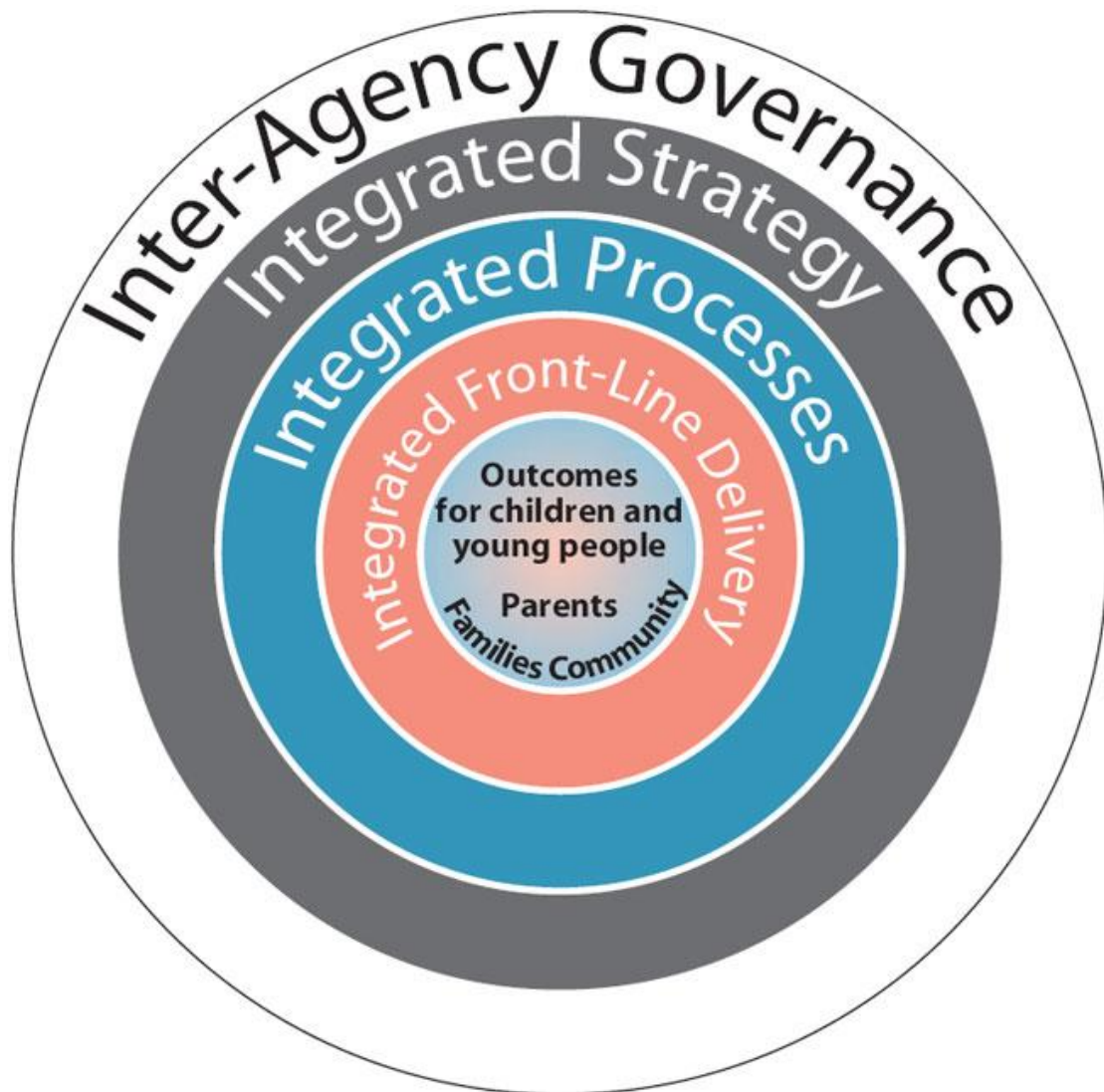


Figure 2 Every Child Matters, the 'onion model'

In addition, apart from a majority of a-theoretical or grounded theory approaches, some of the models present in the literature make a greater claim on theory. For instance, organisational theory, cultural historical activity theory (or CHAT) and developmental work research (or DWR) have been used to analyse practices in interdisciplinary working (Engeström, 2001 and

Puonti, 2004). However, few authors make use of organisational theory (Birchall and Hallett, 1995 and Farmakopoulou, 2002). This signifies a mosaic of approaches that adds an extra layer of complexity to the matter and/or another dimension where diversity appears.

Themes such as collective responsibility, interdependency, sustainability, communication, cooperative planning and integration of processes lend themselves as dimensions for evaluating amalgamation (Robinson et al, 2008). The latest trend evident in the wider narrative in health and welfare is a strong focus on involving service users (participation) and sustaining partnering ventures (Miller and McNicholl, 2003 and DCSF, 2007). Therefore, the language is shifting from discussing outcomes for users to viewing them as co-participants, which is in line with an overall international recognition of the need to involve users and carers as experts in their own right and to encourage and enable their full participation across the board.

Although variance has persisted over the years and is evident in all the reviews examined, it has been perceived as both an enabler and an obstacle, as it can translate into a welcomed degree of flexibility to adapt to different circumstances or a bewildering labyrinth, or swamp, that is hard to bring order to and even more so to evaluate and duplicate. There is an apparent swing from perceiving collaboration as a panacea to viewing outcomes as related to precise circumstances and therefore allowing for acceptance of a greater variety in approaches. This variety links models to particular service user groups, specific localities or individual projects (Frost and Robinson, 2007). Despite this, recent reviews highlight the lack of justifiable links between various models and respective outcomes, thus advocating for further research in the field (Atkinson et al, 2007). It would appear that collaboration remains elusive and attempts to codify it have not assisted in evidencing its value beyond reasonable doubts, which has been a longstanding critique evident from the Birchall and Hallett review in 1995. It seems the literature has gone a long way in describing and dissecting the various forms of co-working but has yet to clearly establish the benefits of such initiatives, thus weakening the argument for greater collaboration against the difficulties encountered in practice. Having established that, a recent publication by the National Children's Bureau questioning whether integrated services improve children's outcomes has found "...no consistent quantitative evidence for better outcomes in more integrated areas, however, 25 of the 35 survey respondents provided locally specific examples of children's trust pathfinder arrangements improving outcomes for children and young people" (O'Brien et al, 2009: 320).

Consequently, this thesis will not adopt a pre-set or “a priori” definition in so far as it is exploratory in nature and thus open to investigating what the Greek system is like according to the respondents and the available literature, rather than setting out to look for something tightly predetermined. As a result, ambiguities and ambivalences regarding conflicting or overlapping definitions can be avoided.

2.2 Policy/Macro-Level, Is it Political Wisdom or Political Jargon?

“...it is hard to find a policy or guidance document that does not promote coordination of services and collaboration of workers” (Payne, 2008:27).

Even as a policy objective aiming to improve the somewhat fragmented picture, offer a more holistic response to complex social problems, and increase efficiency, collaboration remains elusive and harder to achieve in practice than was initially anticipated.

“Coordination is widely perceived both as an important objective and an important problem. It has been a central plank of government policy and an important part of professional rhetoric in this field for years, since before the cataclysmic impact on the social work world of the Maria Colwell inquiry which reported in 1974” (Birchall and Hallett, 1995: 2).

Even though the importance of collaboration was recognised more than 30 years ago and it is seen as mandatory for good child protection outcomes, repeated failures to achieve such practice have been highlighted as contributing factors in the majority of inquiries into child deaths. The theme has been reoccurring from the inquiry into Maria Colwell’s death in 1974 to the death of Victoria Climbié in 2000, which could indicate that multi-disciplinary working is in practice harder to perfect than was originally anticipated. “A wide range of issues from organisational and occupational sociology are pertinent, as well as a variety of legal, administrative, financial and technical opportunities and constraints.” (Birchall and Hallett, 1995: 3) Therefore, achieving interagency cooperation, which appears straightforward at a policy level, seems extremely complicated at the grassroots level.

However, Anning and partners in 2006 raised the significance of taking into consideration the macro level when examining an initiative. The macro level can be understood as regional or even national. In child protection in England, there is a strong top-down impetus materialising through guidelines and mandates, although the initial drive was bottom-up, rising

from practitioners' concerns regarding the variety of expertise required to effectively deal with the complexities of the phenomenon.

Boddy and partners in 2006 described bottom-up initiatives to increase collaboration as more likely to bring about the “cultural transformation” required for working together to succeed by enhancing, amongst other things, the professionals' willingness to embrace such ventures in comparison to top-down approaches that tend to be directed by policy yet far less inclusive, and therefore to risk being rejected or sabotaged by the practitioners. In a similar manner, in 2006 Sullivan and partners wrote of “collaborative capacity” being a crucial ingredient for achieving set goals when aiming to strengthen integration on all levels.

Another pertinent issue is the obscurity in linking collaboration to outcomes that is evident within the literature, especially accentuated when dealing with notoriously complex issues such as child abuse and/or neglect. For instance, the rise in the number of looked after children often perceived as a negative outcome could be seen in the exact opposite way if interpreted as an increase in the number of children and young people living in a safe environment where they are more likely to achieve their potential. It appears that working together is widely perceived as desirable but hard evidence is lacking partly due to the multifactorial nature of interventions and the difficulties associated with separating their effects and attributing them to a single condition. The difficulty is even more exasperating when dealing with outcomes related to families receiving services. There are many conditions that exist concurrently, and as a result, separating their respective impact on an outcome is an almost impossible task while any links described can be easily criticised as strenuous. However, in official inquiries into child deaths it appears that the absence of collaboration is quite frequently highlighted as contributing to the failure to protect, which is a rather obvious remark.

2.3 Inter-Organisational Issues/Meso Level; Are they Partners or Competitors?

“... inter-organisational relationships occur through the interactions of individuals”
(Tibbitt, 1973:166)

Three theories are commonly put forward to explain inter-organisational relations. First, there is the exchange that is voluntary and seeks to explain links between organisations as an effort to combine resources in order to accomplish their respective goals. Second, one has power/resource dependency, which stresses the significance of power imbalances between

organisations and the impact of these on collaboration, which in turn could result in less powerful partners being overridden or exploited. Third is political economy, which is a more multifaceted approach in that it examines the climate within which decisions to work in partnership are made (as cited in chapter two, Benson, 1975 & 1983). The various agencies involved in child protection operate in very distinct manners, assume an array of roles and have diverse agendas and jurisdictions. As a result, the wider the partnership the greater the challenge will be, although there are some indications that full integration has a greater impact on service users and members of staff alike.

Finally, Glasby and Peck in 2006 suggest a model of integration featuring a two-axis diagram depicting the number of services working together, or 'breadth', versus the extent of integration between them, or 'depth', which was based on some of their previous work. Children's services in England appear to feature highly when measuring breadth of partnership activity as they are working with a vast array of organisations, but they are not as high on the depth axis, as the majority of co-working is confined to information sharing rather than any greater degree of service integration. Finally, in the current climate of upgrading the service user's status from consumer of services to co-participant in their formation, and thus a member of the multi-disciplinary team, it would seem appropriate to include children and families along the breadth axis as was advocated by Robinson and partners in 2008.

2.4 Professionals/Micro Level; an Attempt to Herd Cats?

When practitioners from multiple professional backgrounds come together they bring with them diverse perceptions, values and training. There are also inherent power imbalances between them. These unavoidably influence their overall attitudes, understanding and decision-making, particularly in such a value-laden and contested field as child protection, and therefore impact the feasibility of aligning practices and reaching the desired consensus. One such grey area is the equilibrium of care and control, or support and protection, a long-standing, open debate. The vast array of terms and theories can exacerbate the delicate art of communication and information sharing. In ancient Greece, dialogue was perceived as thesis plus antithesis equals synthesis, meaning that one argument combined with the counterargument would help reach the most favourable balanced blend, the optimal solution, or in other words, the best way forward. However, time to build trust and common language is required in order to overcome

obstacles and master the art of communicating with others. This is one of the most significant steps to achieving a combined viewpoint that will encompass all perspectives and all available information regarding a child or a family and will therefore eventually result into a distilled plan for action, which is one of the preconceived benefits of working together. In other words, time is required for professional members to get accustomed to approaching the antithesis as complementary rather than contrasting and accept the plethora of voices as strength, as wealth rather than threats against their personal skills, role and position. Other prerequisites are respect as well as confidence in one's skills and expertise in order to be able to handle criticism and be a constructive member of the professional group without feeling threatened or undermined when colleagues' views are dissimilar. Remaining professional at all times so as not to interpret disagreements as personal attacks and keeping the best interest of the child in focus are the best ways to accomplish convergence within a diverse group.

The low morale and stressful environment within which such collaborations frequently take place can be partly counteracted by mutually supportive professionals out to assist one another, not shirk responsibility. At this professional level, accountability and supervision are seen as significant and were both flagged up and explored in this study in so far as one of the concerns regarding collaboration is that individual responsibility can be diluted. A common line of accountability – a manager or chair of the multi-disciplinary team or meeting – has been promoted as a way to counteract different backgrounds and agencies and attain common direction.

As evident in the literature studied, the impetus for coordination was originally rooted in the professionals working in the field before it emerged as policymakers' agendas (Birchall and Hallett, 1992). It was therefore born in the frontline, and then promoted to official legislative and policy documents, only to create an enormous chasm between theory and practice and remain elusive and almost unachievable. This is nearly inexplicable as it is generally suggested that formalisation strengthens commitments all around and guarantees a greater degree of engagement. However, as Birchall and Hallett (1992:13) appropriately remark, "The existence of coordination machinery does not necessarily mean that coordination exists. The activities and decisions of those participating determine the extent to which coordination occurs." Thus, suitable "machinery" might be the way to fortify bottom-up initiatives, but it is up to individual actors on the micro level to actually make it work. In the same vein, Lupton and partners comment that success "...depends as crucially on the effectiveness of local collaborative

arrangements as it will on the quality and quantity of central policy directives or “mandates”” (2001:5).

In 2003, Reder and Duncan focused on the issues of communication as central to any attempt at collaboration, given that the former is at the heart of every networking initiative. They define communication as “...the process by which information is transferred from one person to another and is understood by them” (2003:85). They go on to argue that “silence, ignoring or choosing to be absent can be as powerful a message as an emotive speech or a physical blow” (p. 86). The authors also borrow the term “meta-communication”, “communication about the communication” from Waltzlawick and colleagues in 1967. The factors that have been identified to affect the results of an attempt to communicate are listed by the authors as intellectual capacity, relevant knowledge, concentration, memory, emotional response, and immediate context (including personal beliefs, prejudices, past experience, organisational structures) (pp. 89-90).

Reder and Duncan proceed to communication as a mindset in the sense that “...successful communication requires a degree of reflectiveness, since both parties need to be aware of these influences and must monitor them” (2003: 94).

2.5 Impact; or What is to Be Gained by Working Together and for Whom?

“...no one discipline could understand and handle such a complex problem. The wide range of social, psychiatric, and psychological problems involved in abuse requires that social workers, physicians, nurses, lawyers, judges, psychiatrists, and many other professionals work together if the cycle of abuse is to be broken. These various disciplines make distinct contributions to a comprehensive diagnosis of the abusive family and the abused and neglected child as well as the planning and treatment of such cases” (Mouzakitis and Goldstein, 1985:218)

On professionals, impact identified as positive is in relation to reward, stimulation, knowledge gain, job satisfaction, understanding other agencies and ameliorated communication and relationships with other practitioners and their respective agencies (Atkinson et al, 2002; Abbott et al, 2005; Anning, 2005; Moran et al, 2006 and Boddy et al, 2006), while professional identity crisis, including an element of confusion over roles and responsibilities, coupled with status imbalances that occasionally affect the confidence of weaker members of the groups, are cited as negative effects (Atkinson et al 2002; Abbott et al, 2005; Boddy et al, 2006; and Robinson et al, 2008). In addition, there appears to be some evidence pointing towards an amplified

workload. In a study by Abbott and partners in 2005, however, this finding was mainly attributable to the views of managers rather than professionals. Nonetheless, Atkinson and partners reported in 2002 that half of the schemes examined were experiencing a rise in the demand for their services, translating into more pressure for practitioners. Furthermore, in some of the literature a correlation is implied in that the greater the degree or extent of integration, the bigger the load on the participants, since more effort is required (Cole, 2003; Broadhead and Armistead, 2007; and Tunstill et al, 2007). Moreover, in 1991, Bruner highlighted role change and redistribution of knowledge as important processes for professionals working in a multi-disciplinary setting. In addition, the concept of ‘emotional labour’ is re-introduced by Robinson and partners in 2008, based on work by Smith and Bryan in 2005, as follows: “New work systems and new multi-professional teams require modelling of and negotiating new roles, workplace identities and professional boundaries, which involves risk and emotional labour” (p.56). Finally, duplication was cited as a negative effect of working together by Abbott and partners in 2005, noticeable in areas where many different collaborative initiatives were in existence simultaneously. This finding is ironic, if one takes into consideration that avoiding duplication and providing a ‘seamless service’ has been the main feature of the discourse advocating joint working and service integration. However, partnerships can overlap as can individual services.

On service users, impact is inadequately described as the majority of studies report on this aspect by relying on the accounts of various professionals rather than on the users themselves. As Robinson and partners point out,

“Whilst there is some indication within the literature that a fully integrated model would be most valued by, and of most value to children and families or service users, some authors state that as yet, there is little evidence on the effects of integrative models, in particular on outcomes for children and families” (2008:20).

However, impact can be summed up as easier and faster access to services, greater availability of information, more appropriate referrals, a focus on prevention and better-targeted support (Atkinson et al, 2002; Brown et al, 2002; Pettitt, 2003; Tunstill et al, 2007; and Broadhead and Armistead, 2007). Improved outcomes and more holistic approaches are also reported within the literature (Atkinson et al, 2002; Miller and McNicholl, 2003; and Tunstill, 2007). Finally, including service users in any integrative initiative, be it joint assessments or joint development of care packages, affords children and families greater rights and so is in line with the CRC way of thinking, while it simultaneously holds them accountable for any deviations

from the co-produced plans of action (Miller and Stirling, 2004). For a plan to be successful, both family and professionals need to agree and follow it through.

Regarding services, there is some evidence that hints at the possibility of a slightly greater demand for services. On that note, in 2007 Bell highlighted that the broader the partnership, the less the stigmatisation experienced by parents, leading to a greater take-up of services and thus more work for the professionals involved. These findings were echoed by Tunstall and partners in 2007. In addition, a study completed by the University of East Anglia (UEA) and the National Children's Bureau (NCB) in 2007 showed some service improvement through integration in that Children's Trusts were becoming more efficient by avoiding some duplication and saving money by way of wiser commissioning. Finally, in 2002 Sullivan and partners reported that increasing the width of a partnership impacts decision-making processes, available information and service delivery. Overall, both quality and efficiency are reportedly enhanced through closer co-working and service integration (Miller and McNicholl, 2003; Fox and Butler 2004; Percy-Smith, 2005; and Boddy et al, 2006).

An emphasis on collaboration pre rather than post recognition of maltreatment has been attributed historically to the emphasis placed on identification of abuse and/or neglect generated from public inquiries into the death of children known to various services, dating back to the death of Maria Colwell in 1974. (Howarth and Calder, 1999) It would appear that after a child's name has been placed on the child protection register there is little clarity or guidance in keeping up the momentum for the continuing engagement of multiple agencies able to offer an array of services and expertise. A neat inquiry leading to a tidy hearing and possible conviction may be of greater interest to the State and the legislator as a means of gratifying the public's sense of justice, thus shifting the professionals' initial interest to share solutions and placing emphasis on the investigation. Nonetheless, as successfully pointed out by Birchall and Hallett (1995:298) and hinted at above, the requirement for collaboration at any stage along the way and its importance in the field have mainly been "asserted rather than demonstrated" in the relevant literature, a fact that significantly weakens its strength.

2.6 Facilitators; What Enables Synergy?

To begin with, when exploring factors that facilitate or impair collaboration, these should be in operation on all levels, the "supra-organisational", or macro level, the inter-organisational, or

meso level, the inter-professional and the interpersonal, or micro level. In addition, it is noticeable that conditions that enhance partnership working would hinder it in their absence, meaning that with a slight change of wording all enablers could be obstacles and vice versa, and that the partition dividing the two is somewhat false.

The factors appearing to enable collaboration can be divided into three categories. First, in relation to working relationships, it seems that role clarity, commitment to this way of working and growth of understanding, trust and respect are found to be of importance (Anning et al, 2006 and DCSF, 2007). Commitment at higher organisational levels has been identified in the literature as particularly crucial for the success of a partnership (as above plus in UEA, 2007). Second, regarding processes, planning, good communication, precision, commissioning and transparency in terms of collective goals and objectives are seen as pertinent (Miller and McNicholl, 2003 and Miller and Stirling, 2004). Finally, resourcing, interpreted as staffing, time and sustainable funding, is considered significant. Other key points within the relevant literature appear to be effective leadership and opportunities for joint training (Atkinson et al, 2002 and Broadhead and Armistead, 2007). Local history of collaboration, together with individual partners' willingness to work together and the degree of involving service users as partners also feature as enablers (Miller and McNicholl, 2003 and Percy-Smith 2005). Finally, a degree of flexibility is seen to be highly desirable in that any model for integration has to be adjustable in response to individual circumstances, given that no model has all the right answers (Boddy et al, 2006). The Birchall and Hallett study (1995:78) identifies similar issues even though it differs with respect to the choice of grouping by recognising four distinctive categories.

2.7 Obstacles/Challenges or Forces Working Against this Uniting Vision.

Barriers to full integration are reported as fears of loss of autonomy and overdependence on partners, which are then linked to concerns about resources and reputation. In addition, counting on particular individuals/leaders is seen as a potential threat to maintaining collaboration, and suggestions to balance this advocate a focus on professional roles and not personal relationships. However, a study by Davidov and collaborators (2016) proposes that it is the personal rather than the formal that can lead to beneficial collaboration. This is due to the fact that the author relates the impersonal to power struggles.

In 1994 Hvinden described mechanisms impeding service integration as “...coping mechanisms that we referred to as avoidance (or evasion) substitution and off-loading (or inappropriate referrals) tended to impede the accomplishment of horizontal integration in service delivery and administration” (p. 275). In addition, in 1992 Hardy and colleagues presented what they perceived as being barriers to achieving collaboration. They divided these into: structural (complexity, non-coterminosity and fragmentation), procedural (differences in planning and budgeting), financial (differences in funding and resources), and professional barriers (differences in ideologies and values, threats to job security, conflicting views about user interests and roles), as well as barriers related to status and legitimacy (organisational self-interest, potential threats to autonomy and domain, and differences between elected and appointed agencies).⁷

Furthermore, equilibrium between input and output of partnerships is put forward as a preferred state in that the resources allocated for collaboration by individual organisations must translate into outcomes. Issues such as these, which are embedded in notions of effectiveness and efficiency, appear to dominate more recent literature.

Additional challenges reported in more recent literature are structural (i.e. budgets and commissioning, legislation, buildings, conditions of employment, etc.) (Anning et al, 2006 and UEA, 2007). All important disparities between agency policies and procedures that affect ways of working have to be reconciled in order to be in accord with each other and facilitate processes like, for example, information sharing. A basic degree of harmony is vital for success.

Moreover, power imbalances between member organisations are highlighted in the literature as another potential obstacle (Allnock et al 2006 and Tunstill, 2007). On occasions, smaller partners have been reported to abandon integrative schemes when their needs or priorities are ignored and their voices do not carry any clout within the multi-disciplinary team.

In addition, procedures can be alienating, as Cooper rightfully pointed out in 2004. This is especially the case when aiming to include service users, who can feel intimidated in a room full of professionals questioning their abilities as parents, as would happen at a child protection conference, for example, whilst listening to formal reports full of confusing professional jargon. It is therefore vital to simplify procedures and think participation through in order to make it

⁷ Figure 2:241

meaningful and overcome a tokenistic and disempowering, plain invitation to attend.

Similarly, Boddy and partners found in 2006 that legislation, mandates and guidelines have the potential to impede efforts to integrate assessment practices.

Professional values and practice can also be an obstacle to collaboration. These can vary to different degrees and can include anything from the overall conceptualisation of the phenomenon of child abuse and/or neglect and its causation to stereotypical viewpoints about other professions (Asthana et al, 2002; Atkinson et al, 2002; Cole, 2003; Warmington et al, 2004; Boddy et al, 2006; Goodwin, 2006; and Wheatley, 2006). Tunstill appears to advocate the view that even varying degrees of professional experience and training can generate friction between collaborating professionals (Tunstill et al, 2006).

Finally, many studies have included the overall political climate, or the macro level, as a significant barrier to collaboration, especially at times like these when budget cuts are ordered left, right and centre (Asthana et al, 2002; Atkinson et al, 2002; Cole, 2003; Boddy et al, 2006; and DCSF, 2007). Also, according to Goodwin in 2006 too many restructurings and reforms can affect partnership working, as they foster a climate of volatility, which does anything but guarantee the sense of security required by professionals to be able to concentrate on working together and bring about convergence of their practices. This makes perfect sense and was already implied when in a previous subsection in this chapter the interrelation of the three levels, used as analytical tools throughout this thesis was highlighted.

2.8 Learning or Work in Progress

“The tensions and contradictions between understandings of knowledge and practice which emerge when professionals work together in new ways can be viewed as ‘tools for learning and practice’ ” (Warmington et al, 2004 and Engeström et al 1997).⁸

An important issue was presented by Whittington in 1983. Whittington suggested seeing effective collaboration as an “accomplishment” reached through continuous negotiations and/or bargains concerned with specific plans of action. Furthermore, in 1992 Hallett and Birchall described collaborations as “...ever changing coalitions among a large number of professionals in different locations and groups” (1992:232). Therefore, even though structures

⁸As cited in Robinson et al, 2008.

are important, working together is a dynamic process of inter-organisational relationships and can only be viewed as such.

Similarly, in 1996 Morrison conceptualises the culture of interagency collaboration as “a series of building blocks”, again, a dynamic process, rather than a static one, which can be gradually improved or mastered. The basis of these blocks are recognition and definition, moving through existing mandates for collaboration, the type of structures and leadership present, the philosophy of intervention, available policies and procedures, training, provision, supervision, quality assurance mechanisms and staff care (p. 136).

Learning is a topic that appears in all reviews incorporated in this study, particularly in the most recent ones. Learning is understood not only as the need for joint training to enhance the ‘...core dimensions of effective interagency relationships’ (Charles and Horwath, 2009: 372)⁹, but also, and most significantly, as a constant process of re-evaluating collaborative practices and learning from mistakes. There is also the notion of the whole working together process as a way of learning through other members of the group, by sharing skills and expertise. This mainly emerges from papers using activity theory as a conceptual framework, which accepts the reality of co-working as a challenging, bumpy, up-hill road rather than a trouble-free, uncomplicated, theoretical walk in the park. (Warmington et al, 2004; Anning et al, 2006; Frost and Robinson, 2007) Moreover, Robinson and partners (2008) highlight three essential functions of emerging new practices as follows: “problem resolution, signposting and gate keeping”. They interpret these as a focus on swift problem solving approaches, a mission to refer service users to a vast array of services, thus avoiding the more specialist services that are already working close to their full capacity. Here Hudson’s paradox is very appropriate in that it points out that because synergy has yet to be mastered, practitioners and their respective agencies are required to work together more to have a chance to achieve synthesis in the future (Hudson, 2000:253). Thus, longer term planning seems to be required for trying and testing collaborative schemes that will allow the necessary time to achieve optimum results. This could indicate that longstanding, flexible partnerships are more likely to hold the answers to successful partnering. However, like an old married couple, a long-term collaboration may succeed by striking a delicate balance that may ensure a degree of harmony but risks being suitable only for

⁹The authors include a table from Piat, 2008 (a collaboration between the University of Nottingham, the University of Sheffield and the NSPCC) that presents the core dimensions as types of knowledge, skills and attitudes that constitute the central characteristics of effective collaborative relationships.

the partners involved rather than for all. Consequently, comparing even well-established initiatives and looking for lessons to be learned would seem to require extra care.

Finally, reflective learning and working have been promoted as a way to overcome the obstacles and improve partnership working in order to achieve better outcomes for the children and families involved by ‘...balancing blueprint- and practitioner-focused approaches to policy and services’ (Canavan et al, 2009: 385). Here blueprint approaches are those existing in policy documents and guidelines, whilst the practitioner-focused are more focused on perceptions of professionals in the field. This divide acts as a reminder of Munro’s analysis of the combination of analytical and intuitive thinking and skills required by social workers when dealing with child protection cases, which are often characterised as ‘messy, confusing problems’ in the literature (Schön, 1996:3).¹⁰ It is this kind of reflection that is presented by Canavan and partners,¹¹ as advocated by Ruch in 2007; hence, it combines practical reflection, critical reflection, process reflection and technical reflection. In other words, a reflective approach geared towards all the sources of information, thinking and learning within a practitioner’s work to protect children. Accordingly Munro states that, “The old-style debate in which formal knowledge and intuition are seen as rivals battling it out for supremacy is sterile. We need to see them as complementary and focus on how they can be integrated” (2008:27).

2.9 Conclusions

In conclusion, literature outlining the benefits of inter-professional co-operation emerged in the USA and the argument used in support of such practice was twofold; on the one hand, it was portrayed as a prerequisite for the delivery of appropriate services for children and families, and on the other, as a means of support for professionals dealing with child protection cases due to a perceived decrease of anxiety linked to joint decision-making.

This chapter has focused on some of the relevant literature surrounding collaboration and has highlighted the central controversies and ambiguities inherent in the writings on this topic. Thus, if nothing else, accentuating the complexity of achieving collaboration and measuring its outcomes for professionals and services, as well as for children and families. In other words, as Payne vividly showed whilst conversing on multi-professional teams, “...a team is always

¹⁰ As cited in Charles and Horwath, 2009: 372.

¹¹ Available in Canavan et al, 2009: 382.

travelling but never arrives...” (2000: 75). Hence, a multi-professional network is ever changing and evolving but never perfect like the humans that are its vital components, a fact that may go some way in explaining the difficulties evident in the literature and in practice. Consequently, pinpointing the dynamic nature of partnerships and the importance of constant learning to master synergy and achieve synthesis.

The third chapter introduces the findings regarding Greece’s welfare state and its responses to child abuse and neglect. The part that follows is the record of findings from internet and literature searches. It also includes material from the first thirteen interviews conducted in the region of the capital, which aimed to paint a picture of the Greek child protection system and its policy and practice. The idea is that the Greek child protection system will now be explored using tools described in the first chapter such as Marsh and Rhodes’ network policy and the main components of such systems as identified by international guidelines and mandates. Even though the central theme of this thesis is interagency and multidisciplinary working a chapter on the Greek child protection system is seen as a prerequisite. This is due to the fact that collaboration does not occur in a vacuum and as such cannot be decontextualised. A picture of the system as a whole is necessary in order to aid understanding of the networks under study.

Chapter 3

Setting the Context; Findings from the Country in Focus, or as Greek as It Gets

«The true measure of a nation's standing is how well it attends to its children – their health and safety, their material security, their education and socialisation and their sense of being loved, valued and included in the families and societies in which they are born.» (UNICEF)¹²

Having discussed the international reality of the phenomenon of child maltreatment, which serves as a contextual background, and having offered a clear picture of this thesis's main literature review, the study now turns to the target country, Greece, signalling the starting point for an exploration of the findings. As collaboration does not exist in a vacuum, Chapter three gives a description of the child protection system in Greece based on library and internet-based searches in conjunction with data gathered during the initial thirteen interviews with professionals working at various settings around the capital. It begins by exploring the condition of the current welfare state and some reforms¹³ in order to aid the reader's understanding by framing responses to child maltreatment within the general national welfare climate of provision and support. It continues with demographic trends likely to impact services and to affect the everyday life of children and families. Furthermore, it delves into information related to ethnic diversity, which has the potential to exacerbate an already thinly stretched network of provision and at the same time it identifies a fairly recent increase in a particularly vulnerable section of the population. It goes on to describe current levels of awareness and detection of child abuse and neglect and the system's responses within the current legal framework. Finally, it investigates NGOs working in the child protection arena alongside existing statutory services, thus introducing all alternative responses to such cases.

3.1 The Greek Welfare State

A study of child protection needs to be seen within the wider context of the welfare state in Greece. This is due to the fact that although this thesis is focused on that particular phenomenon, an all-encompassing review of policy, implementation and service provision is

¹²Innocenti Research Centre, Child Poverty in Perspective - An overview of Child wellbeing in rich countries (Report card 7).

¹³ These reforms took place around the time of the fieldwork.

necessary in order to understand what is available for children and families in general, as well as what is there for those who fall within the child protection remit. As has already been argued in the second chapter, a holistic response to child abuse and neglect requires interventions on all three tiers of prevention. The primary level includes the general population, policies and services that support and improve its quality of life. The secondary is aimed at those often referred to as “at risk” of maltreating their children, a category that would be populated by children and families with many different needs and difficulties due to the aforementioned multifactorial nature of the phenomenon. And last but by no means least; tertiary prevention consists of those specialist services that are designed to work with abused and neglected children and their families so as to prevent revictimisation. Therefore, although child abuse and neglect remains the focus of this study, the wider picture of the welfare state is significant in that it contains the child protection arena, as the specialist system does not operate in a vacuum, a condition that might therefore aid in explaining some of the crucial shortcomings.

The Greek welfare state developed with a considerable time lag in comparison to its European counterparts. Major legal reforms (i.e. the establishment of a National Health Service) and the rapid increase in social expenditure in the early eighties did not succeed in bringing about a balanced pattern of welfare. Since the mid-eighties some qualitative internal characteristics of the Greek model (i.e. fragmentation and deep inequalities of the income-maintenance system, extensive abuse of regulations, collusion of public and private interests producing corruption and an enormous waste of public money) were intensified by budgetary constraints and significant demographic changes.

By undermining the capacities of collective action, Greece’s centralised state structure and weak civil society are considered major impediments to both the exchange and socialisation functions at the regional and local levels and subsequently to the learning, adaptation and Europeanisation processes (Paraskevopoulos, 1998; Venieris, 2003). Therefore, despite the reforms involving the establishment of the thirteen regions, the elected second tier of local government at the prefectural level and the creation of viable local government units by the compulsory merger of neighbouring communities (known as Kapodistria’s Plan, Law 2539/97), the processes of exchange at regional and local levels are inhibited.¹⁴ As Skamnakis (2011)

¹⁴In 2011 a new plan was introduced, named Kallikratis Plan (Law 3852/2010), which reset the boundaries between local authorities and regional bodies. 910 local authorities existed with the old plan but they have now been reduced to 325 and similar changes occurred on the regional level. The funding of local government used to be based on central government, council tax, EU funds, and the local authorities own business ventures, with the

argues, “weak welfare arrangements on the one hand and weak local authorities due to a centralized state on the other” have restricted “local initiatives”. “The expansion of local authorities in recent years has proved weak and fragile” (p. 47).

Diamandouros (1994) and Mouzelis (1995) have described a cultural dualism in modern Greek State history between two powerful trends: the Western, which derives from Enlightenment traditions of rule of law, constitutionalism and civicism, and the Byzantine-Ottoman, which is characterised by the combination of strong state, clientelism and the Orthodox Church, a powerful stakeholder to be reckoned with. Within child protection this duality would generate concerns regarding the perceived power of the state when dealing with vulnerable children and families, the influence of the church and preaching and the possible impact on people practicing different religions, as well as the inequalities generated by a clientelistic approach, which creates first, second and third rate citizens in accordance with their respective connections and as such ostracizes the most vulnerable.

Petmesidou (1996) has shown that familialism constitutes a crucial component of the Greek model of social organisation and welfare provision and for a long time support from family and kin, which was strongly linked to the “soft-budgeting practices” pursued by households, individuals and enterprises, provided a substitute for the inadequate social welfare. In many respects, the crisis of the social protection system reflects the serious deadlocks to which the static/clientelistic model of social organisation has led since the eighties. Traditional clientelism based on personal ties and connections has evolved to party clientelism. Therefore, what used to be the power of personal/family acquaintances has transformed into the power derived from being seen to be affiliated with the political party in government, which means relying on the party’s support for appointment, priority in service provision (i.e. jumping the queue), preferential treatment of any kind, inexplicable pardons and absolution, authorities turning a blind eye to all sorts of violations, etc. In other words, it means exchanging the voting power of your family for any commodities up for grabs at any particular moment in time. This sort of mutual back scratching exhausts available resources in favour of the privileged few, hence leading the rest to despair and further discouraging meritocracy and incorruptibility.

new plan they also receive funding via the central revenue service. Finally, Regional Heads are no longer appointed by government but are voted for by the public instead. However, these changes occurred after the completion of the fieldwork.

Greece has a mixed model of welfare with many characteristics in common with other southern European countries.¹⁵ The primary features have been reported as follows: the prevalence of “contributory social transfers”; the supremacy of “unjustified social insurance privileges”; the late development of “universal welfare policies”; the “underdevelopment of social assistance and social care services”; “poor unemployment protection”; “distributional imbalance and administrative inefficiency; inexistent family policy -in a pattern where family remains the essential welfare provider (Venieris and Papatheodorou 2003, Petmesidou and Mossialos 2006)”¹⁶. In Greece throughout the years, as already stated above, family and kinship support was a substitute for an insufficient welfare state. However, changes in structure and roles (urbanisation, dual earning households, late child bearing, etc.) have affected the family’s ability to provide for its most vulnerable members (Mousourou and Stratigaki, 2005).

The country is currently in the process of decentralisation by transferring the responsibility of social welfare from central government to local authorities, following the UK model of service organisation. Therefore, at the end of this transitional period, the responsibility of protecting children will lie with local government overseen by central bodies, and this will have implications for the services provided. Nevertheless, during the life of this project, what could have been viewed as the beginning of the decentralisation process has yet to be completed and a recurring concern voiced by the participants of this study has been that the shift of responsibility has not been consistently and adequately backed by monetary transfers and expertise. As Skamnakis (2005) warns, when the responsibilities for social protection are passed down from central to local government without specific preconditions, the subnational level becomes a ‘weak link’ and exacerbates the picture of ineffectiveness of social policy systems.

According to the Greek Ministry of Health and Welfare- that during fieldwork was known as the Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity and now is the Welfare Secretariat in Ministry of Labour and Social Security- in the priority area of child and family,

“It is our commitment that all children issues become priority for our government and for our society. In order to achieve this particular objective, we are working out an integrated policy and the guarantee of co-ordination mechanisms. We should also reinforce the prevention sector, especially during the first years of the life of children and we should create a society, which is more focused on children. At the same time the healthy psychosocial development of the child presupposes the guarantee of decent living conditions for every family

¹⁵ See Chapter 2.

¹⁶ In Venieris, 2013:17.

(not only on financial terms), and the harmonisation of family life with the working life.” (On the official ministerial website, www.yypyp.gr/EN/welfare/pol_welfare/pol_welfare.html), [as accessed on the 19/12/03]¹⁷

The messages above would at first appear to be in accordance with what the international community is preaching, as presented in chapter two. However, an apparent lack of exact planning and change over the course of this study led the observer to view these announcements as nothing more than empty promises and political doublespeak that promotes synergy between policies and departments but fails to offer the way forward in practical terms, thus bringing about a loss of faith in the existing system.

In an attempt to realistically portray what was actually on offer at the time of the current study and what could actually play a significant part in achieving the goals and vision described above in practice, the following services were identified as being provided at the time:

Firstly, in terms of marital, maternity, and parental leave provided in the private sector the following apply. If a woman is employed five days per week, she is entitled to a week’s marital leave. During a pregnancy and for a year after giving birth it is illegal for an employer to seek to question her employment. She has the right, if on night shifts, to be transferred to a day shift in a similar position, and, if that transfer is technically or objectively impossible, to be excused from her duties during the pregnancy, and after birth and the breastfeeding period. A woman cannot be fired if she is pregnant, has given birth, or is breastfeeding. She will be excused from work to attend any antenatal appointments. If there are health and safety risks, pregnant, post birth, and breastfeeding women are not obliged to perform these tasks. This can be resolved by a permanent or temporary change of employment circumstances or timetable with a change of position or by being excused from work.

Additionally, every working mother is entitled to a 17-weeks’ maternity leave, as well as part-time hours for breastfeeding and looking after her child. After the end of the maternity leave and for 30 months a woman is entitled either to arrive an hour later or to leave an hour earlier alternatively. With the agreement of the employer, she could work two hours less per day for the first twelve months and an hour less per day for six months after that. The above

¹⁷The Ministry’s website subsequently became www.mohaw.gr but the aforementioned priorities remained unaltered throughout the study. Recently, according to Article 9, Paragraph 5 of Law 4052/2012 the General Secretariat of Welfare has moved from the Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity to the Ministry of Labour and Social Security (www.ypakp.gr). The Directory for the protection of the family operates within the Secretariat, it consists of three Departments, namely Family and Demographic Policy, Protection of children and adolescents, and Protection of the Elderly. The priorities have disappeared from the current website.

right also applies to stepparents of a child up to six years of age, using the time of the adoption as a starting point. In addition, this is applicable to unmarried parents. A working father is entitled to two days off when a child is born and could claim the subsequent leave to look after the baby, if the working mother is not making use of it. As a working parent, one is entitled to three and a half months unpaid leave until the child reaches the age of three and a half years old. An unmarried, widowed, or divorced parent is entitled to six months unpaid leave, if they have parental responsibility. In the case of the illness of one's children or other family members, one may take up to six days off per year (unpaid), and this limit will rise to a maximum of twelve days off per annum (unpaid), if a family has three or more children. Finally, there is an entitlement of up to four days off/per year to follow the child's school progress when they are in primary or secondary school. If a single parent with parental responsibility, then you are entitled to six days off per annum in addition to any other entitlements. If one has three or more children up to the age of twelve, he or she can take eight days off, planned in conjunction with the employer and not attached to either side of their annual leave.

If one is employed in the public sector the following apply. A woman is entitled to paid maternity leave two months before and three months after giving birth. If in need of special treatment after having used up her sick leave, she is entitled to paid leave certified by the treating doctor. If a woman has adopted a child, she is entitled to three months paid leave within the first six months after the completion of the adoption providing that the adopted child is up to six years of age. The working day is reduced by two hours if the children are under two years old and by one hour if they are between the ages of two and four years. If a woman does not use the reduction mentioned above, then she is entitled to nine months paid leave. A working parent can have a two-year unpaid leave to raise his/her children until they reach the age of six years. There is also an entitlement of up to four days per annum to follow the children's school progress in primary or secondary education. Finally, twenty-two days per year special paid leave is granted, if the children are suffering from a condition that requires regular blood transfusion or regular hospitalisation.

Apart from the obvious differences when comparing the prerogatives between the two sectors, it is also extremely important to note that on the one hand conditions in the private sector are nowhere near uniform, and on the other, employers' compliance with these requirements is at times tokenistic. As a result, women who would at first appear to wave these

rights might turn out to have been put under considerable pressure by their employers to do so.¹⁸ According to Stathopoulos (2015) Law 3852/2010 provides for women who do not work or are not entitled to maternity benefits from their social security 440.20 euros, half before and half after giving birth, depending on their circumstances.

Secondly, other universal measures and services for the benefit of children and their families include the following. Nurseries for pre-school children previously supervised by the Ministry have been passed on to the municipalities. More kindergartens are being set up and infant divisions developed within the existing ones so as to provide for younger children and enable more mothers to go back to work sooner. A pilot programme for the operation of kindergartens in the evening is underway. Children with disabilities are being integrated into mainstream kindergartens.

Centres for creative activities for children during after-school hours have been established. These centres mainly resemble all-day schools offering extra tuition and activities in the afternoons, and are yet another measure to support longer working hours for both parents. Furthermore, children's vacation camps have been set up offering cheap or free placements so that children can be safely out of the way during the summer months, as they are usually on summer holidays for longer than their working parents could ever dream of. It is also common practice in Greece that grandparents, as informal carers, step in, and children frequently spend larger parts of their vacations with them whenever possible.

Benefits for the third child, for families with four or more children, single-parent families, maternity leave, and life-pension for mothers of four or more children are on offer, but these usually translate poorly in monetary terms as will be indicated below. This was also a concern reported in the Concluding Observations of the CRC in 2002, point 48C.

Thirdly, in the form of more specialised services, short stay centres for children aged 4 to 15 have been developed for children in need of accommodation outside their family, which would include children subjected to abuse or neglect; collaboration with NGOs is being established in unison. Also guesthouses for teenagers exist, though services for this age group can still, in the researcher's opinion, be characterised as inadequate and underdeveloped. Such

¹⁸All information concerning leave entitlements has been collated from brochures published by KETHI, the Centre for Equality Matters in Greece (www.kethi.gr).

issues particularly appear to affect services for children and adolescents facing mental health difficulties.

Additionally, a telephone help line offering support and counselling for abused and neglected children has been set up by the National Centre for First Social Aid (now known as National Centre of Social Solidarity, EKKKA¹⁹). And under the vulnerable groups committee, a Centre for unaccompanied children is operational and a second one is being developed, within the services for asylum seekers and refugees. Also, health education and prevention programmes are operational for Greek Roma children and their families. The Greek Roma, colloquially referred to as “gypsies”, which is a term that often carries derogatory connotations, are in the majority transients and have traditionally been discriminated against in Greek society, and thus constitute a vulnerable and frequently isolated group at risk of further victimisation. These specialised initiatives are frequently criticised as inadequate or tokenistic²⁰. Greece was taken to the European Human Rights Court and was found guilty of discriminating against the right of Roma children to an education as during the school year 2004-2005 a group of Roma primary school children were moved to a mobile school five kilometres away from their community, which they were to attend exclusively. Additionally, research conducted by the Hellenic Observatory in Helsinki in 2010, in 28 Roma communities across the country highlighted that some children are still not enrolled in education and many of those attending are subjected to all sorts of discriminatory practices in school. ²¹

In addition, every child younger than the age of 16 unable to live with his/her family receives the amount of 15,000 drachmas per month (Euro 44.02) on the condition that the income of the family that fosters the child is low. Low income is set by the government as 80,000 drachmas per month (Euro 234.78) for a three-member family, plus 7,000 drachmas (Euro 20.54) for each member after the third. 34,440 such children receive the allowance. The allowance is also given to children whose father or both parents have died, or children whose father is unable to support them due to health problems, or physical or mental incapability, and to single-parent children. 35,360 such children receive the allowance. These benefits have been criticised as insufficient, and to make matters worse, fathers are not allowed

¹⁹www.ekka.org.gr

²⁰ Also see CRC Report, Concluding Observations 2002 and 2012.

²¹<http://www.amnesty.org.gr/roma-children-are-still-trapped-in-separate-and-unequal-education-despite-rulings-by-the-european-court-of-human-rights>

to receive them if the children's mother has passed away and they are in employment. It is blatantly obvious that a monthly income of 234 Euros is nowhere near enough to raise a family of three in Greece. In the author's opinion, it is highly unlikely that this amount could even sustain one person, given the rising cost of living nowadays, thus creating further disadvantage rather than alleviating any difficulties. Moreover, given the dire state of the Greek economy, it is impossible to imagine an increase in benefits' packages in the near future that would at the very least bring them benefits up to date and in line with the current cost of living. At the same time, it is extremely probable that even more people will be requiring assistance, thus applying extra pressure that may lead to the exhaustion of the public coffers at a faster pace, rendering any progress unattainable.²²

Similarly, in regard to family environment and alternative care and the state's attempts to enhance these, the Committee responding to the country's CRC Report in 2001 highlighted the following concerns: (a) the high percentage of persons (19.5 per cent) estimated to be living below the poverty line and the impact of this on children and families; (b) the system of financial "allowances" provided by the State to assist in the care of children under certain circumstances, such as low family income, not given to children themselves but rather to mothers, irrespective of whether they are caring for their children; (c) the amount of those allowances being extremely low and the fact that many Roma families did not receive these allowances at all. The recommendations were to strengthen efforts to protect children's right to a family environment by reducing the number of persons living in poverty and ensuring access for all children and parents in need to financial assistance, paying particular attention to children and parents from Roma communities (p11); to change the procedures for the distribution of family allowances so as to ensure that they are provided to the person(s) actually caring for the children; and last but by no means least, to consider increasing financial support to families living in poverty as far as available resources permit. According to the EU Greece is in the fourth position when it comes to child poverty after Romania with 32%, Bulgaria with 30% and Italy with 26%. More specifically, Greece has 22% of children living in poverty when the European average is 19%. Research undertaken by EKKE²³, the Greek Social Research

²²Universal benefits were announced in 2013 as follows, firstly, a universal benefit to support children (Law 4093/2012 as amended by Law 4111/2013 and 4144); secondly, a special benefit for families with three or more children (Law 4141/2013). The rates vary in accordance with the family's income (www.ypakp.gr).

²³www.ekke.gr

Centre in 2010, showed that 23.3 % of all minors (aged 0-17 years), around 449,000 children, live in poverty in Greece. ²⁴

Another worrying statistic discovered is the distribution of social workers employed at Social Services Departments reported by the government in 2001 as follows:

<u>(Attiki)</u> <u>Prefecture of Athens</u>	
<u>East Sector</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>West Sector</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>South Sector</u>	<u>7</u>

Figure 3 Number of Social Workers employed by the three generic welfare offices in the Prefecture of Athens (2001)

This is of grave concern if one takes into account the fact that Athens has approximately four million inhabitants and that Social Services is the agency responsible for distributing and scrutinising income support and disability allowances, approving adoptions, monitoring and/or supporting children and families, and compiling assessments amongst other things. This is a far greater remit in comparison to England, where all income-related support is provided by the Department of Social Security and the rest of the services are divided amongst multiple teams of social workers in each local authority. In Greece, local authorities have started employing social workers but mainly under the auspices of the EU-funded “Help in the Home”²⁵ projects, which aim to offer assistance and support to the elderly or to people with disabilities by providing “meals on wheels” and basic monitoring and practical support including, in certain regions, basic medical care provided by nurses. The social workers employed by such programmes are sometimes stretched to cater for all residents’ needs within the constituency, and as a result, roughly on average one or two professionals are employed to offer a service to all client groups within the authority’s catchment area. On occasions, the social worker assumes a rather managerial role and only meets with residents during intake or when a crisis arises, overseeing auxiliary personnel entrusted with the day-to-day service provision. Needless to say, the service provided falls short of any acceptable standards. In addition, short sighted planning at the policy level has often left social workers in precarious positions, not knowing whether their

²⁴Also available on the website mentioned above.

²⁵ The term used is an exact translation of the service made by the author of this research.

short term contracts will be renewed, or whether the central and local governments will secure sufficient funds to continue providing the service. Even worse, at times social workers questioned for the current study admitted to remaining unpaid for months. It is disheartening that established service providers that greatly benefit citizens in need, be they individuals or whole families, and have, in a way, a proven track record, find themselves on such unstable grounds and having to eternally justify their importance. This is just another example of a situation that will most probably worsen in the current economic climate, as a foreseeable rise in demand begins to overstretch the already limited resources.

Indisputably, an additionally restrictive factor is the geographical formation of the country, (i.e. mountainous sections and many islands, combined with difficulties in transport), which impacts accessibility of health and welfare services. As a result, the inhabitants of rural parts of the country do not have equal access to services. This argument has been used in official documents to explain inadequacies in service provision in the countryside, e.g. the Greek Report to the CRC in 2001. Although geography is indeed an additional obstacle to service delivery, it is the researcher's opinion that it can also be seen as a convenient defence against any valid criticisms. Furthermore, it could be argued that one would not have to look at the exceptionally distant and isolated areas to observe severe limitations in regard to service delivery. By the end of this chapter this view will be better substantiated by the deployment of a variety of sources that will evidence significant shortcomings in the system.

Finally, given that this study is mainly focused on child protection and according to the official report submitted to the CRC in 2001, since 1979 the Ministry of Health and Welfare has financed and supervised programmes implemented by the Directorate of Family Relations including research; research and action; training for professionals; and the provision of services. However, these are referred to in a very general manner; no references are provided and no useful available data is presented. During the last approximately 20 years, these approaches, according to the same source, have resulted in raising public awareness, briefing groups of professionals (mainly paediatricians and social workers), and influencing social policy. The Ministries of Health and Welfare (or Health and Social Solidarity as it is currently known), Justice, and Public Order have adopted measures in the form of laws and programmes for dealing with the phenomenon in the form of diagnosis, therapy and rehabilitation in respect to a large number of children who have suffered various forms of abuse and neglect, research results concerning physical abuse and neglect, non-organic dystrophy, sexual abuse, prevention of risks

among families disposed towards violence (secondary prevention), the attitudes, views and practices of groups of professionals such as paediatricians and police officers, and corporal punishment, and finally the development of primary prevention programmes which have led to the formulation of standards. In addition, the formation of the European Movement for the Prevention of Abuse and Neglect of Children, which held the First European Congress in Greece in 1987 and the development of the initiative, Group for the Rights of Children and Young People, in collaboration with other governmental and non-governmental bodies will be explored. This study will seek evidence of shifts/changes as results of the aforementioned initiatives.

As a first step in that direction, the following section will investigate welfare reforms in an attempt to explain what has changed in the last decade in Greece and how in order to measure any effects of these major reorganisations on the child protection system.

3.11 Reforms

The reform of social and welfare services in Greece (Law 2646) began in 1998 with the “Development of the National System for Social Care”, which was aimed at unifying existing services. However, there remains a significant discrepancy between policy and implementation that is clearly visible. The National Council for Social Care was established as the central advisory point with special committees for the development of national programmes, for the elderly, people with disabilities, children and families, and vulnerable groups. In addition, a Welfare Services’ Chart had been announced as a tool for planning, developing and evaluating policy, which would contain a record of all existing welfare services and the needs of each of the country’s districts. This chart was supposed to be found on the Ministry’s website; however, the researcher was unable to download it. When further inquiries were made during a visit to Athens in March 2004, ministerial staff shared that this initiative was never completed and claimed that they were unaware of the reasons why. In 2009, the chart was still unavailable.

Furthermore, a thorough restructuring of social welfare organisations was planned to amalgamate the three major welfare organisations: the National Welfare Organisation (EOP), and the two Child Welfare Institutions, known as PIKPA and MHTERA, into a single institution to be named the National Welfare Agency, which was intended to operate as a strategic agent for welfare policy development, while any of the functions previously performed

by the three organisations, such as running public nurseries and child welfare centres, would be transferred to first and second tier local authorities. This move, initially welcomed by many, seemed to stem from concerns about duplication of work as well as the need for uniformity in governance and co-ordination,

A national committee was made responsible for the preparation of social care programmes. Among its primary pursuits are: family, child and youth (article 2, par. 1a). It is the responsibility of the state to provide social care and it is provided to every individual legally residing in Greece. The National System of Social Care provides services through the public sector under the supervision of the Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity and through not-for-profit organisations in the private sector (article 5). Private, profit-making bodies can also provide services (article 1, par. 4).

The provided services are:

- a. Primary Social Care. The services mainly focus on prevention and are universal.
- b. Secondary Social Care. The services mainly focus on rehabilitation programs and on preventing the consequences of social and/or economic seclusion.
- c. Tertiary Social Care. The provided services demand high standards of expertise and technology as they are offered as a response to more complex difficulties (Newspaper of the Greek Government Gazette, Issue 1, No. 236, 20 October 1998).

According to Law 3106, at the beginnings of 2003, the Regional Health Authorities, which were set out in the 2001 ESY – the NHS equivalent- reform will also have regional social and welfare services under their jurisdiction. Furthermore, the National Welfare Agency, created in 1998 in an attempt to merge different welfare institutions, was dismantled and the responsibility was passed on to Regional Health and Welfare Authorities on a locality basis. This “one step forward two steps back” process created many problems. For example, in reality, PIKPA was the main organisation overseeing all fostering arrangements around the country, as it had some smaller, fairly decentralised units across the country. Following this reform, their responsibility was passed on to regional units without any clear vision or financial incentives or extra, suitably specialised staff. As a result, in many areas there are no services operating fostering schemes and any new placements that unintentionally materialise, mostly kinship care, have to be approved and paid for through PIKPA’s service in Athens. This has obviously created huge gaps in service provision and many unnecessary delays in the process. Overall, the evidence points to a lack of long term planning at the government level, which is extremely alarming, as it

fuels uncertainty and jeopardises service input for all citizens, though it will particularly impact on the most vulnerable groups, such as minors at risk and maltreated children and their families.

A statement by the Hellenic Association of Social Workers (SKLE) was published in their official tri-monthly bulletin, *Social Worker*, summarising the current system and identifying future directions as follows: (vol. Oct-Nov-Dec 2003: 15)

“In Greece, social care lacks social planning and achieves a partial cover of social needs through multiple, fragmented and uncoordinated policies. The need for rational planning is therefore primary in order to design a system of services to deal with social dangers and to meet social needs at a local level through research, description and evaluation, as well as by specific political decisions. The responsibility for the development of primary social care services lies exclusively with local authorities. By delivering social care through local social services, social solidarity, social participation, and direct access are ensured. Local services can support the family and provide the means to enhance its functioning as well as the relationships within those families that are already, or are at risk of being, in a less privileged position, which could threaten their quality of life regardless of any individuality in their composition. The development of a system of social services for prevention and treatment through an individualised approach with the sole goal of satisfying the needs of the citizen is necessary.”²⁶

To deal with fragmentation and lack of coordination, the document goes on to advocate the need to develop a Directorate of Social Services in every local authority, which would consist of the following departments: Elderly, Special Needs, Family and child, and Vulnerable groups (i.e. people at risk of social exclusion) along the lines of the British paradigm. Thus, professional voices appear to unite via their official body in denouncing current practices and urging the state to expand service provision at a local level in order to enhance coordination and eradicate fragmentation. Such voices were also present as participants in this study, a fact that corroborates the importance attached to synergy and the researcher’s move to explore frontline collaboration in greater detail.

Researchers in Greece concerned with preventing violence in the community also advocate co-ordinated intervention at all levels of prevention (primary, secondary and tertiary) by innovation, inter-agency coordination, and multi-disciplinary teams (Stavrianaki, 2003). The benefits of inter-agency cooperation and multi-disciplinary working are present in the relevant Greek literature, but in reality examples of co-operation are rare (Kandylaki, 2002).

A review of research undertaken by Agathonos-Georgopoulou in 1997 concludes with a call for the following policy measures. Health education programmes and health promotion to be established in the schools, thus promoting preparation for adulthood and parenting.

²⁶ Offered as translated by the researcher.

Organisation of multi-disciplinary teams at the community level and within hospitals is necessary to deal clinically with diagnosis and monitoring of treatment. Reorientation of out-of-home child care, with the promotion of alternative schemes such as fostering, therapeutic care, crisis care, shelters for youth, etc. is required. Additionally, it is important to ensure appropriate use of the media for the promotion of awareness of child maltreatment and for health education. Furthermore, development of primary prevention programmes through the collaboration of health, education and welfare services at the community level are needed as well as special programmes for socially excluded population groups. Finally, the promotion of children's rights and recognition of childhood as a social phenomenon is advocated (Jensen and Saporiti, 1992). At the time of this research, ten years later, none of these recommendations appear to have become reality.

Finally, in 2000, the Division for the Development of Voluntary Activity was set up in the Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity to accredit, finance, and co-ordinate actions. According to the government, the participation of voluntary organisations in the sector of Welfare is high and it is recorded in the Welfare Chart of Greece (this Chart did not exist in 2004 or even in 2009 when the researcher re-visited the Ministry). The Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity verify the work and the causes of the voluntary organisations and finance them to expand their network nation-wide. This long overdue attempt to organise and monitor the third sector is extremely valuable, if it can guarantee incorruptibility, though concerns are raised by what appears to be an incomplete effort. The Ombudsman reported in the press in 2014 that EKKA went ahead with the accreditation of NGOs but the criteria used were not qualitative (e.g. staff training), thus organisations were assessed exclusively on technical issues. The role of not-for-profit organisations is gradually becoming more significant as economies struggle with the ever-increasing financial burden of the welfare state, a reality that is definitely affecting Greece. To make matters worse, demographic shifts play a significant part and will be explored in the following section.

3.2 Demography

Child protection in Greece needs to be seen against the backdrop of significant demographic changes, which have an impact on the needs of children and families. “Even perfect

organisation and perfect timing is not enough if there are not social trends and social forces working with us.” (Finkelhor, 1991: 17)

According to EUROSTAT (1999), in Greece in the year 1998, 21% of the population had an income that was 60% below the mean annual per capita income and was, therefore, below the poverty level. Infant mortality gradually but substantially declined in Greece from 29.6 infant deaths per 1,000 live births in 1970 to 6.15 in 1999, which was one of the most noticeable improvements within the EU. However, this is still the highest rate in the EU, which reported an average of 4.94 in 1999. Peri-natal mortality has also decreased significantly in Greece, dropping from 18.19 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1981 to 8.77 in 1998, but it is still the highest in the EU, which in 1999 revealed an average of 6.31 deaths. Similar trends can be found in maternal mortality, as Greece ranked fourth with 5.96 deaths per 100,000 live births according to data available from 1999.

According to the WHO in 2004, Greece’s birth rate was among the lowest in Eur-A, resulting in a natural population growth of zero. As the large birth cohorts of the late 1940s approach retirement age, the number of Greeks aged 65 years and over is expected to grow from about 17.5% of the population in 2003 (Council of Europe, 2003) to an estimated 25.9% in 2030. In addition, infant mortality is declining reaching 5.1 in 2001 and so is neonatal mortality at 3.5 per 1000 live births, the Eur-A average being 4.7 and 3.2 respectively.²⁷ According to the 2010 population data sheet infant mortality in Greece has dropped to 2.7 per 1000 live births. ²⁸ Live births per 1000 population were recorded as 9 in 2013, whilst infant mortality per 1000 live births was estimated as 4 in 2015, a rise in comparison to 2010. ²⁹

Changing trends in family patterns, (i.e. increasing participation of women in the labour force, growing rates of divorce and one-parent families³⁰, urbanisation) further limited the capacity of the traditional model of social protection based on family and kin support to tackle pressing social needs, due to growing unemployment (especially among the young), impoverishment and social exclusion. For example research by EKKE in 2012 described that one-parent families face very difficult circumstances. These social and institutional deadlocks compounded by the fiscal crisis of the state made large-scale institutional change urgent. In addition, policy measures are necessary to tackle low fertility and demographic ageing.

²⁷ http://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/103220/GRE_Highlights.pdf

²⁸ http://www.prb.org/pdf10/10wpds_eng.pdf

²⁹ As data source same as in footnote 26.

³⁰ 20% of all families in Greece are one-parent families according to Stathopoulos, 2015: 380.

A study by Kaldirimitzian in 2002 showed that Greek women are delaying getting married and becoming mothers, that more married women work and bear fewer children, that there has been an increase in divorces (an approximately 90% increase from 1977 to 1987), and that approximately one in six marriages ends in divorce (data for 1997). Child birth outside marriage is still low, which could be linked to society's persisting negative attitudes and perceptions on that subject. These figures have however recently risen according to Simou (2014). In the same publication she also suggests that divorce rates dropped in 2010, a finding that the researcher attributes to the financial crisis. Similarly civil marriages are on the rise and in 2011 they almost reached the number of religious ones performed in the country. The economy is once again put forward as the reason behind this trend, due to the fact that marriages in the church tend to be a more costly affair.

In 1997 Agathonos-Georgopoulou argued that in the Greek culture, where the institution of the family has been the primary unit of the social structure, a gradual change is being observed from collectivism to individualism, which brings with it a number of high risk factors at the individual, family, community, and societal levels. However, according to Riga and collaborators (2012) even though there are some structural (moving away from the traditional family model) and operational (roles and responsibilities) changes, these occur at a much slower pace in Greece in contrast to other societies.

Research reveals that the family may well become a source of anxiety and pressure for its young members. Greek parents tend to be, on the one hand, over-protective, and on the other, to set high aspirations for their children, expressed mainly in terms of educational attainment (Kataki, 1983; Mousourou, 1984). Children are thus expected to fulfil parental aspirations by following a heavy daily programme, which includes additional after-school courses taken on a private basis. The latter is done in order either to cover issues not taught at school or to improve children's performance. Pressure and anxiety are further reinforced by the housing conditions in small apartment houses (mainly in the cities) where room for play is either not available or restricted. In addition, the family institution in Greece both strongly supports and heavily relies on medical expertise. When a child is born almost regardless of the family's socio-economic status, the child's health and well-being is entrusted to a private paediatrician, who is almost a companion throughout childhood and will give advice on habits and activities as well as health matters (EuroSocial Reports, 1992, vol. 36/12: 21).

These changing patterns are likely to impact on children and their families, and as a result, put an extra strain on the system as a whole. However, it is not only a question of changing figures in family formation and cessation, but a significant shift in the makeup of the country's population is also observable as will be argued below.

3.21 Ethnic Diversity

Throughout recent history Greece has been fairly homogenous. However, in the last fifteen to twenty years more and more people from different ethnic backgrounds are living in the country. Officially, the 2001 Census recorded 93% of the population as Greeks and 7% as others. However, it records citizenship rather than ethnicity.³¹ The same source estimated net migration rate 2.32 per 1000 inhabitants in 2014. Since then, the situation has changed dramatically following the recent migrant crisis. Even though most refugees arriving in Greece do not plan to stay as they prefer to seek asylum in other European countries, Greece is struggling to look after them in the meantime. The situation is exacerbated when other countries make decisions to close their borders.

According to the European Council, the population of Greek Gypsies (Roma) was 120,000 in 1987, but many organisations of and for Gypsies suggest that the population may be as large as 450,000 (Korre and Marselos, 1987). The majority of Christian Gypsies live as nomads, in free camping sites near urban areas, whilst the majority of Muslim Gypsies live in Thrace, in the north of Greece. In 1955, the State granted Roma people Greek nationality and citizenship (Law 3370/1955). However, the process of social integration has been very slow and there is a high level of exclusion from education. In 1996, the State began a comprehensive rehabilitation programme for Greek Gypsies, including residential facilities, multi-cultural education, primary health and welfare care and vocational training. However, issues related to their living conditions (i.e. overcrowded, unhygienic, no sanitation) as well as educational and social exclusion (i.e. children not attending school, Roma people being discriminated against in employment and access to public services) remain unresolved and, therefore, are of concern, as is their impact on children's life chances.

In 1997, the Ministry of Public Security estimated the number of illegal refugees in Greece to be about 398,000, while other publications suggested that there were about one million

³¹ http://www.indexmundi.com/greece/demographics_profile.html

people (Georgoulas, 1997). The official number of unaccompanied child asylum seekers or refugees is as follows: in 1999: 22; in 2000:135; in 2001:103 (Data provided by the government in 2001 in the CRC Report).

In 2001, KAPA Research undertook a study of pupils, parents and teachers from primary and secondary schools in the two largest cities in Greece, Athens and Thessalonica, where the majority of foreigners living in the country reside. 2,343 questionnaires were completed in total in an attempt to register the degree of tolerance and acceptance of foreign pupils in Greek schools as expressed by Greek pupils, their parents and teachers. Pupils from other countries attend mainly primary schools but there are some foreign pupils in secondary schools. On many occasions, schools are the forum of discrimination against foreign pupils, practised by other pupils, parents, teachers and school governing bodies. High percentages of xenophobic behaviours and attitudes were suggested in all aspects of the educational community. The individuals responsible for the children's socialisation, i.e. parents, teachers and professors, appeared more negative in their attitudes towards the presence of foreign children in Greek schools and the general presence of foreigners in the country in comparison to the pupils. Especially primary school children seem to hold the best opinion of and behave better towards their foreign schoolmates. Furthermore, the findings indicated that the greater the communication and co-existence of children from different ethnic backgrounds, the less prevalent were xenophobic views. In addition, parents with a higher level of education and their children were less likely to have xenophobic attitudes in comparison to those with a basic level of education. According to their gender, female teachers and mothers appeared less tolerant than male teachers and fathers, but this difference was reversed in pupils (i.e. schoolgirls were seen as more tolerant than schoolboys). In primary school, parents and teachers seemed more worried and more likely to discriminate against foreigners than in secondary school. In conclusion, it is suggested that schools mirror xenophobic stereotypes present in the wider society. The main problems that were identified as relevant to or caused by foreign pupils were problems of integration and behaviour as well as difficulties associated with learning. The respondents identified the need for further training for teachers in teaching foreign pupils and the need for a greater appreciation and awareness of equal opportunities issues and of respecting differences. Therefore, the life chances of these children would be more impaired than those of their Greek counterparts, which would impact access to services

and information, living conditions, social isolation and exclusion, making them an even more vulnerable group.

Overall, the population in Greece is becoming more and more heterogeneous, making it highly likely that service provision, which is inadequate to begin with, will be inundated with requests, provided that non-Greeks will be able to communicate their needs and so be entitled to services. Needless to say, immigrants, especially those with few or no papers tend to be socially excluded, live in poverty and are in danger of suffering from xenophobic attitudes.

Finally, this newly found heterogeneity has significant implications regarding access to information. In response to the Greek report submitted under the CRC in 2001, the Committee expressed concern that non-Greek children and their families, children from some isolated regions and from some distinct ethnic, religious, linguistic or cultural groups do not always have adequate access to information regarding welfare and other services. In addition, they expressed concerns that some harmful information, particularly via the Internet, remained easily accessible to children. The recommendations made were: first, to ensure that all children and their families have access to essential information; second, to promote the development and accessibility of information reflecting the cultural diversity of the population; third, to protect children from harmful information, including information available on the Internet. Needless to say, the lack of information on available resources exacerbates the disadvantage experienced by these particularly vulnerable sections of the general population.

Having presented a synopsis of the Greek welfare reality, the study now moves on to the core phenomenon under study, child abuse and/ or neglect and the country's recorded responses.

3.3 Awareness and Detection of Child Abuse and Neglect

Child abuse, once known as “battered child syndrome”, came to prominence as a phenomenon in the medical field in 1962 thanks to the efforts of a paediatrician named H. Kempe. In Greece, however, the first written report regarding child abuse was published more than a decade later, in 1976. It was based on data from other countries and questioned whether such a phenomenon could exist in Greece (Agathonos, 1991: 127). However, within the country’s report to the relevant Committee under the Convention of the Children Rights, it is stated that all forms of child abuse and neglect of children described in literature and reported in other countries also occur in Greece. Subsequently, these forms are listed in two broad categories as follows. First, there is abuse and/or neglect that takes place mainly inside the family or its substitutes and that includes physical abuse, physical neglect and non-organic dystrophy, Munchausen’s Syndrome by proxy, psychological abuse, emotional neglect, and sexual violation – incest. Then there are the types of abuse that happen predominantly outside the family, namely organised ritual sexual abuse (not including financial exploitation), which mainly occurs in groups that engage in quasi-religious ritual procedures and is aimed at obtaining perverted sexual satisfaction during which the victims are often murdered; sexual exploitation of children (child prostitution); pornography, which may include financial profit (prostitution or perverted pederasty on the personal and/or group level). Then, the report refers to abuse seen in relation to the labour exploitation of minors – i.e. street children. Finally, it mentions systemic abuse; the role of the state or other system, which, by positive action, or more frequently by omission, infringes the fundamental rights of children. A characteristic example of a context within which systemic abuse can occur is institutional care and, in general, the protection of children.

Although there has been a shift in attitudes and the existence of the phenomenon has been established in Greece, the number of cases of child abuse in the country is not yet known as Greece lacks an official protocol for recording cases of abuse as well as a supervising agency and suitable structures, and due to the fact that the existing services are extremely fragmented and/or non-specialised. There are currently only three child protection teams in Greece, two of which are based in the capital, Athens, and one in the second biggest city in Greece, Thessalonica. Again, lack of equity immediately springs to mind, but far greater than that is the overall inadequacy that is evident even where these services do exist. In addition to the fact that two services are nowhere near enough for a capital city that houses approximately four million

people, the remit of these teams has been changed. This shift means that they are now mostly responsible for young people who display anti-social behaviour with some similarities to what are called Youth Offending Teams in England. No parallel provision has been created, which means that these teams are stretched to the point of breaking, and this project has revealed that social workers in the capital are extremely concerned and find this lack of adequate specialised provision rather frustrating as it further hinders their already difficult work. During the researcher's initial social work training, six months were spent as a member of one of these teams, which at the time –mid-nineties- consisted of two social workers and five students on placement. Since then, rather than witnessing an improvement, it would appear that further deterioration is evident as more responsibilities have been casually allocated without upgrading resources that were greatly insufficient prior to this arbitrary widening of the services' remit.

The impossibility of accurately reporting the prevalence of child abuse and neglect is reiterated in Greek literature.

“In Greek society, where family is highly valued and where parental love and affection are undisputable, research exploring the issue of child abuse or neglect within the family setting faces some obstacles and becomes a rather delicate theme” (EuroSocial Reports, 1992, vol. 36/12: 21).

3.31 Relevant Research Findings

In Greece, various studies of the phenomenon have been conducted in the last 25 years, which reveal design limitations characteristic of small clinical samples and a clinical approach and run the risk of underestimating the phenomenon. The following data is nevertheless available. Research findings show that the abused child does exist in Greek society (Agathonos et al., 1984; Maroulis, 1979; Nakou et al., 1979). It is estimated that every year almost 7,000 children are victims of family violence or severe negligence. In reported cases from the trimester January-April 1998 alone, there were 20 children sexually assaulted, two children severely injured, five cases of infanticide and six cases of severe negligence (Agathonos, 1989). “In 1988, there were 91 incidents of child abuse or neglect that reached publicity through the press: they involved 125 children, out of whom 15 died” (EuroSocial Reports, 1992, vol. 36/12: 21).

Similarly to England, the lack of mandatory abuse reporting leaves official morbidity and mortality statistics as the only source of information, the study of which produced some interesting observations. In 1994 the Statistical Yearbook of Greece classifies hospital discharges by diagnostic categories, age groups and sex. Category 17, defined in English as

“Accidents, poisonings, and violence”, is translated into Greek as “Accidents and Poisonings”, denoting that the word “violence” is an unacceptable term whereas the word “accidents” is used as synonymous to “injuries”, probably implying that injuries can only be accidental. This category in 1994 included 840 children under one year old who were hospitalised with “fractures of all kinds, dislocations, sprains and strains, concussions, other intra-cranial and internal injuries, open wounds, burns, poisonings, ingestion of foreign bodies”. The causes of these injuries should be questioned as they pertain mostly to children who are not yet mobile and who depend totally on their parents or other caretakers. Another observation relates to the causes of death for children under one year old in 1983 when 76 children were reported to have died from “other accidents”, that is, accidents other than falls, fires, poisonings and child murder, or those resulting from medical practice or traffic accidents. Twelve years later, in 1995, the corresponding number was 24 children. The death of these children could be attributed to non-accidental injuries (Agathonos-Georgopoulou, 1997).

In Greece, a significant number of studies have shown that physical chastisement is widely used as a way to discipline children, and although in most instances physical chastisement is not synonymous with abuse, physical abuse mostly begins as physical punishment. In 2000, Stavrianaki reported that out of a sample of 591 families with children in the first or sixth year of primary school 65.5% used physical punishment to discipline their children. In 1.2% of the cases the physical chastisement lead to a serious injury requiring stitches and/or hospitalisation, whilst in 4% minor injuries such as nose bleeds, grazing, etc. occurred. Physical chastisement was used for boys more than girls and for younger children more than older ones. Children living with both parents were chastised more and children with siblings were more likely to be chastised this way. There also appeared to be a relationship between the mother’s education and the level of physical punishment, i.e. the higher the level of education, the less the use of physical chastisement. Finally, the family’s socio-economic classification seemed to influence the level of use of physical chastisement, i.e. the higher the socio-economic level, the less the use of such punishment.

In Greece the law used to permit physical chastisement in the home and only forbid its use within the spheres of education, the penal system and alternative care. Evidently, regarding violence and ill treatment, the Committee that responded to the country’s submission under the CRC in 2001 expressed concern that the practice of corporal punishment of children is widespread in Greece - 60% of parents being the alarming figure mentioned in the initial report.

Although prohibited by law in schools, it was permitted in the family in all contexts and education and awareness campaigns were considered necessary to inform about the harm of violence as well as to introduce alternative, non-violent, forms to discipline children. Thus the Committee recommended that all forms of violence against children be prohibited by law. In response, Law 3500/2006 on the Combating of Intra-family Violence was passed, prohibiting corporal punishment in the home (Article 4). Overall, it is treated as a positive step that cultivates a level of optimism in relation to the treatment of victims and a zero tolerance stance towards domestic violence in general, which is now treated as a social problem. Although the new legislation is mainly geared towards women other positives appear to be the recognition that children are victimised when witnessing domestic violence, even if it is not directed to them and that victims are entitled to monetary compensation. In addition, rape within marriage is now included as a punishable act (Bechlivani, 2007). Amnesty international in a report about Greece compiled in 2007 commented on the new law as follows:

“...parliament adopted a law combating domestic violence, placing the emphasis on the preservation of the family unit rather than on the rights of the victims, who in the vast majority of cases are women. Under the law, judicial arbitration would be at the initiation of the prosecutor rather than at the victim's request, a definite time frame for immediate implementation of restraining orders was lacking, and budgetary provisions to ensure the implementation of the law had not been allocated by the end of the year.”

This commentary alerts the reader to the fact that the law is in favour of keeping the family together and as such may at times fail to adequately protect the victims. Also even though tighter timeframes may ensure prompter responses that are of extreme significance when dealing with such cases, the law is criticised about its failure to tightly determine these. A law reform, though a significant step in the right direction, cannot on its own guarantee any sort of compliance or shifting of longstanding child rearing practices. This forever-shifting phenomenon of appropriate or tolerable chastisement is based on culturally acceptable practices for the children's socialisation that vary over time and will require a significantly longer period to be modified and for the legal amendment to be translated into a change of societal attitudes. In addition, it is extremely important to disseminate the changes to the public and support parents by providing them with alternative suitable ways of disciplining their children. The cultural context is an important aspect that has been taken into consideration in all the phases of this study, i.e. the definition and prevalence of the phenomenon as well as the provided services

and future trends. In line with the aforementioned concerns, a campaign supported by the Child's Ombudsman has begun in Greece that includes an array of organisations.

Agathonos-Georgopoulou and Tsangari, in 1999, studied 743 students aged 18-20 and revealed that 17% of the girls and 7% of the boys were victims of sexual abuse in their childhood. In one out of three cases the perpetrator was a member of the family and in one out of three cases the perpetrator was a familiar face (i.e. family friend, etc.). Furthermore, Nitsopoulos in 1991 reported 11 sexual abuse cases (4 boys and 7 girls) in a sample of 100 families living in Kavala (a town in the north of Greece) who had one member with a learning disability.

The Greek Helsinki Monitor (GHM) in a press release dated 19th November 2001 expressed concern over the problem of child sexual abuse in Greece. They argued that "the fear that pressing charges against such acts is likely to result in the victim's public abuse" is the main reason for abuse remaining unreported. As an example of this they quoted two cases of sexual abuse concerning 13-year-old girls in Athens and the in Drama. The media, which publicly covered both cases by interviewing the juvenile victims and/or mentioning the names of the victims' parents or the high-school principal accused of indecent assault along with his school, resulted in indirectly revealing the identities of the victims. Furthermore, they criticised the composition of the court of Drama, which publicly tried the 13-year-old female defendant without a special juvenile court judge present. On a different note, given the international days against child abuse (19/11) and for the rights of the child (20/11), GHM highlighted the recently published findings of the not-for-profit organisation "The Child's Smile" and of criminologist Angelos Tsigris, which demonstrate that the percentage of sexual abuse charges is really low. "The reasons for this are that the interrogating authorities (prosecutor and police) often try to dissuade the victim from pressing charges and/or that there is a fear that the minor victim will suffer public abuse, which makes him/her vulnerable to the threats of victimisers. The media play a crucial role in public abuse,

"... using sensationalising tactics that do not respect their obligation to protect the minor victim, and by irresponsibly making cases and even interviews with the victims public. The superimposition of an electronic "mosaic" over the victim's face or the use of initials instead of a name is inadequate, if not hypocritical, when the context makes it easy to identify the victim."

The GHM concluded by pressing the Prosecutor of the Court of Cassation (PCC) and the National Radio and Television Council (ESR) to publicise the actions they have taken to avoid analogous problems and to penalise those who have already played a role in the abuse of the two minors in the public eye. (<http://www.greekhelsinki.gr>)³²

A Greek study by Petridou et al in 2002 examined Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) as a significant socio-cultural and public health problem. The researchers used the EDISS database (Emergency Department Injury Surveillance System) to collect data on socio-demographic variables together with event and injury characteristics, from 1996–98. Among the 27,319 women (19 years or older) who were injured, 312 (1.1%) were classified as IPV-related compared with 26,466 cases of women with accidental injuries. Out of 35,174 men with injuries, 39 (0.1%) were described as being IPV-related, compared with 34,049 men with accidental injuries. The results showed that IPV is more often found in rural than in urban parts of Greece. Women appeared more regularly as IPV victims but men can also be IPV victims; with younger women and older men appearing more vulnerable. IPV incidents appeared to intensify during the late evening and night hours. Multiple injuries in the face, someone with an injury showing up alone at Accidents and Emergencies or other combinations of predictive characteristics were considered indicative of IPV incidents. IPV cases are not unusual in Greece, even though society is more traditional and given the trend of under-reporting. These findings have implications for the prevalence of child maltreatment as international research has linked domestic violence with child abuse and neglect. For example, studies reviewed by Hughes et al (1989) have found that child abuse and domestic violence occur together in 40-60% of cases. Similarly, Caetano and partners in 2003, state the children that witness domestic violence incidents have greater probability than those who do not experience such episodes in their homes to develop aggressive behaviour or psychopathology. Similar adverse effects were also recorded by Holt and partners in 2008. This type of study is probably one of the most accurate attempts to realise the magnitude of the phenomenon in Greece.

Another significant study overseen by Artinopoulou and Farsedakis (2003) explored IPV incidents in Greece. The research team interviewed 1,200 women respondents, aged 18-60,

³² Accessed 19/11/03.

living in urban, semi-urban and rural areas. The main results indicate that 56% experienced verbal and/or psychological violence, 3.6% physical and 3.5% sexual violence, but only 8.8% characterised their partner as violent. Additionally, 23.6% of women stated that they knew a woman –friend or relative- that had suffered or was still suffering from IPV. Finally, another important finding extremely relevant to this thesis is that 49.2% reported that the children never witnessed violent incidents, whilst 28.4% were sometimes or frequently present, and 22.2% were rarely present. In terms of their children’s reactions, 32.1% of the participants declared that the children tried to calm the perpetrator down. These findings are alarming in that they clearly indicate a high degree of societal tolerance when only a small percentage of the victims characterises the perpetrators as violent. Furthermore, as above, links between IPV and abuse make these findings alarming for the children growing up in these households.

In addition, Costa and colleagues (2013) reported on a study on IPV that included eight different European countries (Greece was one of them). The research used the same tool, a fact that caused different challenges but also assisted in obtaining comparable results. However, the specific article mainly reports on method and demographic of the sample.

Moreover, the Institute of Child Health (2013) reported the findings of the Balkan Epidemiological Study on Child Abuse and Neglect, more specifically Incidence and Prevalence rates, types and determinants of CAN (on national and Balkan level) in children 11, 13 and 16 years old. The results were as follows: “Exposure rates for psychological violence were found to range between 64.58% (FYROM) and 83.16% (Greece) for prevalence and 59.62% (Serbia) and 70.02% (Greece) for incidence rates respectfully. For physical violence figures were found to exhibit greater variance for prevalence, ranging from 50.66% (FYROM) to 76.37% (Greece), and smaller for incidence rates, ranging from 42.4% (FYROM) to 51.01% (Bosnia) for incidence rates. Regarding exposure to sexual violence figures were found to vary substantially with higher rates of prevalence in Bosnia both for overall (18.68%) and contact (9,75%) sexual adverse experiences and lower in FYROM for overall (7.60%) and Romania (3,56%) for contact such experiences. For incidence respective rates the lowest figures were found in Romania for overall (4.99%) and contact (2.09%) sexual adverse childhood experiences and higher in Bosnia for both as well (13.62% and 7.65% respectfully). Self-reported subjective feelings of neglect showed higher rates of prevalence and incidence in Turkey (42.62% and 37.55%) and lower in

Romania (22.59% and 16.66%). Experiences of positive nonviolent parental practices in general were found to be reported by the vast majority of responding children in all participant countries with percentages exceeding 90% of the sample with higher rates in Greece for both prevalence and incidence (98.18% and 96.21%) and lower in FYROM (83.87% and 83.02%)” (p. 37). This study is extremely significant as it provides a clearer picture of the magnitude of the phenomenon in Greece and neighbouring countries.

Finally two research projects were recently published (Hatzinikolaou, 2015 and Hatzinikolaou and partners, 2016). The first one described a literature review that took place in six European countries (Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain, and the UK) and revealed that there were no protocols or guidelines to screen families at risk for infant and toddler abuse. The second found that the Parent–Infant Relationship Global Assessment Scale (PIR-GAS) can be applied in all countries involved in the particular study in order to aid identification of maltreatment.

3.32 Out of Home Care

Foster care was established in Greece in 1992, Law 2082/92 and it is viewed by the legislator as the way to promote the deinstitutionalisation of children and institutions are charged with the obligation to gradually place children in foster families (Presidential Decree 337/93, Article 14, and Paragraph 1), (Robokou-Karagianni, 2007). However, in relation to foster care the following conditions prevail which cause concern for the children’s welfare. There are limited resources, if there is a need for alternative accommodation to be provided for the child or the mother and child together. There are very limited foster placements and there are specific criteria for entering a residential unit. Foster parents have no official on-going support (no link workers) and the money given is more like a supplement towards the costs of looking after a child. Kakkouros (1996) attempted to research the characteristics and problems of foster care in Greece and amongst his conclusions were the following: Greek foster care does not meet the necessary standards in order to provide quality care. The majority of placements are long-term or indefinite and without forward planning. And finally, the biological parents are excluded from the whole process and this makes fostering a substitute of the biological family and not a form of support. However, it is important to note that foster children were not included in this

piece of research. Nonetheless, these findings are alarming in that vulnerable children are being placed with no quality of placement guaranteed, indefinitely, with little prospects of keeping any bonds with their biological families. As a result, there are very few, if any, chances of rehabilitation. Such practices cannot be seen as acting in the best interest of the child and clearly fail to adhere to the principles of the Convention for the Rights of the Child. Additionally, the Ombudsman's report (2005) reinforces this picture by stating that "The institution of foster care appears to be particularly weak; although it is provided for by legislation, in practice no system has been put in place ..." (p.46).

In so far as residential care is concerned, residential units are organised so that 30-160 children may reside in each unit (10-30 per room), and they are operated under a block treatment system. The majority of staff is untrained for the job and although there is low staff turnover, they are assigned to a group of children on a shift basis. Contact with the parents varies according to the unit and children could remain there until early adulthood (Vorra et al, 1998). There exist 13 such institutions known as Child-Care Centres financed by the National Budget; they host 600 children aged 6 to 18. In addition, 48 institutions run by the Church or various private bodies exist nation-wide and offer hospitality to 1,500 children. According to the government, various institutions host 2,360 children, 600 children stay with foster families, and 600 children (average number) are adopted every year (data submitted to the CRC in 2001). To echo other academics and participants of the current study, a radical shift to organised foster care would be a cost effective and long overdue reallocation, and it would immediately better the life chances of the children in question. The Ombudsman's report (2005) also expresses similar concerns "The public child protection institutions are lacking in expert technical staff and there are no specialised facilities to house children and particularly adolescents who need multiple support. In many cases, the children housed are numerous, which reinforces an institutional image, whereas emphasis should be placed on creating small units in the form of homes." (p.46). Similarly Stathopoulos in 2015 characterised children's living conditions in institutions "inadequate", specifically listing issues in relation to buildings, equipment, and specialised staff members. Furthermore, he suggested the principal reason for this as limited funding that has further declined post crisis. Finally, children with special needs, or children of asylum seekers or ethnic minorities, are usually accepted with difficulty. The abovementioned difficulties in finding alternative accommodation often lead to the child remaining in the abusing family longer, and when a decision is made, more often than not it entails a total

uprooting of the child from his or her local community and everything familiar, thus rendering it much more traumatic. In addition, such research raises grave concerns regarding the suitability of available out-of-home care for such vulnerable children in conjunction with the ability of the existing system to actually protect them, as the possibility of further abuse during an out-of-home placement poses quite a real threat, thus proving yet again the incompatibility of current practices with the prevailing philosophy behind the CRC movement.

In 2014 the Ombudsman reported in the press that he estimated that approximately 3,000 children resided in residential units around the country. He explained that about 800 of them are in public institutions whilst the number of those in homes ran by the church and other NGOs is not known as such data is not available. This is very worrying as vulnerable children entrusted to the State are in a sense unaccounted for. In addition, Berens and Nelson (2015) argue that deinstitutionalisation is a necessity together with swift responses when children are faced with deprivation.

Evidence presented at a recent conference in Athens (2010) by Asimopoulos suggested that there are residential units that have a very unacceptable children staff ratio, 60 children looked after by 13 mainly unqualified workers on a 24-hour rota. These numbers were presented to partly explain the reasons why these children were left in bed physically restrained for hours. In addition, the academic shared his research findings that included two particularly disturbing cases. One of a teenage girl in a Reform Unit in Athens, who was arrested on an island during summer as she was sexually exploited by an older adult and was found during an inspection in November still dressed in her bathing suit as the unit's wardrobe facilities were kept locked. The second example described a residential unit where children suffering from disorders of the autistic spectrum and children with other special needs are looked after. Again the children to staff ration given was extremely worrying, 1 nurse for 20 children, and as a result some children were left in what the speaker described as 'wooden cages'. A child recently died in this particular institution after having eaten part of his mattress.³³

In order to ameliorate such unacceptable situations academics have argued both for better pay and wider advertising of fostering in an attempt to recruit more carers. There have also been suggestions for smaller units for children, which would accommodate a maximum of 10-

³³ This information was included in an oral presentation given by Dr Asimopoulos, at a conference organised by SOS Children's villages titled "Children in danger" that the researcher attended in Athens in November 2010.

12 children at any one time (Kandylaki, 2002). There is an evident gap in Greece between research and policy, which is not an exclusive phenomenon in the country in question but appears to be quite magnified in comparison to England. Therefore, it might be more accurate to describe it as a “wall” between, thus slimming any chances of communication, rather than a gap or time lag.

Overall, regarding out of home care the CRC in 2012 recognised some efforts but raised concerns regarding the widespread use of institutions coupled with the low rates of foster care. Furthermore, it highlighted ‘the lack of data’ and ‘systematic monitoring’; lack of placement reviews and children spending long periods of time in care; and staff shortages combined with inadequate resources that are likely to deteriorate due to the current crisis. Finally, the Committee expressed the concern that given the crisis more children may be removed from their families as a result of financial hardship (Points 42 and 43). These alarming apprehensions also arise from this thesis and the Greek Ombudsman’s reports.

On a positive note the Ombudsman recently (2015) published a special report on the rights of children residing in residential care. The researcher hopes that this development will trigger serious discussions on an appropriate level which may lead to the amelioration of the circumstances for children in care in Greece.

3.33 Other Services and Related Information

In Greece there are four specialised police units for minors in Athens, Thessalonica, Patra, and Herakleio (Crete). If an allegation is received in any other part of the country it will be dealt with by regular police officers with no relevant training and occasionally limited sensitivity. This is yet another proof of poor and fragmented service provision lacking the necessary expertise. It indicates great inconsistency and can certainly further traumatise a child or a young person in need of protection.

Social workers might come across cases of child abuse whilst working in any welfare service (hospitals, welfare offices, etc.) as there are very few specialised teams and therefore cases are dealt with by generic teams. Kandylaki published an article in the Greek Social Work Journal in 2002 that discussed the needs, emotions, and difficulties facing social workers when they deal with cases of sexual abuse. The article contains the following list which emerged from a workshop held in 1998. Professionals felt angry at the perpetrator, fear of possible revenge by

the perpetrator. Anger was also expressed towards the system that often “ties their hands”. They also felt defenceless due to lack of experience and up-to-date information, not knowing what to do when they come across a sexually abused child or how to deal with the case. Practitioners described experiencing despair, which meant they often preferred not to have heard of the case to begin with or wished they had encountered a different case instead. Professionals experienced intense dilemmas as to what needed to be done, wondering whether the child or the perpetrator should be removed and whether the child should be placed in a home or remain in the family. In addition, the article highlights the lack of supervision for frontline social workers that exacerbates the issues mentioned above. It is argued by academics that work supervision should be regular and provided by an outside organisation, especially in the case of child protection work, so as not to be connected to other administrative or managerial tasks involved in line-management. Furthermore, the benefits of supervision are twofold. It provides a clear line of accountability and it provides a safe space to deal with the practitioner’s heightened emotions aroused by the intensity of this type of work. Lack of professional supervision is really alarming in relation to lines of accountability and support for frontline workers. It also allows unlimited discretion, which is of concern.

In dealing with cases of child abuse, if a social worker decided that a child should be removed from his/ her family, he/ she would have to apply to the Public Prosecutor for Minors. The ultimate decision would lie with the Court and the child would be removed only if there was sufficient evidence that the child was at risk. The social worker would then file a report and in most cases would not be required to be present or to give evidence during the proceedings. This is another great difference in comparison to England, where social workers have to be available to give evidence when applying for a court order. In addition, the child has no legal representation in its own right, as the role of the Child’s Guardian does not exist in Greece.

Concerns about the lack of operational definitions of types of abuse to be used for both research and practice are evident in the literature, as has already been suggested in the first chapter of this study. The situation is echoed in Greece. Agathonos-Georgopoulou in 1997 suggests the use of a definition by Garbarino and Gilliam (1980) as presented in the first chapter of this thesis. Once again it can only be described as grey or muddy waters when judgements about a child’s life are made on such ambivalent terms. A blend of community and professional values used to decide whether an act of a parent is inappropriate and damaging.

However, child abuse is a phenomenon that is so value-laden that a demand for clarity may be elusive.

In 1997, a study by Agathonos-Georgopoulou and Browne in Greece reported findings that showed that secondary prediction of child maltreatment is possible. They used a list of items that may be used to predict risk. The article, however, concludes that the implementation of a national screening programme, even if methodological and monitoring difficulties were overcome, may face cultural and ideological drawbacks related to the role of the State and its interventions into the private lives of citizens. In addition, it was argued that there is a need to carefully promote the idea of a “caring” state policy that would identify families in need of support at an early stage rather than potential abusers. Greek professionals appear to be leaning towards support rather than protection, a choice that is probably made in view of the chaotic, institutionalised and under-resourced out-of-home care sector.

A 2001 study by Trogan and colleagues focused on young children with femoral fractures in order to estimate the amount of undiagnosed child abuse in Greece. The Emergency Department Injury Surveillance System database recognised fifty-seven children younger than six years old with femoral fractures. 4162 children with other orthopaedic injuries were located on the aforementioned database and used as controls. One third of femoral injuries among young children are recognised as child abuse in the relevant literature. However, not even one child studied had been identified in this context even though injuries were compatible with child abuse. Many were very young boys of low socio-economic status, and the conditions were unclear or unbelievable. Additionally, the incidents had mostly occurred at times when most family members were at home. From this and other studies it appears that child abuse is present in this country as in most other cultures. There is a clear need for refocusing medical personnel and hospital social services so that the problem is revealed, quantified, and appropriately dealt with.

Researching the issue of child abuse from a different focus Chatzifotiou and colleagues published a summary of their findings in the Greek Journal Social Work in 2002 (Vol. 72: 211-224). The aim of their study was for social work practitioners involved in child protection to identify and evaluate their interventions and practice. In addition, they attempted to gauge the professionals’ opinions regarding the legal framework, the service provision and any particular difficulties they encountered, as well as to encourage front line workers to make suggestions that would increase effectiveness. In order to achieve this, they administered a questionnaire to

social workers working at various governmental and not-for-profit welfare services likely to be involved in cases of child abuse and neglect that were located in Athens and Herakleio, Greece. Sixty-five social workers completed their questionnaire. Out of those professionals 54.6% rated the general performance of their service as satisfactory. 58% believed that the phenomenon of child abuse and neglect could be prevented by a multi-level intervention. The levels mentioned were individual, group, community, society and the state. Regarding the future prevalence of the phenomenon, 60% of the professionals were of the opinion that it would increase a lot, whilst 30.7% believed it would increase slightly. When highlighting their concerns and suggestions, social workers spoke of the need for a clear legal framework, more supportive and specialised services, increased public awareness, more specialised professionals, and increased inter-agency and multi-disciplinary cooperation. With 90.7% of the participants believing that child abuse is on the rise, this is yet another cry for greater organisation and coordination by frontline staff as well as a clear justification for this study.

Another vulnerable group of children are those who are working. There is no officially documented number of working children under 15 years of age. In Greece employing children less than 15 years of age is prohibited, unless they are employed in artistic activities or family agricultural undertakings. The statistical data provided by the Ministry of Public Order show that the vast majority of minor beggars in our country are children aged 7-12 years, out of which 95% who come from Albania; the other 5% are the children of Greek gypsies. In 1998, 280 cases of beggary whose perpetrators were 410 minors were revealed by the police authorities throughout Greece (There are no detailed data on the problem of beggary for this year). In 1999, 233 cases of beggary whose perpetrators were 399 minors were revealed by the police authorities throughout Greece, of whom 38 were Greeks and 361 foreign citizens, 329 males and 70 females, 196 aged 7-12 and 203 aged 13-17. In 2000, 192 cases of beggary whose perpetrators were 352 minors were revealed by the police authorities throughout Greece, of whom 40 were Greeks and 312 foreign citizens, 265 males and 87 females, 258 aged of 7-12 and 94 aged 13-17. The exact number of street children to whom the Minister of Health and Social Solidarity provides protection and social care is not known. There are two schemes for children begging in the streets. The children are sheltered, fed, clothed and psychologically supported.

Greek Police estimated the number of children working at traffic lights in the mid-1990s to be about 3,500 (Greek Parliament, 1997). A later estimate by UNICEF suggested that the number of children living and working on Greek streets was about 5,800 (UNICEF, 2000). Fifty-one children were arrested at traffic lights in Athens and placed in a special institution, Agia Varvara (i.e. Saint Barbara), between the 10th of December 1998 and the 31st of December 2000. In 1999, more than 348 children aged 7-18 were presented for trial (arraigned) for begging at the Athens Juvenile Court (Juvenile Court of Athens, 2000).

In 2002, Altanis and Goddard reported the findings of an extensive study of Greek street children that was conducted between October 1999 and September 2000. The definition used to identify their sample was children who live, work, beg or loiter for long period of times on the streets of urban centres. This study used qualitative methodology including direct observation, individual and focus groups interviews and reported the following findings. The majority of the children observed were boys (75%), whilst 65% were under twelve years of age and 6% were under five. Out of the children who worked or begged within the smaller further contact group, 69% said they were employed by their parents, and 16% said that their relatives were their employers. The remaining children claimed to either be employed by a “foreign person” or be self-employed, or they gave no response. 95% of the contacted children did not attend school. When asked about risks, almost half of the children reported being exposed to physical abuse (47%), which included abuse on the street and also abuse by employers for money or quota deficiencies determined by employers as well as violence as a result of muggings or struggles over lucrative positions. 60% of the children who were contacted further were Greek citizens whilst the rest were illegal economic and political refugees. These groups were subdivided further and out of the 36 Greek citizens, 20 were Greek Gypsy Christians, 5 were Greek Gypsy Muslims, and the remaining 11 were Greek without any additional characteristics recorded. Out of the 24 refugees, there were 12 Albanian, 3 Iraqi, 3 Serbian, 2 Pakistani and 4 other. There appeared to be cultural differences, as refugees from Iraq did not permit their children to work or beg, refugees from Albania were more likely to force their children to work or beg, and refugees from the rest of the Balkans tended to work or beg with their children.

All the children mentioned above are particularly vulnerable to all forms of abuse and are already being exploited. Working for adults under extremely difficult circumstances instead of being given an education or training at such a young age is abusive enough to begin with without taking into consideration any incidents of neglect or other forms of ill treatment.

Law 2920/2001 sets out the creation of a Body of Inspectors of Health and Welfare Services (SEYYP) accountable to the Minister of Health and Social Solidarity whose mission is to undertake regular inspections, checks and research with the aim of improving productivity and effectiveness of health and welfare services, a qualitative upgrade of the services provided, the tackling of mismanagement, and the protection of the health and income of citizens from the misuse of service provision. However, the majority of reports documenting results and recommendations arising from inspections are considered confidential and are not available to the general public. Here is yet another difference between the English inspection system and its Greek counterpart. It is the researcher's opinion that these should be made available as they are written in relation to services that are there to serve the citizens of the country. Despite the aforementioned concerns, these inspectors could provide some form of monitoring on behalf of the State. However, when the Welfare part of the Ministry of Health and Welfare was transferred to the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance the inspectors' remit changed and no longer includes welfare organisations. This means that no body currently performs any hands on monitoring of welfare services provided.

In addition, academics in Greece have started arguing for the rights of service users as individuals, citizens, and consumers (Papaioannou, 2001), including the rights to choice, information, standards of service, and for involvement in decision-making. Unlike England, in Greece there are very few established complaint procedures, and even when they exist they are certainly not advertised. It would seem that public services are not accountable to the citizens they are meant to serve in any way. For children the only available avenue is the Ombudsman who has a special section on children's rights.³⁴ This was undoubtedly a positive change for the implementation of children's rights in Greece. However, it is important to consider that vulnerable children are unlikely to have a voice strong enough to reach his ears.

Furthermore, from the researcher's observations during the life of this project, there are still plenty of services that are not computerised and professionals who are nowhere near IT literate. The existing culture does not promote data collection in any way or form, not even for evaluative purposes. The Child Health Institute is one of the few organisations that have produced a number of research reports, the majority of which were based on specific projects or interventions that they have been involved in. Taking into account the activities of the Child

³⁴ Law 3094/2003 awarded the responsibility to promote and protect children's rights to the Greek Ombudsman as an independent authority.

Health Institute in the field and the new bill to establish the “legal bystander” for the child victim, the Committee responded to the 2001 report submitted by Greece under the CRC, voicing concern about the absence of national data on the incidence of the phenomenon, indications that physical, emotional, and sexual abuse are prevalent within the family as well as within institutional care, and the fact that social, medical and other service resources available in response to abuse and neglect are mainly in Athens and that even these are insufficient. The recommendations were to improve data collection on all types of abuse, to develop and implement a national programme for the prevention and reduction of the incidence of the phenomenon within the family and within institutions, to develop and implement a system for reporting and referring such cases and taking suitable measures for the protection of child victims, the provision of rehabilitative assistance and the prosecution and treatment of alleged the perpetrators, to strengthen the capacity of social services across the country in order for them to be able to identify and respond to such instances, including physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of the victims of all types of abuse in accordance with article 39 of the Convention, and finally, to take measures to prevent the criminalisation and stigmatisation of victims, promote the use of child-sensitive methods of investigation, the presentation of court evidence and the availability of expert multidisciplinary child assistance teams, and to ensure that the law provides sufficient protection for all children (p. 12).

Finally, existing literature appears to address specific issues, particular aspects of the problem in Greece. As a result, although it can be established without a doubt that the phenomenon exists, research has mainly relied on small clinical samples, leaving question marks as to their validity and reliability. In addition, the underreporting that is linked to the phenomenon paired with limited public awareness and lack of specialisation further impact the possibility of gaining an accurate and complete picture. There is no central agency in charge, to collect data, undertake research or organise policy responses.³⁵ Consequently, the figure produced in the second chapter depicting what a Child protection system should look like would not be applicable to the current situation in Greece. According to the Ombudsman’s report in 2005,

“... there is no national level agency for child abuse providing support and guidance to the professionals working in decentralised units, or collecting and processing research data, aimed at developing a national policy to deal with the problem.” (p. 46).

³⁵ A concerned shared by the CRC 2002, 2012.

The Greek system that would deal with an allegation would look something like the following diagram.

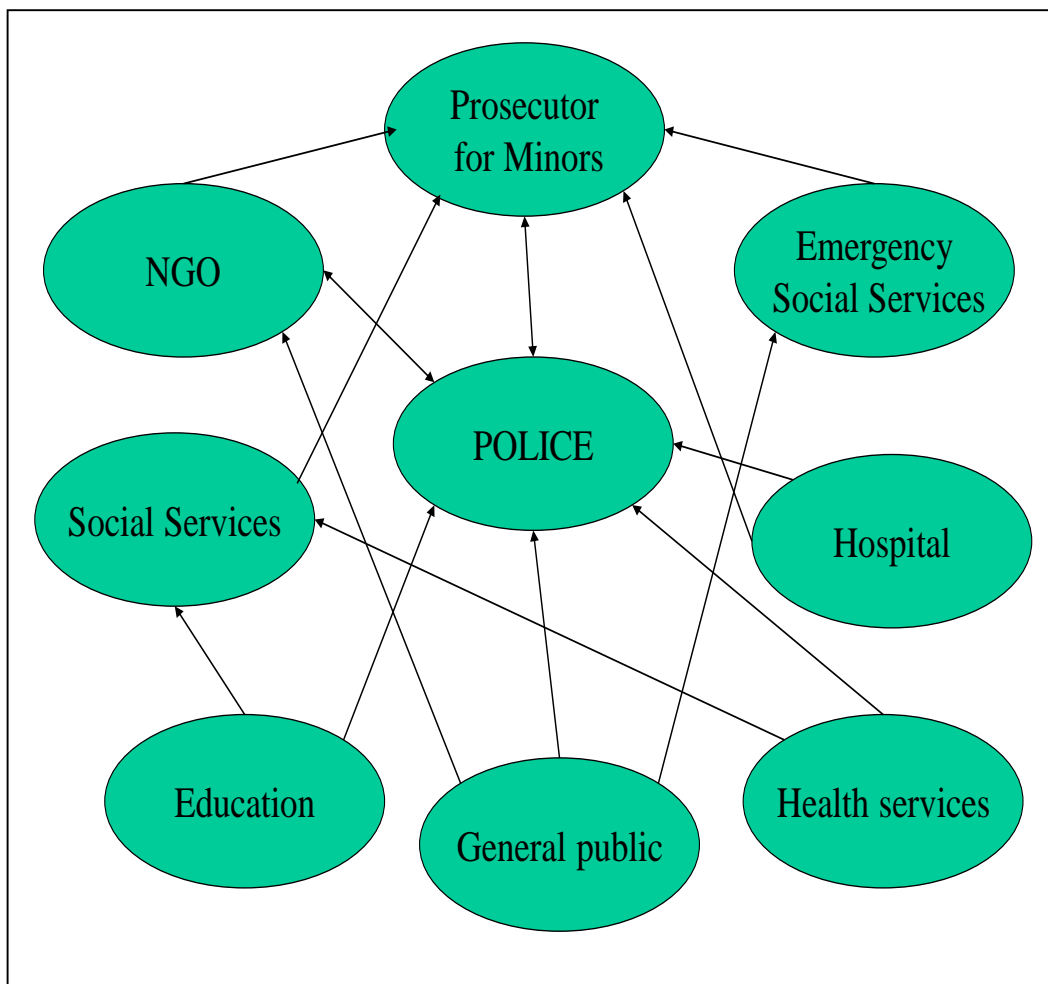


Figure 4 A map of services likely to deal with child protection cases in Greece

Different services that could come into contact with a child that is a victim of abuse and or neglect would be working in isolation and the majority of cases would go through the police and on to the Prosecutor, should further action be required.

To my knowledge, there has not been an attempt so far to address either the phenomenon or service responses as a whole, a gap this case study intends to fill along with a more in-depth exploration of inter-agency and inter-professional cooperation at the micro level in so far as

there is no coordination at the macro and meso levels.³⁶ Thus, although international mandates do exist and conventions have been ratified by Greece, the pressure exercised to achieve conformity is minimal to non-existent. There is, however, a legal framework in the country aiming to protect children and punish abusive parents or guardians and any attempt to understand the current situation needs to include this dimension.

3.4 The Legal Framework

“Legislation exhibits the dominant social attitudes towards childhood, as well as the dominant ideology justifying these attitudes” (EuroSocial, Vol. 36/12: 22).

As a category, childhood is central to the law; law intervenes increasingly to define, regulate, and legitimise children’s relationships with adults and with existing social institutions. The fundamental characteristic of the legal conceptualisation of the adult- child relationship is that of subordination and dominance (Boli-Bennett and Meyer, 1978: 798). The Children’s Rights Convention is here to amend this imbalance in that it clearly addresses children as subjects with their own rights rather than as objects of protection, thus discouraging sanctification or demonization. However, the relative dependence of children on their parents and/or carers remains an irreversible fact.

The Greek Constitution provides the broad principles under which childhood is understood. Exact clauses in the Civil Code and Family Law contain both a detailed account of the child’s status and lines of probable action and a definition of the likely type of actions, or reactions, that institutions will take vis-à-vis a child.

In the Greek Constitution, article 4, paragraph 1, all Greeks are equal in the eyes of the law, and in paragraph 2, all Greek men and women have equal rights and responsibilities. In article 21, paragraph 1, the family, as the foundation for the maintenance and improvement of the Nation, together with marriage, motherhood and childhood, are under the protection of the state. In article 116, paragraph 2, taking positive measures to promote equality between men and women does not constitute discrimination. The state provides for the elimination of inequalities that exist, especially those against women.

³⁶ This is also a concern of the CRC (2012) that reports “the lack of a clear structure or body for the coordination of the implementation of the Convention both at the national level and among the central, regional and municipal levels. It also notes with concern that the National Observatory for the Rights of Children, established in 2001 to design and monitor policy measures for the protection of children’s rights, is still not fully operational and its coordinating role is not properly defined”.

The basic principles by which childhood is formulated as a legal category are linked to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) as follows:

- All children are equal in the face of the law.
- All children, because of their vulnerability, need special care and protection, to be met primarily by the family.
- All children are under the state's protection.
- The primary concern of the state and of institutions dealing with children is the child's best interest.
- The family, as the essence of the nation's survival and development, is under the protection of the State together with marriage, motherhood, and childhood.

Age is not considered as a potentially discriminating feature and thus does not impede the right to full and free personality development or the right to participate in the social sphere. This way, children are awarded the same rights as others and a frame for the equality of children and adults is established. However, children's rights are to be recognised as valid claims only if adults are willing to become the official channel; certain rights actually take the form of compulsion (i.e. compulsory education), leaving children with no other alternative, while others are equated with privileges and phrased in such a way as to reinforce children's vulnerability. Overall, the realisation of children's rights depends entirely on the intermediary role of adults (Franklin, 1986; Freeman, 1983:6-66). In addition, since childhood is under the protection of the state, it is important to note that it exists as a social body independently of the family, consequently questioning the de facto placement of children in the family milieu. Finally, age is the factor that determines or even guarantees the possession or deficiency of certain abilities (Jenks, 1982), thus clearly evidencing the impact of psychobiological developmental theory on legal ideology.

Legislation in general significantly affects parenthood, divorce, marriage, and parent-child rights and obligations. In Greece, however, the abovementioned themes have been the subject of long-term disputes between political parties, the Church, the women's movement, and other legal institutions. The new Family Law was enacted in 1986 and it has a progressive nature in that it advocates for the equality of both parents in the family, removes the stigma attached to out-of-marriage births, equally acknowledges civil and religious marriages, and affords women the right to terminate a pregnancy by medical means (Stasinopoulou, 1989).

Greek family law relies upon and strengthens the close relationship between childhood and the family, using the term family to encompass any type of cohabitation. It furthermore identifies the parents as the people mainly responsible for the child's upbringing in that the family is the social setting that best meets children's needs and best protects their rights and interests. This responsibility is expressed by the term "parental care", which replaced what was called the "father's authority". The legal meaning of the former signifies both a parental duty and a parental right (Civil Code, Article 1510) and it is associated with child custody, child representation and child property including both parents rather than recognising the father as head of the family (Koumantos, 1985: 141).

The child has the right to parental care immediately after birth and for children born outside marriage parental care is routinely assigned to the mother. Decisions made by the court in relation to the assignment of parental care are guided by the best interest of the child, and the child's opinion is sought depending on their age and understanding, although, unlike England, the child is not entitled to any legal representation whatsoever.

Where a child's safety and well-being are at risk of significant harm due to inadequate or poor parental care (i.e. incidents of abuse or neglect), the law intervenes by affording the court the right to remove parental care and custody and to entrust them to the other parent, a third party, or an institution. Depending on the severity of the abuse or neglect, the parents or guardians may face three months to five years imprisonment providing a heavier violation of the law has not occurred simultaneously (i.e. infanticide, rape, etc.) (Penal Code, Article 312). However, the cases of child abuse and neglect that come to the attention of the court are only the tip of the iceberg, whilst the bulk of the phenomenon escapes unnoticed, as is the case in quite a few other countries.

Reporting an incident of abuse or neglect is the duty of every citizen, according to article 40 of the Penal Code. However, failure to report such an incident is not a punishable offence. The Prosecutor is obliged to present the case to the court if either no other relative decides to do so or there are no other relatives. From 1983 to 1990, 32 such cases were recorded, which included 21 cases of neglect by parents who misused drugs, alcohol, exhibited anti-social behaviour, or were prostituting, as well as 4 cases of physical and sexual abuse (EuroSocial Report, 1992, vol. 36/12).

If criminal intent is established and a parent has received a custodial sentence of at least a year, the court is obliged to make an irrevocable decision to remove parental care of the subject child but is open to consider removing parental care of any siblings (Civil Code, Article 1537).

Under civil law, acts of violence committed by the parents against children incur either forfeiture of the right of parental custody (article 1537 of the Civil Code) or deprivation of the exercise of that right (articles 1532-1533 of the Civil Code). Forfeiture takes place *ipso jure* if the parent has received an irrevocable sentence for a crime against the life, health or morals of the children, while a court decision is a prerequisite for deprivation of exercise of the right of parental custody.

Parents may use corrective measures to discipline a child provided they are pedagogically necessary and do not violate the child's dignity (Article 1518, Law 1329/83). This could in theory include physical chastisement. However, criminal law contains numerous provisions aimed at the protection of minors against any form of violence inside and outside the family, attack or physical or mental assault, abandonment, neglect, maltreatment or exploitation, etc. Under article 312 of the Criminal Code, if there is no question of a graver offence, any person who: (a) by continuous cruel behaviour causes injury or damages the health of a person who is under the age of 17 or one who is unable to defend him/herself and under the custody or protection of the perpetrator, or belongs to the perpetrator's household or has entered into a relationship of work or service with the perpetrator or has been left in the perpetrator's authority by the person responsible for the minor's custody; or (b) by malicious neglect of his/her obligations towards the above-mentioned person(s), is to blame for his/her suffering or injuries, or damages to his/her health, that person shall be sentenced to imprisonment of at least three months.

At least one year's imprisonment shall be imposed on ascendants by marriage or adoptive parents, guardians or trustees, carers of any kind, teachers, tutors or priests who commit acts of indecency against minors who are under their protection. The same punishment shall also be imposed on servants or roommates if they commit acts of indecency against minors who belong to the same household (Article 342 of the Criminal Code).

Further, article 345 of the Criminal Code provides for the punishment of the offence of incest between blood relatives in the ascending and descending line by imprisonment of up to ten years for the ascendant and up to two years for the descendants, while article 346 provides for imprisonment of up to one year for any other act of indecency between the relatives

mentioned in article 345. Incest between siblings is punished with imprisonment of up to two years. If the relatives in the descending line have not reached the age of 17, they are not liable to be punished.

If an ascendant or any other person to whom the minor has been entrusted for upbringing or even for temporary care incites the minor to corruption, debauchery, prostitution, etc., he is liable to imprisonment for between nine months and three years as well as a fine. The upper limit of the sentence is increased by five years if the perpetrator committed the crime of procurement of the minor (articles 349 and 351 of the Criminal Code).

Article 360 of the Criminal Code makes any person who, having the supervision of a minor, neglects his/her duty and fails to prevent the minor from committing a criminal act liable to imprisonment for up to one year. The sentence is increased to imprisonment for up to two years if the person culpable of the omission also had custody of the minor's person.

Any person who incites a minor to begging or fails to prevent the minor from begging or vagrancy is liable to imprisonment for up to six months or a fine, if the minor is in his/her custody or has a relation of dependence upon him/her (article 409 of the Criminal Code). Relevant to this provision is the provision of article 358 of the Criminal Code, which although not concerning only minors, provides for the imprisonment for up to one year of any person who maliciously violates an obligation to support a minor ordered even provisionally by the court. The penalty provided for in this case is imprisonment for up to one year. Article 10, paragraph 1, of the new law on adoption and guardianship provides that any person who, having adopted a minor, employs him/her in work which is immoral or dangerous to his/her physical or mental health shall be punished by imprisonment of at least two years and by a fine of up to one million drachmas (approximately 3,000 pounds), unless there is a question of a more serious offence having been committed.

3.5 Nongovernmental Organisations (NGOs)

NGOs in Greece have been mostly related to the Church and apart from international NGOs like UNICEF and Doctors without Borders are isolated and respond mostly to local needs. An NGO involved in looking after children in different localities around Greece are the SOS Children's Villages. This NGO operated 4 such villages around the country. In recent years

the organisation expended to provide two half-way houses for teenagers, three shelters for babies and children who require protection and services that operate in support of the family with the aim of reunification post removal.

However, recently a Greek NGO called the Child's Smile appears to be playing a primary part in child protection in Greece.

3.51 Main Greek NGO Involved in Child Protection

Originally launched in 1997, the Child's Smile (*to hamogelo tou pediou* in Greek) is the main Greek NGO involved in child protection (www.hamogelo.gr). The main aim as stated on their website is to support public institutions in becoming more effective in dealing with children and to promote children's rights. It is licensed by the Institute of Social Policy and Solidarity (IKPA in Greek, www.ikpa.gr), an organisation under the Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity (www.mohaw.gr), and as such is subject to inspections. However, the two reports compiled by the inspectors (for 2004 and 2006) that are available on the web do not name the Child's Smile as one of the organisations inspected. In addition, the Ombudsman states in his report in 2005 that "... the system of certification, supervision and funding for private (non-profit) child protection centres and foundations is inadequate" (p. 46), a comment that can only magnify concerns. The board that runs this charity includes various celebrity figures such as actors, singers and businessmen perceptibly aiming to raise its profile and encourage public donations.

This organisation operates a 24-hour child abuse hotline (1056) that recently went national. The hotline is a 40-line phone bank open for children and adults to get support or make allegations of child abuse and/or neglect. It allows those reporting to remain anonymous whilst making it possible to launch an official investigation as a result of their phone calls. The charity reports that calls tend to increase dramatically (from roughly 100 to 400 per day) whenever cases are projected in the media. It is a not-for-profit body that has also used public donations to set up ten children's homes around Greece where children are looked after. On the organisation's website it is stated that the aim is for a shelter for children to be made available in every local authority. The Child's Smile also works with the police and other international organisations to locate missing children and runaways (www.lostchild.gr). In

addition, it provides a service for street children, children living in poverty, and hospitalised children, using volunteers as well as paid staff. This is admittedly a huge task for one NGO, thus raising concerns as to whether this overambitious agenda with its overstretched resources impacts the quality of services provided. To that end, it is hard to get a sense of the agency's capacities as there is no public record available of the number of professionals employed or the amount of volunteers involved in their various projects. In addition, there is no indication of the training provided to volunteers or the monitoring they are subjected to (i.e. police checks, etc.). Given the fact that their work is focused on vulnerable children and families, it would be extremely worrying if no such precautions and screening mechanisms were in place as there is the apparent danger of attracting the wrong kind of people.

Overall, it is evidently positive that such an organisation has been established in a service area that requires specialist attention, an area about which little is available through the statutory avenue, as has already been shown. This NGO is bridging a big gap as the Societies for the Protection of Children that were attached to courts around the country and that used to deal with abused and/or neglected children have been given a different briefing by the Ministry of Justice and are now concentrating on anti-social behaviour and delinquency. In addition, the National Centre for Emergency Social Help (initially EKAKB in Greek), which became the National Centre of Social Solidarity (EKKA), an organisation under the auspices of the Ministry created to deal with all kinds of emergencies, including child protection, has had many problems regarding staffing and resources ever since it became operational. EKKA also offers supportive services to families. This particular umbrella organisation has a huge remit as it deals with every social emergency including but not limited to homelessness, addictions, street children, the elderly, trafficking, domestic violence as well as abuse and neglect. If, therefore, someone in Greece suspects abuse, they can contact the police, the National Centre for Social Solidarity or the Child's Smile. Because the police lack the specialised units and relevant training necessary to deal with such cases sensitively, therefore the only avenue left, given the aforementioned problems faced by the National Centre, is the Child's Smile, which is also quite well advertised through quite regular, televised marathons to collect money, which are similar to the Children in Need appeal in England but which are exclusively for the aforementioned organisation and happen more than once a year.

On the NGO's website there is a survey asking people to choose which organisation they would notify should they have concerns about a child, listing the Child's Smile, EKKA, the

police or other. This is definitely a biased attempt to monitor public opinion as the respondents are already viewing the Child's Smile website and are therefore familiar with the services provided and thus highly likely to choose the NGO as their point of contact. In the researcher's opinion, this survey is just another way for them to 'blow their own trumpet'; unless of course it indicates instead that the NGO has set up a system in competition with the official one and is competing for customers and praise, which would be a very dangerous picture. Most importantly, regardless of repeated efforts over the telephone and via email to approach a representative of this organisation for this study, it has been impossible. It is surprising that an NGO with such a highly public profile was unwilling to take part in this research. There are many probable explanations for their behaviour, but concern about exposure to professional scrutiny is certainly one that sounds plausible and is therefore most alarming.

There are no policies and procedures available on the Child's Smile website and no clarity about why decisions were made to provide these type of services apart from a very sentimental narrative related to the founder's child who had passed away and left a request in a diary that an organisation be created to help children and give them back their smile. It is not clear how this initial vision related to sick children was then reshaped to include child protection, a helpline for children and adults and so many other services. Furthermore, it is uncertain how these services were designed and are run, or under whose specialist knowledge and expertise. In its public profile, the organisation seems to represent itself as a children's saviour, which is fairly disquieting in itself as it raises concerns about whether they would tend to display an overzealous approach and opt to protect/rescue the children rather than explore the possibility of supporting the family as a whole.

In addition, there is no financial information present on the website apart from the needs of the different services translated into requests for money and goods along with the corporate donors' logos. Greater transparency is therefore necessary, particularly as the majority of funds derive from the Greek public and international experience has taught that even philanthropists require some degree of monitoring. It is unclear whether the government offers any financial support.

As already mentioned above, the researcher contacted the aforementioned organisation on numerous occasions in order to obtain first-hand information on policies and procedures, but

to no avail.³⁷ Therefore, the information that follows is based on data available on the organisation's website accessed in February and March 2008 and coincides with data collection for the rest of the thesis. This is the reason why more recent findings are not made available.

3.51.1 Helpline: The helpline deals with abused and/or neglected children, children victims of economic exploitation, trafficking, missing children, children facing family or social problems, as well as parents having difficulties with their children. Again, we are dealing with an extremely broad target group that would require a high level of expertise, a lot of resources and significant organisation to be served appropriately. The phone line aims to provide support and protection to children as well as to promote their rights. Both named and anonymous referrals and/or allegations are accepted twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

The data available refers to 2005, 2006 and 2007.

-2005

This year the line received 556,314 phone calls out of which 26,391 were regarding specific issues related to children that the NGO had to deal with.

Reason for call	No. of calls	Percentage
Health matters	6,114	23.16%
Families with social or financial difficulties	3,619	13.72%
Children in danger (including abuse, neglect, missing and street children)	4,531	17.16%
Counselling parents or children	3,811	14.45%
Information and directions on matters concerning children	4,671	17.69%
Issues or requests for children to be looked after	3,64	13.82%

³⁷ Recently the researcher met the founder at a conference and he promised full access, but this did not fit with the timescales of this study.

	5	
TOTAL	26,3	100%
	91	

Figure 5 Main reasons for calling the phone line in 2005

-2006

Reason for call	No. of calls	Percentage
Health matters	4,130	15%
Families with social or financial difficulties	3,783	14%
Children in danger (including abuse, neglect, missing and street children)	5,680	21%
Counselling parents or children	4,692	17%
Information and directions on matters concerning children	6,057	22%
Issues or requests for children to be looked after	2,609	11%
TOTAL	26,95	100%
	1	

Figure 6 Main reasons for calling the phone line in 2006

-2007

Reason for call	No. of calls	Percentage
Health matters	2,711	11%
Families with social or financial difficulties	2,071	9%

Children in danger (including abuse, neglect, missing and street children)	7,399	31%
Counselling parents or children	2,594	11%
Information and directions on matters concerning children	8,765	36%
Issues or requests for children to be looked after	452	2%
TOTAL	23,99	100%
	2	

Figure 7 Main reasons for calling the phone line in 2007

From the three previous tables, one can see an obvious increase in telephone calls received by the helpline from children in the danger category, which includes abused and/or neglected children. This number could partly be explained by the fact that as the years go by the organisation is becoming more widely known to the public and therefore more enquiries are directed towards them. In other words, it might not reflect an overall increase in the phenomenon. Still, it would have been extremely interesting to be able to compare numbers from other organisations involved in similar work; however, such figures are not available.

Another interesting observation is the significant drop in the number of calls received for looked after children observed in the last year. Unfortunately, it is impossible to know what factors contributed to this change so any attempt to explain it would be inadequate. Nonetheless, the opposite trend would have been more likely in that one would expect more people to call with requests for child care as the agency becomes better known to the public.

3.51.2 Children in danger:

-2005

According to information available on the web, during the year 2005 the Child's Smile received 242 serious allegations regarding child abuse and/or neglect. However, it is not clear how "serious" is defined and exactly in what sense it is being used in this instance, or whether there were other "not serious" allegations that have not been accounted for. Out of these 242, the

majority (149) were anonymous whilst 93 came from a named referrer. It appears that preserving anonymity is important for the majority of referrers. It would be useful to have a break down detailing who these people were and their relationship to the children and families in question so that one might know what percentage of these allegations was generated from relatives and what from professionals or neighbours.

The total allegations received in that year is divided into the following categories: 74 concerning physical abuse, 137 concerning neglect, 14 for obliging a child to beg, 6 for sexual abuse, and 11 related to prostitution. Neglect is clearly the highest category. It could also be argued that it is the one that is most exposed to the public eye and therefore the easiest one to detect, a fact that could explain why it would be recognised as the category with the highest prevalence in Greece. These allegations concerned a total of 351 children (197 boys and 154 girls). 154 of them were between 0-6 years of age, 134 were between 7-12 years and 63 were between 13-18 years. A slight difference between the sexes is observed, which could be verified by international research. The same applies to the indication that younger children are more likely to be the victims of abuse and neglect. A 1993 study by Capelleri and colleagues on the prevalence of abuse in the USA examined the impact of different variables amongst which were the gender and age of victims at the time of disclosure, and not when the abuse began, a factor which may favour older children as they may be more willing and able to make an allegation in comparison to younger ones. Having clarified this, the study showed that the oldest age groups disclosed higher rates of both physical and sexual abuse in comparison with the 0-2 year olds and that girls were more likely to suffer sexual abuse than boys but that no noticeable differences existed between the sexes in relation to physical abuse. In the case of Greece, Mouzakis (1993) is cited in a book by Chatzifotiou (2005) as estimating that 1,200 children in Greece become the victims of sexual abuse per year. In addition, in 1999 the Institute of Child Health showed that in a sample of 423 Greek police officers, 8% of the men had suffered sexual abuse before reaching the age of 18. Another research by the same body showed that 15% of boys and 11% of girls had been sexually harassed or abused during childhood. In 1987 they estimate that exclusively in Greater Athens, i.e. the Prefecture of Athens, more than 4,000 children were abused per year, out of which more than 100 died and

more than 100 were severely disabled as a result. This figure was increased to 4,500 children in 1993, within six years.³⁸

In the majority of reported cases the perpetrator was the mother, N=122 or 35%, followed closely by cases where both parents were identified as perpetrators, N=103 or 29%. The father was the perpetrator in 81 cases (23%), whilst another person was the perpetrator in the remaining 45 cases (13%). The differences between abuse perpetrated by the mother and that perpetrated by both parents are not significant enough to take into consideration. It is, however, interesting that fathers feature third on the list.

Finally, all allegations were forwarded to the Prosecutor for Minors, which has to imply that they were all substantiated, at least to a level that would justify applications for Court orders.
-2006

It is reported on the web that in the year 2006 the aforementioned NGO received 520 allegations of serious child abuse and/or neglect cases. Out of these 520, 493 were anonymous whilst only 27 originated from a named referrer. This signifies a more than two-fold increase in comparison with the previous year. Again, it would be extremely useful to be able to ascertain the reasons behind this. Was there an increase in the overall prevalence or an increase in reporting, or just an increase in the popularity of this particular body, or all of the above? The preference for anonymity is likewise undisputable.

A total of 1,017 children (468 boys, 422 girls, and 127 children whose sex was not specified) were involved in these cases. It is of concern that allegations are received and the sex of the children involved is not specified. This alone justifies concerns voiced by the researcher at the beginning of this subsection regarding organisation and professionalism of the services provided. The categories under which these allegations are divided are: 301 children concerning physical abuse, 607 children concerning neglect, 37 children obliged to beg, 36 children concerning sexual abuse, 4 related to prostitution, and 1 child who was emotionally abused. As before, neglect is by far the most used category but this year many cases seem to fall under physical abuse, too. Emotional abuse, however, which is an internationally renowned category for its inherent difficulty to be detected or substantiated via allegations, is worryingly low.

³⁸These findings are reported by Chatzifotiou, 2005:106-107.

The children's ages were reported as follows: 339 children aged 0-6, 358 children aged 7-12, 193 aged 13-18, and 127 of unknown age. As noted in relation to the previous year's figures, the difference between the sexes is not very significant, but it remains apparent that children between 0-12 are more vulnerable than older ones.

Out of the 520 allegations made, 187 (36%) identified both parents as perpetrators, 184 (36%) named the mother, 101 (19%) the father, and the remaining 48 (9%) someone else.

For this year, there is no mentioning of the amount of allegations forwarded to the Prosecutor, an omission that further diminishes the value of the data available as there is no indication of what happened next or how many of these were actually investigated, or substantiated. It is a fact that an anonymous system could potentially encourage malicious allegations.

-2007

That year the organisation received a total of 669 allegations of serious abuse and/or neglect. Out of these 669, 94% were anonymous, whilst only 6% were eponymous. The increase is again noticeable but not as distinct as the rise in allegations noted between the first and second years. These involved 1,380 children out of which 583 (42%) were boys, 553 (40%) were girls and 244 (18%) were children whose sex was unknown. This year the number of children whose sex is not known is much higher. One could question whether the dramatic amplification of the agency's caseload could be primarily responsible for what would be characterised as unprofessional practice. It would also be interesting to know the fluctuations in the number of employees and volunteers in this three-year period. In terms of age groups, 449 (32%) were aged 0-6, 415 (30%) were 7-12, 272 were 13-18 and 244 (18%) did not have their age recorded. Although the proportions are similar to that of the previous two years, more information appears to be missing.

When dividing children into categories according to the type of maltreatment they were subjected to, the picture is as follows: 494 (36%) under physical abuse, 728 (53%) under neglect, 44 (3%) obliged to beg, 32 (2%) under sexual abuse, 16 (1%) related to prostitution and 66 (5%) under emotional abuse. In terms of the children's relationship with the abuser, both parents were identified in 234 cases (35%), the mother in 232 (35%) cases, the father in 143 (21%) cases, and another person in 60 (9%) cases. All remarks made about numbers in relation to the

previous years would apply here, too. Interestingly, mothers rank significantly higher than fathers each year.

Despite the researcher's reservations, one should note that as Greece does not have many statistics readily available regarding such issues, the Child's Smile website does prove a welcome exception. It is hoped that they are leading the way and that others will follow soon.

Once again the data suggest an increase in the number of allegations received over the past three years (2005-2007). The majority of referrals received were anonymous, which could indicate reluctance in being identified as the referrer in such difficult cases. It would have been interesting to have more information regarding the referrers, for example, whether they were members of the public, neighbours, friends of the family, professionals, or even children, but this is not available. The number of boys involved in reported cases seems to be slightly greater than that of girls; however, this variation does not appear to be statistically significant. In relation to age groups, it appears that the most common age groups are 0-6 and 7-12 years, which would to a degree confirm the notion that the younger the child, the greater the risk of abuse. Neglect seems to be the category with the greatest number of cases across the three years, followed by physical abuse. The categories of sexual abuse and children involved in prostitution could be merged into one. In addition, it is interesting to note that the emotional abuse category introduced in 2006 for one case went on to include 66 cases in 2007. Could this mean that such cases had been included in other categories before or that the creation of a separate category aided their recognition? Finally, in terms of the information provided in relation to the perpetrators of abuse and/or neglect, it appears consistent with the wider picture that in the majority of such cases the perpetrator is a parent, carer or somebody close to the family rather than a stranger. It is also interesting to point out that mothers feature very high on these lists, which serves well to remind us that either or both parents can be responsible for such phenomena.

Once again, these figures are followed by the remark that all allegations were forwarded to the Prosecutor for Minors. It is, however, intriguing that some of the children's data (e.g. age and sex) is missing in both 2006 and 2007, especially given the fact that these cases must have been investigated and substantiated prior to any involvement of the prosecution service. Could these omissions simply be attributed to the recording systems or could they in any way raise concerns regarding the handling of these cases?

It is obvious that some form of dialogue with the organisation would have assisted the researcher in shedding more light on the available data but, as has been mentioned at the beginning of this section, attempts in that direction were not fruitful.

3.51.3 Intervention in the field: This heading is an exact translation of the category quoted on the organisational website. This grouping is not self-explanatory as it is not clear where or how it fits with the data already reported. It has however been included in this study due to the overall lack of available statistics. The researcher has reserved all comments for the end of this section in order to allow the reader to form a personal impression, uninterrupted.

-2005

During this year the Child's Smile "intervened in the field" in 60 cases involving 90 children (47 boys and 43 girls). Out of those 90, 42 were aged 0-6, 28 were aged 7-12 and 20 were aged 13-18.

Following a social investigation, it was found that 32 children required immediate removal from the family home, 49 were in need of supportive and/or counselling services and 9 were not located. Out of the 32 children that were removed, 23 were looked after in the homes run by the NGO, whilst 9 were referred on to other units.

Regarding the reasons why an intervention was necessary, the following was reported: 8 due to abuse, 11 due to family problems, 49 due to neglect or abandonment, 16 due to begging, and 6 due to running away.

-2006

In 2006, the organisation dealt with 82 cases that required intervention involving 128 children (73 boys and 55 girls). Out of those 128, 57 (45%) were aged 0-6, 43 (34%) were aged 7-12 and 28 (21%) were aged 13-18.

Following a social investigation, it was concluded that 39 (31%) required immediate removal from their family home and 46 (36%) required support and /or counselling services. Out of the 39 children that were removed, 17 were looked after in homes run by the NGO, whilst 22 were referred on to other organisations.

The children were categorized according to the reasons why an intervention was required as follows: 22 (17%) due to abuse, 29 (23%) due to family problems, 52 (41%) due to neglect or abandonment, 16 (12%) due to begging and 9 (7%) runaways.

For this year another graph is also available presenting the origin of the referrals as follows: 36.5% came from the police, 14.5% from the prosecution service, 7% from social services, 32% from members of the public, and 10% from children.

-2007

The organisation dealt with 72 cases that required intervention in the field, which involved a total of 113 children (48 boys and 65 girls). Out of those 113, 42 (37%) were 0-6 years old, 46 (41%) were 7-12 years old, 23 (20%) were 13-18 years old and 2 (2%) were 18 years old and over.

Following a social investigation, 30 (27%) children were found to be in need of removal from the family home, whilst 51 (45%) required other specialised services. Out of the 30 children who were removed, 14 were looked after in homes run by the NGO and 16 were referred to other organisations.

In relation to the reasons behind the interventions, the following is reported: 17 children due to abuse, 15 children due to family problems, 52 due to neglect or abandonment, 16 due to begging, and 13 runaways.

In terms of referrals, 28% of the cases were referred by the Police, 5% were referred by prosecution services, 5% by schools, 54% by members of the public, and 8% by children.

It is difficult to clarify whether the cases presented under the intervention heading were also counted under the children in danger heading and/or the helpline heading or not. Children requiring an intervention and possible removal from their family home would logically be classified as children in danger but the website does not clarify this. It is therefore uncertain whether these cases should be added to the previously reported totals or whether they have already been included. What is also indistinguishable is what type of service the rest of the children in danger received if it was not an on-the-spot intervention and social investigation. The only other plausible explanation would be that these cases are different, in that they were not referred via the telephone helpline. Whatever the reality is, it would, once again, have been helpful to have gained access to additional clarifications.

Again, more children seem to be coming to the attention of the Child's Smile, although there is an insignificant decline in 2007. It is also important to flag up that governmental, statutory services make referrals to and accept referrals from the NGO. This would indicate that some types of partnership working do exist and that the NGO is recognised, accepted and

used by other services in the field. Statutory services such as the police legitimise the NGO by working with it. This is gravely concerning, especially coupled with the fact that no official guidelines are produced by the state on how to deal with such cases, or to set up children's homes, or to promote fostering, thus emphasising a less than wholehearted approach to protecting children. Therefore, the state could be described as absent, or unwilling to assume a stance. Is Greece inadvertently allowing a charity to set its welfare policy by default?

3.51.4 Children's homes: Before describing the children's homes run by the Child's Smile, it is extremely important to note that, in my opinion, it is not acceptable that a developing NGO would invest in creating a number of children's homes before exploring the possibility of more family-oriented foster placements for these needy children. This is especially problematic when one considers the available research evidence suggesting that residential units are not the optimum place for children's welfare and development (Kelly, 2000; Vorria et al, 1998; 2003). A study completed in Greece (Giagazoglou et al, 2012) suggested that residential units would benefit the children they look after more, if they became more supportive. In 2015 Lionetti and colleagues reviewed existing studies and suggested that evidence so far may point out to disturbed attachments formed in children residing in residential units but called for further research.

All children looked after in the homes are there following orders issued by the prosecution service, and, according to the website, the parental rights and responsibilities for many of these children have been assigned to the NGO. The choice of the home where each child will reside is made on the basis of their age, although exceptions are made for siblings so as not to separate them. There are no rules in terms of the length of a child's stay. This is decided based upon individual circumstances and there is no clarity as to whether it is reviewed at regular intervals. The homes are run by a coordinator and they employ a social worker and residential workers, a cook, employees in charge of cleaning, as well as volunteers. Employees are subjected to annual health checks and are required to submit a copy of their criminal record at the time of appointment, which is never rechecked or updated throughout their employment. The website provides exact addresses and pictures of the homes, another potential oversight as these are the homes of some very vulnerable children and advertising them in such a way could attract unwanted attention.

Their respective capacities of the homes are as follows:

Home 1: 15 children, aged 0-6, both sexes

Home 2: 20 children, aged 6-12, both sexes

Home 3: 22 children, aged 12-18, both sexes

Home 4: 40 children, aged 0-18, both sexes

Home 5: 25 children, aged 6-18, both sexes

Home 6: 20 children, aged 12-18, both sexes

Home 7: 25 children, aged 0-12, both sexes.

In the opinion of the researcher, these homes are too big to be able to provide a service in response to the complex needs and issues these children are facing. The age range they accommodate is also too wide. Having stated that, on the website the homes are reported as being “small”, so it seems that size is a matter open to interpretation. The researcher would however insist that one home accommodating 25 to 40 children does not constitute a small facility, especially when taking into consideration the multiple issues faced by these children. It is also reported that, “the prototype for the running of the homes is the family and the rule is to avoid institutionalisation” (phrase translated from the website). In addition, five out of the seven are scattered around the greater Athens area, leaving only two outside the capital. This obviously has many implications as children might end up being moved across the country, thus preventing them from keeping any ties with the place they were living in and the schools they were attending before. Furthermore, I would imagine this would impact on parents or relatives’ visiting rights and sever any family ties, thus making rehabilitation much harder.

The use of children’s homes could also further suggest that the NGO subscribes to the child rescue approach to welfare, which means removing children to protect them, thus attempting to substitute families rather than offer support in order to preserve them as the optimum environment for a child’s upbringing. This could be characterised as a very fragmented response to complex issues with the added risk of ignoring, or even abusing, the rights of parents.

-2005

During the year 2005, Child’s Smile received 139 requests to look after children or deal with issues concerning children already looked after, out of which 121 came from services and 18 came from members of the public. The total of requests concerned 257 children (119 boys and 72 girls). Out of these children, 57 were 0-6 years old, 86 were 7-12 years old, and 48 were 13-18 years old.

Out of the total number of children referred, 60 were referred to the NGO in the year 2005, whilst 131 had already been looked after from previous years. In addition, 43 children were moved from the homes either to return to their family or because they were referred on to other organisations due to their particular circumstances.

The reasons these children became looked after were: 19 due to physical abuse, 2 due to sexual abuse, 105 due to neglect or abandonment, 49 social reasons, 16 other.

-2006

During this year, 140 requests were received to look after children or deal with issues concerning children already looked after, out of which 126 originated from services and 14 from members of the public. This was a total of 225 children (127 boys and 98 girls). Out of these children, 71 were 0-6 years old, 101 were 7-12 years old and 53 were 13-18 years old.

In 2006, 47 children began being looked after by the NGO, whilst 178 had already been looked after from previous years. Furthermore, 46 children left the homes either because they were being rehabilitated with their families or because they were re-referred to other organisations due to the particularity of their issues.

The reasons these children became looked after are as follows: 26 due to physical abuse, 3 due to sexual abuse, 109 due to neglect or abandonment, 65 due to social reasons and 22 other.

-2007

Two more homes were added to the existing ones this year:

Home 8: 20 children, aged 0-12, both sexes, and

Home 9: 10 children, day-care centre.

The requests related to looked after children received in 2007 were 162, with 153 originating from various services and 9 from members of the public. These requests involved 220 children (128 boys and 92 girls). Out of these 220, 61 were 0-6 years old, 104 were 7-12 years old, 49 were 13-18 years old, and 6 were 18 and over.

During this year, 48 children were referred in order to be looked after and 172 were already looked after from previous years. At the same time, 29 children left to return home or were re-referred to other organisations due to individual issues.

The reasons the children were being looked after are as follows: 22 due to physical abuse, 1 due to sexual abuse, 107 due to neglect or abandonment, 72 due to social reasons, and 18 other.

Finally, it is important to mention the huge numbers of children in care due to neglect/ abandonment in contrast to the tiny numbers of those that were sexually abused. It is highly likely that concerns about the underreporting of such cases present in the international literature might justify this picture. Another significant observation is that the picture of looked after children somewhat mirrors the picture set out earlier on in relation to allegations received by the helpline. In addition, it would be interesting to have some information regarding the percentages of children being rehabilitated each year as well as the practices around contact issues.

3.51.5 Networking: The Child's Smile works with many national and international organisations. It has established many links, especially for dealing with cases of missing children, with organisations such as the Childline, the International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children, the European Federation for Missing and Sexually Exploited Children, etc.

In addition, together with the regional government of Western Greece, the Child's Smile held a meeting to establish a local forum for the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect in that region in December 2007. The aim of this initiative was to bring local services together in order to promote children's rights regardless of their individual background and to offer assistance to children in need or at risk of abuse or neglect. A search of the websites of both the regional authority (www.westerngreece.gr) and the Child's Smile revealed that there is no indication as to what if anything, has happened following the initial meeting. It is understandable that such initiatives require plenty of groundwork to take off; however, it would have been useful to make some minutes or future plans/targets available following that initial meeting.

This is a welcome initiative but it is not the first such initiative in Greece, as it is advertised on the Internet invitation. This thesis presents other similar, longstanding initiatives in different areas of the country. Moreover, it is interesting how the Child's Smile and other organisations have been invited to take part in these initiatives but have not responded, a clear contradiction of their claim to be promoting partnerships. In one of the networks studied, there was a representative to begin with, but when that specific employee moved on to another job no representative replaced her. This also raises questions as to whether they are mainly willing to promote any work they do in order to attract funds or raise their profile rather than use existing opportunities where their role would be more that of an equal partner rather than

that of the driver, founder or initiator. Finally, the question mentioned earlier on about rivalry springs back to mind, is it that ours is better than theirs no matter the cost?

3.6 Interview Findings

Overall, the interviews conducted in this initial phase successfully highlighted most of the issues raised in the relevant literature whilst illuminating the grassroots reality through the eyes of practitioners and other significant actors in the field. This material is available to the reader in the Appendices and can be treated as corroborating evidence rather than solid proof, given that it is in line with the rest of the material gathered from most of the other sources.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter introduced Greece's child protection "unsystematic" system within the wider frame of its welfare reality as reported in the relevant literature and by professionals working within it. As Venieris (2003:133) explains,

“Social policy reflects the legacy of a heavily politicized and centralized policy-making system, an impoverished administrative infrastructure and poorly developed social services. Its emergence is characterized by the pursuit of late and ineffective policies. It lacks continuity, planning and coordination, being oriented towards short-term political expediency. It is largely insurance-based, reproducing huge inequalities and institutional arrangements which are behind the times. It provides mainly cash benefits, low-quality but rather expensive health services and marginal social welfare protection.”

And

“By implication, complex policy and interlocking interest linkages have tarnished the “system” with a reputation for strong resistance to progressive change. At the same time, sources of change such as globalization, demographic developments, new household and family/gender patterns, unstable economic growth, fiscal imperatives, programme maturation, as well as persisting unemployment, changing labour markets and rising health care costs, have produced mounting pressures for welfare reform.”

The country's service response has been characterised as insufficient by researchers both within and outside the country as well as by official circles. The Committee for the Rights of Children has made suggestions regarding best practice issues for service provision for children in general as well as in response to the phenomenon of child abuse and neglect. This study has revealed that many years after the Convention (1989) and following the country's submissions to the CRC in 2001 and 2011, the situation hasn't changed noticeably. Any observable shifts in the course of time would most appropriately be characterised as being extremely sporadic.

A blatantly visible deficiency at the meso level is the total lack of any guidelines for interagency collaboration and inter-professional working that is such an integral part of any developed child protection system. Working together has been shown, from as early as chapter one of this study, to be of extreme importance, on the one hand, when investigating allegations of child abuse and/or neglect, and on the other hand, when formulating a care plan consisting of various interventions aimed at dealing with the multi-factorial nature of this complex phenomenon. In other words, although international mandates do exist and have occasionally become part of the country's legal framework, or, in other words, circumstances are ripe at the macro level, they do not seem to readily translate into much observable action. The Greek State could be characterised as the great absentee – it is not there to regulate, collect data, plan, provide and oversee services, and/or rigorously review/inspect those provided by other bodies. This lack of state ownership clearly visible to the naked eye is the most alarming finding of this chapter, and it can overshadow any positive attempts and pockets of good practice that may exist in the frontline and also discourage all those involved from achieving healthier results in the near future without any radical shifts across all the levels of Benson's network policy. As Agathonos noted in 2004, Greece relied on the strengths of the family to protect its vulnerable members for too long and prioritised the economic survival of the country over service provision for the vulnerable. Lack of resources coupled with the overarching belief that the child "belongs" to the parents thus any interventions would violate the sanctity of the family brought about a long delay in providing for children on a social policy level. The child remained "unseen" as a subject and citizen and existed only as a member of its family. Furthermore, she argues that many initiatives were linked to EU funding and were not sustained long term (p. 157-8).

On a similar note the Institute of Child Health in 2010 published a memo it submitted to the Special Permanent Parliamentary Committee for Equality, Youth and Human Rights that expresses analogous concerns as follows: inadequate training of professional and defensive stance in verifying cases; no universal criteria to assess, diagnose and verify cases; no monitoring systems; and even though the new law on domestic violence is acknowledged as a positive development structural deficiencies are also highlighted, such as lack of data, no central registration system, no clear mandatory reporting, lack of coordination, no common framework to categorise and assess CP cases, no evaluations of interventions, children harmed during the

publication of cases. The aforementioned concerns were voiced after the conclusion of the fieldwork of this thesis and are also important in that they confirm the findings³⁹.

The same year the Institute of Child Health also published a report on the current situation of child abuse and neglect in Greece that echoes the findings of this thesis. This report raises the following concerns: (1) difficulties in estimating the scale of the phenomenon in Greece due to lack of data from epidemiological studies and methodically collected data from services, (2) an inadequate legal framework and restricted enforcement of the existing provisions, and (3) the absence of a structured Child Protection System in Greece, that more often than not prioritises harm reduction and tertiary prevention rather than emphasising primary or secondary prevention. (2010: 3)

In addition, Moschos (the Ombudsman for Children) reported in 2014 that “child protection requires investment of funds, development of partnerships, modernisation, systematic supervision and support, in order to fulfil its mission”.⁴⁰

Overall, this picture provides the reasoning to justify the researcher’s choice to focus on the micro level where by word of mouth some professional movement in a cooperative direction was detected and is brought to light in the two following chapters. The researcher additionally welcomed such a spotlight as an opportunity to identify initiatives, that somewhat counteract the overall bleak picture painted so far. However, it is important to note that there is a positive side to the developments described above in that more voices have recently joined those of the participants of this study demanding change.

The next chapter looks at the specific questions posed by this study and explains the methods used to answer them. It presents details on design, completion and analysis of the fieldwork undertaken as part of this thesis.

³⁹This memo was published in the Newsletter of the Institute, July-August 2010, Issue 1, available on line http://www.ich-mhsw.gr/sites/all/themes/ich_mhsw/img/pdfs/BECAN_Newsletter_Issue1.pdf

⁴⁰ No page numbers available.

Chapter 4

Methodology and Research Design

“Not everything that can be counted counts and not everything that counts can be counted.”—Albert Einstein⁴¹

Having sketched the main features of the Greek child protection system as shaped by mandates, influences and efforts across all three levels of network policy -macro, meso and micro- in the previous chapter, this chapter explains which methods were chosen and the development of research questions structured enough to guide the researcher but also open enough to allow for on-site transformations and additions. Such flexibility and responsiveness to all voices in the field is undoubtedly one of the greatest assets of qualitative research. The key method was a case study approach, defined by Yin

‘as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used’ (1984: 23).

This study investigates the country’s version of a child protection system with a focus on countable data and uncountable information that affect partnership working across all levels. As a result, although the main focus remains on the frontline, it also examines wider issues regarding policy implementation and service provision that are intertwined.

This chapter is the backbone of the whole study in that it outlines the route of the journey from conception to completion and presents the research questions that led to the choice of tools and methods used to analyse the material collected, which will be made accessible to the reader in the following chapters. As such, it is structured and presented in a way that mirrors the exact phases the current study went through.

4.1 Methods

The reason for choosing a case study approach was because, as Creswell (1998) suggests in line with Yin (1985) presented in the beginning of this chapter, a case study is an exploration of a case (or multiple cases) bonded by time and place. Before taking a closer look at the features of this particular study, it is important to state that this study involves three different cases. First,

⁴¹ This quote has been attributed to Einstein and is believed to have been found written on a sign on his wall.

the whole child protection system in Greece is explored and then two separate informal networks that operate within it. Additionally, it is a multi-site study, as data was collected from different organisational settings based in dissimilar geographical regions. The context of the case was set by exploring the prevalent social, political, historical and cultural issues (Merriam, 1998), a process that began in the previous chapter of this thesis but which will continue in the subsequent one. In addition, this case study is intrinsic due to the uniqueness of Greece and collective as more than one case was studied (Stake, 1995).

There are no arithmetic rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry as this depends on the purpose of the inquiry, what is useful, what will have credibility, and resources and opportunities available (Patton, 1990). The strategy used in sampling was “convenience sampling” due to the need for an economic and convenient process (Coyne, 1997). According to Gaskell, 2000, the total number of interviews for a single researcher is somewhere between 15-25 individual interviews unless the research is phased, which is not the case for this study. In addition, a useful cut-off point is when “...the researcher realises that no new surprises or insights are forthcoming” (Gaskell, 2000: 43), known as the point of saturation. This study counts a total of twenty-nine interviews; thirteen in the first instance and sixteen in the second, without taking into consideration the wealth of information gained during the non-participant observations of network meetings recorded over a two-year period.

When qualitative data collection is undertaken, ethical dilemmas manifest themselves in different ways. Some of the most common dilemmas are related to the following situations: the problem of influencing the interviewees’ answers, the potential conflict between the interviewer’s professional background and the interviewer as a researcher, the temptation to intervene, the possibility that self-disclosure might lead to the need for further intervention, and also the anonymity of the research site. The researcher as a social work practitioner has had ample practice interviewing different people at various settings. She has also practiced extensive note taking during interviews. Influencing the interviewees’ answers was avoided not only as a result of the researcher’s prior experience, but also as a result of her attitude that pluralism is wealth. This is observable in the findings as a range different and at times even conflicting views has been recorded. The researcher faced the temptation to intervene during observations but was able to control this. In this respect, the fact that she had no prior involvement in the network as a practitioner was significant. Moreover, the researcher’s social work background

did not impact responses as is evident in the findings. These professionals have been able to voice negative comments related to social workers' ability to collaborate. Finally, extra care has been taken to preserve anonymity by omitting information that could identify the interviewees.

4.11 First Phase

Multiple sources of data were used to build a picture of the child protection system. The researcher carried out a literature review on the subject in Greece in the last decade using snowballing techniques and conducting library and internet searches⁴² in conjunction with a detailed examination of public documents including the relevant law and policy documents. The starting point of the fieldwork was to revisit all related governmental websites, the Greek Gazette (where any new laws are first published), as well as the Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity. The main reason for this was that during the second year of this project there was a change in government in Greece from labour to conservative, an occasion that was expected to impact social policy and service provision. Information regarding the current situation in Greece was also collected through existing statistics kept by the police, the Ministry of Internal Affairs (i.e. Home Office), the Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity (i.e. Department of Health), the three hospitals for children in the capital and the Institute of Child Health. The researcher also visited the library of the Panteion University (Social Sciences) and the library of the National Centre for Social Research (EKKA) in order to gain access to any relevant literature available. Greece is a small country and therefore publications are not as frequent as in other countries. Moreover, the only social work journal is not available electronically, so one can only perform manual searches of backdated copies held at the offices of the Hellenic Association of Social Workers (SKLE). Official sites are also fairly poor, and appear to be updated irregularly.

As soon as the picture was complete, the next step was to move on to interviewing practitioners in different settings involving abused and/or neglected children and their families. The interviews during the first phase were unstructured as defined by Robson, "where the

⁴² Two leading journals in the field, Child Abuse and Neglect and Child Abuse Review were searched electronically for material on Greece using relevant key words. ProQuest was also searched for articles containing the terms "child abuse or neglect and Greece" and "child protection and Greece".

interviewer has a general area of interest and concern, but lets the conversation develop within this area” (Robson, 1993: 231).

It was envisaged that the initial interviews would have covered all three tiers of service provision, including local, regional, and central services for this client group. This was partly achieved and any services not represented in the first phase were unable or unwilling to respond to the researcher’s invitation to participate, such examples are the Child’s Smile and the Society for the Protection of Minors (EPA), etc. The professionals dictated the initial sequence in that they indicated services they worked closely with and accepted referrals from or referred to more often. The reason behind this was to map the informal network of provision as no fixed directives or guidelines for inter-agency and multi-disciplinary working appeared to exist. However, both statutory and voluntary services were included regardless of whether they were presented as linked or not in order to provide a more detailed and realistic picture. In addition, to facilitate a more complete and wider picture of the Greek reality and transcend an array of hierarchical levels and subsystems, the researcher included organisations strongly related to policy, practice and research in the field. The researcher chose this path of action in order to be able to concentrate on the trees, the key players in focus, without losing sight of the forest, the playing field within which these networks of professionals operate. An additional reason was that service provision in Greece is still highly centralised and greatly generic, thus there are no key players that would operate exclusively within the child protection arena but rather services that would take on such roles amongst others.

The initial interviewees primarily included social work practitioners from various service tiers even though the level of co-working with other disciplines discovered during the pilot phase went on to determine the inclusion of other professionals in the interviews. From the researcher’s experience in child protection it appeared likely that the police and some health professionals would be involved. However, the main discipline working closely with social workers appeared to be psychologists, who were included in the initial interviews. This collaboration often took place within the boundaries of the same team and/or service.

This first group of participants was approached with some general queries in mind, starting from whether they would be involved in a child protection case, to what extent, how often, who they tended to work with on these cases and in what way, and finally what was the Greek reality

for these children and their families as well as for the professionals and the services they represented.

FIRST SAMPLE

PROFESSIONALS							
Number of interviews	13 + 2 informal discussions						
GENDER	<table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;"><u>MALE</u></td> <td style="border-left: 1px solid black; border-right: 1px solid black; width: 1px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><u>FEMALE</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">3</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">12</td> </tr> </table>	<u>MALE</u>		<u>FEMALE</u>	3		12
<u>MALE</u>		<u>FEMALE</u>					
3		12					
PROFESSION	Social workers: 9 Child Psychologist: 1 Psychologist: 1 Academic: 1 Director/Civil Servant: 2 Researcher: 1						
EMPLOYER/ SERVICE	Local Authority team Academia Two Residential Units for children (also offering the only fostering and adoption services) Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity Hellenic Association for Social Workers Children's Hospital Social Work Team National Centre for Social Research Institute of Child Health						

Figure 8 Socio-demographic data of first sample

In terms of observations, it was envisaged that time would be spent in the different teams/services between interviews, observing their work with particular attention given to any networks discovered, multi-disciplinary and inter-agency working (i.e. various professionals

meeting and working together) and decision-making processes. In such occasions, access was sought to any relevant meetings in order to observe professional and team dynamics. This took place to a greater or lesser degree depending on what individual circumstances would allow.

Contrary to the original proposal, case records were not accessed as their value was seen as questionable due to the fact that they did not appear to abide by any central rules or standards. Some services, like the hospital's Social Work Teams for example, kept no records whatsoever, and in addition, such access would have had many ethical implications as case records contain personal and confidential data of the client group. In Greece there are no central ethical committees and every researcher is required to approach each and every organisation included in a study separately in order to obtain permission to investigate records held on site. The emerging ethical issues in relation to this study will however be discussed at greater length in the relevant subsection below.

In seeking to ascertain how services operated on the ground, the initial focus was on Athens. Firstly, time constraints would not have allowed an in-depth study of the situation in the entire country. Secondly, the majority of the Greek population is concentrated in the capital (approximately 4,000,000 out of a total of approximately 11,000,000 people) along with the relevant services. Thirteen unstructured interviews were conducted of professionals selected to represent the range of relevant work settings (i.e. a children's hospital, a local authority, two residential units, the Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity, the Hellenic Association of Social Workers, a research centre, academia). Information gathered at this stage was used to better understand the current policy and practice situation in Greece. This initial stage identified a huge gap in collaboration between professionals and services when dealing with maltreated children and their families. Any attempt to co-work such cases was, it seemed, purely coincidental in that practitioners, depending on personal awareness and sensitivity, occasionally sought advice or assistance from fellow practitioners or even attempted to prioritise cases by mainly calling in favours. The journey of a case could be described more as accidental and outcomes resembled random lottery picks or 'lucky dips' as they are known in the United Kingdom. As the links appeared fairly heterogeneous and somewhat chaotic, the researcher followed the interviewees' recommendations and sought access to two other networks, henceforth to be referred to as A and B respectively, in order to protect the anonymity of the participants', who were based in two smaller cities.

4.12 Second Phase

A review of the literature on collaboration was deemed necessary with the aim of understanding the networks and analysing the findings. This review was based on four previous reviews that cover a sixteen-year period, from 1992 to 2008, as is explained in the second chapter. This also provided the researcher with the opportunity to explore the fluctuation of prominent themes in the relevant literature over time.

Initial arrangements, contacts and interviews were established with the two networks in the spring of 2005 and observations began in late autumn 2005 and lasted until the beginning of the autumn 2007. A total of 24 two-hour meetings were observed by the researcher during fieldwork and field notes were recorded, not during but as soon as possible after the meetings.

The researcher initially participated in the monthly network meetings and any smaller meetings accessible in between. After having attended and observed a few meetings, semi-structured, hour-long, personal interviews were arranged with most of the professionals that were involved on a regular basis. Access was also requested to any available minutes from previous meetings to observe any significant differences, patterns or changes over time. As Beattie argued in 1991 a “portfolio approach” was used to evaluate the existing network, which he describes as consisting of material divided into six broad categories: basic work records (e.g. attendance, costs, diaries, etc.); needs database (e.g. statistics, reports, interviews, etc.); project file (e.g. charts, CVs, minutes, etc.); audits (e.g. feedback sessions, letters, surveys, etc.); follow-up data (e.g. contracts, action plans, etc.); and external monitor (e.g. press cuttings, presentations, publications, etc.) (pp. 230-231).⁴³

A sample of recent cases -one new case was on average presented per monthly meeting- of the two networks was studied. “Corpus construction is functionally equivalent to representative sampling and sample size, but with the different aim of maximising the variety of unknown representations.” (Bauer and Gaskell, 2000: 347). The trajectory was observed, shedding light on different perspectives of the problem. Among these random cases were some ordinary and some unusual cases, thus helping to explore the whole continuum (mapping representations rather than measuring distribution). Finally, the issue of accessibility came in to

⁴³ As cited in Hart and Bond, 1995:206.

play in that the selection process was in practice affected by the level of access gained by the researcher as well as the condition of the very limited records.

Non-participant observations were seen as ideal given that the researcher was able to gain permission to attend networks meetings but was not there in any other professional capacity, e.g. representing a specific service. This opportunity to witness the meetings from the inside ensured a sense of familiarity as time passed and the researcher was seen as a silent group member. The experience aided the design of the topic guide for the semi structured interviews. During the interviews that followed the observer was able to comprehend the interviewees' responses better. The experience offered insight that was useful in forming a picture of the collaborative process as it unfolded before the researcher's eyes and allowed comparisons between the observed interaction and the participants' accounts selected at a later stage. Robson (1993) quotes this as the main advantage of observation in that "You do not ask people about their views, feelings or attitudes; you watch what they do and listen to what they say" (p. 191). He continues to suggest that observation techniques can be seen to 'complement' interviews where there can be 'discrepancies' between what people say they would do and how they would actually handle a situation in reality. Another advantage described by the aforementioned author is 'a lack of artificiality' which is usually present when other data collection tools are employed. However, like all other techniques observation has its flaws, one of the main ones being that it is very time consuming. Another pertinent one is the degree that an observer, by his presence alone, alters the behaviours or the situation observed. The way the current study addressed this was by aiming to accustom participants to the observer's presence over a considerable length of time, 'habituation', and 'minimal interaction', thus the researcher remained a silent observer during the meetings but greeted participants as they were gathering for the meeting and again when they were leaving (p. 208). The first observations were a most valuable reconnaissance of the network meetings and they subsequently served as a complementary tool to corroborate data collected during interviews.

Approximately a year of attending and observing network meetings passed before sixteen semi-structured interviews of a range of participating professionals were undertaken, covering themes that emerged from studies that took place in other countries. In developing the topic guides for the interviews, the researcher relied on validated questionnaires used in a DOH study of inter-agency collaboration including vignettes to explore the different perceptions, which

were adapted according to data from the interviews, media and initial observations in order to fit within the current Greek reality (Birchall and Hallett, 1995). This was also seen as a way to enable compatibility with existing results from other countries as well as a way to ensure that all variables that were found to be of significance within that project would be accounted for within the current endeavour.

“Vignettes have long been used to study attitudes, perceptions, beliefs and norms within social science.” (Finch, 1987) They have been defined as “...simulations of real events depicting hypothetical situations”, often deployed as “elicitation tools” in order to enable researchers to investigate the respondents’ reactions to these and similar scenarios. These scenarios frequently involve some sort of a dilemma and have been used in both quantitative and qualitative research, in the former with mainly predetermined responses. In the latter, open answers to specific questions can be encouraged, as was the case with this study. In addition, vignettes enable the comparison of various responses based on specific variables within the group of respondents. For instance, in this thesis, variation of responses was examined under the light of the different characteristics of the interviewees such as gender, profession, years of experience, years of involvement with the network, etc. Furthermore, as Flaskerud (1979) explained, the scenarios used within a research project can vary in a specific way, by containing “one manipulated variable” in an attempt to test its significance in the dissimilar responses obtained by the participants. In order to explore how such a variation might affect the professionals’ judgements, this research used two of three vignettes that were identical apart from a point contained in the second clarifying the service user’s ethnic background. The scenarios deployed in this instance were also presented in a staged manner, thus allowing for a gradual release of information that replicated the reality of working with such cases on the front line, as professionals usually begin working on very little and more unfolds along the way. This also has the potential of exposing decision-making and the power of first impressions (Munro, 1999) in that it depicts the ability of shifting initial judgements and action plans as new information becomes available. That is why vignettes have been used in child protection research that focuses on making decisions (Taylor, 2006; Stokes and Schmidt, 2012; Minkhorst et al, 2014; Benbenishty et al, 2015). Vignettes are also extremely suitable for such a study, as they have been considered appropriate before when called upon to explore ‘sensitive topics’, such as child abuse and neglect. This is due to the fact that they create a distance between the respondent and the case that enables some degree of ‘desensitisation’

(Barter and Renold, 2000; Finch, 1987; Hughes and Huby, 2002; Hughes, 1998). Obviously questions about the possible discrepancy between reported behaviour and actual behaviour are valid. In other words, it is important to bear in mind that vignettes are limited in that respondents may react differently if faced with the same case in their everyday working environment than when participating in a research project and dealing with a 'virtual case'. Thus, the Hawthorne effect may remain unavoidable. Finally, it is appropriate to reiterate that the vignettes were only a part of a more complex design as the interviewees were also observed whilst handling real cases during their monthly network meetings. As the observer's presence was consistent over a two-year period, the participants were more than likely to become accustomed to her, thus progressing unconstrained. Vignettes are also deemed suitable when research takes place in different contexts as they permit comparisons (Lopez et al, 2015).

In addition to the initial topics included in the guide, three staged vignettes were used, A, B and C, as described in Birchall and Hallet's research, translated from English and slightly adjusted⁴⁴ to the Greek reality and tested by two Greek practitioners (other than the respondents) and a Greek academic prior to use. No significant issues were raised during this pilot so the researcher proceeded to interview the professionals following some minor amendments. These particular vignettes were chosen due to the fact that they had been used as part of a significant study in England (Department of Health) and also would possibly allow some degree of comparison of findings post completion.

Vignettes A and B describe cases that involve physical abuse and neglect, whilst case C is a case of sexual abuse. For example, in its first stage, vignette A informs the interviewee that a citizen has reported to his workplace that he is concerned about his nineteen-year-old neighbour, a single mother living without heating and on benefits with a toddler and a six-month-old baby suffering from frostbite⁴⁵ who cries a lot. In the second stage, the baby is below normal height and weight for her age, and the mother says she is difficult to feed and is anxious about her. The baby is clean but has a sore bum. The toddler is in good health, not warmly dressed, active and slightly violent with his toys and towards his mother. The baby has a bruise on her lower cheek. In the third stage the picture is clearer in that more information is available. The mother is suffering from depression and the baby's weight keeps dropping.

⁴⁴ This issue is further explained in Chapter 6.

⁴⁵ This was not considered inappropriate for Greece, as winters are very cold and at times snowy in the north of the country.

Concerns are raised in regard to the toddler's diet, the mother's relationship with the baby's father and her way of disciplining her older child. Different professionals are now involved and more information is revealed in relation to the parents' previous history, enhancing the picture.

Professionals were asked various questions at all three intervals (thus simulating real life where information becomes available gradually). They were asked to comment on the information contained in each part of the vignette, discuss actions they would take, partners they would seek and whether they would bring the case to the attention of the network. After all the information was collected, the interviewees were also asked to give their opinion on the outcome of the case, comment on decision-making processes, on agreement or disagreement within the network and the reasons behind this, accountability, practical barriers to collaboration, and to give their opinion based on experience as to how different professions rate when it comes to co-operation. Furthermore, comments were invited on role clarity, role importance and response when dealing with cases of child abuse and/or neglect. Interviewees were also asked to remark on the extent to which they saw assessments and interventions as coordinated and to name the factors that they perceived as impacting coordination. In the analysis, SPSS was used for basic descriptive statistics as the sample size did not allow any other analysis.

This second set of semi-structured interviews with various practitioners working in relevant organisations conducted in different regions of Greece was an attempt to explore the range of practitioners' perceptions of the phenomenon and the service responses, as well as to identify any other disciplines closely linked to and greatly involved in dealing with the phenomenon (e.g. paediatricians, police officers, etc.).

During the second phase, inclusion was only possible in practice depending on the degree that services from various tiers participated in the networks examined. In contrast to the first stage, the second group of interviews was semi-structured as defined by Robson, "where the interviewer has worked out a set of questions in advance, but is free to modify their order based upon her perception of what seems most appropriate in the context of the 'conversation', can change the way they are worded, give explanations, leave out particular questions which seem inappropriate with a particular interviewee or include additional ones" (Robson, 1993:231). This approach was considered the most appropriate as it would permit a certain degree of

flexibility during the interviews in response to the interviewees' input whilst ensuring an acceptable level of comparability between interviews and allowing enough room for variation steered by individual characteristics, job descriptions and areas of expertise.

The first two interviews were used as pilot interviews in order to provide the opportunity to “rehearse” the data collection method. The methods used in any research are usually piloted on a small part of the population to be studied. The reasons for this are to detect unforeseen factors and prevent problems. The attempted pilot aimed to provide a means of checking whether the intended information would be obtained. During these initial interviews few difficulties were identified and minor modifications were made in the way the interviews would be carried out with the rest of the sample. The limited number of interviews dictated the length of the pilot study. It is, however, important to remind the reader that the research tools were also tested using experienced practitioners and researchers who were not part of this project's sample.

All interviews during the second phase were conducted on a one-to-one basis and lasted approximately an hour each. The interview topic guide can be found at the end of the current chapter. According to Powney and Watts's (1987), the semi-structured interview is still respondent. The interviewer has some topics he wants to cover with the interviewee but there is greater freedom in this method of data collection. The sequencing of questions, the amount of time spent on different topics and the wording are not predetermined.

SECOND SAMPLE

NETWORKS	A		B	
Number of interviews	10		6	
GENDER	<u>MALE</u> 5	<u>FEMALE</u> 5	<u>MALE</u> 0	<u>FEMALE</u> 6

PROFESSION	Social workers: 3 Child Psychologists: 1 Psychologists: 2 Child Psychiatrists: 4	Social workers: 4 Psychologists: 1 Lawyers: 1
PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE	8 years; 10 years; 6 years; 13 years; 5.5 years; 4.5 years; 20 years; 16-17 years; 6 years; 30 years	18 years; 24 years; 15 years; 5 years; 27 years; 9 years.
NETWORK PARTICIPATION	6.5 years; 1 year; 1 year; 8 years; 4 years; 4 years; 11 years; 14 years; 1 year; 14 years.	8 years; 8 years; 8 year; 1 year; 7 years; 1st time.
STAGED VIGNETTES	A: 3; B: 4; C: 3.	A: 3; B: 2; C: 0; No: 1.

Figure 9 Socio-demographic data of second sample

Here are the socio-demographic data of the second-round interview sample. The numbers show that the sample includes both male and female representatives of various professions with diverse amounts of experience in their fields and different periods of involvement in the networks. This data was thought significant in order to allow for a degree of testing whether responses appear to follow a pattern that could be in part explained by variation between participants along these lines; in other words, whether being a female or male professional, the corresponding age group, professional training, or experience and involvement could help explain views, attitudes or practices identified by this project. Any probable patterns could in turn be compared to findings from Birchall and Hallett's earlier research for the Department of Health, which would certainly add significant value.

This project served a dual purpose. On the one hand, it tested the experience of the professionals involved in networks A and B; on the other, it set out to understand the process of working together within the Greek culture in order to use some of the information in the last stage of this research to attempt to reinforce and expand networking. How does it work? How can it be duplicated or reinforced? Are there any lessons to be learned for the international community?

Finally, a comment on how the research developed; what could have been initially thought of as a setback, given the fact that the first set of interviews appeared to reveal a somewhat disheartening picture in relation to formal structures for collaborating and managing cases of child maltreatment, was eventually transformed into a strength by directing the research towards discovering more positive instances of practice where grassroots initiatives had generated informal networking. This instance could be viewed as a textbook example of what Silverman in 2000 described as things that happen in the field whilst attempting to gather data that could be treated as a source of data rather than a problem in need of a solution.

4.2 Research Questions

4.2.1 *First Phase*

The research began with some questions formulated ‘a priori’ but these were augmented by some that emerged ‘a posteriori’ as a clearer picture of child protection in Greece was seen. The initial phase responded to the pre-formulated research questions that emerged from the study of relevant literature and the practitioner-researcher’s own experience.

■What are the internal and external influences on the Greek welfare state in general that can be linked to responses to child abuse and neglect?

The objective was to analyse policy documents, the law, demographic movement, historical heritage and available research in order to paint a picture of the current welfare state and to understand how Greek policy and practice have been formed. This exploration mainly focused on the phenomenon of child abuse and neglect and it examined existing levels of awareness and detection, turning the spotlight on the macro level of Marsh and Rhodes’ network policy and Benson’s inter-organisational analysis. Apart from analysing written word, this question was also explored in the first round of interviews in order to highlight professionals and experts’ views on the matter. In addition, external, regional and international influences were explored

in order not only to identify global expectations from a child protection system- main components, current practices and standards- but also to look at the current trends within which the Greek system operates and existing pressures to achieve change.

■ **What welfare, health and other services exist in Greece that would be involved in a child protection case?**

The objective was to gain a clear picture of the meso and micro level⁴⁶ that encompass services on offer for abused and/or neglected children and their families in Greece using observational techniques, word of mouth and internet searches. This mapping exercise assisted in understanding the available service network, identifying any innovations, gaps or duplications, as well as locating any pockets of exceptional practice. The choice of wording for this specific question is not inadvertent, as the services involved in a child protection investigation and intervention were found not to be custom-made to deal with such a complex phenomenon but rather general, generic welfare and other services that have had no choice but to handle such cases in the absence of a highly specialised response of any kind. This question was answered through the first round of interviews that included professionals working in an array of services most likely to be regularly involved in serious cases from various perspectives and with different roles and responsibilities within the system. Interviews included central, local, general and a few more specialised services as well, together with organisations with a greater focus on policy and/or research rather than direct practice. This combination was chosen to enhance the picture gained and provide an almost 360° angle, thus encompassing views and agendas of various key players- stakeholders.

■ **How developed is inter-professional and inter-agency collaboration?**

The starting point of this question was the fact that the complexity of the phenomenon under the microscope has led many authors around the globe, as already discussed in the first two chapters of this thesis, to promote synergy and collaboration as the best, if not the only, way forward. Consequently, the researcher, as an informed observer, was looking for the existence of appropriate mechanisms in place in the country in question to promote these. As no official guidelines and mandates for collaboration were discovered in the country and there was thus nothing to report on the meso level, a new research question was generated: ‘are there any informal systems using multi-disciplinary and inter-agency working?’ From discussion with professionals, two established multi-professional networks on the micro level were identified

⁴⁶ Ibid, Marsh and Rhodes’ network policy discussed at greater length in the previous chapter.

and, subsequently, closely investigated. The idea was to explore collaboration and identify its extent and format in order to bring to the surface examples of good practice as well as the difficulties in achieving partnership, which are the epicentre of the following research stage.

The question that follows played the role of a 'bridge' question linking the two research phases in that it served in the initial phase not only to identify weaknesses but also to give birth to the second phase through the interviewees suggestions that lead to the discovery and further study of the two networks.

■What are the difficulties emerging and how could it improve and perhaps help improve other systems?

The objective was to enhance collaboration since one of the starting points for this study, evident in international literature, is that working together contributes significantly to good child protection outcomes. This question could be split into two shorter ones, but given the fact that inhibitors can be transformed into enablers, or in other words, what is not there suggests what needs to be improved, the questions were joined to better serve this research project. In answering this question, the possibility of lessons from other countries was explored. The ultimate goal was to make useful propositions and even develop a set of guiding principles and plans to improve the existing situation using both professionals' suggestions and good practice examples familiar and from abroad in order to positively impact service outcomes for children and families. The system is not the aim but the means, the structure to better serve users, enhance their life chances and ensure the best possible outcomes for the children and their families. Would findings generated abroad help adequately explain the situation in Greece and would these networks manifest traits comparable to those present in their better researched and longer standing counterparts?

4.22 Second Phase

The last question of the previous research stage generated the information about the existence of two networks portrayed as positive experiences of collaboration by the professionals interviewed. The researcher began a quest to find ways to incorporate these networks in order to explore their contribution to services, professionals and families within the system. Having identified and negotiated access to the two networks based in different localities in Greece, a second set of research questions emerged to help explore the following issues during an in-depth analysis on the micro level. These were as follows:

-What are the existing networks like?

In other words, this is the “how does it work” question. This question was used to describe the local history of networking as well as the current situation, i.e. what services and professionals are involved and what their degree of involvement is, as well as what shape the networks are in. This question was answered by direct observations, discussions with the members and examination of relevant written material.

-What impact are the networks having on the professionals involved, on their practice, the service they represent and the service users each of them is working with?

This question, when examined more closely, hides three sub questions and was essentially answered during the interviewing process. It was asked predominantly in order to understand the professionals’ experience of their involvement and its impact on practice, service provision and individual clients. However, observing meetings was also significant for gathering evidence in response to this question. Whilst interviews highlighted the participants’ perceptions of what was going on and how they were finding the collaborative experience, the meetings allowed more space for the researcher’s perception on what was taking place and the degree of participation and satisfaction observed on a monthly basis. This dual angle could be viewed as an additional opportunity for triangulation.

-What are the important points to be learnt from these networks, both positive and negative, and how can these help inform the design of any intervention aiming to reinforce the collaboration of local services working together under the umbrella of child protection?

This question aimed to locate significant issues to be taken into account in the process of transferring knowledge and benefits gained to other areas of Greece and beyond, but at the same time aimed at looking for ways to reinforce any positive achievements that had already taken place and clear any evident blockages.

An attempt was made to access any available evaluations and/or investigations regarding the above organisations completed by the Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity inspectors. However, such documents are not public as they would be in England and as a result, apart from general annual reports that described the investigators’ work over specific periods, the rest required special permission to be accessed, which was out of bounds for this research given that the additional complications might have rendered any added value questionable. As a result, the question was addressed using the relevant literature, the observations and the interviews.

4.23 *Third Phase*

Finally, the latter part of this research, as a real action component, focused on bringing together the two networks studied. This was decided in response to the participants' views voiced during the second phase of the project. Various attempts were made to build links between the two and encourage communication, but the major step achieved in that direction was that a significant founding member of network A visited network B and attended one of their meetings, which was called especially for that occasion. The researcher was also present during that meeting, and although there were no fireworks and no significant promises were made in relation to future involvement, an interest was recorded. Unfortunately, any further developments might have required more time to evolve than this project could ever afford, but when reports of the findings are given to participants, enquiries will be made to determine any established progress in that direction. However, as a result of this thesis, at least the two networks became aware of each other's existence, which was not the case prior to the researcher's contribution. The professional members themselves are currently in a position to determine the level of any further involvement, if deemed valuable.

In this latter stage, action research approach was used, as Hart and Bond argue in 1995,

“...the arguments in favour of practitioner research and research into the practice of social work and social care may also be seen as arguments in favour of action research as a potential methodology of choice for exploration, enquiry and problem-solving about the workings of human service agencies.” (p. 218).

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) have argued that action research should be utilised when there are practical problems within the framework of organisational change that require a solution. Inter-agency collaboration is a practical problem to be solved and change of the existing organisational culture will be a prerequisite in order to encourage communication and co-working so as to achieve real progress. Reason and Bradbury (2001) offer another definition of action research:

“...It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities.” (p.1)

Alternatively, action research has been divided into four approaches: the experimental, the organisational, the empowering and the professionalising. This method has also been defined according to seven criteria as follows:

“...that action research aims at improvement and involvement, is problem focused and context specific, and involves a research relationship in which those involved are participants in the change process.” (Hart and Bond, 1995:5)

Furthermore, action research is perceived as a value-laden approach in contrast to that of the natural sciences. As Brydon-Miller, Greenwood, and Maguire present in 2003,

“A key value shared by action researchers, then, is abiding respect for people’s knowledge and for their ability to understand and address the issues confronting them and their communities.” (p. 14)

Beginning with a sort of reconnaissance of the existing services and any links between them, this process of identifying “salient stakeholders” (Scholl, H. J., 2004: 277) aims to achieve a high degree of inclusion. However, as March and Simon (1958: 141) argue, in the public sector “satisficing” rather than complete consensus seems to be the optimum outcome. This agreement should encompass the process itself, the course of action and the involvement of each participant (Scholl, 2004: 282). Cavaye, (1995) has discussed the variety of participation in terms of type, formality, extent, degree and influence. The influence of a stakeholder according to Freeman in 1984 can be unidirectional (i.e. influence or be influenced) or bi-directional. Mitchell, Agle and Wood in 1997 sort stakeholders in relation to power, legitimacy and urgency. In addition, Blair and Whitehead in 1988 distinguish stakeholders according to their ability to collaborate against their ability to threaten. Finally, Scholl in 2001 described how especially in the public sector, the attitudes of stakeholders may differ over time. Recognising the main stakeholders is the first step to identifying their needs, which may vary even within the same group (Wolfe and Putler, 2002).

The research followed cycles as presented by Sussman in 1983: diagnosis, action plan, action, evaluation and learning. These cycles duplicate the process followed by practitioners when working with vulnerable service users, i.e. assess, intervene and review. (Hart and Bond, 1995:3) A journal was kept throughout this research to keep track of all the steps and reflect on any issues that might arise, discrepancies between the steps, and findings.

The professionals involved in this research, especially during the second phase of the project, were looking into their own practices and how those could be improved in order to achieve greater collaboration. Thus, they could be better characterised as co-researchers rather than research subjects. Furthermore, any positive results from this study, if appropriately disseminated, could lead to practice or even policy change.

“...what was emerging for us as professional practice research-the intimate involvement by the professional practitioners themselves in researching, inquiring into, and interrogating their own practice as a basis for: illumination and improvement of their practice; an informed

influence on policy development in relation to their practice; and the creation and extension of theory out of their practice.” (Macpherson, Brooker, Aspland and Cuskelly, 2004:92)

Moreover they argue that,

“In order for this sort of research to claim authenticity, validity and rigour, it must remain open to scrutiny by the professional practitioners themselves and their colleagues and others further afield. Furthermore, this scrutiny must be framed by appropriate conceptual and methodological approaches so that egocentrism, introspection and an ill-informed naval-gazing are avoided.” (p. 101).

On the same matters Brydon-Miller and partners in 2003 state the following,

“Conventional researchers worry about objectivity, distance, and controls. Action researchers worry about relevance, social change, and validity tested in action by the most at risk stakeholders.” (p. 25)

To address these limitations, this study was conducted using qualitative methods, which are designed to produce an abundant amount of detailed information about a much smaller number of people and cases (Patton, 1990). Although these methods increase the understanding of cases and situations studied, they also limit generalisability. In choosing qualitative methods, the choice is made to focus on depth rather than breadth. The sample selected for this study may be lacking in homogeneity, but was selected purposefully to focus in-depth on the most information-rich cases. The researcher is confident that the small sample size and the particular cases selected do not reduce the meaningfulness of the study. According to Patton (1990),

“...the validity, meaningfulness, and insights generated from qualitative inquiry have more to do with the information-richness of the cases selected and the observational/analytical capabilities of the researcher, than with sample size” (p. 185).

4.3 Analysis

Documentary analysis was used in this study as an unobtrusive research method. The researcher had access to different sources of information, policies, reports, records and other published documents. However, reliability and validity have been flagged as major issues in what is commonly referred to as “content analysis”.

A simultaneous pattern of data collection and analysis was followed for this research project and transcription began well before the conclusion of the interviews and observations. Thus the researcher started ‘listening to the data’ well in advance. After a full transcription had been completed, content analysis was performed. Each set of answers was categorised as well as themes derived from these categories. The data was initially analysed using Nvivo, as it is the only available qualitative computer package that can cope with non-Latin languages such as

Greek, though there is still a degree of compromise (loss of some of its functions due to the computer package's inability to fully 'comprehend' the foreign language). Categories or code labels (descriptive names for each group of data) separated some paragraphs of the interview and these were then grouped in larger categories (themes). To do this, several readings of the data were undertaken. After themes were highlighted and the significance of every theme was interpreted, some verbatim transcriptions will be used in the following chapters to illustrate these themes. Stake (1995: 123) refers to this analysis as "development of issues", whilst Bauer and Gaskell (2000: 347) define the use of verbatim sources as "thick description". Computer-assisted analysis was selected to add to the project's integrity, but also to provide the researcher with an opportunity to master the use of the particular package for qualitative analysis. However, in the process of the analysis various difficulties occurred, some highly related to the fact that the data could only be accessed at the University and the periodical updating of the computers resulted in errors that could only be corrected by contacting the home team in Australia. These complications significantly delayed the analysis and restricted the researcher's access to the data on more than one occasions. Finally, as manual analysis had been resorted to during those gaps, the author decided to abandon the use of the computer package. Nevertheless, apart from retrieving and grouping data slightly more easily than when done manually, and given the relatively small amount of new data and the language constraints the program was faced with, the researcher does not believe that this shift jeopardised quality in any way. On the contrary, this shift probably saved time by avoiding further complications and allowing the researcher to revert to more traditional and rather familiar data analysis processes using paper, notes and highlighters.

Furthermore, it was anticipated that the following theories would come to play a significant role in the analysis. First, the research used systems theory, which arose from biology but has been successfully applied to human beings and sees each person as a system in their own right as well as a subsystem for a greater system, i.e. society. There are different rules as to how systems work and maintain equilibrium. The main belief is that the system is larger than the sum of its parts and that any change in one part of the system will result in changes in other parts. In addition, there is the concept of boundary, which is the point where mental and physical energy is exchanged between systems and subsystems. Systems theory has been used

extensively in social work literature. (Pincus and Minahan, 1973⁴⁷) Systems theory blends in perfectly with Marsh and Rhodes' network policy and inter-organisational analysis according to Benson, which were presented in the first chapter as a framework for the analysis of the Greek system. In other words, the macro, meso and micro levels could alternatively be viewed as interrelated systems or subsystems, thus warranting a systems-approach. Hence, the lack of guidelines and policies promoting or obliging working together on the meso level, lead the researcher to explore the micro level at greater length. The researcher began by identifying the main entities in the system, the legal framework, the services, etc., and then focused on the actual interaction between them on a practical level, which is in essence the soul of the system.

Second, a solution-focused model was favoured. This approach argues for the need to concentrate on the positives and to look for solutions rather than dwell on what is not there, e.g. lack of resources and inadequate services. This approach has been applied to organisational change. It is thus seen as beneficial for this thesis due to the fact that Greece's child protection system is underdeveloped in many ways and that a study focused on the system's inadequacies would be far from constructive (O'Connell, 2008).

Through the data collection, a detailed description emerged as well as an analysis of issues/themes that arose and in turn invited interpretation or assertions by the researcher (Stake, 1995). During the analysis, a first detailed description of each case and themes within it was provided followed by thematic analysis across the cases, i.e. within-case analysis and cross case analysis (Creswell, 1998). Overall, a holistic analysis was attempted as defined by Yin in 1989. Finally, there was an interpretive phase i.e. the "lessons learned" form the case (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Furthermore, to achieve rigour regarding data obtained from interviews, observations and field notes, four criteria were followed: truth-value, applicability, consistency and neutrality. (Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 290) To deal with truth-value (credibility), phenomena examined in this research are seen, as participants would perceive them. However, the researcher maintained the objectivity necessary to increase the validity of the study, evident when categorising data under various themes derived from relevant literature and previous studies. This way, readers not involved in the study may find it believable. In addition, evidence was used from various sources and multiple methods of data collection, most often referred to as

⁴⁷ As cited in Adams et al, 2009: 100, 170.

triangulation; to verify the case further enhanced credibility (Robson, 1993: 404). For applicability (fittingness), findings represent the setting, (i.e. the city and the specific network) in which the study was carried out. However, even though the sample is not big enough to generalise, the methodology might be applicable to other studies. To improve consistency (auditability), the findings are reported in writing so any reader can follow the “decision trail”. Once conclusions were reached, reliability was increased, as the design of the study is explicit (i.e. transparent) and therefore could, in theory⁴⁸, be replicated, obtaining similar results. In addition, computer-assisted analysis and the use of verbatim reporting of confirmed and disconfirmed expectations could be seen as contributing towards achieving clarity of procedures (Bauer and Gaskell, 2000: 346-348).

Finally, neutrality (confirmability) could not be ensured, especially during the second phase of this research project, as objectivity may have been jeopardised during the research process when the researcher gradually played more of an insider role in an attempt to achieve prolonged involvement. However, this assisted in gaining a better understanding by enhancing a sense of familiarity and ease with the researcher’s presence, which in turn contributed to the concurrence of the picture painted for research purposes with that corresponding to the professionals’ day-to-day reality. Nevertheless, Bauer and Gaskell (2000: 348) argue that the observer is privileged in three ways: the ability to see things that the respondents cannot see about themselves, wider knowledge of the field, and use of abstractions. Moreover, the fact that the design was left open until the analysis of pilot interviews had taken place is a first step in the right direction, meaning that the topic guide was tested before the main data collection started and changes occurred wherever necessary. Furthermore, to increase validity, interview questions were based on current issues from the literature review related to this study. The starting point of this research is based on existing literature on the subject, including research projects of a similar nature. The overarching principle is that qualitative research is circular⁴⁹ and reflexive and the process followed was to develop and test the topic guide during the pilot phase and revisit case selection. This revision was re-tried after the preliminary analysis in order to finalise case selection and eventually decide to terminate data collection. In this way, an entirely dynamic process is depicted that is shaped along the way rather than being totally dependent on

⁴⁸ This comment is meant to reflect the fact that most networks share the characteristics of living organisations thus ever changing.

⁴⁹ See the diagram that follows.

any predetermined course of action, and which is thus seen as highly responsive to eventualities emerging in the field that could not have been anticipated within an 'ivory tower'.

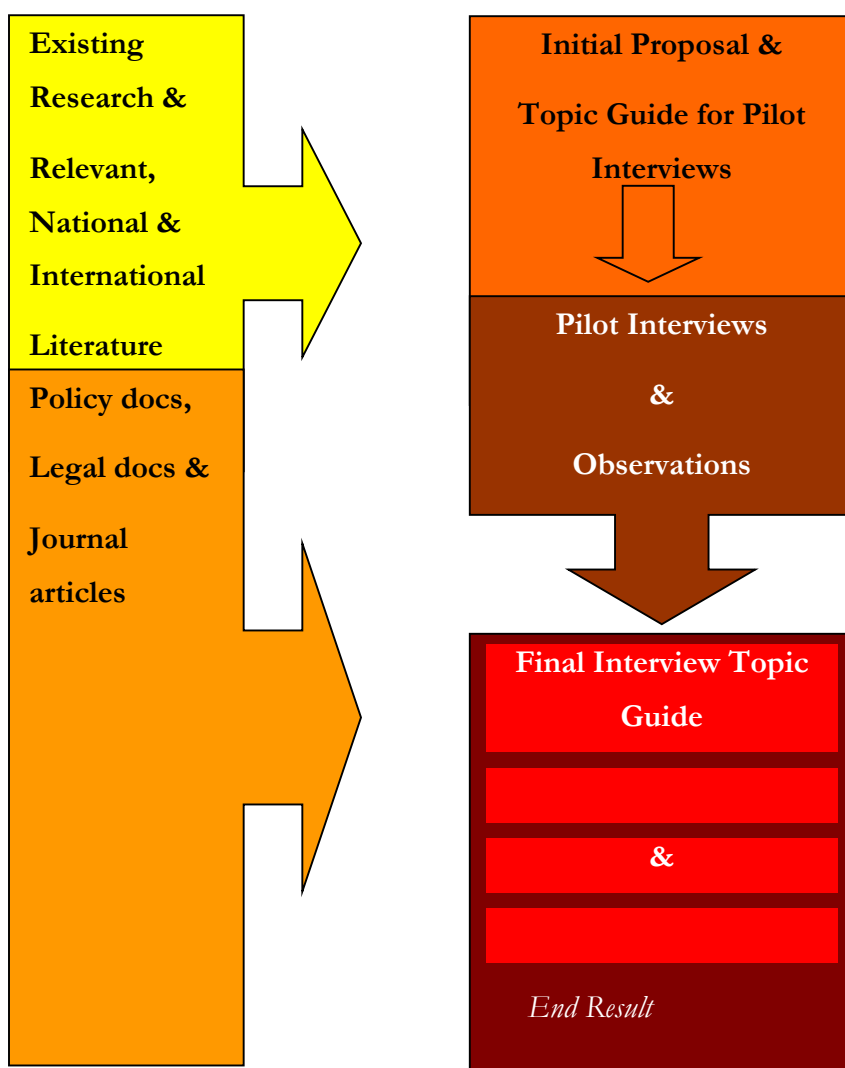


Figure 10 The main stages of research design

4.4 Ethics

This study complied with the formal research ethics policy of the London School of Economics (LSE). In Greece, there is no central research ethics committee in operation, at least in the social sciences domain, and so permissions are supplied by individual organisations and or ministries. ⁵⁰ Transparency in seeking consent was achieved by openly declaring the source of

⁵⁰ As available at:

http://www2.lse.ac.uk/intranet/researchAndDevelopment/ethicsGuidanceAndForms/Research_Ethics_Review_Checklist_FINAL.doc

⁵¹ A copy of the checklist completed in relation to this project is available in Appendix 3.

funding to all participants, which for the first three and half years of this endeavour was provided by a Greek State Scholarship (IKY), together with intermittent hardship funds provided by the LSE in the latter years to ensure its completion. The aforementioned sources of funding, vital though they were for the completion of this thesis, also allowed the researcher complete freedom of movement without restrictions in terms of design, scope or execution. Furthermore, the researcher undertook to be honest with the participants when discussing the aim of the study and the possible uses of its findings in conjunction with foreseeable output. Confidentiality and anonymity for all those taking part were ensured by using codes instead of personal data and password-protected storage of all information. Any information that could lead to the identification of an individual or a case has been omitted from this thesis. Furthermore, informed consent was sought in writing and subjects were reassured of the voluntary nature of their participation and unconditional withdrawal in advance of their interviews. No children or families were interviewed and in line with ethical guidelines the professionals involved were deemed capable of providing informed consent. The researcher shares the same professional background with social work practitioners, the same professional value-base and the same language. Consequently, material such as the vignettes used during the interviews, as well as quotes contained in this thesis, has been translated from English to Greek and Greek to English respectively by the researcher. Finally, a report of the findings of the study will be offered to those participants who opted to receive it, and no financial incentives have been offered to any of the participants involved in this research project. For more details see the Ethics Protocol, an adapted and translated version of the one available in Hart and Bond (1995), which was signed by all interviewees who agreed to participate in this study prior to the commencement of each and every interview.⁵²

In conclusion, the researcher's experience working in England and Greece and prior familiarity with and training in the Greek culture definitely informed the topic guide, which was subjected to change during the pilot stage of the interviewing process. The aim was for any methodological issues to be fully clarified as early as possible in this study. This is also applicable to the limitations of this study, although some were already visible to begin with. For example, regional variations within Greece would never permit a generalisation of the themes arising in the regions examined, and the availability as well as the accessibility of data from multiple sources was considered highly likely to influence the exact direction and

⁵² Available at the end of this chapter.

outcomes of this study. However, even if a detailed, countable picture of Greece had been achieved, given the country's idiosyncratic nature and welfare peculiarity, any further generalisations would have been almost meaningless.

4.5 Research Tools

4.51 *A Topic Guide for the First Interviews*

<u>Socio-demographic data describing the first sample</u>
Male or Female
Profession
Current workplace
<u>Main topics</u>
Child protection in Greece
Involvement in child protection cases
Inter-disciplinary working
Inter-agency working
<u>Further suggestions/Closing remarks</u>

4.52 *A Topic Guide for the Second Interviews*

The following table contains the topic guide followed by the researcher when interviewing the members of the two networks studied.

<u>Personal Details or Socio-demographic Data Describing the Sample</u>

• Male or female
• Profession
• Years qualified
• Time at current workplace
• Length of network membership
<u>Main Topics</u>
• Explore services offered by current workplace
• Frequency of network participation
• Explore co-operation between the network partners on cases outside the monthly meetings
• Explore perceived similarities and/or differences between working together with professionals from the network and professionals who do not belong to it
• Explore feelings about the network and participation
• Explore the advantages, if any, for the professional
• Explore the disadvantages, if any, for the professional
• Explore the advantages, if any, for the service represented
• Explore the disadvantages, if any, for the service represented
• Explore the advantages, if any, for the service users
• Explore the disadvantages, if any, for the service users
• Explore any ways to improve the existing network
• Explore any obstacles for the existing network
• Any outside issues perhaps (e.g. central and/or local government, policy issues, etc.)
<u>Closing Remark</u>
• Comments, additions, corrections.

VIGNETTES

<u>Topics for Stage One and Stage Two</u>

• Thoughts on the case
• Suggested action (If no action, why not?)
• Contact other colleagues or services
• Decision to activate network (If not, why not?)
<u>Topics for Stage Three</u>
• Collaborations
• Case outcome
• Anticipated agreement or disagreement within the network
• Opinion on the four reasons for disagreements as presented in the relevant literature
• Family is or is not required to take responsibility before treatment or support and why
• List of professions to comment on how easy or how difficult they are to work with
• Role clarity in CP
• Role importance in CP
• Role fulfilment
• Coordination of assessments and interventions
• Factors that affect coordination (positively or negatively)
• Practical issues
• Opinion on practical issues presented in the relevant literature

4.53 Ethics List

The following list consists of the main rules followed by this project, thus providing some evidence of ethical conduct.

1.	Fieldwork will consist of interviewing professionals so there will be no direct contact with children and families.
2.	The objective of the study will be made clear prior to interviewing.
3.	There are no implications arising from the sponsorship of this research; the only requirement is that the sponsors are mentioned throughout this piece of work.
4.	The researcher will ensure confidentiality by anonymising the sample and storing data safely in a password-protected setting.
5.	No incentives will be offered to those participating in this research.
6.	Consent forms including information on the study will be offered to all

participants and their respective organisations.
7. Consent will be obtained in writing prior to interviewing and reassurance will be given to all participants that no adverse consequences will follow withdrawal at any time.
8. Results will be disseminated to those participants who opt to receive them.

4.54 Ethics Protocol

The ethics protocol used for this study is an adaptation by the researcher based on a protocol presented in Hart and Bond's (1995) Action Research for Health and Social Care (pp. 198-201).

The following extract was translated into Greek and given to the interviewees to be signed at the beginning of each interview.

(To be read by the interviewer before the beginning of the interview. One copy of this form was to be left with the interviewee and one copy signed by the interviewee and kept by the interviewer.)
My name is Helen Athanasiou and I am a PhD candidate at the London School of Economics (LSE). I am a social worker and the researcher on a project entitled: Inter-disciplinary and inter-agency collaboration in child welfare in Greece. I am the contact person in charge of this project and I may be contacted at this phone number *****, should you have any questions.

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this research project. Your participation is very much appreciated. Before we start the interview, I would like to reassure you that as a participant in this project you have several very definite rights.

First, your participation is voluntary.

You are free to refuse to answer any question at any time.

You are free to withdraw from the interview at any time.

This interview will be kept strictly confidential and will be available only to my supervisor, Dr Eileen Munro, at LSE.

Excerpts of this interview may be part of my thesis but under no circumstances will your name or any identifying characteristics be included. The thesis will be submitted to the university for academic purposes and parts of this project or the whole of it may eventually be published.

I would be grateful if you would sign this form to show that I have read you its contents.

Signed

Printed

Dated

Please send me a report on the results of this research project (circle one)

YES NO

Address for those requesting a research report⁵³

4.6 Conclusion

After having explored the methods used in this study and established the main stops along its journey from conception to completion, the following chapter begins presenting the findings. Overall, the picture painted so far provides the reasoning to justify the researcher's choice to focus on the micro level where by word of mouth some professional movement in a cooperative direction was detected and is brought to light in the following chapter. The researcher additionally welcomed such a spotlight as an opportunity to identify initiatives, that somewhat counteract the overall bleak picture of the Greek child protection system.

Chapter five begins by presenting the two networks studied during the second phase of this research through the eyes of the participants. Concepts from the literature review are used to interpret findings from this second phase of the research, with the overall aim of assisting in understanding the results and drawing useful conclusions.

These two different multi-disciplinary professional networks involved in child protection were identified and explored by the researcher in separate localities in Greece. The following section introduces and discusses findings that stem from non-participant observations of their meetings in conjunction with semi-structured interviews of some of the professionals involved. The research questions presented in chapter four are revisited and answered in chapter seven at the end of the thesis, prior to reaching any conclusions or making recommendations.

Chapter 5

Findings and Discussion; a Tale of Two Greek Networks

The second chapter explored literature on the topic of cooperation between professionals and services whilst beginning to locate the Greek partnerships under study. This chapter presents findings on the two networks of professionals and services that form the core of this study. The findings are based on observations of network meetings, both published and unpublished papers on these initiatives as well as the sixteen interviews that took place during the second phase of this study.

Having recognised the significance of interagency cooperation and the key role it plays in all developed child protection systems, the researcher sought out evidence of service coordination and multi-disciplinary working in the Greek child protection arena. The findings on collaboration from the first round of interviews were extremely disappointing, as respondents described the process as being random, unreliable and mainly based on personal connections. Subsequently, two smaller cities were identified as having developed collaborative mechanisms. Consequently, these two cities, referred to as Network A and Network B were selected as study sites and explored in further depth. Do these networks work? Can informal interagency collaboration compensate for the lack of formal agreements? Should Greece rely on informal networks? Should they be encouraged? Could the country build its response on them?

The following table is an initial attempt to look at the two countries collaborative framework, Greece and England, in a comparative manner whilst using the different levels of network policy as an analytical tool. This gives an overall initial impression based mainly on the information gathered during the first phase of this study and presented in the third chapter. It clearly demonstrates the current, overwhelming differences between the countries in respect of collaboration on all levels. As long as one bears in mind the dialectical nature of the relationships between the three levels, this table provides an illuminating impression of the bigger picture within which any local initiatives exist. As Lupton and partners have argued (2001:3), working together is “susceptible” to an array of external factors such as changes to the organisational landscape within the public sector, the participating agencies’ need to take full

advantage of and even enlarge their “market positions”, the effects of power and influence that typify the sector and society as a whole intensified further by the fairly recent mixed economy of welfare, knowledge and skills within networks, “disciplinary dynamics”, variation in governance, lines of accountability, guidelines and procedures. As a result, the table depicts a clearly hostile Greek environment where partnerships would find it hard to appear, get established and grow. It would look as if though Greece has ratified the Convention, it has not really translated this into guidelines for service provision and practice. As a result, a sense of a “superficial legality” is created. In other words, though at first the country appears to be in line with the rest of the EU, when explored in greater detail, it becomes clear that not much effort is being made to cascade new ways of providing services and working with children and their families according to the children’s rights discourse. Despite this fact, longstanding collaborative initiatives like the ones investigated during this research do exist in Greece against all odds. Though the Greek system may appear unsuitable for cultivating collaborative working, it has been found to exist regardless and this makes the need to zoom in and examine it even more compelling.

	UK	GREECE
Macro level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ International mandates (Children's Rights, EU Strategy) ➤ Legislation (Children Act 1989, 2004) ➤ Guidelines (Working Together 1988, 1991, 1999, 2006, 2015) ➤ Child Abuse Inquiries (Serious Case Reviews) ➤ Re-organisation (New Public Management, Third Way) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ International mandates ➤ No official guidelines
Meso level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Established, fairly regular networks (Child Protection Conferences, Core groups, Looked after Reviews) ➤ Some shared resources and training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Mostly occasional, personalised networks ➤ Limited sharing and scarce resources
Micro level	Individual members' behaviours make or break the partnerships and create fluctuation in strength but repeated exposure fosters a degree of complementarity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Different behaviours ➤ Professionals in isolation

Figure 11 A comparison of England and Greece using Marsh and Rhodes' policy network

It appears that little is known about frontline professionals' perceptions of working together and even less about children and families' experiences of multi-agency, multi-disciplinary interventions. It is the first opening that this thesis attempts to fill to the degree that findings regarding existing collaborative initiatives in Greece strengthen, weaken or advance results and theorising already present in the relevant literature.

In Greece, the sheer existence of the networks studied combined with the total lack of any state guidance indicates that collaboration is, for the time being, promoted by frontline staff, a bottom-up approach in contrast to that used in England, though certainly reminiscent of that country's earliest collaborations.

Following, is a formal description of the aforementioned networks, including some historical details regarding their formation and existence through the years. For ethical reasons, anonymity is maintained; hence, the descriptions provided will be generalised so as to prevent identification. However, in order to understand these systems and do proper analysis of the findings some background information on these networks is necessary. This will aid in interpreting these findings on the basis of the literature reviews that were presented in the second chapter.

5.1 Network A

Network A is an informal collaborative network made up mainly of child psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers and occasionally a teacher and/or health visitor. All these professionals meet formally, albeit unofficially, on a monthly basis to discuss the most complex, most worrying children and families on their respective caseloads, the majority of which would be classified under child protection casework even though their respective services were not generally specialised in this type of work.⁵⁴ There are no specific criteria in choosing a case to introduce to the network. Professionals present cases when they have reached a dead end or feel at loss about how to approach the case alone, or believe that the child or family would benefit from a more holistic, multi-layered intervention.

The main difference between these meetings and an average child protection conference in England, apart from the degree of formality, is that not all practitioners present are in contact with the child or family in question. Additionally in contrast to the English system, most of them cannot officially represent, and therefore commit services. Moreover, the discussion centres on intervening and/or supporting rather than, the English tendency of focusing on investigating abuse. As Font and Maguire-Jack argue in 2015 (p. 70) "Substantiation is less likely when agencies can provide services to unsubstantiated cases and when collaboration with other social institutions is high." The concentration on substantiation and not on the provision

⁵⁴ As discussed in Chapter 4, Greece has generic rather than specialised services.

of services has also been criticised by Gilbert and colleagues in 2009 and Kohl and partners in the same year. (Kohl PL, 2009)

Consequently, a clear emphasis is placed on the important second phase, the protection or care plan, rather than on policing families or attempting to establish abuse. Although this is an interesting variation from the English system introduced in the previous chapter and may be viewed in a positive light, as it potentially offers a multifaceted intervention that would address the child and family's needs in a holistic manner. However, the negative side of this perspective is that the lack of mechanisms for cooperation may make it difficult to establish abuse. Therefore a key concern is whether agencies are left to ascertain abuse single-handedly. If so, how is information synthesised in such a manner that abuse is recognised early and children protected.

Furthermore, during these meetings decisions about services and the nature of their involvement are not made by a chair or by any democratic voting method in place. On the contrary, it is the person whose case is discussed who has to decide; whilst the others share ideas and can agree or disagree to contribute to any subsequently formed plan. Thus, established lines of accountability remain intact, which is extremely important given the uncommitted participation of the respective services.

The organisations participating in these meetings, albeit involuntarily, are varied and include child and adolescent mental health teams based in hospitals or community centres, adult psychiatrists, various institutions and children's homes, local and regional social services departments, schools, child protection units, NGOs, etc. This is therefore a wide and open meeting that includes many of the services that work with vulnerable children and families, which makes it even harder to sustain momentum over time as members can join or quit at any given time. The breadth of professionals in attendance could also explain the significant variation in active participation observed during these gatherings. Some practitioners have a say about cases on a regular basis whilst others remain quiet. However, these formal monthly meetings appear to have opened and established communication channels between the involved professionals. For example, they may be summoned outside these set meetings as cases require, thus turning the network into an invaluable resource for the practitioners and maximising its usefulness and impact on individual caseloads whilst simultaneously increasing its effectiveness as a structure. This description illustrates the notion of "knot working" presented in the previous chapter section 5.1 that included the definitions of all the relevant

terms, in so far as services are called upon as and when required, and are thus tailored around case-dictated needs.

Network A was founded approximately fourteen years before this study and relies solely on individual goodwill. It stemmed from the professionals' frustration and anxiety about "difficult" psychosocial cases and the total lack of communication and coordination between services and practitioners working in the child welfare system. This led to decisions about a child's or family's future being made in isolation, which, unfortunately, appears to be the norm in Greece. As an example, the professionals found that siblings of the same family were being treated by different services that were unaware of each other's interventions. Services were often fighting against each other over accommodating children, building walls and exploiting catchment areas and remits, or else avoiding cases rather than exploring what each had to offer. Overall, the general picture of service provision was mirroring the chaos of the families it was meant to serve.

Consequently, a bottom-up initiative was born out of sheer desperation triggered by the ruthless reality of a service relay race where professionals were passing the baton of responsibility to one another in order to rid themselves of any future involvement. One of the mental health services involved boasts of founding this network and perceives itself as the "coordinator" and even an "arbitrator" providing "...a neutral service with a scientific authority", according to an article published in a peer-reviewed international journal⁵⁵.

In that same publication, the network roles are further described as "*...a tool for assessment and therapy and as a training and research programme*".⁵⁶ From the researcher's observations, the first two roles are fulfilled in an obvious manner, while the third role is less evident and harder to assess. In addition, it is difficult to establish their research agenda. . The only evidence of relevant research is some available data about work carried out over a three-year period that is restricted to counting the number of service users and some of the circumstances or reasons for intervening in relation to their presenting issues. The information available corresponds to the time when the network was accepting direct referrals, which was no longer the case during the two-year observation period.

⁵⁵ Reference not revealed to preserve anonymity.

⁵⁶ The exact reference can be made available upon request but is hereby omitted to preserve the network's anonymity.

Before moving on to network B and subsequently analysing findings in greater detail, a final analysis of network A as a whole is presented, making use of Benson's 'imbalances' as introduced in the second chapter of this thesis. In that light, this network appeared high on mutual positive evaluation as the great majority of participants spoke extremely highly of each other and the network as whole. Nonetheless, a weakness on domain consensus is clearly detectable given that the agencies that the professionals represent are not really participating. Without this participation no commitment to this partnership exists on a higher level within the respective agencies.

5.2 Network B

Network B is a more formal collaborative network that includes psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers and occasionally a lawyer, police officer and local politician as well as representatives of the local, Orthodox Church, covering a smaller area than the aforementioned network. Partnerships with religious institutions in a country like Greece where children's homes as well as other more supportive services are offered by the church can be seen as essential. Robinson and Hanmer (2014) suggested that religion communities should be included in wider child protective initiatives; this is consistent with practices in this Greek network.

Furthermore, this network has a website⁵⁷, produces leaflets advertising its existence and operates under the auspices of the regional authority. This reflects more thorough frontline as well as managerial cooperation sanctioned by local political power, suggesting a much better supported initiative than the one described above and as such one that possibly enjoys far greater recognition.

This network is meant to meet on a monthly basis, although while doing fieldwork, quite a few network-wide meetings were cancelled. It also contains a smaller core, similar to a board, which is more flexible in order to respond to emergencies. This structure is reminiscent of Hallett's (1995) four layers of networks as presented in the second chapter of this thesis and may serve to explain a certain level of detachment clearly observable when talking to the involved professionals in contrast to those participating in the first network.

⁵⁷ As above, withheld to preserve anonymity.

Network B, is more of a hierarchical organisation that fits the overall picture of welfare service provision in Greece. Their aims, as stated on the website, are to raise awareness of both local professionals and the general public about the phenomenon of child abuse and neglect. They also deal with individual cases, occasionally responding to allegations, assisting in investigation and forming support packages for the child or family in need.⁵⁸

In contrast to Network A, their role has greater breadth, as they are active in every aspect, from publicising the occurrence of child maltreatment to detecting it and offering solutions, or, in other words, intervening in individual cases. They campaign similarly to the NSPCC in the UK, and can act in lieu of a case conference in identifying ill-treatment. At the same time, they serve as a core group that develops an inclusive approach to dealing with the particular child and family.

This multi-tasking may well be a cause for concern, as the involved services may include the police, lawyers, and psychiatric, social, educational and third sector organisations. Though once again, attendance is erratic and more peripheral services do not have practitioners present on a regular basis. However this gap may not be problematic providing that promises of involvement translate into action should the need arise.

However, the dilemma is whether this apparent multi-tasking is a wise operational combination or a risk of spreading services too thin. Even though such concerns would be valid, it is important to bear in mind that the overall poor service provision, combining scarcely existing resources may be the only way to provide a decent service across the board.

Although this network appears to have stemmed from similar concerns regarding the handling of child protection cases in Greece, it obviously followed a different path and developed into a group formally endorsed by an array of organisations including the regional government. It is, however, debatable whether this additional sense of formality has positively impacted local practices and the group's appeal and overall effectiveness in dealing with children and families. One thing that requires clarification at this stage is whether the authority's contribution is limited to housing the meetings, providing a part time minute-taker/administrator and the occasional representative, who acts as chair, and possibly some or all the funding of website production and informative materials. It appears that this network has its

⁵⁸ The network's website is withheld to preserve their anonymity but can be made available upon request.

origins in common with network A, in that it arose from the grassroots level but somehow was adopted by local government and has had a totally different journey from then on that could be attributed to the smaller locality or the greater recognition enjoyed by its founders that may have acted as fertile soil would for a planted seed. Its current formation is nonetheless different from the previous network, although, as already implied, it is hard to ascertain any greater impact, efficiency or effectiveness when comparing it to network A without access to case histories. In order to be able to accurately research such variations, data containing detailed descriptions of the cases handled by both networks in question over the years as well as respective outcomes would need to be made available which is unfortunately not the case. This would need to include not only cases discussed during meetings but also those for which the network was mobilised. An additional control group of cases would have been necessary in order to be able to test for achievements in relation to working together. However, as already discussed in the fourth chapter, data collection and service evaluations are not really on the menu yet in Greece and the networks examined here are no exception; thus, the current study has inputs limited to those instigated by the researcher.

Finally, as with the previous network, it is worth exploring network B along the lines of Benson's typology of potential states of disequilibria. Accordingly, the second network exhibits some contrast in comparison to the first in that it features higher on work cooperation, albeit of a rather forced nature, and domain consensus but evidently lower on mutual evaluation, pointing towards an evaluative imbalance. However, in order to be able to clearly evaluate the two networks, the availability of the type of data mentioned in the previous paragraph would be essential.

Given the experiences of Network A and Network B it is imperative to acknowledge Weiss (1981:43) who argues, "...coordination cannot generate new resources, cannot devise new treatment methods, cannot solve problems of alienation or mistrust, (and) cannot transmute ineffective systems into effective ones". Multidisciplinary and interagency collaboration should not be seen as a way to mask shortages and insufficiency and are not the solution for system shortfalls. Therefore, collaboration even as a policy goal emphatically advocated by the state, cannot replace funding, long-term planning, organisation and clear leadership.

This misuse of collaboration may well explain its occasional inadequacy in practice and to a certain degree the reasons why it has been so eagerly embraced by many political figures over

the years. A term that is used loosely can be easily abused. During these dire times, financial hardship can push leaders to promote collaboration as an umbrella term to counteract or even mask other shortages. The Greek child protection system, for example, cannot be solely enhanced by asking staff to collaborate more. Collaboration cannot be treated as a panacea for other systematic inadequacies.

5.3 Cases

As an extra aid to understanding the two Greek networks of professionals under study, this section reports on some characteristic cases discussed during the meetings attended by the researcher over the two-year period of observations. These cases are anonymised and are the fieldwork notes written by the researcher soon after each meeting.

CASE ONE

“Discussion began with a case of an eleven and a two-year old, father Albanian, abusing alcohol and displaying aggressive behaviour (e.g. domestic violence, possession of weapons), working occasionally as a construction worker. Mother Greek, trained as a nurse but unemployed, appears dependent and a grandmother who collects rubbish. Squalid living conditions, rubbish, dead animals, no electricity or water. Grandmother wants to evict the family, states that father rapes mother in front of the children. The eleven-year old boy attends school, good academic performance, he keeps to himself, and the teacher had not suspected anything wrong. Both children had no medicals, vaccinations, etc. The local authority has intervened and the children have been examined and vaccinated. Father has threatened to take children to Albania to his mother when faced with the possibility of having them removed from his care. The Prosecutor for minors has been informed and a court date was set for the beginning of February. Both parents attended with extended family and a solicitor and argued for court date to be postponed. The whole family agreed to work with professionals and new date set for April. The extended family appeared willing to help. Hospitalisation of the children was agreed in order for a psychiatric assessment to be completed for the whole family. However, the child psychiatrist, member of the network that had agreed to undertake the assessment was moved to another post. Social worker unable to gain access to the psychiatric service and she was also absent from this meeting. An excuse was put forward re. catchment area, which was disregarded in a laughing manner by the child psychiatrists. Discussion followed during which the support/protection dilemma was obvious. Some professionals were talking about the lack of supportive services to monitor and give this family a chance. Disagreement whether the parents can change or not and what is the

best way forward for the children. The need to inform the children of the situation was stressed; it is worrying that this task is still outstanding. Any plans to accommodate would mean that the children would be placed in different institutions due to the age gap. Agreement was reached to attempt talking to the child psychiatrist again in case she can influence her former colleagues to hospitalise these children as a matter of urgency and then to speak to the person in charge. If all this fails, another hospital will be approached.”

This case indicates the type of cases discussed during the meetings, in that it is definitely a child protection case but the network’s role was not directly linked to the Court process. The major dilemmas of child protection work emerging i.e. support versus protection and parents’ ability to change. The case is also indicative of a personal system, in the sense that in the absence of one professional, who moved to a new job, the case was put on hold and catchment area was used as an excuse not to deal with the case. The personal system is also reflected in the emphasis on locating the specific professional and using her influence on her previous workplace in order to complete the assessment and hospitalise the children. Additionally, poor practice is evident in this case through the absence of communication with the children, and the fact that the children would be separated in residential units, thus adding to their trauma.

CASE TWO

“Second case raised by a professional from an NGO. Two girls, twelve and thirteen, again living conditions not fit for humans, fire risk, rubbish, etc. Two parents, domestic violence, father abusing heroin, mother prostituting, and presenting ill health possibly due to malnutrition. Social worker talked to children in their mother’s presence, younger one suffers from epileptic fits, they both said they are ok and want to stay where they are. They speak of their parents arguing and father attempting to kill mother and they describe father being high on heroin and nearly setting the place on fire. Mother recently found in a bad condition, so weak she could not stand up, suffering from incontinence, taken to hospital by ambulance but was not admitted. Possibility of some extended family in another town, social worker unable to verify this. Discussion followed to inform the Prosecutor for Minors a.s.a.p. Professional needs to clarify this with manager due to the fact that it is an NGO and might have to inform the statutory services first. The social worker from a statutory service was in attendance and agreed to put this matter forward urgently if the NGO feels they cannot act on this. Professionals appeared very concerned about these children; worker worried that if there are no clear recommendations in the report addressed to the Prosecutor, any action may be extremely delayed. Child psychiatrist, Mr X, argued the necessity to inform the Prosecutor first, in order to avoid anything happening to the children, and then until the Court date proceed with the paperwork and liaise to come up with a specific plan.

Discussion followed about the possibility of admitting the mother with the children at the hospital for an assessment.”

This is a clear child protection case; this time the network is working for the case to reach the Court by utilising its resources, i.e. the professionals in attendance, and expedites the case thus offering a more efficient service to these children. The long term aim was to form a coordinated plan for this family.

CASE THREE

“... a family with children in a residential unit and parents with mental health concerns. The children and especially the oldest one (7y.o.) were displaying difficult behaviour, issues around unsupervised contact with birth family and a pending court decision for the long term plans for these children.”

This child protection case required intervention to ensure the wellbeing of the children post removal. It highlighted issues and evoked discussions regarding poor contact arrangements that lead to further damage of the children as there is no or very limited supervision during contact. Residential units employing shift workers with limited training in inadequate numbers to protect very vulnerable children.

CASE FOUR

“... case involved a Roma family and arrangements were made for the older daughter to be seen at a hospital with the social worker due to concerns regarding lack of medical care (i.e. parents not administering medication provided).”

This case has a definite child protection element even though the Court was not involved at the time. The network was activated immediately to protect the child’s health and assess risks. As a result, the case moved forward at a faster pace in contrast to the usual slow formal system, thus attempting to more appropriately serve the child’s needs.

Other discussions within the networks revealed concerns about institutional practices. For example, issues were raised, in relation to contact arrangements with the biological family, sibling separation, lack of appropriate placements, child rescuer approaches, etc. The selected course of action was to advise on alternative ways of working. Although poor practice was not publicised the professionals intended to meet with the units in question and discuss more appropriate strategies.

Finally, attempts to expand the network in order to include significant services were witnessed by the researcher. The professionals agreed and drafted letters of invitation to other needed agencies. There were also concerns about the inadequacy of services, for instance shelters for abused women and their children, and services advertised but not in existence.

Having presented the two networks and case examples, the next subsection introduces the findings from the interviews.

5.4 Arising Themes

Arising themes will be grouped and introduced under the headings presented in chapter five in order to be consistent and facilitate understanding and data analysis. This grouping or division is, however, somewhat artificial or false in that the levels adopted from Marsh and Rhodes' network analysis are in constant interaction and elements established or housed under a certain category have implications for the rest. For instance, supervision or the lack of it, as is the case in Greece, may primarily be a micro issue if seen in relation to the effect on individual practitioners and/or individual cases. It may also be viewed as a meso issue linked to organisations, their day-to-day running, procedures, management and accountability, and also a macro issue as it reflects gaps at the policy level.

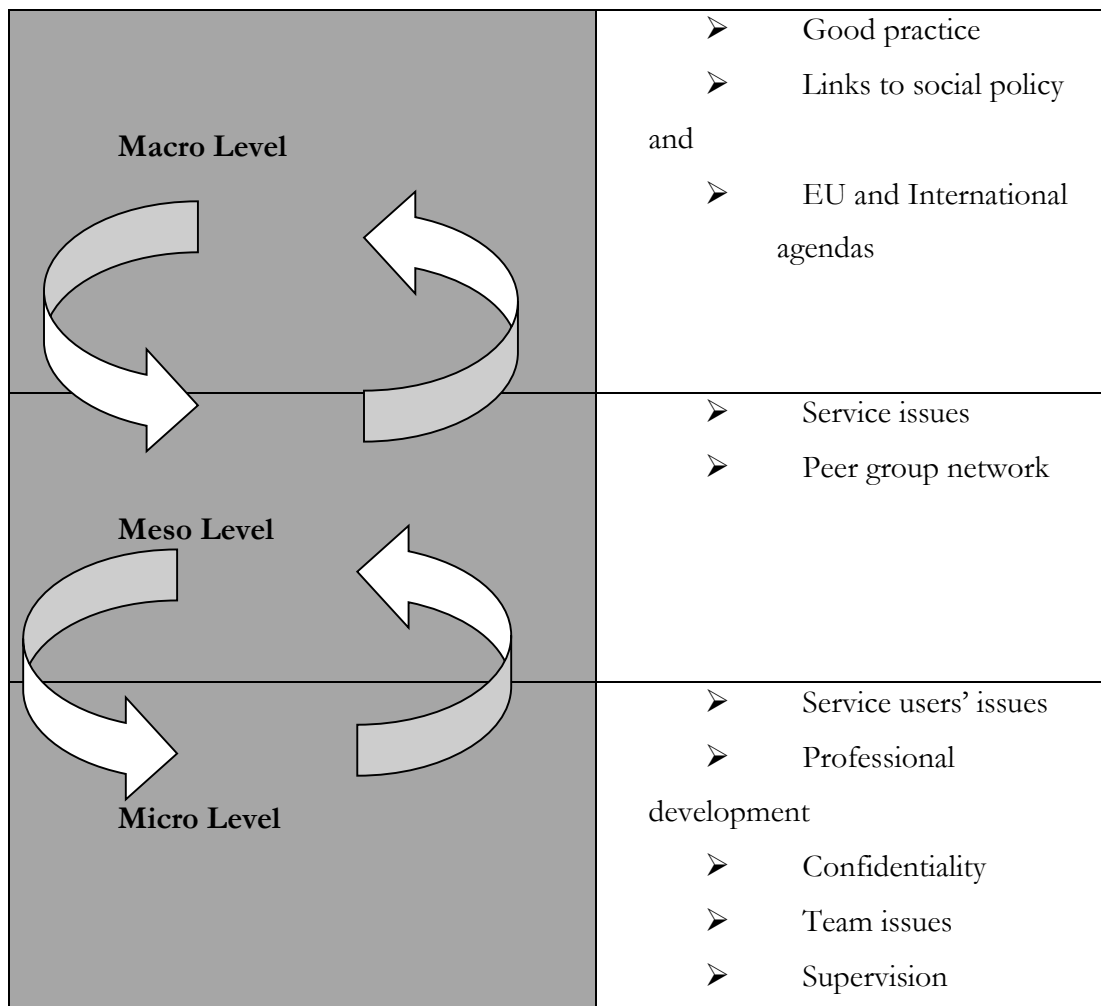


Figure 12 Arising issues presented on the different levels of network policy

In addition, information contained in this section has been gathered through interviewing various professionals and by observing them in action, i.e. the micro level. All other levels are in a sense depicted only through the perspectives of these practitioners. Therefore, findings will be presented in reverse order, meaning that their presentation will begin from the micro level, which is also the level that contains the greater amount of information and describes the actual interaction within the system. Data from observations and interviews are combined as observations began first and informed the choice of topics to be discussed. The observations proved extremely valuable in that they provide an additional perspective and increased understanding of the material presented in the interviews.

Finally, findings emerging from both networks are pooled together due to the fact that the differences between the two were not considered significant enough to justify a comparative presentation and the fact that Network B was composed of six interviews and Network A had ten.

5.41 Micro Level

5.41.1 Feelings on network participation: During the interviews, network members admitted to experiencing a variety of feelings, both positive and negative, regarding the network and their participation in it. Although counting is not that significant in qualitative analysis, more positive than negative feelings were reported. This provides a clear indication of the overall climate within which these monthly meetings took place and colour the overall collaborative experience in bright, hopeful shades. This suggests that the majority of the practitioners have something to gain out of working with each other and in general enjoy being part of this interactive forum, a conclusion that confirms the researcher's observations.

The respondents described the following positive feelings: *-feeling safe, -supported, -sharing anxieties and fears, -networking, -helpful, -group supervision, -finding solutions, -educational, -constructive criticism, and finally, -satisfaction.*

It would appear that feeling supported, being able to share anxieties and fears and listen to constructive criticism could be prerequisites for feeling safe and thus reaching better case resolutions. In addition, a network that finds solutions and is simultaneously considered by its members to be educational could be characterised as helpful for the practitioners themselves in terms of promoting both their professional development. This is extremely significant if the almost complete lack of opportunities for further training is taken into account. In Greece, unlike England, apart from privately paying for a course or choosing to attend a conference, there are no built-in prospects for career advancement through free, in-house continuous training and development. The notion of lifelong learning encouraged by employers is distinctively absent from the organisations' vocabulary.

Additionally, there is some overlap in the words discussed above (e.g. supportive, helpful, etc.). One could possibly consider merging the aforementioned categories, but all words were used by the respondents and sometimes, after a second or third reading of the data, a slight variation in a manner of expression can enhance or delicately twist the meaning attached to a

specific response. Overall, the dominant feeling is that professionals are responding positively to each other's scrutiny, learning from each other's experiences and relying on each other for support. Working in the child protection arena can undoubtedly be a stressful, even at times fearsome experience and the existence of such a supportive network would act as a welcoming safety net for a practitioner (Sayers, 1991; Balloch et al, 1998; Littlechild, 2005). Such a network could operate in a protective manner, thus shielding the individual against burnout, which is a fairly common danger in this line of work.

Finally, when these categories are considered as a whole it might be possible to link them all together under the description that one interviewee provided, that of group supervision. Supervision requires a sense of safety and support, a degree of exposure of one's practice (i.e. constructive criticism) to the rest of the group, whilst also including an educational, problem-solving approach. It could be strongly advocated that such characteristics are amply present in a textbook relationship between supervisor and supervisee. Thus, it is easily deduced that the Greek network might well be replicating a supervisory context and hence substituting for the lack of any formal in-service arrangements. Given the stresses and heightened anxieties in the child protection arena this is a pivotal function of the networks.

It is at this point imperative to emphasise that in Greece supervision is not typically made available to professionals working with abused and/or neglected children and their families, a fact already highlighted in the third chapter of this thesis. As a result, one would expect that a group/network that brings together so many different professionals with such varied levels of experience could perfectly function as some form of peer supervision, especially for its weaker, less experienced, members. This function of the particular group might be more prominent than it would be in England where all professionals receive at least some sort of supervision, even if it is not always ideal.

This data could have an added value in reinforcing the argument for supervision and the significance and necessity for such provision to be made widely available to practitioners working in health and/or welfare across the board, whilst being regulated and mandated by the state. Quotes such as, "*I need to be at these meetings*" and "*I am all alone here. I got my degree and then they threw me in a service*", blatantly indicate the urgency and frustration experienced by practitioners in the field, particularly those who are newly qualified or less experienced than their colleagues. However, a negative ramification is that without any clear responsibility, an open group format, no regulations and accountability, professionals and families are at risk.

Practitioners in Greece are rarely supervised, which is a great danger, especially in the child protection arena, while accountability issues within the case study areas were seen to be dealt with by retaining the existing lines within individual partners in network A and by devising a core group and a hierarchy in network B, the more formal network. Additionally, neither network had supervision in place, though the least formal one, network A, offered more opportunities for such a relationship to evolve between colleagues.

The importance of supervision especially when working within the child protection arena has long been established in the relevant literature. Discourse has now moved beyond this point and is rather preoccupied with ensuring better quality supervision instead of arguing for its necessity. For example, Rushton and Nathan (1996) argue for more specialist supervision to be made available to frontline practitioners working in such a pressurised area that is child protection. Morrison (1993; 1996; 2001; 2010) has also written extensively on supervision linking the quality of supervision to the quality of practice, that impacts positively on service provision and ultimately affects the client's outcomes. He advocates a "4x4x4 Model", thus integrating the four functions of supervision –management, professional development, emotional support, and mediation- with the reflective supervision cycle –experience, reflection, analysis, plans and action- and the four stakeholders, the member of staff, the organisation, the service user, and the partners. (2010:5) It is the dynamic relationship of all those involved that can affect supervision.

Network A enjoys the advantages of being an entirely voluntary network. This in turn guarantees that professionals work with each other of their own accord and possibly even have a more helpful attitude than one would expect to find in a top-down, enforced or mandated cooperative scheme. This might help justify some of the overall greater positivism observed in Network A in comparison to Network B.

The literature highlights as one of the main drawbacks of working in a group, 'the desire to avoid conflict' (Munro, 2008:148). This is coupled with what are called overt or covert 'pressures towards conformity',⁵⁹ which translate into a tendency, or even bias, to agree with the majority so that decisions appear to be unanimous. It is always difficult to stand up against a group of people and choose to differ without doubting oneself, especially when that group may include professionals with much greater experience and power who enjoy the respect of the

⁵⁹ Ibid: 149-150.

local community. In addition to these evidenced norms, members of this particular network cannot be held responsible for any of their contributions, as there are no shifts in accountability, and any suggestions or solutions given do not require any sort of justification or ‘owning up’ to the outside world. If advice is followed and fails to achieve the desirable outcome, there is no way of knowing who made the decision or plan. This alters the dynamic of the group significantly and sets it even further apart from any case conference or core group held in England. The absence of minutes in Network A further undermines any sense of individual responsibility, this further increases the risk of suggestions put forward easily, lightly and without much thought.

Members described the following negative feelings: *-anger, -tiredness (feeling fed up), and -confusion*. The anger and the tiredness seem to be related to professionals feeling that membership in the group fluctuates significantly at times; thus, any sense of excitement when new members join is coupled with disappointment as older members pull out and disappear. This coming and going, a characteristic of all open groups, must also impact on the members’ sense of safety, a fact that was commented upon by different interviewees at a later stage in the interview and which will be revisited below. The frustration can be such that it has the potential to overshadow any sense of achievement or progress within the network, intensified by the fact that trustworthy professional relationships take time and energy to rebuild all over again when someone new walks through the door. Therefore, even though expertise may not be lost as such, since the pool is consistently replenished, personal investment in the group may be compromised as the group lacks consistency. This drain was occasionally observable during meetings and was also noted in the interviews as the members referred to the occasional participants as ‘comets’, with no intention of staying and putting in the time and effort required. Moreover, the behaviour of existing network members might occasionally discourage those who show up on an irregular basis. However, on the micro level as the professional who leaves the group has been “trained” to collaborate and they may act as a resource, albeit in the more distant community, whilst at the same time someone new is given the opportunity to acquire such skills. Consequently, cooperative ethos is cultivated and spread, which could eventually provide fertile ground for additional initiatives and the network, is not constantly operating in comfortable but stagnant waters.

On the other hand, only one interviewee quoted feeling confused: “...at times I was really more confused but that was less frequent”. This was further explained as a result of the many views

and arguments heard during the meeting, which could at times be inconclusive. Decision-making is not a current function of this network, as has already been established. This can be experienced as extra pressure on the case bearer as more options are opened up through the discussion which can appear bewildering as they will almost certainly involve more thinking and careful planning and coordinating for a case. As a result, an initial negative reaction to what can be perceived as extra work can be anticipated. However, even though decision-making is a set function of child protection conferences in England, research has surprisingly shown that the majority of time is devoted to sharing information between the participants, while only a little time, approximately nine minutes, is set aside for decisions and forward planning. (Farmer and Owen, 1993)⁶⁰ This finding, surprising though it may seem to an outsider, is in keeping with the researcher's personal experience whilst working as a social worker in child protection in England.

Furthermore, being part of an apparently headless group-as appears to be the case at first glance for network A- may add to the confusion, particularly for the inexperienced practitioners and/or those who are so embedded in the hierarchical and bureaucratic way of working, i.e. being told what to do and how to do it, that they cannot cope otherwise.⁶¹ Freedom requires virtue and courage, as the ancient Greeks put it. Independent thought and initiative can be seriously impaired when working within an unforgiving, old fashioned and rigid system and this networking may be a way to flutter the doves by avoiding habitual ways of working and encouraging practitioners to think and focus on the supremacy of the child's best interest. If effortlessly promoting good practice can be counted upon as a standardised outcome of such collaborative schemes, then this alone covers enough ground to justify advocating the nationalisation of working together. At this point of the argument it once again becomes apparent how micro level issues are in constant interplay with the meso and macro levels and are thus at times inseparable.

⁶⁰ As cited in Bell, 1999.

⁶¹ On closer inspection, there is a long-established natural leader who can lead with verbal and non-verbal clues and around whom are a number of the strongest members, again a sense of a separate core.

5.41.2 Positives and negatives for the professionals arising from network participation: The **advantages** as described by the professionals themselves during the interviews are as follows: - *helpful; -indirect supervision, -team identity; -therapeutic; and -valuable.*

Helpful and valuable have some common ground as something helpful is definitely valuable but it is not always the case vice versa, meaning that something valuable may not necessarily be helpful. However, in this study it appears that the two words are linked on all occasions and used with the same meaning in mind. See below how the professionals involved in this study interpreted the two words.

Helpful	Valuable
<i>Receiving directions from the network</i>	<i>Alternative, best or original solutions</i>
<i>Picking up the phone anytime when insecure</i>	<i>Don't have to deal with difficult issues alone</i>
<i>The network always responds</i>	<i>You see the results of your work</i>
<i>Sharing experiences</i>	
<i>Hearing views/ different angles</i>	

Figure 13 Comparing and grouping quotes

One could argue that the two headings could in this instance be used interchangeably. It is important to note how supervision emerges yet again. A therapeutic, helpful and valuable forum could well be a supervisory one, although risks are most certainly involved, as has already been discussed in the previous subsection of this chapter. Similarly, the mention of the word “therapy” in such a group could sound equally alarming given that these networks were originally envisaged and have been operating as supportive professional groups to enable collaborative working for service users and not as therapeutic groups for their members. Such views foster misunderstandings that do not do the initiative any favours, if circulated. However, as a regular observer, the researcher has the ability to solemnly deny any such function of these particular groups and attribute the respondent’s choice of words to an attempt to give extra emphasis to the supportive or even nurturing nature of the networks, especially for young professionals. In conclusion, the best way of interpreting the description “therapeutic” would be that participating in the network seems to in a sense counterbalance the

negative experiences and the difficulties involved in frontline, children and family work. It is also worth noting at this point that the strongest wording stems more often from the respondents from the first network. On a similar note, Barbee and Antle (2011) described lower stress levels and higher staff retention as a result of collaborative working.

The sense of belonging to a team and sharing an identity is also very significant, especially so when it comes to dealing with difficult issues, vulnerable children and families, tough, borderline decisions, chaos, restricted resources and bureaucracy. This term implies a sense of security and affiliation. It must be good to feel you are not the only one faced with all this and that you don't have to deal with such complex issues on your own. Again, based on responses from the interviews, this would appear to be even more accentuated when it comes to newly qualified staff members. These remarks also illustrate that bonding or gelling processes, as they are often referred to in group work, have successfully taken place and as a result the person identifies with the network so much so that he/she perceives it as a team, a term with positive connotations that entails a degree of closeness or proximity to the rest of the members. This is one of the prerequisites for successful collaboration according to the relevant literature, so the establishment of a somewhat common identity is an indicator that the practitioners have greater chances of working together well. (Gough et al, 1987:101; Robinson et al, 2008:56; cited in chapter 2)

In contrast, the **disadvantages** for the professionals were grouped and are presented as follows:

-frequency of meetings (or maybe more appropriately, infrequency of meetings); *-informal*; *-irregular participation*; *-lack of publicity*; *-loss of cases* (professionals agree on a way forward but then a service or the court might make a different decision); *-network size*; *-resistances* (professionals and services resisting change and working in a fossilised manner, in isolation, a criticism mainly addressed at the 'other services', or in other words implying those operating outside the network); and *-space for meetings* (this was resolved along the way and only appeared in initial interviews and exclusively in relation to network A).

There is some notable controversy here. As some of the interviewees complaining about the infrequency of meetings according to the researcher's observations, do not seem to attend very regularly, the question arises as to how they would cope if meetings became even more frequent given that there is evidence that their attendance is erratic to begin with. In addition, there is the danger that by increasing the demand placed on individuals' time some of them will

withdraw from the initiative altogether, unless this extra time is built into their work routine. This would, however, require a certain degree of formalisation of the network, which would ultimately bare a cost, an important issue to be discussed further in this chapter.

Concerns were also raised about irregular participation. Can professionals handle the let-down? Or as one interviewee puts it: “...*pity this service is again absent and it would have been very interesting to talk to them about this case...*”. Some professionals admitted that those who do not attend are defensive and say things like “*The service does not allow me to participate*” and/or “*I am alone*”, “*I don’t have time*”. One professional felt that the real reason behind the non-attendance was the professionals’ inability to take criticism and expose their practice to scrutiny. Others felt that it had to do with lack of publicity; people were unaware of the network’s existence.

There is a lot of ambivalence regarding the optimum level of formalisation. Some interviewees appear to believe that the network would benefit, if formalised. Examples given were that *it would be easier to attract more services/professionals* and there would be *more power to enforce decision-making* and *affect policy makers*. Nevertheless, others in network A talk as if dreading such a development, claiming the network would risk becoming institutionalised, bureaucratic, etc. An interviewee’s quote for formalisation: “*The services involved will have to allow professionals the time to attend. It will be seen as part of their duties. Now it is viewed as amateur ...something that might be good but has not got a ‘face’; it is ‘foggy’ ...*”. In contrast, “*If obligatory, like the one in Athens, it might lose its essence...become more managerial...*” and/or “*So many years it has been led by people’s initiative, a desire to be there...I do not know if it would be the same if it became mandatory.*” This is not an easily-settled matter, particularly if one takes into account the situation in England, where there is an abundance of formality, guidelines and procedures but without any great sense of achieving the optimum conditions for seamless cooperation and without, one could safely argue, levels of member satisfaction similar to the ones observed in this study. Although the latter point could be seen to be closely related to the overall lack of any supportive structures in Greece that make the network a contemporary ‘deus ex machina’. Paulsen Breimo and colleagues (2016) suggest that other countries are imposing networking “through similar highly formalised, top-down regulatory provisions, even though the intended directions of change differ markedly” (p. 1).

Having stated that, network B has continued to exist even though its founder/initiator is no longer involved, but as it is the more formalised network of the two that were studied, it may therefore be that the level of formalisation achieved counteracts the absence of the original

leader or successfully shifts the balance from relying on individuals to encompassing whole services.

In terms of the size of the network, professionals seem willing to open the network and involve more professionals and more services. This is suggested in what could be characterised a naïve manner, as it does not seem to involve any kind of contemplation of the additional difficulties, stresses and practical implications that will manifest themselves. The sensation is that members are eager to spread the word and share their good fortune with the rest of the professionals in the field and also gain some access to additional resources and expertise because even though in the first network services do not participate officially, if the people who constitute the service, the professionals, are willing, they can usually find a way to fulfil any network requirements. This is even easier given that public services in Greece do not have as many layers of middle management and the service managers are more often than not from other disciplines, such as economics or law. As a result, for better or worse, professionals still enjoy a greater degree of discretion.

5.41.3 Practical issues that impact communication and collaboration: The following practicalities were identified by the interviewees, presented again in the same order as in the previous subsection, depicting the frequency of their citing starting with the most popular: *-staff movements* (when forming and posing this question, the interviewer understood it as professionals changing jobs, but respondents also brought in the dimension of *moving from your office to attend meetings or meet with other professionals*, raising the fact that expenses were only very rarely covered by the service, unlike in England, where every professional is entitled to car mileage and/or a refund for money spent on public transport tickets when attending meetings or visiting families in their homes); *-other*; *-admin support*; *-time restrictions*; *-size of network*. Again, most of the issues raised here seem to fit with the findings presented in the relevant literature about England. (Birchall and Hallett, 1995)

It is interesting to mention that when professionals were initially asked to identify practical issues, the majority expressed the view that such issues did not exist, or that even if they did, they could easily be resolved with good will and continuing involvement. However, this initial picture changed when at a later stage during the interview the respondents were provided with a list of issues derived from the relevant literature.

Interviewees could also recognise ways that some of the aforementioned practicalities could actually have a positive impact on the situation as a whole. They saw that increasing the size of the network could be beneficial, as it would mean more services involved and more views heard. They also described staff movements as positive in that professionals moving to a new service could carry on participating and thus establish a new connection, as a service previously not involved could as a result become so in the future. At this point it is in the researcher's opinion important to clarify that many, if not the majority, of professionals working in the public sector in Greece are employed as permanent staff members, so movement is less common than in England, for example. A position in the public sector is mainly seen as a job for life, ending only with retirement and modified only by individual transfer requests. It is only workers employed by NGOs or those working for local government on a contractual basis that are faced with the possibility of a move and as such face a degree of instability. Hence, researching staff movement, or job mobility, would be more relevant to the situation in England.

Under other issues or practicalities that could hinder collaboration, respondents added the fact that the first network, network A, *operates outside a specific legal framework*. They also mentioned the *lack of education for collaboration in all professional training* and the *danger that such initiatives could become quite bureaucratic, if formalised*, which would translate into trading off any degree of flexibility they may now possess.

5.41.4 Is it necessary for parental responsibility to be recognised prior to any interventions?: All responses described parents assuming responsibility for their actions or inactions as secondary, desirable but possibly achievable through a therapeutic process, more as an end result rather than a prerequisite for intervention. Therefore, this dilemma does not appear to feature as a potential point of friction within the networks. Overall, this could indicate that Greek professionals prefer a softer approach compared to some of their British counterparts. In other words, they would support the parents and work with them without requesting they accept ownership of any behaviour that could be seen as endangering the child. Having established this, the concern arising may be that it could be possible that Greek professionals tend to work in specific ways exclusively to avoid conflict. As a practitioner the researcher would be worried, if this was the case, given that some challenging is very often necessary when working within child protection.

5.41.5 Role clarity: Only one professional advocated that “*there is some role clarity*” when dealing with child protection cases. Another spoke of the network meetings as “*a place where such issues were clarified*”, but the rest painted a negative picture. Some of the exact quotes are as follows: “*...how the whole system works with cases of abuse-neglect is a slightly painful story here in Greece...*”, and “*We all become psychiatrists and psychologists. Role confusion.*”, and also “*...we would very often use theory as an excuse not to intervene...*”, and

“*...non-governmental organisations often say yes, but if we go to the prosecutor the prosecutor won't reply, he won't move the case forward because he does not care. And ok, let's say we take the case to the prosecutor, what will happen since there is nowhere to place the child and what, are orphanages a better solution?*”, and finally,

“*...not all can become social workers, or all saviours...*” and “*...the one who goes to deliver bread to the house should not play the psychologist.*”.

Such views clearly underscore a general lack of role clarity that impacts the effectiveness of the system and has at some point troubled many of the practitioners who took part in this research and would most likely feature as a common point of friction in any type of collaborative working. Clarifying roles has been presented in research as a necessity for collaboration (Mildon and Shlonsky, 2011). However, as Feng and colleagues stated in 2010, clear roles may be easier for practitioners to fulfil and achieve a good performance, but do not guarantee actual teamwork. The obvious absence of state guidelines or protocols and specialised services highlighted in the fourth chapter are unmistakably worsening the situation. Such conditions no doubt lead to a compromise on equity, hence leaving each case to its own fate, which is in this day and age simply unacceptable. Lack of protocols can also translate to collaboration that is “*improvisational and situational, involving trial and error*” (Davidov et al, 2016: 1).

5.41.6 Role importance: Apart from one interviewee who cited that usually responsibility or importance lies with either the social worker or the child-psychiatrist and another who spoke of an emphasis on doctors in Greece, all the rest shared the following opinions:

“*...all are important*”, “*...during different stages (of the case) there is different importance.*”,

“*...the most important in all this is not each role separately but the role of the team*”

“*...importance varies according to the case*”.

The above statements are not as contradictory as they may appear at first glance and a combined version would make perfect sense. All professional roles are important in child protection, although different professions may be in prominence for different cases or during the various stages of a single case's evolution. Overall, it is the combined effort of all professions that counts more than individual contributions. It is however also true that people tend to identify the social worker or psychologist or psychiatrist as the case bearer, coordinator or the "lead professional", to use UK terminology, who manages the case long term, whilst other professionals dip in and out as required. Furthermore, the medical profession dominates the social care profession in Greece and its power and status may even be slightly greater there due to the fact that Greece is a more traditional society. In conclusion, respondents seemed to mainly be in agreement and therefore no intense rivalries would be anticipated within the group, even though it is clearly observable that the active core of network A is fairly medically dominated. This can obviously lead to concerns in relation to the other professionals' ability to question a long established status quo. Hallett and Birchall, 1992 highlight that doctors are "high is public prestige and ascribed authority" (p. 167) and go on to stress that "broad public assumptions about the relative standing of the actors in the child protection system, built into their employment systems, also affect their own mutual perceptions and interactions." (p.175) However, no obvious turf wars were observed during the researcher's two-year involvement though medical dominance at least on network time was evident. Another explanation of this avoidance to identify lead professionals is that given their culture Greek respondents may also avoid choosing their own profession over others because they see such behaviour as openly egoistical. Such statements are to be avoided even if the professionals may have silently thought that that was the case resulting in false readings of agreement.

5.41.7 Down to business; professionals' commenting on what it is like to work with members of the various professions: During their interviews, the practitioners were asked to comment on their experience working with specific professions. To begin with, two professionals gave the following general comments: "*It depends on the person*" and "*The work place, I think, is of great importance*", thus, linking the quality of collaboration with personal rather than professional characteristics, in the first instance, and in the second, considering the workplace to be a factor of significance in this equation.

The table below is an attempt to present the rest of the comments on collaborating with particular professions: positive responses are marked as (+), negatives as (-), no collaboration (0), and neutral (+& -).

LIST OF PROFESSIONS	RESPONDENTS			
	SOCIAL WORKERS	PSYCHOLOGISTS	CHILD PSYCHOLOGISTS	CHILD PSYCHIATRISTS
SOCIAL WORKERS	(+) (-) (+ & -)	(+ & -) (Extremes) (+ & -)	(+)	(+& -) (+& -) (+ & -) (+)
HEALTH VISITORS	(0) (+) (0)	(+) (0)	(0)	(+) (0) (+) (+)
TEACHERS	(-) (+ & -) (+)	(+) (Bumpy) (+)	(-)	(+ & -) (Choice) (0) (+ & -) (+)
POLICE OFFICERS	(+) (+) (0)	(+) (-)	(-)	(-) (-) (+& -) (0)

DOCTORS	(0) (+) (+)	(+) (+)	(+ & -)	(+ & -) (choice) (+) (+ & -) (+?) ⁶²
LAWYERS	(+) (+) (+)	(+ & -) (+)	(+)	(+ & -) (0) (0) (+)
PSYCHOLOGISTS	(+) (+) (+)	(+) (+ & -)	(+)	(+ & -) (+) (+) (+)
PSYCHIATRISTS	(+) (+) (+ & -)	(+) (+)	(+)	(? Adult) ⁶³ (+) (+ & - Adult) (+)
NURSES	(+) (+) (0)	(+) (-)	(+)	(+) (+) (+ & -) (0)
OTHER PROFESSIONS				Speech therapists, Ergo therapists, Special

⁶² The question mark is used where the researcher is not sure that the view expressed was only positive.

⁶³ The question mark is followed by the word adult as the comment recorded was intended in reference to adult psychiatrists, whilst the plus signs were for child psychiatrists.

				needs teachers ⁶⁴
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Figure 14 Presenting the respondents views on working with various professionals

Almost all interviewees commented on the lack of health visitors combined with an overall positive image of their contribution. This is interesting in that, although the majority of participants have had little or no contact with health visitors, all views expressed were positive. This could be interpreted either as judging the profession's ability to co-operate based on the experience of one very positive health visitor, or idealising and replying based on what one would expect health visitors to be like given their training and strategic positioning (e.g. access to the family, non-stigmatising service, etc.).

Social workers and police officers were the professions with the least positive scoring, but it is important to take into account that no police officers were interviewed⁶⁵ and as a result there is no telling how this picture could have shifted if they had been included. Furthermore, although the two professions scored equally on the positive side, the police received the highest negative score of all groups, whilst social workers received more points in the mixed or ambivalent category (+& -). In addition, when commenting on their own profession, social workers mirrored the views of the group, which could be interpreted as greater insight or sincerity on their behalf. Finally, the researcher is a trained social worker but this did not discourage participants from voicing ambivalent or negative views.

Psychologists got the most positive reviews on cooperation, followed closely by psychiatrists, then doctors, lawyers and nurses. When commenting on their own profession, psychologists provided positive reviews on their colleagues' ability to cooperate. Psychiatrists, on the other hand, voiced concerns regarding adult psychiatrists, stating that they approached their work differently and were sometimes hard to work with. It is also important to point out that the first network is dominated and/or led by psychiatrists, a fact that could imply that other professionals participating were reluctant to assign negative values to their ability to cooperate. Some respondents even differentiated between psychiatrists in the network versus the ones outside it. It could also be argued that there is a possibility that any professionals who

⁶⁴ These are the extra professions that the participants suggested.

⁶⁵ The police service did not participated in Network A and was not available for interview in Network B.

found it difficult to work with them would leave the group sooner rather than later and in the meantime would be likely to opt out of this study. As a result, they would not be a part of this particular sample. This could suggest biased results in favour of psychiatrists.

Teachers' positive scores were just one point higher than those assigned to social workers and police officers. They also received two negative reviews and three ambivalent votes, the same number as doctors. It is significant to point out that no teachers were part of the sample; thus, their rating has not been altered by the inclusion of their views about their own profession.

Regarding ease of cooperation, the study of Hallett (1995) reports the following results. Health visitors were voted as "very easy" to cooperate with by 32% of the participants whilst social workers were voted by 27%. Only few participants voted psychologists as very easy to work with. Psychiatrists received the "rather difficult" ranking by 22%. Participants in Birchall's study in 1992 ranked health visitors as top; followed by school nurses, teachers, the police and then social workers.

Another study that examined child protection and mental health practitioners, the two disciplines that form the core of the Greek networks, identified issues that affect professionals' attitudes towards other disciplines. These were reported as training, positive outlook towards one another and mutual mistrust (Darlington et al, 2005).

5.42 Meso Level

5.42.1 Variation in the experience of collaboration between member organisations in comparison to non-member organisations: Two professionals noted no difference between collaborating with network members and non-members and put it down to individuals working within these organisations and their personalities. The rest recognised a positive difference when working together with member organisations and put that down to the acquired familiarity that goes hand in hand with belonging to the network and the common language established between the professionals. The common language developed is described as a more psychosocial way of thinking, which could be perceived as a more complex, holistic approach. It is in that context that professionals speak of the educational role of the network. In conclusion, it appears that it is easier to work with people you know and with whom you have developed common codes to understand each other. Easier and better communication impacts positively on the quality of collaboration. This seems a perfectly logical result evident in the

literature presented in the previous chapter (Miller and McNicholl, 2003 and Miller and Stirling, 2004).

5.42.2 Advantages and disadvantages for services involved arising from network participation:

Similarities of impact between what is recorded in the literature and what emerges in the findings from Greece appear to be quite significant, although some variation does exist. One of the most striking examples of divergence is that collaboration in Greece comes across as greatly focused on interventions and support packages, post-recognition rather than an emphasis on the initial, investigative process, as is the norm in England. In contrast, the Greek professionals appear to have felt compelled to act together in order to treat the phenomenon rather than investigate it. The following issues were raised as advantages for the services represented by the professionals in attendance: *-communication, -coordination, -simplicity and -time.*

Some of the exact quotes were:

“There cannot be a successful intervention if every service is operating alone”, or “Avoid an autistic way of working either as individuals or as a service”, and “Communication between services is very often communication between individuals”.

These comments are significant, especially in a country that has no mandates for interagency communication. When the frontline professionals in one service are working together with professionals from another on various cases, or “knotworking” as it was defined in the previous chapter, even if there are no formal links between the services at a managerial and a policy level, the services are effectively collaborating- especially so given the nature of the Greek system that, as already discussed in this chapter, affords greater discretion to professionals- and combining their efforts for that specific child or family. The Greek government seems to struggle with work that crosses ministerial boundaries but Lipsky’s “street level bureaucrats” seem to have found a working formula. Finally, as one respondent clearly put it: *“...these personal relationships (i.e. relationships between the members of the network) impact on your work because we do not discuss personal problems...”*, thus successfully demonstrating the public benefit arising out of the personal sphere.

The disadvantages were cited only in relation to *the size of the network*, i.e. not as wide as professionals would have liked it to be and as such failing to assist in service delivery to a great degree, thus demonstrating once more their inclination to expand.

Overall, as one of the respondents stated: *“The members of the network are the frontline professionals, the ones that in reality handle all cases of a service, the most active ones; therefore, if they gain something from the network, then their services gain, too.”* Could one argue that so would the service users? Although this question is not as straightforward as it might initially appear to be, professionals could, for example, benefit from a chance to relax, meet with other colleagues and share their hopes and fears, and thus recharge themselves and be in a better frame of mind to work with their clients. However, it could also be considered time wasted on networking, precious time that should be spent on users’ issues, though this interpretation does not fit the evidence gathered during this project.

Overall, whilst re-reading the data collected on the networks, the idea of networking as a form of social capital emerged. It is clearly evident to the researcher that all these frequently undervalued, overworked and isolated professionals encounter an important opportunity to grow when joining the networks; they find bridges and links that help them become better professionals and more efficient and that possibly even give them a higher degree of job satisfaction, elements which are exceptionally important to those struggling in the stressful, often hostile and demoralising atmosphere of Greece’s chaotic child protection system. Thus, networking becomes a supportive and invaluable resource that can help care workers strengthen their ability to work under these tremendously difficult circumstances and deal with professional burnout.

5.42.3 Advantages and disadvantages for service users arising from network participation: It is important to stress that as much research in the field, this study addresses the question of a practice’s impact on service users partly, by asking professionals to speak on the service users’ behalf due to time and access restraints. This is definitely quite problematic as one can never be sure of whether users’ views would correspond to those of professionals or even be remotely similar for that matter. It is however, the norm as most studies in the field explore benefits via the accounts of practitioners. A welcome exception is a study by Buckley and partners in 2008 that reports that children and parents viewed collaboration as responsible for receiving a better service.

On another instance Karatekin and colleagues (2014) reported that an integrated case management program featured positively on outcomes related to child maltreatment by examining child protection referrals and placements outside the biological family. They also commented that in the literature “there is not yet enough information to decide whether an

integrated service model is more effective than usual care and which type of integration works best for each population” (p. 17). On the same note, a study in the health sector reported on the absence of significant findings establishing clear links between integrated services and positives outcomes for service users, such as greater satisfaction, better services, more cost efficiency and improved health (Brandt et al, 2014). Another research project from a different arena encountered negative evaluations on partnerships voiced by service users. Consequently, meetings were organised inviting all relevant stakeholders and progress was recorded (Lamie and Ball, 2010).

This noticeable lack of representation of service users’ views mentioned above, is of particular concern given the fact that in the 21st century discourse ‘clients’ are now ‘experts in their own right’. Although this is in line with the emphasis on rights and it is an empowering notion, it nonetheless minimises professional discretion yet again, following the first managerial wave brought about by modernity. However, it could be argued that a meeting where users are being discussed by a group of professionals in a medium-sized town might not have a measurable impact on the individuals as there could be no direct comparison between how the case would evolve with and without the network meeting, and given the compactness of the locality served by the network, it would be nearly impossible to identify a control group of similar cases and study their journey without the network’s interference.

A grave concern would, however, be that these children and families would appear to be discussed without their knowledge. This has clear human rights implications. In an era in which the world has gone far beyond informing service users of processes to actually inviting them to actively participate in meetings as partners and to have a say on any decisions made, Greece still seems to be working “behind their backs” under the aegis of greater professional discretion. Not only are service users not invited to meetings but they are also unaware of their existence, do not have a choice as to whether their family or personal issues are exposed to a wide group of professionals or not, and last, but by no means least, are not necessarily given any feedback about proposed plans of action and thus have no choice either. As Munro (2011) argues hearing the voices of children and families is a human rights’ issue.

In general, service user’ involvement does not feature highly in the Greek policy agenda to date. Many services lack even basic complaints or access to files procedures, as has already been discussed in the third chapter. As a result, neither of the networks studied included users in any way, although in theory they both are in existence for the benefit of their respective client

groups. A common paradox found in public sector service operation in Greece is that though services are funded by taxpayers' money and theoretically are in existence to serve the people, in reality, it would seem that the everyday user appears powerless. On this front, Greece and England would appear totally dissimilar, in that Greece has yet to even develop complaint and access to files procedures and hence is nowhere near treating children and families as partners and experts in their own right given that it has not even mastered treating them as consumers or recipients of services thus bearers of rights. It would seem that Article 12 is not part of the CRC endorsed by the Greek State.

Nonetheless, there seems to be a consensus amongst the professionals that:

"There cannot be a successful intervention if every service is operating alone" and

"The only reason for the existence of the network is to have a positive impact on service users".

It is therefore widely recognised by the interviewees that in unity is strength and that the best intentions are in place in that all of this effort is being made for the benefit of service users. It is refreshing to find so many advocates for collaboration at the grassroots level of such initiatives because their motivation can be interpreted as arising from the benefits they are enjoying already.

It seems that in articles published about one of the networks, the primary concerns that led to the creation of the network were that different services were working with the same family without being aware of each other's involvement. Anecdotal evidence claims that this was even occurring within the same office with various professionals being involved with different members of the family without any knowledge of each other's intervention, even though they sat only a few desks apart. This kind of oversight obviously has enormous implications on service delivery and on the service users. Consequently, any form of communication or networking between agencies and professionals working on a case would signify a huge improvement. It is therefore safe to assume that these networks have helped improve the reality that Greek service users are faced with in these specific localities. The hope would be to see more initiatives like these germinate throughout the country. Since the starting point, or previous threshold, for collaboration was zero, it is easy to evidence some progress, or in any case easier than if some level of co-working was already there. Barbee and Antle (2011) suggested that when services work in partnership (one important characteristic identified was colocation) this enables service users to access more services.

The advantages for service users as reported by the participating professionals were: *-child's best interest paramount* (no automatic responses, or habitual actions), *-educational, -holistic, -referrals* (less time consuming and involving better briefing) and *-therapeutic*.

Additionally, if the network is assisting professionals in finding solutions and combining their efforts and expertise, then this must affect the service users as it improves their chances of receiving a better service and makes transfers between services smoother and faster.

Furthermore, the professionals spoke of less anxiety or a greater sense of safety because they knew the person they were referring the case to thus echoing the concerns of a protective parent. This was linked to the fact that “...*there are different people in this arena; some are less competent sometimes...*”

The professionals, on the other hand, reported the disadvantages as follows: *-confidentiality, -irregular attendance, -special cases* (one service does not always find the network helpful for its own cases but puts this down to the cases rather than the network).

Some exact quotes on the negatives were:

“When the circle is wide, there is danger that cases could be recognised and things could then get out of hand” and

“People attending may not all be bound by confidentiality”.

There is also some doubt as to whether one can trust irregular members, thus linking lack of stability to confidentiality. In other words, erratic attendance enhances anxieties and impacts on feelings of safety within the group as it disrupts the trust-building processes.

There is some evidence that sensitive cases were at times discussed in a smaller circle and/or outside the meeting. From the researcher's observations, service users were never named, no files or reports were ever shared and on one occasion, during a meeting of the first network concerning a particular case under consideration that was due to specific circumstances easily identifiable, members who were not professionally bound by confidentiality were asked to leave the room prior to discussion. In the second network, network B, there is a smaller committee dealing with referrals that occasionally moves matters forward even without opening the case to the larger group for discussion. Having established that, confidentiality is of graver concern due to the fact that network B is serving an even smaller locality, making it almost impossible to maintain anonymity when discussing a case within the larger group as many of the families are known to different services at different times. Therefore, although the existence of a core group must allow for fewer people

involved, greater flexibility and maybe even a speedier response it is also an indication of a more formalised network. The first network, or network A, does not accept direct referrals as such any more, only dealing with active cases of the member organisations, as was established at the beginning of the current chapter.

5.43 Macro Level

“...Networking is not a panacea...”

5.43.1 Ways to improve the initiative:

-Membership Expansion and Frequency Increase

Some respondents asked for network expansion, i.e. more services to take part, and argued that this would make the network stronger and thus better for everyone involved. Obviously, any such move would make ensuring confidentiality even harder and, as has already been discussed, could be a mixed blessing.

The respondents also asked for greater involvement in the network. The suggestion was that participants should take an active role in informing others of its existence by organising information days and forums. There was also a call for better organisation prior to the meeting taking place, e.g. forming an agenda, determining who has a case to present, what services the presenting professional needs in attendance, etc. This call was explained by the interviewee as an attempt to save professionals' time as it would ensure that there is a case to be discussed at the meeting and also that the necessary participants are present so as to benefit by getting all those relevant to the specific case involved in one go. The second network provides informational leaflets and maintains a website, thus advertising its existence. An administrative body is also present at all meetings recording minutes, which would imply greater organisation, although that did not stop them from forgetting to invite the researcher when scheduling a meeting on more than one occasion or from cancelling meetings with greater frequency than the first network.

Furthermore, there was an argument for more meetings (twice a month) and the logic behind this was more meetings means more time. More time can be translated into more cases discussed in the forum and more in-depth discussions. However, there was again some doubt as to how realistic such a plan would be, a notion already mentioned previously.

Nonetheless, if one contrasted the two networks, network B would feature higher on the depth front as there is at least some formal agreement of cooperation which, if nothing more, signifies the involvement of whole services rather than individual employees, thus eliminating the danger of personifying the partnership.

-Publicity

Members of the first network felt that publicising the network's existence and function would be a way forward. To this end, various suggestions were put forward e.g. archiving minutes of meetings and texts on cases discussed and interventions achieved by the network. When asked by the researcher, members of the first network did not seem to be aware of any publications related to the network, though some do exist. This fact alone would cast doubt on the value of publications. If the publishers themselves are unaware of their existence, what could be expected of the greater public?

-Lobbying

Participants expressed the view that they would like to see this forum push for changes in the way things are done in the Greek child protection arena, thus arguing for a bottom-up approach to forming/changing social policy, which is definitely nowhere near the current norm in Greece. Moreover, they thought a promising shift would at this time be unrealistic given the current economic reality and the country's history of favouring those with the best social connections. However, such a move may indicate a hopeful way forward for professionals, services and service users across the board.

-Legal representation

Many professionals thought legal expertise within the first group would be useful for establishing a better collaborative relationship with the judiciary service. During my observation of the networks, members of the prosecution service for minors were formally invited to attend on more than one occasion but to no avail. Members of network A were concerned that there is a type of "improvisation" when it comes to dealing with legal matters. Social Services Departments do not have legal teams in Greece, so if a professional need apply for a care order, for instance, there is no help at hand and no supportive representation within the hearing. The Society for the Protection of Minors only has a legal team composed of volunteers who would represent a case in court on their behalf, if necessary, but these societies are now supposed to deal with delinquency and anti-social behaviour rather than abuse and

neglect exclusively. Their brief has therefore shifted over time even though there does not appear to be a service -certainly not a specialised one- stepping in to cover this gap in provision, as was already established in chapter four. The second network, network B, has local solicitors involved on a regular basis; therefore, legal advice is almost always at hand, thus ensuring a smoother transition of cases through the justice system.

-Financial assistance

This suggestion was not seen as absolutely necessary but as a means of hiring some administrative assistance and organising the whole system in a better way (network A). In contrast, the second network, network B, sees potential financial assistance as a way to help create a shelter for abused/neglected women and children, given that as a locality they are often faced with the lack of any suitable temporary accommodation for this particularly vulnerable client group.

5.43.2 Issues hindering communication and collaboration:

-Organisational issues

Such issues are detectable both within the network and within services in general. Services can be inflexible, erratic in attendance, “*comets*” (a graphic description given by one interviewee) passing through the network only to disappear soon after, routine in their working methods, and they can be managed by professionals with no idea of what working together means. There are professionals and services with the “*superhero*” (I can resolve all issues by myself) approach to cases with feelings of power they do not want to give up easily and those with the opposite “*get away from me evil*” approach, who pass cases on just to get rid of them without even stopping for a moment to think which referral would be the most appropriate for the specific case. There are also clear avoidance tactics stemming from a fear of getting involved, which is manifested as a “do not pick me, it is not my problem” approach. All these issues may appear to be more appropriately located on the meso level but are also on the macro as they are the norm and would be addressed more efficiently collectively on the macro level through some specific policies and guidelines.

The organisational environment in Greece is characterised by large, hierarchical bureaucracies, set in their ways of working and thus creating an obviously infertile atmosphere for integration. Therefore, any long-standing networks are even more admirable. The need

for less hierarchical relations features in the literature as an important enabler for collaboration, together with organisational change concerning culture, procedures, routines and activities. However, to accomplish this, a greater top-down commitment would be required, as state impetus could compel change while jeopardising any sense of ownership maintained by voluntary participation.

-Personalities

Personalities can make or break partnerships on all levels. Professionals may, in theory, share a common value base, but individuals can have characteristics that make it easier or even pleasurable to work with them whilst others are much less so. This personal side is probably more important in Greece in comparison to other countries due to the fact that the networks studied are more personalised to begin with and there is no obligation to attend. The latter characteristic is linked because if one individual was to find collaboration difficult he or she would probably quit the network rather than explore this further or seek any sort of remedial action.

-Theory versus Practice

In theory, during discussions, things may sound straightforward, but it is not as easy to put them into practice, so sometimes it is easier to stay within a theoretical bubble than to deal with reality. This is applicable on the policy level where phenomena may appear clear-cut but suggested solutions need to be tried and tested in practice. Figures high in the hierarchy inhabiting ivory towers are always in danger of overestimating themselves and their skills and abilities and losing sight of the practical everyday reality.

- The Welfare System

No clear guidelines and very few specialised services exist in Greece. There is no supervision but widespread clientelism, and an absent state and antiquated ways of working, as presented in the third chapter. In a similar way, the whole system was described as “*rotten*” by one professional and “*very sick*” by another, thus depicting the severity of the situation and the frustration of those working within it.

-Lack of Stability

It was discussed earlier in this chapter that an instable network places higher demands on the professionals involved the same way an open group does to its members in comparison to a closed group.

-Space

Space is significant, as the rotation system followed by Network A when the researcher started observing was costing in attendance. If collaboration is enhanced when professionals become familiar with each other, then a familiar space can but increase the sense of familiarity and lessen the confusion. The members found it easier not to have to negotiate hosting each month as this meant that at times the chosen location was far from suitable, either in terms of its proximity to the centre or in terms of its appropriateness as a meeting venue.

-Lack of time

Networking does take up some time, not only for the meeting itself, or travelling back and forth, but also in regards to the extra work that is likely to be generated. The significance of this issue is heightened when the overall picture of service provision in Greece is brought to mind. The majority of services as explained in the third chapter are understaffed thus professionals need to learn to strictly prioritise.

The networks in Greece do not appear to require major sacrifices in terms of time, staffing or funding and therefore might figure positively when looked at from this angle. Any positive outcome, however small, becomes an unambiguous improvement when the effort and/or cost entailed in attaining it are minimal. This is a favourable argument given the dire state the Greek economy is in today.

Overall, as research suggests organisational and relational factors affect the quality of cooperation (Cole, 2016). In 2004 Darlington and collaborators proposed that contested issues can impact collaboration. They also included communication, role clarity, different focus (who is the client) and resources as barriers. In 2005 the same group of researchers suggested that resources, confidentiality, processes, expectations, knowledge fields and boundaries were obstacles to collaboration. Lee and colleagues in 2015 presented “challenging work climates characterised by limited resources, high workloads and staff turnover, and lack of guidelines” as issues hindering collaboration (p. 170). The wider picture in Greece is characterised by four out of the five issues raised by the aforementioned research thus making the existence of the networks studied even more remarkable. A study by Drabble in 2011 identified

communication and fragmentation as obstacles to collaboration but they also included the ‘value of lessons learned’ as a way of overcoming these. Greek networks can definitely learn from this as they have existed for a significant amount of time. Learning from practice is also echoed in a study by Lindsey in 2014. Finally, a study of the cooperation between practitioners and Guardians ad Litem conducted in the US (Phillips, 2016) highlighted “frequent and open communication, mutual respect, understanding the other's role and responsibilities, having an open mind, and valuing collaboration” as factors improving partnership regardless of identified organisational and systemic blocks (p. 61).

5.43.3 All other significant issues or comments:

-Legal matters

According to some of the respondents, Greek laws for children and families should change or at least get updated so they are in line with international advancements and modern requirements. It is however, important to reiterate that this research took place at the time that the law was changing in Greece and therefore does not reflect any criticisms against it.

-Network evaluation

Participants expressed that a written report evaluating the work of the network should be made available to encourage others acting on higher policy levels to consider their paradigm. This finding ties in with the following two. Research suggests that network analysis may be the best approach to improve collaboration between different organisations (Walker, 2006; Como et al, 2014).

-The role of the network

A forum for change

The network could be the forum where professionals suggest changes or innovations (regarding legal, practice and service issues) based on experience. Here we see the lobbying role described above re-emerging and the boundaries between the macro, meso and micro levels challenged yet again.

A supervisory/ policy-related role

The network could potentially oversee or supervise services for children and families; make decisions on cases that services have to adhere by and produce guidelines on working with

complex cases. It was suggested that material could include a guide about dealing with complex cases in crisis, referring on, etc. In this instance, professionals appear to be asking for formal guidance to assist them with their practice, which could be seen as the complete opposite of some complaints made about too many guidelines and written procedures available in England. So is striking a balance the safe bet? Could the ideal lie somewhere between what seem to be extreme situations encountered in the two countries? The way this role was put forward by the professionals reminded the researcher of what used to be England's Area Child Protection Committee, or ACPC, which is a type of local committee or partnership responsible for overseeing matters related to translating national guidelines into local policies and procedures and overseeing child protection work. Such a model could be useful for Greece and will be examined further in the last chapter. This way of thinking, which clearly links policy making with policy implementation, obviously provides hope, an explanation for the journey so far and the future of the Greek initiatives in a country where no mandates exist whatsoever and where it would appear that the State is more often than not the last one on board.

-Staffing issues

Services are understaffed so needs cannot be met adequately. One professional characterised the vision of fully staffed services as "*a midsummer night's dream*" emphasising the fact that he/she viewed this option as highly unlikely to materialise.

If the network provides a more efficient, less time-consuming way of working with complex cases, could the development of similar networks throughout the country compensate in some way for the reoccurring issue of staff shortages within the public sector, or is this a very dangerous road that could be put to bad use by central government officials? As has already been argued within this thesis partnership is definitely not to be put forward as a way to mask shortages whether it be staffing, funding or any other type.

-Decentralisation issues

Some services only exist in Athens, as was initially exposed in the fourth chapter, but as is to be expected, other big and small cities are faced with equally demanding, multifaceted issues with much more limited service provision. Respondents expressed their frustration at this state of affairs. Though this is undeniably very real and significant, it is important to clarify that

statements mentioned above should not be taken to mean that provision is in any way near to adequate in the capital city either.

-Local and central government

There was no interest and no presence of local leaders in the first network, or network A. Professionals expressed the view that they would welcome some involvement but only by a sensitive, local politician who could promote the network, the key word here being 'sensitive'. *"This effort is very much alone"* a respondent declared, but looking for a sensitive politician may be like looking for a needle in a haystack. In contrast, the second network, network B, as has already been established, is operating under the auspices of the regional government, which in practice seems to translate into a degree of administrative support and available meeting spaces. Network B also has the support of a member of the political regional board (from a different professional background), who presides over some meetings and some money for advertising its initiative. This type of 'presidency' is likely to be adorned when suiting the political picture and there is doubt that a political figure with no prior training, coming from a totally irrelevant background and only passing through, can be truly helpful.

-Other comments

The respondents made the following negative comments:

"...(the concern is) whether it will function for the service users or for professionals skiving from work..." and

".... collaboration on its own does not mean anything...it's neither positive nor negative.... It can be a horrible thing; collaboration with a conqueror, for example Nazi collaborators, those people were collaborating! So collaboration what for? That's the main thing." and finally,

"The danger is to create the network as something above its users, working for itself, a new institutional structure so to speak."

Although all of the above remarks highlight dangers or concerns regarding the operation and objectives of the networks voiced by the people who are part of them, this is clearly an encouraging sign as it means that members are aware of the dangers lurking in the shadows and are constantly questioning themselves and their practice to ensure they are on the right track. It additionally signifies that they are not getting too comfortable within the created structure or resting on their laurels, but rather are still there for the children and families they serve.

On a more positive note,

"It would be good if it continues to exist" and

“...how great has the need for communication and collaboration been, at least for some people, so that for many years they have opted for continuity of the network’s functions, judging them as important.”,

thus indicating once again, that the members experience these initiatives as positive and admirable. Or in other words:

“...it’s something very useful; other services should take advantage of it (i.e. the network)...” In addition,

“...More communication is required; the network is such an attempt but more communication is required throughout the social fabric”

thus, demonstrating the need to expand these initiatives. There was also a suggestion to connect all similar initiatives and generate an even greater learning experience worded:

“...sometimes, even if it’s once a year, meetings could take place with various networks around the country...A common meeting to note down issues, exchange views, common concerns and share experience...”

Overall, there seems to be an optimistic drive to carry on participating in these initiatives seen largely as a positive experience in the hope that their benefits will eventually be recognised and they will spread to other services and localities. It can therefore be safely concluded that the two geographical areas studied in Greece will hold a clear advantage should further or fuller integration be attempted. This may hold true more for network B, as its formality can be perceived as a greater guarantee for continuous involvement. In contrast, network A, informal and voluntary as it is, could be interpreted as lacking in full and undisputable commitment at the managerial and strategic levels, which could seriously inhibit any plans for greater amalgamation. Nevertheless, both networks have a record of sustained activity over the past fourteen to fifteen years. However, on closer observation network A appears to have experienced greater fluctuation in that the turnover of members takes place at a higher frequency rate. In contrast, even though network B gives the impression of being more stable on the surface, there seems to be a noteworthy number of silent members, or members who do not participate in regular meetings but who are working in partnership on paper. This need not be regarded negatively as an alternative, equally valid, interpretation could well be that the respective organisations are in principal committed to collaboration and would offer their particular expertise as and when an individual case arises. In the case of network A, when professionals moved on to a different job, they occasionally carried on participating in a different capacity, but in most cases the service they represented previously would not substitute them so that no new member would replace them at the network meetings and

consequently the existing ties would be severed. On that note, recognising the participants' urge to expand, the researcher tried to encourage a common meeting between the two networks under study as a more action part of this research. Stemming from the practitioner, this initiative was pursued actively as a first step in the respondents' direction, particularly given that prior to this project the networks were not aware of each other's existence. However, after some effort and some meetings with key actors on both sides, it appears that what could be seen as a small first step has been achieved. One of the founding members of the first network, network A, attended a meeting of network B, establishing first contact whereby the nature of each network was presented and discussed. Unfortunately, the meeting ended without any clear plan as to how to evolve this further. This is nonetheless an important achievement in the field and along the lines of some of the thinking generated by the participants of this study. Unfortunately, the timeframe of this study did not allow any further involvement, but at least a communication channel has been opened and the necessary introductions made. Now it is up to the respective members to develop the networks in any way they see fit.

5.5 Conclusion

Chapter five that is now coming to an end has presented and discussed the findings from the second phase of this study during which two different networks based in separate localities were examined. The researcher observed network meetings and interviewed an array of professionals involved, discovering first-hand in a sense what was termed as examples of 'knotworking' in an environment proven fairly hostile to partnership working. At these sessions, first presented in the previous chapter as 'various forms of tying and untying of otherwise separate threads of activity'⁶⁶, in other words an array of professionals coming to work together around specific children and/or their families whilst maintaining their otherwise separate institutional and/or service paths in surroundings proven fairly antagonistic to networking. Groups of experts gathering around a table and becoming involved in a needs-based, solution-focused approach, thus transforming themselves into a case-specific team brought together to assess and satisfy the service needs of a particular family with a coordinated, holistic response. The result was a combination of practitioners selected on the

⁶⁶ Cited in Warmington et al, 2004.

basis of the child and/or family's unique story who were there not to investigate abuse and/or neglect but rather to support each other and undertake orchestrated remedial action. These informal networks are clearly responding to known cases, however, a formal structure could be useful in identifying new ones. This discovery was, in the researcher's opinion, the gem of this study in that it altered the overall impression of child protection in Greece, spreading hope to practitioners, researchers and children and families, and tentatively paving the way for politicians to change an otherwise rather disheartening picture.

The following chapter, chapter six, continues with the findings of this research. It focuses on the vignettes that were used as part of the interviews conducted with practitioners/members of the network. In this way it enhances picture that started to emerge in the current chapter.

Chapter 6

Findings and Discussion; the Three, Three-Staged Vignettes

Three-staged vignettes used in the 1995 Department of Health study by Birchall and Hallett were translated, adapted to the local culture and included in the interviews, as was already explained in the third chapter of this thesis. Subsequently, they were tested with two local professionals and one local academic. All vignettes were then presented to the interviewees in three stages, with more information made available as the stages progressed. The first vignette (A) described a young mother with two children and concerns of neglect and possible physical abuse paired with a history of domestic violence and mental health issues, which were gradually revealed to the respondents. The information regarding the boy's diet that read she feeds him "fish and chips and apples everyday" was changed to "souvlaki and apples" as this is culturally more appropriate. The second vignette (B) was exactly the same with the additional information that the family was of Albanian origin instead of a black family as was the case in the original vignette; this was done in an attempt to check for any emerging differences in the professionals' approach attributable to racial discrimination. The researcher chose this specific ethnic group because according to the 2007 Annual Report on Racism and Discrimination against Immigrants and Minorities in Greece:

"Negative stereotypes against minority groups and legitimisation of racial violence have proven difficult to extinguish. A football game between Greece and Albania readily sets off racist tensions that lead to clashes between Greeks and Albanians and even murders. What raises concerns is that the episodes cannot be attributed to a few nationalist and fascist groups, but that they are legitimised through a mainstream anti-Albanian attitude, tolerated or shared by a large proportion of the Greek society" (Pavlou, 2007, p. 15).

Finally, vignette (C) described the case of an affluent family where there were concerns regarding sexual abuse amidst a divorce. One limitation discovered whilst using the aforementioned vignettes was that, although the third could have been useful for testing for any variation to responses according to class or economic status, this was not possible due to the fact that it was the only example used describing sexual abuse, which is quite a distinct category in itself, evoking strong emotions as a whole. This difficulty was identified halfway through the interviews but as the sample was not very big and it had already been divided in three by the

existing vignettes, it was too late to rectify this by introducing an identical case from a less privileged background.

Overall, on the classic support versus protection dilemma, the professionals interviewed appeared to be more concerned about supporting families and keeping them together rather than removing children from homes. They appeared quite reluctant to reach conclusions early on and label the cases as either abuse or neglect.

Most quotes either queried the way the information arrived or proposed a supportive stance.

“...I would basically think what the motive of this person is...who reports...”

“... what is the relationship of this person with the particular family and could he undertake a supportive role...”

“... a very young mother, we do not know if there is a father that supports the family, ...she needs to be helped”

“...I do not want to say that I can reach conclusions, I just see a family that is disturbed...”

6.1 Phase One

Initial concerns were recorded but almost all of them were not child protection concerns. This finding is different from when the vignettes were distributed in the UK, as part of a research project by Birchall and Hallett, where more serious concerns were raised. This could be due to the fact that child protection in the UK is a clear priority and professionals may be more alert and worried not to miss the signs. Another plausible explanation may be that unlike the previous project, the current one used the vignettes within the context of networking thus participants did not focus on child protection. It has been documented that a project with a clear emphasis on a specific phenomenon can force participants in a specific frame of mind, for example, when taking part in a child protection project it is highly likely that the respondents will be faster to interpret a given case as child abuse or neglect. However, one person within the networks appeared more concerned in the first instance and mentioned neglect, but even so went on to suggest a helpful stance.

“First thought, is that there is a baby that in a sense...suffers let’s say, maybe due to neglect, it is possible.... And a mother similarly...is in a very difficult situation let’s say. And the situation is such that it would be good to think if one should intervene to help let’s say.”

In terms of proposed actions in the first stage, these could mainly be characterised as fact finding.

“Make some phone calls, ... she is on benefits, so start from the Welfare Service, talk to a social worker, find out more about the case.”

“... we begin to see what we can do with her [the mother]. Once I exhaust all limits with her and any supportive network I may seek, very often such networks emerge, I would see what I would need to do after, either with her or as a last resort without her consent...”

“I would ask exactly what is going on and from then on I would try to make contact for a social worker to see the case and if things were truly that way she could get some help, if she wanted of course.”

“...an effort would be made to get in contact with the nearest let’s say social service, caring service, in the area. And to see with them how one can approach and see what is happening without generating fears...”

On two occasions, action was linked to the duty to report and act on information.

“... according to our duties we cannot officially accept such information and not do anything”

And a no action response was also received, as follows:

“... only with that I don’t think I would do anything I would just advise maybe the person that gave me this info to look into it with greater care, talk to the parents a bit, see what is going on, but as a service ... don’t think I would do anything. Given that the parents have not come to us...”

6.2 Phase Two

In the second stage, professionals were clearer.

“...I start having suspicions about neglect... I would check these with colleagues... but if I see indifference...I would not take on the case...or if my suspicions are confirmed by colleagues I will visit to determine if there is neglect...and if there is I would alert the Prosecutor for Minors, ... if the services involved cannot handle the case that is”

“...so I think this is a suitable opportunity to...to approach her, meaning that she is... by making these comments she shows some anxiety for the development of the children maybe and in a way asks for help.”

“Possibly maltreatment comes to my mind. Is the brother violent?”

“Here I would send the social worker of the area to go see what is going on. I do not know, the local Social Service to go see, offer a service, cause here it seems more, that this family needs more help, there may be malnutrition, there may be another problem, neglect maybe.”

“...the piece of information, about the bruise is in a sense quite ...arousing, to reach..., to think something eh eh eh...time would be required to understand what exactly is going on within the family dynamics. I would wait to see what the mother would say though. And I could of course try to improve what I see...issues that are amenable let’s say.”

“...directly I, I, I would call the Local authority and...say that there is... I would report that there is... a case there and I would ask for information, did they go? ... verification. Here it is clear that someone needs to go, definitely.”

“One assumes that the bad care is...even worse, how can I say this, possibly elements of abuse. Let’s say that at this stage it becomes more urgent to really organise how to intervene, meaning not to lose time.”

“...I just hold on to the fact that the information persists, so whether true or false, no matter what, there needs to be an investigation.”

“I would not think that lets say this mother...is let’s say indifferent or unsuitable these characterisations are yet too heavy, too little evidence...and the bottom line is that it is evidence brought to light by the mother, so it probably shows some caring and interest rather than indifference...”

6.3 Phase Three

The third stage undoubtedly heightened all the professionals’ worries:

“...here it would seem that all suspicions are confirmed... but there is a service that is involved already... and on a very regular basis. So I think the service involved would take the lead...”

“...But still I would not say, that the first thought to enter should be to remove these children. Let’s say I am thinking more that some work needs to be done, to support the mother to see things about herself that are well before she became a mother.”

“The children are in danger. Child Mental health service. The baby is in danger. Urgent medical care. Supportive network? A service is already involved there has been an allegation. Will the mother cooperate? Psychiatric evaluation if difficulties in managing the children are evident.”

“Cooperation with the police and the parents...a child psychiatrist of course...”

“The issue here is if one should mobilise ... how can I say it? ... a prosecution...There is such an issue... But in my opinion, this would come second...meaning there needs to be a new attempt here.... New

intervention, slightly more drastic possibly. Meaning, possibly here the children need to be hospitalised, in a paediatric unit, and based on that one could try to bring order.”

Could these findings be interpreted as fictitious due to the fact that support is seen as the preferred option? Birchall and Hallett (1995: 200) using the same vignettes also report that few professionals chose to remove the children whilst the majority opted for supervision orders. Do they reflect professionals' stances in the outside world or have respondents tailored their responses to fit expectations? It is important to raise this point, as vignettes have been accused of “creating an artificial environment” that can alter decision-making (Benbenishty et al, 2015: 11). In reality professionals decide under pressure as they have time restrictions, they handle various cases simultaneously and the consequences of making the wrong decision can be devastating. From the fieldwork observations, it is in the researcher's opinion significant to state that the cases discussed in her presence were approached from a similarly supportive standpoint, which could indicate that the network has helped forge some collective values and the professionals involved tend to opt for the family. This preference could also be motivated by the limited options available to professionals in Greece and the concerns regarding some out of home placements, which at times dominated network discussion, and were presented and discussed in this thesis. Benbenishty and colleagues (2015) confirm this as follows, “Practitioners who have less favourable views of foster families and residential care tend to have attitudes against removal of children from home, and vice versa” (p. 9). This is another instance when the country context can play a major role in influencing judgements and decisions. In the aforementioned study the scholars apart from country and culture present various contexts that affect decision making, such as the organisations and the welfare state. Similarly, Kriz and Skivenes (2014) argue that organisations are affected by the welfare state and its resources. Finally, Font and Maguire-Jack (2015) identified “county, caseworker, and child characteristics were less influential than agency characteristics and family risk factors” (p. 50).

Furthermore, Spratt, Devaney and Hayes' research (2015) suggests that social workers were likely to interpret evidence in order to back “pre-existing, underlying hypotheses” (p. 76), also known as “confirmation bias”. Rodrigues and colleagues (2015) confirmed that when professionals make decisions on whether or not to place a child away from the family, both intuitive and analytical forces are active. These findings are in line with Munro, 1999 and 2008 respectively.

Some quotes from the current study on case outcome are,

“...the question is whether the 19 year-old has already asked for help ... maybe it has simply not been provided cause services are not always efficient and fast ... She may not know where to go, so it would make sense to approach this woman and notify her of what is out there ...”

“... if the colleague from the Welfare Service did not respond...”

“And of course I think the urgency of the situation plays a role because all the work, I imagine ... would definitely take quite some time the way services work in Greece.”

6.31 Descriptive Statistics

In order to obtain a clearer picture of the findings the researcher used descriptive statistics generated by SPSS. However, it is of primary importance to note that the sample is relatively small and does not allow the use of inferential statistics. Additionally, any relationships between different variables presented in this and subsequent sections of the chapter need to be treated with caution and cannot be generalised.

To begin with, the researcher completed a total of sixteen interviews of network participants. One was removed from the group as that particular respondent refused to respond to a vignette. Out of the fifteen remaining, three were excluded from this analysis due to the fact these interviewees were given vignette C that describes a completely different case and the case alone could be the reason for any differences observed. As a result, the cross tabulations that follow depict the responses of twelve of the participants.

The first table below presents the gender of the participants in conjunction with their preferred case outcome. The majority of this group of respondents were female, eight (8), whilst there were four (4) males. It is clear here that the majority of these participants favoured family support. The only ‘stricter’ protection approach recorded within this group belonged to a male.

Gender * Case outcome Crosstabulation

Count		Case outcome			Total
		Family support	Voluntary accommodation	Court order	
Gender	Male	3	0	1	4
	Female	6	2	0	8

Total	9	2	1	12
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Figure 15 Cross tabulation gender/case outcome

The second table below contains the data regarding the participants' profession together with the case outcome. All five social workers chose a supportive stance for the case described in the vignette. Even though this is a small sample, their response is unanimous and this association could point to their professional values and training. Psychiatrists were the ones who displayed the greatest divergence. Each one chose a different outcome. Profession could be a significant factor that affects judgements and decision-making. In Birchall and Hallett's study, 65.6% of social workers opted for home support services and only 16.4% for an interim care order and 6.6% for a care order (1995: 203). However, no psychologists or psychiatrists were included in that sample thus no exact comparison is possible. Nonetheless the scholars describe that "few of the positive choices for the children vary markedly by profession" (p. 202). They also suggest that those professions that are not that often in contact with the child protection system appear to be more in favour of removal and various court orders. This could also help interpret these findings as child psychiatrists are not involved as much as social workers.

Another interesting observation is that the family support category could be merged with the one titled voluntary accommodation. This is due to the fact that accommodating children in cooperation with the parent can be viewed as a rather supportive action, in that professionals usually choose this option when they feel that there is a need to look after the children in order to keep them safe whilst giving the parent a chance to work through their issues. If the two aforementioned categories became one it would mean that eleven (11) out of twelve (12) of these participants chose alternatives to a court order. A study by Darlington and partners (2010) also demonstrated that practitioners from different services gave supportive responses to the vignette provided.

Profession * Case outcome Crosstabulation

Count		Case outcome			Total
		Family support	Voluntary accommodation	Court order	
Profession	Social worker	5	0	0	5

Psychologist	2	1	0	3
Child psychiatrist	1	1	1	3
Lawyer	1	0	0	1
Total	9	2	1	12

Figure 16 Cross tabulation profession/ case outcome

The following table displays the vignette presented to the participant with the preferred case outcome. At this point it is important to remind the reader that the difference between the two vignettes was of the origin of the family. Shlonsky (2015) overall praised the use of vignettes in child protection research and commented that they were one of the best ways to check for racial bias. In the current study no ethnic origin was recorded in vignette A, whilst in vignette B it was specified as a family of Albanian origin. Studies have shown that ethnicity is one of the factors that affect decisions regarding out of home care (Rivaux et al, 2008; Dettlaff et al, 2011). Once again this is a small sample but it appears that the family's ethnic background does not affect the professionals' responses in any significant way.

Vignette * Case outcome Crosstabulation

Count		Case outcome			Total
		Family support	Voluntary accommodation	Court order	
Vignette	A	5	1	0	6
	B	4	1	1	6
Total		9	2	1	12

Figure 17 Cross tabulation vignette/ case outcome

The next figure compares the interviewees' responses against the network they belonged to. In the twelve (12) participants that could be counted due to reasons explained in the beginning of this section, seven (7) belonged to the first network and five (5) to the second. All participants that were members of the second network chose family support as the case outcome showing a rather united front.

Network * Case outcome Crosstabulation

Count		Case outcome			Total
		Family support	Voluntary accommodation	Court order	
Network	Network A	4	2	1	7
	Network B	5	0	0	5
Total		9	2	1	12

Figure 18 Cross tabulation network/ case outcome

Overall, out of the four previous tables the one comparing the participants' profession against their responses regarding the outcome of the case appears to show the strongest association between the two variables. Thus the profession of a participant seems to be more significant than their gender, the ethnic background of the family in question, or the network they belong to. However, it also important to mention that all interviewees from network B chose the supportive approach, but this could also be related to their professional values and training as three (3) out of five (5) were social workers. However, Spratt (2000) suggested that a broader family support approach more probable when senior social workers were responding to vignettes in comparison to every day practice. This research took place in a frontline team in Northern Ireland where real life scenarios are more focused on risk and protection.

The variables contrasted until this point were nominal thus allowing only cross tabulations. The following figure is a box plot, which shows the median value of the participants' years of experience (scale variable) against the case outcome (nominal variable). A box plot was used in order to show the distribution and ensure that the one participant in this specific group that has thirty years of professional experience was not an outlier.

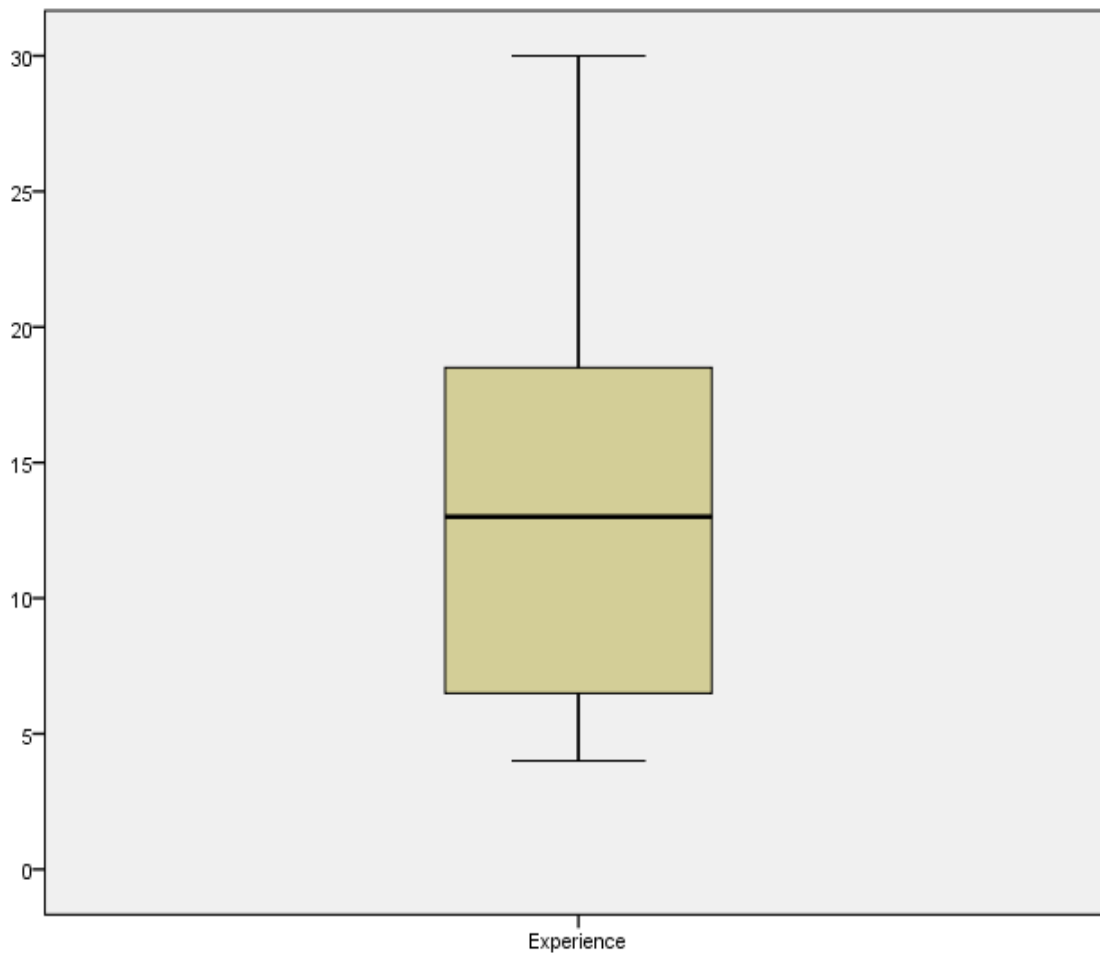


Figure 19 Box plot years of experience

The report that follows indicates that there seems to be an association between the amount of experience a professional has gained and the outcome they chose. Participants with more experience appear 'stricter' in comparison to those with less experience. On a similar note Birchall and Hallett (1995) suggest that more senior level professionals opted for court orders. Even though this comment refers to ranking, it could be valid for this study in that those of higher ranking are usually more experienced. However, the opposite has also been recorded. A study by Davidson-Arad and colleagues (2003) suggests that practitioners with greater experience are less likely to opt for removal but these findings relate exclusively from social workers. Thus profession may be an important factor.

Report

Experience

Case outcome	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Family support	12.00	9	6.285
Voluntary accommodation	12.50	2	10.607
Court order	30.00	1	.
Total	13.58	12	8.107

Figure 20 Report on years of experience/ case outcome

Participation in the network was also reported as a scale variable. As a result, a box plot was again chosen to demonstrate the distribution and the median value. This graph also shows that the person with the longest participation is not considered an outlier.

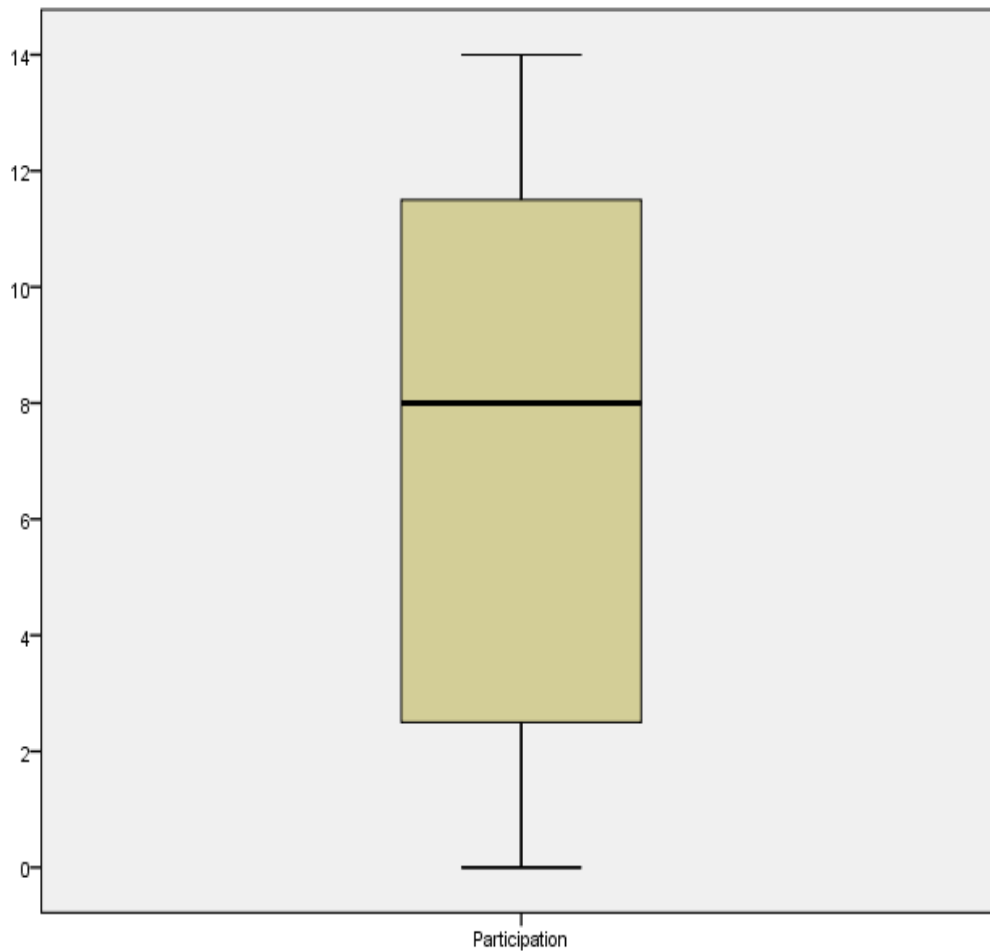


Figure 21 Box plot years of network participation

The report below indicates again that those participants who were attending the network the longest were more inclined to a more protective rather than supportive approach.

Report

Participation

Case outcome	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Family support	6.78	9	5.044
Voluntary accommodation	6.00	2	7.071
Court order	12.00	1	.
Total	7.08	12	5.054

Figure 22 Report on years of network participation/ case outcome

6.4 Network Activation

Although very few expressed the wish to bring the case to the network in the initial stage, this picture changed dramatically through time as more information was available and/or the seriousness/complexity of the case was unravelled to a greater extent. It could be argued that professionals involved in this study developed mutual trust and learned to perceive the network as a helpful forum. Even those who appeared slightly reluctant to openly present their cases would use the network indirectly by asking for another member's advice and/or contribution outside the meeting in a more private conversation. This would indicate that the network has established crucial relationships that would benefit even less vocal members of the group in ways that are more informal and slightly difficult to detect and measure, but would nonetheless prove extremely useful to them as professionals and their respective caseloads.

"I would discuss it to hear many ideas, to hear about...services that I may not know exist, possibilities, and to feel a little safer for my interventions because they are not always easy the interventions and the decisions we make."

"If needed, I would bring it because.... I think that especially such cases can be helped by the network. I would refer."

The participants who were reluctant to bring the case to the network during the first stage and opted for an informal discussion with a member or no mention at all justified their choice based on the perceived severity of the situation.

“... it is far, meaning, if all other cases I had, like a hierarchy or list of priorities were resolved I would discuss it, or informally I might mention it if I knew that the social worker of that particular area was in attendance, let’s say I knew that woman I would say something informally. This came to my attention, have a look at it. Informally though, not within the network.”

“Because in the network we are accustomed to discuss very serious cases I think this ... and since it is not my case, I do not think I would report it, no.”

During phase two, the professionals clearly chose network activation.

“...this piece of information is the first...it is important that it comes from the mother and not a neighbour...and maybe it is enough to bring the case to the network”

“At this stage much easier [to discuss the case within the network], no question, cause at this stage it is clear that other services could become involved”

“...meaning that in this phase as the network is set up it would be worth making an introduction about this case as a worrying professional”

“...within the network...it is evidence that with extra care could be assessed by a child psychiatrist or a psychologist”

“And I would bring the case to the team, but I would also try to engage, if I had her consent, other disciplines.”

“Clearly such a case I would discuss it with the network, clearly, and I would ask for help from the others.”

6.41 Descriptive Statistics

A careful examination of the data showed that initial network activation (i.e. activation during the first phase of the vignette) cannot be related to gender, profession, years of experience or the length of time they participated in the network. The following two cross tabulations show a likely associations between the vignette they were assigned and the network they belonged to with the professionals’ decision to activate the network from the beginning. It would appear that those who read the second vignette that specified the family’s ethnic background, as explained in the beginning of this chapter, were more likely to activate the network earlier. Thus, even though the case outcome as described in the previous network did not appear related to

the vignette, it seems significant when deciding whether to enlist the other members' help by bringing the case to the group.

Vignette * Initial Activation Crosstabulation

		Initial Activation		Total
		Yes	No	
Vignette	A	2	4	6
	B	4	2	6
Total		6	6	12

Figure 23 Cross tabulation vignette/ initial activation

Another interesting finding is that it appears that professionals' decision to activate the network from the beginning is influenced by the network they belong to. Most members of the first network (6 out of 7) were in favour of activating it from stage one. In contrast, all members of the second network delayed activation. This could be attributed to two factors. The first one is that the second network is more formalised than the first. This means that professionals were more likely to speak to their colleagues on an informal basis. The second factor is that the second network is more specifically devoted to child protection cases so participants could be rather reluctant to invoke it given that during the first stage they were not clear whether the case was child protection or not.

Network * Initial Activation Crosstabulation

		Initial Activation		Total
		Yes	No	
Network	Network A	6	1	7
	Network B	0	5	5
Total		6	6	12

Figure 24 Cross tabulation network/ initial activation

6.5 Agreement or Disagreement within the Network

Finally, the last two questions related to the vignette were for participants to indicate their preferred outcome for the case along the support-protection spectrum, and comment on whether they thought such a case would cause disagreement with the networks. Some quotes follow to highlight the patterns observed:

“Look to begin with I see that the service has been involved for two months only, I think that is a short period of time to get work done with the family. We do not know, to begin with if there’s been any progress within these two months, if the situation’s stable, worse or better... Meaning is there room for help? Can she be supported in her parental role so as to keep the children at home? If so, I would support this option support... If of course it seemed that that was not the case I would be in favour of removing the children... I would apply for an order to remove the children, no matter what, the children’s safety comes first and I can see that it is not so clear that the children are safe.”

“...the first option, yes [to support the mother so that the children can remain in her care]”

“The children are in danger. Network around mother so that she can keep them or else immediate placement. Support the mother initially.”

“... to be close to the case and perform as better as we can an in depth assessment, and suitable actions. It is not certain that these actions should touch on judicial or police services, it may happen later. But I do not have evidence at this moment to say, yes, I think we have not reached a conclusion. It will be a bit like... we see, we assess and we do. I cannot come up with a one-liner now.”

“Parental authority lies with mum now? If it does, reinforce mother so that the children remain with her.”

One view was very different.

“Definitely removal of the children and immediate treatment of health matters, and a diagnosis regarding maltreatment ... diagnosis and treatment of the mother and foster care. If there was in Greece what we call...short term foster care, I think it would be ideal, there are no such forms of foster care, so foster care very often almost equals adoption, and that makes things very difficult. Short term foster care...which could possibly evolve into a different type of foster care I think would be ideal in order to familiarise ourselves with and record the situation better.”

As a result, it is likely that most professionals would be in agreement, if the case was discussed within the networks. Overall, participants anticipated agreement, though some highlighted the possibility of varying views but did not clearly label that as disagreement. These views were seen in relation to the support versus protection dilemma as follows.

“... until when do we support a parent who seems... almost openly inadequate some times and where is the point that there is no meaning in supporting instead with the permission of the police, as we say, a bad situation for children carries on, and we have to move to more drastic actions. And that is because we recognise that the parents are important figures. I think that would be the main...the basic issue with different shades in terms of how much or how little... [support for the parents]”

“... there would be tensions, and conflicting views, definitely. There would be people, who would identify themselves intensely with the children, and would say remove them, others that would side with mother and would say help her...”

“I believe we would exchange views, now it doesn't matter if these would be negative, contradictory or not, exchange. Where I believe, through this, a common... would possibly emerge, but maybe not, but just by entering in that process something new something we had not thought of would emerge.”

6.51 Descriptive Statistics

In the beginning it is important to reiterate that the sample is small therefore caution is to be exercised in interpreting the tables that follow. The first table combines gender with the professionals' views as to whether the specific case that was assigned to each one of them would result in agreement or disagreement, if discussed within the network. Again the sample contains more females than males. However, out of the eight (8) female professionals only one anticipated disagreements, whilst out of their four (4) male colleagues two were prepared for disagreements and one sat on the fence.

Gender * Agreement Crosstabulation

Count		Agreement			Total
		Agree	Disagree	Don't know	
Gender	Male	1	2	1	4
	Female	7	1	0	8
Total		8	3	1	12

Figure 25 Cross tabulation gender/ agreement

The following cross tabulation presents the interviewees' profession in conjunction with the expected reactions within the network. This table demonstrates a possible link between

professional affiliations and expected responses within the group. All social workers anticipate agreement. In contrast, all psychiatrists predict disagreement. Professional values and training seem to affect this variable, too. Social workers were also recorded as having “relatively high expectations of consensus” by Birchall and Hallett (1995: 206).

Profession * Agreement Crosstabulation

Count

		Agreement			Total
		Agree	Disagree	Don't know	
Profession	Social worker	5	0	0	5
	Psychologist	2	0	1	3
	Child psychiatrist	0	3	0	3
	Lawyer	1	0	0	1
Total		8	3	1	12

Figure 26 Cross tabulation profession/ agreement

Agreement or disagreement about the case shows a small variation when examined against the vignette assigned to each of the professionals. Whilst five (5) out of six (6) of the professionals assigned to vignette A forecast agreement, it is three (3) out of six (6) of those dealing with vignette B that share their views. Could it be that the family’s ethnic background complicates the situation thus increasing the possibility of disagreements occurring between professionals? A bigger sample could have answered this question better. However, a child’s ethnic background has been found to affect decisions (Drake et al, 2011; Fallon et al, 2013).

Vignette * Agreement Crosstabulation

Count

		Agreement			Total
		Agree	Disagree	Don't know	
Vignette	A	5	1	0	6
	B	3	2	1	6
Total		8	3	1	12

Figure 27 Cross tabulation vignette/ agreement

By examining the table that follows another dimension becomes significant in relation to anticipated reactions. All practitioners expecting a disagreement as well as the one who appears unsure belong to the first network. This could be linked to the degree of formality that differs between the two networks and to the fact the second one is more geared towards child protection cases. In the first instance, a more informal network might allow professionals to express opposing views more. Alternatively, a clearer remit might encourage a greater degree of convergence.

Network * Agreement Crosstabulation

Count		Agreement			Total
		Agree	Disagree	Don't know	
Network	Network A	3	3	1	7
	Network B	5	0	0	5
Total		8	3	1	12

Figure 28 Cross tabulation network/ agreement

The next report demonstrates that the more experienced the professional the greater the likelihood of forecasting disagreement. Is it likely that respondents with more years of practice under their belt are more confident and as such more inclined to report a more realistic picture? Are less experienced interviewees more optimistic? A way to explain this finding may be by looking back at the Figure that shows that it was those with more experience that tended to adopt a 'stricter' viewpoint and as a result, disagree with the majority. Consequently, the practitioners who disagree are those who predict disagreement.

Report

Experience			
Agreement	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Agree	11,25	8	6,541
Disagree	22,33	3	6,807
Don't know	6,00	1	.
Total	13,58	12	8,107

Figure 29 Report on years of experience/ agreement

A similar trend is observable in the last report that combines years of network participation with predictions about agreement. The professionals who have been part of the networks the longest are more likely to anticipate disagreement.

Report

Participation			
Agreement	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Agree	5.50	8	4.840
Disagree	12.33	3	1.528
Don't know	4.00	1	.
Total	7.08	12	5.054

Figure 30 Report on years of participation/ agreement

6.52 Reasons Provided for Disagreements amongst Professionals

The respondents listed the following reasons for disagreeing amongst themselves, starting with the most commonly cited reason: *-professional role; -personal values and beliefs; -differences in interpretation of laws, guidelines, etc.; -personal differences; -other.*

Respondents felt that what is widely termed professional role is somewhat intertwined with personal values and beliefs as well as with power issues, citing the relationships between social workers and psychologists and/or psychologists and psychiatrists as examples. However, the view that these issues can be ironed out over time was also put forward. It sounds reasonable that when “the other”, whether another service or another professional, is no longer an unknown entity but somebody you are familiar with and work with regularly, there is room for improvement as each party acquires a clearer picture of their own and other people’s roles, responsibilities and expertise. Open-mindedness was also seen as key in accepting different

professions as well as different personalities. This finding ties in well with the aforementioned sense of belonging to a team since to cultivate the latter, time (Hudson, 2000:253), familiarity and a common language for expression are required (Anning et al, 2006 and DCSF, 2007). These are other important factors for collaboration found in the related literature.

Personal differences were seen as non-significant by most of the interviewees as they insisted that the professional hat was the most significant one and would compensate for any differences in the personalities of various members. The relevant quotes are as follows: “...*even when there are disagreements, they are all professionals...*” and “*Obviously different personalities bring disagreements but you represent a service; it is not personal*”. The researcher is not, however, entirely convinced that all participants are always able to overcome personal issues and be professional. The keywords here are “all” and “always”, which render this statement of affairs almost humanly impossible based on what five years working in child protection teams have taught the researcher. One explanation for this denial could well be that being able to leave aside personal differences is almost synonymous with being a good professional, so admitting to this inability would be seen as a cardinal sin by the profession. However, research has shown that personal characteristics can impact judgements and decisions (Gambrill, 2005; Ryan et al, 2006).

Under other issues respondents added the “*obsession*” of certain services with a particular way of working and fossilised, habitual actions and reactions. In addition, the fact that this type of work involves “*great pain, great confusion and this reflects on the people handling (this type of cases)...and strong identifications (with either the child or the parents occur)...a more psychological part (of the job)*” that may be at the root of some of the reoccurring disagreements. This was evident in discussions during the meetings of network A in particular, when professionals would appear to side with the child or the parent and lose track of the guiding force, the best interest of the child and its supremacy. A reason behind such biases may be found by asking who they each see as their respective client. For instance, adult mental health workers might push for a child to remain at home, even if the parent’s mental ill health is severely impairing his or her parental abilities, due to the fact that removing the child might signal failure to their patient and/or trigger further deterioration of his/her already fragile health. Therefore, some disagreements may be attributed to the different angles of the different professions deriving from the respective roles or services they are there to represent, which are simultaneously considered to be the wealth of the multi-disciplinary network. Based on the researcher’s work experience in England, it is

important to flag up that such instances are likely to be observed elsewhere and are not inherent characteristics exclusive to Greek networks.

6.53 Existing Group Processes for Dealing with Disagreements

One thing that appeared clearly across the board was that the final decision-making power rested solely with the service carrying the case and presenting it to the network. However, there seemed to be a difference in practitioners' perceptions of the way different views or contradicting arguments were dealt with during the meetings. Varying from, *we discuss* (dialogue) *and find the best solution* (synthesis), to *majority rules* (democracy), to *the opinions of the most experienced members prevail* (oligarchy). This is an extremely interesting disagreement between the group members in that it could almost justify questioning whether they are all in attendance of the same network or not though some justification could initially be provided in the form that practitioners may participate in this process automatically thus not registering the precise steps, and most importantly decisions may be made in a varying way thus including a mosaic of combinations of the suggested ingredients. How can all these professionals be part of the same group and not be clear as to how decisions are made and disagreements are overcome? At first such deviation appears so contradictory that even after having taken into consideration the thinking presented above it remains almost impossible to explain. However, upon closer inspection and with the benefit of having attended these meetings over a two-year period, the researcher can offer some plausible explanations and shed some light on the confusion. However, prior to attempting any rationalisation and in order to make it easier to follow the subsequent argument it is important to illuminate the reader by including some exact quotes on the matter as follows: “...*the one who brings the request has to act on it, but the aim is not to burden him but to lighten him. To give choices, not to create even more of a dead end or to add dilemmas.*”

“*Just to open the brain...this is an educational space, a space for meetings, etc., not a space for making decisions*”;

“*One can get stuck on a one-way street but if you come out of your thinking and listen to an opinion, you open your mind.*”, and

“*We discuss, nothing is imposed, everybody is free to choose what to do....the network has a reinforcing role for the professional; it does not make decisions on his behalf...*”, and also

“*...dialogue yes, but everything does not weigh the same, in my opinion*”, and finally

“...confusion must be cleared, ... people to start being able to think, not to be infatuated only by their emotional responses at the time...”.

From the aforementioned quotes, it is apparent that dialogue does indeed take place and open-mindedness believed to be an unofficial prerequisite for participation. Emphasis appears to be placed on making sure all case discussions are beneficial for the individual practitioner, who is the formal bearer of the case. It would seem that the group is anxious to distance itself from any decision-making function, highlighting the exchange of views and ideas as being of much greater importance than any other operational purpose. Could this extreme distancing be viewed as an effort to avoid any responsibility for the decisions made as a result of all the group discussions, or in other words, a fear of being held accountable for real children and families' futures? This could well be so, but what the researcher would then be inclined to argue would be that this group is failing to fulfil one of its most central aims, that is, to benefit the service users since it is the decisions made that will alter a case's journey and influence the outcomes for the user. Although a group absorbed by theories or schools of thought, options and/or angles could be of tremendous educational value and as such an asset for a practitioner in the long run, there is a danger that without a constant reality check, it might involve too much naval gazing to be of any practical use for the here and now. Having voiced these concerns, it is important to clarify that, based on the researcher's observations, all cases presented to the group were real and that the practitioner in charge of each of them made a decision based on the group discussions. There was no overt imposition, but covertly voices of greater status and experience carried certain clout and spoke louder than those of newly qualified colleagues. Similarly, Hallet and Birchall (1995: 234) highlight “status as a determinant of weight given to different participants' opinion”. This however is not necessarily a negative thing, unless it suppresses other members by silencing them or undermining their contributions. Consequently, even though there is plenty of dialogue and a plethora of suggestions are made, it is not really the majority's decision, as there is no voting mechanism and many opt to stay silent, which does not automatically imply congruency. The reality might be closer to oligarchy, as it is the core, or the more central figures of the group that regularly participate in these debates and have more chances of influencing the decisions made. Structured decision-making has been offered as a way of minimising differences (Ruscio, 1998), but if taken to the extreme, namely “over-structuring”, it can have negative consequences (Munro, 2011). Finally, Bartelink and colleagues

(2015) suggested another way forward. They argued that better decisions may be reached, if practitioners take into account what service users favour.

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter presented the findings that arose from the vignettes. The vignettes are very useful in that they provide an opportunity for the reader to observe different professionals' reactions to the same case on a one-to-one basis. As a result, a clearer idea of how these informal networks work in practice is possible.

The main findings arising from this chapter are as follows. Professional values and training seem to impact responses the most. Years of experience appear to affect practitioner's view of cases and anticipated disagreement within the network. These respondents are the ones who actually appear to disagree. Overall, as Lopez and colleagues (2015) argue it is the interaction of various factors that affects decisions rather than any single characteristic, be it of the case, the practitioner or the system. This observation combines well with the rationale of this thesis in that it explores collaboration within the wider context of the country's child protection system and welfare state. Dettlaff and collaborators (2015) take this a step further by discussing ways of measuring that context and how it impacts decisions.

The following and final chapter of this thesis aims to bring the whole study together by grouping and re-presenting its most significant arguments. It will explore Greece's position within Europe in regard to child protection and recommend steps that should be taken to improve the current situation and align the country with its European counterparts at the vanguard. Finally, it will use information contained in all the previous chapters to offer some recommendations.

Chapter 7

Conclusions and Recommendations

Chapter seven, the final chapter, will begin by summing up the main arguments presented in all the previous chapters and grouping the most pertinent findings together. It will then conclude by highlighting all important themes and any recommendations or lessons to be learnt. At a time when there is an international drive to create convergence of policy responses to complex, multifactorial phenomena like child abuse and/or neglect, it is important to gather the existing data about each and every country in order to understand the situation and compare and contrast it with the rest. This thesis has achieved exactly that in relation to Greece in that it provides the reader with relevant information on the subject, thus enabling comprehension of the current reality and allowing recommendations for an improved future that could see Greece working towards the level of protection for its children that well developed child protection systems have achieved. In addition, it examined existing examples of interagency and multidisciplinary working, as a way to improve the current system in favour of its users, professionals, children and families alike.

To provide a context for the conclusions, this section will start by reiterating the research questions as presented in the third chapter on methodology and research design, and then provide conclusions and make recommendations. All findings and central lines of argument will be summed up and the author will utilise the two frameworks presented in the second chapter, the European model, created by the Council of Europe to guide integration in responses against violence, and the international model developed by UNICEF, which sets out to map the fundamental components of a developed child protection system. This allows the conclusions to be structured in a way that ensures that all aspects considered as main ingredients of an advanced child protection system within the relevant literature and guidelines have been taken into consideration whilst exploring Greece.

This thesis has successfully combined a view of the main actors, or important stakeholders within the system with the workings of the system itself through the eyes of the professionals. It began by describing the main entities, the legal framework, guidelines and services and then proceeded to examine how people interact in the fieldwork. This interaction is at the heart of a

systems' approach and can either make a system flourish or malfunction. Apart from the contributions of this thesis, this chapter will also list the limitations.

On the whole, this chapter will abide by the overall structure followed so far. In other words, the three levels of network policy – macro, meso and micro –, which aim at categorising issues in a way that will aid the reader's understanding, will be employed once again. In making recommendations the author is aware of the danger of copying the characteristics of an advanced child protection system and describing an ideal, utopian system forgetting to take into account the current situation the Greek child protection system is in. On the other hand, if guided solely by reason and what could be expected of Greece given its dire state, there is a danger to be left with a system that will be more like a damage limitation exercise rather than an appropriate structure to adequately serve children and families. In order to resolve this the author will take into consideration the country's starting point and highlight a possible path that will start with small steps that can be made easily before progressing to the cascade of changes required to transform the system, incorporating recommendations for policy makers, higher and middle management and practitioners. This route brings to mind the Chinese proverb that every 1,000-mile journey begins with one step. Similarly, Finkelhor and Lannen (2015) propose “cultivating” rather than ‘transplanting’.

7.1 Research Questions Revisited

This section, as the title states, will revisit the research questions presented in the third chapter of the thesis, which laid out the methodology followed by the current study. The same questions will be used to frame the answers gathered during this research.

-What are the internal and external influences on the Greek welfare state in general that can be linked to responses to child abuse and neglect?

This question was the main subject of the second chapter, which discussed external influences, and of the fourth chapter, which discussed internal influences. Overall, it is important to reiterate that even though at a glance Greece appears to have been subjected to the same forming mechanisms as other more advanced child protection systems, the effect has been, in a sense, contained in that legal shifts are obvious but operational and practical shifts are less so. As a result, what was described in the fifth chapter as a ‘superficial’ legality that attempts to conceal an underlying essentially traditional irregularity seems to be the case here. However,

the decision to look at policy, law, practice, and culture as core ingredients when exploring the Greek system in this thesis was justified based on the UNICEF framework and the EU guidelines presented in the first chapter.

Internally, welfare history and reforms, bureaucracy, nepotism, lack of state ownership, lack of political will, lack of a national plan and adequate funding paint a rather worrying picture. In addition, the particularity of the country's geography and inescapable demographical changes appear to make matters worse by making equity an even harder objective to attain.

Furthermore, children and families rarely participate in decisions that affect their reality, which is more evidence of the system's inability to respect children and parent's rights. The stigma attached to abuse and neglect is an additional fact that worsens the existing situation. Finally, professional burnout is a real danger when working in the aforementioned circumstances, and the lack of supervision can only accentuate difficulties.

-What welfare, health and other services exist in Greece that would be involved in a child protection case?

A diagram was presented in the fourth chapter showing services' involvement in child protection cases according to information collected during the first phase of interviewing.

Most services are far from specialist; a characteristic that may to a degree alleviate the stigma for the families involved but indicates a poor sense of priority given to such cases by the state. It is also worrying given the complexity of such cases. How can practitioners with no particular training and expertise assist such families? And worse, how can they operate productively and provide an appropriate service without supervision? The lack of supervision makes the situation even more daunting. In a nutshell, Greece falls short of both ideal models and guidelines (EU and UNICEF) presented in the second chapter of this thesis, especially so given that there is no coordination mechanism and no systematic data collection.

-How developed is inter-professional and inter-agency collaboration?

Collaboration appears almost non-existent, and is extremely sporadic, disorganised and personalised. No top-down mechanisms were found to exist and no guidelines or protocols on how to deal with cases in a systematic manner. To counterbalance this disheartening picture, the style of this research was changed to look beyond the official system and as a result, specific grassroots' initiatives were examined in greater detail.

-What are the difficulties emerging and how could they improve and perhaps help improve other systems?

This information is gathered in the latter part of this chapter.

-What are the existing networks like?

Chapters five and six contain all relevant information and detailed descriptions of the networks studied. Findings from this phase are much more promising as the networks seem to be beneficial and serve various purposes. Overall, network A as a whole is presented, making use of Benson's 'imbalances' introduced in the first chapter of this thesis, as high on mutual positive evaluation as the great majority of participants spoke extremely highly of each other and the network as whole. Nonetheless, a weakness on domain consensus is clearly detectable given that the agencies that the professionals represent are not really in participation. Thus, no commitment to this partnership exists on a higher level within the respective agencies.

Network B, exhibits some contrast in comparison to the first in that it features higher on work cooperation, albeit of a rather forced nature, and domain consensus but evidently lower on mutual evaluation, pointing towards an evaluative imbalance. Emphasis is placed on supporting children and families rather than investigating abuse as substantiation is not the gatekeeper of services.

-What impact are the networks having on the professionals involved, on their practice, the service they represent and the service users they are working with?

Evidence from interviews and observations suggest a mainly positive impact, which was described in greater detail in the sixth chapter. In brief, the following issues were highlighted:

-The advantages for the services represented by the professionals in attendance were: better communication; more coordination; simplicity; and less time. Whilst disadvantages were noted only in relation to the size of the network, i.e. not as wide as professionals would have liked it to be and as such failing to assist in service delivery to a great degree.

-For the professionals, the advantages were that they found the network helpful; they perceived it as indirect supervision; enjoyed the team identity; found it therapeutic; and valuable for their individual practice. The disadvantages were the frequency of meetings (or maybe more appropriately, infrequency of meetings); the fact that the network was informal; irregular participation; lack of publicity; loss of cases (professionals agree on a way forward but then a

service or the court might make a different decision); network size; resistances (professionals and services resisting change and working in a fossilised manner, in isolation, a criticism mainly addressed at the 'other services', or in other words implying those operating outside the network); and space for meetings (this was resolved along the way and only appeared in initial interviews and exclusively in relation to network A).

-The advantages for service users as reported by the participating professionals were: the child's best interest is paramount (no automatic responses, or habitual actions); greater educational value; more holistic responses; better referrals (less time consuming and involving better briefing); and more therapeutic interventions. Whilst the disadvantages were recorded as: greater risks for a breach of confidentiality; irregular attendance; and special cases that could not always be handled best within the specific mix of professionals and the services they represented.

These findings stress points also supported by other studies thus strengthening their validity. For example, Atkinson and partners (2007)⁶⁷ reports that professionals experienced multi-agency working as rewarding; stimulating and enjoyable; felt greater job satisfaction; creativity and autonomy; and greater confidence. Collaboration strengthened knowledge and understanding of respective roles, services; and highlighted cross-disciplinary matters. Furthermore, working together altered practice; and was experienced as an opportunity to develop and expand existing roles. Enhanced communication between professionals and services was also noted; that improved accessibility to information and other services; better information sharing and problem-solving. However, partnership had the potential to magnify workloads; and raised the risk of duplication. For service users the research reported the consequences as easier/quicker access to services; more appropriate referrals; emphasis on primary prevention and early intervention that brought about a reduction of the demand for specialist services thus minimising stigma. Finally, the results for services show a contradiction as demand on services was reported as occasionally increased whilst other times it was reduced; opportunities arose for better communication, more information sharing, that resulted in more positive relationships between services; and last but not least, efficiency savings.

⁶⁷ Also see McIness, 2007:20 that offers a table that summarises the advantages and disadvantages of collaboration and also presents factors enabling and hindering partnership.

-What are the important points to be learnt from these networks, both positive and negative, and how can these help inform the design of any intervention aiming to reinforce the collaboration of local services working together under the umbrella of child protection?

Important points were also highlighted in the previous chapter and most will be revisited in the sections that follow. These networks can be viewed as hopeful initiatives that operate to support professionals and better serve users. The participants highlighted the following issues as ways to improve collaboration: membership expansion to include more services; and greater frequency of meetings; better organisation; more activity; greater publicity of their work; lobbying powers so as to have a greater impact on practice, service provision and policy; legal representation; and funding. Issues hindering collaboration were presented as erratic attendance or short term involvement in the network; professionals with the ‘superhero’ approach as well as those just looking to pass the buck; personalities that can impede collaborative attempts; theory as an excuse not to act; the state of the welfare system in Greece; lack of stability; time and space restrictions.

7.2 Results and Criticisms of the Situation in Greece

Prior to presenting the results, it is essential to remind the reader that the levels used for classifying the information are very much interlinked and categorisation is fairly arbitrary. Many of the entries that follow, though seen as primarily located on one level, affect one or more of the others.

7.21 Macro or Policy Level

The evidence points to an overall lack of state ownership, regulation and control, as there does not appear to be any clear direction and long-term planning in child protection. The situation resembles a construction site with no architect or lead contractor/coordinator in charge where subcontractors are left to their own devices, which in turn results in delays, duplications, gaps, and an overall chaotic picture. There is a basic legal framework to deal with cases of child abuse- as presented in the fourth chapter of this thesis but, for this to be implemented properly, the EU and UNICEF frameworks have identified the need for several other structures to be in place, namely a system for identifying, reporting, investigating, and responding to child

protection concerns. This absence of involvement could be interpreted as indifference, which would clearly indicate a low priority assigned to maltreated children and their families. This argument can be strengthened by the fact that the ministry's website appears almost unaltered through the years and service provision is nowhere near synchronised with what is available in other developed countries. The overall picture is worrisome and is reminiscent of an orchestra without the conductor in that no matter how skilled and how professional each and every musician is, there is no maestro to bring harmony and make their individual expertise work for the audience. How then can one expect to find any sort of coordinated response to complex phenomena on a service or professional level? It should come as no surprise that the bigger picture reflects Matthew's biblical quote "the left hand does not know what the right hand is doing".⁶⁸ This in turn highlights the importance of the two networks this research examines. Both are highly commendable in so far as they are operating at best in a vacuum, or at worst in totally adverse circumstances, surviving whilst swimming against the tide.

Furthermore, even though international treaties like the CRC have been ratified and new legislation has been introduced accordingly, no significant input, enhancement or innovation is noticeable in service provision. Apart from peripheral uncontrolled movements whose effects cannot really be measured within this thesis, stagnation appears to be the main characteristic of the system. However, lack of bottom-up planning and evidence-based provision and practice only hint at more worrying results. Finally, any legislative shift can be said to be almost useless if it is not accompanied by the necessary resources and provisions, which regrettably tends to be the case in Greece and is bound to be exacerbated by the current economic climate which will encourage further rationing of already inadequate welfare provisions. Additionally, ever-present obstacles are nepotism and corruption that have deleterious effects on ensuring value for money.

It would seem that there is no formal mechanism for making public sector employees accountable to service users, as the latter are not empowered to have a voice in matters that drastically affect their lives. Consequently, no forward planning regarding service development

⁶⁸ Bible, *Matthew* 6:3 ([King James Version](#)):

can draw systematically on the evidence, thereby leaving what could only be described as a valuable source of knowledge unused. Hence, the state was anecdotally accused by research participants of planning in relation to available resources but without any kind of understanding of need as defined by local needs or families themselves. In other words, if some external funding exists to create a certain service or buy specific equipment this is used across the country regardless of local realities. Additionally, whilst the CRC and the European Guidelines are advocating participation, the Greek reality is nowhere near. On most occasions the service user -whether a child or a parent- is not even treated as a consumer let alone a citizen with rights.

Another general alarming find is related to the lack of adequate policies and procedures in relation to staff checks. Professions that guarantee access to children and young people have been known to attract people for the wrong reasons. Greater checking is required to prevent any unwelcome intrusions of such a nature. Even though a police check is required in order for social workers, who have access to vulnerable children and families, to obtain a permit to practice after graduating, that permit is never reviewed or renewed on any subsequent occasion, as if an initial clean criminal record guarantees a crimeless future. Greater rigour is therefore required to at least satisfy that all necessary steps are being taken to prevent the occurrence of preventable tragedies. This issue has been a serious cause for concerns for professional bodies internationally. The General Social Care Council in England for example developed a registration system in response whereby professionals working with children are obliged to have police checks done at regular intervals.⁶⁹

7.22 Meso or Higher and Middle Management Level

The state's ability to develop a more efficient and responsive system is hampered by the slow change-over from handwritten to computerised recording. This shift was only achieved in the last decade in other countries and it is important to acknowledge that computerisation requires time and money. Services are not fully equipped with computers and where they do exist professionals are at times not very adept in using them. Even if the technical skills are present, they are not always put to good use. As a result, all records are handwritten and piled up in paper folders within huge agency cupboards, which makes them almost inaccessible and highly

⁶⁹<http://www.gsc.org.uk/page/3/Registration.html>

unreliable, as information contained tends to vary significantly in terms of quality and even legibility. In addition, very few services keep any sort of track record regarding their service users; thus, almost no statistics are available. This affects not only the overall ability to estimate the frequency and extent of the phenomenon but also to gauge needs or service usage.

Whilst the whole EU appears to be advocating out-of-home foster placements for children within the community and ensuring that residential care is available only as a last resort (COE, 2008:10.3), one of Greece's main NGOs is creating more and more children's homes, thus uprooting the children from their local communities rather than providing local foster or adoptive placements that are more suitable for meeting the children's needs and far more cost-effective as discussed in the fourth chapter of this thesis. Research on attachment has long established that "Human beings of all ages are found to be at their happiest and to be able to deploy their talents to best advantage when they are confident that, standing behind them, there is one or more trusted persons who will come to their aid should difficulties arise". John Bowlby (1973: 359) It would appear that practices that could easily be characterised as old-fashioned are the norm in Greece as international shifts in professional thinking and practice experience major delays in being translated and incorporated in Greece. This could be described as a very significant time lag that results in belated responses or adjustments that affect the quality of approaches and interventions available for vulnerable children and their families. The country appears to be deaf to developments in the international community, an unfortunate situation exacerbated by the apparent lack of leadership and long-term direction at the highest level as well as a probable lack of sector-specific expertise. This situation can also come about due to available funding as this is crucial for NGOs and often determines provision. (Lewis, 2003; 2006)

Research conducted by the Institute of Child Health was presented at a 2010 conference in Athens, which was attended by the researcher. There Agathonos described Greece as the country in the EU with the lengthiest stay of children under 3 years of age in residential care with an average of 26 months. She also estimated that tertiary responses to child abuse and/or neglect cost 19 times more than primary prevention. Finally, the cost to provide residential care for one child in 2005 was approximated to 30,000 Euros per annum.⁷⁰ According to Bridge (1999: 238), "Residential care for children under five is unlikely to meet their needs for

⁷⁰ Data presented during a conference organised by the SOS Children's Villages, titled 'Children in Danger' in Athens (2010).

individual care”. Additionally, as already discussed earlier in the thesis, even more work is required for disabled children as they are even more vulnerable to abuse and/ or neglect. Despite this, evidence suggest that the Greek government is neglecting them and at times even abusing them, considering the worryingly low staff-to-children ratios observed in residential units and the mainly underpaid and untrained staff working in shifts as described in the fourth chapter. Unfortunately, this situation is evident in many countries of the world where child welfare is underfunded or reactive to funding by NGOs rather than being directed by international and national social policies based on current research (Bridge, 2001; Thorburn, 1986; 1991).

Another significant omission on the meso level is the lack of any therapeutic approaches for perpetrators, which indicates a worryingly punitive attitude. Are offenders expected to reform solely by serving a prison sentence? In addition, there are no measures following their release to ensure safe and successful rehabilitation. Such provisions would undoubtedly be prerequisites for a well-developed child protection system. A meta-analytic review of the effectiveness of treatment conducted by Hanson and partners in 2002 concluded that current treatments were associated with a reduction of both sexual and general recidivism. However, this is an underdeveloped and controversial area in most countries, even those with well-developed Child Protection Systems. Thus it is unrealistic to expect this in Greece, given the current state of affairs.

Finally, many professionals are frustrated by the short supply of emergency placements that results in children spending longer than needed in hospitals or abusive households. Not many shelters are in operation throughout the country, making the situation extremely difficult to handle, particularly when it comes to dealing with cases of domestic violence. A mapping exercise of shelters available for female victims of domestic violence or sexual exploitation undertaken by the Greek section of Amnesty International in 2009⁷¹ brought to light the following results. Out of the 60 local authorities approached in Athens, most have a local office with social workers and psychologists without special training. Moreover, only three of these authorities have a shelter for the homeless or for women and children fleeing domestic violence. One local authority has a shelter for abused and/or neglected children and another expressed the intention to open a shelter for female victims of domestic violence. These

⁷¹http://www.amnesty.org.gr/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/support_services_victims_of_domestic_violence.doc

shelters are in the majority funded by ministries and not locally, as the law stipulates. Furthermore, out of 45 prefectures around the country that took part in this project (Athens and Thessalonica not included), nine additional shelters were located. Most regional authorities appear to be unaware of the existence of the shelters, however, and most social workers admitted that they had experienced cases where women could not be housed in such shelters due to lack of space. They also complained about the lack of collaboration and networking between these services as well as the lack of a central coordinating mechanism.

Furthermore, social workers were found to be overworked and without adequate knowledge of available services. A common feature found in all of these organisations was a degree of uncertainty regarding the future availability of funding. There was also the matter of women being allowed to stay for only a few days. Finally, given that some of these shelters were made with different client groups in mind, they are not sufficiently protected to appropriately house victims of violence. Crisis centres staffed with appropriate experts are essential when urgent solutions are required and need to be made available around the country in order to assist professionals in making decisions solely based on the best interests of the child and to facilitate swift removal of a mother and child when absolutely necessary. However, services for victims of domestic violence have been slow to develop in most other countries because of the slow recognition of women's rights. As an example it was the National Women's Aid Federation in the UK that fought to recognise these issues in the mid-1970s (Millet, 1969; Dobash and Dobash, 1980).⁷²

7.23 Micro or Practitioner Level

The most fundamental omission affecting professionals' strength, practice and overall well-being is, in the researcher's opinion, the lack of supervision. The significance of this point may be accentuated due to the fact that the researcher is a practitioner. Actual frontline experience in child protection in both a well supervised and a poorly supervised setting bears this out. This spectrum has allowed for a growth in the appreciation of supervision and a clear recognition of its significance particularly within such stressful and emotional circumstances that arise when dealing with abused and/or neglected children and their families. Without supervision, professionals are left feeling alone and they can gradually, due to their constant

⁷² As cited in Chatzifotiou, 2005.

involvement with the case, develop strong biases that obstruct their view. Such defensive alienation or identifications also have the potential of translating into poor decision-making, which could expose a child to additional and otherwise avoidable risk. Supervision has already been discussed at greater length in chapters four and six and in the latter a definition of what effective supervision consists of was provided based on the work of Morrison and Wonnacott (2010). It is however of extreme importance to bring to the reader's attention that effective supervision appears to be difficult to achieve even in the most developed of Child Protection Systems. Significantly, its absence is repeatedly noted as a failing in Child Protection Inquiries in England (e.g. Blom Cooper, 1985; in response to the death of Jasmine Beckford).

An equally important oversight is the lack of opportunities for further professional development provided for free or subsidised by employers at regular intervals. This could well be another reason why practices in Greece appear at times to be out of date, which obviously has a noticeable impact on service users and achievable outcomes. Social workers are at times accused of being nothing more than public sector bureaucrats or 'pencil pushers', being paid for their presence rather than their work. Without intending to justify everybody and everything, remaining involved, interested and motivated when working at a job for life with no sense of renewal, development or career advancement is clearly unlikely. However, this is an area in which investment is required to make a difference and it is unlikely to be a priority in view of the current economic crisis.

Finally, collaboration and partnership appear to be extremely limited on all levels, which would imply fragmentation and duplication in service delivery, and hence poor use of public money as well as adverse outcomes for individual cases. It seems that very few cooperating initiatives exist and are randomly distributed around the country, reinforcing the perception of a 'postcode lottery', or in other words, a system with no equity. Schemes that have arisen from the grassroots level and have managed to survive the dire reality and establish themselves within their respective localities have received minimal recognition by the state. This is a waste of extremely valuable opportunities to nurture good practice, which would in turn encourage further innovation and support as well as adoption and duplication of successful ideas or projects to enhance and invigorate the child protection system without too much extra expense.

7.3 Limitations

All studies have limitations and this study is no exception. These will be presented in relation to the design, method, findings and conclusions.

To begin, even though this thesis could have benefited from the inclusion of literature from countries and systems outside the Anglo-Saxon ones (for example Paulsen Breimo et al, 2016), issues of time, accessibility, etc. restricted the material studied. Having established that, the current study never intended to compare existing responses to child abuse and/or neglect.

In addition, limited availability of official statistics predestined any attempt to paint an all-inclusive picture of the phenomenon and the emerging description itself to be somewhat incomplete. Nevertheless, this increases the significance of the thesis in that it presents information that is not readily available for research and offers an insight into a system that is far from transparent, revealing, through the experiences of various professionals, the reality of day-to-day practices and service responses to the phenomenon under the spotlight.

Furthermore, great local variation linked to the geography of Greece was inescapable in that any findings from a specific locality would in no way reflect the picture of another. Disparity is a common pitfall when research is conducted. In this instance, it was approached by including three different research sites in order to gain a broader experience, and adopting qualitative methodology that does not attempt generalisations. As expected, the issue could not be entirely resolved.

Another limitation is related to inaccessible or non-responsive organisations. Thus attempts to include a wider variety of voices proved time-consuming or even fruitless in practice given that their representatives were not available or one could even argue not willing to be interviewed. This is again very common in research, original designs are often altered along the way and ambitious ideas of inclusiveness have to be abandoned, at least to a certain degree. Although the researcher counts the unsuccessful contact with the key NGO operating in child protection as the main limitation of this thesis, it would have also benefited from greater involvement of participants from the second network. The latter would have allowed an equal representation of the two networks.

By the end of the study, Greece had started on a downward spiral that led to the current crisis, one of the main global consequences being that welfare states are shrinking everywhere whilst citizens' needs are becoming far greater. As a result, the situation is likely to worsen, especially so for the most vulnerable, including abused and/ or neglected children. Individuals

and families are under duress, as unemployment has reached new levels and even those who are lucky enough to have a job are underpaid or at times remain unpaid for long periods, which in turn affect day-to-day survival, compromise mortgages and strain relationships. In the US Brooks-Gunn and partners (2013) related the Great Recession to declining parental behaviour and higher frequency of spanking. Mylona and collaborators (2014) suggested that income, education and unemployment are important factors when examining self-reported depressive symptoms. Kolaitis (2014) reported at a conference held in Greece that the documented “number of abused or neglected children admitted for child protection to the largest Greek paediatric hospital has risen from 81 cases in 2011 to 170 cases in 2014”. However, research by Kokkevi and colleagues (2014) found no strong association between adolescents reporting running away from home and/ or suicide attempts with the current situation. The authors attribute this to the fact that data collection took place closer to the beginning of the crisis thus consequences may not have been visible at that stage.

Simultaneously, the weakened welfare state cannot assist, support or provide any kind of safety net for these people thus leaving them defenceless. Professionals and services are under an enormous amount of pressure with little or no resources to alleviate countrywide hardship. Such circumstances are far from ideal and do not foster good practices. Matsaganis reported on the crisis in 2012 and 2013. In the latter he concluded that policy responses were not appropriate or effective and Greece will not come out of it easily.⁷³ Lyberaki and Tinios (2014) reported that “austerity tests the capacity of formal welfare provision, and so eats into the liquidity of the informal support system. The crisis is thus transmitted from the state to the family” (p. 193). Another study reported on the effects of the crisis on children and their health and expressed concern in how consequences were felt more amongst the most vulnerable (International Network for Research in Inequalities in Child Health (INRICH), 2014). These findings are very relevant to the current study and indicate the heightened risks that Greek children are currently facing thus increasing their vulnerability and as a result the need for protective services.

Karanikolos and colleagues (2013) linked the dire state of the economy with the chosen interventions to address it, and the lack social protection, seem to perpetuate the crises in southern Europe. Furthermore, Kolaitis and Giannakopoulos in 2015 suggested that cuts to

⁷³ For more information on the crisis in Greece see also Adam. and Papatheodorou (2016), and on a European level see also Petmesidou and Guillen (2014).

funding to state funding (approximately 50% less in 2014 in contrast with what was available in 2007) have left some services unable to function fully, whilst others have closed or are close to being suspended. They went on to advocate for an immediate need for supportive services targeted to the most vulnerable children and families. In addition, Ifanti and partners (2013) stressed the importance of having access to health and supportive welfare services at this difficult time. A finding from a study conducted in Italy and Spain reiterates the aforementioned conclusion portraying increased family support as necessary during the financial crisis (del Valle et al, 2013). Also, a study completed by Courtin and collaborators (2014) mapped services on offer for informal carers in Greece and other European countries. In Greece NGOs were the only support available for this vulnerable group.

In 2014 the Hellenic Association of Social workers published a report on the psychosocial consequences of the crisis and social services in Greece.⁷⁴ This report describes that in child protection that SOS Children's Villages report a 120% rise in the number of families needing assistance. Overall, the report describes child protection services as inadequate due to staff shortages (e.g. one residential unit that also offers fostering and adoption had 18 social workers in 2008 and is now operating with 8) which hinder any efforts towards deinstitutionalisation and force children to remain in hospital for longer periods of time. Some hospitals do not employ a social worker. Local authorities are also unable to meet the increased demand for services and delay assessments. Some localities do not have a social worker, but even in bigger authorities the ratio is one social worker for approximately 50,000 citizens. Public institutions regularly appeal to citizens to cover basic needs.

Similarly, Kallinikaki in an article published in 2015 states "Although Greek families are child oriented, the new conditions have affected inter-generational solidarity and led to a vicious circle of risks causing child neglect or maltreatment" (p. 177).

This crisis is the kind of emergency that could not have been foreseen by the researcher but nevertheless significantly affects some of the conclusions drawn and suggestions made. When the entire system is bombarded by urgent demands far beyond its capacity, reform is out of the question and professionals and the services they represent cannot be proactive but rather react as best they can. Realistic though it may sound, crisis equals danger and opportunity, according to the Chinese ideogram, as social workers are taught when the crisis intervention approach is

⁷⁴ This report is available on line, www.skle.gr

introduced. When everything is up in the air it is also an opportunity, albeit in disguise, to start all over again, to introduce new ideas and set a new course.

Finally, further research is required to explore optimum mechanisms to enhance existing initiatives and disseminate positive aspects in order to improve the current system by adopting the existing networking arrangements to suit needs and resources of other localities and increase state ownership without overburdening these schemes with formal structures and guidelines.

7.4 The Ways Forward

Before listing any recommendations or ways forward, one should reiterate the shifts and changes expected to affect not only Greece but also the whole world in the coming years. These provide the context for any social policy recommendations.

As originally discussed in the third chapter, global demographic, economic and social phenomena impact on families and have the capacity to put extra strain on service provision. Greece's welfare state has traditionally relied upon family and kinship to provide care and support and make up for any shortcomings as discussed in the fourth chapter of this thesis. However, urbanisation (where families move away from villages and thus away from the extended family) has deprived modern units from an essential support network. Second, women now entering the labour market more often than not postpone marriage and births, thus affecting the time spent bringing up children and offering informal care and support to weaker or elderly family members. Furthermore, advances in science have translated into increased lifespans. This coupled with lower birth rates, means that services and the welfare system as a whole are put under increased pressure to provide more support for more service users. Additionally, an increase in divorces signifies a rise in single-parent families, and what are typically mother-led households are at greater risk of suffering from lower incomes. Finally, unemployment appears to be on the rise as the western world is yet again faced with a financial crisis. All of the aforementioned phenomena are global and have an effect already visible to the naked eye.

In such demanding times, it is of importance to anticipate and plan ahead. Moreover, due to the global nature of these matters, it would be most useful to keep in touch with the rest of the world and share approaches, practices or interventions that appear to work elsewhere. Consequently, Greece, like the proverbial ostrich, needs to stop burying its head in the sand. It

must work more closely with other nations and be more open to advice. Proactivity in dealing with the phenomenon of child abuse is also necessary. If the system, as it stands, is seen as not very effective in catering to the needs of all vulnerable citizens, it is of grave concern to consider how it could ever cope with additional loads and far greater stresses. Hence, one of the main arguments of this thesis is that action is required sooner rather than later as the future appears fairly ominous.

While this subsection began with a general or even universal warning, it is now time to move on to more detailed suggestions concerning child protection and the foreseeable shift in policy and practice that could kick-start a very much needed and long overdue change. As in the rest of this thesis, recommendations will be narrowed down from the wider, macro level to the micro or case-specific, individual level. However, prior to this it is important to acknowledge that in parallel to demographic forces at work described above there are also external forces of pressure on the government, namely the EU, UNICEF and the CRC, that are to be reckoned with and may well bring about some better results in the near future.

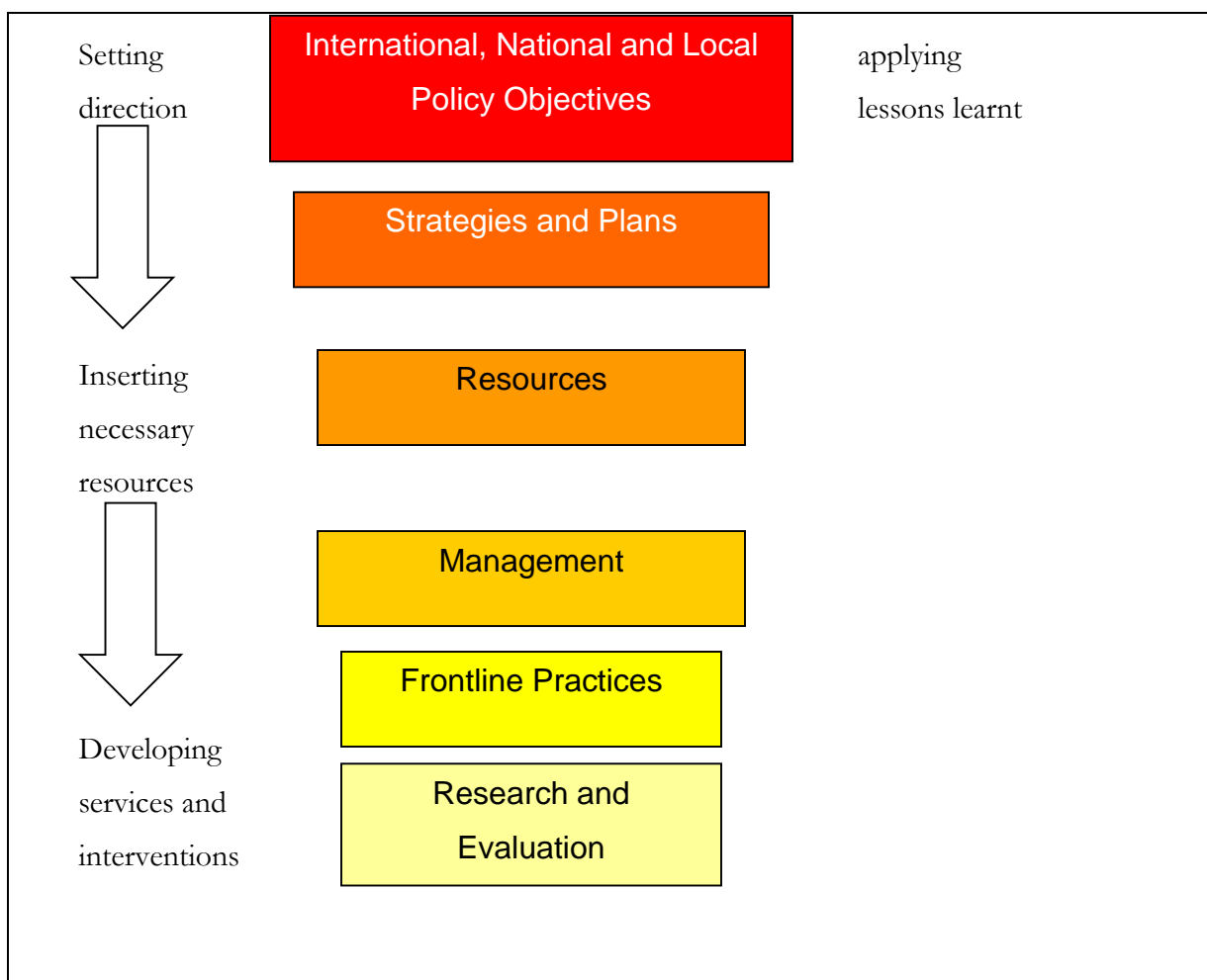


Figure 31 The policy circle

The diagram inserted above depicts what is commonly referred to as ‘the policy circle’, slightly adapted from work on youth policy to fit the child protection focus of this thesis.⁷⁵ It is useful to bear this cyclical process in mind whilst considering Greece’s shortcomings and look at beneficiary changes to be made every step along the way. The most noticeable gap in the Greek system is its inability to give feedback or to evaluate and learn from itself, as the research and evaluation block at the bottom is almost completely non-existent. Absence of renewal and limited, top-down, and possibly, unsubstantiated reforms are worrying. Thus, one could argue that not knowing what is going wrong or what is going right is the current state of affairs in Greece. This thesis has made an important contribution in this direction.

⁷⁵ Adapted from Figure 3. Managing youth policy-a general model (p23), found in Siruala’s work for the Council of Europe available on line at http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/youth-partnership/documents/EKCYP/Youth Policy/docs/YP_strategies/Policy/COE_european_framework_4YP_EN.pdf.

So was this thesis worth doing? Given the very nature of this research in that it helped uncover the exact picture of Greece and the researcher's experience working in England's system it could be tempting to start prescribing changes in line with what is or is not working in another country thus leading to anger and despair at Greece's failures. This fits with conclusions from a study by Meagher and colleagues (2009: 237) comparing the challenges in welfare in Australia, England and Sweden. They stated "...although there are some common challenges in the three study countries, their underlying structures and orientations shape and constrain the directions in which policy and practice develop." Thus, cultural sensitivity and the pursuit for a pragmatic plan dictate a starting point closer to what is already there and gradually building on that, rather than worrying over what is nowhere to be found. In other words, enhancing existing positives is preferable to copying foreign models (Finkelhor and Lannen, 2015). When advocating change it is important to distinguish between the utopian and the achievable. By focusing on the achievable one builds a foundation for moving towards the ideal. In this sense the current section could be framed around the following question. What hope is there for Greece? How realistic is it that Greece can move towards paying more than lip service to the Committee for the Rights of the Child and the European Union? Where could such progress come from? Without ever forgetting the ultimate destination, that is a well-developed child protection system.

Finally, Finkelhor and Lannen (2015) discussed three approaches to mobilisation for the prevention of child abuse and/ or neglect. Firstly, to mobilise the government. This approach is the primary one followed by the Committee for the Rights of Children. The second one is to mobilise professionals. The third approach is to use NGOs. This thesis mainly advocates the second but at the same time the researcher recognises the importance of involving the state and NGOs. Wessells (2015) on the other hand argued for a bottom-up rather than a top-down approach.

7.41 Policy Level

The suggestions that follow need to be born or at least endorsed on a higher level and then trickle down through the various management levels to the practitioner level.

One possible way of ameliorating the existing situation is to appoint a coordinating body or institution with the necessary expertise to act as the head of the child protection system in line

with evidence from UNICEF's Child Protection Strategy reported in the second chapter of this thesis. Although such an appointment would not have any significance whatsoever unless accompanied by the necessary powers and resources to bring about change. A condition that is probably hard for Greece to meet, if one takes into account its current financial situation. This coordinating structure could act as a central point for data collection, where all services would be expected to annually report specific figures and predetermined data that would enable the solution to the real puzzle of need and provision. Having accumulated this important information, the body would then be ideally positioned to make policy recommendations and devise action plans, protocols or interventions to improve any shortcomings. Another part of its role would then be to regularly report on the country's progress on a European or international level. This role could be taken on by the Institute of Child Health and/or the Children's Ombudsman who are the ones with the relevant expertise and are already involved in most child protection research and awareness projects. A fairly recent, positive development is that the Institute of Child Health as of 2012 took part in a European project titled "Protecting infants and toddlers from domestic violence: Development of a diagnostic protocol for infant and toddler abuse and neglect and its implementation to public health system" funded by Daphne III Programme of the European Commission⁷⁶. This project designed a protocol for the diagnosis of child abuse and/or neglect, and aims to train professionals to use it and pilot it. Additionally, it aims to form national networks for children's health in every participating country, namely England, Spain, Italy, Portugal, and Cyprus, which will meet annually and gather results. This is an optimistic step in that it provides a coordinating structure, promotes a unified approach and will generate important data. A valid concern may however be that such a tool may uncover greater needs that overwhelmed services in Greece are likely to struggle to meet but such a development may increase the pressure to better coordinate, organise and staff services.

Another significant development towards enhancing coordination is the establishment of the Central Scientific Council for managing the victimisation and criminality of minors (KESATHEA), Law 3860/2010.⁷⁷ The Council's remit is to coordinate and organise interventions, submit proposals and advise the Minister of Justice on issues related to the

⁷⁶ For more information the project's website is www.intovian.eu

⁷⁷ For more information visit the website of the Ministry of Justice, www.ministryofjustice.gr

prevention and handling of the victimisation and offending of minors. However, the members of this council are appointed by the Minister and current membership includes a majority of representatives of the legal system rather than a balance between legal and social services' representatives and involves mainly high ranking public servants and academics but frontline professionals are the noted absentees. In this instance child abuse is linked to delinquency and this ties in well with the extended remit of the Societies for the Protection of Minors as already discussed in this thesis. The Council founded a countrywide network named Orestis. This network incorporates most local authorities in Greece, excluding localities that do not employ social workers, all services dealing with minors that belong to the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Justice, and various organisations that offer relevant services. The aim of this network is to coordinate interventions and enhance collaboration in order to achieve better outcomes. A framework for this collaboration remains to be established but this initiative appears to be moving in the right direction. KESATHEA is already working with the National Centre for Social Solidarity (EKKA), and within that a national helpline for the protection of children has been established and the next goal appears to be early identification and emergency interventions for abused and/or neglected children. This Council may play a significant part in ameliorating service responses.⁷⁸

Furthermore, overhauling the inspection system is of vital importance, as all organisations working with vulnerable citizens and using taxpayers' money need to be scrutinised not only financially but also on the basis of good practice standards. Even though NGOs are to be embraced and encouraged to contribute as much as possible, clear guidelines and monitoring need to be in place as philanthropy, although highly commendable, guarantees nothing more than good intentions. Apart from speedier and more thorough inspections, there is also the need for any suggestions to be enforceable by law so as to oblige organisations to abide by the inspectors' recommendations. Finally, all reports need to be made public. Citizens have the right to know how the services that they are financing through taxes and that theoretically only exist to assist them are operating. Overall, greater transparency within the sector should be encouraged and the mechanisms are already there, therefore, it is just a matter of strengthening them. This role could well be undertaken by the creation of new Body of Welfare inspectors, given that the previous structure has been dismantled (see Chapter 3).

⁷⁸ For more information see Pitsela, 2013.

If the State wishes to be considered less abusive than the families it is removing abused children from, due contemplation should be afforded to procedures followed in response to the testimony of children who are victims of abuse and/or neglect. Likewise, children should also be present at the proceedings. Finally, there should also be suitable courts and police officers with specialist training employed across the county, which would make the whole process more child-friendly and less threatening. Given the researcher's experience of working within the child protection system in England, it seems highly appropriate to also advocate some form of representation for the child or children in care proceedings, be it a dedicated lawyer or guardian.

It is equally essential to enable children's voices to be heard throughout the system and to provide a plethora of appropriate local placements in order to avoid causing further disruptions to children's lives. This will require a total reorganisation of the fostering system across the country, suitable campaigns, training, care planning, monitoring, and adequate financial support. Such an increase in suitable placements would imply a decrease in the usage of residential placements, which are widely deemed as inappropriate across the globe.

Such crucial changes coupled with clear, protected and safe arrangements for contact between siblings or children and other non-abusive members of the family would most certainly ameliorate the children's experience of being removed from their biological homes. Money that is spent on residential units could be put to much better use, if redirected towards fostering. This has been achieved in Eastern Europe where out-of-home care was historically provided by large residential units. An international organisation with experience in putting local initiatives to good use and modernising service provision is the Every Child organisation.⁷⁹ The emphasis in this recommendation is on using money differently, which is what makes this a realistic plan.

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Another step in the right direction would be to look at providing adequate services in all localities across the country. Decentralisation could guarantee a provision closer to the child's best interests. Families and children 'at risk' would consequently be easier to identify and support reducing the stigma that is normally associated with the involvement of more

⁷⁹ http://www.everychild.org.uk/news_item/21

⁸⁰ On the 20th of November 2009 the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly welcomed by consensus the Guidelines on the Alternative Care of Children, exactly 20 years on from the adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The Guidelines provide guidance on how governments can develop family based alternatives to institutional care. (Available at http://www.everychild.org.uk/news_item/69).

specialised services attaching to the process. Prevention is without a doubt far better than curing, so strengthening universal or primary prevention would be the main goal, followed closely by secondary or targeted prevention aimed at high-risk children and families. However, in order to pass on services to local and regional authorities successfully, power and resources must be made available to local communities. The state needs to steer, oversee and co-fund localities to ensure an acceptable quality of services based on needs across the board rather than exclusively providing centralised services in a one-size-fits-all manner. This study advocates a more supportive, less punitive approach, closer to Sweden or France, and social democratic welfare systems in general over Anglo-Saxon models thus echoing network participants thus placing an emphasis on primary and secondary prevention that is also advocated by the public health approach.

Improving life chances for all is far more acceptable, less stigmatising and in the long run more cost-effective than other approaches. This suggestion is in line with Rose's work on preventive medicine (Rose et al, 2009). He realised that "...risk and disease are a continuum in the population" and "the high-risk and sick individuals simply represent the extreme end of a distribution" (pp. 4-5). As a result, his suggestion was to switch from a 'high-risk' strategy for prevention, to a 'mass population' strategy. In other words he advocated that the reduction of risk factors could be more efficient, if targeted to the middle of the distribution facing moderate risks. Similarly, in child protection screening and treating moderate difficulties would most likely bring much better results than whole systems focused entirely on the high end. Such an approach was also supported by Gilbert and colleagues in 2012.

Another finding that appears worth exploring further in order to better the situation in Greece is that of community mobilisation. Research evaluating such an approach in the US rated it positively in the prevention of child abuse and/or neglect and suggested it was suitable for various communities (McLeigh et al, 2015). Neighbourhoods and local communities deployed as partners in the professionals' efforts to prevent maltreatment. Similarly, Watson and collaborators (2014) put forward the "lack of embeddedness" in local communities as a factor that hinders service users' participation. Finally, in another study it is argued that a strengthened community is prerequisite for the prevention of child abuse and neglect (van Dijken et al, 2016).

The children's Ombudsman in Greece, an independent authority promoting and protecting children's rights (www.0-18.gr), is the main authority that is working along the lines of Rose's thinking by raising awareness and setting up preventive initiatives. One of the most prominent

ones has been a network coordinated by this authority that has brought together the Ministry of Education and Religions, the Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity, the Lifelong Learning Secretariat, the Youth Secretariat, Institute of Social Protection and Solidarity, Institute of Child Health, Greek Paediatric Company, and the Greek branch of UNICEF. These institutions united in 2005 to found a network to raise awareness against physical punishment by organising different campaigns and events (www.somatikitimoria.gr). Other organisations have joined in since then and this unity may over time help spread the word and shift societal attitudes.

One of these organisations is the Child's Smile, a charity that was presented in the fourth chapter. Although the researcher has already questioned its practices and has not been able to locate a policy decision that the agency is taking over the child protection system, it is significant to acknowledge the part they play in raising public awareness and funds to look after children in need of protection.

The best place for children to grow up in is the family; thus, child protection schemes should support the family and prevent breakdown and separation as much as possible. If all else fails, then kinship care or care in the community should be prioritised coupled with work on rehabilitation from day one. A child placed out of home is not the final solution or the end of the journey; it is only the beginning. Such values and ways of thinking and practicing are in line with the children's rights movement and were present in the networks observed during this research. This is a very promising sign that helps create a rather optimistic picture. Given that no top-down mechanisms were found in operation in the Greek child protection system a greater emphasis and hope is placed with bottom-up initiatives. Their higher standards are a positive force that could under the right circumstances be publicised and spread around the country.

In addition, more user-friendly guidelines, practices and procedures should be adopted by organisations to empower some of society's most fragile members by recognising their right to be treated as citizens and to have a say in matters that affect them and their lives.

Professionals, researchers, legislators and policy makers need not merely consult service users but rather involve them meaningfully throughout as partners in the process or experts in their own rights. Enlisting the help of children and families ensures jargon-free, well-targeted material that will meet real needs. In order to achieve non-tokenistic, meaningful involvement, time and training are required, and feedback must be provided to reassure those involved of the usefulness and impact of their involvement. This is a change of mentality that though hard to

achieve and definitely time consuming is absolutely necessary. The positive side is because it exceeds the limits of child protection and is a much wider matter there are many external forces at work and citizens are overall becoming more and more aware of their rights. Especially linked to the protection of children the CRC and the EU are two significant forces, whose input may accelerate results. However, it is important at this point to include the difficulties experienced in this area by other countries. Research conducted in Germany for example, showed that clients' participation in care planning meetings does not ensure partaking in the decision. In contrast, their presence is occasionally used to 'legitimise' decisions made by the professionals (Hitzler and Messmer, 2010).

Furthermore, policy makers and legislators must involve and listen to social workers' ideas on how to improve the services provided, and to consider them as collaborators in the promotion of innovative schemes since practitioners are best equipped to deal with service design. The same applies to all professions involved in service delivery. Policy design and service planning should not be left to politicians alone, as they may not have the insight to make the best decisions and bring about long overdue change.

In addition, unless the state discovers ways to co-work and involve all stakeholders and all departments in planning service responses to complex social phenomena, it will be difficult, if not impossible, to enhance collaboration in the field and deliver optimum results. 'Too many cooks spoil the broth', as the idiom goes; or, in this case, too many case workers working disharmoniously with ambiguous roles, responsibilities and lines of accountability. Of course, offering a combination of services tailored to each service user's particular needs and tastes is a challenge that requires some collective action. The type of common cause, hierarchy, role clarity and accountability that would be found in a kitchen could be considered the most vital ingredient in avoiding blunders, promoting synergy and providing that ever intangible 'seamless service'. If every professional is working for a common cause, or in this instance, the child's best interest, knows his/her own role and responsibilities, is equally aware of what can be expected from other colleagues, has had practice in working collaboratively and is aware of the challenges and time and other restraints involved, and has also seen the magnificent results that come about from this way of thinking, then harmony is achievable.

Moreover, effective professional supervision needs to be made available to all practitioners working within the child protection arena and beyond, as already discussed earlier in this chapter. This is an obvious yet crucial step in the right direction that will improve practice by

providing professionals with an invaluable, safe outlet where they can share feelings awakened by their work and receive much needed support and guidance.

Practitioners would also benefit from on-going training opportunities provided by their workplaces at regular intervals. Keeping up to date with advances in research and practice around the world is extremely important, not only for the service users on the receiving end but also for the professionals, as it could have the potential to help avoid burn out and/or the “public sector employee syndrome” by providing some renewal through professional development.

Finally, paediatricians, discussed in the third chapter, are fairly closely involved with children and their families in the early years. Consequently, they could act as a useful point of contact between families and statutory services. These professionals are an invaluable asset as they are a non-stigmatising service that enjoys some power and trust equipped with medical knowledge to identify and monitor abuse and/or neglect. This role would be pivotal given the scarcity of health visitors in Greece, which results in children being practically invisible between birth, when parents are obliged to come forward to register them, and the age of 5, when there is again a legal requirement to enrol children at a nursery. Papadakaki and colleagues (2013) report that an intensive IPV training programme delivered to general practitioners and residents was important to enhance knowledge though the particular study was unable to generate evidence on improved performance following the training. Such initiatives are vital in order to ensure that professionals from across a range of services are able to identify and handle difficult cases. In addition, a study by Laud and colleagues in 2013 indicated that dentists in Greece did not feel adequately knowledgeable in order to detect and refer cases of suspected maltreatment thus proposing that more training is provided and a clearer procedure for these professionals to report any suspicions. Campaigns including the necessary training for professionals in contact with children are a prerequisite.

7.5 Conclusion and Contribution

In conclusion, this thesis has fulfilled its mission statement by providing a carefully researched, clear and insightful picture of the child protection system, or the lack of it, in Greece. It has answered all questions set out in the design in the best way possible, given the limited data

available on the subject. The fact that key players have subsequently identified similar concerns strengthens the importance of the results.⁸¹

The findings of this thesis are still relevant internationally as collaborative working remains a topic in the current literature (Taylor and Thoburn, 2016; Hood, Gillespie, and Davies 2016; Reeves, 2016). Thus this thesis can enhance the ongoing debate. Additionally, MacBeath and collaborators (2014) advocate for a “conceptual reorientation” of research and urge researchers to consider the (macro and meso) context more. On another note, Reeves, (2016) stresses the need for studies to include more data from interviews and observations in order to examine the reality of collaboration rather than rely solely on surveys (p. 405). He also argues that studies that contain data from more than one site are preferable and more such studies are needed (p. 406). This is consistent with the methodology used for the current study.

They are also relevant in Greece. In October 2014 the Institute of Child Health held a consultation with professionals on the new protocol for dealing with cases of abuse and/ or neglect. In a document released following this event one of the main points is that “Collaboration and communication amongst different professionals and agencies is necessary, in order to correctly assess a case and to avoid repeating processes that could re-victimise the child” (p. 2). Another point in the same document that is related to one of the main findings of this thesis is the professionals’ request to have access to some form of supervision from the Institute of Child Health. Furthermore, the final point is that the community (school, church, social services, police and the family) needs to act as a network in order to ensure the “appropriate and complete” management of such cases. The exact wording is “communicate and co-create” their intervention (p. 3). The protocol itself was released in 2015. Additionally, in February 2016 an organisation named Lumos has begun work in Greece in order “to build awareness of the need for reform of the child protection system away from institutions and towards community-based social services and family-like child care placements”.⁸² This initiative also echoes the findings of this thesis and strengthens the proposed suggestions. Finally, in May 2016 an event was organised in Athens by the Greek Ombudsman for the protection of the rights of children and the Institute of Child Health in the form of a public discussion. The topic was the newly released document containing a set of suggested principles for child protection in the country. One of the main themes included (Principle 3) was the need for “systematic

⁸¹See Chapter 3, 5, and 6.

⁸²<https://wearelumos.org/stories/lumos-greece>

collaboration” between services working with children on a local and national level. Thus this thesis can assist by lighting the way forward.

Reporting on both the positive and negative sides of the issue, it has also given a balanced view of the situation. The thesis has presented the key national, regional and international players in the field and it has simultaneously portrayed the game itself by offering the reader an insider’s view of how all these factors interact to form the national picture. This is an important contribution to knowledge as a system is not only about the entities involved but more importantly about their interface, how these components communicate and interact. Additionally, these findings can be put to good use by the international community during attempts to compare systems and/ or group good practices. They can also inform debates on interagency and interdisciplinary working.

Moreover, the researcher’s familiarity with the culture has served the overall purpose of this enquiry well as it has enabled interpreting, translating and then linking national findings to the international scene, without playing favourites or beautifying the reality, a tendency that could arise from a misguided sense of patriotism. The motives behind this exposé are disinterested in so far as they arise from a hope to see Greece bettering existing practices and benefiting from the knowledge available within the international community so that the ultimate recipients, the vulnerable children and families, can receive the most excellent services possible and thus improve their living conditions. It is hoped that this portrait will find some practical application and thus help achieve better results towards that end, especially given the fact that children are likely to suffer when the institutions that are there to protect them are in danger or when services and the professionals working there appear to mirror the chaos of the families they are there to serve.

Finally, this section provided a utopian and rigorous analysis of what needs to change with urgency by a top-down approach. However, the researcher during the life of this project witnessed promising ‘green shoots’ and took a small step by linking the two collaborative initiatives thus abiding by the participants’ wishes. This thesis has demonstrated that bottom-up change is not only possible but also necessary and therefore the author endorses these initiatives as crucial to the emergence of a Child Protection System in Greece and urges policy makers to lend an ear to the ground.

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⁸³This is used to signify Greek titles translated by the researcher.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Table provided by the Ministry of Public Order showing the extent of the problem of victimisation of minors in Greece (1998, 1999 and 2000)

YEAR	TYPE OF VIOLATION	NATIONALITY	SEX	AGE GROUP			General Sum
				0-6	13-17	7-12	
1998	Incest (345 CC)	Greek	Female		1		1
	Involuntary abduction (327CC)	Greek	Female		3		3
	Threat (333 CC)	Greek	Female		1		1
	Simple physical injury (308CC)	Greek	Male		2	2	4
	Child seduction (339CC)	Albanian	Male	1			1
		American	Female		1		1
		Greek	Male	5	7	7	19
			Female	1	9	7	17
	Unprovoked physical injury (308A CC)	Ethiopian	Male			1	1
		Albanian	Male		1		1
	Kidnapping of minor (324CC)	Greek	Female			1	1
	Lechery between relatives (346CC)	Greek	Female		1		1
	Rape (336CC)	Albanian	Male			1	1
		Greek	Male	2	2		4
			Female	1	16	3	20
	Voluntary abduction (328CCK)	Greek	Male	1			1
			Female		5		5
	Insult (361CC)	Greek	Female		1	2	3
	Dangerous physical injury (309CC)	Greek	Female	1		1	2
	Abuse to lechery (338CC)	Greek	Female		1	1	2
	Robbery (380CC)	Albanian	Female		2		2

		Greek	Male			1	1	
	Procuring (349CC)	Greek	Male		2		2	
			Female		1		1	
	Neglect of supervision of minor (409CC)	Greek	Male		3		3	
	Provocation of scandal by lecherous acts (353CC)	Greek	Female		1		1	
	Insult of sexual dignity (337CC)	British	Female		1		1	
		Greek	Male		3	1	4	
			Female	1	2	2	5	
	Procuring (351CC)	Romanian	Female		1		1	
	Physical injury to minors (312CC)	Greek	Male	1		1	2	
			Female	2	1	1	4	
Sum – 1998					16	68	32	116
1999	Involuntary abduction (327CC)	Greek	Male		1		1	
			Female		1	1	2	
	Homicide (299CC)	Greek	Female	1			1	
	Insurance fraud (388CC)	Greek	Female		1		1	
	Simply physical injury (308CC)	Greek	Male		3		3	
			Female			2	2	
	Attempted rape (42-336CC)	British	Female		1		1	
		Greek	Female		2	1	3	
	Seduction of children (339CC)	Albanian	Female		1	1	2	
		Greek	Male	1	6	5	12	
			Female		3	4	7	
		Lithuanian	Female			1	1	
	Kidnapping of minors (324CC)	Albanian	Male			1	1	
		Greek	Male	3	1		4	
			Female	1	1		2	
	Unnatural lechery (347CC)	Greek	Male	1			1	
	Gross physical injury (310CC)	Greek	Male	1		1	2	
	Rape (336CC)	Greek	Female	1	9	5	15	
	Exposure (306CC)	Albanian	Female	1			1	
		Greek	Male	1	2	2	5	
			Female		2		2	
		Former USSR	Male			1	1	
	Voluntary abduction (328CC)	Greek	Female		8	1	9	
	Insult (361CC)	Greek	Male		1		1	
	Dangerous physical injury (309CC)	Greek	Male			1	1	
	Abuse to lechery (338CC)	Greek	Female		1		1	
	Robbery (380CC)	Greek	Male		2		2	
	Procuring (349CC)	Albanian	Female		2		2	
		Greek	Female		2		2	
	Neglect of supervision of minor (360CC)	Greek	Male		1		1	
	Neglect of prevention to beggary (409CC)	Albanian	Female		5		5	
		Greek	Male		2		2	

	Provocation of scandal by lecherous acts (353CC)	Greek	Female		2		2
	Insult of sexual dignity (337CC)	Greek	Female	1	1	3	5
	Procuring (351CC)	Albanian	Male		1		1
		Greek	Female		1		1
		Romanian	Female		1		1
	Physical injury to minors (312CC)	Egyptian	Female			1	1
		Albanian	Female	2			2
		Greek	Male	2	2	2	6
			Female	2	3	3	8
		Syrian	Male	1			1
	Physical injury due to negligence (314CC)	Greek	Female			1	1
Sum – 1999				19	69	37	125
2000	Incest (345CC)	Greek	Female		1		1
	Involuntary abduction (327CC)	Greek	Female		4	1	5
	Simple physical injury (308CC)	Greek	Male	1	5	2	8
			Female		1		1
		Russian	Female		1		1
	Seduction of children (339CC)	Albanian	Male			1	1
			Female		1		1
		Bulgarian	Female		1		1
		French	Male		1		1
		Greek	Male		2	3	5
			Female	1	6	7	14
		Former USSR	Female		1		1
	Kidnapping of minors (324CC)	American	Female		1		1
			Greek	Male	1		1
			Female	1		3	4
	Lechery between relatives (346CC)	Greek	Female			2	2
	Unnatural lechery (347CC)	German	Male		1		1
	Rape (336CC)	Albanian	Male			1	1
			Female	1	1		2
		Bulgarian	Female		1		1
		Greek	Male	4	2	2	8
			Female		13	7	20
		Swedish	Female		1		1
	Exposure (306CC)	Albanian	Female	1			1
			Greek	Male	3	1	1
			Female	1		1	2
	Voluntary abduction (328CC)	Greek	Female		5		5
	Insult (361CC)	Greek	Female		1		1
	Dangerous physical injury (309CC)	Greek	Male			1	1
	Abuse of minors to lechery (342CC)	Greek	Male		1		1
	Abuse to lechery (338CC)	Albanian	Female		1		1
			Greek	Male		1	
			Female			1	1

	Robbery (380CC)	Albanian	Male		1		1
		Greek	Male		5	3	8
			Female			1	1
	Procuring (349CC)	Greek	Female		3		3
	Neglect of supervision of minor (360CC)	Greek	Male		4	1	5
			Female		1		1
	Neglect of prevention to beggary (409CC)	Albanian	Female		5		5
		Greek	Male		3	1	4
	Insult of sexual dignity (337CC)	Greek	Male		4		4
			Female		6	3	9
	Slave trade (351CC)	Albanian	Male		1		1
	Physical injury to minors (312CC)	Albanian	Male			2	2
		Greek	Male	2	1		3
			Female	3	1	3	7
	Sum – 2000			19	89	48	156
	Grand Sum			54	226	117	397

Note Since the offences against minors are characterized by invisibility, the statistical data kept are uncertain.

Appendix 2

Table provided by the Ministry of Public Order showing the number of children who were victims of sexual exploitation (prostitution - trade for the purpose of prostitution - pornography)

NUMBER OF INDIVIDUAL REPORTS				AGE					Grand total
YEAR	TYPE OF OFFENCE	NATIONALITY	SEX	13	14	15	16	17	
1998	Procuring (349CC)	Greek	Male				2		2
			Female				1		1
	Slave trade (351CC)	Romanian	Female				1		1
Total – 1998							4		4
1999	Procuring (349CC)	Albanian	Female			1	1		2
		Greek	Female		1		1		2
	Slave trade (351CC)	Albanian	Male	1					1
		Greek	Female			1			1
		Romanian	Female					1	1
Total – 1999				1	1	2	2	1	7
2000	Procuring (349CC)	Greek	Female		1		2		3
	Slave trade (351CC)	Albanian	Male				1		1
Total – 2000					1		3		4

Note It is noted that the cases of sexual abuse of minors do not show the seriousness and extent of the problem since, for different reasons, the issue of concealment is involved. In particular, foreign minor females, victims of sexual abuse, do not report such acts not only for social reasons but also for fear of their physical integrity and their life.

Appendix 3

RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW CHECKLIST

This checklist should be completed for every research project that involves human participants, personal, medical or otherwise sensitive data or methodologically controversial approaches. It is used to identify whether a full application for ethics approval needs to be submitted. The research ethics review process is not designed to assess the merits of the research in question, but is merely a device to ensure that external risks have been fully considered and that an acceptable research methodology has been applied. This checklist applies to research undertaken by *both* staff and students, but it should be noted that the way the checklist is processed differs between these two groups.

For staff: if a full application is required please ensure that you complete the Ethics Review Questionnaire for Researchers and send the completed form to Michael Nelson in the Research and Project Development Division (RPDD).

Please accompany the questionnaire with a copy of this checklist and a copy of the research proposal.

For MSc/PhD students: if a full application is required please ensure that you complete the Ethics Review Questionnaire for Researchers and discuss the issues raised with your student supervisor in the first instance. You should ensure that the completed forms are accompanied with a copy of the research proposal to ensure that your supervisor can make a fully informed decision on the ethical implications of the research. Where the supervisor is satisfied that all ethical concerns have been addressed s/he must sign the checklist and ensure that a copy is retained as a record of the decision reached. It is appreciated that in certain cases the student supervisor may not be able to reach a decision on the ethical concerns raised. In such instances the matter should be referred to the Research Ethics Committee (please send all relevant forms and a copy of the proposal to Michael Nelson in RPDD).

For undergraduate students: After completing the checklist, undergraduate students should discuss any issues raised with their supervisor in the first instance. If fully satisfied with the research proposal, the supervisor can sign the checklist on behalf of the department. A copy of the signed form should be retained by the department as a record of the decision reached. It is appreciated that in certain instances the student supervisor may not be able to reach a decision on the ethical concerns raised. In such instances the application for ethics approval should be referred to the Research Ethics Committee (please send all relevant forms and a copy of the proposal to Michael Nelson in RPDD).

Before completing this form, please refer to the LSE Research Ethics Policy. The principal investigator or, where the principal investigator is a student, the supervisor, is responsible for exercising appropriate professional judgement in this review. For students, your supervisor should be able to provide you with guidance on the ethical implications of the research project. If members of staff have any queries regarding the completion of the checklist they should address these to Michael Nelson (RPDD) in the first instance.

This checklist must be completed before potential participants are approached to take part in any research.

Section I: Applicant Details

Name of researcher:	Helen Athanasiou
Status(delete as appropriate):	PhD Student
Email address:	h.athanasiou@lse.ac.uk
Contact address:	
Telephone number:	

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Section II: Project Details

<p>Title of the proposal and brief abstract:</p> <p>“Working together to protect children; a case study of policy implementation in Greece.”</p>

Section III: Student Details:

Details of study:	
Supervisor’s name:	Dr Eileen Munro and Dr Gill Bridge
Email address:	e.murno@lse.ac.uk ; g.bridge@lse.ac.uk
Contact address:	

Section IV: Research Checklist

Consent

	es	o	N ot certain
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<p>Does the study involve participants who are in any way vulnerable or may have any difficulty giving consent? <i>If you have answered yes or are not certain about this please complete Section 1 of the Research Questionnaire.</i></p> <p><i>As general guidance, the Research Ethics Committee feels that research participants under the age of 18 may be vulnerable.</i></p>			
<p>Will it be necessary for participants to take part in the study without their knowledge and consent at the time? (e.g. covert observation of people in public places) <i>If you have answered yes or are not certain about this please complete Section 1 of the Research Questionnaire.</i></p>			

Research Design/Methodology

<p>Does the research methodology use deception? <i>If you have answered yes or are not certain about this please complete Section 2 of the Research Questionnaire.</i></p>			
<p>Are there any significant concerns regarding the design of the research project?</p> <p>a) If the proposed research relates to the provision of social or human services is it feasible and/or appropriate that service users or service user representatives should be in some way involved in or consulted upon the development of the project?</p> <p>b) Does the project involve the handling of any sensitive</p>			

<p>information?</p> <p><i>If you have answered yes or not certain to these questions please complete Section 3 of the Research Questionnaire.</i></p>			
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Financial Incentives/Sponsorship

<p>Will the independence of the research be affected by the source of the funding? <i>If you have answered yes or not certain about this please complete Section 4 of the Research Questionnaire.</i></p>			
<p>Are there payments to researchers/participants that may have an impact on the objectivity of the research? <i>If you have answered yes or not certain about this please complete Section 4 of the Research Questionnaire.</i></p>			
<p>Will financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants? <i>If you have answered yes or not certain about this please complete Section 4 of the Research Questionnaire.</i></p>			

Research Subjects

<p>Is pain or more than mild discomfort likely to result from the study? <i>If you have answered yes or not certain about this please complete Section 5 of the Research Questionnaire.</i></p>			
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<p>Could the study induce unacceptable psychological stress or anxiety or cause harm or negative consequences beyond the risks encountered in normal life? Will the study involve prolonged or repetitive testing? <i>If you have answered yes or not certain about this please complete Section 5 of the Research Questionnaire.</i></p>			
<p>Are drugs, placebos or other substances to be administered to the study participants or will the study involve invasive, intrusive or potentially harmful procedures of any kind? <i>If you have answered yes or not certain about this please complete Section 5 of the Research Questionnaire.</i></p>			

Risk to Researchers

<p>Do you have any doubts or concerns regarding your (or your colleagues) physical or psychological wellbeing during the research period? <i>If you have answered yes or not certain about this please complete Section 6 of the Research Questionnaire.</i></p>			
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Confidentiality

<p>Do you or your supervisor have any concerns regarding confidentiality, privacy or data protection? <i>If you have answered yes or not certain about this please complete Section 7 of the Research Questionnaire.</i></p>			
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Dissemination

<p>Are there any particular groups who are likely to be harmed by dissemination of the results of this project? <i>If you have answered yes or not certain about this please complete Section 8 of the Research Questionnaire.</i></p>			
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If you have answered **no** to all the questions, staff members should file the completed form for their records. Students should retain a copy of the form and submit it with their research report or dissertation.

If you have answered **yes** or **not certain** to any of the questions you will need to describe more fully how you plan to deal with the ethical issues raised by your research. You will need to answer the **relevant** questions in the Ethics Review Questionnaire for Researchers form addressing the ethical issues raised by your proposal. Staff should ensure that the completed questionnaire is sent to Michael Nelson in RPDD. Students should submit their completed questionnaire to their supervisor in the first instance. It will be at the discretion of the supervisor whether they feel that the research should be considered by the Research Ethics Committee.

Please note that it is your responsibility to follow the School's Research Ethics Policy and any relevant academic or professional guidelines in the conduct of your study. This includes providing details of your proposal and completed questionnaire, and ensuring confidentiality in the storage and use of data.

Any significant change in the question, design or conduct over the course of the research should be notified to Michael Nelson in RPDD.

I have read and understood the LSE Research Ethics Policy and the questions contained in the Research Checklist above.

Academic Research Staff

Principal Investigator Signature:
Date:

Undergraduate/MSc Student/PhD Student

Student Signature:
Student Name (Please print): Helen Athanasiou
Department: Social Policy
Date:
Date of Research Ethics Seminar attended:

Supervisor Signature:
Supervisor Name (Please print): Eileen Munro
Department:
Date:

Appendix 4

Here are summaries of the main findings that derive from a small sample, but capture the views of different stakeholders.

3.61 Local Authority

The professionals working at a local authority shared that due to staff shortages, they now only work by appointment or after receiving an invitation from a head teacher. When asked what happens if there are concerns about parenting capacity, the psychologist stated she would refer any such cases that came to her attention to the social work team. The social workers reported that they occasionally work together with the Prosecutor for minors, when they either receive a referral/allegation about a family in their locality they need to investigate or monitor further, or if they have concerns they might refer a case to the Prosecutor themselves. These cases might involve an assessment of the living conditions of a family, an investigation of circumstances during private proceedings, e.g. divorce, or an assessment of a local family who are applying to become foster carers.

The professionals also shared that service provision is somewhat guided by available funds, in particular EU money. At the moment funding is mainly aimed for the elderly. The staff-to-citizens ratio at the time of the interview was presented as three social workers for 60,000 people plus two social workers offering a service to the elderly. In addition, they do not have access to computers.

Furthermore, they described the difficulties they face when dealing with cases of suspected abuse or neglect due to the fact that these cases remain undetected because of family trends to cover things up, the Prosecutor for minors does not always intervene, there are no alternative services, e.g. limited fostering and adoption services, etc., and there is a legal vacuum, if a parent refuses to cooperate the intervention is blocked.

3.62 Academic

A concern was voiced regarding the lack of funding to back up the new responsibilities at a local level as well as a lack of clear guidelines. Additionally, the interviewee highlighted the lack of supervision for frontline social workers that exacerbates the issues mentioned above. Finally, the inadequacy of the organisation of fostering in Greece was highlighted.

3.63 Residential Units with Fostering and Adoption Services

Unit A: At the time of the interview the social work team consisted of eighteen workers plus one vacant post. Fourteen of the social workers were permanent whilst four were trainees whose posts were funded by the EU. According to their responsibilities, they are divided in the following teams: Information and Initial contact team, Natural parents and children team, Fostering team, Adoption team, Root searching team.

The centre looks after a maximum of 105 children, of which eight are in the infant section, whilst the rest share a living space in groups of ten to fourteen. According to the agency's chart children looked after by this centre should be between 0-4 years of age and come from problem families. The centre works with children and families from around the country.

The cases mainly involve concerns around: parents' mental health, learning disabilities, drug/alcohol abusing parents, children with severe health problems, abused/neglected children, and abandoned children. Some of the cases are taken on after the intervention of the Prosecutor for minors. The centre aims to minimise the children's stay in the institution.

There are evaluative statistics for some years but the filing system has not been computerised. They receive a number of applications from prospective adoptive parents but the majority of these are for the adoption of infants. They encounter difficulties in placing for adoption older children, big sibling groups, sick children, or children from different ethnic backgrounds. There was at the time of the interview a recent noticeable increase in children from eastern European countries waiting to be placed for adoption.

Regarding fostering, the centre has seventy-six foster families who are looking after around a hundred and eight children and adults long term. The allowances for foster parents were reported as small and the majority of foster parents are not related to the children. The cost of a child in foster care was portrayed as smaller than that of a child living in a home/institution.

Decisions regarding the children were made by a multi-disciplinary committee, which consisted of social workers, psychologists, doctors, and nursery nurses. The first aim of the service was reported as support the natural family, rehabilitate children, and should that not be possible then adoption, followed by foster care.

The professionals described working together with the children's hospitals, maternity wards, general hospitals around the country, medical centres, NGOs, institutions/homes and training projects, regional and local social services, etc. It was felt that there were gaps in service provision and inadequate staffing in existing services. Finally, exacerbated difficulties in the countryside were noted such as greater lack of services and professionals to serve local communities.

Unit B: This centre looks after mainly infants 0-4 years of age and has a capacity of up to approximately thirty-four children from around the country. It is also in charge of around a hundred and fifty foster families. The service is divided in four teams: the Looking after Children team (which is the initial contact team also responsible for the children staying in the centre and consists of two social workers), the Fostering team (which consists of a social worker and five health visitors), the Adoption team (that consists of three social workers), and a team dealing with any financial assistance issues for families.

The professionals reported a multi-disciplinary committee making decisions regarding children and families, which consists of physiotherapists, speech therapists, doctors, nursery nurses, health visitors and social workers. No psychologist was employed at the time of the interview.

Children come to the centre's attention through a referral from the Prosecutor for minors due to concerns regarding living conditions, due to having been abandoned by the parents, or because of a parent's request for them to be temporarily looked after or adopted. The interviewees shared that 5%-10% of children in the centre had special needs.

The aim here was also to reduce children's stay at the centre, which was reported as between six months and four years with an average of about a year and a half. Their first endeavour was to rehabilitate the children with their birth families, but failing to do so they opted for adoption or foster care. Some of the foster placements were with relatives. It was felt that there is a lack of public awareness of fostering and also a lack of short term and medium term foster placements. This service had computers.

3.64 Hellenic Association of Social Workers

Members of the Board reported the following concerns. The need for the decentralisation of service provision is great, given the importance of assessing local needs and bottom up planning. They shared the difficulties encountered with the three tier system, e.g. new responsibilities passed

on to local actors but no money, and problems with regional committees consisting of people with little or no knowledge and interest in developing service provision. Members also highlighted the complications facing the Inspection body due to lack of clear guidelines and standards for performance to be measured against. In addition to this, lack of a process for access to data for research purposes further exasperates the situation. They spoke of a long tradition of centralised decision making and planning which left areas bidding for existing services guided not by need but by availability and connections, resulting in creating services without users. Professionals also described lack of creativity in adapting services no longer required to arising needs, opting for closure instead. And finally, they underlined the imperative need for long term planning.

3.65 Children's Hospital Social Work Team

The hospital team had been operational for a very long time and at the time when the interview took place it consisted of four social workers including the team leader. It was however, stated that the number of workers was not sufficient for the demands as they offer services to all the children in the hospital as necessary, who are between 0-15 years of age. The kinds of cases they mostly deal with were described as: suicide attempts, physical abuse, abandonment, and children with long term health needs, e.g. haemodialysis. They get referrals from doctors, nurses, and members of the public.

They shared that they had a good relationship with other disciplines within the hospital and they felt that doctors were very sensitive to cases of suspected abuse. They also described working with NGOs and the church in assisting families. They offer moral and emotional support, financial assistance as well as help when cases require to be transferred abroad for treatment, information about people's rights and advice on training and career prospects for children with special needs or long term health needs.

They spoke of a lack of supportive and specialised services for infants and sick children. The team leader was of the opinion that there has been an increase in the cases of child abuse they encounter in the hospital. The reasons behind this increase were given as stress, changes in family structure and financial difficulties. They described the inadequacy of the service in providing a follow up when children were discharged in the community. As an example, the professionals mentioned that they refer cases they are concerned about but not always because something will actually be

done about those cases but for peace of mind. Furthermore, they addressed the importance of fostering but shared concerns regarding the fact that it is not as widespread as it needs to be.

They went on to share the difficulties of making decisions about children's futures based on very limited information they are able to gather during their hospital stay. Do you send the child back or do you proceed to remove parental responsibility whilst the child is in the hospital? They spoke of children's home delaying admittance of children. Although on the other hand they were concerned with a recent relaxation of criteria for admission in some homes, which could mean a home looking after children with different presenting issues and needs.

Sick children are forced to remain in hospital long term due to lack of alternatives, e.g. children drawing the hospital when asked to draw a home. They also shared difficulties with administrative personnel regarding charges, etc. when it comes to offering a service to children of immigrants, which is a category well on the increase.

They spoke of the need to work closer with local services in order to obtain information about a family's living conditions and shared the difficulties faced by local authority social work teams due to new responsibilities without additional funding and under staffing.

In addition, they shared working closely with the Prosecution service. They refer to them if concerned and then the Prosecutor refers to the forensic services that visit to examine the child. If the concerns are substantiated then the Prosecutor will take action. They highlighted the turnover of Prosecutors for the minors, and spoke of having to "train" them each time and criticised the lack of Family Courts in Greece.

They keep an incident book, in which they enter significant cases and as they have recently acquired computers they shared their plan to create a database of cases in order to produce some evaluative data.

3.66 Research Centre

They stated that the field this study was researching is virgin, which will guarantee novelty but might encounter difficulties due to lack of other studies to rely on. They reiterated that there are no national guidelines for accessing data for research purposes and shared the difficulties they experience when contacting individual organisations with a request for evaluative data.

3.67 Other Services

Professionals shared that amongst the findings was that children in Greece remain in institutional care too long and that was linked to economic and social reasons.

They spoke of the decentralisation trend and the three-tier system of social care but were wondering how long some of these arrangements will last for.

The services they provided were: dealing with sexual abuse cases, offering supervision to front line workers, organising seminars, helping to raise public awareness of child abuse and neglect, e.g. TV spots prepared in conjunction with a Deputy Minister, only few of which were ever used.

Professionals admitted that the services were facing serious staffing issues, for example one team had gone down from eleven professionals to four. It was shared that the creation of local preventive services was necessary due to the impossible task for central services to intervene and cover all the needs.

The lack of extensive research on the phenomenon was also highlighted, as well as the need to engage schools, teachers and nurseries in identifying high-risk families and/or vulnerable children. Concerns were also shared regarding the lack of Family Courts and the legal vacuum in reporting suspicions, which could result in the person reporting being sued for defamation.

Professionals advocated the need for all services to work with the best interest of the child at heart. They also spoke of the difficulties in identifying sexual abuse due to the lack of physical evidence in a lot of cases.

Furthermore, they discussed the newly found Centres for Diagnosis Assessment and Support (KDAY), by the Ministry of Employment, which can now be found in different localities but most of which do not employ any psychologists or psychiatrists and some have a waiting list of up to three years.

Finally, they shared concerns that the majority of executives and directors were appointed by political criteria, and highlighted how frequently members of committees change and services remain on paper. A specialised centre for abused and neglected children that used to operate a few years back was closed, as it was considered too expensive to run.

When discussing the reluctance of the NGO to be interviewed, it was suggested that their reluctance could possibly be linked to the fact that their service has been subjected to criticism by other professionals, especially in regards to the staffing of the homes they run for children (i.e. children looked after by unqualified staff). Discussion followed about the importance of NGOs' involvement in service provision but what was also highlighted was the need for those to be monitored and regulated by the Ministry, in order to ensure high standards.