



The complex dynamics of performance management and improvement in Local Authorities. A psychoanalytic study of how a Local Authority organisation functions and survives an Ofsted inspection.

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## **Abstract**

The aim of this study was to explore how Children's Services Departments respond to inspections undertaken by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) to improve performance. The fieldwork setting for this study was in frontline Children's Service Departments in two Local Authorities. Information referred to in this study pertains to the period when the two Local Authorities were going through a process of change in response to the Ofsted inspections. Information was obtained through qualitative research using ethnographic methods: psychoanalytic participant observation, interviews and organisational documents. A combination of a psychoanalytical theoretical framework and organisational metaphors was used to explore the conscious and unconscious process experienced by individuals going through a process of change.

This study has highlighted the complex issues arising from the inspection regimes and the impact of such regimes on individuals and groups in organisations. Within this, the unconscious processes play a significant role. The anxieties and the subsequent defence mechanisms deployed at an individual and organisational level influence the direction of the organisation. What was apparent in this study was the critical role leadership plays in determining the health and functioning of an organisation in implementing the primary task in particular during periods of organisational stress.

This study shows that to understand the journey of performance improvement in organisations and organisations' relationship with the inspection institutions, it is important to understand the organisations' culture and 'organisation held in the mind' of the workers. Organisation in the mind is what the workers perceive to be the organisation they are working for. It is equally important to understand 'the inspection in the mind' of the workers. The dynamics between the 'organisation in the mind' and the 'inspection in the mind' is crucial in understanding the responses of individual and organisations to inspections.

This study confirms that for any sustainable transformation to occur to improve performance, leadership needs to work through understanding the organisation 'in the mind' of the workforce before implementing any changes. The understanding of the organisation 'in the mind' should determine what change is required. Changing the mind-set of the workers and subsequently the culture of the organisation is paramount in effecting any sustainable organisational development. It is only then can real transformation take place when workers have a clear realistic view of their organisation and its function and the view of the internal and external institutions.

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### **iii List of Abbreviations**

|         |                                               |
|---------|-----------------------------------------------|
| AD      | Assistant Director                            |
| ADCS    | Association of Directors of Children Services |
| APA     | Annual Performance Assessment                 |
| BNIM    | Biographic Narrative Interpretive Method      |
| CA 1989 | Children Act 1989                             |
| CSCI    | Commission for Social Care inspection         |
| Dir     | Director                                      |
| DOH     | Department of Health                          |
| GM      | Group Manager                                 |
| HOS     | Head of Service                               |
| JAR     | Joint Area Review                             |
| LA      | Local Authority                               |
| OFSTED  | Office for Standards in Education             |
| TM      | Team Manager                                  |
| SIF     | Single Inspection Framework                   |
| SSI     | Social Services Inspectorate                  |
| SW      | Social Worker                                 |
| SP      | Senior Practitioner                           |
| EU      | European Union                                |

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## **v. Statement of Originality**

This thesis was completed only for the Professional Doctorate in Social Work at the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation/ University of East London. To the best of my knowledge and belief the work in this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference and acknowledgement is made. It has not been previously submitted for a degree or diploma at any other institution of higher education.

**R.P Madembo**

**13.11.18**

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

This study is centered on performance improvement in Local Authorities and how Children's Services respond to inspections undertaken by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted). The government has tasked Ofsted with the responsibility of inspecting the performance of Local Authorities' Children's Services departments from 2007. As an introduction to this thesis, this chapter will explore the development of the audits and inspection regimes followed by an examination of the role of Ofsted.

The fieldwork setting for this study was in frontline Children's Service departments in two Local Authorities. The information referred to in this study covers the period 2008 to 2013 as both organisations went through change, before during and after an Ofsted inspection.

### **1.0 The Development of Audits and Inspections**

The development of the audit and inspection regime dates back to the 1980s and is linked to the onset of the development of the market economy (Harris 1998). This shift to New Public Managerialism resulted in Health and Social Care Services being faced with escalating demands from the government and community to ensure that funding provides 'value for money' and services are 'cost effective'. Harris (1998) states that managerialism led to managers adopting management models meant for the private sector which focused on economy, efficiency and effectiveness and embraced performance management techniques through the use of audits and inspections.

The government produced the 'Quality Strategy for Social Care' which set a national framework with national standards and local performance measures, which were to be monitored by the Government (DOH 2000). This hands-on approach by the government resulted in civil servants and central government dictating priorities at the local level in order to ensure that social workers were delivering central



government's agenda. Audits and inspections were combined with a competitive culture through the use of rating systems and league tables (Noble and Irwin 2009).

Noble and Irwin (2009) assert that the acceptance of a free market neo-liberalism ideology filtered down to an almost universal adoption of economic rationalism and managerialism in social and welfare service provision and design. The whole welfare sector including social workers had to adapt often to survive the business philosophies of 'value for money' and a concern for budgets where private organizations and outsourcing as well as employer-driven competencies have become new foci for service delivery (Noble and Irwin 2009). Adam (2007) argues that the role and function of social work supervision shifted towards evaluating practitioners' performance in organizational terms rather than supporting professional practice and skills development. Organisational priorities such as performance evaluation and accountability became the focus of supervision at the expense of professional development. Surprisingly, it was not only managers who wanted supervision to focus on its administrative and organisational function. Many supervisees viewed this aspect of supervision as important for their future opportunities in the organization. This is because the new managerialism required a new kind of worker, a worker concerned with work, performance and work appraisals, work outputs and management systems (Noble & Irwin 2009).

### **1.1 Ofsted Inspections**

The aim of the inspection system fall into three categories: raising commonly agreed standards of performance; measuring comparative performance and improving quality (Rustin 2004).

The inspection of Local Authorities' Children's Service departments dates back to 1985 when the Social Services Inspectorate (SSI) in England was set up as a professional division of the Department of Health (DOH). The SSI joined up with the Audit Commission to form an integrated joint review team bringing together the expertise of SSI and the Audit Commission to review the overall performance of councils with Social Services responsibilities (DOH 2003). The Commission for

Social Care Inspection took over the responsibility of the inspection of Social Care Services from the SSI. The Commission combined the inspection, regulation and review of all social care services into one organisation. The Commission for Social Care was established by the Health and Social Act 2003 and became fully operational on 1 April 2004, (Community Health and Social Care Act 2003).

Ofsted was established under the Education (Schools) Act 1992, with the intention of focusing on the inspection of state-funded schools in the country (Elliot 2012). Since then there have been various additions to the cohort inspected by Ofsted. Schedule 11 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 altered the operation of Ofsted without changing the provision (Elliot 2012). In April 2007 Ofsted joined up with the Adult Learning Inspectorate to provide an inspection service that includes all post-16 government funded education and also took over the registration and inspection of Social Care Services for children, and the welfare inspection of independent and maintained boarding schools from the Commission for Social Care Inspection (Elliot 2012). Since taking over the inspection of Social Care Services for children, Ofsted has reviewed and changed the methodology of their framework of inspection three times during the period of this study (2008 to 2013). The different phases are summarised in Appendix 1.

## **1.2 Critiques of Inspections on Local Authorities**

Goldup (2011) asserts that there is evidence that inspections can strongly support performance improvement. It does this by being clear about both the strengths of local systems and the areas where improvement is needed and by highlighting and disseminating good practice and where necessary shining a ruthless spotlight on failure (Goldup 2011). Goldup (2011) noted that evidence that Ofsted inspections support improvement is demonstrated by the improvements made by Local Authorities between the first and second unannounced inspection of 'contact, referral and assessment' arrangements documented in the chief inspector's annual report which was published in November 2010. The evidence is also there in the Local Authorities for whom a judgment of 'inadequate' on their safeguarding services has

been the catalyst for change that means children are now better protected in those areas than they were before (Goldup 2011).

### **1.2.1 Inspection of Children Services Departments**

Munro was tasked by Ofsted to review the SIF (Single Inspection Framework) within a year of its operation. In her review, Munro asserted that within the SIF process, inspectors focus mainly on the impact of services on children, young people and families paying more attention to how professional tasks are performed as well as whether they are performed well. She was impressed with the quality of inspector interaction with social workers in respect of case files that were being audited during the inspection, observing their skills in enabling reflective thought and likening the activity to 'critical supervision, giving workers a fair opportunity to demonstrate their reasoning and justify their actions' (Ofsted 2014). Munro noted that there is developing evidence that the framework is having a beneficial influence on the priorities for reform and that it is driving the necessary cultural change, focusing on help for children and families rather than compliance with prescription and the processing of cases through the system (Ofsted 2014).

Jones (2011) raises concerns regarding the methodology of the inspection process. He viewed the Ofsted inspection process as a 'hit-and-run' inspectorate, 'turning up, issuing a report and then galloping away over the horizon until the next inspection'. Jones's (2011) views are that the previous Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) was more efficient and appropriate in inspecting Social Care Services. It demonstrated success in improving the standards of the Social Care Services it inspected and had a considerable commitment to service development and knew the territory in which it was operating. Jones (2011) asserts that CSCI adopted a developmental responsibility for services, staying independent but close enough to services to be well informed and to be a continuing and consistent critical commentator to prompt change and improvement.

According to Rustin (2004) the two dominant objectives of most inspections – the assurance of acceptable common standards and establishing indicators to justify

ranking by merit – have had a profound influence on the procedures Ofsted inspections follow. Failure to meet standards can lead to sanctions for organisations. Rustin (2004) asserts that although it is often acknowledged that there has been some benefit from Ofsted inspections in terms of improved practice, the gain is generally felt to be small. There are huge commitments required to meet the formal demands of inspections; the production of statements of purpose, the descriptions of procedures, the preparation of data, the planning of meetings and the establishment of adequate audit trails (Rustin 2004). These are often felt to bring a small return in what is learned during an inspection.

According to Jones (2011), the Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission lacked insight into the dynamics and nature of Social Care Services. They thought that top management teams whose skills and knowledge base is in education or health services could somehow use that knowledge base to lead inspectorates of Social Care Services which have major national responsibilities for crucial, life-defining and high-risk services (Jones 2011).

Jones (2011) states that the weakness in Ofsted inspections was exposed in 2008 following the death of Baby P, which resulted in Haringey child protection services being re-inspected. The inspection and re-inspection of the children protection services in Haringey showed some inconsistencies in the Ofsted judgments. During the period of media frenzy regarding Baby P, Haringey council's Ofsted rating was changed from good to inadequate (Jones 2011). Jones (2015) reported that Ofsted was also criticized by the communities and local government select committee for its failure to identify issues in Rotherham about the sexual exploitation of children and young people. Ofsted had given an adequate rating to the local council before revising and reversing its judgment at the time of media and political outrage over children being left unprotected. This impacted on Ofsted's reliability as an inspection institution (Jones 2015).

The inspectors should value the experience, expertise and wisdom built up over time within the services and that there are different requirements for different services and

functions (Jones 2011). ) Local areas should have more freedom to develop their own effective child protection services, rather than focusing on meeting central government targets. They should be judged on what the end result has been for children themselves instead of how well they have carried out certain processes and procedures (Munro 2012).

Despite the positive findings highlighted in her review of SIF, Munro (2012) also identified concerns about the demands of the inspection on both inspectors and Local Authorities. She also highlighted that there were issues about the reliability and validity of judgments (Munro 2012). She cited the demands inspections make on Local Authorities for time, data and support. Munro (2012) mentioned the anxieties in the system and the persistence of a 'blame culture.' She viewed this as not only counter-productive but damaging when senior staff are dismissed following inspections (Munro 2012). Although Munro (2012) did not attribute the 'blame and dismissal' issues to Ofsted, she noted that it would be helpful for Ofsted to make the detail of the overall inspection judgment clearer in relation to its nearness to the adjacent grade. Her view is that this would enable the reform and improvement plans to be clearer, evidencing that while practice and impact may not yet be good enough, the change programme in place is likely to bring improvement (Munro 2012).

Munro (2012) also advocated for a significant shift from previous reforms that resulted in a tick-box culture and a loss of focus on the needs of the child. Professionals should instead concentrate on making good quality assessments that really focus on delivering the right help for the child, and checking whether that help improved the child's life (Munro 2012).

Speaking at the National Children and Adults Services Conference in October 2014, the head of the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS), Alan Wood expressed his concerns regarding what he termed the 'corrosive impact' of the single assessment Ofsted inspection framework on Children's Services. He asserted that a poor Ofsted rating leaves a scar on Children's Services and for Local Authorities judged as inadequate, experienced workers leave, thereby causing difficulties in

implementing the changes (Schraer 2014). Wood further stated that the inspection process has an enormous effect on a council's resources and undermines its ability to provide services. Failing Children's Services sends a serious message to a community, (Schraer 2014).

Representing the views of ADCS, Wood noted that the UK has one of the safest child protection systems in the developed world yet the SIF results year on year do not reflect this reality (Schraer 2014). SIF was described as not getting to the heart of how well services are working and the use of a single worded judgment was viewed as potentially destabilising services which the inspection process is seeking to improve. The shared view of the ADCS was that a robust inspection system which can capture the complex significant issues involved in the work with families whilst at the same time encouraging improvements through the sharing of best practice should be developed (Schraer 2014).

In 2015 the consultancy group iMPower assessed the performance of 29 local authorities inspected in 2013, looking at their performance over a three year period by comparing performance pre-inspection in 2012 and post-inspection in 2014. They identified that being graded inadequate resulted in low morale, high staff and management turnover, reduced interventions, leaving children at risk and increased caseloads in those local authorities (Simmons 2015).

iMPower were concerned about the timescales required to turnaround performance failings. They noted that of the 86 local authorities inspected twice or more since 2010, approximately 25% of those rated as inadequate in 2010 remained inadequate over the five year period and 56% of those requiring improvement in 2010 maintained that rating on re-inspection (iMPower 2015). iMPower concluded that the data appeared to show that inspection is not driving improvements in local authorities. Their report raised concerns regarding the costs associated with both inspection and the impact of a negative judgment following inspection. They questioned the capacity of councils and Ofsted to sustain an

expensive system of inspection and high levels of Department for Education intervention which does not produce results.

Sheppard (2018) asserts that under the SIF one in five Children's Services was judged inadequate resulting in criticism that Ofsted raised the bar too high. Following Stockport Children's Services assessment in 2017, the director of Children's Services, Andrew Webb highlighted that despite the department being judged as good, Ofsted neither evaluates actual social work practice nor provides a rigorous assessment of system impact (Sheppard 2018). Webb argued that there is no evidence that inspections improve outcomes and raised concerns regarding the arbitrary grading framework used by Ofsted which measures the quality of record keeping and not the quality of practice.

Although there is limited literature on the impact of inspections on Social Care workers, there is literature on the impact of inspections on teachers, who are also inspected by Ofsted. Since September 1993 Ofsted has led many thousands of inspections of English schools, comprising of observations of hundreds of thousands of lessons and other activities (Elliot 2012). The literature on the inspection of schools provides vital information on the impact of the inspection process on schools and whether Ofsted inspections have led to performance improvement.

### **1.2.2 Emotional Impact of the Ofsted Inspection of Schools**

In a qualitative study of a primary school completed by Jeffery and Woods (1996), it was found that the technician approach of an Ofsted inspection impacted against the holistic and humanistic values of the teachers, producing a high degree of trauma among them. This trauma was not a simple emotional response of the moment, nor was it a product of school failure or lack of leadership, for neither of these applied; it was, rather, socially and politically constructed (Jeffery and Woods 1996).

The study found out that the particular inspection examined had a latent function of de-professionalisation. Professional uncertainty was induced, with teachers experiencing confusion, anomie, anxiety and doubt about their competence (Jeffery

and Woods 1996). The teachers researched also suffered an assault on their personal selves, closely associated among primary teachers with their professional roles. This took the form of mortification, dehumanisation, the loss of pedagogic values and of harmony. This inspection process changed and weakened the commitment of teachers (Jeffery and Woods 1996). Davis (2012) shares the same concerns stating that teachers are suffering breakdowns because of the stress of Ofsted inspections with some schools opening 24 hours a day in a desperate bid to prepare. According to members of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers, excessive monitoring is “destructive” and causes thousands of staff to quit the profession each year. There were calls for the Government to research how inspections negatively affect mental health and stress levels, especially of new teachers (Davis 2012).

Ofsted Chief from 2012 to 2016, Sir Michael Wilshaw admitted that inspections may be undermining the quality of lessons as teachers try to cram too many activities into one class to impress inspectors (Davis 2012). According to Davis (2012) the constant monitoring was causing an atmosphere of distrust and constant fear. Before Ofsted inspectors arrive, many schools stay open 24 hours a day so that teachers can make sure that all work is up to date. The anxiety of being judged ‘unsatisfactory’ is apparent. *“The extra pressure is a nightmare and so demoralising... you are constantly thinking, ‘are they going to come in tomorrow?’ and it really affects the quality of your life”* (comment from a teacher quoted in Davis 2012).

Davis (2012) asserts that it was claimed that some schools were attempting to cheat Ofsted by bribing pupils, sending troublemakers home and rehearsing lessons. Some whistle-blowers said expert teachers from other schools had been drafted in to replace perceived poorer staff during inspections. Commenting on inspections of all public services, Rustin (2004) shares similar views stating that faced with prospective disgrace and sanction for falling below standard, organisations will conceal truths, and develop solidarity, even paranoia, towards the outside. The preoccupation within the mind does not allow for deficiencies and limitations to be



thought about or admitted. The motivation for achieving high inspection scores, or avoiding low ones, may include more expansive attitudes than simple fear of failure, but the need to succeed will also encourage a concern for appearances over attention to reality (Rustin 2004).

Rustin (2004) raises the issue of trust between colleagues, senior management and external inspectors as a basis for improvement. In the inspection of all public service sectors, trust is required because improvement is not possible without prior acknowledgment of weakness or deficiency and no-one is going to explore their own deficiencies willingly if they believe they are going to be punished when these are discovered (Rustin 2004).

### **1.3 Fieldwork Setting and Context of the Study**

This study focused on the frontline services of the Children and Families Departments of the two Local Authorities, Borrowdale and Eastlea, (*not their real names*). The Local Authorities consisted of the Duty and Assessment Teams and the Safeguarding and Family Support Teams. The main function and core task of Children's Services frontline service is to safeguard and support children and young people between the ages of 0 to 18. This is done by ensuring that children and young people are safeguarded and well cared for and that their needs are met within safe stable family environments. The primary task of the frontline services is guided by statutory legislation, the Children Act (1989, 2002, 2004 and 2014) and various policies and procedures.

I worked in Borrowdale as a Team Manager in the aftermath of the Local Authority failing two successive inspection processes from October 2010 to April 2012. I also worked in Eastlea from May 2012 to August 2014. I joined Eastlea at the peak of their Ofsted preparation phase and was part of the subsequent Ofsted inspection.

The research was undertaken between June 2013 and December 2013. The information referred to in this study covers the period 2008 to 2013 and was obtained from respondents and the various published Ofsted inspection reports undertaken in both Borrowdale and Eastlea Children's Services during this period, as will be explained further in the Methodology Chapter.

Borrowdale is one of three Children's Services departments in a very large county called Greendale (*not real name*). Borrowdale Children's Services is situated in a small seaside tourist town. In the 2011 census, the population of Borrowdale was 50 000 and there were 10 000 children below 18. Borrowdale is characterised by areas with high levels deprivation and scant resources.

In 2008, Borrowdale had two Referral and Assessment Teams and two Safeguarding and Family Support Teams. Prior to the Joint Area Review (JAR) inspection in 2008, Borrowdale was said to be inadequately staffed. Staffing levels were increased following the JAR inspection. Appendix 4 is the structure of Borrowdale Children's Services prior to the JAR inspection and appendix 5 is the structure of Borrowdale Children's Services after the inspection.

The frontline services in Eastlea Children's Services consisted of a screening of referrals team, three Assessment Teams and three Safeguarding and Family Support Teams, Appendix 6: Structure of Eastlea Children's Services prior to Ofsted inspection. Appendix 7: Structure of Eastlea during the inspection preparation phase. In the 2011 census, Eastlea had a population of 260 000 with approximately 70 000 children and young people under the age of 18 years. Eastlea is a diverse inner London Local Authority.

I chose to undertake the study in Local Authorities at different stages of the Ofsted inspection process to obtain a holistic and an in-depth insight into the impact of Ofsted inspection processes on organisations. Eastlea was preparing for an Ofsted inspection while Borrowdale had failed an inspection process.

#### **1.4 Research Objectives**

The tight surveillance by the central government with its focus on targets has changed the nature of social work provision. I have worked as a social worker and Team Manager for the past 12 years in front line children and families services where I have been subjected to several inspection processes in different Local

Authorities. I have experienced stress and trauma as a result of Ofsted inspections and have also observed the emotional impact on colleagues, as organisations try to manage the anxieties caused by the inspection process. This raised my interest in exploring what lies beneath the surface, which forces individuals and organisations to go through a grueling process in order to manage Ofsted inspections. I was mainly interested in how the unconscious processes impact individuals' behaviour and team dynamics during the stressful periods of inspections. In particular I was interested in finding out the anxieties brought to the surface and the defence mechanisms deployed to manage these anxieties at an individual and organisational level.

This led me to formulate my main research question as: How do individuals and organisations respond to Ofsted inspections to improve performance?

I noted the following objectives for this study:

- To explore social workers and team managers' perception of the Ofsted inspection process.
- To explore the impact of the inspection on individual social workers, managers, senior managers and the dynamics within the teams and organisation.
- To find out the underlying tensions (unconscious) within organisations brought about by the Ofsted inspection process.
- To find out the views of the social workers and managers regarding the contribution and effectiveness of Ofsted inspection as a medium for change and improving service provision within the Children and Families Department in Local Authorities.
- To find out whether the outcomes of the inspections (judgment and recommendations) are similar to the Local Authorities own internal audits outcomes.

## **1.5 Conclusion**

The fundamental purpose of Ofsted inspections is to improve quality of service delivery in Children's Services departments. The aim of this research is to study the impact Ofsted inspections have on individual workers, teams and organisations. This research seeks to understand the underlying unconscious processes within organisations brought about by the inspection process and how organisations manage this and improve performance.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature using a combination of psychoanalytic and metaphorical frameworks to explore the theoretical concepts underpinning this study. Chapter 3 explores the methodology used in this study. Chapters 4 and 5 examine the themes identified in Borrowdale and Eastlea respectively. Chapter 6 explores the concept of an organisation 'under siege' by examining the metaphors used by the respondents, the anxieties generated and the subsequent defence mechanisms deployed to manage the anxieties. Chapter 7 explores the different images of Ofsted portrayed by the respondents through the use of metaphoric language and my reflections of Ofsted as an inspection institution. Chapter 8 explores leadership in both organisations as they went through a process of change to manage and survive an Ofsted inspection process. Chapter 9 integrates the information in this study to explore the relationship between the Inspection institutions and frontline organisations. Chapter 10 concludes with a reflection of this study and recommendations.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **Organisational Dynamics Emanating from Ofsted Inspections**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

The previous Chapter introduced the two organisations under study, explored the purpose of Ofsted inspections and provided a critical analysis of Ofsted inspections from various authors. It also highlighted the weight attached to the outcome of inspections in Children Services and the dire consequences of failing one. It is therefore understandable that the implementation of the primary task in children and families services is significantly impacted by the Ofsted inspection process.

This Chapter will examine literature regarding the primary task of children and families social work, the anxieties already inherent in this work and the defence mechanisms deployed by individuals in dealing with those anxieties. The anxieties and defences do not only impact on the implementation of the primary task but rather alter 'the organisation in the mind' and the 'Ofsted in the mind' created by individuals and their organisations. This chapter will also explore how the metaphorical language used by participants illuminated the knowledge about 'basic assumption' mentalities prevalent in both organisations during the inspection process. Of particular interest are the links between the metaphors and the 'basic assumptions', defences and 'organisation in the mind'. These are terms I will explain in this chapter.

I used the psychoanalytic and metaphorical framework to explore the theories emanating from themes identified in the research data. Psychoanalysis is based on the idea that the behaviour of an individual is influenced by unconscious factors (Halton 1994, Cooper et al., 1995, 2003; Ferguson, 2004, 2005). The data shows a coherent pattern of metaphors used by respondents depicting their underlying feelings and anxieties about what was happening in their organisations as influenced by inspections.

The use of these two theoretical frameworks provides a deeper and meaningful insight into the organisational functioning in response to the Ofsted inspection process and the impact of this on the individuals and groups in the organisations. The main purpose of Ofsted as an inspection body is to ensure that Local Authorities are implementing their primary task (safeguarding children and supporting children and families in need) to the expected performance levels. This study will therefore expound on the 'primary task' of Children Services in Local Authorities.

Leadership had a significant role in how the organisations responded to the inspection process. This included managing the anxieties and defence mechanisms whilst ensuring continued organisational functioning and effective implementation of the primary task. The theory of leadership will be discussed further in this chapter.

## **2.1 The Primary Task in Frontline Child Protection Safeguarding Teams**

The primary task of local authority Children Services is the protection of children from abuse and neglect and the promotion of their welfare through collaborative work with the multi-agency network (Whittaker 2011, DfE 2018). The role of the Ofsted inspection process is to assess and make a judgment on whether the local authority is discharging their duties to the expected standards in undertaking their primary task. The introduction of the market model means that social workers have to balance managing distress and emotional impact emanating from the primary task with the bureaucratic and managerialist demands of the job (Harris 1998). In this study social workers perceived the Ofsted inspection process as heavily reliant on performance data at the expense of practice, something I will elucidate in the findings chapter. Given the prominence afforded to the outcome of inspections in organisations, it is understandable that priorities change to meet the perceived requirements of the Ofsted inspection process, therefore, perhaps distorting or misplacing resources away from helping children and families. For example, local Authorities' reaction of dismissing senior staff following a 'failed' inspection and the resultant blame culture, are viewed by Munro (2012) as counterproductive to the primary task.

Murray and Ruch (2011) assert that for an organisation's work to be effective, it is essential to establish a clear and shared understanding of the primary task, that is, what the organisation intends to achieve. The degree to which this is achieved rests on the ability of the leaders and managers to support workers in performing the collectively identified task. Murray and Ruch's (2011) view is that where there is sound leadership and management and a collective understanding of the primary task, effective and efficient work practices can become developed and the work remains 'on task'.

## **2.2 The Meaning of Primary Task**

Owens (2015) argues that the concept of primary task is quite complex. Owens (2015) draws on the historical work by Lawrence (1977) which used the psychoanalytic framework to identify three forms of primary task; the normative primary task, the existential primary task and the phenomenal primary task. The normative primary task is the formal or official task, the operationalization of the broad aims of the organisation. The existential primary task is the task people within an organisation believe they are carrying out, the meaning and interpretation they put on their roles and activities. The phenomenal task is the task that they are actually doing, which can be inferred from people's behaviour and of which they may not be consciously aware (Owens 2015). Using this to analyse the behaviour of individuals and groups when conducting the primary task highlights the difference between what the organisation sets out to do and what is actually happening in reality. Ruch and Murray (2011) state that the degree of similarities or differences of these three approaches to the primary task determine the extent to which a group's activities will be more or less 'on task'. It can be argued that this is what the Ofsted inspectors will be assessing.

Work groups which act in line with their primary task at every level are possibly an 'idealized construct'; most groups are diverted from their task (Bain and Gould 2000). As conditions change; the primary task may shift either temporarily at times of risks or permanently. Where local authorities fail an Ofsted inspection, it would be prudent to review the implementation of the primary task to identify strategies to improve

performance. If not done, this may cause further stress and compromise the organisation's effectiveness which may inadvertently result in further Ofsted inspection failures.

Attempts have been made to explain the various layers and complexities within the core function of the work undertaken by child protection social workers (Cooper et al 2003, Whittaker 2011, Ruch & Murray 2011). The work by Lord Laming following the death of Victoria Climbié and by Munro (2010) following the death of Peter Connelly attempted to unravel the failures in the systems that support the execution of primary task within child protection teams. Rustin (2005) sums up the difficulties faced by frontline child protection workers when executing the primary task. He asserted that, the inadequate responses of individuals and institutions are profoundly linked to the disturbing impact of what they are trying to manage.

To ensure that teams continue undertaking their primary task, it would be essential to identify the team's existential and phenomenal tasks. Hinshelwood & Skogstad (2000) note that these are not readily discernible because they operate at an unconscious level and are thus subject to forces such as primitive defences, projections and splitting. When a group is not clear and does not follow the primary task both by definition and feasibility, it sets out the potential of the emergence of some other primary task unrelated to the one which the group was originally called into being (Roberts 1994). Ruch and Murray (2011) highlighted the importance of creating a shared understanding of the primary task for workers in services for children and families through the provision of training and support to address both personal and professional responses to working in this context. They view this as critical in reducing the discrepancies between what is intended to be done (the normative primary task), what is understood as being done (the existential primary task) and what is actually being done (the phenomenal primary task) (Ruch and Murray 2011).



### **2.3 Anxieties Emanating from Primary Task and Inspection Regimes**

In the inspection of local authorities, the Ofsted inspectors have a critical role in the assessment of performance ensuring that the normative, phenomenal and existential tasks are aligned with no gaps. Of equal importance are the workers' views regarding what Ofsted's primary task is. This has a significant impact on organisations' responses to the inspection process and how they implement their organisation's primary task during inspections.

Genuine fears and anxieties regarding the impact of failing Ofsted inspections may distort the organisation's perception of Ofsted's primary task. The defense mechanisms deployed significantly impact on the implementation of the organisation's own primary task. Rustin (2004) asserts that trust is essential during inspections as no one will acknowledge weakness and a willingness to explore deficiencies in a punitive system.

### **2.4 Anxieties and Defences Associated with Frontline Child Protection Work**

Anxieties faced by child protection social workers have been explained as emanating from completing the primary task, media scrutiny, public perception and performance driven management (Cooper et al 2003, Munro 2010, Whittaker 2011, Jones 2014, Long 2016, Whittaker and Havard 2016). Given the negative consequences associated with failing Ofsted inspections explored in Chapter 1, it is understandable that Ofsted inspections induce more anxieties for individuals and organisations (Rustin 2004, Davies 2012, Munro 2012).

Cooper (2018) asserts that social workers are confronted daily with the inherent pain and anxiety of the primary task of responding to vulnerability and need in others which affect not only individuals but whole systems of care. The organisational and professional psychic effort needed to pull together around these tasks is enormous. In her paper following the death of Victoria Climbié, Rustin (2005) asserted that it is indeed human nature to defend themselves through the defence mechanisms of splitting and disavowal when explaining the reason behind social workers' need to

defend themselves against the pain and knowledge emanating from child abuse. Information from this study shows that in some local authorities, child protection workers preparing for the Ofsted inspection processes or addressing failure of an Ofsted inspection process are not only faced with the anxieties emanating from the work with child abuse but rather anxieties brought about by the Ofsted inspection process. The anxieties created when the organisation tries to avoid failing an inspection or address failure can impact on workers resulting in them developing defences to manage the anxieties created in order to survive. This has significant negative consequences on the implementation of the primary task.

There has been negative media attention dating back to the 1980s, following a number of high-profile child-death inquiries (Aye 2001, Cooper et al 2003). This media attention has been targeted at condemning individual workers and managers (Garret 2009, Jones 2014). After the death of Peter Connelly, a tabloid newspaper started a petition to sack all of the social workers involved. The petition was signed by 1.4 million people in 2009 (Jones 2014). Cooper et al (2003) argue that one of the reasons child protection and safeguarding is so risky to professionals is its politicisation and consequently the media attention it draws which creates a blaming culture. Equally risky are the intense emotions which child abuse itself engenders in the human species regardless of personal or professional backgrounds. Local Authorities who fail Ofsted inspections have found themselves under instant and constant public scrutiny which causes great anxiety for the workers.

Some authors have argued that the introduction of the more sophisticated systems of accountability, including reviews, inspections, audits and managerial scrutiny have led to the social work practice being more defensive (Parton and O'Byrne, 2000; Munro, 2004). This has led to different types of anxieties. Cooper (2018) identifies these anxieties as professional anxiety, rationing anxiety, performance anxiety and partnership anxiety. Drawing on Dartington (2010), Cooper (2018) asserts that the culture of targets and audits in the delivery of public service has significantly made effective delivery and responsive services more difficult to achieve and maintain. These performance management systems result in new forms of survival anxieties

which Cooper (2018) refers to as performance anxieties as they are directly associated with the measurement of work. The digitisation of case records has also introduced additional anxieties for workers through different rules, rituals and practices which have created closer scrutiny of work by managers, whilst also creating a dissonance with the intuitive, emotional realities of the work (Krantz 2010; Whittaker 2011).

This study has demonstrated that reliance on targets creates performance anxieties for workers as they struggle with the balance between relationship-based social work versus meeting compliance targets, which they believe are the Ofsted inspection requirements.

#### **2.4.1 Individual and Institutional Defence Mechanisms Associated With the Primary Task and Inspection Regimes**

The anxieties emanating from the primary task and the fear of Ofsted inspections have to be managed through the deployment of defence mechanisms to enable individuals to survive within organisations. Defence mechanism can be divided into two categories: personal and social (institutional) (Halton 1994). Like individuals, organisations have a way of managing anxiety by developing defences against difficult emotions which are threatening or too painful to bear (Halton 1994, Whittaker 2011, Munro 2012, Whittaker and Havard 2016). Such defences allow people to retreat from role, tasks and organisational boundaries. This has a profound impact on the implementation of the primary task. To function effectively and efficiently, it is important for organisations to have an understanding of the anxieties inherent in the nature of the tasks and work carried out by its workers in particular during periods of external pressure such as inspections. This enables organisations to understand the defences which may be deployed by the staff to manage any work-related anxieties.

Trevithick (2011) identifies several personal defences commonly used in social work, amongst these, the defences which are relevant to this study are: denial, acting out, regression, rationalisation, introjection, splitting, projection and projection identification. It is important to note that these personal defences are also prevalent

within organisations where individuals deploy them to manage anxieties emanating within work settings. Trevithick (2011) asserts that splitting and projection involves disassociation from reality by separating out the self or objects into 'good' and 'bad', and locating them in others.

Reber et al (2009) note that denial is a defence mechanism that simply disavows or denies some aspect of external reality, thoughts, feelings, painful experience and wishes or needs that cause anxiety. While repression removes a memory from consciousness, denial involves splitting where 'there is cognitive acceptance of a painful event whilst the associated painful emotions are repudiated (Bateman et al 2010). Acting out is a defence used to describe behaviour that involves pursuing a desire or impulse to act in ways that indicate little or no conscious attempt to reflect on the action and its impact, as such it can take the form of aggressive behaviour directed at self or others (Trevithick 2011) and inhibit the development of a more appropriate or constructive response to thoughts, feelings and actions that can be triggered.

Regression describes a situation where people retreat often when feeling stressed or under attack to an earlier stage in their development in order to avoid or reduce anxiety. Idealisation describes the way in which ambivalent or contradictory feelings are kept apart and split into two different representations, where one object is constructed as being wholly and ideally 'good' and the other as wholly and ideally bad.

Rationalisation occurs when a 'false but reassuring or self-serving explanation is contrived to explain behaviour that in reality arises from a repressed wish' (Coleman 2009). Introjection is a process where the functions of an external world located out there are absorbed symbolically or in a fantasy and replaced by an imagined object that is internalised and brought inside (Colman 2009).

Having described individual defences where social workers may feel persecuted by the intense feelings emanating from an inability and failure to achieve positive outcomes for children at times, the next section will argue that there are also defences rooted in the organisations (institutional defences) as propounded by authorities such as Menzies (1959), Cooper & Lousada (2005), Taylor et al (2007), Waterhouse & McGee (2009), Cooper (2010), Whittaker (2011).

#### **2.4.2 Social Defences in Child Protection Practice.**

Social defences date back to the work undertaken by Menzies Lyth's (1959) in her work into the dynamics of the nursing profession with critically ill patients. Contemporary authors who have expanded on this work include Cooper 2010, Whittaker 2011, Ruch and Murray 2011, Whittaker and Havard 2016. . The defences adopted by nurses to manage anxieties reduced the nurse-patient relationship as they stuck to specific tasks which prevented the nurses from dealing with the patients' needs in totality.

The theoretical framework developed by Menzies Lyth's study has been applied to child protection social work settings (Cooper & Lousada, 2005; Taylor et al 2007; Waterhouse & McGee, 2009; Cooper 2010; Whittaker 2011). It can be argued that there are significant differences. Menzies Lyth's study focuses on student nurses in a large institution whilst child protection social work is undertaken in the community by qualified practitioners (Dartington 1994). The anxieties experienced by child protection social workers emanate from a variety of sources ranging from daily exposure to powerful emotions within the families and other professionals that they work with, to an awareness of a history of inquiries and media coverage that has influenced public perceptions of their profession. However, there are similarities which offer valuable insight into understanding the defences in child protection social work.

The following studies are quite pertinent to this study as they highlight the anxieties and defences adopted by social workers. Ruch and Murray (2011) undertook a research with a group of childcare social work practitioners examining their

experiences of the Every Child Matters and Integrated Children's Services agenda in their work. Whittaker (2011) undertook a study of four referral and assessment teams in a Local Authority in North London whose primary task is similar to the teams in both organisations in this study. Whittaker undertook a further study with Havard in 2016 which focused on the final year social work students' attitudes towards defensive practice within social work (Whittaker and Havard 2016). The existing literature has focused on psychological and organisational factors that increase the likelihood of defensive practice, rather than the nature of defensive practice itself (Whittaker and Havard 2016). The findings from this study will show the defensive behaviours adopted by workers and their senior managers to cope with the anxieties emanating from the primary task and from the Ofsted inspection process.

In his study, Whittaker (2011) identifies similarities between the settings and the roles in Menzies's study and frontline social work. In the latter; the primary task is the protection of children. In their work, social workers are exposed to human vulnerabilities which can provoke powerful emotions such as fear, anger and shame, similarly in hospitals nurses are involved in working with vulnerable children and adults who are at crisis stages with some at the verge of death.

Whittaker (2011) like Menzies also identified defences related to decision-making processes, excessive checks, upward delegation to managers and tenacious adherence to procedures.

The procedural adherence to ritual task performance serves as a defence against anxiety. Social workers feel safe from blame and criticism if they follow the agreed way of performing tasks irrespective of the consequences of those choices. In her child protection review (Munro 2010) refers to the authoritarian professional mechanistically applying sets of procedures in carrying out the primary task where the absence of professional curiosity is glaringly apparent. Munro (2010) views the use of procedures as organizational drivers that encourage defensive practice and upward delegation to managers to share or avoid responsibility. The challenges of managing uncertainty results in some workers feeling that following rules and being

compliant can appear less risky than carrying personal responsibility for exercising judgment (Munro 2010). Hirschhorn (1988) concurs with this view arguing that the extensive paperwork aids in containing anxieties of direct face to face communication, excessive checking and monitoring reduce the anxieties of making difficult decisions by disseminating accountability. These rituals induce thoughtlessness and by not thinking, people avoid feeling anxious. In both organisations under study these defences became more overt as the fear of the Ofsted inspection processes took hold. The consequences of failing an inspection process are dire thus workers irrespective of seniority used these defences as a safety net and to avoid being blamed.

Harris (1987, p. 62) refers to such behaviours mentioned above as defensive practice, defining this as 'practices which are purposely chosen in order to protect the professional worker at the possible expense of the well-being of the client'. Whittaker and Havard (2016) elaborate on Harris's definition highlighting that defensive behaviors comprise unintentional behavior including subtle and often unconscious aspects of many real-life situations.

According to Harris (1987) defensive practice behaviour range from an overemphasis on documenting practice to either intervening more than is needed or refraining from intervening in order to protect oneself against later being held responsible. In their study Whittaker and Havard (2016) categorised the defensive behaviours they identified into passive behaviours and proactive behaviours. Passive behaviours arising from work with service users were identified as overestimating risk, avoiding contact, unwillingness to challenge clients and passive behaviours related to working in organisations, such as avoiding supervision and upward delegation. Proactive behaviours related to direct work with clients were identified as being overly cautious, risk-averse and those related to work within the organisation as an unwillingness to challenge managers, hiding files during inspections, overemphasis on case recording and putting procedures before clients (Whittaker and Havard 2016). The findings in this study identified some of these defensive practices adopted by workers in both organisations in response to the Ofsted inspection process.

There is another school of thought which argues that it is not only the defence against anxieties that lead to the development of structures and practices in organisations but rather the presence of other strong emotions. Stein's (2000) view is that the fundamental paradigm of defences against anxiety per se has led to the neglect of the effects of other strong emotions in organisations. Long (2008) explored emotions such as pride, greed, envy, sloth and anger within the context of perverse organisational structures and argued that perverse structures develop through the expression of such emotions and the consequent development of defences against exposure.

Obholzer (1994) argues that when there is so much pain inherent in the work, it is clear that some defences are necessary for the staff to remain in role and carry on with some hopefulness. However, at times the extent and nature of the defensive process is such that they not only interfere substantially with the primary task of the institution but can obstruct contact with reality. In this way, they damage staff and hinder the organisation in fulfilling its task and adapting to changing circumstances. They become ineffective in their intended purpose of protecting the staff from the pain of the job.

The complexity around the interpersonal dimension of child protection work makes the primary task in social work settings such an intricate one (Cooper 2011). Failing to embrace a holistic and humane comprehension of the situations encountered within a child protection social work setting can worsen the situation being addressed as the defensive responses themselves generate additional anxiety. As observed in both organisations under study, this may result in organisations and those working in them being deflected from the essence of the work they intended to undertake. An understanding of group work and the impact of defences on group functioning is therefore important to gain an insight into how the workers in both organisations functioned in their teams as individuals and as teams to manage the anxieties whilst ensuring effective implementation of the primary task.



## 2.5 Team Dynamics

Group functioning has a significant impact on individual and organisational functioning. Understanding of group dynamics in this study has been informed by the work of several authors who have explored and elaborated on Bion's (1959) theory of groups and its wider application in organisations (Kets de Vries and Miller 1984, Stoke 1994, Hendrikz 1999, Armstrong 2005, French and Simpson 2010). As already mentioned elsewhere in this chapter, the Ofsted inspection resulted in a shift in organisational functioning as both organisations attempted to focus on their perception of the Ofsted inspection requirements and work they needed to do to fulfill that. The anxieties and the defence mechanisms adopted manifested through the behaviours of individuals and groups. This in turn had a significant impact on organisational functioning.

French and Simpson (2010) state that groups operate in two contrasting ways based on distinctive mental states. Bion (1959) referred to these states as basic assumption mentality and work group mentality. Such mentalities do not signify people but rather the mental activity in a group which is said to determine a group's ability to achieve its purpose (Armstrong 2005). Work group mentality describes the dynamics within a group to the extent that its members are able to manage their shared tensions, anxieties and relationships to function efficiently; the outcome is capacity for realistic hard work (Simpson and French 2010). Armstrong (2005) argues that work group mentality should not be used to describe an actual group of people and the way they organize, but as 'only mental activity'.

Bion viewed the basic assumptions as operating at a more primitive level and being of a regressive nature. Basic assumption mentalities may influence any rational tasks that the work group has to accomplish resulting in stagnation (Eisold 2005). Basic assumption functioning is associated with the absence of scientific curiosity about the group's effectiveness, a disregard or even hatred of external reality, an inability to think, learn from experience or adapt to change and is most likely to dominate when there is anxiety about survival (Armstrong 2005). This study shows that basic assumptions can manifest in some organisations subjected to the Ofsted

inspection process when members become riddled with anxiety and conflict that energy is expended on managing this rather than progressing the primary task.

The distinction between the group's dynamic in basic-assumption functioning and work-group activity is not the existence or lack of strong emotions or unconscious motivations but rather the members' ability to negotiate, consciously and unconsciously, the tension between the developmental push of work-group mentality and the regressive pull of basic-assumption functioning (Armstrong 2005). These opposing tendencies in group behaviours can be thought of as the wish to face and work with reality and the wish to avoid it when it is painful or causes psychological conflict within or between group members (Stokes 1994). The two mentalities co-exist in human interaction whereby the work group functions are always permeated by basic-assumption phenomena, however one tends to dominate at any particular given time (Gosling, 1994).

## **2.6 Basic Assumptions**

Bion identified three sets of basic assumption mentalities which are identified by specific defense mechanisms and accompanying emotions: the group acting as if its purpose was to gratify the dependency needs of its members (basic assumption dependency, (BaD) , as if it was fleeing or fighting a danger (basic assumption fight-flight, (BaF), or as if it was producing a pair who will in turn create a messiah (basic assumption pairing, (BaP) (Hendrikz (1999). French and Simpson (2010) deduced that they could gain insight into the state of specific groups or organisations from observing the form of interaction as one can from trying to determine which mentality is prevailing. As humans we interact through pairing, taking a lead and depend on others and we also fight with or run from them. These key human interactions can manifest in basic-assumption or work-group mentality.

Hendrikz (1999) states that the fight-flight group resorts to primitive defences of splitting and projection to manage anxieties. The fantasy found amongst members is the belief that somewhere is an enemy against whom one has to defend or from whom one has to escape. The leader is expected to devise appropriate actions to

fight the enemy and the group's task is simply to follow. There is a culture of paranoia and aggressive competitiveness where the group is preoccupied not only by an external enemy but also by the enemy within. Rules and regulations proliferate to control both the internal and external bad objects (Stokes 1994). Such groups view the environment as extremely dangerous. The environments and the people are separated into good and bad parts, those that act in accordance with group members' needs and those that act against them (Kets de Vries and Miller 1984). There is lack of evidence of self-reflection and insight, the main view being that only others are to blame thus hostile impulses are externalised and projected onto others. The individuals in the groups introject what is good (Kets de Vries and Miller 1984, Moxnes 1998). Chapter 6 explores how the fight-flight basic assumption mentalities impacted on the dynamics within the teams and the organisations' functioning.

Stokes (1994) states that the dependency group members need to be sustained by a respected all-powerful leader who is dependable. The group is dominated by the view that the primary task is solely to provide for the satisfaction of the needs and wishes of its members. The leader's responsibility is seen as to look after, nourish, protect and sustain members of the group to make them feel good and avoid the demands of the group's primary task ( French and Simpson 2010). BaD potentially gives rise to a culture of subordination where authority derives entirely from the position in hierarchy requiring unquestioning obedience (Stokes 1994). This situation inhibits growth and development. It is not uncommon for social work teams to default to this position due to the fear of taking responsibility and of being blamed if something goes wrong. The chief defence in such groups is the need for idealization where members' main wish is to merge with the omnipotent leader and thus obtain his power (Kets de Vries and Miller 1984).

In the basic assumption pairing mentality the collective and unconscious belief and preoccupation is with the thought that somewhere in the future, a person or idea, will surface that will offer ultimate rescue from their anxieties and fears, a longed for Messiah (French and Simpson 2010). The group is focused on the future as a defence against the difficulties of the present. The members live with the hope that in

the future a new leader or new idea will ultimately resolve all their problems. There is a sense of expectation and a propensity to use fantasy to address conflict and attain satisfaction. French and Simpson (2010) note that it is near impossible for the idea or person ever to live up to their wants so eventually when members' hopes and faith are crushed, despair and disillusionment ensues. Findings in this study will show that in one organisation under study, there were changes of senior leaders and workers with the intention of passing the inspection process. There seemed to be an idealized view that the new individuals would resolve the existing issues.

### **2.6.1 Applying Bion's work to organisations**

Even though basic assumptions have been discovered through work with small therapeutic groups, it has been argued that they also characterise groups in organisations, groups that determine organisations' strategies, structures and processes (Kets de Vries and Miller 1984, Moxnes 1998).

In both organisations under study, the splitting and projection processes deployed to manage the anxieties brought about by the Ofsted inspection process, resulted in basic assumption functioning within the various teams. As will be explored later on in this study, this had profound implications for the 'organisation in the mind' of the individuals and the implementation of the primary task.

Moxnes (1998) argues that in organisations, individual members end up in a web of projections and counter-projections, their identity and feelings are dependent on the patterns of shared fantasies they are caught up in. Therefore what a group experiences as its reality is a product of the group members' collective projections and how these are manifested. Moxnes's (1998) view is that individuals become real only to the degree they suit the organisation's fantasy objects. The collective mental activity in groups results in shared perceptions and desires that may lead to shared fantasies. Such unconscious fantasies can be crucial in influencing an organisation's culture, decision-making, structure and strategy (French and Simpson 2010).

Other authors have provided different insights into the behaviour of groups over and above what Bion (1959) has identified. Bion's (1959) theory of groups appears to be mainly centered on biological processes underneath social interaction however neglects the role of interpersonal and social relationships in shaping behaviour within groups (Eisold 2005). Eisold (2005) argued that Bion's (1959) theory of groups did not address the issues of social reality but rather focused mainly on the fantasy aspects of group behaviour. The issues of social identity will cut across work group memberships and their subgroup behaviour will be driven by the daily concerns of members' security, interests and needs. The influence of the leader in shaping the actions of those he leads should not be overlooked or underestimated.

Some authorities have expanded on the basic assumptions theory from their observations of group behaviour. Turquet (1975) introduced the basic assumption "oneness" which is a group myth enabling the avoidance of membership schisms and allows members to avoid the anxiety emanating from the identity problems that emerge in a large group. Lawrence, Bain, and Gould (1996) suggested the basic assumption "me-ness;" here the individual views the reality of the external world so stressful that they withdraw from the group experience to a personal inner reality.

Agazarian (1997) provides another view of the theory regarding group behaviour. Her view is that essential building blocks of groups are subgroups, not individuals. She views subgroups as the overriding variables that account for group behaviour. Agazarian's (1997) view is that individuals form subgroups depending on the issues that are principal for them. Through interactions, the subgroups shape the behaviour of the group as a whole. The group members' anxieties about how the group will respond to them, recognize their feelings, progress their interests, propels them into subgroups in which those anxieties are shared (Agazarian 1997).

Understanding group functioning and the defences within groups is essential for organisations to develop strategies to ensure that the primary task implementation is not distorted. This is mostly vital during Ofsted inspections when anxieties are rife and there is a tendency to shift towards defence mechanisms that hinder the work

group mentalities. Leadership in groups exhibiting basic assumption mentalities will be explored later on this chapter, given that both organisations under study's response to Ofsted inspections resulted in basic assumptions mentalities permeating the groups thereby distorting the implementation of the primary task.

## **2.7 Motivation**

The previous sections have so far shown that the social work task is riddled with anxieties and defence mechanisms. Some of these defence mechanisms permeated across services and into leadership. However despite this, findings in this study will show that the reported resignations of social workers were not as high as one would expect given the stressful situations described in the organisations. It is therefore imperative to ask the questions, what motivates social workers to join the profession and to stay the course in such hardship? This section will provide some level of insight into some of the behaviours displayed by the social workers as well as why some social workers leave whilst others stay.

Various factors motivate individuals to train as social workers. BMRB Social Research completed a qualitative study involving 15 group discussions with social work students in five different universities across Scotland regarding their motivation to study social work (BMRB Social Research 2005). The study found out that all the social work students in the fifteen focus groups were motivated by an underlying wish to care for others. This was viewed as 'contributing to society' and 'doing the right thing'. The research noted that the wish to care for others was frequently recognised from childhood. Motivations were said to develop further over the years, influenced by various factors such as influences from family and friends who worked in social care roles, casual and voluntary care work experiences and the opportunity of securing a more meaningful, professional job with responsibility and a career structure (BMRB Social Research 2005 pg. 5).

The findings in the BMRB Social Research have been confirmed by several authors who cited the motivation to join the profession as including personal experiences as service users, the influence of relatives in similar professions, a wish to work with

people in a 'caring' role or to do something they saw as valuable. For some with experience in the social care sector, it is a wish to develop their skills, knowledge and ability to make a difference through qualification (Furness 2007; Manthorpe et al 2012, Scholar 2016).

Webb and Carpenter (2011) highlighted other factors which motivate individuals to join social work such as job security, the job market, training as well as workers' expectations linked to job satisfaction. Some authors view direct work with children and families as the main factor why social workers join the profession and is central to job satisfaction (Eborall and Garmeson, 2001; Stalker et al, 2007).

The concept of reparation provides further insight into why some social workers join and stay in the profession. Roberts (1994) asserts that the choices we make regarding which profession to train for, which client group we will work with and the type of setting are all influenced by our need to come to terms with unresolved issues from our past. At a conscious level, reparation is enacted on those we feel we have hurt however at unconscious level reparation referred to as restitution by Dockar-Drysdale (1990) can be enacted through our actions to others. In this form, reparation may not be expected or recognised by the unaware adult. Some professions such as social work which enables working with others can be viewed as a form of reparation (Dockar-Drysdale 1990). Success is deeply validating, strengthening the capacity to act constructively but failure or even limited success is felt to demonstrate inner deficiency and is intolerable (Roberts 1994). Similar feelings may have been associated with wanting to 'please Ofsted' and get the validation of success. On the other hand, failing an Ofsted inspection would increase the level of anxieties thereby creating a vicious cycle.

The research in practice (2015) cites some of the reasons behind social workers leaving the profession and the motivation to stay. The reasons for leaving were cited as; negative organisational culture where fear and blame are rife, social workers in such organisations may experience feeling vulnerable and lacking trust in management (Healy et al, 2009; Baginsky, 2013); cumbersome electronic recording

systems; lack of role clarity, overly bureaucratic systems and a negative Ofsted judgement which is viewed as exacerbating organisational instability (Kelly 2015).

The motivations to stay included direct work with families and the difference they can make to the lives of young people by providing high-quality services (Stalker et al 2007, Faulkner and Borah 2008); support from management through good supervision and opportunities for staff development and peers (Dickinson and Perry 2002; Nissley et al 2005); opportunities for career development (Burns, 2010), organisational support for emotional well-being, peer support and feeling valued (Russ et al 2009, research in practice 2015).

Frost et al (2017) undertook an international research focusing on England, Sweden and Italy to explore the reasons why 50 percent of child protection workers stay. They noted that in addition to well-known factors such as workload management, good supervision and supportive colleagues which featured highly in their participants' accounts; creativity, power, reflective spaces and interpersonal relationships were also equally important. Frost et al (2017) discussed the concept of resilience as a core element of remaining in practice which is associated with the dynamics between organisational conditions and individual workers.

Ellet et al (2007) note that research literature demonstrates low organisational and professionals' commitment together with stress and lack of social support as the strongest predictors of turnover or social workers' intentions to leave. Staying is not viewed by workers as an absence of the pressure but that the job of child protection is in itself rewarding on both an individual and collective level. Frost et al (2017) argue that where social workers have the tools including the time for preventative and supportive work for positive intervention, job satisfaction and motivation to remain are increased.



Findings in this study will show that they were additional motivating factors some as subtle as fear of change. Respondents created their own 'organisations in the mind' to help them cope with the difficulties and painful realities of the job.

## **2.8 Organisation in the Mind**

Armstrong (2005) uses the term 'organisation in the mind' to refer to the idea of the institution that each individual member holds in their mind. Information from this study demonstrates the importance of understanding the 'organisation in the mind' of workers given the profound impact of this not only how the organisation functions in implementing the primary task but importantly how individuals react to internal and external pressure emanating from the Ofsted inspection process. This study shows that defences deployed to manage anxieties impacted on the workers' view of their organisations.

Hutton, Bazalgette & Reed (1997) describe 'organisation in the mind' as what an individual perceives in his or her mind of how activities and relations are organised, structured and connected internally. 'Organisation-in-the-mind' can be considered as what is happening inside an individual's mind, that is their own reality which has to be distinguished from the existing reality 'out there'. It is an individual's notion of the organisation which through experiencing and imagining, forms in an individual's inner psychic space and which then influences how individuals interact with their environment (Hutton, Bazalgette & Reed, 1997). In his research study of primary school head teachers, Tucker (2012) established that the culture that participants produced through their narratives about the organisation and their responses within interviews provided evidence of the kind of organization they had in their minds.

In his work with groups, Bion (1961) identified that in a similar way people are attracted to work in particular settings because they provide opportunities to work through their own unresolved issues, such settings may draw staff with similar internal needs and a similar propensity to fit with certain kinds of defences. Bion (1961) refers to this as valency and viewed this as giving rise to collective defences

against anxieties stirred up by the work which can seriously impede the task performance.

Armstrong (2005) expanded Bion's (1961) concept of valency noting that the images and ideas of the individual about the organization is a product of the interrelation between individual and context. Workers contribute individually and often anonymously, according to the structure of their personality to the organization they work within. Therefore, the individual does not only project onto the organization, they are also projected into by the organization, developing an emotional resonance within themselves of the organization both at conscious and unconscious levels (Armstrong 2005). Armstrong (2005) views these resonances as being determined and informed by the role the individual holds within the organisational structure and the boundary the role relates to within the organisation as a whole. As such an individual can be influenced to behave in a particular way due to the dynamics within the organisation, this interrelationship between the individual and the organisation indicates that the emotional experiences of individuals are not independent of the organisations they work in; they directly influence the organisation and are in turn influenced by the organisation. Perin (2013) concurs with this view adding that members not only contribute individually to this experience according to their personality structure but also contribute anonymously in "basic-assumption" activities.

Armstrong (2005) asserts that the emotional experience of the organization as a whole is a combination of the interrelation between task, structure, and context. Thus 'organisation-in-the-mind' not only refers to the individual's conscious or unconscious mental constructs of the organisation; the assumptions individuals make about aim, task, authority, power, accountability but also refers to the emotional resonances, registered and present in the mind of an individual (Perini 2013). The basic assumption mentalities therefore have a profound impact on the 'organisation in the mind' of individuals.

It clearly became apparent in this study that the views and perceptions of the individuals regarding the Ofsted inspection process were not only influenced by the workers' past experiences with Ofsted but also their interrelations with others in the organisations, the shared fantasies within their teams and the defence mechanisms adopted to manage the inspections. Workers' own perceptions of dealing with powerful external authority figures scrutinising their work also had a significant bearing on the individuals' 'organisation in the mind.'

Stokes (1994) asserts that members from different parts of the same organisation may have different pictures and these may be in contradiction to one another. Such views are partially unconscious however, they significantly affect the behaviour and feelings of the workers towards others. Stokes (1994) argues that an organisation is coherent to the extent that there is also a collective organization in the mind shared by all members.

Findings from this study show how the basic assumption mentalities prevailing during inspections significantly contributed to the differences in the 'organisation in the mind' held by various teams within the same organisation and notably the differences between the workers, team managers and the senior managers. Such differences are likely to have contributed significantly to tensions within the organisations which potentially had a detrimental impact on the primary task implementation. Equally important were the differences of the 'Ofsted in the mind' between the various teams and individual workers. This had a significant impact on how organisations respond to the Ofsted inspection process. Similar to the 'organisation in the mind', the findings from this study show that the 'Ofsted in the mind' can be influenced by the individuals' roles and responsibilities, past experiences and unconscious processes. These different views are likely to have contributed to some of the difficulties experienced as the senior managers tried to mobilise their workers and transform their organisations to respond to the inspection processes.

Viewing the 'organisation in the mind' in terms of Lawrence's (1977) psychoanalytic analysis of the primary task implementation sheds more insight into the workers' perception of their organisations. The normative task is what the organisation say they do, however underneath this at an unconscious level, is what they believe they are doing and also what is actually going on (Owens 2015). The three approaches to the primary task influence the 'organisation in the mind' of individuals. In the same way that the normative, phenomenal and existential primary tasks need to be aligned for the organisation to remain on task; the individuals' 'organisation in the mind' needs to be aligned with the normative primary task to ensure that all individuals are carrying out the objectives of the organisation. Thus for leaders and managers to be effective in their roles, there are two key factors which they need to consider.;

*'the first is to do with the organisation that is 'intended', that is, what is the planned aim and structure of this, enterprise. The other is to do with the organisation that is actually happening, which will inevitably differ from the intentions, since it involves human beings who bring a variety of responses to the situation derived from their own ways of seeing the world'* (Hutton, Bazalgette & Reed, 1997:1).

When individuals create an 'organisation in the mind' far from reality, this can lead to a perverse state of mind which engages others as conscious or unconscious accomplices in the perversion (Long 2008). In addition, the perverse relationships between members of the organisation bind them to one another and often to a leader in ways that ensure loyalty. The perverse state of mind is a societal state of mind that turns a blind eye to abuse, the system both knows and does not know (Long 2008).

Linked to the way workers created their 'organisation in the mind' of both their local authorities and the regulator Ofsted, is the way workers developed 'a unique way' of describing their feelings and what was around them through the use of metaphors. The following section will explain in detail the conceptual framework which will be used to analyse the language of the 'metaphors' used by respondents to describe their circumstances before, during and after the inspection.

## 2.9 Metaphors

Beckett (2003) asserts that the language that social workers use like all languages is filled with metaphors to an extent that they are not aware of. In this study, no attempt was made to have the social workers express themselves metaphorically in the interviews. Through the analysis of information in seminars and supervision, a coherent pattern of metaphors emerged from the interview data with the overarching metaphors of war and theatre. The overarching metaphors provided central themes to the underlying metaphors and the relationships among the concepts (Mirka 2001). In this study, metaphors were not only used to shed light into the individuals' responses to the inspection processes but some of the metaphors used depicted the links in the dynamics between teams which provided a deeper meaning to organisational behavior (Carpenter 2008).

Danziger (2000) asserts that while metaphors are a common way of structuring or making sense out of one's experiences, they are often formed unconsciously and respondents are not aware that they frequently express themselves metaphorically. The metaphors depicted in this study provided insight into the workers' 'organisation in the mind' as well as 'Ofsted in the mind'. The anxieties and defence mechanisms were presented in a different light through everyday language. Some essential elements may have been missed had this study not considered using a metaphorical framework as part of data analysis. The respondents' metaphors revealed profound meanings that traditional research language could not have conveyed (Stanworth 1997).

Metaphors used by the respondents illuminated the basic assumption mentalities prevalent at different periods during the inspection process and provided a coherent connection between the primary task, basic assumption, 'organisation in the mind' and 'Ofsted in the mind'. Miles and Huberman (1994) assert that metaphors can serve as a data-to-theory connecting mechanism which yields new theoretical insights. They are a powerful strategy to depict complex realities. They illuminate features of phenomena not previously observed and add depth of meaning to understanding (Danziger 2000)). Morgan (1986) asserts that to look at metaphors is

to look at how our view of reality influences, shapes and informs the very organizations that we participate in. Metaphors provide specific frames or lenses for viewing the world. They are fundamental to the way we read, understand, and shape organizational life.

It can be argued that the metaphors used by respondents were another form of defence mechanism against the pain of the primary task and the inspection process. Beckett (2003) asserts that the metaphorical expressions have been adopted into the official and colloquial language of social workers from different areas such as medical, business and military. The wide use of such metaphors imply the existence of underlying conceptual metaphors for instance social problems are portrayed as illnesses, social work agencies are portrayed as business or social workers are portrayed as soldiers. Such metaphors have a way of detaching the emotional feelings thereby protecting the workers from being confronted by the pain emanating from the work. Cooper (2017) cites the example of a social worker who compared her work in child protection to working in a factory, 'churning out assessments'. Whilst this can be viewed as the main impact of managerialism with the emphasis on performance targets, it can also be viewed as a defence mechanism in removing the human emotional aspect of the primary task.

Hawkins et al (2001) identified that a generally used word in social work 'strategy' has a military origin although it also has a business connotation. Beckett (2003 pg. 634) identified other commonly used words in every day social work language which although used in other disciplines, taken together have a strong military origin such as intake, going in, intervention, bombardment (referring to pressure on a team), to blow (cases are blowing up), front line, held/hold (case being held on duty). Various aspects of the war and theatre metaphors were frequently cited by the respondents in this study.

There have been some debates regarding the legitimacy and value of using metaphors in organisational science. Grant and Oswick (1996a) cite two main areas of debate regarding the use of metaphors in organisational analysis. One of the

areas is regarding the validity of using metaphors in organisational science research. Can what a metaphor generate be appropriate for studying organizational phenomena and can it increase our knowledge and comprehension of those phenomena? Secondly, science is all about precision thus something that is applied in a figurative sense cannot be used in scientific investigations (Grant and Oswick, 1996a).

Lakeoff and Johnson (1980) provide a different perspective. They refer to the concept of experientialist synthesis or an imaginative rationality where metaphor serves centrally to unite reason and imagination. Their view is that our ideas about the world are grounded in particular conceptual systems and in turn metaphors interpenetrate these conceptual systems. We interpret our world by trying to understand our experiences as they arise out of the specific cultural context, this requires metaphors but it does not follow that the metaphorical understanding lacks objectivity or that it is only a form of subjectivity (Miller and Fredericks 1988).

According to Sandelowski (1998) misuse of metaphors such as mixing metaphors, not following through metaphors or using metaphors that do not fit the data can generate an inaccurate picture casting shadows on the experiences represented in the data. If the whole implication of metaphors is not developed they can clutter the text and can lead to the misrepresentation of the data and lead to faulty conclusions (Denzin 1989). Emotionally charged metaphors may mask the true meaning of phenomena revealing more about the researchers' attachment to the metaphors than the data (Donovan & Mercer 2003). Carpenter (2008) argues that at their best, metaphors illuminate at their worst they distort or obscure. It can however be argued that metaphors can also depict the true feelings of what is created 'in the mind' of an individual.

In this study the metaphors were derived from the data and they were fully explored during the data analysis with the independent objective view of my supervisors and peers in seminar groups. The metaphors were used as an adjunct to the data with a full exploration of how they fit in the data and relate to each other (Carpenter 2008).

Thus the metaphors were triangulated within the context of all the information from the respondents, observations and documentation.

## **2.10 Containment**

For organisations to function effectively particularly during periods of external pressure like Ofsted inspections, the organisations need to have structures to manage the anxieties and defences deployed to ensure that implementation of the primary task is not distorted. Douglas (2007 p 33) refers to the notion of containment as the process whereby 'one person receives and understands the emotional communication of another without being overwhelmed by it, processes it and communicates understanding and recognition back to the other person'. The concept of containment was initially identified by Bion (1962) who used this in explaining how a mother receives unwanted or overwhelming projections from an infant, processes them and returns the experiences to the infant but in a modified way so that they are not overwhelming. Mawson (1994) asserts that from infancy we develop the expectation that we gain some relief from the pressures by seeking a 'container' for the painful feelings and the part of ourselves that experiences them. Thus we unconsciously try to get rid of them with the hope that the recipient of the projected distress may be able to tolerate what we cannot and through the process of articulating thoughts that we have found unthinkable, we contribute to the development in us of an ability to think and to hold on to anxiety ourselves.

Ruch (2007) elaborates on Bion's (1962) original formulation of containment and suggests the concept of 'holistic containment' comprising of emotional, epistemological and organisational elements. Ruch's (2007a) research identifies the situations that best enable holistic reflection, which is a reflection that assimilates emotional and experiential knowledge and is concerned with sense-making as well as practical or procedural tasks. Emotional containment includes the presence of trusting relationships between practitioners, managers and other professionals and spaces for emotions to be processed. Epistemological containment gives practitioners practice frameworks that enable the integration of multiple forms of knowledge with ethical decision-making (Ruch 2007). Organisational containment



refers to the ability of an organisation to deliver clear and supportive managerial structures and processes.

In her work with organisations, Biran (2003) applied Bion's (1962) notion of containment to organisational functioning. Biran's (2003) view is that for organisations to develop, they require space for thinking and a process for thinking. She refers to this as the alpha function which is responsible for the deciphering and containment of new and unformulated ideas allowing such ideas to grow and develop. Biran (2003) argues that without containment and deciphering functions, organisational functioning may be hampered in times of crisis where the organisation may deal with events through splitting, denying contacts and context.

Winnicott (1965, 1971) linked containment to what she described as the concept of a 'holding environment' (1965, 1971), where a loving mother holds her baby, both physically and emotionally, and is attuned and attentive to the baby's needs. Winnicott's (1965, 1971) concept is applicable within social work organisations. It is vital for leadership teams to provide such a holding environment to ensure that there is ongoing support for workers. Ruch (2007) highlights the importance of thoughtful managerial relationships which act as containers for the anxieties that practice and organisational uncertainty generate. She views characteristics of containing organisation as consisting of the existence of emotional and practical support for practitioners at every level and also the existence of good quality supervision that enables sorting out and working through complex emotions and practical issues.

This study like others before it shows that workers are under immense pressure to improve practice during Ofsted inspections (Jeffery and Woods 1996; Jeffrey et al 2006, Jones et al 2014). However, there is limited literature regarding containment in organisations undergoing Ofsted inspections. It is apparent that the splitting and projection processes arising from the anxieties generated by the inspections require a coherent, structured and stable environment. Stokes (1994) argues that stability is not a prominent feature of most social work organisations today. Continual change and re-organisations are in progress most of the time more so with the unrelenting

pressures some local authorities put themselves under. Systems and structures within organisations with their managerialism agendas do not support the idea of containing anxieties and working with individuals for defences to be lowered and personal truths to be revealed (Harries 1998, Cooper 2017). Sound leadership is crucial not only for the effective implementation of the primary task but to provide a supportive function within organisations to ensure that the organisations remain 'on task'.

The section below will explore the abilities and capabilities of leadership to function as a container and holder of anxieties during Ofsted inspection.

## **2.11 Leadership**

Leadership is a process of interpersonal influence from one person to others in the direction of a goal where the others subsequently act of their own will in the direction sought for by the leader (Baruch, 1998). Leadership should be viewed in context and not considered as being separate from strategy, organising, learning and all those interactions that make organizations (Gray 1989). Leadership is pivotal in the development of individuals, groups and organizations and always deserves extensive exploration (Baruch, 1998).

There is also a view that to attain best organisational goals, individuals within the organisations should be allocated roles or positions differentiated by decision-making power, responsibility, authority and access to information, receipt of rewards, prestige or status (Rothschild-Whitt 1979, Baruch 1998, Kets de Vries et al 2007). This is referred to as Formal leadership, where an individual exercises authority bestowed upon an individual by the organisation in relation to the individual's position in the organisation (Kets de Vries et al 2007). Formal leaders may use the various forms of authority and power available to persons in these positions: legitimate, coercion, and reward (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999; Fairholm, 1998; French & Raven, 1959). Informal leaders on the other hand are those not in positions of leadership but recognized as leaders nevertheless but do not have such authority at their disposal (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). Formal leadership was exercised in both

organisations under study, the leaders had power and authority sanctioned by the organisations they were working for.

For the purposes of this study, I will explore the leadership in social work and the following leadership theories which are relevant to this thesis; transformational, transactional and distributive leadership. I will also explore effective leadership, basic assumption leadership and the dynamics involved in the leadership-follower relationship. The notion of power and authority will also be explored.

Trowell (1995) argues that it is difficult to develop effective management and leadership without understanding the unconscious processes of splitting and projection. Findings from this study demonstrate how critical leadership was not only in motivating workers during periods of pressure from Ofsted inspections but most importantly in providing a coherent, stable environment to contain the anxieties and defences deployed to ensure that the organisations continued to function effectively in implementing the primary task. The risk of ineffective leadership is that organisations may deviate from the normative primary task, this in itself, may create further anxieties. It is only through consistent and clear monitoring of the primary task that it is possible to develop and maintain on task leadership, to avoid abuse of power and to keep at a relative minimum the occurrence and spread of basic assumption activity in the organisation (Roberts 1994).

### **2.11.1 Leadership in Social Work**

As previously stated, the leaders in social work settings are formal leaders. The social work organisations sanctions their power and authority vested in positions they occupy. Fairtlough (2018) argues that apart from the few texts on management, very little has been written explicitly for professional leadership in social work. Fairtlough (2018) cautions that solely linking leadership with management is detrimental as it leads to the implication that advancement in a management hierarchy is the sole route to professional leadership. Peters (2017) completed a systemic review of the literature on leadership in human organisations and concluded that despite the clear need for strong leaders in the managerial and

executive positions of human service organisations, there are very few courses that teach the leadership skills that are needed for the administration of human service provision in the context of client needs, employee needs, organisational needs and changing political climates.

There is an assumption that models of leadership can be transferred from the private to public sectors. However, Cooper (2018) argues that this transfer of concepts with highly prescriptive and formal models from the private sector is doomed to fail in the public sector. Moore (1995) shares the same view stating that although there are similarities in the sectors, the differences between the sectors mean that transfer of managerial concepts including performance management techniques should be implemented with sensitivity to context. During Ofsted inspections, Children's Service organisations tend to shift their practice, focusing more on the performance management targets which causes tension in the organisations' primary task implementation.

Hafford- Letchfield et al (2014) identify the concept of inclusive leadership as vital in bringing effective relationships between people that use and provide services to the forefront of leadership practice in social work and social care. Lawler (2007) categorises the different dimensions of leadership in social work as: promoting the public image of social work, improving staff effectiveness, leading inter-professional activities and counterbalancing managerialism. Counterbalancing managerialism seemed difficult for leadership teams during inspections as their perception of the Ofsted inspection framework was that it relied on performance indicators to evaluate practice standards.

### **2.11.2 Effective Leadership in Social Work Settings**

For effective leadership to prevail in social work organisations, Cooper (2017) asserts that leaders need to develop an insight into their organisations specifically the emotional tensions inherent in the primary caring task of the organisation, the character of the organisation emanating from the socio-political forces acting on managers and leaders and lastly an appreciation of the organisational culture. This

will assist leadership teams in understanding organisational dynamics and how they manage both internal and external boundaries in relation to inspection, audit, regulation, performance and governance (Cooper 2017). Findings from this study show how fundamental it is that leaders gain insight into how anxieties arising from the primary task and inspections are managed. Equally important are how the tensions emanating from the uncertain nature of direct work with families and performance targets culture are dealt with. Leaders need to be cognisant of the middle managers' dilemma in managing the demands of the practitioners and senior managers. Most importantly, the leaders also need to carefully negotiate and manage the power dynamics within different groups in the organisation. Chapter 8 explores how this posed difficulties in both organisations as the leadership teams tried to implement changes during Ofsted inspections.

Stokes (1994) asserts that, in well-functioning organisations, work group mentality members are able to mobilize their capacity for cooperation and to value the different contributions each can make. Within such groups they choose to follow the leader in order to achieve group task rather than doing so in an automatic way determined by their own needs or fear of reprisals from the leader (Kets de Vries et al 2009). The leaders are able to continually scan the internal and external environment and adapt their organisations in times of internal or external pressure.

Leadership in work group mentality is viewed as ensuring that the culture of the organisation maintains a set of behaviour patterns, norms and values that are geared towards meeting the objectives of the organisation thereby sustaining effective implementation of the primary task (Kets de Vries et al 2009, French & Simpson 2010). Such leaders have a rational view of reality and an awareness of the internal and external boundaries of the group. They are capable of withstanding the hatred of rationality activated under basic assumptions (Kernberg 1984, French and Simpson 2010).

McKitterick (2015) refers to the requirement of 'self-leadership' for social workers to provide confident and skillful social work practice both on an individual basis and the

profession through consciously influencing one's thinking, feeling and behaviour to achieve one's objectives. Many social workers state that they do not feel prepared for the transition from practitioner to the front-line manager, this indicates that organisational attention to support for the continuing professional development for supervisors and managers is crucial (Patterson 2015). Fairtlough (2018) views professional leadership as being undertaken by social workers at every stage of their career from newly qualified to experienced, as practitioners and educators, not only as managers and developing in depth, scope and degree of complexity. This means that, like their managers and senior managers, social workers are also accountable and responsible for ensuring effective implementation of the primary task. This provides useful insight regarding the mindset of the workers and an understanding of the behaviours displayed during the inspection process.

### **2.11.3 Transformational and Transactional Leadership**

To understand leadership from a social work perspective, it is important to explore the concepts of transformational and transactional leadership. Fairtlough (2018) draws on the work of Burns (1978) regarding these two concepts of leadership. A transformational leader raises the aspirations of his or her followers such that the leader's and the followers' goals are merged in a mutual and ongoing pursuit of a higher purpose. They pursue to motivate, influence, empower and develop the skills of others which will enable staff members to make their own decisions. This results in staff taking ownership and responsibility for the tasks (Adamson 1996).

Aamodt (2016) notes that transactional leadership is viewed as being mostly concerned with processes and the current; there is no forward thinking or planning. A transactional leader's main focus is on performance, followers' compliance is engendered through sanctions of punishment and reward. Workers are rewarded for good performance and effort. The leaders are mainly focused on goals, structure and the culture of the existing organization and are directive and action-oriented (Mulder 2016). This study will show how the leadership teams' perception of the Ofsted inspection requirements resulted in the adoption of the transactional leadership style during the Ofsted inspections.

#### **2.11.4 Distributed Leadership**

Bolden (2011) asserts that distributed leadership, also referred to as dispersed or shared leadership, conceptualises leadership as potentially arising in any professional interaction. Distributed leadership is a dynamic, interactive influence process where the leader involves the group (Spillane (2006). The group members are encouraged to listen to each other. The objective is to lead one another to accomplish group and organizational goals so that the team is empowered and all are equal (Locke 2003). This can be provided by a worker at any level of the profession as it arises from individual's actions, not their position thus leadership is embedded in the social system at different levels and is viewed as a relational process occurring at various levels. This is in contrast to the traditional vertical or hierarchical leadership where leadership role lies chiefly with an individual instead of a group (Fairtlough 2018).

Fairtlough (2018) argues that in any organisation or practice system all three ways of getting things done, hierarchy, heterarchy and responsible autonomy are likely to be required, although their specific pattern will be dependent on the environment and situation. Locke (2003) suggests that perhaps a vertical form of leadership may be more appropriate in some cases. Despite the group members understanding of what needs to happen, some situations require a position of power and authority to implement change (Spebert, Sparrow and Leiden 2003).

#### **2.11.5 Power and Authority**

Power can be defined as a potentiality to exercise influence and to stay uninfluenced from others (Copeland 1994). Power infiltrates the very core of our being and it cannot be detached from the emotions and relations that reinforce it (Knights & McCabe, 1999, Vince 2001). Power is the ability to act on others or on organisational structure (Obholzer 1994, Coates 1997). It is not based on roles but is rather an attribute of persons. Power is seen as emanating from both internal and external sources.

In organisations, authority is the right to make final decisions which are binding on others (Obholzer 1994). Such authority can be sanctioned from below. Thus the use of authority is based on the position one occupies in an organisation and is exercised on behalf of the organisation. By working in an organisation workers willingly delegate their own personal authority to those in charge, thereby confirming the system. Workers can impact on those in authority through undermining or sabotaging them consciously or unconsciously. Authority is bound with relatedness with others and is thus always exercised in a relationship with followers.

In distributed leadership Fairtlough (2018) asserts that in social work settings, individuals/teams need to have a degree of responsible autonomy which delegates authority for aspects of decision-making and action-taking. Fairtlough (2018) refers to this as heterarchy where decision-making is distributed amongst participants and permits power to be used in different directions, laterally and from the bottom up, not just through a pre-determined top-down hierarchy. It needs to be noted that for this to be effective, the individuals within an organisations should have the expertise, ability and professional knowledge to enable it to reach consensus and make sound cognizant decisions (Locke 2003). Leaders who partake in this model have to be prepared to relinquish their power.

By adopting 'a hands-on' approach, the central government has exerted power on Local Authorities by dictating priorities at the local level in order to ensure that social workers are delivering central government's agendas (Noble and Irwin 2009, Cooper 2017). Within the Children Act 2004, each local authority is expected to appoint a lead member. The Department for Education and Skills (2005) asserts that the role of the Lead Member is to have political accountability for Children's Services and to have particular responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children through engaging with partners and the communities. Thus the power and authority of the lead member and councillors come from the government and the electorates. The latter votes councillors into power.



As an inspection institution tasked with the overall responsibility of evaluating Children's Services' performance, Ofsted's role comes with authority and power sanctioned by the government itself (Rustin 2004).

#### **2.11.6 Power dynamics in the leadership-followership relationship**

According to Junker et al (2016) leadership and followership are two sides of the same coin. Leadership does not exist in a vacuum but exists only with the consensus of followers (Bennis 2007, Uhl-Bien et al 2014). The aspect of power is quite crucial in the leader-follower dyadic (Uhl-Bien et al 2014). In the past two decades, researchers have started to recognise followers not only as passive recipients but as active contributors to leadership (Oc and Bashshur 2013, Notgrass 2014). This is quite an interesting phenomenon which will be explored in Chapter 8 when analyzing how workers in individual teams shaped the directions of their organisations in response to the Ofsted inspection process.

Leadership develops through communications between leaders and followers in which leaders share power and engage their followers' talents through empowerment (Hollander and Offermann, 1990). Leadership may be exercised by people at all levels of the organisation including 'informal leaders' (Spillane 2006). Informal leaders play a significant role within organisations, their power and influence should not be minimised.

Modern concepts of leadership place significant emphasis on the power and importance of followers in ultimately legitimizing and enabling leadership (Uhl-Bien et al 2014). Leaders can use their power to try to control the behaviour of followers. The differential power dynamics which can exist between leaders and followers may have the effect of limiting motivation or directing motivation towards the efforts of resistance (Uhl-Bien et al 2014). This may result in followers spending significant time resisting being controlled while leaders spend more time trying to control subordinates' behaviour than giving organisations the creative direction and guidance which could be beneficial.

It has been argued that people do not passively accept the existence of structural inequities and they resist and rebel against this (Giroux 1983). Vanderslice (1985) postulates that work slowdowns and absenteeism can be viewed as forms of resistance in the traditionally hierarchically –structured workplace. Vanderslice (1985) scrutinized an extensive variety of power relationships between leaders and subordinates and found out that when power was equalized, the followers' sense of responsibility and ownership increased within the organisations. Information from this study shows that in one organisation (Borrowdale) equalizing power through distributed leadership was viewed as one of the significant contributions to performance improvement.

In describing leadership and management in public sector organisations in the caring industry, Cooper (2018) refers to partnership or governance anxiety where senior and middle managers adopt the new commercial and business culture. This results in them facing 'outwards' in their effort to manage the demands of cost, competition, performance and partnership, leaving front-line staff isolated in their struggle to implement the primary task. This lack of sympathy or recognition to those who deliver the organisation's primary task may, according to Cooper (2018), lead to brutal and insensitive treatment of subordinates in the system or a cautious compliance with the dictates of the system and culture, a kind of 'follow orders at all costs' mentality. Cooper's (2018) observations are similar to the respondents' account of the leadership prevailing at the height of the Ofsted inspection process. The perception of the Ofsted requirements and the fear of failure resulted in leadership teams demanding workers to focus on performance targets which were viewed by the respondents as being in contention with the primary task implementation.

### **2.11.7 Leadership-Followership in Basic Assumption mentalities**

In groups where basic assumption mentalities prevail, the leaders are deviated from effective leadership roles by the nature of regression in such groups. The group utilises its leader's personality characteristics for its own purpose (Hendrikz 1999).

In groups dominated with fight-flight mentalities, the leader is maintained in that position only because s/he happens to mirror and articulate the pre-existing concerns and fears of the followers (French and Simpson 2010). If s/he ceases doing this, s/ he loses power. Such a culture is characterised by the paranoid/schizoid inclinations where the leader and followers spit the world into two main camps, the bad and the good. Power is centralised in the hands of the paranoid group of leaders since no one can be trusted. The level of distrust within the organisation results in rigidity in the decision making and the application of management information systems to monitor threats (French et al, 2006). Findings from this study show the increased reliance on performance monitoring systems by the leadership teams and the anxieties arising from this and the subsequent defensive behaviours adopted by the workers.

The dependency culture revolves around an idealized strong charismatic leader. The hopes and ambitions of the followers in the organisation all center on this individual or a legacy that the individual leaves behind. There is blind trust of the leader, lack of self-reflection, unquestioning and a trustful climate of subordinacy among followers. Followers are tied to the leader. The leader's power gives the leader much latitude in which to act. S/he is free to consider both goals and means in making decisions without losing the basis of support (Kets de Vries and Miller 1984). When the leader leaves the followers, the codes of his legacy replace him which are usually in the form of rules, procedures, policies which are followed rigidly. Flexibility is lost and deliberation ceases altogether as an autocratic style gives way to a bureaucratic one. The primary effort is to extend the past practices, resulting in great resistance to change (Kets de Vries and Miller 1984).

The pairing culture is quite future-oriented and emotional energy is invested in the expectation of future ameliorative events than regularly pressing current problems (Kets de Vries and Miller 1984). The leader is not expected to do much and can be quite passive with the focus being upon goals themselves much more than the means necessary for their achievement. The group is democratic and tensions appear to be reduced by the shared anticipation of the ideal future. A future conceptualised by members, without a powerful leader or a set of rigid processes and procedures.

Cooper (2018) asserts that fantasies and projections flow along the chain of command whereby leaders and followers are split. The followers are constantly fearful of being labeled a dissenter whereas the leaders are obsessed by the belief that there are provocateurs and saboteurs who must be controlled, suppressed or expelled if the project is not to be derailed. This situation results in followers living in a state of anxiety for themselves, with some containing rebellious impulses, but with little capacity to actually test the reality of their own fantasies due to fear of persecution. Cooper (2018) argues that the constructive contribution of the followership to the total organisational effort is hindered resulting in a rather hostile compliance instead of a mature co-operation.

Kets de Vries et al (2009) asserts that the consequences of basic assumption cultures can be mitigated by a leader who has the self-knowledge and maturity which can limit the organizational regression. One way of assisting managers and leaders to remove themselves from these basic assumption mentalities is through participation in what Balin (1957) termed Balin groups. The Balin groups are said to provide non-threatening settings in which leaders and managers deliberate their work experiences with professionals who have an extensive knowledge of different organisational cultures and basic assumption groups. The aim of such groups is to assist managers to identify the dysfunctional patterns of managing in their work environment.

French and Simpson (2010) highlighted that attempts to support groups enmeshed in basic assumption mentality may be more effective if the focus is on a form of interaction that is different to the dominant basic assumption. Thus to support a group exhibiting BaF mentality, an intervention that induces or support dependence or pairing may have a containing or challenging impact which can result in decreasing the hold of the emotions underpinning the basic assumptions fight-flight response .

It is interesting to note that in their work with leaders in organisations, French and Simpson (2010) identified situations where basic assumptions resulted in positive outcomes. In such cases leadership was evident more widely in the group or organization with some leaders actively working to downplay any fantasies of infallibility projected onto them by followers (French et al 2006) They observed situations where pairing resulted in significant contributions to the group's purpose so that the hopeful expectation generated by the pair was translated into action by realistic hard work and not lost in denial or avoidance. Gilmore (1999) describes the notion of the productive pair which is a form of purposive pairing in which good interpersonal chemistry and intellectual understanding are mobilized not for personal benefit but in the service of the mission. French and Simpson (2010) observed cases where dependence on a leader did not lead to stagnation or to rigid thinking, but to productive work. The dependence thus was not experienced as a disruption from the group's purpose but instead the leader and group members together maintained a focus on their purpose.

## **2.12 Conclusions**

The discussion in this chapter has illuminated the link between psychoanalytic concepts of defences, 'basic assumptions', 'organisation in the mind' and the metaphoric language as a framework for expression in social work language. This link has assisted in providing different but holistic lenses in which to view the associations of these concepts and their impact on organisational functioning. The defences adopted to manage the anxieties inherent in the primary task and in response to fear of failing the Ofsted inspection process permeate groups resulting

in the basic assumption mentalities behaviour which influence the 'organisation in the mind' of workers. This in turn distorts the implementation of the primary task. The concerning factor for organisations is that such defences create gaps between the normative task, the existential task and the phenomenal task. The greater the gaps the further away an organisation deviates from its core duties of primary task implementation. Effective leadership should therefore be the glue which 'holds' the organisation together by 'containing' anxieties and managing defences. Sound leadership and its followership should be able to provide the necessary strategies to deal with any internal or external pressures such as those exerted by Ofsted, their regulator.

The next Chapter will explore the methodology used in this study.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **3.0 Introduction**

The previous two chapters explored the Ofsted inspection processes and the theoretical framework underpinning the organisational responses to the inspection processes. They demonstrate the role defences play in group dynamics and how this can influence the organisational dynamics and implementation of the primary task.

This chapter will examine the research methods used in this study to understand not only the conscious processes but also the hidden, unconscious processes impacting on the individual and organisational responses to Ofsted inspections. The chapter will also explore the data gathering techniques used and ethical considerations made. In addition, the chapter will look at reflexivity, the dynamics of the relationship between me as the researcher and the research participants in particular as I have worked as a manager in both Local Authorities under study. The impact of this on the interviewees and the research itself will be examined.

In deciding the research methodology to use, I considered the two main paradigms in social science research, the positivist paradigm which underlies quantitative research and the interpretive paradigm which underlie qualitative research (Creswell 2003, Hennink et al 2011, Tracy 2013). The positivist paradigm is a scientific approach focusing on the objective measurement of social issues with a view that reality consists of facts and the researcher's role is mainly data collection and interpretation in an objective way. (Charmaz, 2006, Collins, 2010). To get a holistic picture of the organisations under study's response to the inspection process, including the conscious and unconscious process impacting on behaviour, I used a qualitative research approach which focused on understanding people's lived experiences through studying them in their natural settings. This approach allowed identifying issues from the perspective of study participants and understanding the meanings and interpretations that they give to behaviour and events (Silverman

(2000, Tracy 2013). Quantitative research would not have been appropriate in this study due to its emphasis on objective measurement which minimises subjective perspectives and produces research with humans that ignores their humanness (Mckenzie et al, 1997, Wilson 2010).

I considered the qualitative approaches and concluded that for the purposes of this study the most relevant approach was an ethnographic methodology comprising of participant observation, case study, interviews and the use of organisational documents. Ethnography has a long history in the research of childcare social work (Dingwall et al 1983, Pithouse, 1984, White 1997, Holland 1999, Scourfield 1999, Buckley, 2003, Gillingham, 2009, Whittaker 2014). I worked in both organisations during the period of this study. The case study approach provided an opportunity to gain in-depth understanding of the impact of the inspection process on individual workers and the organisation through direct observation of participants in their natural environments and the use of organisational documents.

I used psychoanalytically informed observation instead of ethnographic participant observation as this afforded an opportunity to consider the emotional world of the 'study' participants, the unconscious processes, anxieties emanating from the implementation of the primary task and the Ofsted inspection process and the subsequent defences deployed to manage these anxieties. The interview process used consisted of an adaptation of a combination of two methods, an adapted version of the Biographical Narrative Interpretive Method, (BNIM) combined with an adapted version of Holloway and Jefferson (2008)'s free association method which enabled study participants to narrate their story in their own way according to the meaning they attached to it. Additionally, the psycho-social approach to research was invaluable to this study enabling the consideration of the anxieties generated between me as a researcher and the research participants, (Clarke and Hoggett 2009).



### **3.1 Aim of the Study**

The aim of this research was to explore how individuals and organisations respond to Ofsted inspections to improve performance. The impact of the conscious and unconscious processes on the behaviour of individuals and teams and how this affects organisational functioning during an inspection was also explored. Although there is limited information about the impact of inspections on social workers, there is information regarding the impact of inspections on teachers. This was explored in chapter 1.

This study's aim was not only to examine the overt issues but to delve deeper into the beneath the surface issues associated with the Ofsted inspection process. Inspections are geared towards improving performance. My view is that only by fully understanding both the conscious and unconscious processes experienced during inspections, would local authorities fully benefit from inspection processes to strengthen their performance.

In my role as a researcher, I used my observations during the periods I worked in both Local Authorities. I kept a running journal of my observations and reflections in both Local Authorities.

The objectives of the study are as follows:

- To explore social workers' and team managers' perception of the Ofsted inspection process.
- To explore the impact of the inspection on social workers, managers and the dynamics within teams and the organization as a whole.
- To reveal the underlying tensions (unconscious) within organizations brought about by the Ofsted inspection process.
- To find out the views of the social workers and Managers regarding the contribution and effectiveness of Ofsted inspection as a medium for change

and improving performance in the Children and Families Department in Local Authorities.

- To discover from social workers and team managers how the inspection process can be improved.

The case study method facilitated in finding out the relevant issues interviewees felt about the Ofsted inspection at an individual, team and organisational level. My intention was to use multiple sources of data collection to triangulate the information gathered. Information from the interviewees ranging from social workers to senior managers within the two Local Authorities was augmented with the information from my own observations, my own experiences of the Ofsted inspection process in both Local Authorities and the existing documents. This triangulation of information enhanced the validity and reliability of the data gathered during this study.

The following section will briefly describe the qualitative research paradigm in general.

### **3.2 Qualitative Research**

Tracy (2013) asserts that qualitative researchers study people in their natural settings, endeavouring to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of meanings people bring to them. They attempt to identify how people's experiences and behaviours are shaped and influenced by the context of their lives such as the social, economic, cultural and physical context in which they live (Denzin and Lincoln 2008). The main thrust is to gain insight into people's lived experiences from the perspective of people themselves. This involves studying the subjective meanings that people ascribe to their experiences so instead of focusing on facts as in the quantitative research, qualitative researchers seek to understand subjective meaningful experiences and the meaning of social actions within the context in which people live (Snape & Spencer, 2008).

Bryman (2008) states that the qualitative researcher seeks close involvement with the people being investigated, so that s/he can genuinely understand the world through their eyes. This approach is unstructured so that the possibility of getting at respondents' meanings and of concepts emerging out of data collection is improved. The qualitative researcher seeks an understanding of behaviour, values and beliefs in terms of the context in which the research is conducted (Creswell 1994, 2003, Myburgh et al 2001, Hennink et al 2011, Tracy 2013).

This approach recognises that reality is socially constructed as people's experiences happen within social, cultural, historical or personal contexts and these broader contexts impact on people's lives. The approach questions whether the behaviour of people can really be studied outside the context in which they live in (Snape & Spencer 2008). Qualitative research was suitable in this study because it aims to comprehend the feelings, emotions, experiences and views engaged by individuals during the Ofsted inspection process. This study was exploratory and interpretive and as Mason (1996) asserts, it enabled me to assess how 'the psycho-social world is interpreted, understood, experienced and produced'.

The relationship between the researcher and the respondent is less formal than in quantitative research. Bryman (2008) states that through the use of probing and follow up questions respondents are able to respond in detail than with quantitative methods. The researcher is able to engage with the respondents and enable them to provide elaborate answers through explanations. It seeks to comprehend a given research problem from the viewpoint of the local population it involves. However in quantitative research the researcher is uninvolved with their subjects and may have no contact with them, (Bryman, 2008).

Hennink et al (2011) argue that qualitative researchers acknowledge that people's perceptions and experiences of reality are subjective hence there can be multiple perspectives on reality instead of a single truth as proposed in quantitative research. This approach queries the concept that research is truly value-free and that researchers have no influence on data collection or interpretation. The qualitative

research approach highlights the inherent subjectivity of humans both as study participants and researchers, acknowledging that the background and values of researchers influence the creation of research data (Flick 1998, Stake 2000, Hennink et al 2011).

### **3.3 Ethnography**

Murthy (2008) asserts that ethnography is a multi-method form of research which can include structured or semi-structured questionnaires and/or interviews, non-participant through to full participant observation, diaries, film, video records, official documents, digital records and technologies. I decided to use ethnography as the main qualitative research methodology because of the data gathering techniques which enabled me to gain information within a naturalistic environment on the 'here and now' as events were unfolding. This was vital given the importance of capturing the raw feelings and emotions associated with Ofsted inspection processes as events were unfolding. The main difference from other ways of investigation is that the researcher does fieldwork and collects the data through physical presence (Eberle and Maeder 2011, Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007).

Eberle and Maeder (2011) refer to the notion of organisational ethnography as doing ethnography in and of organisations. Van Maanen (1979) argues that the purpose of organisational ethnography is to uncover and explicate the ways in which people in particular work settings come to understand, account for, take action and otherwise manage their day to day situation. A continued period of fieldwork is central to an ethnographic approach whereby the researcher spends significant periods of time in the field working or living alongside the research participants, immersing themselves totally in the cultural and social environment of those under investigation, (Griffin & Bengry-Howell, (2017).

During the time of this study I was employed by each Local Authority at different periods. In Borrowdale Local Authority, I was involved in the whole inspection process including preparing for an inspection following an inadequate judgment by Ofsted in 2010, participating in the actual inspection process in 2011 and its

aftermath. When I joined Eastlea Children's Services, in 2012 they were in the midst of preparing for an anticipated unannounced Ofsted inspection, which then took place end of 2012 after six months of my arrival. I experienced that as an employee doing fieldwork, I was continually present as a researcher in the field as opposed to "grab it and run" methodologies like the survey in-depth interview or analysis of documents and recordings (Gobo 2011).

The fact that I have worked in both Local Authorities gave me an 'insider' view in that I was able to observe the dynamics within the organisations as events were unfolding. I experienced first-hand the impact of the inspection process whilst at the same time was able to witness the impact on colleagues, teams and the organisation as a whole. I was mindful that inspections can cause tensions within organisations which may impact on how organisations survive this process and improve performance. Griffin & Bengry-Howell (2017) assert that ethnographic researchers are attuned to the meanings that behaviour, actions, contexts and events have from the perspective of those involved. They seek an insider's viewpoint to comprehend a phenomenon from the point of view of those involved which can be different, complex and contradictory. I was aware of the challenges brought about by being an insider researcher and was mindful of the ethical considerations.

From the outset of the research process, I kept a daily log of field notes and a journal where I recorded my observations, analytical notes, views, feelings and reflections (Spradley, 1980; Emerson et al., 2011; Lofland et al., 2006). I also utilised material from various Local Authority internal documents pertaining to the inspection process. As an area I was passionate about, I took every opportunity to talk informally to colleagues about their views regarding the inspection process as the majority of social workers have experienced Ofsted inspections in their working lives (Spradley, 1980). I was privy to the informal chats amongst workers regarding the Ofsted inspection, attending formal meetings and as an employee directly involved in and impacted by the changes brought about by the Ofsted inspection. These unguarded responses from social workers were quite powerful and I used them for reflections in my journal. As noted by Denscombe (2003), the researcher participates overtly or

covertly in people's everyday lives, watching, listening, asking questions, and collecting other relevant information. Gobo (2011) refers to this as ancillary sources of information arguing that what distinguishes ethnography from other methodologies is a more active role assigned to observation.

In Borrowdale Children's Services, I was interested in finding the social workers, team managers and senior managers' views, perceptions and experiences of the inspection process and failure. Within this I wanted to find out their views regarding whether they found the inspection process vital in improving their practice and outcomes for children and the impact of the inspection process on the dynamics within the teams and organization. In this Local Authority, I explored whether the outcome of the inspection was what they had expected from their own internal audits procedures.

My observations and experiences of the impact of the inspection process on individual workers, teams and organizations as a whole, during the period I worked in this Local Authority are valuable to this study. Working in this Local Authority provided me with an opportunity to closely observe and analyse the dynamics within the teams and the underlying tensions brought about in the aftermath of failing two successive Ofsted inspections. I was actively involved in the change process as they prepared for the inspection. I was able to scrutinize the whole inspection process from the preparing, to the actual inspection and the aftermath. Basically working in this Local Authority afforded me an opportunity to live through the experience as an active participant observer as I was involved in the changes that occurred.

In Eastlea Children's Services, I was recruited specifically to improve performance in preparations for the Ofsted inspection. I joined this organisation in May 2012. They were in the middle of their inspection preparation which they had started towards the end of 2011. I was therefore very much involved and attended crucial meetings regarding Ofsted preparations. I noted the impact on individual workers and teams resulting from the hectic preparations for the Ofsted inspection which was believed to be imminent. I had access to the organisation's documents. This level of involvement

was beneficial to my role as a participant observer. It gave me insight into organisational dynamics which I would not have been privy to if I was not employed in this organisation.

### **3.3.1 Critique of Ethnography as a research methodology**

It has been argued that ethnography is not reliable, it is sensitive to the researcher's attitude and perceptions if different researchers visit the same setting they will see different things (Robson 2011). Hegelund (2005) asserts that the researcher has a background of knowledge with her all the time, which cannot be switched off, it will affect what they see and conclude. The researcher could be blind to certain aspects that for another researcher would be evident and vice versa. Gobo (2008) asserts that this notion has scant empirical grounding as ethnographers observe behaviours and behaviours are more consistent than attitudes and opinions. Behaviours are much more stable over time. Following the notion that behaviours are stable, ethnographic research can be replicated where a precise research design has guided the research and that no significant changes have taken place between the piece of research and the next (Gobo 2008).

Gobo (2008) further states that another criticism of ethnography is that the results are impossible to generalise because they are based on a few cases and sometimes only on one case. According to Collins (1992) much of the best work in sociology has been carried out using qualitative methods without statistical tests. Since the focus of ethnography is on behaviour and given that these are stable in time, then it is likely that generalisations are possible obviously precise criteria must be followed in the choice of samples. O'Connell et al (1994) assert that by watching people over time, talking to them and others about what you have seen and how you interpret, it is possible to obtain more reliable and richer data.

Some authors have raised issues of bias, querying the validity and reliability of the ethnographic research method (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, Hegelund 2005, Griffin & Bengry-Howell 2017). Hegelund (2005) argues that the major risk in assuming that it is possible to work from some atheoretical approach from the definition of the

object of study through the collection of data to the analysis is that it blinds the researcher to all the paradigmatic assumptions they carry around. By blinding themselves in this way, researchers lose objectivity by not being able to situate themselves in the research process and they may let preconceptions become real biases (Nagel 1986, Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992) Robson (2011) argues that to ensure that qualitative study is robust and makes a socially responsible contribution to scientific research, researchers have to systematically consider the nature of the observations and the role of the researcher, the interpretations and assertions need to be subjected to rigorous challenges and disconfirmation and researchers need to constantly adhere to an ethical code of conduct. In addition to this, the triangulation of data with other sources and close supervision enhances the reliability of the study (Smith 2009).

The information from my observations was triangulated with documentary sources and interviews. I relied on the seminars and supervisions, these fora rigorously tested the interpretations and assertions I had come up with on the data. Furthermore, the analysis of the auto-ethnography information in a seminar assisted me in being consciously insightful of my own views and beliefs which would otherwise impact on data interpretation. Willis (2000) refers to the concept of theoretical confession where the history, theoretical position and subjectivity of the researcher are stated explicitly in order to inform the reflective aspect of the ethnographic study.

I will now provide a brief description of the ethnographic methods I used in this study: case study, participant observation, interviews and documentation. Participant observation and interviews have been used in previous ethnographic studies in social work by other researchers (Dingwall et al 1983, Pithouse 1984, Scourfield 1999, Whittaker 2014). Documentary analysis has also been used in ethnographic studies to augment data (Holland 1999, 2010; Scourfield 1999, 2003; Foster 2009).



### **3.4 A Case Study Approach**

Gomm et al (2000) state that a case study refers to research where the holistic investigation of a few cases or just one is undertaken in depth in naturally occurring situations. A narrative about the experiences of each Local Authority under study was developed through interview data, observations and organisational data. Each Local Authority could be viewed as a case study.

The case study approach provided me with an opportunity to gain an in-depth understanding of the impact of the inspection on process on individual workers and the organisation as a whole using multiple sources of data mainly interviews, participant observations and organisational documents. The benefits of using multiple research methods are that it enhances the depth and range of the data and reduces the risk that the findings are method-dependent (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007; Madden 2010). Tellis (1997) asserts that case study is known as a triangulated research strategy; the need for triangulation arises from the ethical need to confirm the validity of the process using multiple sources for data collection. Case studies bring about details from the viewpoint of the participants using multiple sources of data.

Stake (2000) asserts that a case study method is pertinent when research addresses either a descriptive question or an explanatory question and aims to produce a first-hand understanding of people and events. This method helps a researcher to make direct observations and collect data in natural settings, compared to relying on 'derived' data (Yin 2009). It enables a researcher to explain complex causal links in real-life interventions and to describe the real-life context in which the intervention has occurred (Yin 1994).

I worked in Borrowdale Children's Services for 18 months and in Eastlea Children's Services for six months prior to their 2012 Ofsted inspection. I stayed in Eastlea a further 18 months after this inspection. It is important to note that three respondents

worked in both Local Authorities under study at the crucial period pertinent to this study, (Table 1 & Table 2: list of respondents). This study was enhanced by interviewing three key informants who have worked in both Local Authorities. The information I gathered from these three key interviews is invaluable and provided me with further insight into the comparative differences and similarities in both Local Authorities under study, prior to, during and after the inspection process. This would not have been available through only relying on interviews from participants who have only worked in each Local Authority.

Bassey (1999) raises concern that general statements emanating from case studies could be viewed as fuzzy generalisations; this gives the data a degree of uncertainty. Stake (2000) argues that the main concern should be about understanding the uniqueness of any case without claiming generalisations. Gomm et al (2000) argue that case studies encapsulate the exclusivity of individuals' experiences rather than aiming to use the findings for wider generalisation. Case study findings attest that something has occurred and may occur somewhere else which is an invitation for other researchers to test this out. Case studies progress the insight of individual organisational, social and political phenomena (Stake 2000), they have an epistemological benefit over other investigation methods as a basis for naturalistic generalisation.

### **3.5 Data Gathering techniques**

Three data gathering techniques were used in this study, interviews, psychoanalytic participant observation and documentation.

#### **3.5.1 Psychoanalytic Participant Observation**

I chose to use psychoanalytic participant observation as this provides an opportunity to consider the attendant emotions, anxieties and defences deployed in response to the inspection process and how this affected behaviours and subsequently the implementation of the primary task. Psychoanalytically informed observation has its roots in infant observation. Similar to infant observation, the aim is to develop an

understanding of subject instead of recording scientific truths (Obholzer 2005). Price and Cooper (2012) state that psychoanalytically informed observation research can be viewed as a form of ethnography. Berg (2007) argues that what distinguishes ethnography from other methodologies is a more active role assigned to observation. According to Kumar (2011:140) observation is a 'purposeful and systematic way of listening to an interaction or phenomenon as it takes place'.

The presence of the researchers in the field enables them to gain a better understanding of the conceptual categories of social actors, their points of view, the meanings of their actions and behaviour and social and political processes (Gobo 2008, Lofland et al. 2006). Gobo (2008) lists the characteristics of participant observation as follows; the researcher establishes a direct relationship with the social actors, staying in their natural environment with the purpose of observing and describing their social actions; by interacting with them and participating in their everyday ceremonies and ritual and learning their code (or at least part of it) in order to understand the meaning of their actions.

Atkinson et al (2001) argue that ethnographic observation shares these similar characteristics with psychoanalytic observation. Hingley-Jones (2016) argues that psychoanalytic observation requires the researcher to be sensitive to unconscious processes, reflecting on what it feels like to be with others and thinking through what this might mean in terms of providing data. It goes beyond ethnographers who usually remain at the surface level of society and culture without attempting to explore the inner dimensions of emotions beyond what can be made explicit between researcher and subject.

To get a true reflection of both organisations' responses to the inspection process, it would have been remiss not to consider the influence of the unconscious processes at play as this significantly impacted on group behaviours which influenced organisational functioning. By paying attention to the projections and countertransference, I was able to understand some of the unconscious processes going on which enriched the data collated. By working in both organisations at the

time of the study, I was not only a detached observer but rather a participant observer, undergoing the same experiences as the study participants as events unfolded during the period of study.

It brought to light how the impact of the inspection process is felt differently depending on the status of the workers (whether agency or permanent). There were also differences on the impact and reactions to Ofsted within the hierarchical positions. Hinshelwood and Skogstad (2005) state that psychoanalytic observation enables consideration to the sensitivity of the human dimension and culture of an institution and to the anxieties and pressures within it.

As an employee in the organisation, I became familiar with the local colloquial language used to describe feelings and experiences. Observing the organisational functioning brought to the fore behaviours and dynamics within the teams, in response to the inspection process, which would otherwise have remained hidden. Crucially these dynamics were forgotten during some interviews or mentioned casually offhandedly. Thus participant psychoanalytic observation provided me with a platform to track how these differences developed over time and through interviews I was able to explore further to get to the underlying issues. Being in the field meant that study participants could not just gloss over the reality of their experiences as they were consciously aware that I also had been part of the experience. To some extent they may have felt compelled to share more than they would to an outsider who had no real experience of their situation; as people tend to be guarded about sharing organisational information to an outsider. Combining narrative interview with psychoanalytic observational methods was beneficial in exploring the way in which the 'unsaid' of the organisations may find expression both in the narratives of organizational actors and in some dialogues (Chamberlayne 2004).

Seminars and supervision were vital in enabling me to objectively unpick and understand what I was observing. In psychoanalytic observation research, observations rest on the observer's subjective experience in the observed

organisation as much as on their objective description of what they can observe and their own subjective experience within the culture (Hinshelwood and Skogstad 2005). On reflection, I note that using psychoanalytical participant observation enabled me to understand the characteristics within the local authorities under study that are not easily discernible from interviews and my own experiences. Through support from seminar groups I was able to unearth the reasons behind these; for instance the reasons why one local authority chose to rely heavily on transient workers to address the deep-rooted performance problem and did not hide anything during the inspection process. On the other hand, another local authority chose to stay beneath the radar and lacked confidence in their performance to the extent of wanting to hide from the inspection process.

Hingley-Jones (2016) poses the difficulties regarding how to untangle a researcher's own unconscious feelings and transferences from their own relationship histories from those they may be identifying when with their research subjects. Price and Cooper (2012:58) address this arguing that, 'emotional and unconscious states are real to us as knowing subjects, however, their meaning is inherently ambiguous with multiple interpretations which may be valid although this does not apply to all or any interpretations.' Discussion with others who are not part of the field work through seminars and supervision becomes vital in making sense of the psychic fields and the emotional dynamics at play (Price and Cooper 2012).

### **3.5.2 Interviews**

Rubin and Rubin (1995) assert that interviewing is a versatile approach with an emphasis on listening to people as they describe how they understand the world in which they live and work. In my interviews for this study, I used a combination of two methods, an adapted version of the BNIM (Biographical Narrative Interpretive Method) combined with an adapted version of Holloway and Jefferson (2008)'s free association method. Doing so ensured that I was able to get the full experiences of the interviewees regarding the impact of the Ofsted inspection, including their emotions and feelings experienced regarding the inspection processes.

Holloway and Jefferson (2008) and Wengraf (2010) describe the biographical interpretive methods as being part of the narrative tradition in social science research, a tradition which has been most developed in life story research. The researcher's responsibility is to be a listener and the interviewee is a storyteller rather than a respondent. Holloway and Jefferson (2004) adopted and developed the free association method from the Biographical Interpretive methods.

According to Wengraf (2010) there are three sub-sessions within the BNIM method, I noted that these sub-sessions are almost similar to what Holloway and Jefferson (2008) termed the principles of free association interview method.

Within BNIM the first sub-session is that the interviewer asks a single initial question to elicit the full narrative. A single carefully designed question which is called a SQUIN (Single Question aimed at inducing Narrative) and indicates that there will be no interruptions or helpful prompts (Wengraf 2010). Holloway and Jefferson (2008) talk about the principles of the Free Association Narrative interview citing the first principle as the use of open-ended questions. The second principle is to elicit a story from this open-ended question and the third principle of the free-associative narrative interview is avoiding the why question as this elicits an intellectualisation, (Wengraf 2010). In a similar manner to the free association narrative interview, the BNIM gives priority to eliciting narratives concerning people's biographies in an uninterrupted way but it offers a particular approach to both interviewing and analysis (Clarke and Hoggert 2009).

After obtaining written consent from the interviewees regarding participating in the study, I met with the interviewees and each interview lasted between one and a half to two hours. A recorder was used to record the interviewees which I later transcribed. I initially asked the interviewees one open-ended question (akin to what the BNIM refers to as the SQUIN) *'Tell me about your experiences of the Ofsted inspection process, you can start wherever you wish to start. I will not interrupt you during your explanation but will be taking some notes and may ask you for clarification in some areas when you have finished your explanation'*.

By using this open-ended single question, I wanted to give the interviewees leeway to tell me their story and experiences without any interruptions or influence from me. This gave the interviewees an opportunity to start their story in a way which was comfortable for them.

In their use of the free association narrative interview, Holloway and Jefferson (2000) talk about this method as facilitating the production of the interviewees' 'meaning frame'. The use of open-ended questions enables the interviewees to tell their story in the manner and detail they prefer, with particular emphasis on the points they wish to focus on. How the story is told and the morals drawn all represent choices made by the storyteller. Such choices are revealing often more so than the teller suspects. These characteristics of storytelling which contain significances beyond the teller's intentions are what this method shares with the psychoanalytic method of free association (Holloway and Jefferson 2000). This is one of the major reasons behind my choosing the adapted version of the free association method. In addition to what the interviewees shared, I was interested in the unsaid, the hidden parts that were mentioned casually and not given significance by the interviewees. Thus I paid specific interest to the non-verbal cues and in follow up questions after the interviewee's narration I asked for further explanations to the areas that were mentioned offhandedly or where I observed caused overt non-verbal behaviour during the narration. One of the interviewees (Franny, Social Worker from Eastlea), kept on laughing throughout the interview and describing '*the whole Ofsted inspection as a joke.*'

Narratologists argue that biographical narratives are powerfully expressive and are symptomatic indicators of the natures of particular persons, cultures and milieu (Clarke and Horgett 2009). They are valuable instruments for a large range of social and psychological research theory-question because they present to the researcher embedded and tacit assumptions, meanings, reasoning and patterns of action and inaction (Clarke and Horgett 2009).

By allowing the respondent to structure the interview and talk of what they 'feel' like talking about, I was able to gain some indication of unconscious feelings and motivations something which is not possible with traditional research methods. As Jefferson and Holloway (2008) argue 'by eliciting a narrative structured according to the principles of free association, therefore we secure access to a person's concern which would probably not be visible using a more traditional method'.

I was able to reflect on why some interviewees were focused around particular aspects of their story and kept on emphasising these aspects throughout the whole interview which was a clear indication that this was what mattered to them most. According to Holloway and Jefferson (2008) the difference between a story and a report is that in telling a story the narrator takes responsibility for 'making the relevance of the telling clear'.

When the interviewee indicated that they had finished the account of their experiences, I followed up some areas I wanted more information and clarification. This was done following the order they were raised by the interviewee, using the exact phrase and language the interviewee used when describing their experiences. This resulted in more storytelling from the interviewee when they were elaborating on the areas I had followed up on. This enabled me to get in-depth raw and rich material from the interviews. According to Wengraf (2010) sub-session two of the BNIM involves extracting more story from the topics. The interviewer asks for more story about the topics that were raised in that initial narration following strictly the order in which they were raised and using the keywords and phrases of the interviewee in respect of these topics. The follow-up question is strictly for more story designed to elicit more narrating about the topics initially raised (Wengraf 2010). In agreement with this view, Holloway and Jefferson (2008) assert that attentive listening and some note taking during the initial narration is vital in order to be able to follow up themes in their narrated order using the respondent's own words and phrases in order to respect and retain the interviewee's meaning-frames.

There were some areas where interviewees had just glossed over in their original story. When we went back to them I was able to gain a fuller understanding of the



meaning of these aspects to them and in some instances, I was able to get to the bottom of why initially they had not been delved into. In most cases, it was the pain and discomfort associated with these experiences.

Leaving the interviewee to tell their experiences without guidance allows the interviewee to tell their story in the order they wish and can bring about unconscious views to the surface which would not have otherwise been aired in a question-answer type interview. Mishler (1986) argues that the question and answer method of interviewing has a tendency to suppress respondents' stories. This type of interview invokes interviewees to say what comes to their mind in the order they want; this elicits the kind of narrative that is not structured according to conscious logic but according to unconscious logic that is the associations follow pathways defined by emotional motivations rather than rational intentions (Holloway and Jefferson 2008). We therefore access a person's concerns which would probably not be visible using a more traditional method. Free associations defy narrative conventions and enable the analyst to pick up on incoherencies, contradictions, elisions, avoidances and accords them due significance (Holloway and Jefferson 2008).

It is important to note that, I did not undertake follow up interviews as advocated by the BNIM and free association method. Before starting the interviews my plan was to undertake follow up interviews on another day after the first interview. In my discussions with each interviewee prior to each interview they always readily agreed to participate in a follow-up interview if required. The material brought in the majority of the interviews was very painful and in a few of the interviews (4), we took breaks during the interviews (two were comfort breaks, one cigarette break and another 'interviewee decided that they urgently needed to make a phone call to a client'. At the end of each interview the participants felt that they had said all they needed to say during the interview and did not feel that a second interview was necessary. There were thus no follow up interviews for all the interviewees completed in this study.

### **3.5.3 Documentary Sources**

I used a variety of documentary sources to augment data collated through interviews and observations. According to May (2001) documentary evidence enhance the understanding of an organisation through the ability to situate contemporary accounts within an organisational context. In both Local Authorities I used documentary evidence published on the Ofsted website in the form of Ofsted inspection reports. Additionally, I used official statistics, policy/procedures regarding Ofsted preparation and documentation prepared for addressing gaps identified by the inspection process. Most of the internal documents were published on the Local Authorities intranet website. I also used official correspondence and minutes of meetings convened regarding Ofsted inspection processes.

### **3.5.4 Sampling**

Purposive sampling allows for the selection of specific respondents for the purpose of study who can give insights into a particular issue related to the study area (Gilbert 2008, Silverman 2013; Denzin and Lincoln 2005). Through purposeful sampling I selected social workers, team managers and two senior managers who worked in both Local Authorities during the period of study. The sample included three individuals who had worked in both Local Authorities during the period of the study. My own experience and observations corroborated the data collated. This information was augmented with organisational documentation.

I chose to study the experiences of two separate Local Authorities at different stages of the inspection process to obtain a holistic view regarding the Ofsted inspection process and how organisations respond to this. Using Local Authorities each with a unique experience of the Ofsted Inspection process demonstrates the differences and similarities of the impact of the Ofsted inspection right from the onset of preparations, during the inspection and the aftermath of an inspection process.

The downside of purposive sampling could be issues regarding the reliability of some of the data generated and research bias into choices of interviewees and

subsequent qualitative interpretations of data (Bryman 2008). Alston and Bowles (2003) assert that it is important that the researcher remains focused on the importance of the validity of the research findings and interpretations.

The following is a list of the respondents from both Local Authorities. I have deliberately provided only scanty information to preserve the anonymity of the respondents. I have coded their real names with pseudonyms so that I alone will know who actually said what.

Throughout this thesis, each respondent's pseudonym will be hyphenated with the position and local authority they are working in for instance Rickson will be referred to as Rickson-TM-Borrowdale, Franny will be referred to as Franny-SW-Eastlea and these are not their real names.

**3.6 Table 1: Respondents from Borrowdale Children's Services**

| Name     | Local Authority        | Position                         | Permanent /Agency                                                                                                                         |
|----------|------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Xenia    | Borrowdale and Eastlea | Head of Service (Senior Manager) | Agency Group Manager in Borrowdale & moved to a permanent Head of service in Eastlea                                                      |
| Eileen   | Borrowdale and Eastlea | Group Manager (SM)               | Agency team Manager Borrowdale, moved to Eastlea initially agency Team Manager in Eastlea and promoted to Agency Group Manager in Eastlea |
| Rickson  | Borrowdale and Eastlea | Team Manager (TM)                | Agency Team Manager in Borrowdale and moved to Agency Team Manager in Eastlea                                                             |
| Sue      | Borrowdale             | Team Manager (TM)                | Permanent                                                                                                                                 |
| Lisa     | Borrowdale             | Senior practitioner (SP)         | Permanent                                                                                                                                 |
| Lorna    | Borrowdale             | Senior practitioner (SP)         | Agency                                                                                                                                    |
| Cornelia | Borrowdale             | Social Worker                    | Permanent                                                                                                                                 |
| Ophelia  | Borrowdale             | Social Worker                    | Agency                                                                                                                                    |

### 3.7 Table 2 Respondents from Eastlea Children's Services

| Name     | Local Authority        | Position                 | Permanent /Agency                                                                                                                         |
|----------|------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Xenia    | Borrowdale and Eastlea | Senior Manager (SM)      | Agency Group Manager in Borrowdale & moved to a permanent Head of service in Eastlea                                                      |
| Eileen   | Borrowdale and Eastlea | Senior Manager (SM)      | Agency team Manager Borrowdale, moved to Eastlea initially agency Team Manager in Eastlea and promoted to Agency Group Manager in Eastlea |
| Rickson  | Borrowdale and Eastlea | Team Manager (TM)        | Agency Team Manager in Borrowdale and moved to Agency Team Manager in Eastlea                                                             |
| Cynthia  | Eastlea                | Team Manager             | Permanent                                                                                                                                 |
| Travinia | Eastlea                | Team Manager (TM)        | Agency                                                                                                                                    |
| Franny   | Eastlea                | Social Worker (SW)       | Permanent                                                                                                                                 |
| Betty    | Eastlea                | Senior Practitioner (SP) | Agency                                                                                                                                    |
| Lucy     | Eastlea                | Social Worker (SW)       | Permanent                                                                                                                                 |
| Jasper   | Eastlea                | Social Worker (SW)       | Agency                                                                                                                                    |
| Jeremiah | Eastlea                | Team Manager             | Permanent                                                                                                                                 |

### **3.8 Data Analysis**

The information obtained from respondents through audio-recorded interviews was transcribed verbatim. I also kept a running research journal of my observations and experiences which formed my own narrative.

The data analysis process consisted of different layers. The raw transcribed data was presented and discussed in seminars. The data was also discussed in supervision which assisted in the reflection process. Hingley-Jones (2016) asserts that research seminars are crucial in triangulating the emerging research findings and themes. Through close analysis and reflection, others are able to assist a researcher to separate their own experience, subjectivity or personal countertransference from the conjectural exploration of the emotional/unconscious lives being observed (Hingley-Jones 2016). This is also referred to as reflexivity.

The data was thematically analysed using Holloway and Jefferson's (2000) gestalt principles. This is a method of analysing data based on the concept that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. The 'whole' was all the information accumulated about the respondents during the interviews. After completing interviews, Holloway and Jefferson (2000) compiled a summary of each case which they referred to as a proforma and a pen portrait. This included the transcript of the interview and the researcher's memories of the interview. I used the 'gestalt' approach in analysing my data because it provided a platform to view the respondents in their totality. Coding would have resulted in losing some of the information shared during the interviews. Commenting on the use of codes, Coffey and Atkinson (1996) noted that the common starting point for some researchers is to use codes when analysing data. However breaking up the data during the coding process sometimes results in researchers overlooking some aspects of their data (Coffey and Atkinson 1996).

After each interview I immediately wrote notes in my journal. These were basically a summary of the interview, noting any particular information which the respondents placed special emphasis on during the interview. The respondents' emotions observed during the interview and my emotions during and after the interview were

also included in the journal. Writing in this journal was my own reflection of the interview and also provided a summary. I was able to note emotions which could have been due to projections and countertransference between me and the respondent immediately after the interview when the information, with all the attendant emotions, was still fresh in my mind.

Following this first stage, I went through the transcripts. The research questions initially guided me in identifying the themes generated from the data. However, I also identified additional recurrent themes from the data. The questions I applied to the data are as follows:

- *What are the social workers and team managers' perception of the Ofsted inspection process?*
- *What is the impact of the inspection on the social workers, managers and the dynamics within teams and the organization as a whole?*
- *What are the underlying tensions (unconscious) within organizations brought about by the Ofsted inspection process; what are the anxieties and defences operating at the individual and team level?*
- *What is the view of the social workers and Managers regarding the contribution and effectiveness of Ofsted inspection as a medium for change and improving service provision?*

Going through the transcripts using the above questions as a starting point enabled me to start noting the emerging themes. I recorded the themes in a matrix framework. I went through each transcript several times to familiarise myself with each respondent's views. I also took notes when I went through the transcripts which assisted in the data analysis process. After this process, the matrix I produced consisted of a first column of the interviewees' responses, followed by a column of notes from the journal (taken immediately after each interview) and another column of the notes I made as I read through the transcripts. There were 2 additional columns, one column for the comments from the seminar discussions (with doctorate colleagues) and the last column was regarding additional comments and reflections

after the seminar. I went through each transcript several times, this was important to ensure that no data is missed.

Holloway and Jefferson (2000) note how important it is for researchers to immerse themselves in the data during the analysis process, they refer to immersion where researchers are totally 'inhabited' by the respondents. To come up with a matrix, I systematically went through the interview transcripts several times looking at the patterns of emerging themes. I was able to make various links of the data within the transcripts and the interrelatedness of the themes. I also made links of the themes to my journal notes as well as the notes I made during the several times of going through the transcripts. This enabled me to make interpretation of the data and themes, the emotions displayed during the interviews were paramount to this process. Through discussions in seminars and supervision, colleagues assisted in identifying a pattern of metaphoric language which featured regularly in the interviews underlying the metaphors of war and theatre.

The identified themes were then subjected to robust screening and analysed using the information from the seminars and supervision. Thematic analysis is one of the main frequently used methods for analysing qualitative data which has been defined as a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data (Bryman 2012; Davies 2007; Riessman 2008, Braun and Clarke 2006). It was time consuming as the data analysis was not a separate process but rather an ongoing process which commenced at the onset of interviews and continued until the completion of my final draft (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007; Gobo 2008). Glaser and Strauss (1967) state that time is required to produce a well-grounded analysis. The labour intensiveness of psycho-social data analysis is heightened by the fact that there are always multiple sources of data: the researcher's reflexive diary and field notes, the live recordings of the interviews and the transcript of the interviews (Wengraf 2010).

Ritchie et al (2003) describe a framework as a matrix based method for ordering and synthesising data. The final matrix framework consisted of several recurring themes



and metaphors emerging in response to the research questions and additional themes. The matrix depicted all the responses cross-referencing the themes and metaphors identified by each respondent, thus it clearly showed how many respondents identified particular themes and metaphors in their interview. The additional column of notes from my journal, notes made during reading the transcripts, information from the seminars and the last column of my reflection on the seminar discussions were also part of this matrix. All this provided a 'whole' picture of what was going on in the organisation at the individual and team level.

Research seminars provided me a platform where colleagues assisted me in unearthing the underlying issues within the interviews and the intersubjective dynamics going on between me and the respondents particularly as I was working or had worked in the Local Authorities under study. In addition, they assisted me in identifying the recurrent metaphors. The transcripts were also discussed during my supervision sessions. My supervisors were essential in this process as they provided another independent layer to objectively analyse the data.

Although I was familiar with the 'everyday' language used when I was working in the two Local Authorities, it was only during seminar discussions and the intense data analysis process that the metaphoric links and themes were made. This prompted me to use a combination of metaphors and a psychoanalytic framework to analyse the data. The metaphors were frequently used by the respondents in reference to their individual feelings, experiences and views of their teams and organisations. As stated in chapter 2, metaphors offer a valuable methodological tool in qualitative research as they have the potential to generate insights to hidden, barely conscious feelings of group participants, impose structure on research material, and convey research findings to readers in a compact form (Gareth Morgan 1986, Danziger 2000, Carpenter 2008). Following Holloway and Jefferson's (2000) tracing concept, I was able to trace series of links of metaphors and themes to the wider issues to respond to the main research question which was the social workers' views of how organisations respond to the inspection process to improve performance.

### **3.9 Reflexivity: The role of the insider researcher**

As a participant observer and insider researcher I was immersed in the 'lives' of the organisation I was studying. As time went on I noticed I was entangled in the politics and dynamics of the organisation. I was part of the service as an employee yet at the same time I had another role that of being an objective researcher. These two roles are intertwined and at times difficult to separate. Role ambiguity is connected with role duality (being the researcher and the colleague/ worker), and role conflicts (doing research work and helping with participants' work), which are often claimed to be part of an insider-researcher's journey (Coghlan & Holian 2007). The longer I stayed in the organisations, it was a challenge to manage the balance between my role as a participant observer for my research and my status as a full-time employee in the organisations.

I was deliberately conscious of my role at all times using my reflective journal in writing my thoughts, feelings and experiences. However, I found myself zoning 'in and out of role' during the period I worked in both organisations. Asselin (2003:70) asserts that the dual role can result in role confusion when the researcher responds to the participants or analyses the data from a perspective other than that of the researcher. I found the support from supervision and seminar groups invaluable in grounding me and assisting me in making sense of my own observations and interviews. Davies (1999) asserts that ethnographers recognise that they are part of the social world they are studying and cannot avoid having an impact on the phenomena under investigation, unlike positivists, they do not deny their impact but aim to comprehend this in a systematic and rigorous way as an inevitable part of the research process.

Price and Cooper (2012) raised the notion of a reflexive practitioner which involves sustained and critical self-reflection on our methods and practice to recognise our emotional involvement in the project whether conscious or unconscious. For instance we could ask ourselves a set of questions as to why are we interested in our research project, why choose this area and not another. For more than ten years, I have worked as a social worker in the UK and rose through the ranks to a senior

manager within Children's Services. I have experienced a fair share of Ofsted inspections within the Local Authorities I have worked in. The impact of these experiences has been profound on me as an individual, on the teams I worked in and on the organisation as a whole.

The impact of the inspection process has had lasting effects on most of those involved irrespective of whether the impact was positive or negative in nature. Given the significance awarded to the Ofsted inspections and the long-lasting impact on individuals, I felt compelled to study this area in detail to see whether my experiences and observations were shared by others across the profession. I wanted to see whether this grueling inspection process did indeed lead to sustainable performance improvement thus making it a worthwhile process. On a personal and professional level, I found the inspection process painful, nerve-wracking, emotionally and physically draining. I was thus aware these personal feelings would have an impact on the interviews I conducted and observations that is why I found the use of the reflective journal and seminar groups vital throughout this research process. Hammersley (1992:64) views reflexivity as concerned with researcher effects, relating the concept to the experimental scientific paradigm where researcher effects need to be 'controlled for' or 'declared' as a form of potential contamination. As researchers we cannot be detached but must examine our subjective involvement because it will help shape the way in which we interpret the interview data.

Given that I had gone through the process of inspections, I decided to be interviewed using the same methodology as all the research participants in this study. A colleague interviewed me as a research participant for my study. Reflecting on the information I shared in this interview and discussing this with colleagues was quite useful as in this interview I brought about additional issues I was not even aware of at a conscious level. Ellis (2009) refers to auto-ethnography as a method of self-reflection and writing that explores the researcher's personal experience and connects this autobiographical story to wider cultural, political and social meanings and understandings. Auto-ethnography thus provided a platform to air my views,

thoughts, reflect and analyse them as an involved person who is also being affected by the matters being researched. This enabled me to be objective and prevent my own biases emerging during interviews and data analysis.

During the interviews I noted that the fact that I was working in the Local Authorities under study in a managerial capacity had an impact on the interview process, being an insider had both positive and negative impact on the research process. On a positive note being an insider researcher has some distinct advantages such as speaking the same insider language, understanding the local values, knowledge and taboos, knowing the formal and informal power structures and obtaining permission to conduct the research, to interview and to get access to records and documents easily facilitate the research process (Coghlan 2003; Herrmann 1989; Rouney 2005; Tedlock 2000). I understood exactly what the workers were going through, was aware of the internal politics and the meaning behind particular internal phrases.

On another note, Dwyer and Buckle (2009:58) observed that though this shared status can be very beneficial as it gives access, entry and a common ground from which to begin the research, it has the potential to obstruct the research process as it progresses. The respondents may form views preventing them from sharing full information they would otherwise have shared. I was an agency manager in Borrowdale and started as a project manager focusing on inspection preparation before moving on to an Agency Senior Manager after the 2012 inspection in Eastlea. Throughout the research process, I was quite conscious that this may have impacted on the information provided. However, I noted that such conscious views were usually at the beginning of the interview and but were quickly dispelled as the interviews progressed. It appeared as if feelings and emotions were dominating the flow of the interview process and my position seemed forgotten as interviewees talked freely about their views regarding management. I was quite observant during the interview process and noted any contradictions, inconsistencies, avoidances and changes in emotional tone.

Hinshelwood and Skogstad (2005:22) define the task of observation as, 'the observer endeavours to keep an eye on three things; the objective events happening, the emotional atmosphere, and ones' own experiences', the whole area of what in the psychoanalytic setting would be called counter-transference.' When psychoanalytic researchers go into the field there are typically many research subjects within it, all of whom can be conceptualised as having their own inner lives, enacted through their modes of relating (Holloway and Jefferson 2000). Members influence each other intersubjectively and unconsciously and the observer too has no privileged uncontaminated epistemological position within the field.

The effective dynamics of the research encounter are also influenced by what each person bring to it some of which will not be accessible to conscious thought. Price and Cooper (2012) used the term transference to refer to researchers unconscious reactions to subjects and some aspects of their world. It describes the unconscious archaic images that the subject imposes onto the person of the researcher. Countertransference in contrast refers to the researchers' unconscious reaction to the subject's transference. Once the research is underway, unconscious forces mediate encounters between the researcher and the researched, the subject's behaviour and the unconscious transferences toward the researcher may generate the development of reciprocal reactions and transferences (Clarke and Hoggett 2009). The researcher becomes a transference object for those inhabiting the field as they do for her and contributing to and alters the functioning of the field (even marginally) as she becomes entangled in transference –countertransference dynamics and enactments (Price and Cooper 2012). Holloway and Jefferson (2000) noted that the research interview may stir up such uncomfortable material for both those being interviewed and those doing the interview producing what they refer to as the defended subject and the defended researcher.

Entanglement which can result from the involvement with the daily activities within the organisations under study is usually associated with insider researchers. It is referred to as being over-involved (van Heugten 2004), engaging in 'over familiarity' (DeLyser 2001), having 'over-rapport' (Miller 1952), or even 'going native' (Kanuha 2000). I found myself feeling the pain of my respondents when they shared quite

painful material and I felt resentful to those causing pain. In an interview with an agency worker Betty, she expressed '*.... I came to work one day ...to find all my belongings on the floor....a permanent worker had been recruited and was sitting at my desk. It seemed after 2 years here I was no longer needed as we had passed Ofsted inspection....*'. The interviewee immediately stood up and said she needed a comfort break. The emotions were so raw that I was also struggling to contain them and was very relieved with the comfort break. I felt resentful towards that manager.

Three other interviews were similar to this where interviewees took breaks which I deduced were due to the pain and trauma being experienced through the information shared. I felt as if I was reliving all the pain they encountered and after all the interviews I was left holding all these emotions. Thus in addition to dealing with the actual Ofsted inspection whilst working for the Local Authorities under study, I was also dealing with the emotions and pain encountered during the interview process. Clarke (2000) argues that respondents unwittingly communicate their own emotional states by evoking feelings in researchers that replicate their own, so if researchers are open to experiencing something that may feel 'alien' to them, they can learn from respondents 'otherwise' and reach 'that which is beyond word'. For Clarke (2002) this arousal of similar emotions and ideas within researchers to those (unconsciously) experienced by respondents is the result of 'projective communication' and involves projective identification (Holloway and Jefferson 2000, Clarke 2002, 2008).

I found the research seminar group and supervision extremely useful in dissecting the information gathered in the research process and analysing this information taking into consideration my own personal experiences of Ofsted inspections and the relationship created within the interview process with the interviewees. Price and Cooper (2012) assert that researchers are exposed to primitive and unprocessed psychic material and will also inevitably identify with research subjects and their ordinary defensive functioning in the field. They will need the help of others who are not emotionally identified with the material in order to rediscover reflective thinking capacity in relation to the unprocessed, unconscious aspects of the material and to

link together their registration of conscious and unconscious data. This is the function of individual especially group psychoanalytic research supervision.

According to Smyth & Holian (2008), to undertake a reliable insider research, insider-researchers must constitute an explicit awareness of the possible effects of perceived bias on data collection and analysis. They need to respect the ethical issues related to the anonymity of the organization and individual participants and consider and address the issues about the influencing researcher's insider role on coercion, compliance and access to privileged information, at each and every stage of the research (Smyth & Holian 2008).

### **3.10 Ethical considerations**

Prior to undertaking the interviews, I sought approval from both Local Authorities. Borrowdale Children's Services approval was granted by their research board (see appendix: 2). In Eastlea Children's Services research approval was granted in their senior management meeting. In both Local Authorities, my own observations and relevant information regarding the Ofsted inspection process was captured in my journal.

There are some ethical dilemmas arising from the data gathering techniques I used in this study. I am a qualified practicing social worker so am bound by the Health and Social Care Professional Council (HCPC) and the British Association of Social Workers (BASW) code of practice and social work ethics. I upheld and promoted my respondents' human dignity and well-being, respecting their rights to self-determination, treating each one of them as a whole and also identifying and developing their strengths when debriefing and giving feedback (BASW, 2012).

This study also upheld the British Sociological Association (BSA) Statement of Ethical Practice which states the following ethical considerations: ensuring informed consent, ensuring anonymity Privacy and confidentiality, voluntary participation, honesty and avoidance of deception or, misrepresentation among other

considerations such as consciousness of the special power of the investigator, coding names and identities of respondents in all notes and records as well as building trust with respondents (British Sociological Association, 2002). I made sure that I only asked relevant questions to the study and ensured that the questions asked were pertinent to the research.

Confidentiality is of utmost importance in the research process. Berg (2007) describes confidentiality as an active attempt to remove from the research records any elements that might indicate the subjects' identities. In my research study I anonymised all respondents' information and ensured that there is no information that revealed the identities of the local authorities under study or the respondents. I assured the respondents that the information provided would be treated with the utmost confidentiality and that their identity would not be shared with anyone. I did not record the names of the respondents I interviewed. I did all the transcriptions of the interviews.

When discussing ethics, the issue of consent cannot be overlooked. According to Scott and Marshall (2009) informed consent refers to the participant being given as much information as is needed to make a comprehensive decision about whether they will participate in the study or otherwise. Informed consent really means informed consent in other words making sure that people know what they are participating in (Clarke and Hoggert 2009) I obtained both verbal and written consent prior to interviewing participants,( Appendix 10). I explained the purpose and nature of the research and stressed that this is an academic piece of work. The respondents were informed of what was expected of them and given the average time the interview would take. My experience of undertaking a research when I was completing my Masters programme was that respondents felt better once they understood the overall aim of the study. I explained that participation is voluntary and that it is within their rights to change their minds and withdraw before or during the interview.



Even though I reiterated to the respondents that engagement is their choice and there are no repercussions for withdrawing, I remained cognisant about the power dynamics at play when undertaking interviews in the Local Authority I was working in as a manager. Some respondents may have found it difficult to refuse to participate or to withdraw due to my position or as colleagues. I was aware that as a Manager I held some level of power and authority which could present during the interview process. According to Holloway and Jefferson (2000), ethical guidelines are often based on scenarios of unequal power especially scenarios where researchers could abuse their superior power in situations in which participants may not be in a position of to protect themselves. My interview sample included senior managers as well and I felt the different shifts in power dynamics during the interview. Holloway and Jefferson (2000) assert that it is important for the researcher to think carefully about ethical implications rather than assume that they do not count because the researcher is not holding all the power.

In preparation of this research project, I discussed with other Team Managers and social work colleagues working in Local Authorities who have experienced the Ofsted inspections, regarding the impact of the Ofsted inspections. I noted that the issues we discussed are quite emotional and all respondents felt quite strongly about the issues. I was also affected emotionally by the issues arising from the stress and anxieties brought about as a result of the inspection process. Stanely and Wise (1993) assert that emotions of both the researcher and participants should not be ignored. Smith (2009) asserts that exploration of experiences may produce strong emotional response thus participants need to be afforded access to additional support. Smith (2009) also raises the importance of ensuring that interviews are conducted in a safe containing space. Debriefing is therefore an important part of the research interviewing process. The respondents were debriefed after the interview. I also gave them an opportunity to ask questions. The interviews took place in a venue of the participant's choice and I ensured that the venue afforded them confidentiality and anonymity. Berg (2007) states that in the interest of ensuring no harm to participants, it is important to debrief the subjects and to determine if they require any assistance or explanations for questions they have been asked during the course of the interview.

Holloway (2006) argues what frames the primary ethical challenges in psycho-social research is care for the subject. These concerns are about the need to avoid misrepresentation of the respondent and about the need to ensure that the research does present what is really important to the respondent; these concerns are also about guilt, a duty of care and the fact that our respondents have trusted us with their thoughts on some very contentious issues. The concern here is about the selective use of interview transcripts, about falling into the trap of not listening to our respondents and making our data fit our preconceived ideas and research questions. Ethically then a psycho-social approach must guard against these mistakes and really needs to be reinforced with teamwork. I found the seminar groups and supervision very supportive regarding this.

Clarke and Hoggert's (2009) view is that it is important to recognise that ethical issues are present throughout the whole research process. This involves being aware of the ethical demands of the actual research encounter, recognising countertransference, identifications and projective identifications. It involves an ethical approach to data analysis one which is able to recognise what gets left in and what gets left out in talk, transcriptions and presentation (Clarke and Hoggert 2009).

### **3.11 Conclusion**

The use of ethnographic research methods and psychoanalytically informed observation were helpful in understanding the lived experiences of the research participants in their natural environments. Working in both organisations under study was crucial in providing access to the day to day lives of research participants, the meanings attached to events, language used and the insight into the unconscious processes at play, the anxieties and defences which shaped and influenced organisational responses to the inspection process. The analysis of the metaphors used in daily language assisted in depicting the defences and the organisation in the mind of the workers. The use of seminars and supervision was beneficial assisting me in untangling what belonged to my unconscious world and what I conjecture emerging from the individuals I was observing (Cooper 2009).

The following two chapters are the first part of the analysis of findings. They provide a snapshot of the themes emerging from the data. An in-depth analysis of the findings will be undertaken in chapters 6 to 9 using the metaphoric and psychoanalytic theoretical framework to analyse the research findings.

## Chapter 4: Findings from Borrowdale Children's Services

### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter will explore the findings from Borrowdale Children's Services, focusing on the emerging themes as the organisation went through change, before, during and after an inspection process. The inspection period covered in this study in Borrowdale Children's Services was from 2008 to 2013. During this period, Borrowdale had three Ofsted inspection processes. They were unsuccessful in two consecutive Ofsted inspections and passed the third Ofsted inspection. The findings will include my observations from 2010 to 2012 when I worked for Borrowdale Children's Services.

### 4.1 Deprivation

Borrowdale Children's Services was situated within a community where some areas were described as having high levels of deprivation and scarce resources. The gaps in universal services provision was highlighted by some respondents.

A team manager Rickson said:

*'... some parts of Borrowdale are characterised by poverty, the referrals were high.. because of extreme social deprivation in some areas and the social difficulties that families faced, cases were much more complex ... in one year we had 4 murders, high level of drug and alcohol abuse, high levels of domestic violence.. it was so difficult to recruit social workers...not easily accessible by public transport... there are not many services out there... seems to be a gap of like universal services...'*  
(Rickson-TM-Borrowdale)

Housing was viewed as a major issue in Borrowdale with the council deploying temporary strategies to address the problem. A social worker Ophelia noted:

*'...most of the housing in this area were not meant to accommodate people all year round, they were meant to accommodate people in the spring and summer ... however they are now being used as all year accommodation because of the increase in population and demand for housing'* (Ophelia-SW-Borrowdale).

It appears that prior to failing the Ofsted Joint Area Review (JAR) Inspection process in 2008, Borrowdale Children's Services struggled to recruit workers. Several respondents raised this as an area of concern. Rickson; an agency team manager noted:

*'...by the time I arrived the teams had depleted, you could just not recruit, no one wanted to work here ... I took over a team with 2.8 workers with 300 cases, the team was falling apart, this was in November 2008. ....The inspectors came in shortly after my arrival..... we failed the inspection., ...Workers were carrying caseloads of 80 or 90 cases ....we had the biggest backlog of unallocated cases locked in the cupboards more than 400 unallocated cases...'* (Rickson-TM-Borrowdale)

Appendix 4 shows the structure of the organisation and the level of staffing prior to failing the initial Ofsted inspection during the period covered in this study.

In addition to inadequate staffing, the lack of tools to perform the job was also viewed by some respondents as a hindrance to service delivery. One of the senior practitioners, Lorna noted . *'...when the first group of agency workers started they were not enough computers, they were sharing one computer between three workers...the Integrated Children computer system was poor quality ..... it took 2 year to make the changes to address this... it can be really draining and its annoying for practitioners...'* Lorna-SP-Borrowdale.

## **4.2 A Sense of Apathy and paralysis**

Some respondents used phrases such as *'apathetic, lethargic, scarce resources, paralysed, poor service delivery'* to describe the state of their organisation prior to failing the initial Ofsted inspection during the period of this study. Several respondents (permanent social workers and team managers) expressed that they did not see their senior managers regularly. Ophelia noted, *'...We had meetings where people were complaining about the lack of support and at one meeting the Head of Service attended but nothing was done about our situation... Workers were*

*in tears; crying that the caseloads were very high. I remember our senior practitioner had 107 cases and over 50 of them were child protection. I was newly qualified and I had just over 60 cases... I was very scared...* (Ophelia-SW-Borrowdale).

This was mirrored by the service users. It appeared that the families did not frequently contact Children's Services unless they had an appointment. Rickson commented, *'...although the office was right in the middle of town you never had that constant flow of clients coming through the door wanting support as one would expect.... People would only come in if they had an appointment with their social worker ... Maybe they just learnt to live without Children's Services' support because we were very short staffed we did not provide the adequate level of support required anyway....'* (Rickson-TM-Borrowdale).

### **4.3 The Leadership styles adopted in response to inspection process**

Although it was clear that the Local Authority was not performing well, failing an inspection appeared to galvanise the leadership team to act. Respondents noted that the leadership teams decided to address the gaps in performance identified by Ofsted by changing their recruitment policies.

#### **4.3.1 Panic Recruitment**

After failing the Ofsted inspection in 2008, one of the Team Managers, Rickson noted, *'After failing the Ofsted inspection we were running around like chicken with their heads cut off...'*

The respondents described how their senior managers recruited groups of agency workers. The agency backlog team came with their own team managers and a senior manager. This appears to have created a parallel hierarchical structure similar to the existing organisational structure. This group of agency workers was referred to as the backlog team and was based at Borrowdale Children's Service Department offices. Sue, a team manager stated, *'... senior managers remained invisible to us... it was panic recruitment ...we had to deal with the agency workers who were recruited...'* (Sue-TM-Borrowdale).

Rickson, a team manager, noted '*... after failing the Ofsted inspection in 2008, senior management brought in back log teams of agency social workers... they allocated these teams across all the Children's Services departments in the county, there were seven workers per backlog team and each area in the county got 2 teams....allocation of these teams was not based on anything other than simply allocating same number of teams across the county. ....*' (Rickson-TM-Borrowdale).

Following this initial recruitment process, respondents stated that further recruitment of two more groups of agency workers was undertaken. One team referred to as the 'roving team' was based 30 miles away from Borrowdale Children's Services. The agency workers in the roving team worked across the whole county as determined by the senior managers. The other group of agency workers were auditors who were based at the central office 40 miles away from Borrowdale Children's Services. Respondents noted that this resulted in three different groups of agencies working on the same cases in addition to the existing group of workers. The groups of agency workers were recruited from all over the country so they were staying in local hotels. Several respondents stated that the hotels were paid for by the Local Authority and the agency workers were paid higher rates than the permanent workers and the existing workers.

Appendix 5 shows the new structure of the Duty and Assessment Teams and the Safeguarding and Family Support Teams following the recruitment of additional agency workers.

Prior to the recruitment of the groups of agency workers, the existing managers felt that they kept track of their cases. However, the addition of three different groups of agency workers working on the same cases was viewed as creating confusion. Rickson, team manager, explained '*...The backlog teams were supposed to concentrate on working on the back log cases in the cupboards. We were to focus on new referrals coming in and the cases already allocated to us...but it was just a mess anyway; nobody knew where cases were as they were many fingers in the*

*pie... the backlog teams and the roving team and the auditors were just coming in and taking our files away and allocating them all over the place so we lost touch.. So you had backlog teams working on cases, we were working on the same cases... This was just a mess. ' (Rickson-TM-Borrowdale).*

The recruitment strategies which were put in place to improve performance were described by respondent as having the opposite effect. Respondents noted that there was no coordination between the various team managers and between the team managers and senior managers. The senior managers were reported as not directly involved in the functioning of the groups of agency workers they employed. Rickson said, '*...Senior managers were not on the ground but were monitoring performance targets Senior management sacked the agency workers without any notice period due to poor quality work ...they sacked the whole group not just individual workers....In actual fact the workers came in to work as normal on a Thursday and they were told 'you are finishing tomorrow' so some workers just packed their bags immediately and left ...one backlog team lasted 3 months the one after this 5 months.... ' (Rickson- TM-Borrowdale).*

#### **4.3.2 ' Blame'**

Ophelia and Cornelia reported that like some of the workers, they struggled for a considerable length of time with what they viewed as inadequate resources and no leadership support. They felt that permanent workers, who had been struggling along for a considerable length of time prior to the inspection, with inadequate resources and no leadership support, were being blamed for failing the inspection. Cornelia noted, '*... we worked hard sacrificing our evenings, weekends and family life to manage the work... senior managers should have talked to us about and involved us in making decisions about how to improve practice...we failed because we did not have enough social workers...'* (Cornelia-SW-Borrowdale).

Several respondents felt that following failing the inspection process, other professionals were blaming some permanent social workers for this failure instead of working together. The partner agencies were viewed as not taking any



responsibilities regarding their part which may have contributed to the failure. Some respondents expressed that they felt the responsibility to safeguard children was mainly left for social workers and other professionals' role was to scrutinise and blame them. Respondents noted that the senior managers were not supportive as they failed to address the issues of blame from partner agencies. As noted by a social worker, Ophelia, '*... education, health, police were all blaming us, making complaints about our work instead of working together ... I had one such complaint from the police and the Head of Service gave me a warning following the complaint ...*'.(Ophelia-SW-Borrowdale).

Some respondents felt that permanent workers were also being blamed by the groups of agency workers for failing Ofsted. They felt judged. A team manager, Sue noted '*... these agency workers blame us but the workers worked hard ...they were all working evenings, weekends to try and catch up with the work load it was bad because we were under staffed. not because of performance issues.*' Sue-TM-Borrowdale.

The threat of loss of employment appeared to have been used to ensure that workers continue meeting the performance targets deemed by senior managers as a requirement to pass the Ofsted inspection process. Sue noted, '*...workers were afraid of being fired if targets were not met...the manager for the Duty and Assessment Team was scapegoated after failing the inspection in 2008. Senior management blamed her for the accumulation of the unallocated backlog cases so she was sacked...*' (Sue-TM- Borrowdale).

The respondents stated that the groups of agency workers were also worried about being sacked by senior managers if they were 'viewed' as not performing. This may have resulted in long working hours. The respondent agency worker, Lorna, felt that senior managers treated them differently in comparison to their permanent colleagues, as they were expected to do more and deal with more complex cases. Lorna noted, '*....people were leaving their home and having to stay outside away from their families ... were working from 7.00 in the morning and we were not coming*

*back until 10.00 at night and that was constant daily... people who take time off are permanent staff and as an agency if you have to take time off you do not get paid for that so we did not take time off...'* (Lorna- SP-Borrowdale).

It appears that the 'blame' was not only between workers and other professionals but also impacted on senior managers. Respondents noted that after failing the Ofsted inspection process, some senior managers lost their jobs. Several respondents noted that the fact that senior managers were based elsewhere and had no direct contact with the workers exacerbated the instability in this organisation as workers were not immediately aware when senior managers left and when new senior managers were appointed.

*'...senior managers were all based at central office 40 miles from here; they rarely came here to see us. They all did not stay long in their posts anyway, they were sacked... high turnover of the service managers....'* (Ophelia- SW-Borrowdale).

Respondents noted that the changes in senior managers resulted in changes in the policies and procedures. The frequency in which the senior managers changed in this organisation could not have provided a platform for any transformation changes to be sustained and embedded within the performance structure. Lisa noted:

*'And it's always changing... every time you get a new senior manager everything changes .....and as it seems we have a quite a high turnover at that level so the changes continue...I think in the norm we seem to get guinea pigged for a lot of the new policies .....'* (Lisa- SP-Borrowdale).

#### **4.4 Tensions within the Organisation**

The changes made following failing the inspection appeared to cause anxiety and conflict within this organisation. Several respondents noted that some workers who had been in the organisation prior to failing the Ofsted inspection were feeling undermined by the senior managers and the groups of agency workers. Agency workers reported to be experiencing resentment from permanent workers who they felt should have been more appreciative. This situation resulted in tensions between

the different groups of workers which may have created a hostile working environment.

#### **4.4.1 Warring factions**

The absence of the senior managers was generally viewed as contributing to the conflict between the various groups of workers. The managers from the four groups of workers were left to coordinate the operational functions of the organisation. However, as noted above each group of workers were afraid of being sacked for poor performance so were in competition with each other. This is likely to have made working together difficult. Ophelia, social worker noted that;

*'There was no team work among the managers and among us social workers, no proper meetings where all workers were introduced to each other. We just heard information through gossip, it was very disjointed, you just did not know who was who, or even who were the senior managers... no team spirit. ...we were fighting for cases... I guess we were all scared of losing our jobs...'* (Ophelia-SW-Borrowdale).

Several respondents noted that the fact that the groups of agency workers were paid much higher wages than the permanent workers and the agency workers who were recruited prior to failing the initial inspection exacerbated the tension. Respondents who were working in the organisation prior to the recruitment of the groups of agency workers expressed that they felt resentful towards senior management and the groups of agency workers. They felt that they had been working very hard prior to the inspection process and their efforts were not acknowledged.

Several respondents expressed that the deterioration in the relationships between the agency workers and existing group of workers resulted in open hostility between them. Some respondents who were working in the organisation prior to failing the inspection felt that the groups of agency workers behaved as if they more powerful and superior to them. Lorna viewed this as emanating from the fact that groups of agency workers had been brought in to do what the existing workers had failed to do. *'...as agency workers we were particularly brought in because of our skills and*

*experience to improve things so basically that's what we were doing. We are just trying to clean up their mess to improve performance... Our group of agency workers has done this type of work before in other failing Local Authorities...'* (Lorna-SP-Borrowdale).

There was also tension between different service areas which was portrayed through the difficulties in transferring cases. In my first week in Borrowdale I noted in my journal what occurred in relation to a transfer meeting with the safeguarding and family support teams, '*...prior to the meeting, a team manager colleague from our Assessment Service looked very anxious ...she said to me 'we have to prepare for this transfer meeting and fight them, otherwise they will refuse to take our cases.... We have so many cases which they have refused to take from us'... we attended the transfer meetings with 6 of our social workers who had cases they wanted to transfer. The meeting was so hostile and no cases were accepted, I spent the whole day filled with anger and resentment...I felt helpless because the social workers were upset and voiced their anger in the open team rooms'* (Journal October 2010). When later reflecting on this I could not understand why we attended with 6 social workers. As managers we could simply have presented the cases on behalf of the social workers.

The rift between the different groups of workers may have been worsened by the fact that there was no effective communication between the teams as they were not all located in the same building, the roving teams and the audit teams were several miles away. The backlog teams were based at the same building as the permanent workers but on a different floor.

Cornelia noted that there was also tension between the permanent workers recruited from this country and those recruited from abroad. The latter was viewed as being given preferential treatment by senior management as they had a better pay package. Cornelia expressed, '*...permanent workers recruited from another country were paid a lot of money..., their holiday flights are paid for.... such things are too painful for permanent workers from this country...it was not fair, we are doing the*

*same work...we are teaching them as they are not familiar with social work in this country...'* (Cornelia-SW-Borrowdale).

#### **4. 5 Bombardment of work**

Following failing the inspection process, several respondents reported to being under a lot of pressure and stress as they tried to address the performance gaps identified by Ofsted. Respondents noted that the situation following failing an inspection was worsened by the chaotic environment created by four different groups of workers working on the same cases and the tight timescales being imposed by senior management to complete the work. Ophelia expressed, *'All of us felt under pressure because after the inspection, senior managers were trying to improve things and trying to put us under pressure to meet timescales but not actually listening to the social workers ...they were just firing workers for not performing ... we were blamed by professionals...blamed by senior managers, blamed by these agency workers... we were bombarded from all ends..'*(Ophelia-SW-Borrowdale).

Several respondents noted that the pressure from senior managers to close cases to meet their perception of the performance indicators required to pass an Ofsted inspection increased the pressure for the social workers. The Local Authority failed a second successive Ofsted inspection. Rickson noted, *'... inspectors came and saw the confusion with all these different group of agency workers, it was worse than before because cases were being lost in the system... we failed again...there was no way we could pass...'* (Rickson-TM-Borrowdale).

This action to meet the perceived Ofsted targets resulted in some cases being closed prematurely. Ophelia commented, *'...after failing the second inspection we had many re referrals because of performance monitoring by senior management we always ended up closing cases because we were under pressure even where you feel there has been little improvement and there is still work to be done with the family. You are forced to close the case by your manager who is also under pressure from senior management to improve statistics but the cases keep coming back so ....'* (Ophelia- SW-Borrowdale).

As noted by Lisa, *'it was just one crisis after another ... we were always under fire... before failing it was a crisis with families... after failing it was a crisis with the agency workers trying to find our cases...we just could not cope...'*(Lisa-SP-Borrowdale).

Lorna viewed this slightly differently *'... it was hectic ... I am an agency worker and we are paid more to do this type of work...we are used to this level of pressure... we expect this in Local Authorities who fail ...we have seen it before...that's why we are prepared to work long hours and weekends .... We are used to this now...'* (Lorna-SP-Borrowdale).

#### **4.6 Support for Workers**

The workers who were working in the organisation prior to failing the inspection process referred to the lack of supportive environment prior to and following failure of Ofsted inspection process. They noted that prior to Ofsted inspection, they were focused on, *'keeping their heads above water...working hard to manage against the insurmountable task given the high caseloads and inadequate staffing...'* (Sue-TM-Borrowdale). The action taken by senior managers following failing the Ofsted inspection of employing various groups of agency staff was perceived by some respondents (existing workers) as not promoting supporting environment for frontline workers within this organisation.

Prior to the 2008 inspection, the reported high caseloads and the lack of adequate resources may have caused anxiety as workers were unable to provide an effective service. This was viewed by some respondents as being worsened by the lack of support from senior managers and the lack of supervision from team managers.

Some of the workers were worried that leaving would worsen the plight of the families. Sue stated *'...it felt so unsafe... it felt dangerous working here and you think I don't want to leave because then that makes the situation worse for families but on*

*another hand you don't want anything to happen to the children you are responsible for on your caseload but are unable to work with.....'. (Sue-TM-Borrowdale).*

The permanent worker respondents reported feeling guilty about the plight of the families allocated to them who they were not able to help due to high caseloads and the unallocated cases 'tucked away' in the cupboards. Ophelia commented, '*...There were cases of neglect, sexual abuse and the children had not been seen for over 6 months. ...we were scared of what we would find during the home visit because of the gravity of the concerns. .... It was embarrassing to knock on people's doors for a domestic violence incident last year... Families were defiant, angry and there was opposition. I undertook initial assessments for referrals sent about 6 months previously and straight away the children were removed ...'*(Ophelia-SW-Borrowdale).

#### **4.6.1 Supervision**

Prior to the inspection, the reported inadequate staffing may have resulted in managers undertaking some social work tasks preventing them doing managerial tasks which included supervision.

Following the inspection process, the respondents expressed different views regarding supervision. Permanent social workers were reported as not receiving regular supervision so had little guidance on casework. This was said to have impacted mostly on inexperienced and newly qualified workers who needed management guidance to undertake their tasks. Ophelia remarked '*...prior to and after the second inspection I was going through a traumatic experience at work. Because of lack of supervision, I was making mistakes at work.... Head of Service threatened to issue me with a first and final warning...no consideration that I had no supervision... no induction. I had very high-risk profile cases for a newly qualified social worker... I had to guess how to do the work .....*' (Ophelia-SW-Borrowdale).

Cornelia shared the difficulties she went through, '*... I used to go to the toilet and cry, not knowing what to do on my cases... ...My manager was nowhere to be seen ... no guidance at all; he just kept saying he was too busy ... the other social workers were also too busy to help me...'*(Cornelia-SW-Borrowdale).

A team manager noted that they did not have time to supervise workers. Sue noted, '*... I don't have time to supervise ...I am busy sorting out this mess from all the agency workers, trying to keep track of our cases... I feel sorry for the social workers... there is nothing I can do... The senior managers are not here to support us so what am I supposed to do...*' (Sue-TM-Borrowdale).

The workers from the backlog teams appeared to have regular supervision as noted by Lorna, '*...I think all the agency workers from the backlog teams were supervised regularly by their team managers... there were no issues of lack of supervision for me...we have worked together as a group for some time now... we support each other in our work..*' (Lorna-SP-Borrowdale).

Some social workers were said to have left. Lisa stated '*...we had a lot of staff leave because of the high caseloads and people just burnt out*' (Lisa-SP-Borrowdale).

#### **4.7 Views of the Ofsted inspection Process**

Some respondents viewed Ofsted in a positive light. They had tried to seek help from senior management to improve the quality of service but this was viewed as ineffective. Ofsted was viewed as the institution that would help. Sue noted, '*...you don't want to shoot yourself in the foot but we all felt relieved that somebody was finally looking at the work because it felt so unsafe... it felt dangerous.... When allocated 87 children... you cannot say you are working with those children because you aren't, you are just doing crisis management. When you come into work that morning you picked up whoever was having a crisis....*' (Sue-TM-Borrowdale).

Cornelia shared similar sentiments, '*... we suffered a lot to the point I was regretting joining this profession, this was my first job. I was so relieved when Ofsted came ... I can say they saved me ...well my career... I don't know what would have happened to the families and to me...*' (Cornelia-SW-Borrowdale).



However, Rickson noted that senior managers may have had a different perspective as some of them were sacked following failing the inspection process. Xenia who had worked in Borrowdale prior to moving to Eastlea noted, '*... you suffer untold misery if you fail an Ofsted inspection process...*' (Xenia-HOS).

Some respondents felt that, the senior management group was trying to cover up the reality by employing agency groups to show Ofsted that they were doing well. Lisa noted, '*Resources are poured in during the inspection process to improve practice like what happened here when we failed.... This provides a false sense of improvement, it's like putting plaster to hold things together which is not sustainable...no meaningful benefit for families. Senior managers did nothing before only to try after failing ... they were asking us to work overtime after we failed the inspection and they would pay us but we were working overtime before failing the inspection ... we had no staff. .... I don't understand why they do this during the time of inspection...*' (Lisa-SP-Borrowdale).

Lorna provided a different perspective, '*... backlog teams like ours only go into Local Authorities preparing for inspections or have failed inspections anywhere in the country... the reason for us being here is to help them pass this inspection... we have done this long enough we know what Ofsted expects to see.... when they pass Ofsted ... usually that's when our job ends and we move to the next job... ...*' (Lorna-SP-Borrowdale).

#### **4.8 Improvement Journey**

Respondents stated that after failing the second Inspection process, the leadership team was sacked. A new interim director was recruited who brought in a new senior leadership team. Respondents noted that the senior leadership team was visible spending, the group manager's desk was in the team's sitting area and the head of service worked twice a week at the office where the frontline teams were.

Respondents expressed that improvements were notable within a few months of this new leadership team being in post. Rickson noted,

*'... it was senior managers who needed to get the message to change...the first Ofsted inspection failure, was a senior manager's responsibility for poor resources and not due to our management of work... second failed inspection resulted in recruiting new interim senior managers... they realised the mess ... .. introduced structural changes ... teams were clearly separated into referral and assessment teams and family support teams... it was a long journey to improvement but we got there...'* (Rickson-TM-Borrowdale).

The respondents noted that the new leadership team invested in the training for all workers. Respondents expressed that workers were given clear guidelines regarding the organisation's expectations of practice standards. It appears that workers were involved in the change agenda. As a result of the positive changes, recruitment improved as workers wanted to work in this Local Authority. Rickson further noted:

*'... senior managers invested heavily in laptops and mobile phones for social workers... previously we had paper files...when they were many people working on each file it meant that a file had to be physically taken from the office and they were misplaced.....we were all co-located in one building. There was improved communication across all the departments with tasks of what to do or targets... consultations with staff about the changes...regular meetings so it became shared ownership of the improvement plan and explored ideas of how to improve.... It became easier for us to recruit to our teams than it was before ....'* (Rickson-TM-Borrowdale).

Notable changes were made to the Quality Assurance (QA) department and they scrutinised the functioning of the Children Services through audits and provided training for all social workers. This encouraged learning and sharing of practice across the service. Rickson observed:

*'...we had to complete case audits using the same rating as Ofsted grading so we knew the expectations... it was good learning for us all. ...had access to our team's*

*performance through the developed IT reporting system ...we had monthly meetings with the group manager who was very supportive... the QA department worked closely with the frontline teams ...' (Rickson-TM-Borrowdale).*

Regular fortnightly service meetings were undertaken which were mandatory for all staff, the Group Manager and Head of Service for the frontline service and quality assurance department attended the meetings, Sue observed;

*'...I think the investment in workers by new senior managers made a real difference in the workers, senior managers had a positive disposition and very supportive... the feeling was this is a Local Authority that wants to make a difference...not just about number crunching and all your performance indicators being met but it was about let's invest in the workers... lots of training..., lots more guidance coming out about good practice...the director had open door policy and was open to ideas from social workers and managers... ' (Sue-TM-Borrowdale).*

The social workers appeared happier about the significant changes made to this service. Ophelia observed, *' ... we are no longer focusing only on performance indicators... it's more about direct work, we had training about forming positive relationships with families, we are now doing the real social work, caseloads are very manageable now, computer system now sorted..., our job is much easier ...'* (Ophelia-SW).

I remember noting in my journal, *' ... this looks like a totally different place, everyone is happier and it feels lighter... joking in the office, no hostility... no bitter complaints about the different pay packages... everyone is sitting together.....'* (Journal 2011).

The positive changes were viewed as being based on an evaluation of the service and not on an ad hoc basis but rather allowed to embed. Some respondents noted that power was no longer held in the central office away from the frontline teams. Sue noted: *'...it was not like let's try this and change a week later.... It was actually a system that was allowed to embed in. children's services were being managed*

*centrally from one central office... new senior management decentralised the power .... This decentralising meant that it was easier to implement ideas suitable for each local area ....' (Sue-TM-Borrowdale).*

However, some respondents queried the sustainability of the changes made. Thus passing the inspection process may have raised anxiety. Lorna noted, '*... they immediately reduced the hourly rate for all backlog agency workers after passing the inspection... reduced the size of the teams so some agency workers were asked to leave... Permanent workers are now worried that it will gradually return to where it was in terms of staffing levels... I think all these additional resources were lip service for Ofsted...I was asked to leave so a few of us are now working in another Local Authority who failed their inspection... same package, same salary conditions as Borrowdale...'* (Lorna-SP-Borrowdale).

#### **4.9 Conclusion**

Respondents in Borrowdale described a journey from failure to success. The problems leading to failing the Ofsted inspection process in 2008 were seen by some respondents as mainly being due to inadequate staffing and resources to perform their tasks. The lack of support from senior managers was viewed as worsening the situation. Some respondents viewed the Ofsted inspection positively, as a way to evaluate service provision with the hope of service improvement. Some of the actions initially taken to address the performance issues identified in the inspection process appeared to cause confusion. Respondents stated that this created a difficult working environment which significantly impacted on the quality of service delivery. It was the recruitment of a new senior leadership that was viewed by some as positively changing the functioning of the Local Authority. This shows how important leadership is to the effective functioning and implementation of the primary task in an organisation. The next chapter will look at the findings in Eastlea.

## Chapter 5: Research Findings Eastlea Children's Services

### 5.0 Introduction

This chapter will explore the findings from Eastlea Children's Services, focusing on the emerging themes as this organisation embarked on preparing for the Ofsted inspection process and during the Ofsted inspection. The inspection period covered in Eastlea Children's Services was from 2008 to 2013 so this chapter will include information pertaining to this period. I started working in Eastlea Children's Services in May 2012. Information in this chapter will also include my own observations during the period I was employed in this organisation.

### 5.1 Stagnation

Eastlea Children's Services was described by several respondents as a stagnant place which does not develop at the same pace as its external environment or other local authorities. A Head of Service, Xenia noted:

*'...In 2011... Eastlea did not have a management system of information regarding children ...there was no step-down process from Children's Services for families requiring low-level support .....no Common Assessment Framework (CAF) in place... .. everywhere else has had CAF for five years... stuff needed to be done that had never been done and there was a huge amount of work that needed to be done to prepare for an inspection....'* Xenia-HOS.

Eileen's view was that this organisation struggled in developing their human resources and infrastructure to meet the changing needs and demands of their community. Eileen commented, *'... Children's Services has stayed quite stagnant.... they don't recognise changes in the borough and what is going on outside of these little offices....8 years ago Eastlea took many newly qualified social workers, I was a team manager at the time. When I came in back five years later, the newly qualified are still sitting in the same team, in the same position I left them, never have been developed and are still struggling with the same things they struggled with 4 years ago ...'* (Eileen-GM-Eastlea).

Travinia viewed the senior managers as not wanting things to change. Travinia stated. '... *It's the senior managers who I may describe as dinosaurs ... they don't want to change, ...it's difficult for them to accept anyone who brings about change, ... senior managers want things done a particular way like they have always done it ...*' (Travinia-TM-Eastlea).

Prior to the preparing for Ofsted phase, the senior managers were viewed by several respondents as not being involved in their teams.

During the period I worked in this Local Authority, my observations and feelings were of an organisation 'wanting to remain under the radar'. I noted in my journal, '*it was as if the organisation wanted to hide away.* (Journal July 2012). The majority of the decisions appeared to be made jointly with others at the senior leadership team meetings. I noted in my journal, '*...the bureaucracy here is frustrating and the environment appears stifling...*' (Journal September – 2012).

Several respondents referred to the 'hectic' preparation for the previous Ofsted inspection. However, after the inspection, it appears that little progress was made to address the improvement plan recommended by the Ofsted inspectors. The organisation was said to have reverted back to their 'old ways' of working after the inspection. Commenting on the events prior to and after the previous inspection, a team manager, Cynthia noted,

*'...I remember vividly the previous inspection before this recent one... The whole of team managers and service managers from across all services were basically camped in our service.... the pressure was too much ... we had a high staff turnover so cases were clogging up just before the previous inspection... There were cases where children had not been seen for a significant period so managers were going out on home visits .... A lot of activities like that happened up until the inspectors showed up..... So there is always that difficulty in trying to sustain progress... This is my experience here. I do not think it has changed significantly there is a slight*

*progress from the last inspection in to this recent inspection but overall there is always a tendency for people to relax and over relax to the point we are not moving on and addressing what was identified as gaps... ....' (Cynthia-TM-Eastlea)*

It appears that this organisation delays implementing the improvement plan identified in an inspection process which results in them embarking on a hectic preparation process when they think an inspection is imminent.

## **5.2 Leadership styles adopted in response to inspection process**

### **5.2.1 Panic**

Information shared by some respondents seems to suggest that the Ofsted preparation appeared manic. They referred to feeling anxious. A few respondents highlighted that there was a sense of 'panic-driven inspection preparation' to address the improvement plan identified in the previous inspection. The threat of an Ofsted inspection appeared to have induced great fear and anxiety which seemed to have been transmitted down the hierarchy from senior managers.

*Franny noted, '...I think everyone just panicked. It started in May when senior managers thought the inspectors were definitely coming... From then on it was complete madness, of wanting assessments cleared up; we were offered payment for working extra hours. Offices were open Saturdays and Sundays....open until late during weekdays. Giving people access to work at home... get assessments done at all costs..... You felt the intensity... I struggled to manage ... I spent whole weekends clearing my tray and sending to the manager to authorise... by Monday I got the same amount of cases back in my tray with more work to do because my manager was working weekends...'* (Franny-SW-Eastlea).

The preparation was described as '*grueling and relentless*' by several respondents. The initial action was to bring in additional people from other services to assist the frontline teams. Some respondents found this undermining. Lucy stated, '*... during*

*this Ofsted preparation we had loads of managers from other teams leaving their own teams coming in to check on our work and on us... It's about knowing inspectors are coming because we panic, all these managers make us panic. ...does it mean I was not doing good enough before the inspection... does it mean my manager is not doing good enough that's why all these managers from other teams are coming to look at our work and help us to prepare for the inspection...'*(Lucy-SW-Eastlea).

In addition to bringing in the managers, several respondents stated that Eastlea went into a massive recruitment drive and brought in additional agency workers to assist with the Ofsted inspection process. The frontline service was reported to be fully staffed so the additional staff caused problems in terms of sitting arrangements. Lucy noted, *'we had so many agency workers who were employed to help us when we were preparing for the inspection process... they were no desks for all of us so we had to go and sit on different floors... it was really confusing for us because we were no longer sitting together as a team so we kind of lost that team spirit and the help from colleagues... ...'* (Lucy-SW-Eastlea).

Commenting on the consultants brought in Franny noted, *'they also brought in the consultants to audit cases and help with practice improvement, it was all just too much...'* (Franny-SW-Eastlea).

Cynthia welcomed the additional agency staff, *'... we have too much work to catch up on to make sure that we address the improvement plan... additional workers are welcome to assist us in preparing for this inspection...'* (Cynthia-TM-Eastlea).

However, Travinia queried the sustainability of any changes made by additional staff, *'...the increase in staffing is done for inspectors ... it defeats the whole purpose because after the inspection things tend to fall back to where they were...'* (Travinia-TM-Eastlea).



Jasper also viewed the decreased caseloads as positive, ' *my caseload is low now so I am spending time doing quality work with families... building relationships with them which is good...*' (Jasper-SW-Eastlea).

Appendix 6 shows the structure of the three Duty and Assessment Teams and the three Safeguarding and Family Support Teams in Eastlea Children Services prior to embarking on the Ofsted preparation phase. Appendix 7 shows the structure during the inspection preparation phase.

### **5.2.2 Micromanagement**

During the inspection preparation phase, senior managers who had been previously viewed by some respondents as 'detached and not accessible to the workers appeared to increase their presence and visibility. Jasper noted, '*better working relationship and communication between workers and senior management is good at all times, instead of this type of ... Let's go and show our faces to the staff members and team managers because Ofsted is coming... to show a better working relationship to Ofsted...*' (Jasper-SW-Eastlea).

Xenia viewed this as a way for senior managers to closely scrutinize performance to ensure improvement. '*...we had to put in a lot of work and manage the workers to ensure that the practice standards improve to a good enough standard pass an inspection...*' Xenia-HOS.

However, this may have caused anxiety for some workers. Franny noted, '*You never see Senior Managers and Director in and out of the team rooms so much than in an inspection period checking your work trays... this was nerve –wrecking ...you don't feel trusted as a worker*'. (Franny-SW-Eastlea).

This level of scrutiny was viewed as causing tensions between the senior managers and some of the team managers who directly line managed and supervised the

workers. Travinia viewed this as undermining to her role as a team manager, ‘ ... *I used to be responsible for managing performance for my team, now it seems that this is being taken away by the senior managers who are micromanaging my team’s performance...I feel redundant ... too much duplication of tasks..*’ (Travinia-TM-Eastlea). The duplication of tasks is likely to have confused some workers who were already anxious about this level of senior management involvement.

However Jeremy viewed this level of senior management involvement as positive, ‘... *this is the level of senior management scrutiny required to pass the inspection...*’ (Jeremy-TM-Eastlea).

### **5.2.3 Bombardment of work**

Respondent social workers and managers expressed that they were under pressure to work all the time. The preparation for the unannounced inspection was said to have gone on for at least a year before the inspection took place. Several respondents stated that there was no escape from work as the work was extending to the home environment and impacting on family life.

Noting how she struggled to manage a healthy work-life balance, a social worker, Lucy noted, ‘...*I have a family; my son is too young; I work from home during evenings and weekends...I am neglecting my family... if I don’t catch up on my work; my manager will think I am not performing...*’ (Lucy-SW-Eastlea).

### **5.2.4 Oppressive leadership/ Management**

Respondents noted that there was a significant change of leadership tactics by senior managers at the height of the Ofsted inspection preparation which was in turn adopted by the team managers. Several reported that the leadership and management style became autocratic where threats and humiliation tactics were being used to ensure workers performed to what senior managers perceived as the ‘Ofsted standard’ of performing. It appeared as if the organisation was operating in

crisis mode and most functions were reported to be suspended as energy was expended only towards Ofsted inspection preparation activities.

Franny noted, '*...gradually we all started getting put on performance plans with weekly monitoring of these performance plans... So each week we had to go through our cases, look at what had to be done the dates and targets ... if we did not meet targets, we got hauled back to the Team Manager to explain...that's when the unrealistic pressure gets put on you.. also threats of being fired... (Franny-SW-Eastlea).*

Respondents expressed that performance was being discussed publicly which is likely to have been stressful for some workers. Betty noted, '*...in June it went absolutely unrealistic, timescales, being threatened every week in the weekly team meetings. If on duty we have daily meetings ... in all these meetings we were told individually how much we are failing as if that's going to make you want to do more when you are told in a meeting that you are not meeting timescales .... You go into the team meeting and you would be named and shamed .....*' (Betty-SP-Eastlea).

A team manager expressed that some team managers were also under pressure from senior managers to sack workers who were deemed to be performing poorly. Some respondents raised that the crisis mode prevailing led to decisions being made in a rushed manner.

Commenting on workers who were sacked, a Travinia noted, '*...if there were workers who were underperforming you were called on to sack them without appropriate procedures being followed particularly agency workers... anxiety and gossip as to who was performing, who was not performing and at times the information was inaccurate... colleagues were told to leave when in fact there was not enough digging to see where the problem was, the problem was not with the colleagues but the problem was with the system ... colleagues were fired because*

*there was a delay in cases moving to other teams, yet it was later discovered that it was not colleagues fault ...* ' (Travinia-TM-Eastlea).

Xenia's view was that the quality of work was not to the expected standards, '*... some workers had to go... they were process driven...not focused on the quality of assessments and outcomes for children...a lot of work was required to improve performance...*' (Xenia-HOS).

However, some respondents had different views. Lucy noted, '*... we were working well before the inspection process, our managers were happy with the quality of our work...I don't understand why we were being subjected to all that pressure...*' (Lucy-SW-Eastlea). Franny shared the same views, '*... our work was good, we would have passed the Ofsted inspection process without all this suffering...*' (Franny-SW-Eastlea).

Xenia, who was a new senior manager coming into this Local Authority had a different view regarding the expected performance standards. Some of the workers and their managers may have felt they were performing well. However as noted by Cynthia, they had a tendency to 'relax' until the next inspection process where they embarked on hectic activities to pass.

Franny felt that the Local Authority was only focused on failure, the positive work going on in the Local authority was not acknowledged. Franny said, '*... if I did one good piece of work... it was quickly forgotten because I had not done the other things that should have been done within the agreed timescales... We never seemed to achieve though; at no point up until the day of the inspection did I ever hear a manager or group manager say to the frontline staff you have done well...*' (Franny-SW-Eastlea).

### 5.3 Support for Workers

The emotions generated during the interaction with vulnerable families coupled with the excessive demands of the perceived 'Ofsted expectations' meant that social workers needed a safe supportive environment 'to offload'. The information from the respondents indicates such a containing environment was lacking in this organisation.

The perceived threat from Ofsted was real to them and the impact was felt by some individuals emotionally irrespective of the level of seniority. As noted by Lucy, '... *For months and months throughout this year... it was Ofsted are coming; Ofsted is coming; ..... the anxiety; it just filtered down for me at a ridiculous rate. It was senior managers and team managers' anxieties that Ofsted is coming so we have to get everything done....* (Lucy-SW-Eastlea).

Respondents noted that the inspection preparation went on for several months and had an impact on the workers' morale and health. They appeared exhausted due to the long working hours. It led to the deterioration of team dynamics as well.

It appears that some senior managers were relying on the adrenaline created by anxieties and fear to energise the workers into working beyond the normal expected levels. Xenia noted, '*so I guess yes you have to create a nerve-wracking anxious environment for workers to push performance... that fear will make workers perform at very high levels...you just cannot afford to fail...(Xenia- HOS).*

However, the human body is not designed to deal with such sustained levels of stress over a long period of time thus such methods had a negative impact on some of the workers' health. Franny, showed awareness to the strategies being used to improve performance, but acknowledged the negative impact of this, '... *I can see their viewpoint which was to jig people up to work long hours... put in some positive preparedness for the inspection.... all I know is that it backfired because more people were going off sick... (Franny- SW-Eastlea).*

#### **5.4. Lack of Professionalism**

Some respondents noted that the stressful situation created within this organisation impacted on some of the workers' behaviours. It appears that the lack of support for managers to manage their own anxiety impacted on their interaction with workers. It seemed that the Ofsted inspection preparation had impacted on some individuals' ability to act in a professional manner. Franny expressed, '*... my manager came out of her office and bellowed at a colleague about her work not meeting set targets, this was in the open office in front of everyone other teams could hear. I could see my manager's stress... she forgot her professionalism ...*' (Franny- SW-Eastlea).

Travinia observed that there was competition between departments as each Head of Service tried to impress the director that their department had the best performance. This was described as filtering down to the team managers and social workers creating tension. Franny noted '*... There has always been competitiveness between the teams like which team is doing better than the others and this was not always healthy..... there was a feeling that you are not supposed to socialise... you are just there to work... the competition got worse as the preparation progressed*' (Franny-SW-Eastlea).

#### **5.5 Warring teams/ Broken teams.**

Some respondents noted that one of the side effects of this Ofsted inspection preparation was the fracturing of team dynamics within this organisation.

The senior management group in Eastlea noted how the teams were struggling and took measures to address this by forming supervision groups as a support mechanism for workers. However, the groups were viewed as causing conflict between the teams. Betty noted, '*....we were given group supervision, each team had its own group supervision and we talked about the build-up to Ofsted inspection in the group supervisions ... It was not productive... it happened, throughout the period we were falling apart as a team ... it created more animosity between the teams... because we were talking about each other in a negative way...*' (Betty-SW-Eastlea).

Franny noted, '*...the pressure seemed to increase and you noticed deterioration in the team dynamics.... by the time of inspection, we had totally broken down... beaten and battered ..... we used the group supervision to talk about the problems with our manager and senior managers ....it backfired on all of us... it actually messed the relationship within a team and between teams ...*' (Franny-SW-Eastlea).

Lucy noted the issues of contention between the teams, '*... we no longer get on well with other assessment teams... we are always in competition and secretive about our performance... a huge problem with the family support teams... we are always fighting about cases, they blame us for poor quality work but they refuse to take our cases, we are blamed by senior managers for not transferring cases... our managers don't get on...*' (Lucy-SW-Eastlea).

## **5.6 View of Ofsted Inspection Process**

### **5.6.1 Punitive**

Respondents in Eastlea noted that they felt that Ofsted was punitive. Some of the respondents viewed the changes in their organisation as being induced by the Ofsted inspection process. Lucy noted, '*...it's not our managers' fault, they have no choice but to make us work this way... its Ofsted's fault...*' (Lucy-SW). As noted by Eileen, '*...Ofsted is very punitive... you cannot afford to fail an inspection... I think it creates chaos... really initially it creates chaos, it creates carnage... then it unstabilises relationships within teams... it's about fighting to win....losing is not an option at all...*' (Eileen-GM-Eastlea).

Xenia noted, '*...it is really important that and I get this now that you do need to prepare for an inspection because I think the damage that's done to an authority that does not get a good inspection is too much.. I know people who are directors in other Local Authorities who are not having a good Ofsted inspection outcome and who are now in serious trouble in terms of their Local Authority's credibility, their staff group's morale, their own confidence and credibility across the board...*' (Xenia - HOS).

Some respondents noted that there was no respite from Ofsted; the suffering was felt within their family homes and at work. As noted by several respondents, the fear of being sacked for poor performance was real and resulted in workers working above and beyond the normal expectation. Commenting on the inspection process Lucy noted, '*.... my manager asked me to do some work at home even though I was so sick. I did what she asked ... I don't think that you should be forced to work at home when you are off sick just because you are preparing for an inspection; it should be understandable if you are off sick regardless whether the inspectors are here or not... because they are human beings they will understand.. (Lucy-SW-Eastlea).*

Betty highlighted that some workers may have been afraid of losing their jobs and may not have felt secure enough to trust the inspectors in presenting a true reflection of their view of their organisation. Betty said, '*... senior management will know who is talking to inspectors....it is difficult to be open and honest ...senior management will ask about what was discussed. I don't think people really opened up about how they feel within the workplace because everyone is fearful of losing your job.... the inspectors were talking to people on their desks ...'* (Betty-SP-Eastlea).

## **5.7 Conclusion**

Information shared by respondents show that Eastlea appears to view Ofsted as punitive and the threat of an inspection process is terrifying for them. Respondents noted that this organisation appears to go through periods of hectic preparation when they think an Ofsted inspection is due. The organisation's perception of Ofsted seems to be that to pass an Ofsted inspection, they have to change their way of working. There is thus a shift of prioritised tasks during the Ofsted inspection preparation. The next chapters will explore the theories underpinning the findings in Borrowdale and Eastlea using a combination of psychoanalytic theoretical framework and metaphors.



## Chapter 6 Organisation under Siege

*'..what can I say... ...I think when Local Authorities get the nod or when they believe that Ofsted is going to come into Children's Services. I think it creates chaos... really initially it creates chaos, it creates carnage... then it unstabilises relationships within teams... it's about fighting to win....losing is not an option at all...'* (Eileen-GM-Eastlea).

### 6.0 Introduction

The themes emerging from the previous two chapters represent the tensions and conflict within the two organisations and the punitive working environment which ensued as both organisations tried to implement changes they perceived were required to meet the Ofsted inspection expectations. The lack of a supportive containing environment was one of the themes reported as contributing to the deterioration of relationships among the workers in the organisations.

This chapter explores what happens in organisations when workers feel 'under siege,' and a 'sense of attack' at an individual, team and organizational level. The analysis will pay attention to the metaphors used which were mainly depicting 'war' situations, as the opening quote from Eileen, a Group Manager in Eastlea indicates. A combination of the psychoanalytic framework and organisational metaphors will be used in developing an understanding of what was happening in both organisations as they were going through the changes enacted in response to the Ofsted inspection processes.

### 6.1 Anxieties

The respondents identified several anxieties associated with Ofsted inspections and performing the primary task which are similar to the anxieties cited by several authors explored in chapter 2 (Cooper et al 2003, Ruch & Murray 2011, Munro 2012, Whittaker 2011, Cooper 2018). In their study with a group of childcare social work practitioners Murray and Ruch (2011) stated that the social workers referred to the 'emotional toll of the work', describing it as being like an 'emotional rollercoaster'.

The anxieties stated by the respondents were mainly stemming from: the tension in managing the competing demands of meeting performance indicators and undertaking quality work with families focusing on relationship building (Munro 2012, Cooper 2018); managing high caseloads within an environment where resources in partner agencies are being cut (Cooper 2018); fear of public outrage and media exposure (Cooper et al 2003; Garret 2009, Jones 2014); blame by senior managers for not meeting targets which Cooper (2018) refers to as performance anxiety and the subsequent loss of employment if they fail an Ofsted inspection process (Munro 2012). The constant fear of failing an Ofsted inspection process was viewed as threatening to the effectiveness and survival of individual workers and organisations thus induced great anxiety in workers irrespective of the level of seniority.

## **6.2 The War Metaphors**

The quote from Eileen (GM –Eastlea) above depicts ‘battle’, ‘destruction’ and ‘chaos’. One of the main themes emanating from the research findings was that of organisations ‘under attack’. The perception and sense of reality created within both organisations was that of being ‘under siege’ and as a result, the actions taken by both organisations were to protect themselves and survive ‘this threat’. From a personal perspective, the emotions generated within me noted in my journals during my time in both Local Authorities were general feelings of being ‘under attack’. I noted in my journal, ‘*I feel like we are in a war ... so many different battles to be fought on a weekly basis...*’ (Journal comments Borrowdale February 2011). *It's like a political minefield I have to be very careful of what I say and to whom... not sure how long I can survive this really. I will continue buying weekly travel cards, not sure how long I will last here...*’ (Journal April 2011, Borrowdale). In Borrowdale, this was arising from the efforts to address the gaps identified through failing the Ofsted inspection process while in Eastlea this was arising from preparing for an Ofsted inspection.

Lisa who is an experienced social worker, commented, ‘*...this Ofsted preparation is just like a military operation...it's like we are preparing for war, the rigidity of the*

*planning, the inspection drills are physically exhausting and painful ... its painful to see colleagues losing jobs over this...*' (Lisa-SP-Borrowdale).

Franny also added that, at the height of the inspection preparation phase in Eastlea, *'my manager changed and became something out of this world.. she would stand in front of the team bellowing instructions, drilling us like a sergeant major...'* (Franny-SW-Eastlea).

Beckett (2003) asserts that the language that social workers use like all languages is filled with metaphors they are not aware of. In this study, no attempt was made to have the social workers express themselves metaphorically in the interviews.

Through the analysis of information in seminars and supervision, a coherent pattern of metaphors emerged from the interview data with the overarching metaphors of war and theatre. The overarching metaphors provided central themes to the underlying metaphors and the relationships among the concepts (Mirka 2001).

Metaphors were not only used to shed light into the individuals' responses to the inspection processes but some of the metaphors used depicted the links in the dynamics between teams which provided a deeper meaning to organisational behavior (Carpenter 2008).

The metaphors used by respondents also portrayed the underlying anxieties and defence mechanism. Thus the metaphors provided some level of insight into the unconscious processes in both organisations (Danziger 2000). The war and battle metaphors used in this study frequently focused on danger, hardship, endurance and the heroism required for success in a hostile environment, (Oberlechner and Mayer-Schoenberger 2002). When one thinks about social care services the immediate view is that of a caring profession whose primary task is safeguarding vulnerable children and adults. It is associated with repairing and empowering. However, the environment created by the inspection process resulted in basic assumption mentalities functioning in both organisations due to the defence mechanisms deployed by the workers and their leaders as they tried to manage the anxieties

emanating from implementing the primary task and the changes (French and Simpson 2010).

### **6.3 Perceived 'Enemies'**

The notion of 'war' indicates that a perceived enemy is in existence. In Borrowdale, it was failing an Ofsted inspection which created 'fighting and carnage', whilst in Eastlea, it was the preparation that led to such an environment. Narratives from respondents indicate that social workers bore the brand of the effects of any transformation introduced in a bid to manage organisations' perception of the Ofsted inspection requirements.

The workers in both organisations faced challenges both on a professional and personal level. In Borrowdale, they were faced with feelings associated with managing failure which are likely to have induced anxieties given their high caseloads and unallocated cases. In Eastlea, it was the fear of failing an impending Ofsted inspection. It was not only the prospect of being judged as failing to safeguard children that provoked anxiety but the consequences associated with failure.

The anxieties induced by the inspection processes had to be managed to enable the individuals to survive. Through the process of splitting and projection, enemies were identified within and outside the teams (French and Simpson 2010, Moxnes 1998).

#### **6.3.1 Ofsted**

As noted in Chapter 4, many respondents in Eastlea identified Ofsted as being behind the difficulties they were experiencing as their organisation prepared for the inspection. Lucy noted, '*... it's not our managers' fault, they have no choice but to make us work this way... its Ofsted's fault...*' Lucy-SW-Eastlea. Some of the senior managers in Eastlea appeared to share the same views as the workers, Xenia referred to the '*untold misery that individuals are subjected to if they fail an inspection process*'. The respondent social workers and managers in Borrowdale

tended to view Ofsted in a positive light with some referring to Ofsted as a 'saviour'. They seemed to view Ofsted as a replacement to what they perceived as their 'ineffective' senior leadership team. Sue noted that the performance in this organisation prior to the first Ofsted inspection was so 'dire' that workers did not feel safe. '*...you do not want to shoot yourself in the foot ... but it was good that someone was looking at our practice...it was dangerous practice*' (Sue-TM-Borrowdale). Respondents in Borrowdale noted that the senior managers are likely to have had different views as they were sacked following failing an Ofsted inspection process. The views of respondents regarding Ofsted will be explored further in chapter 7.

The data above shows that irrespective of the contrasting views about Ofsted by workers in both organisations, the notion of Ofsted created in the mind of individuals was brought inside the boundaries of the organisations. As a result, the presence of Ofsted and the associated anxieties was felt and experienced by workers in their day to day work within the organisations. This is likely to have impacted on the implementation of the primary task. When people face uncertainties and feel at risk, they set up psychological boundaries that violate pragmatic boundaries and deviate from the primary task to reduce anxiety (Hirschhorn 1988). The systems within an organisation are heavily influenced by unconscious processes, more so in times when the organisation is under stress from internal or external forces. The role of leaders is critical in effectively managing the internal subsystems, the boundary and the interface of the larger total system with the outer world to ensure that an organisation remains focused on the primary task (Hafford-Letchfield 2009).

### **6.3.2 'Enemies' within Organisations**

In addition to failing to effectively manage the boundaries between their organisations and Ofsted, the leadership teams also struggled to manage internal boundaries which resulted in internal 'enemies' being created within the confines of each organisation through the process of splitting and projection (French and Simpson 2010). As discussed in chapter 4, in Borrowdale there was infighting between the four groups of workers, the permanent workers, the backlog agency

team, the roving team and the auditing team. The permanent workers felt they had to '*protect their cases*' as the other teams would take them away. '*.....we are always fighting for cases...the auditors and other teams take the case files away from us...*' (Rickson-TM-Borrowdale).

The respondents also noted the conflict between the backlog agency teams and the auditing teams. Rickson noted, '*...the auditing team and the agency team were fighting for cases, nasty emails flying about when the auditing team was commenting on the quality of work by agency team...*'(Rickson-TM-Borrowdale). Respondents highlighted that the conflict between teams resulted in some managers refusing cases to be transferred to their teams which impacted on service delivery. The other professionals were also not viewed positively by some of the permanent workers, '*...the schools, health, police are always blaming us for failing the inspection...*' (Ophelia-SW-Borrowdale).

In Eastlea, the competitiveness which was reported by some respondents as having been introduced by the senior managers in a bid to improve performance resulted in conflict between some individuals and teams. Betty noted, '*... we do not talk to each other, the family support teams are hostile at times.. they refuse to accept transferred cases.*' (Betty-SW-Eastlea). This created a hostile working environment which was portrayed metaphorically through language, by some respondents. Jasper notes, '*... this place is hostile, you cannot trust anyone... I just keep my head down...*' (Jasper-SW-Eastlea).

The resultant environment created in both organisations is likely to have resulted in the creation of various 'camps'. The workers had to manage the infighting and the subsequent chaos and anxieties triggered through this. The defences deployed through the process of splitting and projection resulted in the groups functioning in basic assumption mentalities thereby distorting the implementation of the primary task. The shared fantasies are likely to have been that of an 'enemy or enemies' which needed to be conquered and defeated or fled from, this resulted in subsequent

defensive behaviours being adopted to alleviate both the individuals and organisations of the distress (Moxnes 1998).

Some of the changes made in response to the Ofsted inspection processes were viewed by some respondents as distorting the organisational structures which were previously experienced as containing in Eastlea unlike in Borrowdale. In the latter, permanent social worker respondents highlighted the lack of supervision by their team managers and the lack of support from their senior managers prior to and after the Ofsted inspections. However, the subsequent environment created in both organisations in response to the Ofsted inspection appeared to be unpredictable and incapable of managing and containing the organisational splitting and projection processes. In well-functioning organisations, such feelings of aggression are usually targeted at leaders who are able to manage and contain them thereby reducing the anxiety of the workers.

It seemed that in both organisations the 'Ofsted in the mind' was that of a 'being' that invokes such great anxieties which the organisations struggled to contain within existing organisational structures. As a result, the aggressive and hostile feelings between and amongst the workers and teams caused personal and team stress. It is not surprising that many respondents in both organisations described working environments characterised by interpersonal and inter-team battles. What was required in both organisations was a space and process for thinking and reflection that provides a containing element to manage the anxieties and defences deployed, what Biran (2003) referred to as the alpha function of an organisation. Biran (2003) argues that without this containment and deciphering element, organisational functioning may be hampered in times of crisis where the organisation may deal with events through splitting, denying contacts and context.

#### **6.4 Recruitment strategies.**

As discussed in chapter 4 and 5, both organisations embarked on recruitment strategies to increase staff in response to the Ofsted inspection process. In Borrowdale respondents noted that senior managers recruited three groups of agency workers in addition to the existing teams. In Eastlea senior managers sought support from managers from other services in the Local Authority and also recruited additional agency workers.

There appeared to be a commonly shared view by the senior managers in both Local Authorities that services needed to be improved significantly to prepare for an impending Ofsted inspection process as the case in Eastlea or after failing an Ofsted inspection in Borrowdale.

The actions by senior managers can be viewed as defence mechanisms which stem from the anxieties associated with Ofsted. Recruiting additional staff to pass an inspection could be indicating their perception of how the primary task should be implemented to pass an inspection process. Irrespective of the reasons behind this, the scenario created in both organisations resulted in two versions of primary task implementation: the primary task perceived as 'good enough for Ofsted' which required additional staffing to achieve and the organisation's normative primary task 'good enough for families' (Owens 2015).

However, the addition of new agency workers also meant that new groups and alliances had to be formed. Teething problems occurred during the formation of the new groups, as individuals were subconsciously assigned to or took on roles within the new groups being formed (Hischhorn 1988).



## 6.4.1 Impact of recruitment of additional staff

### 6.4.1.1 Eastlea

Some team managers in Eastlea welcomed the additional staff, '*...we welcome any additional resources to help us to prepare for Ofsted...*' (Cynthia-TM-Eastlea). Some workers in Eastlea also viewed this positively citing a significant decrease in caseloads, '*...my caseload is very low now... I have time to spend with families...*' (Jasper-SW-Eastlea).

However, this was viewed differently by other respondents. Franny noted that this was a '*temporary fix*' put in place for the Ofsted inspection process.

Some of the respondents who viewed the increase in agency workers negatively reported that this caused confusion which resulted in animosity and tension within the service. Franny referred to the chaos and the impact on the work arising from the additional workers; '*Everyday there would be a new face... We had a full complement of staff but each team got three to four additional workers ... new workers were no longer being introduced. Phone calls were a nightmare ... there were not enough desks so we were fighting for desks ...team spirit was lost as we were scattered on different floors...*' (Franny-SW-Eastlea).

The environment created in Eastlea was viewed as preventing positive relationships between some teams from occurring or being sustained. Several respondents from Eastlea noted the competitiveness between the teams. Eileen noted, '*....Senior managers begin to point score of each other... competition ...who has got the best service .... So instead of pulling everybody together prior to Ofsted coming.. a lot of relationships between teams became quite fractured and broken ....*' (Eileen-GM-Eastlea).

The senior managers in Eastlea noted how the teams were struggling and attempted to provide a supportive environment by establishing supervision groups for workers. The supervision groups were facilitated by managers from other departments within the organisation. However, this was met with skepticism by some workers. The

Ofsted inspection appeared to dominate the majority aspects of this organisation's functioning thus the group supervision was described as another forum to discuss Ofsted preparation processes. The groups were thus viewed by some workers as a way of senior managers trying to influence workers to concentrate on specific performance areas.

Some workers were said to have used the group supervisions as a forum to share their discontent regarding their managers, senior managers and other teams. However, as noted by two respondents some of the information was later shared publicly which appeared to cause friction between some teams and further strained the relationships between some of the workers, their team managers and senior managers. *'..... it was a waste of time and it created more animosity between the teams because each team had its own separate group supervision and the sessions were said to be confidential.... However, we started hearing other teams talking openly about the problems in our team...'* (Betty-SW-Eastlea).

The supervision groups appeared not to fully achieve the intended outcome. They were viewed as increasing animosity and divisions between the teams which led to an intolerable working environment. One team which was previously stable was described as having wilted and disintegrated due to the prevailing pressure in the organisation. Franny shared this view regarding the deterioration in the team dynamics. *'...the pressure seemed to increase and you noticed deterioration in the team dynamics.... We were deemed the strongest stable team of permanent workers...by the time of inspection, we had totally broken down... beaten and battered ... the group supervision was a way of nudging workers to toe the line as expected by management. ...'* (Franny-SW-Eastlea).

#### 6.4.1.2 Borrowdale

There was also team conflict noted by respondents in Borrowdale. Respondents noted that some of the conflicts were a result of differences in remuneration packages as agency workers were being paid more than permanent workers regardless of the number of years of experience. Some of the permanent workers were feeling resentful of the agency workers whom they felt were given preferential treatment by senior management. Commenting on the events during the time she worked in Borrowdale. Eileen noted, '*...there was lots of conflicts ...it was not conflict that you could see, it was unconscious conflict... the permanent workers who had been there for a significant period of time were angry, that all these workers from all over the country, suddenly appear and they are going to save the teams , ...being paid loads of money, hotel accommodation, travel ...you had staff there that felt as if they had been working their backside off but had not been recognised because Borrowdale had gone into special measures...*' (Eileen-GM-Eastlea).

Some permanent workers viewed the recruitment strategies as driven by panic. The permanent teams and the backlog agency teams were located at the same building but on different floors. The fact that the four groups were not located at the same venue was viewed by some respondents as contributing to the lack of effective communication or coordination of work. This is said to have resulted in duplication of work and 'fighting for cases' resulting in some case files being lost. Rickson noted that they, '*lost touch with their cases... it was a mess...*' (Rickson- TM-Borrowdale).

Interestingly, the agency respondents were more focused on support from senior managers. They viewed senior managers as treating them differently from their permanent colleagues as they were expected to do more and deal with complex cases. The respondents felt that they had 'sacrificed' by leaving their home and families to come and work in this area.

The conflict was not only limited between permanent and agency workers but several respondents reported conflict between some of the existing permanent workers and permanent workers who were recruited from abroad following failing the inspection process. Furthermore, respondents noted there was conflict between the

backlog agency teams and the audit teams. This organisation was like a 'battle' field which appeared to foster the development of various camps. Sue noted, '*I would say there was a lot of hostility and conflict between the agency workers and permanent workers and between the agency workers and the auditors...we were all fighting for the same cases you know...*' (Sue-TM-Borrowdale).

Borrowdale appeared to have a dichotomy of views mainly between the existing permanent workers and the additional agency workers. Respondents described the conflict between the two groups through metaphorical phrases such as 'lots of conflicts', 'save the team', 'working their backside off', 'fighting for cases', 'sacrificed' and 'under fire'. In Eastlea some of the metaphors used included, 'bellowing like a sergeant major', 'drilling instructions', 'conflict', 'hostile', 'broken down', 'fractured', 'animosity', 'beaten', 'battered' and 'bruised'. Although there are similarities in some of the metaphors used in both organisations, the metaphors in Eastlea describing internal conflict were not as deep and vivid as those in Borrowdale. The conflict in Eastlea appeared to be within the teams.

It appears that respondents used metaphors to express their experiences and feelings. However, these could also be representing their unconscious processes which respondents may not have been aware of (Danziger 2000). The metaphoric language used in both organisations significantly illuminates the BaF mentality functioning. The antagonism within the teams and between teams appeared to dominate the actions of the workers and the internal politics was characterised by suspicion among workers resulting in warring factions which made collaborative work difficult (Kets de Vries and Miller 1984). One of the reasons cited by social workers regarding why they stay in post is the support from peers (Frost et al 2017). However the environment in both organisations did not present a conducive environment for peer support, this is likely to have led to some social workers feeling isolated (Dickinson and Perry 2002, Russ et al 2009). All these factors undoubtedly impacted on the primary task implementation as teams were focused on managing their needs whilst senior managers appeared to be focused on ensuring meeting the perceived Ofsted requirements.

## 6.5 Bombardment

One of the main metaphorical themes emanating from the findings was that of 'bombardment'. Beckett (2003) views the metaphor 'bombardment' as having a military connotation. Ophelia captured the feelings and views by saying, '*it was always pressure to complete statistics... I was bombarded from all ends... it's long hours and working weekends... professionals always blame social workers... what I see here is backbiting and wanting to satisfy the demands of senior managers.*' (Ophelia-SW-Borrowdale).

In both Local Authorities, workers were described as not only 'bombarded' with the pressure of work emanating from the senior management's focus on performance targets but also with anxieties associated with performing the primary tasks in an unsupportive environment and the anxieties from the conflicts within the organisations. Both organisations appeared to be in what Mawson (1994) viewed as characteristics of paranoid-schizoid position which is the fear of attack and annihilation. This is typical of basic assumption mentalities where some workers spend a lot of energy defending themselves from the external and internal enemies. The lack of trust in such environments results in feelings of paranoia with some workers losing contact with reality (Hischhorn 1988).

The splitting and projection processes which occurred between the various groups of workers may have resulted in intergroup defences which took the form of rivalries (Kets de Vries and Miller 1984). This masked the defensive process and flight from performing the primary tasks in both organisations. Some respondents blamed senior managers for the predicament the workers found themselves in whilst some senior managers are said to have blamed the workers for what they perceived as poor performance resulting in some workers being sacked in both organisations.

In both organisations, the resentment and animosity between the various teams could have been the reason for defensive behaviours such as self-preservation which manifested through some teams 'guarding their doors' and preventing cases from being transferred to them. This at times resulted in blockages in the workflow

which may have negatively impacted on collaborative work between teams. The transfer process was viewed by the majority of respondents in both organisations as evoking great anxiety, increasing the interpersonal tensions and personal stress intensifying the internal conflict between the assessment and family support teams. It can be argued that the teams felt powerless and attempted to wrestle back some semblance of power by blocking the flow of cases. The tenuous relationships created further fractured the teams which needed to co-operate together and support each other to lessen the uncertainty their organisations faced (Foster 2016).

On closer examination, it can be noted that some workers across the hierarchy of seniority, whilst at the same time fighting the perceived 'enemy', appeared to be seeking containment and support in managing the painful feelings brought about by meeting the perceived demands of the Ofsted inspection process (Murray and Ruch 2011). Lucy noted '*...the first question in supervision was about cases and timescales and the last question was about cases and timescale... what happened to .. how are you feeling today...leave and TOIL is no longer on the agenda.. taking TOIL is frowned upon and annual leave is like a privilege...*' (Lucy-SW-Eastlea).

These traumatic environment organisations may have resulted in 'emotional injuries' to some individual workers in both organisations. '*Some workers went off sick... others simply burnt out...*' (Lisa – SP-Borrowdale).

## **6.6 Survival Mechanisms: Individual and Organisational Defences**

I share the same views as Halton (1994) that institutions, similar to individuals, develop defences against difficult emotions which are threatening or too painful to bear. Such emotions may be due to external threats or may stem from internal interdepartmental conflicts. This may be manifested through basic assumption mentalities. The worst effect is felt by individual workers in these organisations as evidenced by the reported levels of 'tiredness' and 'sickness' in both organisations. In order to survive and preserve the individuals, the organisations under study resorted to developing defences to manage the painful emotions evoked by the Ofsted inspection process to preserve themselves (Halton 1994, Whittaker 2011, Munro 2012, Whittaker and Havard 2016). Such defences allow people to retreat

from role, tasks and organisational boundaries. This has a profound impact on the implementation of the primary task

## **6.7 Individual defences**

Due to the painful process of managing inspections, the organisations appeared to have been solely focused on accomplishing the goals to protect or ‘conquer the enemy’ (Kets de Vries and Miller 1984). This inadvertently induced the survival instincts in workers.

The inherent stresses associated with the primary task and the strenuous working environment created within both organisations was viewed by respondents as creating an untenable situation for most of the social workers. Some of the defence mechanisms and the defensive behaviours adopted by the workers to survive were similar to those identified by Whittaker (2011), Whittaker (2016), Munro (2012) and Cooper (2018). These defences provide an insight into the organisation created ‘in the mind’ of the workers.

### **6.7.1 Long hours**

Respondent social workers in Eastlea and Borrowdale noted that in order to manage the anxieties arising from the perception by senior managers that the Ofsted requirements are mainly related to meeting performance targets, the majority of the workers ended up trying to satisfy both the perceived Ofsted requirements and what was coined by one respondent as ‘the real social work’. The latter was described as focusing on direct work and building sustainable relationships with families. Lisa noted, ‘... *supporting families is all about relationship building of trust with them, to do this you have to spend time with them... these performance targets prevent this, we are always rushing against time to complete assessments...*’ (Lisa-SP-Borrowdale). This pressure and demands perceived as coming from senior managers regarding the performance targets generated more anxiety. The social worker respondents in both organisations noted that some workers sacrificed their

personal lives by working 'above and beyond the normal working hours including weekends'.

In Eastlea Children's Services, Franny observed '*... I can't say anybody enjoyed coming to work. I used to watch people coming from the car park coming around dragging their feet.... We had people coming in at 7.00 a.m. People were still taking phone calls and I was like this is 7.00pm at night....*' (Franny-Eastlea). This level of working appears '*reactive and mostly fueled by adrenaline*' without opportunities for effective planning (Franny-SW-Eastlea).

The long hours and being constantly busy took away time from social workers to think or reflect on the plight of the families. This may have been used as a defence mechanism by the social workers to avoid facing the families' trauma. Focusing on the performance indicators for senior managers created some sense of security that working hard to meet the perceived Ofsted targets would ultimately result in families and children being safeguarded. The guilty feelings for social workers of not concentrating on the quality of work and on relationship building with families were reduced as targets were met. However, Munro (2012) argued that instead of focusing on the tick-box performance driven culture, social workers should concentrate on good quality assessments that really focus on delivering the right help for the child.

### **6.7.2 Changing jobs**

The environments created in both Local Authorities were described as hectic and punitive to any signs of perceived weakness. This lifestyle appears unachievable and unsustainable and in some cases resulted in illness and frequent changes of jobs.

Ophelia observed. '*... after the inspection, senior managers were trying to improve things and trying to put us under pressure but not actually listening to the social workers so people were leaving .... looking for opportunities in better Local Authorities where they can get support ....*' (Ophelia-Borrowdale).



For some workers it may have resulted in 'fear of commitment' hence they chose to remain agency workers. They wanted to remain transient thus maintaining a distance from being enmeshed in the work environment with the option of moving on to another Local Authority within a week's notice. It can be argued that this was another form of defence mechanism to protect the workers from the traumatic work environment.

### **6.7.3 Role reversal**

This study notes that some workers from both organisations tended to 'step in' and 'out of role' as a way of coping with the painful realities of their work. These defensive behaviours may have been adopted to escape the reality of their professional role and work situation which was viewed as the source of the anxiety. They created and stepped into fantasy roles which they acted out in their daily operational duties at work. Hirschhorn (1988) asserts that if the anxiety grounded in work is too great, too difficult to bear people will escape by stepping out of role. The role shapes their vision so that they see the work reality for what it is but if they cannot bear the work reality, they need to step out of role so that they can step away from reality. These roles included 'sergeant', 'victim', 'hero' and 'savior'. Some senior managers in Eastlea were said to be displaying '*childlike antics to score points against each other's service area*' and a team manager was said to be 'bellowing like a sergeant major'. It can be argued that these fantasy roles were partly assigned to individual workers through the process of splitting and projection (Moxnes 1998).

#### **6.7.3.1 Victims**

The behaviour of some workers in Borrowdale described by several respondents depicts a sense of helplessness and powerlessness. It seems some workers adopted the role of victims looking to be rescued and sought refuge from the clients and other professionals. In Borrowdale, Rickson noted the extent of the trauma experienced and the impact of a lack of containing supportive work environment, *in one particular case, a social worker just sat there and cried in a Child in Need Meeting, she was falling apart in front of the family and professionals. ...*' (Rickson-

TM-Borrowdale). Ophelia noted, '*...social workers crying at a meeting with the Head of Service..*' (Ophelia-Borrowdale).

### **6.7.3.2 Heroes & Saviours.**

Agency social workers and team manager respondents in Borrowdale reported that they felt the projected feelings of resentment from some permanent workers. The agency workers were expected by the senior managers to clear the backlog of the unallocated cases. They reported being overwhelmed by the plight of the families. Ophelia noted, '*...I had families who had not been seen since receiving the referral 6 months ago....*' (Ophelia-SW-Borrowdale). Some of the respondents feared failing the families and also loss of employment if the senior managers felt that they were not meeting the expected targets required for the Ofsted inspection process. Some professions such as social work which enables working with others can be viewed as a form of reparation where success is deeply validating, strengthening the capacity to act constructively but failure or even limited success is felt to demonstrate inner deficiency and is intolerable (Dockar-Drysdale 1990, Roberts 1994). Thus the fear of failing families or Ofsted is likely to have increased the anxiety levels of some workers.

To manage the anxieties created, some of the agency workers created what seemed to be collectively shared fantasies, seeing themselves as 'saviours' and 'heroes' who had come to save families in Borrowdale. This contributed to the long working hours without taking any leave. Lorna expressed the views shared by some agency workers in Borrowdale "*... the permanent workers failed to do their job so we were brought in because of our expertise in child protection and assisting Local Authorities in crisis...we have come to save the day*" (Lorna-SP-Borrowdale). It can be argued that this view was also emanating from the projections of some of the existing permanent social workers and some senior managers who may have viewed agency workers as the 'rescuer'.

### **6.7.3.3 Punitive**

Ruch (2007) highlights the importance of providing holistic containment in organisations to support workers cope with the anxieties emanating from the job. In Eastlea, some team managers and senior managers appeared to step out of role. They appeared to adopt new roles described by some social worker respondents as an 'attacking and punitive' role. This defensive behaviour may have been adopted to justify the punitive and blaming culture created in the name of Ofsted inspection processes. Xenia noted '*You have to prepare very hard for an inspection; failure is not an option .... you have to create a nerve-wracking anxious environment for workers to push performance... that fear will make workers perform at very high levels....*' (Xenia- HOS-Eastlea). The lack of sympathy or recognition to those who deliver the organisation's primary task may result in brutal and insensitive treatment of subordinates in the system resulting in a sort of 'follow orders at all costs' mentality (Cooper 2018).

### **6.7.3.4 Invisible**

In Borrowdale, some of the senior leadership were viewed by some respondent social workers as being overwhelmed by the task. They were viewed as being 'defensive' and 'abandoning' the workers '*...We just heard information through gossip, it was very disjointed, you just did not know who the senior managers were...we did not see them...*' (Ophelia-SW-Borrowdale).

### **6.7.3.5 Avoidance**

The information from the interviews and my observations in both organisations made me wonder whether this 'infighting' and 'chaotic environment' was unconsciously created by the workers and the senior managers as a way of avoiding dealing with the task at hand which looked 'insurmountable' and 'too painful' to bear. In organizations, expectations are handed up and down, consciously and unconsciously through relations between individuals, sub-systems and through processes of action and avoidance. This will have an implication on primary task implementation (Vince 2001). The infighting created a diversion for the workers preventing them from facing the 'traumatic task' of dealing with vulnerable families.

In Borrowdale, it may have been to avoid the trauma of being confronted with families who were neglected over a significant period due to staffing problems. In Eastlea Children Services, it was to assuage guilty feelings of meeting the perceived Ofsted requirements which were seen as prioritising meeting performance targets over spending time doing direct work and building relationships with families.

## **6.8 Organisational defences**

### **6.8.1 Performance Targets: organisational defensive behaviours**

It can be argued that the need to religiously adhere to the audit and target regime is a defensive behavior exhibited to manage the anxieties brought about by dealing with families under trauma (Hischhorn 1988, Munro 2012, Whittaker 2011). The sense of failure and inadequacy induced by the threat of Ofsted inspection process appeared so overwhelming that it resulted in a 'combative' stance being taken by organisations. The senior management groups may have felt that the only way to fight back was to adhere rigidly to the performance targets which was perceived as the way to pass an inspection process '*when Ofsted come... they check your performance targets, if you are good then the battle is almost won..*' (Eileen-GM-Eastlea).

By hiding behind performance indicators and statistics, organisations are authorised to detach from thinking about the painful realities of the suffering of individual children. This escape from reality can be done without any guilty feelings as it appears to be openly sanctioned and permitted by the government, with Ofsted being the agency tasked to monitor this through the assessment of set performance indicators. However, instead of alleviating anxieties, organisational defensive behaviours adopted may have triggered additional anxieties which worsened the plight of the workers who were working within the organisations fraught with tension and turmoil... In some cases failure to meet the performance targets resulted in loss of employment. In her study, Menzies concluded that stress and anxiety in the nursing services could not be accounted for by the task alone but from the social defence system which was inadequate in alleviating anxiety because it also invokes anxiety (Menzies 1959).

The rigid nature of the audit regime with its emphasis on measurable performance targets has been a source of conflict and anxiety for social workers whose main basis for positive outcomes is derived from the formation of positive relationships with families, which is rather difficult to measure in quantifiable terms (Munro 2012, Ruch and Murray 2011).

Franny stated '*...I am not saying at any point children were placed at risk because despite all this pressure we still practiced but that's kind of where our focus had to be.. clearing our work trays. It was more about report writing...making work trays look pretty...making sure that boxes are ticked in our computer system and you are busy thinking I should be out there ...doing the direct work with families, get the children's wishes and feelings...*' (Franny-SW-Eastlea). Referring to the adherence of ritualistic procedures in a hospital setting, Halton asserts that far from making patients safe, obsessional-type systems, devoid of empathic relationships, increase the danger to patients of poor care, neglect, or abuse when these systems are under strain or management is absent (Halton 1994). Foster (2016) argues that whilst performance management is important, senior managers need to reappraise outcomes and success to make sure that performance indicators reflect qualitative as well as quantitative aspects.

It has to be acknowledged that the continuous scrutiny from senior management with the insistence of meeting performance indicators created disparities with the frontline workers who valued prioritising building quality relationships with families. The underlying anxieties associated with failing an Ofsted inspection process may have impacted on both organisations' primary task resulting in differences between the normative primary task, existential primary task and the phenomenal primary task. The differences in the three approaches to the primary task are likely to have distorted the implementation of the normative primary task (Owens 2015).

This difference created an ongoing dilemma and constant 'battle' between the need to implement what the social workers viewed as their normative primary task versus fear of reprisals from senior managers for not meeting performance targets. This

resulted in workers being always in turmoil particularly where the two factors are not consistent. Jasper noted, '*...it is always a battle with my manager... I want to spend time with the children, getting to know them, my manager is only interested in the performance stats ...*' (Jasper-SW-Eastlea). According to Hoyle (1994), the optimum position in an organisation would be when the normative primary task, existential primary task and phenomenal primary task are in alignment, that is, when the task the workers are being asked to pursue by those in authority is in alignment with the task that the workers believe they should carry out and the tasks that are actually being carried out.

It appears that in both Local Authorities under study, the senior managers' perception of the Ofsted requirements made it impossible for the normative and existential tasks to be in alignment. The tensions created within some individual workers from this meant that they were always in turmoil and at near breaking point. Greater anxieties are triggered if individuals feel they are diverting from their perception of the primary task. This was further complicated by the anxieties created within individual workers emanating from the reasons behind why they joined the profession and what motivated them to stay even when the working environment became fraught with anxieties.

It appears that some social workers in both organisations were torn between being open and honest by challenging the system regarding what they perceived as the correct standard of practice which is in the best interest of individual families rather than sticking to the prescribed performance indicators. This inner conflict was exacerbated by the blame culture rife within both Local Authorities and the risk of loss of employment. Inadvertently, these fears and the lack of an effective 'safe containing' environment due to the chaotic nature created within both organisations, precluded social workers from challenging the system, owning up to mistakes or genuine difficulties they were experiencing.

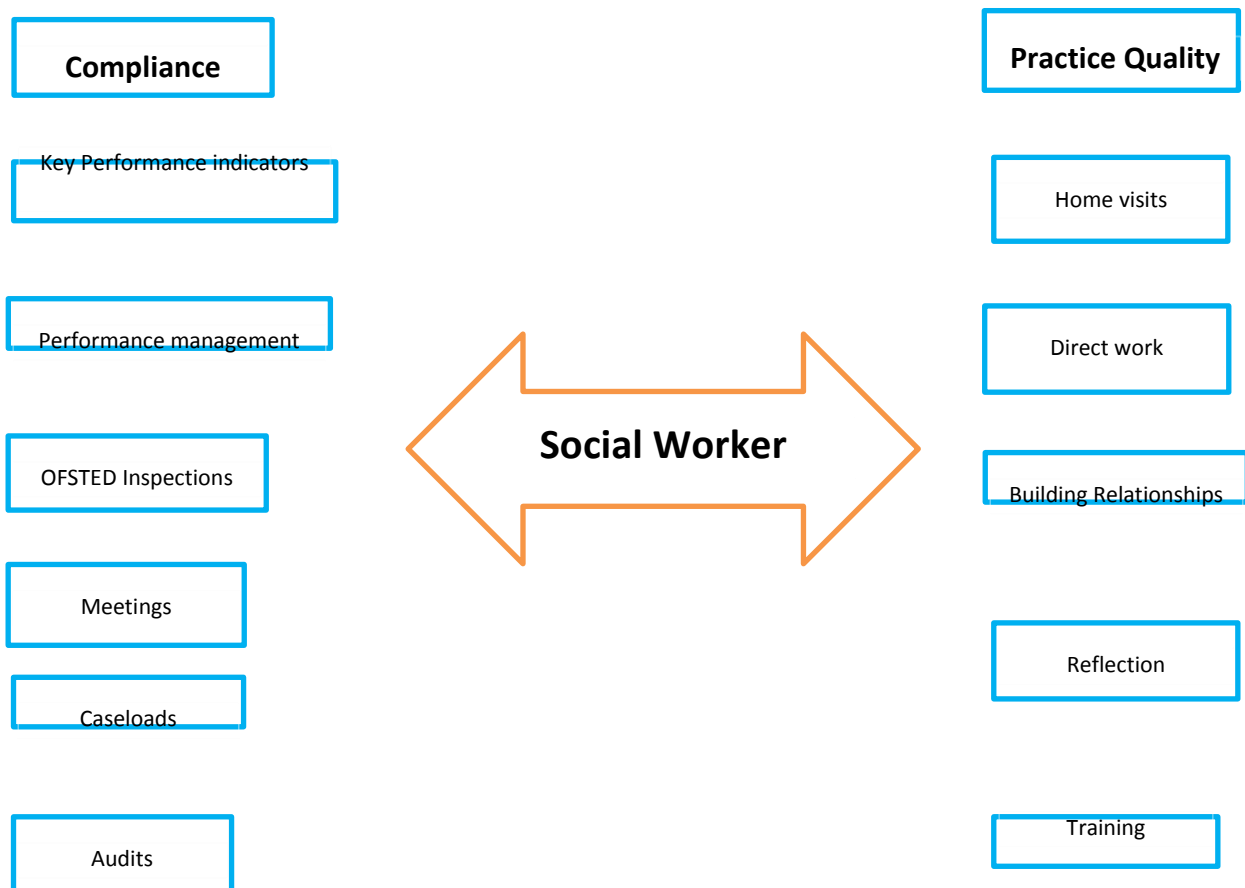
This study suggests that during the Ofsted inspection processes, the fear of failing to meet the performance targets is the overriding anxiety for workers and senior

managers. My own experience working in Local Authorities supports this view. There may be several explanations for this, one being the need to 'survive', due to the fear of loss of employment being one of the main driving factors. The perception of 'Ofsted in the mind' is that of an institution which is performance driven. The organisational defensive behaviours described earlier give a false illusion that if the tick box performance indicators are completed then individual and organisational performance is of a good standard, however, the serious case reviews such as Baby P has disproved this (Munro 2012, Jones 2014)

Fig 1 below shows the dilemma social workers are constantly experiencing in their work.

**Fig 1**

**Practice vs Compliance Tug- Of- War**



### 6.8.2 Organisational Defences enshrined within Procedures

In frontline social work, several defences are deployed to manage the anxieties triggered through performing the primary task. The majority of such defences are enacted and inbuilt within the structure and processes of the social work tasks. For social workers within the frontline services, the relief from anxiety provided by the defence of sticking to ritualistic practices cannot be ignored (Munro 2012, Whittaker 2011, Whittaker and Havard 2016). As previously stated, the environment created within both organisations in response to the Ofsted inspection significantly changed the functioning of the organisations and indeed some of the defences which were previously adequate in managing anxieties were rendered ineffective. The relief some social workers may have received from undertaking ritualistic tasks such as visiting children and holding meetings at prescribed times, irrespective of whether this was appropriate for the needs of the children or not, was no longer available in these dysfunctional organisations. In some cases, this was taken away by the autocratic nature of the way social workers were dictated to undertake their work and the random sacking of those not deemed to be performing '... *our work trays were looked at every day by managers and senior managers, you were told what to do and when...*' (Franny-SW-Eastlea).

For some workers, the detachment process which may have previously been achieved through cases being broken down into categories and using electronic identity numbers for families thereby depersonalising families is likely to have been rendered ineffective in providing a sense of relief as this was overridden with guilty feelings of not spending quality time with families. It is vital to acknowledge that the absence of these established defence mechanisms meant that the workers were confronted with the painful traumatic experiences of the children and families within an environment which was at times chaotic and unsupportive. It is not surprising that the level of splitting and projections resulted in increased basic assumption mentality behaviours manifested through aggression and hostility (Moxnes 1998).



As stated in the previous chapters, in both organisations, the structure of the Children's Services was similar to the majority of Local Authorities in this country. There is a clear demarcation of teams with specific roles and responsibilities. Respondents raised the difficulties which were viewed as associated with transferring cases. Delays in 'transferring' families within the teams were viewed negatively as causing 'delays in progressing plans for children. This can be viewed as an organisational defence enacted so that the workers achieve a sense of detachment from the holistic nature of the families' needs similar to the depersonalisation described by Menzies in her study (Menzies 1959). It can be argued that the children's reality is too painful to bear in entirety and these defensive systems and structures sanctioned by the government enable workers to remain detached. However in both organisations, several respondents reported that these defensive practices also invoked great anxieties for some workers, '*...when there was a delay in transferring cases from our team to the long-term team or LAC teams, colleagues were fired because there was a delay in cases moving yet it was not colleagues fault ...but more the receiving teams not readily accepting cases ...*' (Travinia-TM). Similar sentiments regarding difficulties encountered in transferring cases to other teams were raised by many respondents in Borrowdale.

## **6.9 Conclusion**

This chapter shows how the anxiety triggered by the Ofsted inspection process resulted in actions being undertaken which led to the organisations feeling 'under siege'. The senior managers' inability to manage the internal boundaries and the external boundary with Ofsted resulted in the feeling of being 'under attack' permeating throughout all the levels in both organisations. Both organisations were operating within basic assumption mentality as evidenced by the irrational and chaotic behaviours within the teams. The organisations' behaviour demonstrated their strong wishes to avoid reality as it was deemed too painful and causing psychological conflict within or between group members (Stokes 1994). The organisation created in the mind of the workers appeared to be that of performance-driven organisations where the focus was mainly on performance targets. This appeared to cause a dilemma for some workers who believed that the focus of their

work should be about building relationships with families. The next chapter will explore in detail the individuals' views of Ofsted.

## Chapter 7: Ofsted in the mind: the Saviour vs the Monster

*'...through the Ofsted inspection, ...senior managers started to look at resources... they identified resources required to meet the service needs .....things got better... caseloads went down from 90 to 20 cases ... ..workers did not see a failed inspection as a negative thing... Ofsted was actually very positive and beneficial in improving their working environment' (Rickson-TM-Borrowdale).*

*'...you have to prepare very hard for an inspection... failure is not an option Ofsted is a very punitive organisation and you suffer untold misery if you do not pass.. . . . . you watch directors walk out that door and that becomes headline news... it is like they are killed... .. Ofsted just march them out of their jobs and give them no employment ...there is no coming back ... (Xenia-HOS-Eastlea).*

### 7.0 Introduction

The comments above from Xenia and Rickson show the different views of Ofsted portrayed by respondents in this study. Throughout the period of this study different facets of Ofsted were depicted by the respondents. One of the recurrent themes was the strong emotional response to the Ofsted inspection process. This is not unusual given that some respondents viewed Ofsted as having a significant impact on workers' personal and professional lives and the implementation of the primary task and survival of the organisations (Davis 2012).

This chapter will analyse the metaphoric images of Ofsted captured by the respondents; 'saviour', 'monster', 'punitive', 'rescuer' and 'theatre production'. The respondents' metaphors revealed profound meanings that traditional research language could not have conveyed (Stanworth 1997). The chapter will also explore how the image of Ofsted 'held in the minds' of the workers impacted on the responses to the inspection process by individuals and organisations and the overall impact on the implementation of the primary task. This chapter will also assess the

sustainability of inspections as noted by the respondents followed by my own reflections of the Ofsted inspection process.

As stated in chapter 1, the aim of Ofsted is threefold: raising common agreed standards of performances; measuring comparative performances and improving quality (Rustin 2004). There is evidence that inspections can strongly support performance improvement. They do this by being clear about both the strengths of local systems and the areas where improvement is needed, by highlighting and disseminating good practice and where necessary, shining a ruthless spotlight on failure (Goldup 2011). However, Ofsted has been criticized of being too harsh and punitive on Local Authorities resulting in some Local Authorities hiding the true reflections of performance in their organisations (Rustin 2004).

## **7. 1The different faces of Ofsted**

### **7.1.1 Power and Authority: Ofsted the Omnipotent Being**

The image of Ofsted inspectors created in the minds of both organisations appeared to be that of 'omnipotent' beings. They were viewed as having the ultimate power and authority to decide the fate of organisations. The quotes from Xenia and Rickson at the beginning of this chapter illustrate the power and authority attributed to Ofsted. Several respondents in both organisations highlighted that massive resources are poured into departments involved in the Ofsted inspection process to prevent failure or in the aftermath of failing an inspection (iMPower 2015).

As noted in this study, irrespective of whether an organisation is preparing for an inspection or is in the aftermath of failing an inspection process, the actions undertaken by both organisations show that responding to Ofsted appears to take over the life of the organisations. Organisations under study appeared to deviate from their normal way of functioning to focus on what they perceived as the requirements of Ofsted inspections. Xenia expresses the views shared by some respondents, *'When I say you have to prepare I think your whole time of being in this, is preparing for Ofsted, so your whole role irrespective of whether you know*

*whether they are coming or not or when they are coming, your whole role is about preparing for them because it should be our bread and butter' (Xenia-HOS).*

Respondents noted that some individuals were working very long hours to meet the perceived Ofsted requirements. Lucy noted that, *'...For months and months throughout this year...it was Ofsted are coming; Ofsted are coming;... the anxiety just filtered down for me at a ridiculous rate. It was senior managers and managers' anxieties that Ofsted are coming we have to get everything done' (Lucy-SW-Eastlea).*

The power of Ofsted was also seen in the way Ofsted inspections seemed to dictate the shape and functioning of the organisations. Information from this study shows how some workers struggled to manage when the implementation of the primary task was adjusted and adapted to suit the organisations' perception of the Ofsted framework at that time. It can be argued that the implementation of the primary task should be consistent and this is what Ofsted evaluates during inspections. However some respondents felt differently. This may have resulted in confusion regarding direction of the organisation when the Ofsted inspection was completed. A senior manager, Xenia voiced her feelings following passing the Ofsted inspection process, *'...Ofsted have taken away the reason for living, what am I supposed to do now that the inspection is finished...'* (Xenia-HOS). As noted in previous chapters, several respondents in Eastlea noted that this organisation tended to go into 'stagnation' following inspections.

This study shows that some social workers view Ofsted as being too driven by performance targets and not focused on the quality of work they were undertaking. Franny noted, *'... they need to take more interest in social work practice not just the paperwork side of it, don't sit down and talk to me about my cases, come and see me in practice ....., Ofsted inspectors should basically get their hands dirty because it's just not about ticking boxes it's about taking a bigger picture of social work almost like a day in the life of a social worker and being realistic..'* (Franny-SW-Eastlea).

### 7.1.2 Theatre production

Analysing the information from this study in my seminar groups and supervision, one could not avoid noting the vivid theatre metaphors portrayed in some of the behaviours of both organisations in response to the inspection process. It appeared that some of the collective shared fantasies resulted in some individuals stepping out of reality and subsequently out of roles which support work group mentality (Moxnes 1998). The normative primary task became less focal as it was redefined according to what the organisations perceive as the requirements of Ofsted.

The previous chapter explored how the metaphors depicting 'war' were used to describe the situation in both organisations during the Ofsted inspection process. It is interesting to note that the theatre metaphor was also used to describe both organisations' behaviours in response to the Ofsted inspection process, however, this was more pronounced in Eastlea. These are such different metaphors with different foci. War is focused on winning or losing; danger; need to survive; hostile, overcoming obstacles, obedience and command. Whereas play is focused on joy; togetherness; team spirit; playfulness; consultative, competitiveness and hiding any unpleasant aspects or conflict in the teams (Oberlechner and Mayer-Schoenberger 2002). The narratives from respondents show how such different metaphors existed side by side within the organisations (Carpenter 2008). In both organisations the senior leadership teams were like the 'directors' of this 'act/play' the audience being the Ofsted inspectors.

Data from this research demonstrates that a lot of work went into the preparation phase of what both organisations perceived their audience would like to see. The first was hiring of additional staff as stated in the previous chapters. In Eastlea, the senior managers held various sessions with workers to coach them how to talk to inspectors and making sure particular workers are around in the office when the inspectors turn up. Franny commented on how she viewed all this prepping for the inspectors; *'I think it's a bit of a joke... I think the Ofsted inspection; the whole process ... is a bit of dressage... I just found it was all dressed up .....And all the prepping, the number of meetings we had about how to speak to an inspector; we*

*are adults... We are professionals; if someone asks us questions obviously it's our professional judgment how we answer that question and clearly, inspection is about kind of service we provide (Franny-SW-Eastlea).*

This prepping and coaching extended to the day the inspectors were in the building with workers given 'manuscripts' to read. Franny expressed '*...when the inspectors came in...I was confronted by my team manager 'don't say anything'...then she went 'read this hand out in case you have to speak to an inspector' ...When the inspectors were in our team room we were told where we sit and work; it was like... you were not allowed to breathe, ...*' (Franny-SW-Eastlea).

This 'stepping out of role' in some organisations, although a major concern, also brings into question the authenticity of the whole Ofsted inspection process. In the inspection of all public service sectors, trust is required because improvement is not possible without prior acknowledgement of weakness or deficiency and no-one is going to explore their own deficiencies willingly if they believe they are going to be punished when these are discovered (Rustin 2004).

One of the themes from this research is that this whole Ofsted inspection process is nerve wrecking and intolerable to the extent that organisations appear to recreate different realities to their normal day to day life to survive this. Such is the fear to hide reality that some of what goes on during inspections appear staged with workers being 'hidden away' if they are deemed not appropriate. As in any play, some senior managers may have wanted to portray the best actors to their 'audience', Ofsted. This action seemed to create divisions amongst the workers between those deemed 'good performers' and those deemed 'poor performers'. This must have negatively impacted on the confidence and morale of the workers who were deemed not good enough for Ofsted. It appears as if the organisation felt the strong need to protect itself from these workers. A social worker Franny expressed, '*... obviously, you going to present the best ... it was colleagues of mine who were asked to leave the office.... I noticed that half my team was missing, It was like to hide the crap away... it was sad. I was supposed to be one of them ... but I turned*

*up late...that's telling them bluntly that we do not want you to talk to the inspectors ..... that was harsh and painful to deal with..... (Franny-SW-Eastlea).* In Eastlea, the same sentiments were echoed by Betty and Travinia. However, Cynthia viewed this as necessary as the organisation needed to present itself positively. '*... the Local Authority did not want the inspectors to speak to everybody because they know that it is not everyone who will represent the Local Authority in good light..*' (Cynthia-TM-Eastlea).

Some workers who were normally entrusted to work daily safeguarding children in this Local Authority were viewed as 'not good enough' for Ofsted inspectors. This action can be viewed as defensive practice adopted by some senior managers against the anxieties emanating from the Ofsted inspection. In their study, Whittaker and Havard (2016) identified 'hiding files' from inspectors as one of the defensive practices adopted by organisations during inspection processes.

It is interesting to note that some workers also expected to 'prepare and be prepped' for an inspection. This lack of 'prepping' was viewed as contributing to the failure of the second successive inspection process in Borrowdale by a respondent. Ophelia noted '*...little support was offered regarding how we were supposed to achieve what we had been told to prepare for the inspection.....no one really prepared us about what to say to inspectors...*' (Ophelia-SW-Borrowdale). This situation may result in the creation of a culture whereby workers feel the need to present a certain image for Ofsted which may explain why practice standards for Ofsted inspectors are perceived as different from what an organisation does in its normal day to day working life. It can be argued that the purpose of an inspection process is to assess the daily implementation of the primary task not the 'prepared version' of the task.

It is interesting to note that the 'staging' process for Ofsted may not be limited to Children's Services but also to the schools who are inspected by Ofsted as well. Eileen, who had worked in both organisations under study commented on her child's school. She noted '*...schools are normally much more aware of Ofsted inspections, am not sure whether they are announced or unannounced but I do notice that things*



*suddenly go up on some walls quite interestingly that have not been there before. And they suddenly start sending letters to parents...'. (Eileen-GM-Eastlea).*

Davis (2012) asserts that it was claimed that some schools were attempting to cheat Ofsted by bribing pupils, sending troublemakers home and rehearsing lessons. Some whistle-blowers said expert teachers from other schools had been drafted in to replace poorer staff during inspections. Commenting on inspections of all public services, Rustin (2004) shares similar views stating that faced with prospective disgrace and sanction for falling below standard, organisations will conceal truths, and develop solidarity, even paranoia, towards the outside. The preoccupation within the mind does not allow for deficiencies and limitations to be thought about or admitted. The organisations want to display a particular image which they perceive as the image required by the Ofsted inspection process.

One manager is said to have found it difficult to come out of this 'fantasy role' after the Ofsted inspection process and she struggled to revert to her normal role. The lack of effective supportive structures in Eastlea may have meant that some managers were not afforded a safe environment to offload the anxieties triggered by the Ofsted inspection process may have lingered post passing the Ofsted inspection. As noted by Betty, '*...My manager had turned into something from hell. She could not bring herself back to just being a team manager and carry on supporting us. She was still at that critical Ofsted stage and I was like Ofsted is over and the pressure is off* (Betty-SW-Eastlea).

### **7.1.3 Rescuer**

The data shows two organisations whose images of 'Ofsted in the mind' impacted on their response to the Ofsted inspection process. The senior managers in Borrowdale appeared to view Ofsted negatively as this research shows that some of them lost their jobs following failing an Ofsted inspection. However, it seems that some of the respondents' (social workers and team managers) view and perception of Ofsted was positive. Prior to the first Ofsted inspection process, Borrowdale appeared to have been facing difficulties regarding practice standards. It appears that the

organisation could not find ways to remove themselves from this predicament. Some workers may have viewed Ofsted as a potential 'rescuer' for them. Cornelia noted, '*I was so relieved when Ofsted came... I can say they saved me ...well my career...and the families.*' (Cornelia-SW-Borrowdale). Thus during the inspection, some workers were open and showed inspectors cases 'hidden in the cupboards'. They may have felt this was the only way they could be helped. '*...During inspections Local Authorities try and cover up things that are bad...it does not help because when we went on special measures that helped because we would not be where we are now... .. when we went to special measures that's when something was done about staffing levels about caseloads perhaps that's what we needed*' (Lisa-SP-Borrowdale).

It needs to be acknowledged that Ofsted was not only saviour to the workers but to the families who had been neglected in Borrowdale. Ophelia referred to Child in Need cases where children were not in school and visits were not undertaken frequently. '*...children were not seen by a professional for 5 or 6 months*' (Ophelia-SW-Borrowdale).

It appears that some workers lacked trust in their own senior management to change without being told by Ofsted to improve things. They relied on Ofsted to highlight areas of poor practice and identify an improvement plan to improve performance (Goldup 2011). Indeed in this organisation it was only after failing Ofsted inspection that senior managers began to take some form of action to improve service delivery although viewed as 'ad hoc' by some respondents, at least there was an impetus to improve.

It is interesting to note that Borrowdale failed two successive inspection processes before being judged as adequate. During this period the situation in the organisation was described as 'dire'. Given the vital nature of the organisation's primary task of safeguarding vulnerable children, it is difficult to ascertain why and how the situation in this organisation proceeded unmitigated for such a long period after the initial failing. Some respondents attested to a '*few hundred of unallocated cases locked in*

*the cupboards*' during the initial Ofsted inspection. However, despite this the organisation appeared to have been left to their own predicament with an improvement plan, only to discover during the re-inspection that not much had changed. Rickson shared the views raised by several respondents from Borrowdale '*...when the inspectors returned we failed again, nothing had changed, too many agency workers ... it was still a mess.*' (Rickson-TM-Borrowdale). Ofsted was aware that this Local Authority had failed two consecutive inspections which is an indication that this organisation may have lacked capacity to change. However, no evidence to suggest that this organisation was supported in effecting the changes as they struggled to implement the improvement plans. As noted in chapter 1, Jones (2011) views the Ofsted inspection process as a hit-and-run inspectorate, 'turning up, issuing a report and then galloping away over the horizon until the next inspection.'

#### **7.1.4 Punitive Ofsted**

Unlike Borrowdale, Eastlea appeared to view Ofsted as harsh and punitive. As noted by Franny '*... we were all like oh God... so this is Ofsted, it really is a monster...unending suffering...*' (Franny-SW-Eastlea). The 'suffering' experienced by some workers was attributed to the Ofsted inspection regime and not necessarily to the actions undertaken by the leaders. Lucy noted the stress from the inspection process '*...I felt exhausted, a lot of energy used. No lessening of pressure... obviously we can't blame management; because they did not know when the inspectors will come ...*' (Lucy-SW-Eastlea). This is a Local Authority which was described by one respondent as having some workers who were '*process driven and dated in their practice*' (Xenia-HOS-Eastlea). Given this, it can be easily understood why some of the workers were said to 'hate' Ofsted as changes perceived as negative were injected into this organisation due to the fear of failing an inspection process. Lucy shared the same sentiments raised by some respondents in Eastlea; '*...Before starting this preparation ...It was okay but not as much pressure as this because; you are not looking forward to any inspectors...; but you do your work in your pace and the management can see that work is being done but there is not much pressure...*' (Lucy-SW-Eastlea).

The majority of the respondents referred to the trauma and suffering endured during preparing for the Ofsted inspection process which culminated into what some viewed as a culture of 'intimidation', 'threats' by senior management and also loss of employment by workers. It was not necessarily Ofsted punishing the workers but rather the actions undertaken by senior managers in their response to the Ofsted inspection process which was viewed by some workers as punitive. The majority of the respondents who were interviewed highlighted that the blame culture within the Local Authority escalated as the preparation progressed. The respondent social workers highlighted that this negative organisational culture characterised by fear and blame resulted in some workers feeling vulnerable and lacking trust in management (Healy et al 2009; Baginsky 2013). However, two respondents (one team manager and a senior manager) viewed the punitive culture as relevant to push the workers to meet the demands of the Ofsted requirements.

Referring to events in Borrowdale Rickson noted, '*... The Director who was in post when I initially arrived in the department in 2008 was moved to another department after failing the first inspection, The second time we failed the inspection they moved on some senior managers...*'. In some cases failing the Ofsted inspection was not attributed to failures in the systems but to specific individuals. It appears that what determined the sacking of workers were the findings of the Ofsted inspection. In Eastlea, respondents mentioned that several workers who were viewed as not performing by senior managers were sacked during the Ofsted preparation phase, however, the respondents' view was that there was no evidence to suggest that these workers' performance was an issue prior to the Ofsted inspection process.

Munro (2012) mentioned the anxiety in the inspection system and the persistence of 'blame culture', which she views as not only counter-productive but damaging when senior staff are dismissed following an inspection. Although Munro did not attribute the 'blame and dismissal' issues to Ofsted, she noted that it would be helpful for Ofsted to make the detail of the overall inspection judgment clearer.

According to Davis (2012) the constant monitoring causes an atmosphere of distrust and constant fear. Before Ofsted inspectors arrive, many schools stay open 24 hours a day so that teachers can make sure that all work is up to date. The anxiety of being judged 'unsatisfactory' is apparent. "*The extra pressure is a nightmare and so demoralising, ... you are constantly thinking, 'are they going to come in tomorrow?' and it really affects the quality of your life*" (comment from a teacher quoted in Davis 2012).

The changes in the Ofsted inspection framework meant that during the inspection of Eastlea, social workers had a much more responsible and accountable role as Ofsted inspectors spoke to the social workers and team managers during an inspection. In Eastlea, several respondents expressed that this caused great anxiety among some social workers who felt exposed in the absence of the usual defence system where Managers and senior leadership were previously viewed as having the authority and responsibility for the work.

It appeared that during the inspection process, Ofsted inspectors mirrored some of the behaviours of senior managers in Eastlea. Workers were interviewed in full view of their colleagues on their desks in the vicinity of the managers. This may have added pressure on workers who were already under immense pressure regarding the consequences of not giving the expected right response. It was as if the Ofsted inspectors were unconsciously colluding with the leadership within the Local Authority regarding the responses they wanted workers to give. Betty noted:

*'...the discussion was not private, no discretion, I was just sitting a desk away from the person who the inspectors were interviewing. Managers and Service Managers were hovering nearby so the pressure was just immense....'* (Betty-SW-Eastlea).

The Ofsted interviews were quite significant as they were viewed as contributing to the assessment of performance of the organisation. One worker was said to have found the interview quite traumatic and her confidence was knocked. The workers who were interviewed by Ofsted were debriefed by senior managers, however, several social worker respondents from Eastlea viewed this debriefing as an

interrogation of what was asked and the answers the workers provided to the inspectors. Two social work respondents expressed that this information was relayed to all managers and other workers so they prepare in case they were interviewed. Instead of the debriefing being supportive, one responded highlighted that some workers viewed it as another layer of nerve wrecking interview.

Franny recounted '*... one of my colleagues after she had been spoken to by the inspectors...in the team room in front of everyone...she was in tears ...they made her cry to the point it went beyond endurable. She just could not speak... they told her she did not know her cases..... She had her debriefing actually interrogation with senior managers and she did not come out of this feeling any better ...*' (Franny-SW- Eastlea). Betty recounted the similar sentiments. Referring to the inspection of schools, Davis (2012) notes that teachers are suffering breakdowns because of the stress of Ofsted inspections.

The sections above highlight some of the metaphoric language used in both organisations to depict Ofsted: '*Omnipotent, monster, rescuer, punitive, theatre*'. Such metaphoric language vividly illuminates the basic assumptions prevailing in the organisations manifested through the unconscious processes of splitting and projection to manage the anxieties associated with Ofsted inspection processes. Although the previous chapter highlighted the dominance of BaF in both organisations, the theatre metaphor also depicts some level of BaD functioning. It appears that the shared fantasy was dependency on the leaders who were viewed as capable of providing the required support ((Stokes 1994, French and Simpson 2010) to manage the 'omnipotent Ofsted' by 'preparing' the workers and providing a 'script' during the inspections. One worker in Borrowdale viewed the lack of this '*prepping and coaching*' as contributing to her unpreparedness for the inspection process. In his work in organisations, Moxnes (1998) noted that what a group experiences as its reality is a product of the group members' collective projections and how these are manifested.

Furthermore, the metaphors used portrayed not only the 'organisation in the mind' but the 'Ofsted in the mind' of individuals in both organisations. Hutton, Bazalgette & Reed (1997) assert what is happening inside an individual's head, that is, their own reality which has to be distinguished from other reality 'out there'. The view of Ofsted as the 'rescuer' demonstrates that the 'organisation in the mind' of individuals may have been that of an organisation which needs to be saved. Whilst viewing Ofsted, an institution tasked with the mandate of evaluating performance, as 'punitive' may indicate an organisation in the mind of 'not wanting to be found out' (Healy et al, 2009).

## **7.2 Sustainability of changes**

This study shows that at some level Ofsted did not fully consider the cultures of the organisations and the day to day subtleties that were the driving forces within both organisations. This is understandable given that the inspection process took place over a specific number of weeks. As stated in chapter 1, where Local Authorities are judged as Requiring Improvement or Inadequate, inspectors go away expecting to see improvements when they re-inspect the Local Authorities. However; as evidenced by the stagnation described by some respondents in Eastlea after an inspection process and the successive inspection failures in Borrowdale, Local Authorities do not always find it easy to improve and maintain practice improvement following inspections. As highlighted in chapter 1, the iMPower research identified that out of the 86 councils inspected twice or more since 2010, approximately 25% of those rated as inadequate in 2010 remained inadequate over the five year period, and 56% of those requiring improvement/considered satisfactory in 2010 maintained that rating on re-inspection (iMPower 2015).

Some of the respondents in the iMPower research raised the high level of resources required pre and post inspections as impacting on the effective completion of the changes required to meet Ofsted inspections. This suggests what has been highlighted in previous chapters regarding the potential distortion of the primary task to suit Ofsted inspection requirements. This raises a pertinent question regarding credibility, whether Ofsted is assessing the organisations' real primary task or an

adapted distorted version of the primary task which fits the organisations' perception of the Ofsted requirements.

Findings from this study, particularly in Eastlea, show that superficial changes happen during and around inspections. This may suggest that in some Local Authorities the cultures are deeply embedded and intrinsic in the operational functioning of the organisation thus these short-term changes made in response to the Ofsted inspection process are not sustainable. One can argue that this is one of the contributing factors to the vicious cycle that some organisations go through whereby it is difficult for organisations judged as outstanding to maintain this repeatedly over several years.

In both organisations under study, respondents described the massive recruitment processes around Ofsted inspection times. This presents the risk of providing a false sense of improvement. A senior practitioner, Lisa from Borrowdale viewed it as, '*like putting plaster to hold things together...*'. This is clearly not sustainable and it is not apparent how this would be beneficial for the primary task implementation in the long term.

The additional agency workers recruited in both organisations were temporary and only focused on the 'here and now'. Such recruitment policies do not suggest the impetus to plan long-term for sustainable changes. Franny noted, '*...Bringing extra staff to clear backlog. Well if you need extra staff to clear backlog it means you need extra staff all the time...*' (Franny-SW-Eastlea). Similar views were echoed by several respondents in Borrowdale.

As with any theatre performance, the end is signaled when the curtains close at the end of the play. Information from this study in Eastlea indicates that the majority of the structures put in place during the Ofsted preparation ceased within a short space of time after the departure of the Ofsted inspectors. Eileen noted '*...as soon as Ofsted goes away there is this sense of relief whether you pass or fail ...but a few*



*things get maintained and sustained but ultimately you tend to go back to where you were prior to Ofsted inspection...* ' (Eileen-GM-Eastlea).

As described by the majority of respondents in Borrowdale, the workers were worried when their organisation came off special measures and was judged as 'Requiring improvement'. They were fearful that the situation would deteriorate to what it was prior to the Ofsted inspection process. Rickson observed *'I would say they were disappointed when we came off the improvement notice because it meant that some of the resources they had were being withdrawn because the department had clearly pumped a lot of additional resources... their fears were justified agency workers were asked to leave... I left as well..'* (Rickson-TM-Borrowdale).

This study shows that significant improvements were made in Borrowdale Children Services when they recruited several interim senior managers including an interim director. Commenting on the changes in Borrowdale Eileen who has worked in both organisations noted, *'... Ofsted inspections are just like see-saw, you get so many resources to pass, look at what happened in Borrowdale, they employed all the expensive senior managers who turned things around and practice did improve massively, once they passed the inspection the additional funding was gradually withdrawn and all the agency senior managers and agency workers have now left .. the additional posts which helped them pass were cut...so slowly performance starts to drop... it's unsustainable ...'* (Eileen-GM-Eastlea).

This demonstrates how some Local Authorities struggle to sustain positive changes made to pass inspections once the inspection process is completed. It also shows that in some organisations improving performance to pass an inspection is resources-led.

### **7.3 Reflection on Ofsted**

Findings from this study show that the inspection process, although bringing about trauma to organisations, was positive for both organisations. One shudders to think

what would have happened to the high levels of unallocated cases if the inspectors had not turned up in Borrowdale. Similarly, it is difficult to discern what could have happened in Eastlea as it had been described as process driven and 'not progressing and developing' to meet the changing needs of its community. The concerns noted by respondents in this study do not necessarily solely lie with the inspection framework; but rather the response of the organisations to the inspection process which contributed significantly to the anxieties in both organisations.

One of the issues raised by the majority of the respondents in both organisations pertaining to the inspection process is sustainability of improvements made in response to Ofsted inspections. The organisational behaviour described by the respondents of increasing staffing to pass the inspection process and withdrawing it after the process is understandable given that such high levels of resources may be difficult to maintain. It is likely that practice standards will start changing and reverting back to where they were prior to the preparation for Ofsted stage, which in some cases is the organisation's way of functioning when implementing its primary task on a daily basis. Travinia stated, '*...the increase in staffing are done for inspectors and there is no follow up to see how can we uphold the standard ... it defeats the whole purpose because after the inspection things tend to fall back to where they were originally because you get rid of the agency staff that helped you to build up that picture that work is being done...*' (Travinia – TM-Eastlea).

As noted in chapter 1, Ofsted appears to be always reinventing and changing its inspection framework every few years. Information from this study shows that both organisations made significant changes to their way of functioning to meet their perception of the Ofsted requirements to pass an inspection process. What this effectively means is that each time Ofsted changes the inspection framework; the organisations also have to change and adapt.

This frequent change to the inspection framework means that it is not embedded well enough for those being inspected to assess its effectiveness as to whether it is fit for purpose in evaluating the child protection services' implementation of the primary

task. It is difficult to evaluate and improve an inspection process when it frequently changes its framework. For any meaningful evaluation, a framework needs to be in place for a significant number of years to see whether it is fit for purpose.

In addition to the resource issues mentioned in this chapter, this ever changing nature of the Ofsted inspection framework could be seen as partly the reason why changes in organisations are difficult to sustain. It is likely that organisations may continue changing their implementation of the primary task to suit the Ofsted inspection framework. It may be difficult for Local Authorities to keep up with the pace of ongoing change of the inspection regimes. Such changes may be viewed as a defence mechanism where actions undertaken by organisations focus on the future as a defence against the difficulties of the present. These structural changes in organisations are usually implemented during preparation of an impending Ofsted inspection process or following failure of an inspection process, with the belief that transforming the organisation is the way to satisfy the Ofsted inspectors. It can be argued that Ofsted is mirroring the behaviors of the organisations they are inspecting or is it the organisations that are mirroring Ofsted's ever changing nature.

One does wonder what the 'organisation in the mind' exist for some of the senior managers described in both organisations. What is their existential primary task and what tasks do they think their workers are actually carrying out the phenomenal primary task. Understanding this would be insightful in knowing whether these are aligned to the normative task (Owens 2015). What appears apparent in this study is that some of the senior managers' 'organisation in the mind' is that their organisations are not implementing the normative primary task to the standards expected to pass an Ofsted inspection. This may explain why significant organisational changes are undertaken in response to the Ofsted inspections. These senior managers maybe content that at all other times their organisations are effectively implementing the normative primary task. Ofsted is tasked with measuring performance with a view to improve, so if they are not measuring the implementation of the normative primary task, what are they assessing?

In her review Munro (2012) noted that local areas should have more freedom to develop their own effective child protection services, rather than focusing on meeting central government targets. A one-size-fits-all approach to child protection is preventing local areas from focusing on the child (Munro 2012). As can be seen from this study, both organisations are quite different, each organisation has its own unique characteristics, demographics and culture. This should be taken into account in an inspection process. Using one framework may be the reason why some organisations adapt their way of primary task implementation to suit their view of the Ofsted requirements and quickly revert back to their culture and way of operating which may render the inspection process ineffective.

In one of their reports, the ADCS (2015) noted that UK has one of the safest child protection systems in the developed world yet the results prior to April 2015 of Ofsted's Single Inspection Framework (SIF) do not reflect this reality. Their view is similar to the issues raised in this study by respondents that the current framework does not get to the heart of how well services are working and with a single worded judgment runs the risk of destabilising the very services it seeks to improve. The report asserted that what is needed is a robust inspection system which captures the complexity of this crucial work whilst encouraging improvements via the sharing best practice (ADCS 2015).

#### **7.4 Conclusion**

The metaphoric language used by respondents shows the different views of Ofsted held in the mind of respondents in both organisations. The 'Ofsted in the mind' impacted on the behaviour of individuals and how they responded to the inspection process. In Eastlea, the resultant behaviours of individuals was that of identifying strategies to 'conquer' the inspection process whilst in Borrowdale the workers viewed Ofsted in a positive light. In fact in Borrowdale their circumstances eventually improved following the inspection process. One of the main issues identified by respondents was the sustainability of changes made in response to the Ofsted inspection process. The actions undertaken by the leadership teams appeared to be short term strategies to 'pass' the inspection. This had a significant impact on the

individuals in both organisations and influenced the organisational functioning. The next chapter will explore the leadership prevailing in both organisations during the inspection process.

## **Chapter 8: Leading and Managing an Organisation in Turmoil**

### **8.0 Introduction**

Effective leadership is one of the most fundamental cornerstones to creating a successful functioning organisation. Thus it is not surprising that various aspects of leadership have been consistently recurrent themes across the narratives and observations in this study. The theoretical framework underpinning leadership was explored in Chapter 2 in particular leadership in social work (Spillane 2006, McKitterick 2015, Aamodt 2016, Fairtlough 2018, Cooper 2017, Cooper 2018). This chapter will explore leadership in both organisations as they went through a process of change to manage and survive an Ofsted inspection process.

The concept of leadership needs to be viewed from a holistic perspective. It is important to take into consideration the impact of the conscious and unconscious processes on the workers and leaders emanating from defence mechanisms deployed in response to the implementation of the primary task and the Ofsted inspection processes. Equally important is the role played by leaders in managing the internal and external boundaries including the various powers exerted on the organisation from both internal and external forces. The leader- followership relationship dynamics, the environment and culture of organisations all need to be considered. One critical aspect arising from this study is the issue of power and authority in organisations.

### **8.1 Leadership before the Ofsted inspection processes**

Events in both Local Authorities show that there was a significant change in the leadership style before, during and after the inspection processes which had a profound influence on the implementation of the primary task and the culture within both organisations.

This study shows similarities and differences to the leadership styles in both organisations before the Ofsted inspection process. In Borrowdale, some of the phrases used by several respondents to describe the leadership included '*paralysed*', '*apathetic*', '*inactive*' while in Eastlea they used phrases, '*stagnant*', '*lack of development*'. In Eastlea, Travinia referred to the leadership as '*dinosaurs*'. It appears that the leadership teams in both organisations were viewed as 'not being in touch' with their frontline services and appeared not aware of what was happening on the ground. This could have been accurate in Borrowdale. However, it appeared that in Eastlea, the senior leadership team might have had insight regarding what was happening as evidenced by their 'hectic preparation' of the Ofsted inspection process.

Eastlea required effective leadership to address the improvement plan identified in their previous Ofsted inspection. Several respondents stated that the senior leadership teams in Eastlea had no close interaction with staff. '*... senior managers have closed doors policy...in a community care survey one social worker said they needed a telescope to see senior managers... I agree whole heartedly with what happened here before the inspection...*' (Jasper-SW-Eastlea).

In Borrowdale, the quality of service delivery was described by respondents as 'dire' that action was required by senior leadership to restore the functioning of this organisation to undertake the primary task. The huge backlog of unallocated cases needed to be addressed but this was impossible with the level of staffing in Borrowdale, Sue notes that '*there were so many unallocated cases ....there was no way the size of the team we had was going to cope with this...*' (Sue-TM-Borrowdale). The social workers talked of the fear experienced visiting families many months after initial referrals were received. '*Dread, fear, shame... I felt when I knocked on families' doors to discuss a referral received six months ago... this was stressful and nerve-wracking...*' (Ophelia-SW-Borrowdale). The senior managers in Borrowdale were described by some respondents as inaccessible to the workers as they '*..were rarely seen*' (Ophelia-SW-Borrowdale). They were therefore not

confronted daily by the unallocated cases and did not have to cope with the 'chaotic situation' on the ground.

The picture depicted in both organisations is that of leadership teams who were not motivating and supporting their staff to ensure that their organisations were steered in the direction to achieve set goals or vision. It appears that there was a level of 'detachment' by the senior managers in both organisations. In their study of why social workers stay in organisations, Frost et al. (2017) identified support from management as one of the factors motivating workers to stay in organisations. The events in both organisations appear to indicate 'dysfunctional organisations' in need of guidance and direction from senior leadership teams. This 'detachment' by senior leaders could be viewed as a form of defence mechanism to protect them from the anxieties brought by facing the primary task and the painful reality of what the frontline workers encountered in their daily work with families (Hisschorn 1988). Kets de Vries et al. (2009) describe a detached leader as being withdrawn and uninvolved in the organization's present and future. They are viewed as having minimal interaction with organisational members and the outside world.

Arguably, this type of '*avoidance* and *detached*' defensive behaviour was also adopted by the workers. In Borrowdale, by '*locking cases in the cupboards*' and in Eastlea by simply being '*process driven*' and '*sticking to tick boxes*'. Such behaviours may have protected the workers from dealing with the trauma that the children were going through (Harris 1987). Some workers in Borrowdale may have been protected from being confronted with the vulnerable families they were unable to support. In Eastlea this defensive behaviour may have prevented some social workers from spending time relating to families thereby avoiding facing the trauma families were going through. Commenting on the workers in Eastlea, Xenia noted'... *so process driven so that all of my staff were like wound up little mice who kind of went in one direction, who were not allowed to think for themselves ... as long as it has the tick box button and it was done in time and everybody was happy ...*' Xenia- HOS. This reluctance to be in touch with reality can be viewed as denial. By pushing painful thoughts, feelings and experiences of the families out of conscious awareness



because they have become too anxiety provoking, individuals protect themselves (Halton 1994).

Two respondents noted that the senior leadership team in Eastlea preferred promoting workers to senior positions from within the organisation. This was viewed as limiting the number of people recruited to senior management posts from outside the organisation. Travinia noted '*...the senior managers who I may describe as dinosaurs as they do not want to change...*'. (Travinia-TM-Eastlea). In Eastlea things were said to follow the pattern of '*how things are done here*' Travinia-TM-Eastlea. This could be why the organisation was said to find it difficult to change and adapt to the ever changing needs of the external environment and its clients.

For organisations to survive, leadership teams are expected to have a clear vision to lead their organisations in the implementation of strategic plans to ensure that the primary tasks continues to be met (Roberts 1994). The central leadership task is to ensure that the notion of the primary task is not only upper most in the minds of the organisation membership but that it is continuously reviewed in light of changing the internal and external environment and that the organisation adapts in accordance with this (Huffington et al. 2004). To achieve this leaders have to continually scan the internal systems and the external environment and adapt organisational functioning accordingly (Kets de Vries et al 2009). These features are fundamental in ensuring that Children's Services maintain their focus on the primary task to achieve the best outcomes for children and their families while at the same time maintaining a healthy workforce.

The 'stagnant position' described in Eastlea appears to indicate a lack of awareness, by both leaders and workers, of the needs of the organisation within an ever-changing economic and political climate within which organisations are currently functioning. What was quite notable in Eastlea was the view raised by Eileen regarding the lack of consistent effort made to improve their human resources which left some workers without the relevant professional development and guidance to improve their skills and expertise. Eileen noted '*...When I came in back to this Local*

*Authority.. five years later, the newly qualified are still sitting in the same team, in the same position I left them, no development...'* (Eileen-GM-Eastlea).

It appears that in both organisations, more so in Borrowdale due to the reported high caseloads and unallocated cases, the inability of the leadership teams to review their organisations' functioning hindered both organisations' ability to provide appropriate level of service delivery. In Eastlea, '*Children's Services has stayed quite stagnant.... they do not recognise the changes in the borough and what was going on outside of these little offices ..'* (Eileen-GM-Eastlea). In Borrowdale, the organisation was described as inadequately staffed to meet the needs of their community. This apparent lack of awareness of the environment can result in cultural blind spots which may lead an organisation down the wrong path, sometimes with dire performance consequences (Weick and Sutcliffe, 2003). In Borrowdale, this resulted in workers being left to cope with huge risks and very high unmanageable caseloads. Some respondents viewed the working environment as '*unsafe and dangerous*'. What appears to be lack of motivation to address issues in Borrowdale could be viewed as being due to repression, a defence mechanism, where risky or unpleasant ideas are prohibited from reaching consciousness and restricted to an unconscious part of the mind (Gabriel et al 2004).

This 'detached leadership' style is likely to have prevented the leaders from gaining insight regarding the 'organisation in the mind' of the workers and how this was impacting on the implementation of the normative primary task. The organisation existing in the mind of individuals may differ from the actual reality, resulting in the interactions occurring within an organisation that might differ from that which was designed or intended (Armstrong 2005, Tucker 2012). Hutton, Bazalgette & Reed, (1997) argue that for leaders to be effective in their role they need to consider their intended organisation against what is happening on the ground. The latter is impacted by the workers' history and unconscious processes. The information discussed in this section clearly indicates that the workers and their leadership teams may have deviated from the intended purposes of both organisations. This

may provide insight regarding the actions undertaken by Eastlea when preparing for the Inspection and by Borrowdale following failing an inspection process.

## **8.2 Leadership response to the Ofsted inspection process**

The majority of the respondents' view was that during Ofsted inspections, both organisations tended to be consumed by performance targets. This was viewed by some respondents as neglecting the core fundamentals of their duties which they view as centered on building quality relationships with families and empowering them (Ruch 2012, Cooper 2017). For some social workers, the motivations to stay in their jobs included direct work with families and the difference they can make to the lives of young people by providing high-quality services (Stalker et al 2007, Faulkner and Borah 2008). Unfortunately, relationship building cannot be measured in quantifiable terms. Given this, it would have been prudent for the leadership teams to develop strategies to improve staff effectiveness and counterbalance managerialism by supporting social workers to maintain a balance between building quality relationship with clients and meeting the needs of the audit regiment (Lawler 2007). This study demonstrates how the leadership teams and workers struggled to manage this.

It is apparent that both organisations were going through change, a transformation that appeared to have been induced by the Ofsted inspection process. It can be argued that both organisations should not have needed the threat of an inspection process to change. They should have well-established structures and processes to enable them to continually evaluate and effectively manage their organisations. However, in both organisations, the actions undertaken in response to the Ofsted inspection processes was that this change was an emergency and all actions deployed were to deal with urgent crisis situations. In Borrowdale, this is understandable as they had failed an inspection process. Some respondents in Eastlea referred to the fact that the previously identified Ofsted actions had not been fully implemented. This could have been due to resources issues as identified with some organisations in the iMPower research (iMPower 2015). However, as previously mentioned this could also have been due to defence mechanisms of avoidance and denial.

The consequences of failing an Ofsted inspection process had significant impact at an individual and organisational level irrespective of level of seniority. Xenia noted '... as for Local Authorities who fail their inspections, you watch directors walk out that door and that becomes headline news...' (Xenia-HOS).

The anxieties brought about by the fear of failure could have been behind the senior management teams feeling that they did not have the relevant organisational structures, systems and processes required to pass an Ofsted inspection process. In previous chapters, this study highlighted the actions undertaken by the leaders in response to the Ofsted inspection process which included increasing staffing through the recruitment of agency workers, pressure on workers resulting in long working hours and a rigid focus on performance targets. All these actions were viewed as strategies to improve performance to pass an inspection process. As stated in the findings chapters, a respondent in Borrowdale felt such changes were just like '*sticking plaster*' to the gaping problems while a respondent from Eastlea viewed this as a form of '*window dressing*' intended to demonstrate to Ofsted that the organisations were performing well.

### **8.3 The leadership styles adopted**

The previous chapters explored how anxieties emanating from the primary task and in response to Ofsted inspection processes may have resulted in individual and organisational defence mechanisms and defensive behaviours (Cooper et al 2003, Whittaker 2011, Whittaker and Havard 2016). The splitting and projection processes resulted in various 'enemies' being identified within and outside the organisations. This may have significantly contributed to both organisations being permeated by basic assumptions mentalities which impacted on the implementation of the primary task. Leadership teams therefore needed to understand the unconscious processes of splitting and projection to develop effective management and leadership strategies for their organisations (Trowell 1995, Foster 2016).

Several respondents in both organisations viewed the leadership teams as not only failing to effectively manage the external boundaries (with Ofsted) but also the

internal boundaries as they tried to change their organisations' functioning to the way they perceived as required to pass the inspection process. In both organisations under study, the actions taken by senior managers in response to the inspection process were perceived by respondents as causing 'hostile environments' which were not conducive for service delivery.

As stated in chapter 7, the view of 'Ofsted in the mind' of some senior leaders in both organisations appeared to be that of a punitive organisation. This view is not surprising, given the negative public and local media attention when organisations are judged as inadequate by Ofsted and as seen in Borrowdale, the subsequent loss of jobs for some senior managers following the Ofsted inspections. Munro (2012) raised concerns regarding the blame culture associated with Ofsted and the damaging impact when senior staffs are dismissed following an inspection.

### **8.3.1 Transactional leadership**

Information shared by respondents indicates that 'a fear of failure' impacted on the leadership styles adopted in response to the Ofsted inspections in both organisations. Ofsted was viewed as an 'omnipotent being' who could see through what was happening in organisations. This led to defensive behaviours being adopted by the leadership teams and the workers. It appears that Ofsted was viewed as requiring a different way of implementing the primary task.

In response to the inspection process, the leadership teams were described as shifting from the 'detached' style where there was lack of involvement to full involvement (Kets de Vries 2009). They appeared to have adopted the transactional leadership style which, as noted by several respondents, involved closely monitoring the daily operations of the frontline teams with specific scrutiny on the performance targets and the use of sanctions through rewards and punishment (Aamodt 2016). There appeared to be no evidence of future planning or evaluation of sustainability of the strategies and respondents noted that decisions were made without consultation with workers (Bryman 1986, Mulder 2016).

The transactional leadership style was approached differently by both organisations. In Eastlea, several respondents at both social worker and team managers level viewed the leadership style as micro-management. This was reported to be exercised through excessive scrutiny of the tasks by senior managers which was previously delegated to team managers. Team Manager respondents from Eastlea viewed this as causing confusion in their role within the organisation and they referred to feeling undervalued and redundant. Travinia noted, '*.... I feel like a glorified senior social worker ...*' (Travinia-TM-Eastlea). The two team managers in Eastlea noted how their supportive role towards social workers diminished as the culture shifted toward goal oriented performance management. They viewed themselves as being used by senior managers as a vehicle for pushing front line social workers to conform and this is likely to have caused role identity difficulties for them. However one team manager felt this close scrutiny kept him on track of his work as he felt '*... worried about the drift and delay that happened prior the inspection process...*' Jeremy-TM-Eastlea. This different in views shows the different perspectives of the 'organisation in the mind' of the team managers and how they felt the goals of the organisation should be achieved.

Travinia explained how this resulted in divisions within the organisation between team managers who wanted to support the workers and felt rebellious and resentful of the new role thrust upon them and those team managers who felt the actions undertaken by senior managers were appropriate. The former were described as feeling guilty of their new role but could not sympathise with the social workers as they may have also been worried about their own job security. '*... The blame on me as the line manage was unfair because I was being judged not on how I was trying to support workers.... there was a lot of anxiety and gossip as to who was performing, who was not performing and at times the information was inaccurate...I was forced to sack workers who were said not to be performing...*' (Travinia-TM-Eastlea).

Several respondent social workers in both organisations described how their confidence was negatively impacted by what they viewed as the excessive involvement of senior managers in performance management. This was viewed as

causing immense anxiety for the workers. As noted by respondents in the previous chapters, there was a reliance on fear and consequences, punishment for 'poor performance' was the threat of loss of employment (Odumeru & Ogbonna, 2013, Mulder 2016). The leadership styles adopted were said to include threats to enforce workers to perform.'.... *That's when the unrealistic pressure gets put on you ...we were always threatened with 'if you do not do this you will be answerable to senior managers' (Franny-SW-Eastlea).*

The situation was slightly different in Borrowdale. The respondents expressed that the senior managers remained 'invisible' but were directly in control of organisational functioning through the management of performance by closely scrutinising progress of performance targets. They were responsible for recruiting workers and firing workers who were viewed as not performing. '*Senior management sacked the agency workers without any notice period due to poor quality work...*' (Rickson-TM-Borrowdale).

The descriptions provided by respondents in Borrowdale showed different behaviours of individuals depending on the role. Some of the permanent team managers were viewed as not providing regular supervision to the workers. They appeared to be focusing on 'guarding their cases', '*... these agency workers and auditors were just coming and taking our cases away so you had to be careful...*' Sue-TM-Borrowdale. They were also said to be 'managing' the conflict with the different group of agency workers. This action can be viewed as colluding with their social workers by taking active roles in the infighting between the various groups of workers and between teams instead of a managerial role to collaborate with the other managers to identify ways of resolving the issues. It can be argued that like their social workers, they were also looking for someone to rescue them. The downside for the social workers in this organisation was the lack of supervision. This was highlighted by some of the respondent permanent social workers. Cornelia noted '*I have to say I did not get supervision at all so like all my colleagues I did struggle a lot ... There were cases of neglect, sexual abuse and the children had not been seen for over six months ...'*Cornelia-Borrowdale.

The agency team managers were viewed as providing regular supervision to their staff. Lorna noted, '*... we were a close-knit group... my manager was supportive, yeah good supervision for all of us... I worked with her before in another project similar to this one with some of the workers in my team here...*' Lorna-SP-Borrowdale. The permanent workers were part of the organisation and had their own culture and their own way of working. The backlog agency workers, some of who worked together previously, had their own culture and a way of working. They were also cognisant that their own 'survival' in this organisation was solely based on their performance. It appears that they had created 'their own organisation' within this organisation. This may have contributed to the conflict within through competitiveness and 'envy' (Long 2008).

## **8.4 Impact on workers**

### **8.4.1 Blame culture**

In Eastlea, Franny and Betty noted that as the inspection preparation progressed, the anxieties increased. This was said to be manifested through the use of threats and intimidation tactics to coerce workers into meeting performance targets. The leadership style was viewed as increasingly becoming autocratic with some workers being put on weekly monitoring plans with threats of being sacked if targets were not met and those deemed as not meeting targets were brought to the attention of the heads of service. Betty noted '*... You go into the team meeting and you would be named and shamed ... if you did not do the tasks within the agreed timescales...*' (Betty-SW-Eastlea).

Stokes (1994) highlights that in organisations, interpersonal and intergroup conflicts can easily provide scapegoats and the real problem remain unaddressed. This was noted by Travinia in Eastlea '*...colleagues who were told to leave when in fact there was not enough digging to see where the problem was, the problem was not with the colleagues but with the system...*' Travinia-Eastlea. However, Xenia provided another dimension stating that the quality of the work was of concern as the workers were '*process driven*' and not '*outcome focused*'. Eileen, a senior manager, who had left the organisation and returned after five years, had similar views referring to '*the*



*lack of development and progress of workers'* as impacting on practice standards. It could be that the workers who were fired were not performing but Travinia viewed this as a systems' issue. These two perspectives indicate the difference in the mindset between the individuals. This is why it is important for leaders to understand and act on the 'organisation in the mind of individuals' in relation to the 'intended objectives' of the organisation (Hutton, Bazalgette, & Reed 1997, Tucker 2012). This insight assists the leaders in providing effective leadership which ensures participation of workers to enact sustainable change.

In Eastlea Franny reported how some senior managers' actions made some workers feel inadequate and unappreciated, *'even if I did one good piece of work..., it was quickly forgotten because I had not done the other things that should have been done within the agreed timescales. We never seemed to achieve though...'* (Franny-SW-Eastlea). This could be viewed as the difference in perceptions of what 'good looks like' between some of the social workers and their managers.

In Borrowdale, several respondents described the blame culture which was not only prevalent amongst the various groups of workers but the permanent workers also felt blamed by the senior managers and other professionals. *'...social workers felt as if the blame was focused on them which was quite unfair when it was completely beyond their control with the volume of work...'* (Sue-TM-Borrowdale). Cornelia highlighted that she was blamed by other professionals and the police *'... Head of Service gave me a warning following the complaints from police...'* (Cornelia-SW-Borrowdale).

Some of the senior managers were said to be directly involved in the sacking of social workers and managers. Rickson noted, *'....workers came in as normal on a Thursday and they were told 'you are finishing tomorrow' so some workers just packed their bags immediately and left ...one backlog team lasted three months the one after this five months....'* Rickson-TM. The problem with sacking workers is that this does not provide an opportunity to evaluate the service to assess whether poor performance is due to the systems and structures in place but rather it locates

poor performance in specific individuals so the root cause of the problems remain unsolved and performance does not improve (Hischhorn 1988)

#### **8.4.2 Instability**

When organisations are in the process of change, leadership teams are responsible for formulating strategic plans with clear goals and the expected outcomes (Huffington et al. 2004). In well- functioning organisations, this is undertaken in consultation with staff.

In Borrowdale, the recruitment of the group of agency staff was described by some respondents as lacking planning. Rickson noted '*After failing the Ofsted inspection, we were running around like chicken with their heads cut off...changes undertaken haphazardly without any evaluation of service needs or planning...no consultation with staff* (Rickson-TM-Borrowdale).

The recruitment policy adopted by the senior management team mirrored the tourist aspect of the outside environment. This indicated that the senior managers appeared to be focusing on a temporary solution to address the identified performance issues. The high turnover of senior managers in Borrowdale appeared to create an ever changing work environment which was described as creating instability. Each new senior manager brought their own style of management. The new senior managers were viewed as wanting to 'mark their territory' and establish identity which in some instances led to new systems and procedures being brought in place. Like some of the respondents, Lisa noted the negative impact '*...it's always changing... every time you get a new senior manager everything changes...*' (Lisa-SP-Borrowdale).

In Eastlea, some respondent social workers noted that there appeared to be no evidence of strategic planning with staff or clarity regarding the goals to be achieved. Franny noted, '*...the focus of work was always changing on a weekly basis... it was this week we are focusing on chronologies, next week we focus on something else...it was confusing...*' (Franny-SW-Eastlea).

It can also be argued that what the respondents viewed as micromanagement and punitive was actually the defensive behaviours adopted by the senior leadership to meet the perceived requirements to satisfy the 'Ofsted in their minds'. However as reported by respondents in both organisations, the actions by senior managers may have contributed to the splitting and projection processes. This appeared to create basic assumption mentalities which permeated the organisations and was manifested through defensive behaviours (Moxnes 1998, French and Simpson 2010).

### **8.5 Leadership and Followership relationship**

As noted in Chapter 2 followers hold a critical role in shaping the behaviours of leaders (Uhl-Bien et al. 2014, Kets de Vries 2009). At face value, information shared by respondents in this study seems to indicate that social workers were passive, uninvolved individuals whose state of mind was entirely dependent on their leaders (Huffington et al 2004). However, this section will show that they were quite influential and that there could have been underlying unconscious processes influencing their behaviour and the behaviour of their leaders. The underlying view in both organisations seems to suggest that passing an inspection was a 'survival mission' at the individual and organisational level.

On the surface the social workers' behaviour prior to the Ofsted inspection process appeared to have taken on the role of passive recipients who follow the requirements of their senior management groups. Hoyle (1994) referred to such a response by followers as 'sychophant' response which is viewed as unthinking and unchallenging state of followership. However, it can be argued that through processes of splitting and projections, the leadership team and the workers seemed to have colluded and accepted the '*apathetic*' and '*stagnant*' status of their organisations prior to the inspection process (Moxnes 1998). The anxieties associated with the implementation of the primary task may have induced similar defence mechanisms in both the leaders and workers which enabled the prevailing situations to continue in both organisations unmitigated until the Ofsted inspection processes. Bion (1962) refers to the notion of valency where organisations may draw workers with similar internal

needs and a similar propensity to fit with certain kinds of defences. The leaders may have been influenced to behave in a particular way due to projections and the dynamics within the organization. This interrelationship between the individual and the organisation indicates that the emotional experiences of individuals are not independent of the organisations they work in (Armstrong 2005). Information from several respondents indicates that they were dissatisfied with the situation prior to the Ofsted inspection process as it inadvertently hindered effective progress in both organisations.

During the interviews, the lack of action to improve performance (Borrowdale) or address the Ofsted improvement plan (Eastlea) prior to the inspection process was highlighted in one form or another by respondents mainly the respondent social workers and team managers. This appeared to have been accepted as the norm in both organisations. In Borrowdale, this was attributed to as the lack of resources. In Eastlea, some respondent social workers and team managers viewed this as lack if senior leadership involvement. Social workers exercise leadership at all positions in organisations, thus the social workers or team managers could have been more assertive in exploring ways to improve the situation in their organisations (Fairtlough 2018). Whilst acknowledging that this may not have been achievable in Borrowdale due to the reported lack of resources, the social workers in Eastlea could have taken initiative and responsibilities to implement some of the changes at their level.

Vandeslice (1985) raises the issue that some leader- follower dichotomies may encourage followers to feel less responsible rather than taking on more responsibilities. In Eastlea, it may have been that the workers felt that power was centralised to their senior leadership team. Leadership is not only about leading but also about creating an environment of followers being able to challenge those in positions of power (Fairtlough 2018). In their study regarding the relationship between power inequities and decreased responsibility, Blake and Mouton (1961), concluded that there were increased responsibilities by followers where power was decentralised.

The apparent lack of impetus to change by both the leaders and the workers prior to the inspection could have been due to the fact that the workers may have achieved equilibrium of functioning in 'the world they knew'. When referring to the difficulties individuals face regarding change, Kets de Vries and Miller (1984) contend that individuals will stick tenaciously to what is viewed as a safe position. Any change could have been viewed as 'destabilising' the existing situation with some social workers avoiding change due to anxieties this could bring. Equally some senior managers could have been anxious about confronting the practice standards and the subsequent consultation with workers that could ensue. Hirschhorn (1988) concurs with this view stating that when groups face stress they may induce behaviours in their leaders that stimulate failure rather than success. Thus, the behaviour of the leaders in both organisations could be understood regarding followers wishing to avoid confronting and addressing the drift and delay in progressing work. Not addressing the situation may have been a comfortable role for some of the workers which could have provided an opportunity to easily blame their leaders for the situation they found themselves in (Hirschhorn 1988).

As noted by some respondents in both organisations, this lack of involvement and participation by workers appeared to be a major contributing factor to the difficulties faced by both organisations as they embarked on the process of transforming their organisations to meet the perceived requirements of the Ofsted inspection process. According to Obholzer and Miller (2004), when an organisation is going through change, this change necessitates workers giving up something, which may be a way of working or a state of their self-perception. The fact that whatever is being given up may have only been valued ambivalent does not necessarily make any notable difference to the process of working through and mourning (Obholzer and Miller 2004). Hirschhorn (1988) argues that in the absence of broad participation, senior managers pursue narrow and often dysfunctional goals and act irrationally despite the internal expertise at their disposal.

This study shows typical basic assumption mentality behaviours through a somewhat collusive interdependence between the senior managers and the social workers

(Moxnes 1998). Senior managers may have been followed because they fulfilled the behaviours and need of the frontline workers to deviate from implementing the primary task and focus energy on managing the threats from outside and internally (Kets de Vries and Miller 1984). The comments by some respondents in both organisations appear to depict a lack of strategic thinking and planning on how the organisations could adapt and change to manage inspections. It appeared that the actions driven by anxiety about survival seemed to be dominant factor. Upon close examination, some of the manifested behaviours show that in both organisations BaF functioning was the dominant prevailing basic assumption mentality. The presence of enemies created through the processes of splitting and projection explored in chapter 6 indicates that the senior leadership teams would have been expected to fight; conquer or flee from the enemies (Hendrikz 1998, French and Simpson 2010). The senior management groups were not expected to be responsible for ensuring collaborative cooperation to fulfil primary task. Rather they appeared to be expected to devise appropriate action to lead the attack or flee from the identified 'enemies' in both organisations (Kets de Vries and Miller 1984). In both organisations, the sacking of workers appeared to have been attributed to the Ofsted inspection process. However, it can be argued that this was actually through a process of scapegoating where the social workers and other senior managers may have felt that the sacked workers or senior managers had failed to fulfil the functions of the organisations (Huffington et al 2004).

The situation in both organisations described by respondent social workers and team managers shows the social workers' failure to actively challenge the senior leadership regarding the strategies deployed to improve performance to pass the inspection process. However, similarly to their views prior to the Ofsted inspection process, several respondents expressed a dislike on the leadership styles prevailing in their organisations in response to the inspection processes. The defence mechanisms and the defensive behaviours adopted by workers to manage the anxieties emanating from the primary task and Ofsted were similar to anxieties identified by various authors including Whittaker (2011), Munro (2012), Havard and Whittaker (2016) and Cooper 2018. These defensive behaviours could have been interpreted by senior management as social workers lacking insight into the needs of

the organisation and inability to meet the senior leadership expectations of Ofsted requirements. It could have been deemed as poor performance resulting in some workers being scapegoated and fired. As reported by respondent social workers and team managers, nothing appeared to change in the organisational functioning and the prevailing problems and dysfunction within the organisations were viewed as individuals' problems and the blame may have been put back onto some individuals (Huffington et al 2004).

The metaphoric language depicting war and theatre explored in chapter 6 and 7 shows the 'organisation in the mind' of some of the respondents and how this was influenced by the organisational dynamics and interrelationships between the workers, their teams and the senior leadership teams (Armstrong 2005). Workers contribute individually to their organisations whilst being simultaneously contributed to developing an emotional resonance within themselves of the organization both at conscious and unconscious levels (Armstrong 2005). As stated in chapter 7, the differences in the 'Ofsted in the mind' amongst the various individuals and groups within the organisation may have created a disparity in the views regarding how requirements of Ofsted could be met.

What followed in both organisations were varying degrees of investment amongst the individuals in the changes enacted by the leadership teams in response to the inspection process. In Borrowdale, the permanent workers were described as not being fully invested in the changes while in Eastlea the majority of the social workers were viewed as not being fully invested. Some respondents reported some social workers in both organisations feeling undermined and undervalued by the senior management teams. In Borrowdale the commonly held view reported by respondent permanent and agency workers was that senior managers were blaming the permanent workers for failure as noted by Sue '*messages from senior management...is we had failed to do our work and someone was coming to clear our mess..*' (Sue-TM-Borrowdale). While in Eastlea some attributed the blame to Ofsted '*...it's not managers' fault that we are over working... it's Ofsted who are pushing them...!*' (Lucy –SW-Eastlea).

This may have inadvertently led to a situation which Obholzer and Miller (2004) referred to as a 'boarding house mentality'. Some workers may have participated in the changes without any sense of responsibility, acknowledgement or passion on the incentives as they viewed the changes as imposed by their senior managers driven by the Ofsted inspection process.

Through the splitting and projection processes these workers may have absolved themselves of any personal responsibility in the state of the organisations' functioning (Obholzer and Miller 2004). By projecting responsibility to senior managers, such workers disable themselves from finding any effective way to look at their own role in poor performance and devising ways to address this. They focused on blaming Ofsted and senior managers perceiving them as needing to change rather than critical reflection of themselves and their role as change agents. Kernberg (1998) notes that some followers frequently blame their leaders to avoid facing how they themselves have contributed to their organisation's actual or incipient failure.

The study reveals that the working environment in both organisations was unbearable. The senior leadership teams were the recipients of projected feelings from the workers' unconscious demands (Stokes 1994) which in both organisations were feelings of aggression and suspicion and a preoccupation with alternative futures for the groups. As a result, in both organisations, the leadership styles adopted resulted in creating a punitive and combatant work environment. Consequently the workers spent a lot of their energy building up defenses to contain the anxieties brought about by the turbulence within the organisations.

## **8.6 Power and authority**

One of the main arguments arising from this research concerns power and authority. By working in an organisation workers willingly delegate their own personal authority to those in charge, thereby confirming the system. Workers can impact on those in



authority through undermining or sabotaging them consciously or unconsciously (Obholzer 1994). Power is not external to organizational members or relationships, it infiltrates the very core of our being, and it cannot be detached from the emotions and relations that reinforce it (Knights & McCabe, 1999, Vince 2001). Power can be used to hire and fire, discipline workers and also through democratic process to elect individuals into certain positions for instance politicians.

Leaders play a critical role in managing the power and pressures exerted on the organisation internally and externally through effective management of the boundaries. In the next section, I will look at the different players involved in the inspection of organisations and where they position themselves in terms of the power they exert on the organisation.

### **8.6.1 Power and authority exerted by various groups**

There are various parties who have interest in the performance of Children's Services and they influence such organisations' performance directly or indirectly. The parties mentioned by respondents include the government, Ofsted, politicians, the community and the service users.

Within organisations, different groups have various levels of power and authority, with the senior leadership's power and authority being sanctioned by the organisation through the position itself and also from the workers below who by joining the organisations sanction this power. The workers within organisation have the power to remove those in senior positions if they are felt not to meet their needs and those of the organisation (Bion 1967).

In well-functioning social work organisations, decision- making is distributed amongst participants and permits power to be used in different directions, from the bottom up, not just through a pre-determined top-down hierarchy. Fairtlough (2018) refers to this as 'heterarchy'. However, respondents in this study indicated that in response to Ofsted inspection, the senior managers became more autocratic in their leadership

which may have contributed to the basic assumptions functioning in the groups. This is likely to have resulted in power being centralised in the group of senior managers.

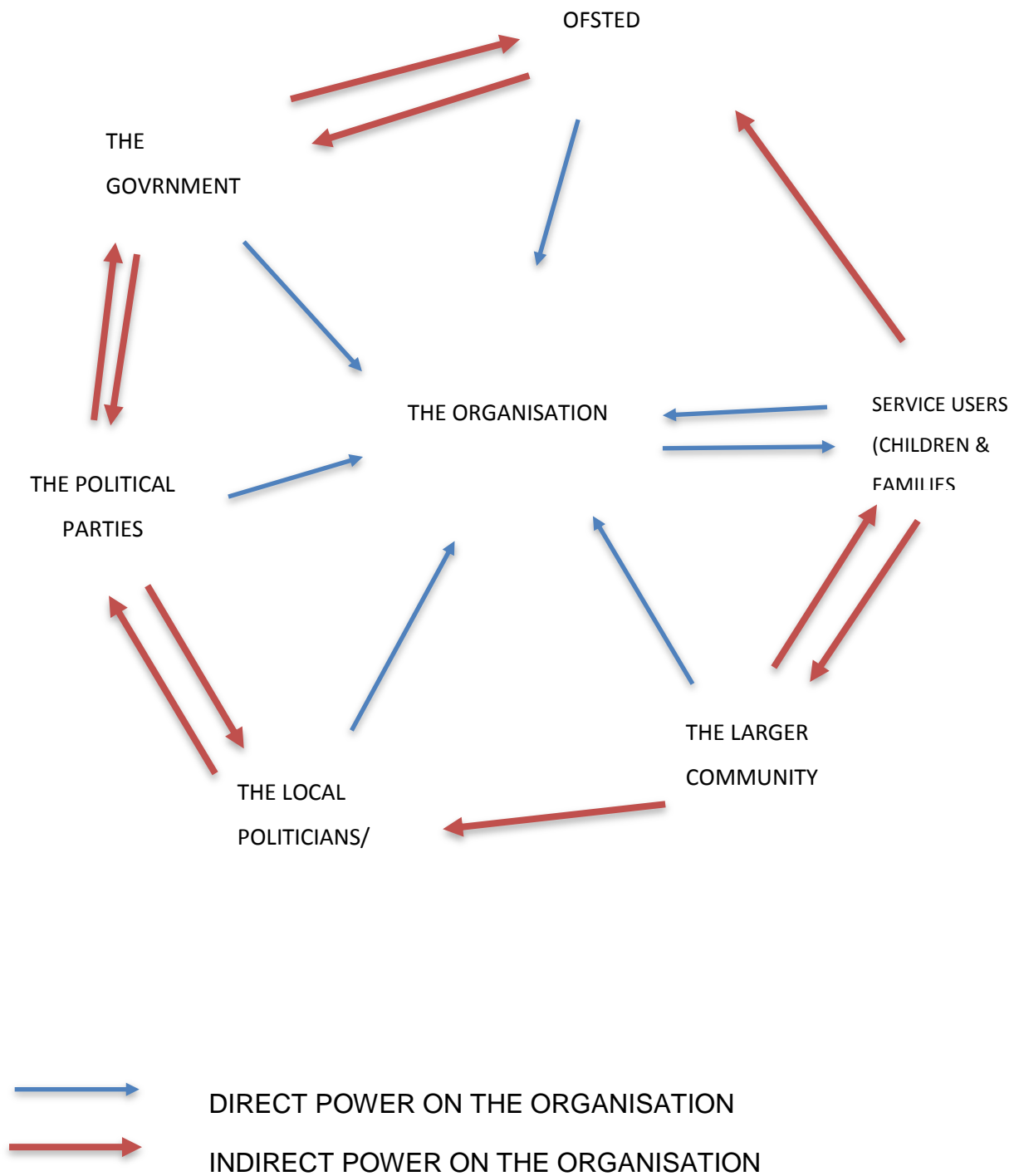
Within the Children Act 2004, each Local Authority is expected to appoint a lead member. The Department for Education and Skills (2005) asserts that the role of the Lead Member is to have political accountability for Children's Services and to have particular responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children through engaging with partners and the communities. Thus the power and authority of the lead member and councillors come from the government and the electorates. The latter votes councillors into power.

It appears that the community including the service users have the power to change the councillors including the lead member through the voting system if such leaders are felt not to be representing the needs of the community, Xenia noted '*... councillors do not want a bad Ofsted; it brings bad publicity, too much public scrutiny so directors and chief executives can be fired...*'. Xenia-HoS. The service users can also exert their power using the complaints system within Local Authority authorities if they are not happy with the services provided.

### **8.6.2 Issues of contention relating to differential levels of power and authority**

Although all of the various players influencing Children's Services performance have one aim, the best outcomes for children and families, information from this study shows that there are various tensions existing amongst them. The contention seems to be centered on the issues of power and authority. Fig 2 shows the different forces exerting influence amongst the various parties.

## The Forces of Power Exerted On the Organisation (Fig 2)



This study shows that organisations themselves feared power and authority being exerted on them. The actions undertaken by both organisations show that they view inspection bodies as having all the power and they appear to feel powerless when faced with the prospect of an inspection process. As noted in chapter 7 Ofsted is regarded as the omnipotent being with a lot of power to determine the future of individuals and organisations. As depicted in Fig 2, the government has power and authority over Ofsted. The government can put pressure on Ofsted to ensure that it is fulfilling its primary task of evaluating performance in Local Authorities. Community members can contact Ofsted if they have any concerns regarding the performance of their Local Authorities in regards to the safeguarding of Children. Ofsted has a duty to investigate any such complaints and in doing so, will contact the involved Local Authorities.

In addition to the power and authority exerted by Ofsted, organisations seem to be subjected to the same by the politicians through councillors and MPs. '*.. you sit in those board meetings with politicians... the level of scrutiny is unbelievable if you fail an inspection... it's the blame culture at its worst. ...*' (Eileen-GM). In most Local Authorities, the councillors were reported to sit on the various multi-agency boards comprising of senior leaders across the Local Authority. The main purpose being to scrutinise the performance of the Social Services to ensure that good quality service is being provided. The politicians were involved and reported to be quite influential in the recruitment of senior leaders in Local Authorities. The politicians are accountable to their political parties, the government and to their voters (the community). They are likely to be influenced by the agenda from their political parties and also by the wishes of their electorates who have the power to remove them from positions. The politicians may therefore expect organisations to perform to a good standard but are also mindful of the budget as they have to meet the competing demands of their political parties and the public needs.

Observing the tensions within Children's Services, Xenia noted '*... we are always under pressure from the councillors, they are cutting out budgets and they tend to*

*prioritise protecting the budget for those who vote .. but if we fail Ofsted inspection senior managers are the first to be sacked... it's a constant battle of resources with these politicians ...'* (Xenia-HOS). The situation was reported to be complex where the politicians are also influenced by the government agenda in particular where their political party is not in power.

It can be argued that politicians maybe fearful of being removed from power thus their decisions may not always be compatible with the needs of the organisations. Thus indirectly influencing the organisation through their own power are the members of the community, the electorates. Their presence is quite profound although the organisation may not come into direct contact with them in their day to day operations. However, in cases of tragedy, the communities including service users use their power through 'protests' and through the media to influence organisations. This is evidenced by the negative impact on the organisations where there has been child death as in the case of baby P in Haringey where the media coverage and public outcry contributed to the sacking of some workers (Jones 2014).

The discussion above shows that organisations need strong leadership teams to contend with the different forces of power exerted on them from external agencies. Effective management of the boundaries with these external agencies is crucial to ensure that the organisation continues to function (Hafford- Letchfield et al. 2014). Failure to do so results in the various conflicting pressures from these outside agencies being felt directly inside the organisational boundaries. This study evidences the trauma organisations are subjected to when they fail to effectively manage their organisations' boundaries with Ofsted. In both organisations, the chaos and anxieties created led to deviation from implementing the primary task as workers focused on managing the effects of the pressures from Ofsted which were now 'experienced' within the confines of the organisation. Senior leadership teams also needed to manage the internal boundaries between the various systems and teams within the organisation. This study shows that in both organisations, there

were organisational tensions due to the leadership styles adopted during this inspection process.

### **8.7 Impact of Effective leadership**

All the respondents in Borrowdale highlighted the significant improvements following the recruitment of a new interim senior leadership team. The new leadership team was described as having made significant changes which motivated the workers and moved the organisational functioning from basic assumption mentalities to work group mentalities focusing on effective implementation of the primary task (French and Simpson 2010). Although the new leadership team did not change the group of workers within the organisation, they were said to have restructured the service which removed the duplication of work. The groups of agency teams were assimilated into the structure thus they were mixed with the existing permanent workers and were all co-located in one building. The senior managers were described as being more visible with group managers sitting with the frontline services workers and they were viewed as supportive. Respondents reported feeling listened to and supported through regular supervision.

These strategies put in place by the senior managers were reported to have shifted the culture of the organisation resulting in the behavioural patterns and values being geared towards meeting the objectives of the organisation (Kets de Vries et al. 2009, French & Simpson 2010). It is likely that the anxieties and defence mechanisms related to the primary task and Ofsted were still prevalent. The work group mentalities and basic assumption mentalities are not stable emotional states, they co-exist and are always in interplay. (Gosling 1994, Armstrong, 2005, French and Simpson 2010). However, the new leadership team was reported to have established structures and processes to contain the anxieties and defences thereby ensured that the organisation was 'on task' implementing the normative primary task. Ruch (2007) refers to the provision of holistic containment in organisation to ensure that workers are adequately supported. Workers followed the new leadership team because they saw that they were '*...invested in the workers and wanted to make change rather than focus on number crunching...*' (Rickson-TM-Borrowdale).

Fortnightly training was provided by the Quality Assurance department which was attended by all workers, managers, Group Manager and Head of Service. Respondents expressed that there was a robust auditing process in place with team managers involved in the auditing of cases. These significant changes were reported as creating a positive working environment and the improvement in performance was evident. As noted by Rickson, ' ... *The new head of service and group manager realised what a mess it all was ... they were structural changes within the services ... teams were clearly separated and divided into referral/assessment teams and family support ...the back log teams were no longer separate but joined our teams and we sat together...no confusion or chaos...improved communication across the service, shared ownership of the improvement plan, audits undertaken, with clear guidelines on what was expected... good learning environment,...*' (Rickson-TM- Borrowdale).

The introduction of the Quality Assurance Service in Borrowdale enabled the organisation to gain insight of performance through evaluating their services and improving performance. It appears that due to the significant performance improvement, workers were not scared of the Ofsted inspection process but rather saw it as a learning opportunity. Lisa noted, ' *I am not afraid of an Ofsted inspection process.. there is nothing additional to prepare everything is up to date... my manager is not worried about the inspection...*' (Lisa-SP-Borrowdale).

It however needs to be noted that this senior leadership in Borrowdale were reported to be interim workers who had high levels of pay packages. As mentioned in the previous chapters, it is difficult to sustain such resources. Xenia noted, ' ... *in Borrowdale, interim senior managers were paid over £400 per day... it drains resources and cannot be maintained....*' (Xenia-HOS).

In Eastlea some respondents noted that there had a robust auditing system which was said to be spearheaded by the three agency consultants employed specifically for auditing cases during the Ofsted preparation process. However, some

respondents viewed this process as negative, judgmental and harsh and this impacted on the learning that could have been obtained through this process. As noted by Cynthia, ‘ ... *the social workers and managers are always being blamed by senior managers for the audited cases... the auditors are too judgmental and harsh... they just use this to punish workers so we have to defend ourselves...*’ (Cynthia-TM-Eastlea).

## **8.8 Conclusion**

Failure to ‘pass’ an Ofsted inspection may cause major negative impact on an organisation and is said to result in loss of employment for leaders and social workers. Given what is at stake, it is easier to understand why both Local Authorities responded in the manner they did to the Ofsted inspection process. However as noted by some respondents in both organisations, better outcomes could have been achieved through a different approach with a well thought out organised planned strategy in place.

It is interesting to note that the pressures experienced by both Local Authorities under study were in largely due to the type of leadership prevailing in these Local Authorities. However, this appeared to be due to the leaders’ anxieties associated with Ofsted inspections and the subsequent actions undertaken to manage this. Information from this research shows that in order to ‘survive’ an Ofsted inspection process; leaders had to be savvy to not only the demands of the Ofsted inspections but also the constant changes in the economic and political climate. Huffington (2004) asserts that as organisations in all sectors cope with massive change both internally and externally, one effect of this turbulence has been to alter irrevocably the psychological contract between organisations and their workers.

This study shows that the ‘Ofsted in the mind’ of the leadership teams greatly influenced how they led their organisations through the inspection processes. By virtue of their power and authority they were to influence workers to perform in the way they believed would ensure passing an inspection. Those deemed not performing to the expected ‘Ofsted standards’ were sacked. In both organisations,



the leaders were said to have adopted a transactional autocratic leadership style which was hierarchical in nature. This study shows that to an extent, workers were quite powerful in influencing the leaders, however, it appears that there were unconscious processes at play which may have resulted in elements of collusion between the leaders and their workers. In both organisations under study, many respondents described being subjected to traumatic, painful environments as the organisations tried to change to manage the inspection process. However, in both organisations it appears that very few workers willingly left the organisations through the traumatic time. Some were scapegoated into leaving the organisations whilst others were sacked. It appears that at some level the unconscious processes may have influenced the workers where situation they described as '*chaotic and painful*' deviated them from focusing on anxieties associated with the inspection process and in the inherent nature of the primary task. In Eastlea, some workers are said to have left after passing the inspection process, when the organisation reverted back to what was viewed as their 'ordinary way of working'. Like several workers out there, I purposely choose to work in authorities that have failed an inspection process. It appears that some workers are drawn by the chaos and turbulence in such authorities.

The next chapter will explore the 'organisation in the mind' of the workers and further explore the leadership required to effectively manage organisations in times of change.

## **Chapter 9: Performance improvement: the relationship between Inspection institutions and frontline organisations.**

### **9.0 Introduction**

This chapter will synthesise the information presented in the previous chapters to provide coherent arguments derived from this study. This study has highlighted the complex issues arising from the inspection regimes and the impact of such regimes on individuals and groups. Within this, unconscious processes play a significant role. The anxieties and the subsequent defence mechanisms deployed at an individual and organisational level influence organisational functioning. What was apparent was the critical role leadership plays in determining the health and functioning of an organisation in implementing the primary task in particular during periods of organisational stress and trauma (Huffington et al 2004).

This study shows that to understand the journey of performance improvement in organisations and organisations' relationship with the inspection institutions, it is important to understand the 'organisation held in the mind' of individuals. It is equally important to understand 'Ofsted in the mind' of the workers. Organisation in the mind is what the workers perceive to be the organisation they are working for (Hutton, Bazalgette & Reed 1997, Armstrong 2005, Tucker 2012). The dynamics between the 'organisation in the mind' and the 'Ofsted in the mind' is crucial in understanding the responses of individuals and organisations to inspections. The concept of organisation in the mind was explored in chapter 2.

### **9.1 Organisation in the mind: responses to the inspection process**

#### **9.1.1 Organisational functioning: Denial and Rationalisation**

Data from this research indicates that the responses to the Ofsted inspection process by Borrowdale and Eastlea shows that both organisations appeared to struggle to maintain a consistent level of performance, both organisations struggled

with holistic self-management and that 'in the mind' workers and leaders may have colluded to maintain such a position.

The respondents in both organisations used various phrases to describe the functioning of the organisations prior to the inspection process. In Borrowdale some of the phrases used were '*lethargy*', '*paralysis*' whilst in Eastlea it was '*stagnation*', '*lack of progress and development*'. It could be a lack of insight by leaders and workers or it could be that senior leadership and the workers had some level of insight regarding what was happening but were in denial as the 'reality' was viewed as causing anxiety ( Reber et al 2009). It can be argued that they were in some 'form of mental lockdown' where they could not perceive a different way of working apart from the reality created in their minds, that is, the 'organisation in their mind'.

The key question is how some organisations get into such a state when they have quality assurance departments whose main role is to evaluate performance. Information from some respondents in both organisations show that there can also be collusion between various departments within an organisation including those tasked with 'unlocking the collusion' such as the Quality Assurance Departments. In Borrowdale the audit team whose role was to evaluate quality of practice was said to be involved in the conflict with the various teams and the '*fight for cases*' whilst in Eastlea the consultants who were auditing cases were viewed as '*harsh and punitive*' thus may not have achieved the intended purpose. Evidence in this study seems to suggest that when in denial organisations can turn a blind eye and create a reality which rationalizes and justifies their actions (Weick and Sutcliffe 2003, Long 2008). In this regard the 'organisation created and held in the mind' maybe totally different to what an outsider may see (Hutton, Bazalgette, & Reed 1997, Armstrong 2005). This has a profound impact and may result in organisations deviating from the normative primary task. This can be viewed as a result of repression, a process where risky or unpleasant ideas are prohibited from reaching consciousness and restricted to an unconscious part of the mind (Gabriel et al 2004). This could be one of the reasons why in both organisations it was only the Ofsted inspection process which instigated the change process.

This study shows that the success or failure of an organisation depends on what organisation in the mind leaders and followers create and whether that organisation in the mind is compatible with the objectives required to successfully implement the primary task. In the same way that the normative, phenomenal and existential primary tasks need to be aligned for the organisation to remain on task; the individuals' 'organisation in the mind' needs to be aligned with the normative primary task to ensure that all individuals are carrying out the stated objectives of the organisation (Armstrong 2005, Ruch and Murray 2011). In both organisations the fear of Ofsted appeared to create overwhelming intolerable anxieties which appeared to distort implementation of the primary task. The actions undertaken by senior leadership resulted in what several respondents described as '*harsh, chaotic and punitive*' environments. This portrays both organisations as being driven by a harsh super ego function, they appeared to have been punishing themselves, doubting their competence, criticising and judging themselves harshly (Healy 1998). This is likely to have undermined any scope of evaluating their strengths and areas for improvement in a realistic way.

Respondents highlighted that what was perceived as poor performance was punished. However, several social worker respondents' view of the performance by social workers in Eastlea was that of competent workers who were not supported by their senior managers whilst in Borrowdale, the view was that of competent, hardworking individuals who were struggling because of the lack of resources and lack of support from senior managers. The actions undertaken by the senior leadership teams in response to the inspection process indicate their 'organisation in the mind' as that of services requiring additional staff to improve performance. Thus the message which is likely to have been transmitted within the organisation was that of inadequate performance which needed to be boosted by additional staffing.

The situations described as prevailing in both organisations by many respondents did not appear conducive to the delivery of high quality service. The dysfunctional organisations described fit the profile of what Healy (1998) described as superego driven systems where organisations being inspected are characterised by dread or

terror of being found out. They are afraid of being criticized and being harshly judged. Threatened with an inspection process, they embark on panic driven activities as evidenced by both Borrowdale and Eastlea where several changes were made to create an image to show inspectors that their organisations are performing well (Healy 1998).

It seemed that the main objective was to defeat inspection institutions. Some of the actions undertaken by organisations to pass inspections were viewed by many respondents as being unsustainable. The harsh superego audit process is experienced as being imposed and any recommendation to practice from this process is resisted as being imposed from outside (Healy 1998). This could be another reason to explain the repeated failure in Borrowdale and fact that Eastlea reverted to what was viewed as their way of functioning.

The creation of 'an organisation in the mind' which differs from reality can contribute to the understanding of the complexities surrounding why some organisations involved in inspection regimes go through repeated vicious cycles of failures or repeat the same patterns of behaviour in response to inspection regimes without sustaining any meaningful, real change over several years. As explained in the previous chapters, some organisations struggle to maintain consistent levels of good performance because they adhere to repeated patterns of behaviours where they appear to rationalise and justify poor performance (Weick and Sutcliffe 2003, Long 2008). Some of the actions undertaken by organisations to pass inspections were viewed by many respondents as being unsustainable. This may explain the repeated failure in Borrowdale and the fact that Eastlea reverted to what was viewed as '*their way of functioning*'. The harsh superego audit process is experienced as being imposed and any recommendation to practice from this process is resisted as being imposed from outside (Healy 1989).

As shown in previous chapters, it seems that when responding to Ofsted inspections, both organisations viewed resource allocations as contributing significantly to performance improvement in both organisations. Massive resources were provided

for short periods of time with the hope of improving performance to pass Ofsted inspections. However, in both organisations, many respondents noted that following passing the inspection, the resources were withdrawn. It seems that poor performance could have been justified and rationalised as being due to lack of resources. Such behaviours where organisations go through episodes of having 'increased resources then withdrawing the resources' could be viewed as demonstrating inconsistent strategic planning and management thus they are not conducive to long term performance improvement. Rather they lead to a process of rationalization of organisational behaviours and actions where organisational performance issues may be attributed to lack of resources thereby using this as defence mechanisms to manage anxieties emanating from being judged as performing poorly. Such actions affirm the organisation 'held in mind' of individuals. The risk here as identified in the study is that it can lead to blind spots within organisations where poor performance continues unmitigated as what was described in Borrowdale prior to the Ofsted inspection process (Weick and Sutcliffe 2003, Long 2008).

This study concurs with the view that for sustainable performance improvement to occur; leaders need to be cognisant of two main factors which are: the organisation that is 'intended', the planned aim and structure of the organisation. Secondly the organisation that is actually happening which will be different from the intentions as it involves individuals who bring a variety of responses derived from their own experiences and is also influenced by unconscious process (Hutton, Bazalgette & Reed 1997). To achieve sustainable improvement, leaders also need to consult workers, motivate them and ensure worker's participation by involving them in the decision making process so that any changes are collectively owned (Adamson 1996, Spillane 2006).

The evidence in the improvement journey in one of the organisations under study illustrates this. In Borrowdale, performance was improved with a new leadership regime that created a different culture with behaviour patterns and norms conducive to supporting workers in meeting the objectives of the organisation and establishing

a learning organisation (Song 2008). Additional resources were poured into the training department and also a strategic evaluation of the needs of the community and the organisation itself which led to the provision of adequate human resources and equipment to enable workers to implement the primary task. The description of the leadership style adopted by the new leadership team appeared transformational; the new leaders were viewed as being more supportive, empowering, 'visible' and invested in developing workers (Adamson 1996, Mulder 2016). Hertz-Linsky (2002) asserts that to turn around failing organisations, emphasis should be on tackling and changing the systems culture.

The above is supported by Long's (2008) assertion that organisations are not just an assembly of people making independent decisions but rather are an entity in their own right giving rise to inter-reliant decisions. The numerous systems functioning within organisations result in individuals taking up or being assigned roles; such roles do not work in isolation.

### **9.1.2 The relationship between 'Organisation in the mind' and 'Ofsted in the mind'**

Data from this study shows that organisations create an image of 'inspection institutions in the mind' whereby they provide an interpretation and form a view of the inspection regimes. Such 'in the mind' views of inspection regimes can be influenced by organisational structures, systems in place, the unconscious dynamics as well as the 'organisation in the mind' held by the workers working in that organisation (Armstrong 2005). As seen in this study this has a profound impact on an organisation's relationship with the inspection institutions.

This study shows that the 'organisation in the mind' of the workers significantly impacted on their 'Ofsted in the mind' and also on the response to the inspection processes. In Eastlea, the 'organisation in the mind' of some individuals during the inspection preparation phase was that of an organisation whose performance was inadequate with some workers who were 'incompetent' requiring 'improvement plans', leadership was 'harsh', 'punitive' and environment was characterised by

hostility and fear of loss of jobs. The 'Ofsted in the mind' of some individuals was that of 'punitive and persecuting' institution which is only focused on monitoring performance targets. Ofsted was seen as ultimately responsible for the decision of the 'survival' of individuals or organisations.

Thus, for some workers in Eastlea, the 'organisation in the mind' had similar characteristics to the 'Ofsted in the mind'. Both were viewed as hostile and a threat to the individual workers. This resulted in high levels of anxieties across the whole organisations. This image of the 'Ofsted in mind' led organisations feeling 'under siege' and unfortunately the actions undertaken by the leadership teams to defend their organisations resulted in personal and team stress leading to different 'enemies' developing inside the organisations. This was mainly due to ineffective management of internal and external boundaries and the lack of containment for the splitting and projection processes (Moxnes 1998, Hafford-Letchfield 2009). Workers felt bombarded and as seen in the previous chapter, workers sanctioned their leadership teams to use whatever strategy was necessary to fight this threat to ensure 'survival' of the organisations.

The response of this organisation to the Ofsted inspection process was to hide some workers who were deemed to be incompetent (Whittaker and Havard 2016). Indeed the inspectors were seen as simply mirroring the behaviours of the leadership teams in this organisation and were perceived by some respondents as punitive towards some workers during the inspection. This reaffirmed their 'Ofsted in the mind' view.

In Borrowdale, following failing the Ofsted inspection in 2008, the 'organisation in the mind' was that of an inadequate organisation. The problems created by the recruitment policies resulted in a hostile punitive organisation characterised by blame and fear of loss of employment. The 'Ofsted in the mind' of some of the workers was that of a 'rescuer' to replace the ineffective leadership. This view impacted on some of the workers' response to the Ofsted inspection process, they were viewed as being open to the inspectors by showing them the reality of their practice standards. Their positive 'Ofsted in the mind' view was affirmed when changes only occurred



after failing the inspection process. Although major problems were encountered due to the actions taken by the senior leadership teams, the workers may have viewed these as due to ineffective leadership rather than blaming the inspection process.

The workers in the two Local Authorities had different 'Ofsted in the mind' views, in terms of Ofsted being viewed as punitive in one Local Authority and Ofsted being viewed as a 'rescuer' in another. The respondents appeared to be concerned about the rigid performance targets perceived to be characteristic of inspection processes (Munro 2012, Cooper 2018). The organisations' 'Ofsted in the mind' resulted in a shift of focus in the organisational functioning and what emerged was performance targets driven organisations at the expense of what some of the respondents perceived as 'real social work'. 'Real social work' was viewed as spending time building and maintaining relationships with families and undertaking direct work with children and families (Stalker et al 2007, Faulkner and Borah 2008). Instead the focus was viewed as shifting to more administrative tasks and 'tick box' exercises to suit the perceived Ofsted requirements (Munro 2012). This appeared to be a source of great anxiety for the workers. Information from this study shows that there was a tug of war (see Fig 1) as social workers tried to meet the conflicting and competing demands of their organisation's perception of Ofsted requirements and what they believed their primary task was. This was a source of great anxiety.

## **9.2 Towards creating a well-functioning organisation**

### **9.2.1 Changing the mindset; boundary management, creating a learning culture and containing environment.**

For any sustainable transformation to occur to improve performance, leadership needs to work through understanding the organisation 'in the mind' of the workforce before implementing any changes (Armstrong 2005). The understanding of the organisation 'in the mind' of individuals as well as the existential primary task and phenomenal primary task is essential in providing insight for leaders regarding the change required to ensure effective implementation of the normative primary task (Owens 2015, Ruch and Murray 2011). Changing the mindset of the workers and subsequently the culture of the organisation is paramount in effecting any

sustainable organisational development. It is only then can real transformation take place when workers have a clear realistic view of their organisation and its function and the view of the internal and external institutions (Hafford- Letchfield et al 2014). For this process to be effective, the role of the leadership team is crucial in not only creating a learning culture and containing environment but also in managing the internal and external boundaries.

### **9.2.2 Leadership Role in managing boundaries**

Organisations are regularly influenced by different forces of power from the external environment including the partner agencies, politicians, service users and the inspection institutions. The economic and political climate is regularly changing; all this has the potential of destabilising organisations (Diamond and Allcorn 2003).

Threats from outside agencies such as the inspection institutions can be threatening to the workers if boundaries with external agencies are not effectively managed. Hischhorn (1988) concurs with this view stating that if the system is closed or fails to manage the relationship with the outside environment it creates defence mechanisms which can negatively impact on the functioning of the organisation. Leadership teams therefore have to be able to continually scan the internal and external environment and adapt the functions of their organisations quickly and effectively if there are any changes in the environments or if organisational outcomes are not achieved (Hafford- Letchfield et al 2014, Madembo 2015). Leadership should have the ability to influence the organisation created 'in the mind' of the workers, Ofsted and its customers.

As noted in the previous chapter, the issues of power and authority result in contentious relationships between the various parties involved in the inspection process which put the organisations in a difficult position as they try to satisfy the needs of the service users, inspection institutions, politicians as well as the needs of the workers within the organisations. Leadership has a critical role to play when the power and authority of an organisation is threatened. This research has shown that when workers, both as individuals and as groups, are subjected to pressure from the

inspection institutions, they deploy individual and social defence mechanisms to manage the processes of splitting and projection (Halton 1994, Trevithick 2011, Whittaker 2011, Munro 2012, Whittaker and Havard 2016). This can distort the implementation of the normative primary task (Hinshelwood & Skogstad 2000).

In this thesis, it was also clear that leadership is important in providing confidence both externally to the inspection system but more importantly to the internal processes of how individuals and groups deliver services. The ability of leaders to manage internal and external boundaries becomes vital to maintain the health of organisations to ensure its survival in particular when pressure or stress is exerted from internal or external forces. The internal and external boundaries have to be negotiated if organisations are to function effectively to implement primary task (Madembo 2015).

Some organisations are characterised by ineffective leadership. Evidence from this research shows that some leaders abdicate responsibilities and withdraw from their roles leaving organisations without clear direction. The vacuum created by the 'absent' leaderships leaves an organisation without containment. The chaos created through the splitting and projection processes may result in a 'siege mentality'.

When organisations are under pressure from inspection institutions and politicians, this may result in the leadership teams exerting power on their workers especially where there is a huge dichotomy between the competing demands of inspection bodies and politicians. The workers in such organisations may exert their own power and control by unconsciously sabotaging any intended changes through creating a hostile work environment and rationalising and justifying poor performance for fear of reprisals (Kets de Vries 1984, Weick and Sutcliffe 2003).

Effective leaders will be able to contain any threats from outside or inside, managing and containing individual and organisational anxieties thus preventing such anxieties from spiraling to the whole organisations (Hischhorn 1988).

### **9.2.3 Providing a containing environment**

Creating a healthy functioning organisation is not only vital for the implementation of the primary task but for maintaining a healthy workforce (Stokes 1994). This study highlights that senior managers in both organisations failed to protect the workers from the toxicity arising from the organisational self-imposed trauma emanating from the changes made in response to the threat of an inspection process and also from the anxieties encountered by workers whilst performing the primary task. High levels of anxieties caused by the fear of an inspection were the driving force behind subsequent defensive actions taken by the leadership teams in both organisations (Whittaker and Havard 2016). As seen in Borrowdale and Eastlea, the anxieties triggered were destructive to organisational functioning. Such anxieties needed to be contained to ensure the survival of an organisation (Stokes 1994).

Senior managers need to be attuned to the unconscious processes at work to be able to ensure that workers remain focused on the primary task (Trowell 1995). This study concurs with Heifetz and Laurie's (1975) view that during periods of stress in organisations, the leadership role is critical to provide not only a holding environment, but an environment which is able to provide containment for the workers (Winnicott 1965, Bion 1962). This importance of this leadership function cannot be overemphasised in organisations who are under threat, as the 'regulation of distress' and providing containment to workers to process their experiences is a crucial feature of the leadership role. This is not an easy task and needs leaders who have certain qualities such as the resilience and emotional capacity to withstand uncertainty, anger, aggression and pain without getting too overwhelmed and anxious themselves. Ruch's (2007) concept of 'holistic containment', explored in chapter 2, highlights that it is important for organisations to provide containment consisting of emotional, epistemological and organisational elements. This provides opportunities and space for individuals to process their emotions through reflections, building trusting relationships between practitioners, managers and other professionals and for organisations to deliver clear and supportive managerial structures and processes (Ruch 2007).

In Borrowdale and Eastlea, the anxieties triggered by implementing the primary task have the potential of being destructive to organisational functioning if there is no containment. Containment is particularly crucial in organisations, where the implementation of the primary task triggers anxieties (Cooper et al 2003, Whittaker 2011). Such anxieties need to be contained to prevent the splitting and projection processes which were prevalent in Borrowdale and Eastlea. Long (2014) asserts that building relationships of trust is the cornerstone of providing containment within organisations.

#### **9.2.4 Learning culture**

Senge (1999) refers to learning organisations as organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they want and where new and extensive patterns of thinking are nurtured. Information in this study has shown that leadership teams are regularly faced with challenges which can derail the functioning of organisations.

Leadership teams need the capacity to ensure that their organisations are capable of self-management and self-regulation so that they stay on course to implement their primary task. To effectively do this, organisations need to have robust functioning quality assurance departments which regularly audit and evaluate quality of service provision. The quality assurance departments need to work closely in collaboration with senior leadership teams and management groups assessing the performance level in the organisations, looking at both strengths and areas of improvement. The culture created is not about blame and punishing mistakes but about finding areas of improvement and obtaining the learning from this to improve practice. The organisation is in a continual process of self-monitoring evaluation and performance improvement, that is, it is not primarily judgmental or critical. It is about learning from experience. In this case leadership emerges as creating an environment conducive to organisational self-reflection, development, monitoring and progress. Such an organisation is oriented towards ego driven audits which stem from curiosity; a wish to learn about one's working practices and a desire to perform better (Healy 1998). They are viewed as positive involving, and the standards are set and owned by the

organisational members rather than being felt as imposed from outside (Healy 1998). In a way such organisations do not feel threatened by external inspections, they are viewed positively as learning experience to improve performance. Mistakes are tolerated not punished; learning is derived from mistakes and experience.

### **9.3 The Ofsted inspections: Does Ofsted improve performance?**

This study confirms that inspections are vital in improving performance within organisations (Goldup 2011, Ofsted 2011). Inspections are paramount especially in dysfunctional organisations where the leadership is ineffective. There is a danger of such organisations continuing same patterns of behaviour creating a cycle of poor performance if there are no independent institutions to evaluate their services (Healy 1998, Weick and Sutcliffe 2003). Some patterns of such behaviours are due to organisational blind spots arising from lack of insight or deployment of defence mechanisms which can distort implementation of the primary task (Long 2008). This could also be due to rationalisations which justify poor and perpetuates performance in organisations.

This study shows organisations can be stuck in defensive behaviours whereby 'poor performance' is explained away by various factors including staff shortage, particular 'poor performing' individuals and complex needs of children and families in deprived communities. The common view from this study was the assumption that things would improve when organisations embark on particular actions which included sacking 'poor performing staff', increasing staffing, restructuring and increasing working hours. It can be argued that these are all the institutional defences that are embedded within organisations to manage the organisational anxieties in times of stresses exerted by external pressures like those from inspecting bodies (Whittaker 2011, Havard and Whittaker 2016). Such actions resulted in repeated patterns of behaviour without sustainable changes to improve performance.

Frontline organisations which deliver services to the public need an inspection regime to ensure that organisations are functioning effectively in the implementation of their primary. The concept of cultural entrapment, where individuals justify their

actions, defence mechanisms and defensive behaviours can distort primary task implementation and negatively impact service delivery (Hischhorn 1988, Weick and Sutcliffe 2003). This is more so for organisations which are not capable of self-monitoring and self-regulation. Inspection institutions need to have power and authority to enforce the delivery of change required.

The issues raised in this study regarding Ofsted do not pertain to the overall concept of inspections per se but rather to the type of Inspection Framework that Ofsted uses to evaluate a Local Authority's performance. The current single inspection framework is viewed by some as being unsuitable for measuring quality of service in Local Authorities (Jones 2015, ADCS 2015, Sheppard 2018).

My view is that inspections are vital to ensure that Local Authorities continue the effective implementation of the primary task. I view Ofsted as symbolising the 'conscience of organisations'. They remind organisations about their duties to deliver high quality service to the vulnerable children and families in particular organisations where there is ineffective leadership. In a similar way to the functions of the superego in an individual, Ofsted forces the organisations to self-regulate their 'organisational emotions' taking into consideration the expectation of the public regarding meeting the primary task (Freud 1923).

When I reflected on the findings from this study, an example by Weick (1995) resonated with some of my conclusions about Ofsted as an inspecting body. Weick (1995) used the story of the Hungarian soldier to illustrate the power of attaching and creating meaning 'in the mind' to form a reality. A young Hungarian lieutenant sent an investigation party into the icy Alps during military maneuvers in Switzerland. During the venture, the group was lost in a snowstorm. One of the men found a map in his pocket, using this map the group found their way back to the base camp. When the young lieutenant looked at this 'lifesaving map', he discovered that it was actually a map of the Pyrenees and not the Alps. Weick (1995) concluded that when one is lost, any old map will do because he views maps as engaging people into taking action. From the research findings, there is no evidence to suggest that

Ofsted itself improves performance, in fact, the repeated failures in Borrowdale Children's Services and other Local Authorities cited in the iMPower (2015) research study, signifies this. Ofsted identifies areas of concern, but it does not provide a roadmap of how performance can be improved. The organisations have to work out this by themselves. However, in ineffective organisations which are not mature and self-regulating, Ofsted galvanises them to act. It is like the map described by Weick (1995)'s example. It can be viewed as a stimuli, once action is taken, cues are generated which help people discover and explain what is happening and what needs to happen in the future (Weick 1995). Thus through the actions, people start making sense of their 'organisation in the mind' and the 'reality out there' leading to changes and outcomes being achieved (Armstrong 2005).

#### **9.4 Conclusions**

In this study, the use of psychoanalytic framework and organisational metaphors was crucial in getting an in-depth understanding of the complex dynamics within both organisations as they responded to inspection processes. This thesis explored how some organisations respond to inspections to improve performance. The organisations under study went through periods of stress as they tried to change their function to meet their perception of the requirements of the inspection process.

This thesis has identified the following:

I discovered that for realistic and sustainable transformation to occur, leaders need to understand the 'organisation held in the mind' of workers, the existential primary task and the phenomenal primary task before any change process can be implemented. Leadership teams need to change the 'organisation held in the mind' of the workers as this will lead to change in mind set of the workers (Armstrong 2005, Hutton, Bazalgette, & Reed 1997). If the 'organisation in the mind' and mind set of workers is changed this will influence the culture of the organisation. Without a change in the 'organisation in the mind' of workers, no real change can take place irrespective of how many organisational restructuring take place.



This study has shown how important and critical the role of leadership is within this. By effectively managing the external and internal boundaries, leadership teams can create an environment which promotes a culture of learning and provide containment to manage the unconscious processes (Hafford-Letchfield 2009, Ruch 2007, Senge 1990). As evidenced by the two organisations under study, lack of containment results in splitting and projection processes which may be targeted at individuals and teams in the organisations. This has the potential of leading to interpersonal and team conflict and negatively impact the implementation of the primary task (Moxnes 1998). Learning cultures facilitates organisational self-evaluation and self-regulation to remain focused on ensuring that organisations continue to implement the primary task particularly when organisations are under internal and external pressure (Song 2008).

This study shows that inspections have a role to play in improving performance in particular for dysfunctional organisations. In mature self-regulating organisations inspections are important as they provide an independent objective view of evaluating their performance with a view learn and improve (Healy 1998). They are not viewed as punitive but rather as a 'critical friend'. However, this study noted that in some organisations inspections are regarded as punitive and in such organisations short term measures are implemented to portray a different organisational image to the inspection process. Such organisations lack the ability to self-evaluate and self-manage thus any improvement is not sustained in the long term. The inspection process framework should be able to identify such organisations that provide a specific image for the purpose of passing an inspection process (Healy 1998). Such organisations need to be supported in changing the mindset and culture so that they implement realistic changes which can be embedded within the structures and sustained.

The next chapter will detail my reflections from the study and the implications for practice, recommendations and areas for further research.

## **Chapter 10: Reflection and Recommendations**

### **10.0 Introduction**

Although this is a small scale study, it has provided an insight into how some Local Authorities respond to inspection institutions and identified some underlying issues which may arise during a change process. Leaders in organisation need to be aware of these underlying issues and develop strategies to manage as they significantly impact on performance within organisations. In this section, I will provide a brief reflection of my journey during the completion of this study followed by a review of whether this study has answered the research question. I will also explore the theoretical contributions to knowledge followed by the limitation of the study. Lastly I will consider the recommendations to practice.

### **10.1 Reflection**

I decided to research in this area based on my experience of Ofsted inspections prior to working in the organisations under study. I went through similar emotional experiences described by respondents in the study and I also watched colleagues going through this emotional upheaval. My view of Ofsted prior to embarking on this study was quite negative. This was based solely on the suffering colleagues and I endured due to the organizational changes induced in response to the inspection process. However, undertaking this study, gave me a different perspective.

During the interviews I was emotionally drawn into the complex dynamics going on between me and the respondents through the process of counter transference. However, the process of analysing the data gave me a platform to reflect in an objective distanced way. The fact that the data was analysed over a few months through several stages helped me gain a detached independent view where I was able to critically interrogate the information.

At the end of this project, I now have a totally different view of Ofsted compared to my previous views. Although this is a small scale study, the information collated is in-depth and gives a comprehensive view of the experiences of the workers going

through inspection processes. My view now is that Ofsted does play a significant part in improving performance, especially in organisations where there is ineffective leadership. The study raises concerns regarding what could have happened if there was no inspection body to evaluate both the organisations, at what point were the senior managers going to intervene.

Using the psychoanalytic framework was enlightening. I was able to pick out nuances of the said and unsaid. It was interesting that I did not need to ask too many probing questions.

Reflecting on my journey, I noted that I got emotionally enmeshed in the whole Ofsted inspection dynamics. On some occasions, the turbulence in both organisations caused me to lose sight of the organisations' primary task. I became focused on the conflicts and battles within the organisations. The emotions evoked in response to the inspection process were quite powerful.

I think I also adopted the view of Ofsted as the 'omnipotent being' during this research process. I had this constant feeling of not being prepared and the fear that I did not have enough information to write about Ofsted. It was as if I felt that Ofsted was too big and the information I had was too small to adequately cover Ofsted so I wanted to continue researching. It appeared that I was afraid of questioning Ofsted. Part of this could also have been my own culture and background where there is a fear of questioning authority.

I also noted that as an insider researcher, I was going 'native' as evidenced by some of the language I was using in commenting on the transcripts. The seminars, supervision and discussion the information with social work colleagues assisted me in unpicking these issues.

It has been a very interesting and enlightening journey. I have learnt valuable lessons regarding organisational functioning. In particular, the importance of

understanding the 'organisation in the mind' of the workers and how crucial it is for all managers at whatever level to always be mindful of.

## **10.2 Responding to the aims and research questions.**

The purpose of this study was to explore how individuals and organisations respond to Ofsted inspections to improve performance. I was interested in exploring the conscious and the unconscious processes which influenced individuals and teams, as organisations try to manage an Ofsted inspection process. By using psychoanalytical informed observations and paying attention to organisational metaphors, I focused on the non-verbal behaviours, feelings and emotions within both organisations during the periods I worked in each of the organisations. The use of metaphors in analysing the data was beneficial in providing another view of the organisations as depicted in their everyday language. During the period I worked in both organisations, I observed first-hand the lived experience of individuals in both organisations as they went through the Ofsted inspection process. This study shows how organisations respond to external stress and how this impact on individuals and team behaviours as organisations go through the process of change.

The study managed to respond to the research questions set before embarking on the project as stated below.

*What are the social workers and team managers' perceptions of the Ofsted inspection process?*

The study provides detailed data regarding the views of the workers, team managers and senior managers regarding the Ofsted inspection. This was explored in detail in chapter 7. Some of the permanent social workers and their team managers in Borrowdale viewed Ofsted as replacing the ineffective leadership prevailing at that time so Ofsted was seen in a positive light. Some of the workers and team managers in Eastlea viewed Ofsted as 'punitive.' In both organisations some of the senior leadership teams viewed Ofsted as punitive. Ofsted was at times viewed as the reason behind some individuals losing employment.

*What is the impact of the inspection on the social workers, managers and the dynamics within teams and the organization as a whole?*

It is clear in this study that the actions taken by the leadership teams in response to the Ofsted inspection caused conflict in both organisations resulting in the organisations feeling 'under siege'. Team dynamics were fractured due to the conflict between individuals and teams. Phrases depicting war metaphors were used to describe the tensions within both organisations as they embarked on a process of change. This was explored in chapter 6.

*What are the underlying tensions (unconscious) within organizations brought about by the Ofsted inspection process; what are the anxieties and defences operating at the individual and team level?*

This study provides a clear view regarding the splitting and projections processes in both organisations due to the anxieties brought about by change in response to the inspection process. This impacted on group behaviour and both organisations were operating in basic assumption mentality. They deviated from focusing on the primary task as energy was spent managing the anxieties triggered. Chapter 6 explores the defence mechanisms deployed at the individual and organisational level to manage the anxieties.

*What is the view of the social workers and Managers regarding the contribution and effectiveness of Ofsted inspection as a medium for change and improving service provision?*

The concerns raised in both organisations were about sustainability of the changes implemented to pass an inspection. In both organisations, respondents felt that additional resources are provided to enable the Local Authorities to pass inspections. However, these were said to be withdrawn in the aftermath of passing an inspection process. Despite this, this study shows that both organisations were in a state of 'stagnation' and there appeared to have been no growth or progress. The threat of Ofsted resulted in the leadership teams taking action.

This study has shown that for any sustainable improvement to occur, leadership teams in organisation need to change the view of its workers' 'organisation in the mind'. This will change the mind-set of the workers leading to changes in the culture of the organisation. Chapter 9 explores some of what needs to be undertaken to maintain practice improvement and the critical role of effective leadership within this.

### **10.3 Contribution to knowledge**

- The study has integrated two approaches, the psychoanalytic framework (Menzies 1960, Halton 1994, Hinshelwood and Skogstad, 2000) and metaphors (Beckett 2003, Danziger 2000, Donovan & Mercer 2003, Carpenter 2008) to gain in-depth information about the organisations under study. Using a combination of the two frameworks proved essential in identifying the links between the theoretical concepts underpinning the research study. Some of the anxieties and defence mechanisms deployed were expressed metaphorically through language by respondents. Thus the metaphoric language illuminated the basic assumption mentalities in the organisations and also illuminated the 'organisation in the mind' of individuals.
- The study explored the impact of Ofsted inspections on Children Services and the unconscious processes that underlie the inspections of Local Authorities. There is a gap in literature regarding psychoanalytic studies of the impact of Ofsted inspections on Children Services.
- Contributes to the existing knowledge regarding anxieties inherent in the work with vulnerable families and the anxieties associates with inspection regimes (Cooper et al 2003, Whittaker 2011, Munro 2012, Whittaker and Havard 2016, Cooper 2018). In addition, the study contributes to the existing literature about the dilemma facing social workers regarding balancing the competing demands of performance targets with building relationships with families ((Ruch 2005, Hingley-Jones and Ruch 2016, Cooper 2018).
- Contributes to the existing literature regarding 'organisation in the mind' (Hutton, Bazalgette & Reed, 1997, Armstrong 2005, Tucker 2012).

#### **10.4 Limitations and Areas for Further research**

As a participant observer I was conscious that some of the responses provided may have been biased to my position in both Local Authorities. I was aware that being in the management team would impact on some of the information provided by workers. The use of multiple sources of data collection to triangulate the information gathered strengthened the findings (.Hammersley and Atkinson 2007; Ying 2009, Madden 2010, Wengraf 2010). Information from the interviewees ranging from social workers to senior managers within the two Local Authorities was augmented with the information from my own observations, my own experiences of the Ofsted inspection process in both Local Authorities and the existing documents. I also found the support from supervision and seminar groups invaluable in grounding me and assisting me in making sense of my own observations and interviews (Price and Cooper 2012, Hingley-Jones 2016).

This was a small scale study based on only two Local Authorities, in-depth interviews, documentation and my own observations. A limitation of the study might be that generalisability might be questioned. However according to Collins (1992) much of the best work in sociology has been carried out using qualitative methods without statistical tests. O'Connell et al (1994) assert that by watching people over time, talking to them and others about what you have seen and how you interpret, it is possible to obtain more reliable and richer data. Since the focus of ethnography is on behaviour and given that these are stable in time, then it is likely that generalisations are possible, precise criteria must be followed in the choice of samples (Gobo 2008).

I would have liked to interview more respondents to get a wider cross section of views from the different groups of agency workers and the senior managers who were asked to leave their jobs. This would have provided me more data for comparison. In hindsight, I think it would also have been beneficial to have a third Local Authority for comparison of findings. This would have augmented the findings regarding organisational functioning in response to inspections and also individuals' views regarding the inspection process.

Further studies may need to be undertaken on a bigger scale involving more Local Authorities and a larger pool of respondents testing the same psychoanalytically informed methods and metaphors. The study only focused on one side of the process, respondents from Local Authorities. It would be interesting to seek the views of the Ofsted inspectors themselves and triangulate the information. Such a study would provide an insight into Ofsted inspectors' views and attitudes towards what Children's Services Departments go through in managing inspection processes. An exploration of whether the Ofsted inspectors are also faced by anxieties and counter-transference during the inspection process would provide a fuller understanding regarding what goes on during the inspection processes. It would be interesting for any further studies in this area to include partner agencies so that a holistic perspective can be obtained.

### **10.5 Implications on practice**

The study shows that inspections are not only critical in guarding against complacency but also in forcing organisations to improve performance, in particular where the leadership is ineffective. Inspections force organisations to confront issues of denial and areas of blind spots which may be impacting on their performance (Weick and Sutcliffe 2003, Long 2008). Although one of the questions raised in this research was how inspection institutions justify judging organisations as inadequate and leaving them to address poor performance on their own. A judgement of inadequate basically implies that an organisation's performance is so poor that there is potential that children are being left at unassessed risk of harm. This was the case in Borrowdale with several hundreds of unassessed cases. Such situations clearly demonstrate that some organisations lack insight and the capacity to improve within reasonable timescales. It is surprising that such organisations are left to manage on their own even more so when inspectors return and the situation has not improved (Jones 2011). This is one area which inspection bodies may need to review their inspection frameworks as they may be leaving children at potential risk of harm.



Information from this study shows that the 'punitiveness' associated with inspection bodies actually arises from the response of some organisations to the inspection process itself. This association with a harsh critique that has dogged inspection institutions does not help their aim of improving performance. Instead, it promotes some organisations to hide information and this lack of openness and honesty hinders learning which organisations would otherwise benefit from inspection process (Healy 1998, Rustin 2004). Additionally, it prevents real sustainable changes being made within organisations. Inspection institutions thus need to move away from such negative image whilst maintaining their evaluation and critique aspect of inspecting organisations.

One of the questions to consider is whether inspecting bodies like Ofsted influence or define social work? Evidence in this study shows that inspections can probably redefine or change the direction of social work. This research clearly shows that inspection institutions change the focus of Children's Services, their core functions are adapted to what they think inspectors will be focusing on, albeit in some cases for a short period of time. In this study, respondents referred to 'real social work' as being centered on building sustainable relationship with families and empowering families (Bryan et al 2016, Hingley-Jones and Ruch 2016).

The relationship between Ofsted and some organisations is strained and is viewed as being characterised by issues of exerting power on organisations. The anxieties associated with the Ofsted inspection processes resulted in senior managers in both organisations exerting power negatively on workers, this does not model the notion of positive relationship building (Vanderslice 1988). Within organisations workers model behaviour which is sanctioned by organisations and this is heavily influenced by the culture of organisations. Thus where organisations are impacted negatively by the power of the inspection bodies, such negativity's may be felt throughout the organisations.

## **10.6 Recommendations**

### *10.6.1 Reconfiguring the relationship between Children's Services and Ofsted*

The relationship between some Children's Services Departments and Ofsted is fraught with tension which hinders any effective learning from the inspection process. As noted in this study, inspections are vital in ensuring that local authorities remain on task to ensure good quality service delivery. As such, it is important for open dialogue between Ofsted and local authorities to assess the areas of tensions and put in place strategies to address these with the aim of building positive open relationships to allow local authorities to be open during inspections. Such dialogue will not only improve relationships but will also build a common understanding of ensuring that future inspection frameworks focus on what social workers view as the real issues, that is quality of the practice instead of the emphasis on performance indicators. This is likely to improve the confidence of local authorities.

### *10.6.2 Framework to ensure sustainable performance improvement.*

Similar to the iMPOWER (2015) study, the information in this study shows that some organisations provide additional resources to pass an inspection process (iMPOWER 2015). Such resources are withdrawn following passing an inspection process so any improvement changes made are not sustained. In these organisations the inspection process become rather ineffective as there is no learning or sustained improvement. Consideration need to be given to establishing a rolling program of unannounced inspections which are undertaken regularly where inspectors remain at a distance and objective but closely monitor organisations' performance. This will not only guard against complacency but the inspectors can be viewed as a 'critical friend' to assist in sustaining performance improvement.

### *10.6.3 Evaluating Ofsted inspection processes*

Ofsted does not need to change the inspection framework after a few years. As seen from this study frequently changing inspection framework causes instability in organisations and deviate the attention of local authorities from focusing on their

core tasks as they try to keep up with the changes. Instead Ofsted needs to identify an outside agency to evaluate the Ofsted inspection framework and process; such a body should include those inspected by Ofsted such as teachers and social workers. Such an evaluation will need to take place once the inspection framework is fully embedded in, like the current SIF which has been going on since 2013. The recommendation from such an evaluation will contribute to the updating of a new framework where there is an agreement that the framework will measure what it is supposed to measure, that is, the quality of the service provided and the impact on the outcomes for children and families.

#### *10.6.4 Establishing supportive and reflective learning organisation*

Johnson (1993) asserts that learning organisation refers to an organisation's ability to build its own future through learning with the assumption that learning is an ongoing and creative process for its members; such organisations develop, adapt, and transform themselves in response to the needs of people within the organisations and those externally. Rustin and Bradley (2008) note that a reflective organisation recognizes the importance of learning from experience, workers are allowed to make mistakes with the knowledge and assurance that such mistakes are tolerated as part of learning. There is no fear of reprisals from making mistakes (Rustin and Bradley 2008). This study has shown how important it is to create a supportive emotionally holding and containing environment for workers, not only is important to manage the anxieties triggered by the primary task but it is vital during periods when organisations are under stress or are undergoing transformation (Ruch 2007, Biran 2013, Foster 2016). Organisations need to have inbuilt structures that constantly support workers to ensure that they remain focused on implementing the primary task.

### **10.7 Conclusion**

Information in this thesis is based on two organisations which were at different stages of the inspection process. The leadership in both organisations appeared ineffective and the actions they took to manage the inspection process created tensions within their organisations. This study does not represent the response of all

organisations to inspection processes, therefore the findings cannot be generalised to other organisations. I believe that well-functioning organisations may respond differently to Ofsted inspections. They may view the inspections process positively as a learning opportunity (Healy 1998).

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## **Appendix 1: Summary of the Ofsted Inspections Phases.**

### *2007 to 2008: Joint Area Review (JAR)*

- Based on meeting the five outcomes of the Every Child Matters agenda,
- Local Authorities also went through Annual Performance Assessments which analysed improvements towards the five Every Child Matters outcomes, (Ofsted 2007).

### *2009 to 2012: Comprehensive Area Assessments and the inspections of Safeguarding and Looked After Services*

- JAR replaced, JAR was replaced by Comprehensive Area Assessments from 1 April 2009
- Focused on assessing outcomes for children and young people and the impact that practice and services have on improving outcomes,
- Included inspectors from the Care Quality Commission under section 20 of the Children Act 2004.

### *2009 (July) to 2012: Annual Unannounced Inspections of the Contact, Referral and Assessment Services*

- July 2009, introduction of Ofsted annual unannounced inspections
- Assessed how well practice helped to manage the risk of harm to children and young people and minimise the incidence of child abuse and neglect (Ofsted 2010).
- Local authorities were notified immediately before the inspection, on the same day (Ofsted 2010).
- All Local Authority areas were to have this unannounced inspection in any one 12-month period.



*2009 to 2011: Children's services assessments & Children's Services: performance profile (2009–2011)*

- May 2009, Ofsted published Children's Services annual rating guidance, (Ofsted 2009).
- Profile comprised of findings from the Ofsted's inspection and regulation of services and settings for which the council has strategic or operational responsibilities, either alone or in partnership with others, combined with data from the relevant Every Child Matters indicators in the new National Indicator Set (Ofsted 2009).

*2013 (November) to date (2016) Single Inspection Framework (SIF) –*

- Came up as a recommendation of the Munro's review, ( Munro 2012)
- The purpose of this new inspection program was to improve the way in which inspections evaluate the experiences of children and their families and the progress that they make in direct response to the professional help and support they are given (Higgs 2011).
- A separate inspection program of services for Looked After Children was also established
- Ofsted announced at the time that all 152 Local Authorities in England and the associated LSCBs would be inspected within three years (Ofsted 2014).
- The Single Inspection Framework was to assess the quality of all Local Authority services for vulnerable children, including those in care, at risk of harm, care leavers up to 25 years old and those not in the education system (Higgs 2011).
- Looking at the 'child's journey' was now the focus (Higgs 2011)
- Inspectors considered how all local services – including health, education, police and the justice system – contributed to protecting children.

## Appendix 2: A Guide Timeline of the Research Period.

|                              |                                                                                                  |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| October 2010                 | Started working in Borrowdale Children's Services.                                               |
| December 2011                | Inspection of safeguarding and Looked After Children's Services                                  |
| April 2012                   | I left Borrowdale Children Services                                                              |
| May 2012                     | Started working in Eastlea Children Services                                                     |
| July 2012                    | The research proposal was formally registered at the UEL Research Degrees Sub-Committee.         |
| December 2012                | Inspection of safeguarding and looked after Children's Services                                  |
| March 2013                   | Approval letter from the ethics board                                                            |
| April 2013                   | Agreement provided to undertake research in Borrowdale Children Services                         |
| May 2013                     | Senior Leadership team provides an agreement to undertake research in Eastlea Children Services. |
| June 2013 -<br>December 2013 | Carrying out interviews and transcribing the audio information notes.                            |
| January 2014                 | Data analysis started.                                                                           |

### Appendix 3: Ofsted Results in Two Local Authorities

| Local Authority | Inspection                               | Grade/<br>Judgement | Key messages from Ofsted                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-----------------|------------------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Borrowdale      | Joint Area Review<br>- 2008              | Inadequate.         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> unacceptably high social work caseloads</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> cases not being closed in a timely or in a safe manner</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> High levels of unallocated cases.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> recruitment systems inefficient</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> no common understanding or implementation of agreed service thresholds,</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Inconsistent support for children.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|                 | Unannounced<br>Inspection end of<br>2009 | Inadequate          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> high rates of referrals</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> high staff turnover,</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> high vacancies and sickness</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Significant delays in allocating initial assessments, (some cases seen by inspectors had waited up to six months before the initial assessment commenced).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> problems faced by families were not resolved in a timely manner</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Risks were being minimised.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> High levels of unallocated work</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> child protection cases were not allocated to a named social worker</li> </ul> |

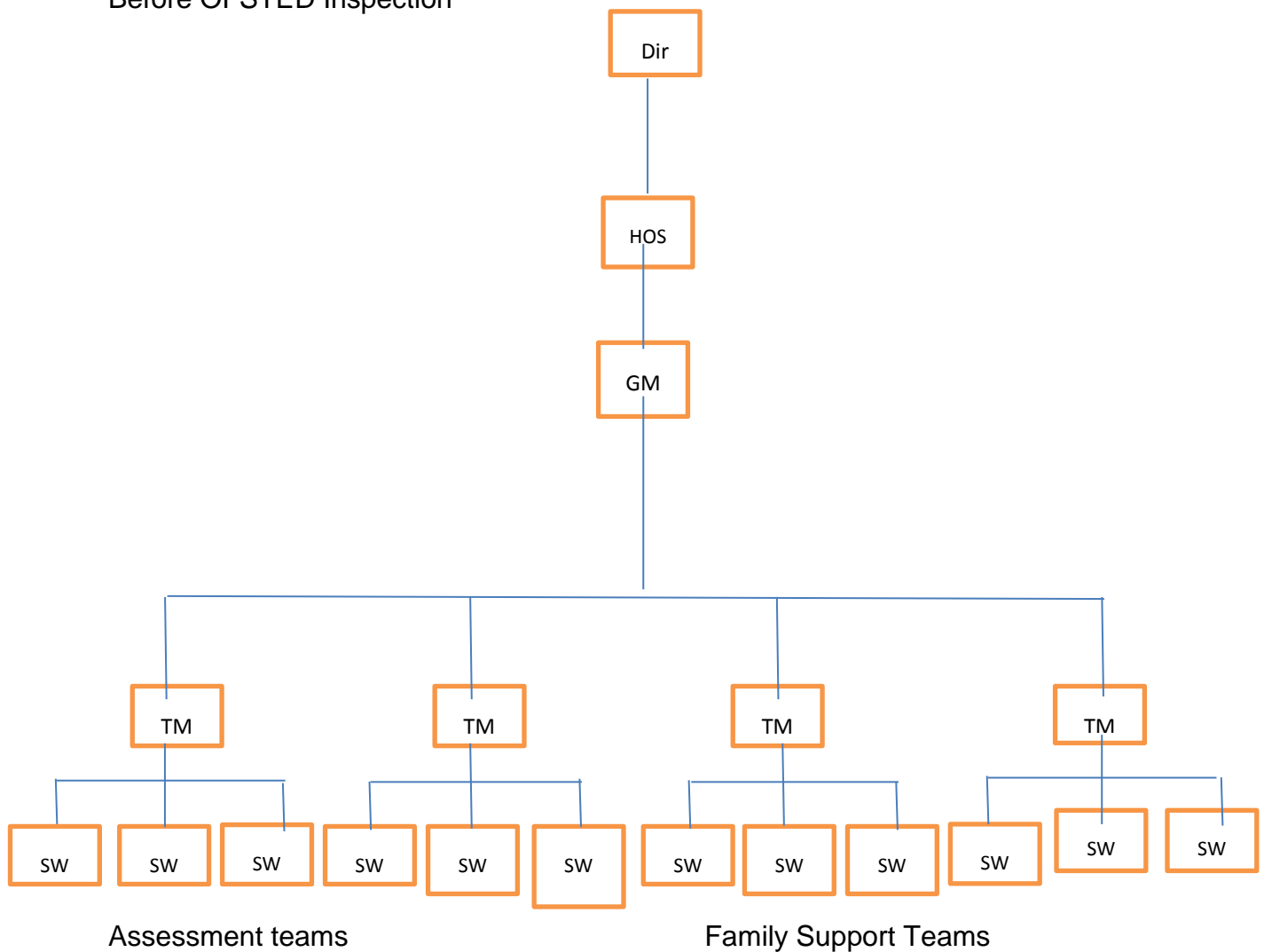
|  |                                                                                       |            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|--|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked after Children's Services - 2010                | Inadequate | <input type="checkbox"/> poor quality of assessments and planning within the child protection and child in need services<br><input type="checkbox"/> additional resources were made available by the Local Authority to increase capacity<br><input type="checkbox"/> no unallocated work<br><input type="checkbox"/> inadequate quality of safeguarding provision                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|  | Annual Unannounced Inspection of Contact, Referral and Assessment Arrangements - 2011 | Adequate   | <input type="checkbox"/> self-evaluation acknowledged as detailed<br><input type="checkbox"/> progress made<br><input type="checkbox"/> areas for improvement identified in 2010 acted on<br><input type="checkbox"/> Quality of audits good<br><input type="checkbox"/> workers practice standards improved<br><input type="checkbox"/> Improvements in the quality of services delivered to children and families.<br><input type="checkbox"/> timely and appropriate responses to contacts and referrals<br><input type="checkbox"/> all cases are were allocated |
|  | Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked after Children's Services - 2011                | Adequate   | <input type="checkbox"/> overall effectiveness of services in the whole of county judged as adequate<br><input type="checkbox"/> significant improvements to services<br><input type="checkbox"/> effective measures are taken to improve staffing resources across the Children's Services<br><input type="checkbox"/> An unannounced inspection undertaken 6 months earlier had identified a few areas for development and no priority actions.                                                                                                                    |

|                                           |                                                                                                   |                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Eastlea Children's Services</b></p> | <p>Annual Unannounced Inspection of Contact, Referral and Assessment Arrangements - July 2009</p> | <p>Adequate</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> high-level of support given to newly qualified social workers</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> need for robust child protection systems</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Concerns regarding the strength of the assessment teams and the capacity for improvement.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Struggling to recruit and retain social workers and managers.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Management not sufficiently focussed to implement and sustain the necessary improvements in child protection and assessment arrangements</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Inconsistent thresholds for assessment and intervention within the interagency network.</li> </ul> |
|                                           | <p>Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked after Children's Services - 2010</p>                     | <p>Adequate</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Immediate safeguarding and child protection needs of individual children were addressed in a timely way.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> yet to achieve a sufficiently stable and experienced social care workforce</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> quality of assessments, planning and management oversight required immediate improvement</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|                                           | <p>Annual Unannounced Inspection of Contact, Referral and Assessment Arrangements – 2010</p>      | <p>Adequate</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> undertaken several months after the Inspection of safeguarding and Looked After Children's Services</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Significant improvements were noted</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> remedial action had been implemented in areas identified</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Capacity had been strengthened</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Stronger management oversight identified.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

|  |                                                                               |             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|--|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | <p>Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked after Children's Services - 2012</p> | <p>Good</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ overall effectiveness of the arrangements to protect children was good</li> <li>□ there was a focus on the key aspects of a child's journey</li> <li>□ help and protection offered was effective</li> <li>□ Investment by the council of substantial, additional financial resources to front-line Children's Services had resulted in significant, identifiable service improvements.</li> <li>□ Improvements to the statutory services that protect children were enhanced by the recruitment of 33 additional social work posts.</li> </ul> |
|--|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

## Appendix 4: Structure of Borrowdale Children's Services before 2008 Inspection

Before OFSTED Inspection



Key

DIR- Director (Senior Manager)

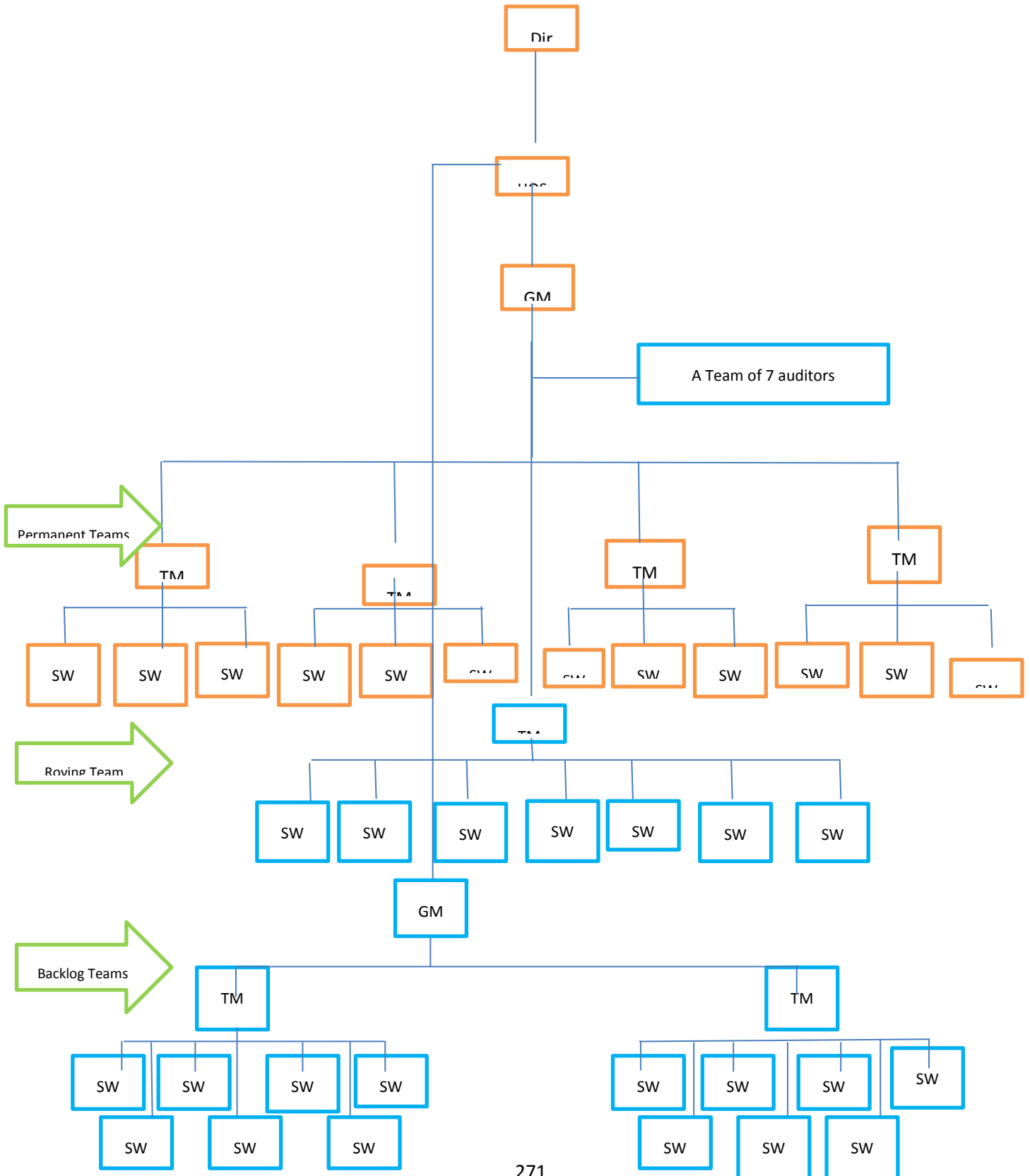
GM – Group Manager (Senior Manager)

TM – Team Manager

SW- Social Worker

## Appendix 5: Borrowdale Children Services after 2008 Inspection.

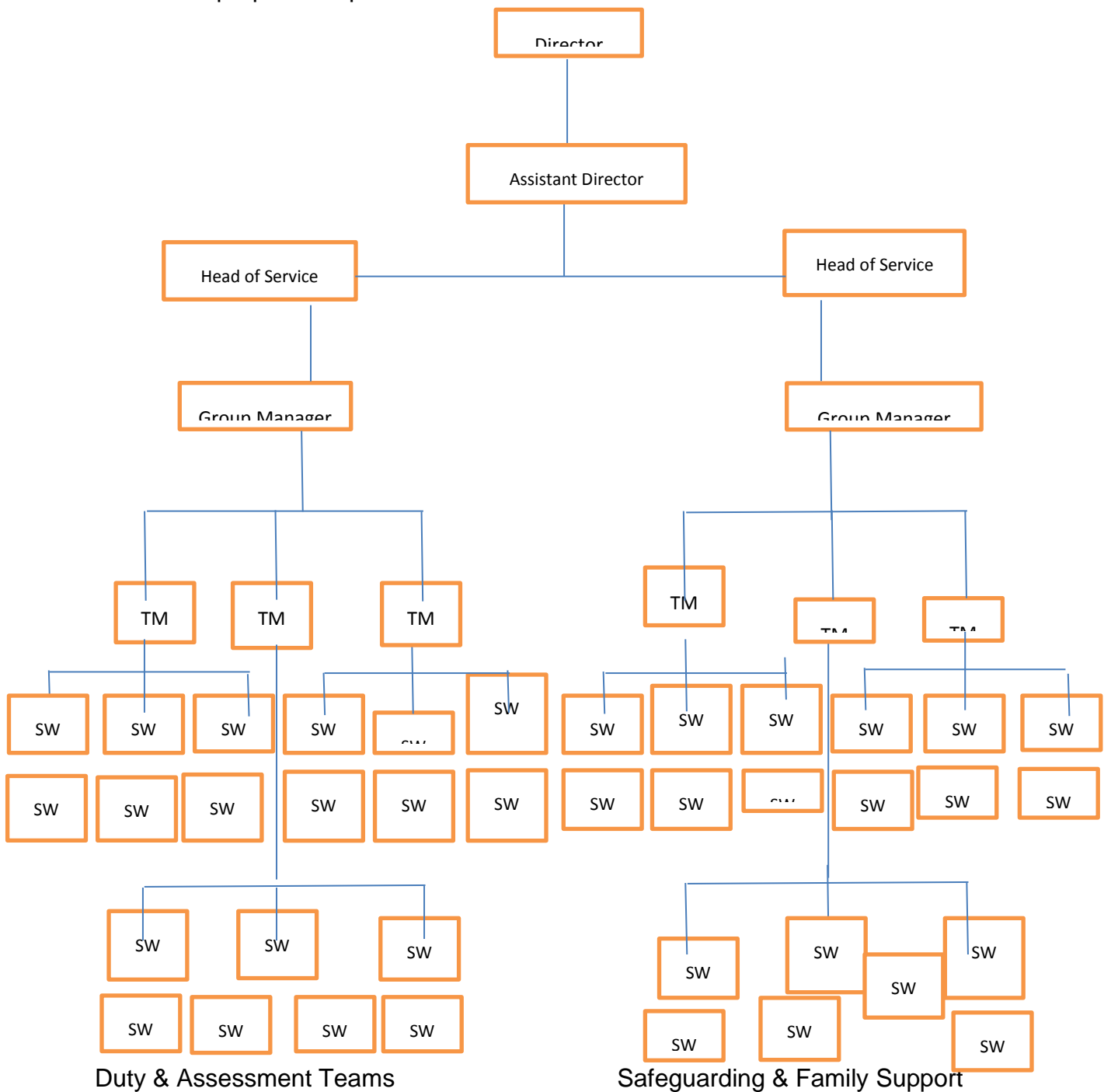
After OFSTED Inspection





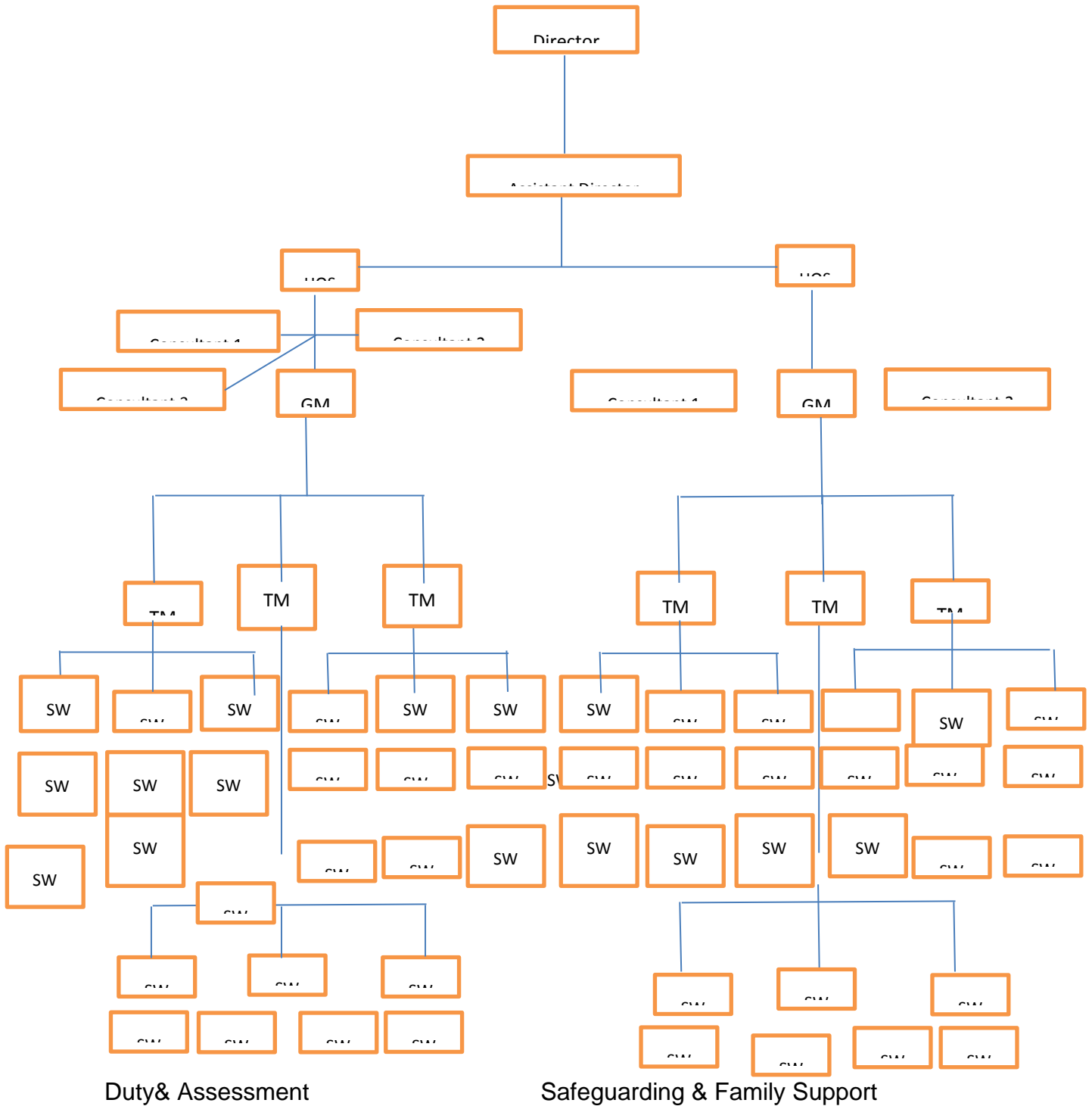
### Appendix 6: Eastlea Children's Services before Ofsted preparation phase

Before the preparation phase



## Appendix 7: Eastlea Children's Services during Ofsted preparation phase

Preparation for Ofsted phase



Dir - Director (Senior Manager)

HOS – Head of Service (Senior Manager)

GM – Group Manager (Senior Manager)

TM – Team Manager

SW – Social Worker

**Appendix 8: Permission to carry out research in the local authority**

Research & Analysis Unit

██████████ Council

██████████, County Hall, ██████████,  
██████████

13.06.2013

Dear Ruth

**Research Proposal:**

The complex dynamics of performance management and improvement in Local Authorities. A psychoanalytic study of how a Local Authority organisation functions and survives an Ofsted inspection.

Thank you for forwarding your research proposal to the Research Governance Group.

I am pleased to inform you that your research proposal has been approved under the terms of the ██████████ Council's research governance guidelines.

May I remind you that your sponsor is responsible for reviewing the quality of the research as it progresses. Should there be any adverse occurrences during the research, your sponsor is required to notify the Research Governance Group and explain what has been done about it.

**The Research Governance Group will require an update on progress at six monthly intervals. When the research is completed you must submit a copy of your findings and details of any peer review to the Research Governance Group.** It will speed up proceedings if you can submit this in an electronic form.

In the mean time good luck with your research and if you do need to discuss any aspects please contact ██████████ direct on ██████████.

Yours sincerely,



**Research & Analysis Unit**  
**Chair, Research Governance Group**

## Appendix 9 University Research Ethics Committee Approval

### EXTERNAL AND STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

uel.ac.uk/qa

Quality Assurance and Enhancement



27 March 2013

Dear Ruth,

|                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Project Title:</b>          | The complex dynamics of performance management and improvement in Local Authorities. A psychoanalytic study of how a Local Authority organisation functions and survives an Ofsted inspection. |
| <b>Researcher(s):</b>          | Ruth Shambare                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Principal Investigator:</b> | Dr Helen Hingley-Jones                                                                                                                                                                         |

I am writing to confirm that the application for the aforementioned proposed research study has received ethical approval on behalf of University Research Ethics Committee (UREC).

Should any significant adverse events or considerable changes occur in connection with this research project that may consequently alter relevant ethical considerations, this must be reported immediately to UREC. Subsequent to such changes an Ethical Amendment Form should be completed and submitted to UREC.

#### Approved Research Site

I am pleased to confirm that the approval of the proposed research applies to the following research site.

| Research Site | Principal Investigator / Local Collaborator |
|---------------|---------------------------------------------|
| UEL Fieldwork | Dr Hingley-Jones                            |

Docklands Campus, University Way, London E16 2RD  
 Tel: +44 (0)20 8223 3322 Fax: +44 (0)20 8223 3394 MINICOM 020 8223 2853  
 Email: r.carter@uel.ac.uk





**Approved Documents**

The final list of documents reviewed and approved by the Committee is as follows:

| Document                                       | Version | Date             |
|------------------------------------------------|---------|------------------|
| Participant Consent Form and Information Sheet | 1.0     | 15 February 2013 |
| Indicative Questions                           | 1.0     | 15 February 2013 |
|                                                |         |                  |

Approval is given on the understanding that the [UEL Code of Good Practice in Research](#) is adhered to.

With the Committee's best wishes for the success of this project.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Merlin Harries', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Merlin Harries  
University Research Ethics Committee (UREC)  
Quality Assurance and Enhancement  
Telephone: 0208-223-2009  
Email: [researchethics@uel.ac.uk](mailto:researchethics@uel.ac.uk)

## Appendix 10: Individual Signed consent form from Respondents

**Participant consent form for Adults**  
Name of participant:

**Title of the project:** The complex dynamics of performance management and improvement in Local Authorities. A psychoanalytic study of how a Local Authority organisation functions and survives an Ofsted inspection.

**Main investigator and contact details:** Ruth Shambare  
(ruemadembo@yahoo.co.uk; [redacted])

**Members of the research team:** Ruth Shambare only

1. I agree to take part in the above research. I have read the participant information sheet, which is attached to this form. I understand what my part will be in this research, and all my questions have so far been answered to my satisfaction.
2. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the research at any time, for any reason and without prejudice.
3. I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded.
4. If I raise issues about my being hurt or abused or some other vulnerable person I understand that someone will contact me to talk about it before taking further action.
5. I have been provided with a copy of this form and the participant information sheet.

**Data Protection Act 1998:** I agree to the researcher processing personal data that I have supplied. I agree the processing of such data for any purposes connected with the research project as outlined to me. I further agree to the researcher processing personal data about me described as sensitive data within the meaning of the Data Protection Act 1998.

Name of participant ..... [redacted]  
..... [redacted]  
(print) Signed Date

**YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS FORM TO KEEP**  
If you wish to withdraw from the research, please complete the form below and return to the main investigator named above.

**Title of project:**

**I WISH TO WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY**

Signed: ..... Date: .....

**THE FOLLOWING PARTICIPANT IS WITHDRAWING FROM THIS STUDY**

Name of participant: .....  
Signed (decision maker): ..... Date: .....

Send to: ruemadembo [redacted]

NB: This Consent form will be stored separately from the responses you provide.

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