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CSWR
Centre for Social Work Research


Trust for London
Tackling poverty and inequality

Safeguarding Children's Rights: exploring issues of witchcraft and spirit possession in London's African communities

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Preamble

The UK is a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), and in consequence the Convention's rights are extended to every child resident in the UK. These include the right each child has to protection from abuse (Article 19) and to support to recover from abuse (Article 39).

Throughout this Report the term 'children' refers to children and young people from pre-birth up to their eighteenth birthday; and the term 'parent' refers to parents and carers.

The Report uses the terms Witchcraft and Spirit Possession, which for the purposes of the Report are defined as follows:

Witchcraft: Historically, it was widely believed that witchcraft involved the use of supernatural or magical powers to inflict harm upon members of a community or their property, and that all witches were in league with the Devil – a common European belief, which was enshrined in Law in England and Wales in 1601. Since the mid 20th century, witchcraft has increasingly been understood to include both malevolent and benevolent witchcraft, with the latter often involving healing.

Spirit possession: Spirit possession is understood to involve spirits, gods, demons, or other dis-incarnate entities taking control of a human body, resulting in noticeable changes in health and behaviour. The concept of spiritual possession exists in many religions, including Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Haitian Voodoo, Wicca, and Southeast Asian, South American and African traditions. Possession may be voluntary or involuntary and, as with 'witchcraft', may be considered to have beneficial or detrimental effects.

The focus of this Safeguarding Children's Rights Special Initiative has been the protection of children from any harm caused by belief in witchcraft and spirit possession. The Report therefore – whilst acknowledging that they can bring benefits – uses the terms 'Witchcraft' and 'Spirit Possession' to describe malevolent forms which may have detrimental effects.

1. Key findings and recommendations

1.1 Key Findings

Key finding 1: Using the existing child protection framework is effective when assessing cases where children have been accused of Witchcraft and Spirit Possession.

The current child protection framework, which identifies physical, sexual, emotional abuse and neglect, provides an effective framework for assessing cases where children have been accused of Witchcraft and Spirit Possession. The initiative identifies that potentially harmful practices associated with Spirit Possession and Witchcraft, including accusations of witchcraft against children and acts of deliverance, are possible in the contexts of communities applying faith systems in which these beliefs and practices are central. Though few cases in which a child was accused of witchcraft were identified in the initiative, it is clear that there is always the possibility that this can occur. Abuse can occur as a consequence of parental behaviour towards the child and through the responses by church leaders in performing acts of deliverance which inflict trauma and/or harm on the child. The child protection framework aims to prevent significant harm to a child through recognition, assessment and intervention and can be applied to cases of Witchcraft and Spirit Possession.

Key finding 2: Belief in Spirit Possession and Witchcraft is widespread amongst many African communities but current knowledge indicates that the incidence of abuse linked to such beliefs appears to be low.

Key finding 3: These beliefs occupy a broad spectrum, and the effects range from harmless to harmful. Belief in Spirit Possession and Witchcraft is not of itself evidence of maltreatment.

Key finding 4: Where there is abuse of children accused of possession or witchcraft, this abuse can be understood using one or more of the four identified forms of child abuse: physical, sexual and emotional abuse and neglect. The signs of emotional and physical abuse are particularly relevant.

Children accused of witchcraft can be subject to abuse through any of the four identified forms of child abuse: physical, sexual and emotional abuse and neglect. What has become apparent from the study is that there is a wide spectrum of abuse and the existence of beliefs in Witchcraft and Spirit Possession is not itself proof of significant harm. Understanding and the categorisation of emotional abuse¹ is particularly relevant to the practices of Spirit Possession and Witchcraft. Glaser's model identifies emotional abuse in these categories:

1. Emotional unavailability through, for example – insensitivity, pre-occupation, mental ill-health, substance abuse
2. Negative attributions and misattributions – hostility, denigration, rejection
3. Developmentally inappropriate interactions – exposure to trauma and violence, over-protection, excessive expectations

^[1] Glaser (2002)

4. Failure to recognise a child's individuality. Using a child to fulfil parent's needs – inability to distinguish a child's reality, fabricated and induced illness
5. Failure to promote a child's social adaptation – mis-socialisation, isolating, psychologically neglecting, corrupting

All of these – though not devised with abuse from spirit possession in mind – provide a framework for assessing the impact of accusations of witchcraft accusations leading to the potential for significant harm to a child.

The evidence from cases encountered within the initiative, which is supported by the data from the work of the organisations, identifies that in all cases where there is suspicion of witchcraft, there is always another abusive – or potentially abusive – factor present. These provide opportunities to make assessments which provide evidence for and understanding of the meaning of accusations of witchcraft in each case.

It is important to recognise that, as well as a spectrum of abuse, there is also a spectrum of motives that adults can have for behaving in harmful ways towards children, which can range from conscious to unconscious exploitation. Conscious exploitation can take forms such as trafficking, in which the faith system can be used as one means of silencing or gaining the compliance of the child. Unconscious exploitation arises in cases in which the key identifier is the adult/parent's fear of the child, which in some cases may be amenable to change if the practitioners working to safeguard children are sufficiently comfortable with recognising the dynamics. However, parents, faith leaders and other adults can have conscious and unconscious motives of harming children.

Practitioners undertaking assessments where there are concerns regarding the existence of Witchcraft and Spirit Possession should be competent to distinguish when the adults labelling a child as a witch or threatening a child with evil spirits are motivated by a search for an explanation and cure e.g. for a disability or perceived behaviour problem in the child; by a fear of the child e.g. where a faith leader identifies a child as the originator of misfortune in the family; by consciously seeking an excuse to harm the child, or to exploit the child in order to extort payment for 'exorcisms'.

The suspicion of witchcraft should therefore lead to a holistic assessment of the child in her/his family setting in order to assess the risks to the child, rather than relying solely on the suspicions of witchcraft. Motivations should form part of these assessments.

It is important to ensure the participation of children in assessments is in line with good practice, taking the child's wishes and feelings into account as appropriate for the age and understanding of the child.

Key finding 5: Knowledge and understanding of culture and faith is critical to effective assessments of harm. However, culture and faith should not be used as an excuse to abuse and must never take precedence over children's rights.

Cultural competence is based on understanding of the norms, values and traditions of faith systems that influence the attitudes and behaviours of individuals and how these are practised in particular social contexts. This should be clearly distinguished from a cultural relativism that argues that child abuse is purely socially constructed, because this can leave children from minority ethnic communities vulnerable to abuse.

The work of the organisations in this initiative shows that detailed understanding of the application of faith and cultural systems which include concepts of spirit possession is important in order to make assessments and interventions. This includes knowledge about the basis of religious beliefs in witchcraft and the practices of delivery. The booklet produced by AFRUCA² is a good example of how this key information can be disseminated simply and effectively. This can be linked with other booklets, such as those produced by CCPAS (e.g. their 'help booklets, such as 'how to discipline my child') to provide a way of explaining these issues. Training which helps professionals and others working with children to understand this background also helps to ensure knowledge rather than partial knowledge, or misinformation, which usually increases anxiety in professionals and inappropriate responses. The focus should therefore be to increase knowledge and include this within assessments. There is a strong demand for knowledge of these contexts from front line workers as evidenced in the take up of training courses.

Key finding 6: Faith organisations have a critical role in many African communities, where poverty, inequality and lack of access to key resources can impact negatively on children. While many offer help and support, some unscrupulous faith leaders are in a position to exploit vulnerable individuals.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of The Child (UNCRC) promotes children's human rights through protection, participation and provision. It is recognised that poverty and problems in accessing resources are strongly linked with increased risks to children. In this initiative, the work of the organisations has identified the particularly difficult contexts for many families within minority ethnic communities, and these have been succinctly described and focused on in order to bring about change. The abusive application of beliefs in spirit possession is thus strongly connected with adverse social contexts, and is in this sense a symptom of distress and difficulties. Faith organisations can have a pivotal role within migrant communities, being one of the few institutions which many migrants feel they can turn to, and which are generally run by their own communities. While many offer help and support, the vulnerabilities of families mean that they can be exploited by unscrupulous faith leaders.

Key finding 7: Community organisations can be an important source of advice and support to London's African communities, and may counterbalance the power of some faith organisations.

^[2] AFRUCA publication, *What Is Witchcraft Abuse?*

Key finding 8: Engaging communities in discussion and debate about human rights can be used as a touchstone for change. The promotion of young people as agents of change is particularly powerful.

Key finding 9: Community-led approaches to promoting child safeguarding are lacking and have been shown to be critical in engaging socially excluded communities; and in changing attitudes and behaviour.

In this initiative, the development of methods for engaging community groups in discussion and debate about human rights has acted as a touchstone for change. The organisations have developed approaches that enable them to engage and maintain discussions with key participants, and groups of adults, parents, and with young people, especially from the perspective of children's human rights. The promotion of young people as agents of change is particularly powerful. There are tensions between children's and parents rights in all communities. Parents present conflicted states about notions of parent rights and require containment of their distress and confusion. These discussions involve, firstly generating discussion and responses to issues of child protection, understanding UK laws and values relating to children's rights and allowing debate to follow. Secondly, developing strategies for approaching more contentious subjects, including the role of faith practices, Witchcraft and Spirit Possession. And thirdly, developing reflective practices that take account of responses to the work of engagement in discussion and training.

Community organisations within migrant communities have an important role in providing support during times of transition. The initiative demonstrates that working within these communities has considerable power in galvanising communities and increasing opportunities. The initiative also demonstrates the urgent need for these communities to be resourced more effectively. At a time in which the Government is looking for new ways to promote social care in the communities, this initiative demonstrates a model which can be further developed.

Key finding 10: Faith leaders have a pivotal role to play in developing children's rights within African communities. A shared faith has been critical to engaging these leaders – cutting across ethnic and national boundaries.

Key finding 11: Training has been effective in beginning to address a lack of knowledge of child protection principles and practice among many African faith leaders in London.

Key finding 12: A broader approach – promoting child safeguarding and well-being – is more effective for engaging communities and churches than a narrow focus on Witchcraft and Spirit Possession. This also led to improvements in wider child protection, including through changed practice and disclosures.

Faith leaders have a key role to play in developing approaches to children that are more cognisant of their rights. The training, focus groups and informal discussions appear to have increased the number of African church leaders who are reflective and concerned for children's rights, though this began – across the faith communities and

leaders of churches as a whole – from a low base of knowledge and awareness of children’s rights and child protection. The work of training African church leaders undertaken by this initiative, notably by CCPAS but also by the other organisations, has strengthened the knowledge and capacity to apply child protection frameworks. It is vitally important that the initiative shows that empowering women in faith organisations, and in the community generally, can have positive effects in reducing and challenging abuse.

The threat of exposure contributes to putting pressure on faith communities to engage with and recognise the problems of actual and potential abuse to children and the need to change practices. However, enforcement appears to be more effective when linked with training and educating faith leaders in the values and practices that support children’s rights. This educational work needs to be continued.

1.2 Recommendations

Embedded in mainstream child protection practice

1. Protecting children from faith-based abuse should be located first and foremost in ensuring application of the existing child protection framework.
2. Protecting children from abuse linked to beliefs in Witchcraft and Spirit Possession should be part of mainstream child safeguarding and the harm to children located under one of the four recognised categories of abuse: physical, sexual and emotional abuse and neglect.
3. In order to protect children from faith-based abuse, the existing UK child protection policies and procedures should be applied with knowledge and understanding of Spirit Possession and Witchcraft.

Local Safeguarding Children Board training and practice

4. Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) should offer training on knowledge and understanding of African culture, including faith practices.
5. LSCBs and practitioners should draw on expertise from community and faith-led organisations (such as those in this initiative) to deliver training and to advise on individual cases where there are concerns about Spirit Possession and Witchcraft.
6. Holistic assessments of potential abuse need to address the motives of the alleged perpetrators. In line with existing child protection practice, children who may be affected need to have the opportunity to describe their experience and express their views.

Children’s rights to protection and recovery

7. Work with communities to change the harmful practice of Witchcraft and Spirit Possession should position this issue within promoting a wider understanding of children’s rights, child development and protection.
8. A model of treatment and rehabilitation for children who have been labelled as witches or spirit possessed, including having experienced prior or subsequent physical, sexual and emotional abuse and/or neglect, should be developed and promoted.
9. Ways of ensuring effective enforcement when abuse or other criminal activity by faith leaders is identified should be developed and put into practice, through on-going work with the Metropolitan Police and the Crown Prosecution Service.

Sharing and funding to promote safeguarding

10. LSCBs should map and maintain contact with all local churches and other faith organisations, in order to ensure that appropriate systems are in place to protect children in their congregations.
11. Learning from this initiative, including models of engagement, should be shared with other communities who have identified similar issues regarding abuse linked with faith and religious practices.
12. Statutory and independent funders and commissioners should support community-led activities to promote understanding of child development and child protection – and to raise awareness of abuse, especially among newer communities. Funding is critical for community organisations which act as alternative sources of support for new migrant communities affected by poverty – and they are an important part of the Big Society.
13. Mainstream children’s charities need to work with community organisations to embed abuse linked to Witchcraft and Spirit Possession within their training and services.
14. Faith leaders trained through this initiative should take a lead in communities by speaking out against child abuse and encouraging churches to meet their legal child protection responsibilities.
15. Other leaders and activists in African communities, including women, parents and young people, need to continue to speak about children’s rights and to challenge abuse.
16. There is a need for a continued programme of training and education for African faith leaders about child development, children’s rights and UK child protection law.

Improving social work practice

17. The national guidance for working to protect children where there are suspicions of Witchcraft and Spirit Possession should be updated to take account of the findings of this report.
18. The expertise gained by the organisations in this initiative needs to be maintained in order to continue the important work in this field, for example through the establishment of an expert group.

2. Introduction

2.1 About Trust for London

Trust for London³ is the largest independent funder of projects tackling poverty and inequality in the capital. Established in 1891, the Trust now makes grants totalling around £7 million per year, supporting around 400 voluntary and community organisations in London at any one time.

2.2 About the Safeguarding Children's Rights special initiative

Trust for London created the Safeguarding Children's Rights initiative in 2007, in response to concerns raised by African community groups about faith-based child abuse linked to a belief in spirit possession in London communities.

Through research and consultation, including two seminars with refugee and migrant community groups, there were three persistent themes that emerged:

- Following the report of the inquiry chaired by Lord Laming into the death of Victoria Climbié, statutory funding had been invested in improving co-operation between agencies. However, there had been little significant support for work at a grassroots level.
- At the same time, there were a number of African community groups attempting to address this complex and difficult problem with limited or no financial resources.
- The involvement of local community groups would be crucial to the effectiveness of a programme to protect children and to eliminate faith-related abuse in London.

This special initiative was therefore designed to develop and strengthen community-based preventive activities.

After careful consideration, the Trust decided it could have more impact with limited resources by retaining a focus on African communities and community groups – although it recognised that faith-based child abuse happens in many cultures. The principal research at that time⁴ indicated that the majority of cases identified in the UK to date had involved victims from African communities. Moreover, it was African community groups in London who asked for the Trust's help in addressing an issue that they were concerned about within their community.

In addition, although it was recognised that many faiths are affected by abuse linked to spirit possession, there was a particular focus on African majority churches, which had been highlighted in the research (ibid). The most recently available figures showed that 64% of Black Africans described themselves as Christian⁵.

^[3] City Parochial Foundation and its sister fund Trust for London amalgamated on 30.06.10. The new organisation is known as Trust for London. This name is used throughout this report to minimise confusion.

^[4] Stobart E (2006) *Child Abuse Linked To Accusations of Spirit Possession And Witchcraft*. Research report RR750. Department for Education and Skills. Available to download from http://www.londonscb.gov.uk/culture_and_faith/community_partnership_project/

^[5] Census 2001

Following an open call for proposals and a number of assessment visits, in August 2007, grants totalling £450,000 over three years were made to four organisations:

- AFRUCA (Africans Unite Against Child Abuse)
- Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service (CCPAS)
- Congolese Family Centre – on behalf of a partnership of five Congolese groups
- Victoria Climbié Foundation

An Advisory Group was established to guide the initiative, chaired by Baroness Howarth OBE, with external members drawn from children's services, London Safeguarding Children Board and the police. The Advisory Group met three times a year throughout the initiative, at the Trust's offices.

In 2008, through an open tendering process, the Centre for Social Work Research was commissioned to undertake an independent evaluation of the work of the four funded organisations and the initiative as a whole. This is the final report of that evaluation.

The Safeguarding Children's Rights special initiative will continue until 2012, with additional grants made by the Trust in June 2010 to organisations within the initiative and to Africa Policy Research Network (APORENet). The extension funding and the work of APORENet do not form part of this evaluation.

2.3 About the Centre for Social Work Research

The Centre for Social Work Research (CSWR) was established in 2006 in partnership between the University of East London and the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust to provide a centre of excellence for the generation, support and dissemination of high quality social work research and the support of research postgraduate students. The Centre is directed by Professor Stephen Briggs and sustains a wide range of research which is published and disseminated nationally and internationally.

CSWR has developed innovative methods of 'practice-near' research which originated in an ESRC-funded seminar series 'Practitioner Research and Practice Near Methods in Social Work'. This innovative approach is applied to evaluative research in CSWR's unit for evaluative and scoping research studies⁶.

^[6] Details of the Centre's activities are available on the Centre's web pages (<http://www.uel-cswr.org/>).

3. Context

3.1 The ‘discovery’ of Witchcraft and Spirit Possession in the UK

Initial interest in and focus on Witchcraft and Spirit Possession in the UK was triggered by the publicity surrounding four high profile cases. In all four of these cases, serious harm to children was linked to beliefs that they were a “witch” or “possessed by evil spirits”. The first case was Victoria Climbié, an 8-year-old girl from the Ivory Coast, who was murdered in February 2000. The government’s response to the publicity around the court case was to initiate an independent statutory inquiry chaired by Lord Laming⁷, which led to a series of child protection reforms including the Every Child Matters programme and the Children Act 2004. Amongst the many factors highlighted in this case, Victoria was starved to death – in the belief that this would exorcise the evil possessing her.

The second case was ‘Adam’, an unsolved murder case in 2001, in which the torso of a young African boy, believed to have been between the ages of four and seven, was found in the River Thames. The third case was in 2004, when three-month-old Samira Ullah was murdered by her father because he was convinced that she was possessed by “*jinn*”⁸. A fourth case was ‘Child B’, an eight-year-old girl brought to the UK from Angola and who had Congolese connections. She suffered considerable abuse, including being beaten, cut and having chilli rubbed in her eyes because her aunt and two others believed she was a witch.

Not all cases of Witchcraft and Spirit Possession relate to Black African communities. There were other cases in this period, including that of a White British woman in Gloucestershire, a member of the Jehovah’s Witnesses, who allegedly abused her foster children because she believed they were possessed by the Devil (2007). However, these generated less media and public comment.

The case of Child B prompted the Metropolitan Police Service to set up a working group called Project Violet, which focused on the Congolese and Angolan communities. From this, the Community Partnership Pilot Project consulted African and Asian communities about child protection issues in two areas of London. This approach led to a widening discussion about the role of spirit possession as an important aspect of the belief systems in both these communities, that children can be described as possessed. Anecdotal evidence from these discussions suggested that the application of these belief systems could, in some circumstances, lead to abuse.

The Department for Education and Skills responded by commissioning desk-based research to establish the frequency and severity of child abuse linked to accusations of ‘possession’ and ‘witchcraft’. The subsequent report by Eleanor Stobart found seventy-four cases of abuse that were clearly linked to accusations of possession and witchcraft, though precautions against double-counting meant that only thirty-eight cases were analysed⁹. Findings included that:

- the belief in some form of witchcraft and possession by evil spirits is widespread across the UK

⁷ Lord Laming (2003) *The Victoria Climbié Inquiry Report*.

⁸ The term ‘jinn’ in the Islamic tradition refers to supernatural beings who occupy a parallel world to mankind.

⁹ Stobart (2006).

- the belief is not confined to particular countries, cultures or religions nor is it confined to recent migrants
- the abuse occurred when an attempt is made to ‘exorcise’ the child. Parents, relatives or carers who perpetrated the abuse believed that the child had become completely overcome by the ‘evil spirit’. They saw the abuse not as an attack on the child but as an attack on the evil within the child
- it was commonly believed that the child could ‘infect’ others

Two additional important findings were that places of worship were involved in more than half of the analysed cases; and that there were significant barriers to reporting e.g. some professionals did not take the disclosures of children seriously and thought the children were making them up. The government sought to address the latter point by publishing non-statutory guidance *Safeguarding Children from Abuse Linked to a Belief in Spirit Possession* (DCSF, 2007). The notion that a new kind of abuse had begun to be evidenced, and the role for discussion and awareness raising was central to this guidance: ‘it is often the case that when a particular type of abuse starts to be openly discussed and awareness is raised, more incidents will be recognised’¹⁰.

At a regional level, the response included the creation of a second Community Partnership Project (2007)¹¹ by the London Safeguarding Children Board, in partnership with the DCSF, the Home Office, and the Metropolitan Police. It involved eight London boroughs, each of whom appointed practitioners to engage with local communities and improve partnership working on safeguarding children issues including spirit possession. The Project identified 21 cases of abuse linked to spirit possession in six boroughs in London. However, the Project report notes that figures only record reported cases and not prevalence, and it called for more investment in resources to gain a better idea of prevalence in order to improve statutory services prevention and response to child abuse linked to Witchcraft and Spirit Possession.

3.2 Child protection and children’s rights

Stobart’s view that raised awareness of abuse leads to greater recognition is based on the history of identification of different kinds of abuse over the past half century¹². Following the identification of physical abuse¹³ and, in the 1980s, wider recognition of child sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect, including the impact of witnessing intimate partner violence, have been defined and described¹⁴. Child protection systems have responded to the problem through identification, assessment and intervention to prevent further harm to children.

Child protection systems in the UK are underpinned by the recognition that parents, communities and community and faith groups, and professionals have a responsibility to proactively safeguard and promote the welfare of children so that the need for action to protect them from harm is reduced.

National safeguarding children guidance describes these responsibilities as follows: ‘Everybody who works with, or has contact with, children [including unborn children], parents and other adults in contact with children should be able to recognise, and know how to act upon, evidence that a child’s health or development is or may be being impaired – especially when they are suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm’¹⁵.

[10] Stobart (2006) p 10.

[11] Community Partnership Report see: http://www.londonscb.gov.uk/culture_and_faith/community_partnership_project/

[12] Protecting children from maltreatment has its modern origins in the child-rescue movement in the 19th century.

[13] Kempe et al (1962).

[14] Glaser (2002).

[15] Working Together to Safeguard Children (s5.8) (DCSF, 2010)

The Common Assessment Framework (CAF)¹⁶ is the current means for practitioners and workers in universal services, such as, schools, health services, youth and community groups and faith-based groups, to identify and share concerns that a child's health and welfare may be being impaired. The CAF provides a way of planning and providing additional support for a child and/or his/her family to address any such concerns. This may be subject to change following the Munro Review of Child Protection, which is due to report in April 2011.

If there is serious concern about a child's safety and well-being, the child needs to be referred to local authority children's services and to the police. Significant harm is judged to be ill-treatment of a child, or impairment of health or development for a child which is markedly greater than could be reasonably expected of a similar child.

Practitioners and workers, both those seeking to promote a child's welfare and those responding to concerns that a child may be experiencing or be at risk of, significant harm, need to base their judgements and decisions on a sound holistic assessment. The assessment should include the child's needs, the parents' capacity to respond to those needs – including their capacity to keep the child safe from significant harm – and the wider family circumstances¹⁷. Assessments should take into account the conflicting pressures on children not to be able to speak openly about their situations, including overt pressures from parents and carers (including threats of various kinds) and the impact of attachments to parents/carers, however abusive these may be in reality. A wide range of research is available to explain and elaborate these complex issues¹⁸.

An Ofsted review of 67 Serious Case Reviews between April-Sept 2010 found that there were a significant number of cases in which professionals from across disciplines did not see the child frequently enough. In other cases, even where the child was seen, they were not asked about their views and feelings, which is consistent with the findings of previous Ofsted review¹⁹. The review also stressed the importance of observing children and gathering information from adults who have regular contact with the child. This is reinforced by the Munro Review, which stresses that social workers should always consider matters from the perspective of the child and ask themselves, 'What are the child's needs?'²⁰. The capacity to observe well requires training and understanding of the emotionality involved²¹.

The protection of children by the state has been subject to continuous change and scrutiny, in response to child death tragedies that have affected the nation through the impact of media response. In recent years these have been most acute following the deaths of Victoria Climbié and Peter Connolly ('Baby P'). Professional work in the field of child protection is subject to intense scrutiny and, at times of highest media attention, it can lead to an increase in risk averse and even defensive practice. It is of course a difficult arena in which to make decisions on the basis of relative judgements and the likelihood of significant harm to the child. In the case of Victoria Climbié, though practices based on beliefs in witchcraft played a significant role in her death, no policies for addressing this issue ensued. Moreover, despite very significant changes to the general landscape, very little emphasis was placed on engagement with communities.

Alongside the development of child protection systems, and underpinning these, the values that children have human rights, and that they are psychological beings have

[16] For Guidance on how to use the Common Assessment Framework see: <http://www.cwdcouncil.org.uk/caf>

[17] The Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families (DoH et al, 2000) (the Assessment Framework) provides a systematic approach to analyse and record what is happening to a child within their family and the wider context of the community in which they live. See:

http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_4003256

[18] Howe et al (1999)

[19] Ofsted (2011)

[20] Munro (2011)

[21] Briggs and Canham (1999)

'inspired'²² the child protection movement and are central to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The UNCRC defines children's rights as consisting of protection, participation and provision. These include the rights to be protected from any form of maltreatment or exploitation, to participate in decisions and actions that affect them and the right to have the provision of education. Children's rights also include the duty of the state to support parents and families (UNCRC 1989). In the UK the 1989 Children's Act introduced in legislation the responsibilities of parents, and this replaced the previous concept of parental 'rights and duties'. There is a potential tension between the need to respect the individual choices of parents (in democracies) and intervention which overrides this on behalf of the child's rights.

Since the Children Act 2004, there is a responsibility on parents, communities, faith and community groups, and professionals to proactively safeguard and promote the welfare of children so that need for action to protect them from harm is reduced. The concept of children's human rights opens up the possibilities not only of intervening when children have been identified as in need of protection, but also of tackling the underlying causes of child maltreatment, as these occur in different social contexts. It is strongly evidenced that poverty and inequality are major causes of harm to children and significantly increase risks of abuse²³. The UN monitors nations' commitment to reduce risks of child abuse. Although the UK children's legislation and national guidance is in line with the UNCRC, the UK has been repeatedly criticised by the UN Committee on the Rights of The Child for failure to commit an adequate share of its resources to children and for the extent of the inequalities of health and education amongst children²⁴. Working to reduce poverty and inequalities and their impacts in any community thus constitutes an important preventive approach to child abuse. In practice, the basis for asserting and striving to realise children's human rights leads to some acute dilemmas; in general terms these involve conflicts about absolute and relative values. The UNCRC asserts absolute rights for children of protection, participation and support for parents, but child abuse arises – differently – in social and cultural contexts. There is a strong consensus that whilst cultural values and contexts need to be respected, tradition does not in itself justify relativism. Children's rights to protection from abuse transcend social and cultural contexts. However, without sufficient information about the meaning of cultural practices, wrong decisions about intervention can be made, resulting in worse care for the children involved.

3.3 The African context for child protection and children's rights

The importance of context for understanding child protection and children's rights is illustrated by an overview of the African community in the UK. It is a significant minority ethnic community, comprising at least 736,600 people across the UK, of which 417,700 live in London (ONS mid-year estimates 2007) and faces critical social problems, including social exclusion and poverty. It is important to recognise diversity within this broad category. For example, a recent study²⁵ found that:

- Pupils from Somali, Lingala and French-speaking homes have the highest levels of eligibility for free schools meals, while Igbo, Yoruba and Shona speakers live in financially better-off households. Moreover, as many as half of Somalis and Congolese live in the most deprived (20%) of local areas.

[22] The phrase is from Scott (2008) in *The Lancet*, introducing a significant series of articles which has highlighted the prevalence, extent and difficulties associated with child abuse and maltreatment.

[23] Reading et al. (2008).

[24] Cited by Reading et al, page 3.

[25] Mitton and Aspinall (2010).

- Pupils whose first language is English achieved the most passes at grades A* – C in their GCSEs, with those of Nigerian background achieving close to the national average, whereas pupils whose first language was Somali, French or Portuguese performed worst in education.

Within the international context, some of the African countries represented by communities in this initiative are amongst the poorest countries in the world in terms of infrastructure, being subject to internal conflicts and unable to make use of natural resources²⁶.

The African Charter for the Rights of the Child (1999) defined children's rights differently from the UN, to include 'children have a responsibility to work for the cohesion of the family, to respect parents and elders at all times and to assist them in cases of need' (Article 31). At the level of policy-making there is clearly a cultural gap between African and UK values. In practice, the high levels of social exclusion experienced by these communities in the UK provides a difficult context for children, and increased risks of harm. Addressing these primary social disadvantages must be part of creating safer environments for children. When people have to adapt through migration to UK society, the relationship between the home and the host cultures can be tense. Traditional belief systems and practices, like Witchcraft and Spirit Possession, can serve to maintain customs, and in these different social conditions, can evolve to meet the needs of the minority ethnic context of African communities in the UK²⁷.

3.4 Definitions of Witchcraft and Spirit Possession

'Historical evidence shows that mankind, from prehistoric times has had belief in supernatural entities and powers. The underlying motive has been the quest for man to find answers to unexplained phenomena and problems including evil in the world, the meaning of human existence and what happens when one dies'²⁸.

Ideas about witchcraft, as distilled here by AFRUCA, are of extremely ancient origin and feature in most cultures as aspects of religious practice and popular beliefs; these beliefs are worldwide, including the Far East (Japan), India, Islamic states, South America. The most widespread evidence of beliefs in witchcraft is currently in sub-Saharan Africa and, historically, in the early-modern period in Europe and British North America.

From its origins, Christianity²⁹ included mysterious, magical and supernatural aspects as part of its core teaching, including the working of miracles and the notion of possession by the Holy Spirit or the Devil. The ability to cure illness, through possession, by the laying on of hands was attributed, for example, to the kings of England – the King's Evil – and was practised by kings into the modern period³⁰. The casting out of the Devil has been, and to an extent continues to be, a part of the ceremony of Christening in some Christian denominations. Harmful interventions by those possessed by evil spirits were attributed to witchcraft; a witch was, traditionally, a person of either sex (but more usually a woman) who could effect harm to others, mysteriously, and interfere for the worse with their health and welfare. The attribution of witchcraft and evil was made against heretical sects and belief systems. Witches were subject to severe procedures to discover their evil – or innocence – and also punished severely. Victims of witches' evil had to be freed – or delivered – from the evil possession through distinctive

^[26] International Monetary Fund, World Economic Outlook Database-October 2010.

^[27] AFRUCA (2009).

^[28] AFRUCA (2009).

^[29] See for example, McGrath (2011) as an example of the history of Christian theology.

^[30] Thomas (1991).

procedures, including exorcisms, starvation, prayers, physical chastisement, and other forms of deliverance.

This core aspect of Christianity has become integrated with African indigenous belief systems. Jean La Fontaine argues that in Africa 'over the course of time ideas about witchcraft were assimilated into ideas of the devil's work and, as Christianity offered no completing explanation of misfortune, beliefs in witchcraft survived'³¹. In African contexts – both Christian and Muslim – those afflicting others with evil – witches – acquired a range of local names; for example 'Djinn' in Tanzania, Ndoki in the Congo, 'Aje' amongst the Yoruba in Nigeria³². La Fontaine comments that there continues to be a distinction between believing someone is 'possessed', infected by evil, and believing they are actually a 'witch', and thus the cause of the evil³³. In all these contexts, the location of good and evil spirit possession within belief systems fulfils the roles of:

'functioning as a system of explanation, a source of moral injunctions, a symbol of social order or a route to immortality; but italso offers the prospect of a super-natural means of control over man's [sic] earthly environment'³⁴.

The role of Spirit Possession and Witchcraft in these belief systems is therefore to mediate experiences, for good or ill, particularly, but not only, in adverse circumstances. In some circumstances these ancient practices remain in contemporary life as a form of superstition, or colloquialism, or even a humorous means of attributing bad luck. The ideas pervade popular culture and are believed in widely, even if not practised literally. In other circumstances, the attribution of witchcraft is taken very seriously, and literally, and is thought to need treatment through severe punishment or deliverance.

In Africa, in contending with recent experiences, these traditional belief systems have undergone changes including the relatively recent attribution of witchcraft to children, rather than older adults³⁵.

In DR Congo, and Nigeria (and other areas in sub-Saharan Africa) the recent phenomena of homeless, abandoned children has been evidenced. Many of these children have been accused of witchcraft and rejected by their families.

'As Congolese society has disintegrated, undermined by the country's rulers and ravaged by Aids and poverty, the family has collapsed. Children have been the main victims, often accused of witchcraft when families suffer misfortunes'³⁶.

In Nigeria, Gary Foxcroft of Stepping Stones (Nigeria) and The UN Children's Fund evidence a similar picture:

'Poverty, conflict and poor education lay the foundation for accusations, which are then triggered by the death of a relative, the loss of a job or the denunciation of a pastor on the make'³⁷.

[31] La Fontaine (2009) 119-20.

[32] AFRUCA (2009).

[33] La Fontaine (2009).

[34] Thomas (1991) 28.

[35] La Fontaine (2009).

[36] The Observer 12.02.09.

[37] The Daily Telegraph 20.10.09.

[38] Stobart (2006).

For African communities in the UK, Stobart's mapping of cases of Witchcraft and Spirit Possession based on cases reported in 2005 provided an initial perspective³⁸, which, linked with the work undertaken by the Metropolitan Police (e.g. in Project Violet), identified some children who were subject to harm through the attribution of witchcraft. These initial attempts to systematically understand the phenomenon achieved a

mapping of some sightings of the problem, through the identification of some 'cases', linked in a general way with belief systems practised in some communities. Some initial key factors were suggested, including family structure, scapegoating, 'a child with a difference' and disability in childhood. At this stage, there was a lack of either detailed descriptive accounts of the occurrences, including contextual factors, or an understanding of the psychosocial causes within these contexts. Stobart makes brief mention of the disruptive experiences of migration but does not comment on poverty and its effects, including social exclusion. The awareness that some children were in dangerous situations as a result of these practices prompted the need for detailed exploration of contexts, and the elucidation of more thorough definitions. These definitions and distinctions will be discussed later in this report as a series of findings arising from the evaluation of the work of the organisations in this initiative.

The Safeguarding Children's Rights Special Initiative responded to the concern and anxiety generated by the 'headline' cases, the initial research by the Department for Education and Skills³⁹, the representations from African community organisations, and the sense that something important was being recognised, but about which not very much was known. The aim was therefore to support some work which would be likely to reach further into the relevant communities, discover more, and also to develop ways of understanding how best to intervene. This provided smaller, mainly new African-based organisations with opportunities for developing extensive outreach into the communities.

The initiative recognised that the contexts for understanding and intervening in this work required collaboration across different sectors and obtaining engagement with different constituencies, including:

- African communities in London
- Church organisations
- Professional networks especially those undertaking front-line work with children and families including statutory child protection organisations
- The Metropolitan Police

3.5 The four organisations

The four organisations involved in the initiative all already had a track record in trying to challenge abuse linked to beliefs in Witchcraft and Spirit Possession, including advising the Laming Inquiry. The specific aims and methods for each organisation undertaken with funding from Trust for London as part of the Safeguarding Children's Rights initiative were:

1. AFRUCA (African's Unite Against Child Abuse)

AFRUCA is a registered charity and company limited by guarantee established in 2001. AFRUCA campaigns against the abuse and exploitation of African children. Throughout its work, AFRUCA aims to promote the safeguarding needs of African children within the UK African community, including faith organisations, community groups, practitioners, policy-makers and amongst children themselves. Some of the key issues it focuses on include trafficking African children to the UK, female genital mutilation, private fostering, child exploitation, physical abuse and child abuse as well as faith based abuse.

^[39] Stobart (2006).

Aims and methods in the initiative:

AFRUCA's aims for the initiative focused on three interlinked areas:

- (1) research and policy development by bringing together the expertise and experience of local community groups to inform and influence policy makers;
- (2) awareness raising, information sharing and training for statutory services and other organisations working with children;
- (3) facilitating and co-ordinating the experiences and expertise of African community groups across London.

AFRUCA appointed a new post of Policy Officer to engage with key stakeholders across London.

2. CCPAS (Churches Child Protection Advisory Service)

CCPAS is a child protection charity set up in 1977, which provides professional advice, support, training and resources in all areas of safeguarding and for those affected by abuse in faith and non-faith organisations and individuals. CCPAS services include a 24-hour telephone helpline, advice to government and statutory and voluntary agencies on safeguarding issues in faith communities, and criminal records disclosures. The operational lead of the Metropolitan Police's Project Violet joined CCPAS as Communities Consultant to lead their work with African churches. Through the initiative, the Trust funded the continuation and expansion of this work with churches and pastors.

Aims and methods in the initiative:

CCPAS proposed to continue the work they had previously undertaken, particularly with the support and child protection training of churches within the Congolese community.

Other aims included:

- (1) identifying and engaging with other African churches in London;
- (2) providing child protection awareness training to church leaders, children's workers and carers;
- (3) establishing safeguarding policies and good practice guidelines to be used across communities;
- (4) providing on-going advice and support through project workers and mainstream CCPAS services;
- (5) liaising with other stakeholders in production of written material that promotes the rights of children and reinforces safeguarding messages.

3. Congolese Family Centre (CFC)⁴⁰

Congolese Family Centre is a company limited by guarantee established in 2002. It is the lead organisation for a collaborative partnership with five other organisations⁴¹. CFC seeks to create leadership, improve the life conditions, and develop the future of Congolese communities. They are a small organisation which provides advice and information to the Congolese community in North London. It organises social events, workshops, discussion groups and seminars (particularly on fostering and parenting skills).

Aims and methods in the initiative:

The main aim was to establish a Congolese Family Centre in North London, which would provide a safe and comfortable community environment to deliver a range of education and learning support activities to Lingala speaking families. Trust for London funded the CFC's first paid staff member. The CFC activities included:

- (1) classes for parents on positive approaches to parenting;

^[40] The organisation's name was changed from Bantu Welfare Future Builder to the Congolese Family Centre in October 2010.

^[41] The partnership was known as the UK Congolese Safeguarding Action Group. In addition to Congolese Family Centre, the partners were African Association for Lingala speakers; CocoricoLikita Ltd.; Kongolese Children Association; BME Innovations Focus Ltd.; London African Health Project. BME Innovations Focus Ltd left the partnership early in the initiative as a result of other commitments.

- (2) a youth forum;
- (3) workshops with young people and parents to raise awareness of safeguarding issues;
- (4) awareness raising work through TV programmes and newsletters;
- (5) one-to-one support to families and children to prevent abuse;
- (6) community activities to develop informal friendship networks of like-minded parents.

4. Victoria Climbié Foundation (VCF)

VCF is a registered charity established in 2002. The Foundation emerged from the death of Victoria Climbié, the result of ritual abuse by her guardian in the UK, who believed Victoria was possessed by evil spirits. Its mission is to campaign for the right of Black and Minority Ethnic children to be protected from abuse and to challenge crimes against children committed by families, communities, or by the inaction of statutory and government agencies.

Aims and methods in the initiative:

VCF's work aimed to strengthen the capacity of African communities and statutory agencies in five London Boroughs to prevent child abuse linked to a belief in spirit possession. More specifically, VCF aimed to undertake the following methods of work within the five London boroughs:

- (1) identify what is known and acted upon in the African communities in relation to spirit possession, about how and why children are accused of being possessed by evil spirits, and how and when such beliefs lead to child abuse;
- (2) work with existing African community groups to raise awareness of beliefs and practices that can lead to child abuse, including prevention;
- (3) facilitate links and collaboration with statutory services and African communities in order to help build the confidence and open access for communities into main-stream agencies;
- (4) assist the statutory sector to identify vulnerable children and prevent child abuse in African communities;
- (5) provide advocacy and support to children and families in relation to faith-based abuse. Trust for London funded VCF's first paid staff member, as part of the initiative.

4. Aims of the evaluation

The evaluation of the Safeguarding Children's Rights special initiative has the following aims:

1. To assess the success of the initiative overall
2. To assess the success of individual projects
3. To assess the impact of the work
4. To assess lessons learnt from the work
5. To report back accurately to partners and interested stakeholders on the projects' and initiative's achievement
6. To identify models of best practice for replication and dissemination

5. Evaluation methods

The methods employed for the evaluation of the initiative applied the model developed by CSWR for evaluative research and adapted it to the specific needs and requirements of this project.

5.1 Centre for Social Work Research model of evaluative research

The model developed by CSWR includes a mixed methodological approach to gathering data utilising both qualitative and quantitative methods and making links between these⁴². The key principle guiding the choice of methods in any project is that these should enable a close and in-depth access to practices, whilst also providing an overarching or objective perspective, which is usually achieved by obtaining baseline data which is compared longitudinally. For most evaluative projects, a combination of in-depth interviewing and observation and survey methods are used to achieve these two aims. Qualitative data from this method is analysed by the distinctive team, or panel, method⁴³. It is central to the model that evaluative research, particularly when concerned with people and organisations working at the forefront of social interventions, generates powerful emotional experiences; these require monitoring to ensure accurate evaluation, and, also provide important understanding of individuals and the interpersonal field in which they are working.

5.2 Adaptation of the method to this evaluation

For the evaluation of this initiative three primary methodological considerations were prioritised in order to achieve an effective adaptation of the CSWR model. Firstly, the evaluation began after the initiative and thus baseline data needed to be improvised. Secondly, the project involved three relatively small and new organisations with limited infrastructure, whilst the fourth (CCPAS), though a large and established organisation, also employed an 'outreach' service for this project. Thirdly, the nature of the work of the organisations involved gathering of information and making interventions in

^[42] Brannen (2005).

^[43] Wengraf (2001).

relatively uncharted territory and – in part at least – unstructured social contexts. This format required the application of ethnographic methods of observation and informal interviewing in order to discover more about the social worlds being investigated and the ways that organisations worked in these settings. These organisations had to develop ways of recording their work and developing reflective practice based on their experiences. Networks of personal and informal relationships held important knowledge, and the methods for the evaluation needed to be able to effectively access these. Working thus, to an extent in the unknown, it was important that the evaluative methods could be responsive to the discovery of new information, and be both robust enough to provide longitudinal comparisons whilst also flexible enough to adapt to new knowledge and circumstances.

A further design consideration was the structure within this initiative of four organisations working to different individual goals within the initiative as a whole. This meant that the evaluative team needed to develop strategies to evaluate each organisation's contribution, development and experiences as well as gaining an overall perspective on how the parts created a whole and making comparisons across the experiences of the four organisations.

5.3 The evaluative method

The evaluative methods for this initiative were based on the above principles and considerations. The structure for the evaluation consisted of an adapted baseline derived from the experiences in the first year of the initiative, and two further assessment time points for comparison, thus:

- Initiative began (grants made): August 2007
- Funded organisations began work: October 2007 – January 2008
- Evaluation began: May 2008
- Adapted baseline: December 2008
- First assessment time point: December 2009
- Final assessment time point: December 2010

The working methods of the team consisted of the following:

1. Regular team meetings of the whole evaluation team to manage the progress of the evaluation and on-going analysis of data.
2. One member of the team was allocated to link with one of the four organisations and these relationships provided a consultative approach to the issues faced by each organisation as the initiative developed, focusing on key issues and reviewing ways that the organisations developed their responses to their work. Thus the approach has a developmental aspect, and evaluative data was generated through the relationship between the research team and the organisations.
3. Observations of the organisations in action, including the range of activities that were undertaken and events that were promoted.

4. Semi structured interviews with members of the organisations, participants of the work of the organisations from communities, professional and church networks.
5. Reading and assessing outputs of activities, including written and multimedia, and published documents.
6. Arising from interim findings of the evaluative team, two day workshops were held to explore the key themes of:
 - a. Change
 - b. Child protection contexts and the meaning of Witchcraft and Spirit Possession

5.4 Data collection

Data from each of the working methods was obtained in the form of detailed written accounts of meetings, observations and interviews. These were logged on the data base and discussed in the evaluative team meetings. The data thus collected consisted of accounts of the organisations' activities, interviews with participants, and with key stakeholders in organisations and communities, including statutory services, pastors and other church representatives, police, and community organisations ⁴⁴.

Though consisting mainly of qualitative data, quantitative data was gathered where appropriate, for example, analysing feedback forms from training events delivered by the organisations.

5.5 Data Analysis

Emergent, conceptual methods: Analysis was on-going, and involved periodic feedback to each organisation and the initiative as a whole, within the time frames. The evaluation worked to evidence a clear structure of nine areas for evaluation. These included the following anticipated outcomes for the initiative as a whole:

1. Improved capacity and skills of the funded African community organisations to provide support to families and children where there are child protection concerns based on belief related to spirit possession
2. Raised awareness of child protection and children's rights issues within these communities
3. Target faith groups adopting and implementing child protection policies, good practice guidelines and demonstrating an increased awareness of child development issues
4. Reduced stigma about faith-based abuse leading to a strong network of families and young people speaking out against abusive practices
5. Improved communications and collaboration between statutory agencies and African community groups

[44] See Appendix 1, pgs 65-66.

6. African community groups more confident in dealing with statutory agencies on child protection issues
7. Increased collaboration between community groups addressing this issue
8. Improvement in how statutory agencies identify and respond to cases of faith-based abuse
9. Constructive media coverage of this issue generated

Evaluating the above aims 1–8 as **outcomes** was challenging. This was because each of the aims was expressed as a comparative, so a baseline assessment of levels was required. Baseline data was problematic because (a) the evaluation began after the initiative and (b) the meaning of the field of study was not known, or was subject to highly inferential and unverified assumptions. Especially and primarily this was true about the meaning of Witchcraft and Spirit Possession itself, for which either over-simplistic definitions prevailed at the start of the evaluation, or the meaning was contested, or both. Thus to be able to evaluate outcomes, the evaluation had to work firstly with **discovering** and formulating the meaning of the terms being used, leading to concepts emerging from this process, and then being refined whilst data was collected and analysed. Only through the prior evaluative work of formulating the meaning of terms and concepts in contexts can useful outcomes be generated. Therefore the evaluation of necessity focused on the task of **generating understanding of the concept of Witchcraft and Spirit Possession in its contexts** in order to be able to generate meaningful conclusions about **outcomes**.

Two key examples illustrate this approach in action:

- Cases involving Witchcraft or Spirit Possession had to be understood in their socio-cultural and faith contexts, and how each case relates to child protection issues had to be clear. Where working definitions are contested – as in this initiative – consideration of cases from these different perspectives is also necessary. From these considerations, interventions to assist in child protection cases and to prevent the conditions leading to potential abuse can be more effectively designed and implemented. The evaluation team studied ways in which the organisations in the initiative were explicitly and implicitly applying definitions of Witchcraft and Spirit Possession, together with perspectives gained from outside the initiative, notably but not only from the police.
- From the organisational perspective, work towards change required a conceptualisation of what changes were being sought, from what knowledge base and through which methods. The evaluative team initiated a day workshop for all the organisations to work through and develop understanding of change based on these considerations, leading to reformulation of processes of work and evaluation of the outcomes.

The analysis of data thus became focussed on the formulation and reformulation of the meaning of Witchcraft and Spirit Possession; this was emergent through the ways that understanding developed through acquiring knowledge as a result of the work of the organisations. The evaluative aim – constituting a major piece of data analysis – was to develop a conceptual framework which placed the subject of witchcraft in key

contexts — socio-cultural, legal, organisational, and religious — taking account of the different approaches of the four organisations. This needed to be formulated in ways that were robust enough to be tested by alternative hypotheses and the requirements of practice actions.

Qualitative analysis: Individual reports from observations and interviews were content analysed to generate themes and categories, permitting comparison across the data.

Quantitative analysis: Where appropriate, some data – mainly feedback from participants of training events – was analysed quantitatively, using simple descriptive statistics.

Case studies: The working methods for the evaluation, together with the range of different kinds of working activity undertaken by the four organisations led to the presentation of evaluative data in the form of illustrative case studies. This term is used in the ethnographic sense to describe clusters of activities – work with particular groups, training, etc. These case studies are, as is usual, descriptive and make use of both qualitative and quantitative data.

6. Main themes in the evaluation: conceptualising Witchcraft and Spirit Possession

As has been described above, the evaluative methods included a developmental approach which aimed to facilitate more effective and more clearly articulated engagement by the organisations, and to enhance their capacity to meet the objectives of the initiative. Additionally, the evaluation worked towards increasing understanding of Witchcraft and Spirit Possession, in these contexts, and towards formulating working models that appeared to be able to describe the very wide range of factors that interplay in the 'field' of Witchcraft and Spirit Possession. Thus it is important that the discussion of findings from the evaluation gathers up the main themes and sets these in context. This is necessary to facilitate description and assessment of progress towards meeting the outcomes, ensuring that outcomes are located in a framework based on change over time and conceptualisation of the field. To restate the problem; as discussed above, to achieve meaningful evidence of outcomes in this evaluation required the generation of knowledge about the meaning of Witchcraft and Spirit Possession. Because this led to new knowledge, this became, for this evaluation, an additional but central aim.

6.1 Themes at the baseline:

1. Bringing about change: At the adapted baseline, the evaluation made the observation that relatively new organisations and CCPAS were undertaking innovative work driven primarily by community development and educative models without any tested knowledge about how these methods would generate change. Nor was it clear – to the organisations and to the evaluators – how the aims and the chosen methods would in fact work in practice. Thus the organisations were involved in activities which required reflective practices to make sense of the experiences and impact in order to meet the aims of the initiative. This also involved the process of developing and using useful recorded data that enabled the organisations to manage their tasks and be able to evaluate their own work. The development of effective intervention methods in each organisation depended therefore on being able to:

- articulate models of change, having appropriate and realistic expectations of change as a result of the activities
- building in models that accounted for resistance to change
- using information from work undertaken reflectively to enhance understanding and assessment of impact

A simple example is; how can it be known that a training event about Witchcraft and Spirit Possession has had effects on the participants, and what were the effects? This encouraged the organisations to triangulate their experiences. For example, CCPAS have used focus groups and developed a questionnaire that was sent out to church groups who took part in their training in the last year that asked participants to identify behavioural change as a result of the training (discussed in more detail below, 7.4)

2. Identifying Witchcraft and Spirit Possession: This linked with the problem of knowledge about Witchcraft and Spirit Possession. At the outset of the evaluation, there appeared to be little verified knowledge about the causes, meaning and practices of

Witchcraft and Spirit Possession. There were instead a range of untested theories and suppositions. For example, there was a fear, widely held by the organisations, that too direct an approach linked with adverse media coverage would drive underground the people who were most involved in the practices of Witchcraft and Spirit Possession and reduce opportunities for engagement and discussion. Even the members of these organisations reported being subject to abuse and degradation by members of their own communities for speaking up against the practices and for aiming to bring them into the open (discussed more fully in Section 6.1 below). On the other hand there was the view that the perpetrators of wrong-doing constituted a minority within the community, most often described as ‘rogue pastors’ who operated on the margins. Thus, though the organisations felt strongly that there were serious problems arising from the practices of Witchcraft and Spirit Possession, it was difficult to describe the nature of Witchcraft and Spirit Possession with clarity and practicality. Assessing prevalence and potential severity depended on answering some prior questions of definition.

3. Relationships between organisations and evaluators: Much of the work of the first phase of the evaluation, up to the adapted baseline report, was concerned with developing working relationships that would be helpful to the organisations overcoming (absolutely usual) initial doubts and anxieties about the aims and purposes of evaluation. By reflecting on the kind of problems experienced in the relationship between the organisations and the evaluators, the evaluative team was able to generate some useful understanding of the qualities of the problems that were faced by the organisations in pursuing the aims of the initiative and on their task. For example, concerns that participants in parenting groups would regard evaluation questionnaires as imposing culturally inappropriate measures onto activities (discussed in more depth under Section 7.1).

4. How does Witchcraft and Spirit Possession link with child protection? There was, broadly speaking, agreement across the organisations that practices of Witchcraft and Spirit Possession can bring about damaging impacts for children and young people through emotional and physical abuse and neglect. It was also agreed – in general terms – that the problems were experienced in interactions and connections between the communities, including church communities, and representatives of UK child protection policies in statutory organisations. Consequently, the organisations engaged in different ways with the key constituencies; the communities, church organisations serving these communities, and those working for statutory and voluntary organisations working in the domain of safeguarding children. This is discussed in depth in Section 7; the work that the organisations undertook with families within communities (Section 7.1), with church communities (Section 7.2) and with statutory agencies (Sections 7.5, 7.6 and 7.7). There was seen to be a tension between highlighting the practices that lead to abuse in these communities and the potential for increasing stigmatising experiences both for African communities in relation to the UK and also for individuals within the communities, by the communities.

In its aim of raising awareness of child protection and children’s rights issues within the communities, the initiative is located within the overall trends towards the greater identification of child protection issues, driven by the twin ideas that children have human rights and that they are psychological beings⁴⁵ (see Section 3.3 above). Taking this approach, child abuse arising from Spirit Possession could be located in the already identified and well-defined kinds of abuse – physical, sexual and emotional

[45] Scott (2008).

abuse and neglect consists of a particular application of parent – or adult – exploitation and harm of children. An alternative view, perhaps implicit in Stobart's approach⁴⁶, held that Witchcraft and Spirit Possession constituted a particular kind of child abuse in its own right, and required defining and legalising as such. The issue was significant in terms of models of change – with an implicit tension around the aims and objectives of the initiative; the more legalistic route suggested that a new form of child abuse would be identified, defined and criminalised; locating the practice of Witchcraft and Spirit Possession in existing child protection frameworks implied introducing a differentiation between different kinds of faith-based abuse. This tension would continue throughout the evaluation of the initiative.

5. Witchcraft and Spirit Possession in faith contexts: A critical issue identified at the adapted baseline concerned the relationship between the systems of beliefs on which Witchcraft and Spirit Possession were based and the actions of individuals who harmed children applying these beliefs. An initial distinction made by the organisations was between belief and actions, with the emphasis on changing the latter while respecting the former. Whilst this helpfully facilitated separate study of beliefs and actions, it is not robust when applied to practice situations where beliefs and actions intermingled. There was therefore the need to explore how the faith systems could be influenced by understanding of the social and psychological causes of distress and adversity, and how understanding of children's human rights influenced attitudes and actions, in individuals and groups. Thus there was an implicit – at least – aim of affecting change in the operation of faith systems. This was explored at the workshop held in July 2010, and in the meetings between the organisations and the evaluative team.

6. Social causes: Identifying the social causes of child abuse through Witchcraft and Spirit Possession was central to the project, since this is accepted as key to understanding the underpinning of risks to children's health and well being (see 3.3. above). It was necessary to assess evidence for how belief systems that included Spirit Possession and Witchcraft were related to poverty, criminality and distress for individuals within communities, how the impact of loss and separation, of adjustment to the host culture in diaspora, and how relationships with the home countries generated more intense holding on to traditional values. How, also, did the interface for experiencing the gap between the host country and these communities become evidenced through problems experienced between individuals, groups and services. These were thought at the baseline to be crucial for understanding and evaluating how communities were able to support – or resist/undermine – values relating to the rights of children.

6.2 From baseline themes to conceptualising Witchcraft and Spirit Possession: evaluation from adapted baseline onwards

From the adapted baseline, the evaluative team formulated that focus on the issue of change was central to the aims and resultant activities of the organisations. The ways that the organisations were engaged in reflective practice was key to this issue. Thus the evaluation team focussed on developing this understanding in each organisation. These discussions were brought together in a day-workshop focussing on change for all the organisations⁴⁷.

^[46] Stobart (2006)

^[47] Held 14.07.09.

The change workshop, building on the consultative work with the organisations, focussed on debates between different ways of seeing Witchcraft and Spirit Possession across the initiative; how interventions based on these articulations could be expected to impact; and how these could be most effectively assessed. This process thus generated ways of linking the key baseline themes. Alongside on-going analysis of data, from work with the organisations and their participants, the change workshop aimed to develop and articulate thinking about the relationship between the purpose of the organisations' activities, the kinds of change expected to flow from these activities and methods for evidencing these. The relationship between activities and opinions/hypotheses/knowledge about the causes of abuse of children through Witchcraft and Spirit Possession developed in this workshop began to articulate deeper and more differentiated ways of thinking about Spirit Possession and Witchcraft through locating the behaviours and belief systems in contexts. This had the advantage also of connecting activities with understanding and thus as formulating effective ways of changing behaviour. The process involves enabling and supporting the organisations to think through and develop their understandings of the meaning of Spirit Possession and Witchcraft in contexts of community and church. Three aspects of this emergent process were:

1. The location of Witchcraft and Spirit Possession in social contexts of change and transition: the role of traditional faith practices and spirituality

Data generated by the organisations and the evaluation detailed the importance of traditional belief systems which included belief in and practices of spirit possession within these communities, and how these are used by groups and individuals. The depth of feeling about traditional beliefs and – in some contexts – how these were fiercely guarded from intrusion demonstrated, on the one hand, a context of tension and potential misunderstanding at the interface between host and diasporic cultures and, on the other hand, a representation of the cultural internalisation of these ideas as a deep experience for individuals and groups (this is discussed in detail in 7.1, below)

Thus within the evaluation it was articulated that patterns of belief as deep, traditional and internalised practices are not simply 'cast off' as a behaviour as contexts change. Secondly, causes could be found – if the evaluation focussed on these – for the reasons why these practices were so strongly adhered to, and these would make sense in their contexts and enable distinctions between ordinary application of religious, spiritual and cultural practices, and abusiveness to children. This cut through the rather simplistic distinction sometimes made by the organisations and others at the start of the initiative that it was possible to change behaviour without changing the belief system. From the Change Workshop until the second assessment time point, the following contextualising ideas were tested against the data from the activities of the organisations:

- (1) While recognising the practice of beliefs in Spirit Possession and Witchcraft in many countries, in the UK context of this initiative, the impact of migration appears to be important. Based on Eisenbruch's thinking about 'cultural bereavement'⁴⁸, the experience of transition or change, can be thought of as generating anxieties which require containment by social structures; these structures are less readily available, or appear to be under threat externally and from within, through the gaps and the experiences of different cultural contexts. Anxieties are likely to become more intense and a defensive alignment with traditional values is thus

^[48] Eisenbruch (1990).

activated to seek to contain experiences of anxiety, confusion, distress, loss, pain and separation.

- (2) The adherence to traditional values and beliefs is a way of maintaining differentiation from the host country and retaining possibilities of contesting authority⁴⁹. The traditional values of the diasporic community are asserted through the traditional leadership – in this initiative this authority was primarily located in church leadership. The contestation of authority occurs also at the level of the individual, for whom the values of the host country may appear alienating. Notably, this conflict appeared around the idea of children's rights. This central concept of child protection, based on embedded attitudes and values in the UK, appeared in various contexts as incomprehensible or detracting from the 'rights' of parents⁵⁰. This is echoed in the different interpretations of children's rights in different continents (see 3.3. above, and further exploration in 7.1 and 7.2 below). The gap between communities and statutory professionals as 'representatives of the host nation' thus becomes a site for the contestation of values, and through this the reassertion of traditional attitudes and authority against the values and expectations of the host country.
- (3) Traditional practices in relatively beleaguered communities separated from and even isolated from their home cultures can become idealised and thus separated do not continue to evolve. In this situation, some practices begin to appear anachronistic and irrelevant, from one perspective, whilst, from another perspective they are invested with urgent need and relevance, particularly in maintaining a relationship with the idealised 'home'. This relationship extends across a spectrum from the banal attachment to an anachronistic object to the maintenance of central cultural ideas. Identifying how and to what extent this dynamic operates for Witchcraft and Spirit Possession in religious practices helps to understand the role of particular attitudes around the subject.
- (4) It was also hypothesised that faith practices are not necessarily or in themselves harmful, and indeed have close affinity with other kinds of spirituality in other cultures and religions, and operate at an everyday level, mediating lives and experiences (see 3.4 above). A key task is therefore to understand the role of traditional religious practice across the spectrum from harmless (and maybe helpful) to abusive.

2. The relationship between abusive practices and spirit possession

Cross referencing data obtained by the work of all the organisations led to a more clearly defined and more finely grained description of the relationship between Spirit Possession and factors/indicators of abuse, including the roles of deprivation, poverty, and exploitation. The application of beliefs in Witchcraft and Spirit Possession for the exploitation of children lies on a spectrum. At one end is conscious exploitation, e.g. child trafficking is likely to involve conscious exploitation, as in the use of power to force silence or compliance of children, and to effect exploitation including through abuse. At the other end of the spectrum lies unarticulated or unaware/unconscious exploitation. Adhering to traditional patterns of spirituality within a specific culture in ways that lead to abuse of children may be more unaware, or unarticulated. Being unaware of the abusive impact on children may be connected with deeply held attitudes or values, and may be resistant to awareness. In the examples of Witchcraft and Spirit Possession

^[49] Eisenbruch (1990).

^[50] There are tensions between children's and parents' rights in all communities.

in families described by the organisations in the initiative and by the police, the factor of the parents' fear of the child probably best qualifies as unconscious exploitation. In the parent's mind appears to be the terror of the child's punishment of them (or for them), for which the child has to be 'exorcized' – usually involving punishments and other abuses – as the power of this projective system is not amenable to thought. However, the knowledge that the child is being abused is not always consciously held by the parents. Interestingly, this dynamic has echoes in other cultures, e.g. the Greek myth of Oedipus⁵¹. Somewhere along the spectrum, the role of faith leaders can both mediate the fears of parents and instil or increase fear.

These crucial dynamics are beginning to be described within the initiative and by others working in this area and through this work we are developing a picture of the complex motives and different applications of the idea and practice of Witchcraft and Spirit Possession. This is generating a very different picture from the one available at baseline, and in the early reports⁵². Stobart listed cases and worked from a unitary model of Witchcraft and Spirit Possession, without, from the data she had available to her, being able to elucidate the processes through which Witchcraft and Spirit Possession became central to individuals and families. Stobart identified only that a child was branded or labelled a witch. Because of the preventive approach of the initiative, the contexts for the application of the belief system became clearer. The complex relationships involve individuals, groups and communities and this suggests a way of approaching the issue of the relationship between spirit possession and child abuse.

3. The relationship between Spirit Possession and child abuse

Data from all the organisations shows that beliefs in Spirit Possession and Witchcraft impacts as abuse of children when adults, including parents, inflict emotional, or physical damage, or both, on children, and that they can be driven by conscious and less than conscious motives. This data shows that the context for abuse and the role played in it by Witchcraft and Spirit Possession show that if Spirit Possession can be understood in its contexts, that it is not so much a separate category of abuse but that it impacts on children through an application of one of the recognised categories of abuse – physical, emotional, sexual abuse and neglect. This formulation opens the way to a descriptive approach to the particular ways in which a child is abused in any or all these categories through the application of ideas and practices of Spirit Possession and Witchcraft. It also leads to further differentiation of the severity of the allegation of Witchcraft and Spirit Possession against a child. This can be assessed through identifying the risks to the child; it leads to the hypothesis that whenever there is a case of Witchcraft and Spirit Possession that is abusive, there is always evidence of another factor, one which is linked with known factors of abuse; in short, it is suggested that there is always evidence of child abuse independent of the issue of Witchcraft and Spirit Possession in any case of abuse. Recognising the presence of Witchcraft and Spirit Possession is thus important for resolving the abusive situations. Further, recognising the reasons for the application of beliefs in Witchcraft and Spirit Possession enables understanding of the role it fills in each case, emotionally and relationally⁵³.

[51] Oedipus' parents feared the prophecy that he would kill his father and marry his mother and thus abandoned him.

[52] Stobart (2006).

[53] See Key finding 5: Knowledge about faith and cultural contexts should inform assessments of individual cases.

7. Achievements against anticipated outcomes

In this section of the report we discuss the application of key themes and the outcomes of the conceptualisation of Witchcraft and Spirit Possession to the nine areas for assessing outcomes. For each outcome, we will apply the framework for assessing change over time (adapted baseline, interim and final evaluation) and link the discussion to key themes. As discussed in the evaluative methods section (Section 5.5, data analysis) we will use a case study approach to illustrate the findings.

7.1 Improved capacity and skills of the funded African community organisations to provide support to families and children where there are child protection concerns based on belief related to spirit possession

The baseline for this aim required an assessment of the capacities and skills of the funded African community organisations and CCPAS at the adapted baseline, together with a summary of how each organisation aimed to support families – directly and indirectly. It also requires assessment in relation to the changing conceptions as knowledge was gained within the initiative of the relationship between child abuse and spirit possession. This section should be read in conjunction with the discussion of individual casework undertaken under Section 7.10 below.

Within this initiative, the Congolese Family Centre and Victoria Climbié Foundation (VCF) provide direct support services to families and children. AFRUCA seeks to achieve this through building these capacities and skills in professionals, whilst CCPAS seeks to achieve this through working with church organisations. The key developments for this outcome are most clearly demonstrated by the work of the Congolese Family Centre and VCF so we shall focus on their work: It should be noted that both the Congolese Family Centre and VCF had been undertaking work within the field prior to the initiative without specific funding, and the support provided by the initiative had begun a new phase and provided opportunities to widen the capacity of their work.

The Congolese Family Centre (CFC) was established in March 2008 as a community referral point and two areas of activity, parent workshops and the youth forum, were developed. The preceding phase (November 2007 – March 2008) was a preparatory stage, including securing premises, receiving consultancy support, developing publicity and putting operational systems in place. The consultancy was judged by the organisation, consultant and ourselves to have been particularly important in enabling the organisation to develop a structured approach to its work.

The organisation aimed to develop contacts with parents and families through church organisations. In the initial stage, however, considerable resistance was encountered, including death threats and experiencing abuse. One of the key members of the organisation described being called “the anti-Christ” and having eggs thrown at him when he was with his child⁵⁴. They tried engaging in work with pastors within their community, but initially found it very difficult. At the adapted baseline stage, one leader from CFC had attended two churches every week for three months but had made no progress⁵⁵. There are several factors that could have influenced this non-acceptance. Firstly, when engaging with pastors, they found that their initial reaction was often to state that they did not feel that there was a problem⁵⁶.

[54] Source: Interview with CFC, 26.10.10.

[55] Source: Meeting with CFC, 12.12.08.

[56] Source: DVD of CFC Youth Forum, November 2009.

Secondly, there was concern amongst the congregation that what the organisation was saying involved challenging pastors, which made them uncomfortable. Other factors included the media coverage of African communities following the Child B case, which promoted unhelpful stereotypes and left African communities feeling that they were being 'demonised'⁵⁷. This media coverage is discussed in more detail under Outcome 9. The issues involved in identifying Witchcraft and Spirit Possession are discussed under key theme two, above in Section 6.

With the funding, the Congolese Family Centre developed three main areas of activity: parent support groups, the Youth Forum and television programmes for OBE and BEN TV. The first two areas will be discussed here and the third area will be discussed in Section 7.9 on media coverage.

Parent support groups have been developed on an on-going and one-off basis. Data from the organisation shows that four parent courses were run between April 2008 and December 2008 with 236 attendances overall. A further two courses ran from January 2009 – September 2009 with 135 attendances. The attendances recorded included short or fleeting contacts rather than individuals taking a 'course' in the accepted sense – the numbers of parents engaging in the latter sense may be much smaller. These initial courses consisted of child protection awareness programmes that were delivered jointly by LSCB staff and Congolese Family Centre staff and volunteers.

There has been a continuous programme of parenting groups held on a one-off basis in community settings. These aim to provide Congolese parents with an understanding of the UK safeguarding system and an opportunity to discuss their responses. These parent groups were directly observed by a member of the evaluative team on two occasions⁵⁸. The discussions observed in the group included how places of worship could provide a community resource for children and families. This included a scenario of a child with a disability and whether the church would or could be used as a reliable source of support. Parents concluded that the church should respond to a specific standard and quality of care in order to be an effective source of support but were aware that Pastors hold considerable power within the community. Feedback obtained directly from participants indicated that they found the sessions useful and informative, particularly as they had found it difficult to understand their rights and responsibilities as parents. Some also expressed fear that their children would be removed by children's social care and these parents requested further training, for example, seeking further explanation of the UK childcare system⁵⁹. Parents told the evaluator that they see themselves as the 'eyes of the community' and as change agents with a responsibility to disseminate the information as well as to encourage other Congolese parents to sign up for forthcoming parent group programmes. From July 2009, the organisation developed strong links with a primary school which has led to the delivery of on-going parent support groups for Congolese parents. These take the form of discussion groups where parents bring particular issues that are causing them concern. One of the group's aims is to support the parents around the integration process as well as to assist them with supporting their children in this new environment. This work with the school was developed in response to an approach by the local authority to ask for advice and consultation because of concern that Congolese children were underachieving in school⁶⁰. This is an example of the organisation being responsive to emerging issues. However, working directly with schools involved a change of direction and raised concerns that the project was losing focus and overstressing its limited resources. Feedback from key

[57] Source: observation of AFRU-CA conference, 22.10.10.

[58] Source: CFC observation on 19.05.09 and 17.04.10.

[59] Source: Discussion with participants 19.05.09.

[60] Source: Interview with Head of Inclusion Manager and the Ethnic Minorities (schools) Advisor (EMA), 03.06.09.

education stakeholders indicates that the work with the school has led to significant improvements in trusting and positive relationships between the staff members and parents and greater confidence in staff and parents and willingness to raise issues, particularly around concerns of child protection⁶¹. Consequently, the success of this link appeared to justify this development, involving a change of strategic direction.

At the current stage (October 2010), the parent groups have regular attendees and the organisation aims now to reach out to others who do not currently access the groups. The existing parents suggested that church networks would be an effective way of achieving wider participation and the organisation has developed links with three churches so as to recruit new parents to attend the workshops. They made contact with the pastors first, stressing that all organisations have legal obligations to work within the Children Act 1989 as a means of gaining access. This proved to be a successful strategy for engaging with churches, who welcomed this approach, both before and after the Channel 4 documentary on Spirit Possession and Witchcraft shown in August 2010 (discussed in detail under Outcome 8). This shows a considerable improvement from the adapted baseline, where building relationships with pastors was extremely difficult. These issues of how the belief system on which Witchcraft and Spirit Possession is based links with child protection – and the tension between these two frameworks – highlight practices that lead to abuse. The risk of increasing stigmatising experiences applies to key theme four in Section 6, above.

Youth Forum The Congolese Family Centre has developed a Youth Forum that has been active in promoting young people's awareness and understanding children's rights, particularly relating to abuse linked to Spirit Possession and Witchcraft. From the first interim report to the end of the second, (April 2008 – September 2009) the forums were run regularly and there were 363 attendances⁶² overall. One youth forum directly observed had 35 attendees. The organisation drew up an initial programme which included a trip to the grave of Morton Stanley to promote young people having a stronger sense of identity and pride in their cultural heritage as well as encouraging greater understanding of their parents' backgrounds⁶³. The forum was closed temporarily during elections in DRC because of concerns that it would be used by people with particular political views to recruit young people.

At the stage of the second interim report (December 2009), there was evidence that the Youth Forum had developed to the point that difficult topics could be discussed openly. For example, a member of the evaluation team directly observed a meeting in which a large group of 35 young people were shown a DVD of a TV programme about child abuse linked to Witchcraft and Spirit Possession in Africa⁶⁴. The aim of this approach was to provide support for young people to be able to talk about whether some practices related to Witchcraft and Spirit Possession could be viewed as abusive (this is also discussed under Section 7.4). Interestingly, in discussion of witchcraft branding and child-rearing practices these young people embraced a full spectrum of views about this. Some young people expressed considerable anger against their parents' generation and community authorities including pastors that children and young people were being branded as witches, but, on the other hand, others felt that it should not be discussed in public with strangers, it is 'our own business', meaning it should stay within the community. These issues illustrate key theme two in Section 6. Others expressed concern that the media were using isolated incidents to attack Black African churches. What was clear was that the issue of child abuse linked to Spirit Possession and

[61] Source: Ibid

[62] 'Attendances' here mean participation in one meeting.

[63] Stanley was the white British missionary who located Henry Livingstone. This engagement with the missionary and colonial history of DRC was an interesting take on identifying the background for the religious practices that emanated from the missionary activities of these white Victorians.

[64] Source: Direct observation and DVD of Youth Forum, November 2009.

Witchcraft was being discussed more openly and young people were becoming aware that some practices were unacceptable. This discussion of Witchcraft and Spirit Possession indicated the range of applications of the faith system, from the more serious or dangerous ways in which young people could be subject to harm to the more innocent and helpful. The generational differences and the young people's age-appropriate responses to their parents (including embarrassment at all things they do!) formed a clear discourse for these discussions⁶⁵.

One interviewee suggested that the Forum should be opened to all Pastors as it was felt that Congolese women 'depended too much on Pastors'⁶⁶. Although the meaning of this can be difficult to ascertain, it does raise wider issues about the role of women and their part in decision-making within their families and communities. The role of women, in particular their vulnerabilities, has emerged throughout the initiative as a significant problem. Several case examples provided in Section 7.10 illustrate how women have been exploited by the pastors that they trusted and who hold authority in their belief system.

In summary, during the course of the initiative, CFC was transformed from a volunteer-only group, working on a shoe-string, to a staffed organisation with systems, processes, and expanded expertise. CFC is now based in established premises as a community hub with regular activities which are well-known and well-respected in the community and beyond.

The **Victoria Climbié Foundation** (VCF) aimed to work with communities in order to reduce the gap they perceived between communities and statutory services for children. This will be further discussed in Outcome 5 below. Here the focus is on VCF's direct work with children and families.

VCF started working in the London Borough of Ealing in 2007 with funding from the local authority. Initially, VCF intended that the additional funding from the initiative would enable them to work in five local authorities but by the stage of the first interim report, VCF realised that their initial intentions were over ambitious and that they were not going to be able to meet their objectives. VCF therefore agreed with Trust for London to focus their energies on two boroughs: Harrow and Hillingdon.

VCF successfully overcame the challenge to move from a visionary individual campaigner to creating a professional organization with staff and structures. VCF saw it as important to reach out to communities and address the need within communities. They were concerned that evaluation was something that would seem strange to the communities and they struggled to see how it could be incorporated into their activities. So the evaluators' work involved helping them to see the significance and importance of evaluation as well as exploring ways to think analytically and reflectively on the work they were doing. This involved supporting them to develop their own working model and this proved particularly fruitful in the latter stages of the process⁶⁷ (see Appendices 2 and 3). This illustrates the process of bringing about change (key theme one) and the relationship between organisations and evaluators (key theme three) in Section 6.

^[65] Source: DVD of Youth Forum, November 2009.

^[66] Source: Interviews, 19.11.09.

^[67] See Appendices 2 and 3, pgs 67-68.

At the adapted baseline stage, VCF had begun to engage in running workshops to promote understanding of child protection with African groups, both on its own and with other organisations. For example, a ‘Keeping children safe’ workshop to bring statutory agencies together with community groups (26.02.08) and a ‘Facing the unthinkable’ workshop with CCPAS to faith groups in West London (18.04.08). The workshops involved engaging with parents about child protection and balancing two potentially conflicting values – to avoid condemning the belief of an individual nation or society whilst being clear that a cultural or faith-based belief must not override the safety of a child⁶⁸.

These groups were run for specific communities, e.g. Somali women, and for particular services, e.g. a refuge for victims of domestic violence and abuse⁶⁹. Observations of these groups highlight the stigma that is attached to child abuse in general, not just abuse linked to belief in Spirit Possession and Witchcraft. For example, during an observation of a parent group run by VCF for Somali women in July 2009, the facilitator asked the 16 participants if they believed that child abuse took place. Three women said they did think this was the case, whilst 13 women answered “no”⁷⁰. This would suggest that for many, the existence of child abuse is something that is literally ‘unthinkable’. Once this happens, it becomes a taboo subject to discuss.

Consistent themes have been identified from observations of the parenting groups. Firstly, parents have described their own sense of confusion and powerlessness when trying to manage their children’s behaviour⁷¹. Secondly, these intergenerational conflicts of perspective can be exacerbated by cultural differences in the perspectives of children and parents. At one parent group, a parent described trying to discipline her child, who told her that “*you are not of us*” or would threaten to make contact with statutory services to report the parent⁷². The former comment would indicate that her child had formed a strong identity with UK British culture and viewed the parents’ culture in a negative way. The latter comment echoes the challenges faced by many parents, as parental authority is challenged by the wider commitment to children’s rights.

During the last year of the initiative, VCF has increased its focus on direct work with individual children who are involved with Witchcraft and Spirit Possession. A small but significant number of cases are currently being worked with. VCF now receives referrals from the community and from statutory services including front line staff, and this work includes making independent assessments for the courts. Solicitors also now refer to VCF. In one case VCF made four recommendations to the court which were all accepted.

The VCF model has always been amongst the most theorised of the approaches in this initiative and work in the last phase of the initiative has focused on the articulation of this model in relation to individual cases of Witchcraft and Spirit Possession, to describe the ‘casework process’ (see Appendix 2). At the heart of this model is the understanding that the faith system is very widespread but that the number of cases of serious or dangerous witchcraft is very small in comparison, a view on the whole shared across the initiative. There are also many more cases in which the term of ‘witch’ may be applied without the seriousness of intent that could lead to abuse⁷³. Their work aims to get beyond the ‘presenting problem’ to understand the underlying issues and contexts. Thus in recent examples of working with groups of parents, the VCF model starts with a

[68] Source: Correspondence, November 2010.

[69] Source: interim reports, observations of two groups on 04.12.09 and 27.01.10.

[70] Source: Notes of VCF parenting group, July 2009.

[71] Observations of parenting groups: 24.11.09; 18.03.10.

[72] Source: VCF ‘Keeping Children Safe’ workshop, 18.03.10.

[73] Peter Bruggen, a family therapist used an example to show that the context was everything: Someone saying “I’ll kill you” would have a different meaning if the person was holding a gun or a tennis racquet!

dialogue about the way that parents see the child protection process, and then moves to a discussion of Witchcraft and Spirit Possession. In individual cases, the aim is to identify the contexts that are impacting on the family, and this looks for common sense rather than reactive solutions. Thus, for example, a father whose child felt she was a witch – a somewhat unusual dynamic, reversing the more often experienced process – was supported to think about his anxieties as a parent having been separated from his daughter⁷⁴.

The achievement of this organisation is to develop the potential – and actuality – of dialogue with communities and a model of case work practice that is aligned with a more holistic – and less simplistic – view of Witchcraft and Spirit Possession (see ‘Themes at the Baseline’ section above). This model has been articulated and can be replicated. VCF maintain strongly – and back this assertion with evidence from their practice – that the child protection system in the UK is robust and needs thoughtful application to be effective in cases involving Witchcraft and Spirit Possession. Overall, VCF gained increased capacity to plan, monitor and evaluate their work.

Summary of achievements: The organisations do demonstrate increased capacity in terms of skills, knowledge and resources to support children and families where there are issues of Witchcraft and Spirit Possession. The two case studies illustrating work in this aim provide contrasting approaches to working with Witchcraft and Spirit Possession. The Congolese Family Centre approach focuses on work within one community, using the ‘family centre’ to mobilise the community to think and discuss the issues, and disseminating these discussions through TV programmes. The approach of engaging young people and parents has been successful and generated a real energy. This view is triangulated by comments from independent practitioners interviewed by the evaluation team⁷⁵.

In contrast VCF have generated an approach based on casework which emphasises working with resistances and utilises a clearly articulated model of change (see above). This model is well theorised and has succeeded in providing in-depth work to individuals which is respected by professionals working with these families.

The work of both organisations has taken us a significant way to understanding and articulating key relationships between Witchcraft and Spirit Possession, the faith systems as practised in these communities and the child protection framework.

There still appears to be a gap in capacity to support the victims of families where there are concerns about Witchcraft and Spirit Possession abuse. Organisations within the initiative are in discussion about putting in place a system to support victims of witchcraft child abuse, in line with the recommendations from UNHCR for supportive and rehabilitative services for child victims of witchcraft.

^[74] Source: meeting with VCF November 2010.

^[75] Met Police interview, October 2010.

7.2 Raised awareness of child protection and children's rights issues within these communities

The notion of raised awareness over time requires accurate baseline data and for the evaluation of this aim we will apply the conceptual and qualitative assessments at the adapted baseline. This focuses, above all, on the tensions and conflicts about the concepts of child protection and children's rights within these communities and across the boundary between the communities and practitioners in social care and legal settings, including the police. The gap between communities and statutory services has been theorised as a key issue in the initiative, the question of how to initiate working methods that can begin to establish dialogue across this gap, together with applying methods of assessment can monitor the impact of these activities to evaluate change.

At the adapted baseline, there was an identified limitation in the application of well-articulated models of change and this was made the focus for development within the initiative (discussed in more depth under Section 6.1). The focus was also clearly shifted from premature attempts at quantitative measurement towards an emphasis on generating descriptive accounts of interventions. This enabled the formulation of strategic directions for engaging with communities to develop dialogue about child protection issues and children's rights. Each organisation took a distinctive approach to this aim. The direct work with families and young people undertaken by VCF and CFC has been described above. These included workshops, and discussions about the UK child protection system and this information was directly requested by some parents⁷⁶. The issue of children's rights was a contested area, which, when taken up by the organisations led to fruitful discussions. However, at the adapted baseline the assessment was that the notion of children's rights was experienced by the communities as belonging to a culture with unfamiliar beliefs and values, which at worst posed threats to traditional values and practices, including threats to parents⁷⁷.

Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service (CCPAS) aimed to raise understanding of child protection issues and children's rights through training members of church organisations, including pastors, and this is discussed in detail in Outcome 7.3, below. Within their overall aims – which also included raising awareness of Witchcraft and Spirit Possession for statutory services (see Outcome 7.5 below) – they aimed to increase understanding of child protection issues in the community.

Overall, there is evidence from the organisations that they have all met significant barriers when promoting awareness of child protection and children's rights issues. One barrier is that communities can deny that child abuse exists for fear of being associated with negative stereotypes⁷⁸. This was discussed in relation to a parenting group under Outcome 1, where 13 out of 16 women at a parenting group stated that they did not believe that child abuse existed⁷⁹. Another barrier is that parents express concerns that children's rights are being given precedence over the rights of parents (see previous discussion of VCF workshop under Outcome 7.1), although this can lead to the beginnings of a constructive dialogue with parents⁸⁰.

Thus the learning from the initiative is that promoting awareness of children's rights and child protection issues involves a complex undertaking across the boundary between the host country values and legal frameworks and community values and practices. These discussions have needed to be located in the key community organisations – including church organisations – and involve large scale discussions of conflicts and

^[76] Source: Observation of workshops and parenting groups on 26.02.08, 19.05.09, 04.12.09, 27.01.10 and 17.04.10.

^[77] Source: Observation of workshop, 24.11.09, 18.03.10.

^[78] Source: meeting with VCF, 29.04.09.

^[79] Source: Notes of VCF parenting group, July 2009.

^[80] Source: meeting with VCF, 29.04.09.

tensions that have arisen. Change has been achieved through, firstly; maximising the impact of 'insider'-led processes in work led by members of the African communities and trusted individuals representing the church, secondly; the development of more sophisticated ways of working and assessing the impact of work has led to more effective, in-depth work with the communities. These models have been discussed above (Outcome 7.1) with reference to VCF and CFC, and will be discussed below for CCPAS (Outcome 7.3) and AFRUCA (Outcome 7.5). An example of the interlinking of the delicacy of these discussions provides an illuminating brief case study:

When the **Congolese Family Centre** ran a Youth Forum in November 2009 and showed young people a video about deliverance process, young people were divided between regarding it as another attack on African churches and as a serious issue that needs to be challenged. During the debate, the facilitators were able to help the young people get beyond a purely defensive position to discuss whether it was an issue for their community. This was problematic for some participants because it involved a questioning process, e.g. one participant said that *"we need to remember that the pastor is just a man"*, but this challenges existing forms of authority and beliefs⁸¹.

When organisations are strongly rooted in communities, this balancing act is particularly delicate. When in external forums, leaders from the Congolese Family Centre were able to challenge negative media coverage of their community and the discrimination that they perpetuate and provide confident community leadership⁸². When in internal forums, they were able to challenge community members to examine their own values and practices where they conflicted with safeguarding children, enabling them to get beyond a purely defensive position⁸³.

To a great extent, the simple and direct messaging of children's rights has provided a powerful way of stimulating debate in the communities, for example, in booklets produced by AFRUCA, and in the DVDs produced by the CFC. One of these DVDs – the parenting skills programme – carries a sleeve with the following text:

"Children have a right according to age and understanding to be informed and consulted of any issue affecting their lives.

The rights of children must be respected and recognised regardless of age, ethnicity, language, gender, religion, ability or social class.

The rights of parents/carers are to be given support and guidance in order to bring up children". (CFC DVD)

The extent of progress towards this outcome thus requires combining understanding of the impacts of this outcome with others, Outcomes 7.3 and 7.5 in particular. Assessment of progress at this point can be evidenced qualitatively: for example, CFC Youth forum feedback data (training session 14.11.09) provides data on what the young people had gained:

"I have understood the effects spirit possessions have on children."

"Knowledge of child abuse linked to spirit possession and the effects on the child."

"How spirit possession affects children's lives."

[81] Source: Observation of Youth Forum, 19.11.09.

[82] Source: Observation of AFRUCA conference, October 2010.

[83] Source: Youth Forum, 19.11.09.

The young people were also asked what would they do differently now:

“I now know what to say to other children like myself. I know what rights I have and that will help me on what to do. I can have discussions with a parent or carer or a pastor and challenge them.”

“I know what might we all have in this country but many children don’t because of how their parents are ruining their lives.”

There is also feedback data provided by the Congolese Family Centre from parents who had attended their own programmes. Ten feedback forms were completed and analysed in November 2010 from parents who had attended parenting groups at CFC. Participants were asked ‘Have you changed anything at all you do as a result of all the information received from the parenting skills and TV programmes’?

Participant comments were:

“My perception of culture/religion and the law including the role of agencies and my role as a parent has completely changed for the best.”

“The perception I had for this issue of witchcraft has changed. I can understand many things, like child development, like wetting the bed is not a sign of witchcraft or evil spirit possession.”

“So many things has changed my life, like according to my belief and what the pastor preaches to us in the church – but now I can challenge some attitudes, particularly towards disabled children.”

“The way I was treating my children has changed. Now I can talk to them nicely, play with them, read to them a lot and also I can pass on my knowledge to others.”

“Now I can talk about this issue with confidence and also take action when I suspect this kind of abuse is taking place in my community or to other communities.”

This supports the conclusion that the methods of engagement have become successful in developing dialogue, working with resistances and better understanding the reasons for these resistances. This conclusion is supported by views of third parties⁸⁴, which confirm the impact that the organisations have had on communities, galvanising discussion and increasing the interchange of information across cultural boundaries.

Therefore, this supports our key finding that the approach centred on initiating and following through discussions of children’s rights is helpful and facilitative. This was an important aspect of the approach that was based on placing safeguarding/well-being of children at the heart of the initiative. It led through dialogue, debate and discussion to greater parental understanding of child development. Particularly when this approach focuses on women, it develops greater capacity to protect children through not resorting to regarding normal behaviour as constituting ‘possession’.

^[84] e.g. Metropolitan Police, interviews June 2010 and October 2010.

7.3 Target faith groups adopting and implementing child protection policies, good practice guidelines and demonstrating an increased awareness of child development issues.

Intervening with faith groups has been a central focus of the initiative and at the adapted baseline, there was evidence that all the organisations were engaging with these, in varying degrees. At the adapted baseline, it was assessed that the overall aim of increasing awareness of child protection in church groups required reformulating to develop methods that could take account of understanding the resistances and avoidances experienced by attempts to engage with some individuals and groups, and to understand the wider issues involved as outlined in the overall themes of the evaluation (see above).

For the purposes of this outcome, the work of CCPAS and the Congolese Family Centre will be the main focus.

The Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service (CCPAS) Working with churches and other faith-based organisations has been the focus of CCPAS' work from its inception in 1977. However, the funding from the initiative enabled CCPAS to build on and expand its recent work within the African Diaspora in London. Their Communities Consultant was well placed through contacts and experience with faith groups, community and police contacts, to access the various communities who have a belief in spirit possession and whose practices impacted on child protection.

There were significant barriers to be overcome; at least part of the resistance was felt to be related to the negative media coverage about Black African churches following the Child B. case for example. There is evidence that African community leaders felt that they were being attacked and demonised by the UK media and there is evidence that this continues (see Section 7.9). Considerable background understanding was provided to the evaluation team by The Metropolitan Police Service's working group, Project Violet, which focused on the Congolese and Angolan communities. Shortly before the initiative, CCPAS was pivotal in supporting the Congolese Pastorship UK to make a public declaration of its commitment to child protection at an event involving the then Children's Minister, Beverley Hughes MP. They expressed concern that Congolese communities and churches were being misunderstood, misrepresented and marginalised⁸⁵.

A key element of CCPAS' work is building up on-going relationships with churches. The communities' consultant identified five elements of their approach:

- Community – identifying the community, its networks and key people. CCPAS adapt their approach to fit the community that they are working with.
- Connection – building up long-term relationships. Change can only be achieved through developing and sustaining relationships.

^[85] Source: Original funding document.

- Communication – this is about communicating in a way that is sensitive and shows understanding of the community. Publications, especially the booklets on ‘help’ topics, are a helpful aid to this process, alongside their DVD, ‘Safe and Secure’ which is available in 16 languages. These are helpful because they take a theological approach to explaining and justifying child safeguarding.
- Commonality – this is very important for CCPAS. As a faith-based organisation themselves, their commonality of faith provides a bridge that can help build trust.
- Co-operation – getting into the community to support and advise can lead to trust and co operation and this enables thought processes to be challenged where appropriate, e.g. smacking and the use of rods as punishment.

CCPAS’s training is about the UK law and broad child safeguarding, rather than specifically spirit possession. This is about creating an environment in which child safety and well-being is more central.

Partly as a result of the evaluation feedback at Interim stage, CCPAS have taken part in project-related monitoring. They decided to do some follow-up workshops in the form of focus groups, the first of which took place in October 2009. A 5-page questionnaire was sent out to groups who had taken part in the training in the last year to try and ascertain information about church activities regarding safeguarding children, their participation in CCPAS training and what has changed since the training. The evaluation team analysed the returned questionnaires completed by pastoral leaders, youth workers, teachers, member of their congregation, the Praise and Workshop leader and child protection officers. Each of the participants had attended CCPAS training within the initiative time period. The following table illustrates the change of behaviour since attending CCPAS training:

What you did before	What you do now
Forgetting to even think about the children in my teaching and preaching.	I spare time not only to teach to the children but to make parents know about their responsibility in children safeguarding and good education from what they hear in the church.
Children were left to themselves even during the Service. They could go to toilets without an adult behind them.	Now they are looked after and followed every time they live the hall to go to the toilets, which are downstairs, etc.
Closed counselling sessions.	If opposite sex counselling, always have pastoral leader of opposite sex present
Didn't keep record of incidents.	Keep record of counselling session and any discipline
A child protection co-ordinator has been appointed.	Address any child protection issue in a confidential level. Involve CCPAS if need arises.
An assistant child protection coordinator has been appointed.	Supporting the Child Protection Co-ordinator in any way possible.
We allowed any adult to work with children without checking their background.	No one is allowed to work with children without checking their background and we make sure they have attended training in children safeguarding.
Children can go to toilet unaccompanied.	No children are allowed to go to toilet without being accompanied by a trained Youth worker.
We permitted untrained adults to run Sunday school.	Adults without current CRB check or those who have not attended the safeguarding children cannot run the Sunday school.
No proper safeguarding policy	We now have one in each church in the UK.
People in positions of trust unaware of child protection matters.	Everyone in position of trust is CP aware.
Child protection officers were the pastors' wives.	Now they are non-bias deacons in the church.

CCPAS provided the evaluation team with feedback forms from their training events, which have revealed consistently positive themes: For example, in June 2010 CCPAS provided the evaluators with 102 completed feedback forms from participants of 7 CCPAS seminars (overall attendees: 159, 102 is a good response rate of 64%). Comments regarding the course content and delivery were very positive, stating that the facilitator was knowledgeable, clear and informative. Many respondents stated they would recommend the course and would want to attend further seminars in the future. There was an overwhelming proportion of responses that attendees had learnt a great deal about safeguarding and legislation, many for the first time. Responses referred to now knowing how to recognise signs of abuse and how to report any suspicions. In particular, safeguarding standards, the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) and CRB checks were mentioned by many as specific learning points taken from the seminars. Other responses to what they had learnt were centred on how to 'deal' with children and discipline. Some stated they had now learnt that 'smacking and beating' a child is abuse in the UK. The overall message from the feedback forms were that awareness had been raised and those attendees stated they would keep an 'eye' out for suspicious behaviour.

In the final year of the project, CCPAS believe that Spirit Possession and Witchcraft are still 'under the carpet', people are still not comfortable talking about it but there are improvements⁸⁶. For example, CCPAS had contact with a church who had initially explained a child's behaviour by believing that the child had the Devil inside them. Following intervention by CCPAS, the church accepted that the child had a learning difficulty. The role of CCPAS was to cement the improvement of their knowledge that he had a disability⁸⁷.

There are currently three main 'champions' from various church communities who have assisted the communities consultant to reach churches across London and to organise events through which over 3000 people (approx) have received training⁸⁸. CCPAS is now able to engage with large numbers of people in church organisations, including, towards the end of the evaluation period, a training event for a large international church organisation which was attended by 811 participants⁸⁹.

The evaluation team interviewed 5 delegates from this event, which included church child protection officers (3), bishops (2), and a pastor (1). Verbal feedback from child protection officers was that prior to the training, the role and responsibilities of a child protection lead had felt 'frightening' and to some degree 'daunting', however, they stated that CCPAS has introduced the relevant tools to assist them in implementing their policies and procedures and had provided them with clarity around their roles. It further heightened for them the need to disseminate the information and deliver briefings to relevant members of the congregation to become effective in their safeguarding role. One pastor fed back that the training had been an eye opener to him and he will now go back to his branch with clarity to implement the required policies which he had previously heard about but had no clear understanding of what it meant, and he will share the information with those who were unable to attend. We would concur with CCPAS's view that it is particularly important to continue follow-up work as the bulk of the congregation is young people, some of whom are potentially quite vulnerable and will be open to strong ideas and belief systems.

[86] Source: Interview with CCPAS, June 2010.

[87] Source: Interview with CCPAS, June 2010.

[88] Source: Communication with CCPAS, Oct 2010.

[89] Source: observation of CCPAS/large international church organisation event, 09.10.10.

Attendees from the CCPAS training event⁹⁰ also completed feedback forms which asked them what new information they had learnt from the training and what they will now do differently. Analysis of a sample of feedback forms from the 811 attendees revealed very similar learning from previous training feedback forms provided by CCPAS training which shows consistency in the learning points they provide. The three main themes of learning are:

- 1) Changes in attitude towards children and, in particular, the impact of praying on children in loud voices and listening to children more – improved relationship with children.
- 2) CRB checks for all workers working with children and would know who to contact if an issue of safeguarding arose.
- 3) Church communities' increased awareness of the safeguarding systems, implementation of safeguarding policies and procedures.

The Congolese Family Centre (CFC) have engaged in work with pastors within their community, but initially found it very difficult⁹¹. The initial difficulties have been mentioned under 7.1 (above). At the adapted baseline stage, one leader from CFC had attended two churches every week for three months but felt he had made no progress. They found that the initial reaction of pastors was to state that they did not feel that there was a problem⁹². This provides a considerable contrast to their current work, where they have developed positive links with three churches to promote the work of their parent groups and recruit new members, as well as one holding meetings at the Family Centre. The organisation had concerns that these relationships could be strained by their participation in the Dispatches programme screened in August 2010 (see below), but this has not proved to be the case.

AFRUCA

At the interim report stage, feedback was also obtained from a church leader, Pastor A, who was a female Nigerian pastor. She has a role with community groups around such issues as fostering, children's well-being, cultural beliefs and emotional stress. She says that prior to her contact with AFRUCA she had little or no understanding, awareness and knowledge of child protection or safeguarding issues. She attended AFRUCA training events after hearing about the Victoria Climbié case and used this training to develop her knowledge of UK safeguarding systems. Following the training she introduced child protection officers in the church and arranged for them to be trained by AFRUCA. She also has contact with organisations in Nigeria and she has conveyed to these the expectations of the UK for safeguarding. Pastor A will continue to maintain contact with AFRUCA. She aims to ensure that cultural practices do not negatively impact on children's well-being.

In the final year of the initiative, a realistic assessment is that much has been achieved in embedding child protection frameworks but it important not to underestimate the scale of the task. Feedback was obtained from the Metropolitan Police Service and the representative said that they still found it difficult to access pastors and the churches because the pastors are "feared and revered" by the community and seen as powerful and gifted. Speaking out against a pastor is regarded seriously within the community. Before the initiative, the interpreter in the Child B case "*panicked*" when he had to give

^[90] Held on 09.10.10.

^[91] Source: Meeting with group, 12.12.08.

^[92] Source: DVD of Youth Forum, November 2009.

evidence as he was scared what the community would think of him⁹³. Towards the end of the initiative a key representative from CCPAS stated that some people will come to training events but ‘still believe what they believe’ and abusive practices of spirit possession will happen in churches that do not have contact with CCPAS⁹⁴. The key to further development lies in getting behind the two prevailing pieces of conventional wisdom. Firstly, the dichotomy between beliefs and behaviour misunderstands the fact that behaviour is based on belief. Beliefs persist within communities because there is a felt need for them, particularly during times of difficulty and distress such as poverty, unemployment and racism (see main themes above). Secondly, attention needs to be paid at both the individual and structural levels. The idea of ‘rogue pastors’ highlights individual pastors who are seen to be abusive, consciously or unconsciously (see main themes above), provides an important focus for policing. However, it is not an alternative to the issues facing whole communities, where – as the case example of the disabled child illustrates – the interface between host and home cultures contains different understandings of the nature of childhood, and particularly the psychological understanding of childhood that underpins contemporary UK assumptions and values⁹⁵. The emergences of some clarity about these important themes constitute an achievement of the initiative and indicate the future direction of travel (see concluding section).

We also point out that training in churches to encourage communities to think more actively about the protection of children (and, indeed, women), has led to some disclosures of abuse unrelated to Witchcraft and Spirit Possession. It is important also to link this with the specific experiences of migration which can lead to reliance on churches as representatives of the home culture, and/or the only source of practical support.

^[93] Source: Metropolitan Police Service representative, 29.06.09.

^[94] Source: Interview with CCPAS, June 2010.

^[95] Scott D (2008) *The Landscape Of Child Maltreatment*

7.4 Reduced stigma about faith-based abuse leading to a strong network of families and young people speaking out against abusive practices

As has been discussed above, there is a complex relationship between particular faith practices which include beliefs in Witchcraft and Spirit Possession and faith based abuse – which is dependent on the application of models for understanding abuse, in this case, driven by ‘host’ UK (and First World) values, and frameworks which are evolving. The assumed solution of ‘speaking out’ is only part of a configuration of support, education and understanding that makes it possible to contain and make sense of individual and group attitudes.

Finding a way through this complex field at the adapted baseline, it was assessed that the task of the organisations should be to describe situations that might be considered stigmatising in order to better identify these, and give accounts of where this occurs. The aim of interventions should be, firstly, to engage families and young people in discussions and reflections, in order to clarify the gains and potential losses that may be experienced by engagement. This was thought to lead towards strategies for bringing about change. This assessment led to the articulation of a number of dimensions for understanding processes of working with stigma.

The first of these dimensions was that members of the communities did not feel comfortable about talking about belief in Spirit Possession and Witchcraft in open meetings involving people from outside their community. This discomfort stemmed from a range of possible explanations. Firstly, a taboo on discussing these matters in any public forum or setting because they are private, family matters. Secondly, the taboo related to fear that traditional beliefs may be misunderstood and attacked and they may be stripped of something precious (see theme 1 ‘From baseline themes to conceptualising Spirit Possession and Witchcraft’ and ‘Key themes at the end of the evaluation’). Thirdly, reticence related to having people from outside the community observing.

In order to address this outcome, the nature of the stigma attached to child abuse linked to Spirit Possession and Witchcraft needs to be understood in more depth. The term ‘stigma’ usually refers to severe social disapproval of characteristics or beliefs that are against cultural norms. In this context, it has two aspects. Firstly, there is the stigma attached to children who have been ‘branded’ as witches or possessed by malevolent spirits. This is the most obvious aspect and the primary focus of the initiative. A second, and less obvious aspect, is the stigma that it is attached to people who believe in Witchcraft and Spirit Possession. Since these beliefs contradict dominant cultural norms in the UK, there can be significant stigma attached to people expressing these beliefs. The initiative requires both aspect of stigma to be addressed.

Case studies:

Congolese Family Centre’s Youth Forum is an interesting example of creating spaces where Spirit Possession and Witchcraft can be talked about. A member of the evaluation team directly observed a meeting in which a large group of young people were shown a DVD of a young people undergoing a deliverance process. Afterwards, the group of young people discussed being branded as witchcraft and childrearing practices. Some young people expressed considerable anger that children and young peo-

ple were being branded as witches; others expressed concern that the media were using isolated incidents to attack Black African churches. Participants said that the forum had provided them with a collective voice and has helped them voice their concerns in their families⁹⁶. These comments included some of the key themes; all these young people expressed the view their parents are generally 'strong headed' and can often set rules without negotiation, though it is unclear to what extent this is related to culture rather than an intergenerational clash of perspectives. The young people suggested that the forum should be expanded to allow parents to attend in order to support them in understanding the changes required when placed in another culture. What was clear was that the issue of child abuse linked to Spirit Possession and Witchcraft was being discussed and young people were become aware that some practices were unacceptable:

"I now know what to say to other children like myself. I know what rights I have and that will help me on what to do. I can have discussions with a parent or carer or a pastor and challenge them."

However, it is important to recognise that the process is difficult because in some circumstances, beliefs in children's rights can directly challenge traditional beliefs and practices⁹⁷.

At the adapted baseline, the **Victoria Climbié Foundation** stated in their progress report that 'There is reluctance by some community groups to openly discuss this topic. The groups have acknowledged that the belief is prevalent within their communities; the challenge is to provide continuity of the debate that we have begun to open through dialogue-based workshops'⁹⁸.

There is some evidence to support the view that there is reluctance to openly discuss the topic. In January 2010, the Victoria Climbié Foundation ran a parenting group for Somali parents, which was attended by 23 parents (17 women and 4 men). Towards the end of the group, the topic of belief in Spirit Possession and Witchcraft was introduced. The evaluator observed that, whilst the Somali parents had used English to communicate during the session up to that point, they moved to communicating in Somali to discuss this topic. It is unclear whether this is a taboo subject or whether the parents felt that it was simply private (The issues this raises are discussed in more depth under key theme two in Section 6). One parent was able to speak about it, stating that *"there are special passages/verses in the Koran to read on any person suspected of being possessed but we do not believe in beating or starving someone to get rid of evil beings"*⁹⁹.

AFRUCA have run a range of conferences and events to tackle stigma by encouraging more widespread discussion of the issues raised, including through the African Safeguarding Children Network that it hosts. There have been six community consultation meetings: four in London, one in Manchester and one in Newcastle. This has been supported by literature that they have developed, entitled 'What is witchcraft abuse?' This use of literature has the advantage of being less threatening than face-to-face interaction, allowing recipients to read and engage with the issues when they feel comfortable. It also encourages a shared understanding of what witchcraft is and how it relates to issues of safeguarding.

^[96] Source: Interviews, 19.11.09

^[97] Source: DVD of Youth Forum, November 2009

^[98] Source: VCF progress report, October 2008

^[99] Source: Observation notes for parenting group, 27.01.10

A general theme running through these various examples is that a change process has been adopted in which the model of engagement enables discussion of 'shareable' topics, capitalising on the curiosity and need of the communities for exchange across cultural boundaries and this forms a basis for developing discussion about more sensitive topics in which fears, preconceptions and misperceptions can be contained and explored. In conclusion, the initiative has clearly provided spaces that enable these issues to be discussed openly and contributed towards reducing stigma. However, such stigma is deeply rooted and its pervasive influence should not be underestimated.

7.5 Improved communications and collaboration between statutory agencies and African community groups

The adapted baseline identified the need to operationalise strategies for achieving this aim, initially through description of experiences of engagement between statutory organisations and African community groups. An important early formulation in the initiative, and one that has stood the test of time, is that a gap exists between statutory agencies and community groups, and the evaluation identifies that the content of the gap consists of some major and important differences about community organisations, values and the ways that communities are organised to support its members. These include the role of faith practices and the adherence to traditions during transitions.

Within this overall context, the operationalisation of aims to improve connectedness and communications across the gap includes a range of approaches. These can be categorised as direct and indirect methods. Direct methods include, for example, the community engagement model of VCF (see Aim 1 above), which facilitated direct discussion between community groups and statutory services. Indirect methods include training professionals to better understand the contexts and practices of Witchcraft and Spirit Possession and to distinguish between these practices which are, and those which are not abusive or warranting child protection enquiry. Amongst these approaches are, notably, the training endeavour of AFRUCA (see Aim 8 below). Also, the training work of CCPAS aims to close the gap through work with the community to understand child protection and development issues. Finally, a distinction can be made between activities on a continuum of levels, ranging from strategic to grassroots levels. At a strategic level, Local Children's Safeguarding Boards (LSCBs) provide a clear focal point for communication at a local and pan-London levels.

At a grassroots level, there are clear examples of communication and collaboration through specific settings. For example, the Congolese Family Centre has built up positive relationships with two local schools through the development of an on-going parenting group for Congolese parents (discussed under Aim 7.1). Feedback from education stakeholders identify that this work has built up increased confidence and trust between teachers and parents, including increased ability to discuss safeguarding issues¹⁰⁰.

At the beginning of the initiative, there was evidence that communication and cooperation between statutory agencies and the funded organisations was variable. At the adapted baseline stage, the Victoria Climbié Foundation VCF reported that, whilst the police and health have been quite proactive in engaging with the subject, local authorities had been "extremely unforthcoming" in engaging in the debate¹⁰¹. The Victoria Climbié Foundation has seen significant improvements in its relationships with local authorities during the lifetime of the initiative and it has developed positive links with two local authorities, Harrow and Hillingdon.

At the second interim report stage (December 2009), there was evidence of increased dialogue between local communities and statutory agencies. For example, CCPAS were directly involved in communicating and collaborating with statutory agencies concerning referrals received through their helpline¹⁰². This included a successful criminal prosecution of an individual who committed offences in churches in several London boroughs, which was initiated after a church leader attended a CCPAS event. However,

^[100] Source: Interview with Head of Inclusion Manager and the Ethnic Minorities (Schools) Advisor, 03.06.09.

^[101] Source: VCF progress report, October 2008.

^[102] Source: Interim report.

it is important not to underestimate the challenges in building mutual trust and understanding. For example, VCF ran groups to bring together local communities and statutory agencies. At one group that was observed, school staff engaged in dialogue with a local group of Somali parents. It was clear that there were some elements of sensitivity for both parties, e.g. some Somali parents felt that Asian parents had more influence whilst school staff expressed disappointment that meetings had not been well attended by parents. Similar themes of parents feeling that they were marginalised and undervalued by statutory services were found in other workshops.

In the final year of the initiative, feedback was obtained from a LSCB representative about their work with VCF. They described having “high regard” for VCF and regarded it as *“an NGO that knows what they are talking about, and have a clear strategy in the manner which they go about addressing the issues of safeguarding”*¹⁰³. VCF was described as being “a critical friend” who will highlight issues, work together to try and resolve the issues they have highlighted and will deliver that which they have agreed to. AFRUCA is now known nationally and internationally (for example, by the UN Human Rights Commission) as an authority on issues of witchcraft abuse and in the final stages of the initiative, have increased their working in the area of policy influencing around the branding of children as witches and the putting in place policies regarding the regulation of starting churches and the registration of faith leaders. They have engaged in lobbying and campaigning activities and have recently launched a nationwide consultation with African communities, practitioners and policy makers to inform their campaigning.

There is evidence that local communities see the four organisations as having an important go-between and support role in their communication with statutory agencies. For example, a workshop that VCF held between local communities and statutory agencies, the discussion focused on children’s social care. There was a suggestion that a representative from children’s social care should attend at future meetings, but this was only supported on the basis that VCF would also attend.

This outcome relates specifically to the four funded organisations, but it is important to consider whether there are wider impacts on communication between statutory agencies and African communities. The four organisations are well placed to be able to reach out to communities that statutory agencies find hard to reach.

Examples:

- CCPAS has worked with Government officials and elected representatives, London Boroughs, the Metropolitan Police and NGO’s on a variety of community engagement initiatives and individual cases¹⁰⁴ aiming to bring about greater understanding of community issues.
- VCF has had regular involvement with several LSCBs in its local area¹⁰⁵ including helping to establish a community engagement sub-group with Harrow SCB.

[103] Source, interview with LSCB representative, 26.02.10.

[104] Source, CCPAS Significant events log.

[105] Source: Interview, 19 November 2010.

- AFRUCA have also engaged in policy work with key stakeholders as part of their funded work. For example, they have engaged in policy work with local safeguarding boards (including delivering training and advice) and have participated in the London Safeguarding Board's Culture and Faith subgroup. Through the African Safeguarding Children Network, it has provided opportunities for statutory professionals (such as the Chief Executive of the Independent Safeguarding Authority) to communicate directly with African community groups.
- All four organisations have provided advice to children's services on individual cases of suspected abuse involving African children.

7.6 African community groups more confident in dealing with statutory agencies on child protection issues

The adapted baseline identified that all four organisations had begun initiatives that indicated engagement with statutory agencies and showed some degrees of confidence in pursuing the aims within their organisations. The baseline assessment emphasised the need for descriptive accounts of the experiences of engaging with statutory agencies. With regard to the ways the organisations developed confidence in the communities, the baseline showed that there was a gulf between statutory organisations and the communities, whilst at the first interim evaluation, the assessment was that, in some areas communities remain suspicious of, marginalised and unable to make sense of statutory organisations' expectations of them.

VCF believe that although there is more awareness of the roles and responsibilities of the statutory agencies, there is still a need to proactively address this issue within their communities; also to develop a clear advocacy approach to effectively support and assist their members. VCF is now being contacted by African community groups and families, which highlights an increasing awareness of the family support available and their increasing knowledge around safeguarding children in the UK. VCF will be able to measure the level of confidence when the number of child abuse cases referred to the local authority has increased. VCF anticipate that the community-led subgroup will be used as a vehicle to increase such referrals, as well as an opportunity to voice concerns at strategic level.

CCPAS refer to a case example of a child with autism who was believed to be spirit possessed by a parent and had not accessed education or health, and the parents had refused access to children's social care. Now the family accesses those services through CCPAS liaising with the family church and children's social care¹⁰⁶. The church has also undergone safeguarding training and accessing CRB through CCPAS membership services. Another example is of a church which received safeguarding training from CCPAS then worked in partnership with children's social care to temporarily provide foster provision for two children when their sole parent served a prison sentence.

In the final phase of the initiative there is considerable evidence, from the organisations themselves, our direct observations and the comments of key participants that the organisations are spearheading a considerable discussion and debate, galvanising communities and bringing about change. Some of this evidence is cited in the sections above. It has appeared to us – and a number of other observers – that the capacity shown by the organisations in appearing on the recent Channel 4 documentary 'Britain's witch children'¹⁰⁷ demonstrated a significant growth to maturity of the organisations in their discussion of child protection issues, the link with statutory organisations and issues of policy and practice. Key examples are:

- AFRUCA's capacity to mobilise large numbers in the community to discuss child protection issues, particularly focussing on their call for a change in legislation to include the attribution of 'witch' as a crime.
- AFRUCA's Safeguarding Network members have gained positive networking between them, particularly linking the community organisations (i.e. views of their members, questions they may have) and statutory bodies. Views are shared on various

[106] The term 'children's social care' replaces 'social services' as the current term for local authority social work teams who have responsibility for child protection under the Children Act 1989.

[107] www.channel4.com/programmes/dispatches/episode-guide/series-67/episode-1

Government policies and community organisations can ask questions to the statutory bodies. Another success for the Network is that the different community organisations can meet and exchange experiences. The community organisations have developed better understanding of statutory services, although they have not been fully convinced that they are a supportive agency and do not want to simply remove children. The network will continue to progress this work^[108].

- The CFC's capacity to galvanise their community in discussion of these issues and to disseminate this through their DVDs and TV programmes. In their work in schools, feedback obtained from key stakeholders within education stated that one of the key benefits of the parenting groups was that they *"developed and nurtured trusting and positive relationships between the staff members and parents"*. Both staff members and parents were reported as becoming more confident and more able to raise issues, particularly around concerns of child protection.
- VCF has acted as an advocate for families where there are safeguarding concerns, including the key role adopted by VCF to act as an intermediary between community members and statutory agencies. Feedback from a mental health advocate who referred a service user who was not receiving an appropriate NHS service to VCF indicated that *"they are a good model of working together to ensure that a young person got the best service"*^[109]. This has led to VCF being asked to provide expert assessments to the court in specific cases. In one London borough, their approach has been to use a 'Keeping Children Safe' workshop to bring together families and statutory agencies to promote understanding and dialogue and to raise families' awareness of safeguarding^[110]. Whilst other NGOs might merely just stay in the role of the critical friend, VCF was described as an organisation that was *"also willing to get involved in finding the best way forward"*^[111]. The representative found it difficult to identify areas for development as they regard VCF as a professional organisation. After some thought, the area of communication (disseminating information, what they are doing, how they going about it, up and coming events, what difference they were making) was identified as an area that could be developed more, although it might generate more activity than the organisation would be able to respond to.
- The success of CCPAS in organising and delivering a huge training event for 800 pastors and leaders, in October 2010. This amounts to a pinnacle in CCPAS's role in working with a range of church organisations to improve understanding of statutory agencies and their roles. A police representative^[112] felt this was a key achievement for CCPAS's work with this church over many years. CCPAS has reported changes in the approach of the leadership of the church, and the development of a close working relationship with them. CCPAS has also worked with several local safeguarding boards in relation to cases, policies, advice and joint training initiatives and has been participating in the London Safeguarding Board's Culture and Faith subgroup.

In conclusion, the funded organisations started from a reasonable high baseline of confidence in dealing with statutory agencies on child protection issues but the initiative has enabled them to build new relationships with statutory agencies and deepen their understanding of the complex challenges involved in child protection. Whilst limited progress has been made in building confidence among African community groups outside the initiative, the work is being progressed by the African Safeguarding Children Network, the work of CCPAS with churches as community organisations and VCF through its community engagement model.

[108] Source: conversation with the chair of the Network, 17.12.10.

[109] Source: Interview, 20.01.10.

[110] Source: Observation of 'Keeping Children Safe In Ealing' workshop, 18.03.10.

[111] Source: interview with LSCB representative, 26.02.10.

[112] Source: Interview 03.11.10.

7.7 Increased collaboration between community groups addressing this issue

At the adapted baseline, there was evidence that the four organisations had already “met independently though not regularly”^[113]. In the first year, AFRUCA established the Safeguarding African Children Network to provide an opportunity for mutual learning and support among African communities and faith organisations working in the area of or interested in the safeguarding of African children in London, and has been attended by over 80 representatives from African communities^[114] (see also Aim 7.8, below). The network has met eleven times^[115] and some of the organisations were working together when running training, e.g. CCPAS facilitated sessions at a seminar hosted by VCF^[116]. The AFRUCA network is able to reach out to other organisations, such as ECPAT and CEOP and the Medical Foundation. These organisations often ask if they can attend the network meetings and sometimes AFRUCA invites them. Other large organisations also ask the AFRUCA Network for contacts such as the Congolese Family Centre if they need information on Congolese culture for example.

In the final stages, there was evidence of strong collaboration between the funded organisations. For example, AFRUCA held a conference on witchcraft branding, spirit possession and the implications for child safeguarding during which CCPAS and the Congolese Family Centre gave presentations and participated in a panel at the end of the day. The collaboration between the organisations appeared both genuine and established because there were areas of commonality and divergence that were clearly articulated in an open and mature way. The areas of commonality were in their understanding of child abuse linked to Spirit Possession and Witchcraft:

- It is one form of potential abuse, but it should not be isolated from other forms of abuse.
- It is not limited to particular communities.
- It cannot be understood separately from the background context, such as poverty, unemployment, disability and ill health, social exclusion and the experiences of migration.
- Whatever the context, culture and religion should not be used as an excuse to abuse children.

The areas of divergence were principally about appropriate remedies. Whilst AFRUCA and the Congolese Family Centre supported new legislation to ban witchcraft branding, CCPAS and VCF regarded the current legislation as robust enough to challenge the abuse currently identified^[117].

[113] Source: Minutes of City Parochial Foundation and Evaluation Team Meeting 16.09.08

[114] Source: data from AFRUCA, November 2010.

[115] Source: conversation with the chair 17.12.10

[116] Source: Data from CCPAS, October 2010

[117] Source: Observation notes, 22.10.10.

7.8 Improvement in how statutory agencies identify and respond to cases of faith-based abuse

Establishing an initial baseline is problematic, particularly given the sporadic nature of the cases that have come to light and difficulties in identifying whether beliefs in Witchcraft and Spirit Possession are present. Consequently, comparison in the responses from statutory services is highly difficult.

AFRUCA has been active with training activities for professionals throughout the period of the initiative. At the final report stage, feedback data from AFRUCA shows that 592 people have been trained on 18 training courses between May 2008 and December 2010. These include practitioners (attendees from a large range of London boroughs), community leaders and church leaders. AFRUCA included pre-course assessment forms from early 2009 onwards, which explored what attendees knew already about the subject and what their objectives were for the training. This meant that training could be tailored to the participant's needs, for example that participants said they had a low cultural knowledge base prior to training.

There is further evidence that these training courses have gathered a significant recognition both locally and nationally, including commissioning from a London borough locally, Bedfordshire, and Scotland^[118].

At the interim report stage, feedback was obtained from the head of children's social care for a local authority that had previous contact with AFRUCA^[119]. The contact with AFRUCA has consisted of receiving and delivering training relating to the 'Every Child Matters' agenda and Child Protection/Safeguarding children. They also received referrals to their casework service^[120]. AFRUCA was recognised as having expertise and knowledge in areas pertaining to African cultural and child rearing practices and had provided input into the Victoria Climbié Inquiry. The manager felt that the organisation could assist and facilitate managers and practitioners in a London Borough when dealing with complex cases where child rearing practices and cultural practices presented a challenge to them. There had been a number of cases within the service where spirit possession had been presented as an issue and AFRUCA was called upon and had offered assistance and provided support in the management of such cases. This was conveyed as a positive experience by the local authority. In addition, AFRUCA had also contributed to a serious case review undertaken by the authority^[121].

In the final year of the initiative, feedback about the work of AFRUCA was obtained from the Metropolitan Police Service. The representative stated that AFRUCA had a "*very good knowledge base*"^[122].

AFRUCA provided the evaluation team with comprehensive feedback reports from their training. This kind of evidence has limitations, but it does provide an illustrative or indicative picture of the activities and the immediate responses of participants across the three key stages of the initiative. Following the first stage of training delivered (2008), constructive feedback from participants suggested more interactive activities (e.g. DVDs) and group work, as it was felt there was too much presentation from the front. AFRUCA responded to this request and from November 2008, DVDs were included in their training programme.

[118] Source: interim reports, feedback from a London borough Children's Services.

[119] Source: Interview with head of a children's social care service, 19.05.09.

[120] Funded outside of this initiative.

[121] Source: Interview with head of children's social care, 19.05.09.

[122] Source: Metropolitan Police Service representative, 29.06.10

Analysis of AFRUCA's training courses over the 3-year initiative reveal a consistent rating of excellence received by over 50% of their participants and on some occasions over 90%. The following comments have been made by participants at AFRUCA's training:

"Speaking freely with others about cultural/religious issues without worrying causing offence is refreshing. Helped broaden horizons, opened eyes to diverse cultural practices, acceptability, rituals unaware of, such as Kindoki and how can be interpreted."

"Unbeatable. Wonderful".

"I have learnt a lot and this will help me to know what to do more about children in my church and how children can be protected in a good environment".

"Yes this training was an opener... this training should be extended to statutory in-house training". A delegate at our training on: Culture, religion and mental health of African children.

"The conference was brilliantly delivered and extremely informative, I was able to use the information I received and cascade it to my team, who also were impressed by the work carried out by AFRUCA."

"It has given me a lot to think about especially as I am of African descent myself. I do not believe there is much that I would do that much different at present but when certain issues arise I will be equipped with a better understanding"

An example of a direct way in which local authorities are seeking to improve their practice in identifying and responding to cases of child abuse linked to Witchcraft and Spirit Possession is that local authorities are commissioning VCF to undertake court-directed assessments along with Independent Social Work and legal partners (discussed under Aim 7.1).

An example of how statutory agencies are seeking to improve how they identify and respond to cases of faith-based abuse is the Pan-London Safeguarding Children Culture and Faith project. This started in July 2010 and is an 18-month action research project, involving three activities¹²³:

- a) 8 local authorities will pilot projects designed to promote statutory and voluntary agency safeguarding children partnership working with local minority ethnic and faith communities and groups.
- b) All 32 London LSCBs will run consultation focus groups to gather views on how to improve safeguarding for London's children living in minority ethnic, culture or faith communities or groups for the children, young people, parents and other adults in their local communities and for the paid or unpaid workers in the local statutory or voluntary sector.
- c) All LSCBs in London will be interviewed to map activity and aspiration for partnership for safeguarding London's children living in minority ethnic, culture or faith communities or groups.

[123] http://www.londonscb.gov.uk/culture_and_faith/

Although this project is outside of the initiative, AFRUCA and the Victoria Climbié Foundation are two key organisations with the project who are contributing their expertise and networks. The anticipated project outputs are developing guidance for professionals about additional issues which may need to be considered in relation to children and families across different cultures and faiths, training to help professionals to identify children across cultures and faiths who are in need of support or protection and a local safeguarding children board model engagement strategy to assist minority ethnic communities and faith groups in protecting their children and working with statutory services¹²⁴.

It is to an extent hard to judge, and we have to be realistic about the impact of a relatively small 3-year initiative. However, it seems that the greater use of expert advice from the organisations suggests that conditions may have been created for improved identification and response, and these can be further developed through effective discussions of the findings of this initiative.

[124] Source: Interview with LSCB representative and documentary data from Pan-London Safeguarding Children Culture and Faith project.

7.9 Constructive media coverage of this issue generated

This has taken the form of media coverage directly generated by the initiative and other media relating to the Witchcraft and Spirit Possession, often news stories that have occurred during the period. The directly generated coverage took the form of the grant announcements for the initiative and the TV programmes produced by the Congolese Family Centre. The grant announcements provided an opportunity to raise awareness of Witchcraft and Spirit Possession in a constructive way through collaboration with a journalist at BBC Radio 4, which led to coverage on the Today programme, BBC World Service and The Sun online.

The Congolese Family Centre has developed its own programmes for OBE and BEN TV. Key messages relating to safeguarding have been addressed through related programmes, e.g. health, poverty. These have generated significant interest, e.g. they received 250 calls after their first programme. Using Congolese media to regularly discuss issues of Witchcraft and Spirit Possession had been key work by the CFC in reaching those usually hard to contact. In addition, four newsletters have been produced in French, Lingala and English.

Throughout the initiative they produced a total of 48 TV programmes (14 in 2008, 18 in 2009, and 16 in 2010). Given the sensitive nature of Witchcraft and Spirit Possession, the programmes used more general topics, such as child health and parenting, to convey constructive coverage of children's rights and alternative explanations for children's behaviour. The broadcasters have confirmed that the average viewers are estimated at 15,000 (French and Lingala speakers) in London.

Comments from CFC members about their TV programmes:

"The TV programme changed me a lot as I followed that parent playing with their children, the way they were playing back home and the way our parents played. It inspired me and I do the same and my children are happy."

"The TV programme is helping me to renew my parenting skill all the time and after I can call other people to discuss the programme."

Throughout the initiative Witchcraft and Spirit Possession has received media attention as responses to serious child abuse cases, e.g. Khyra Ishaq in 2010, and through several television broadcasts. Throughout the initiative, Trust for London, the groups and advisory board members have been consulted or have featured in the media coverage in a joint aim of striving for constructive and balanced exposure.

The majority of the media coverage has been in the form of the three Channel 4 Dispatches programmes on child abuse linked to Spirit Possession and Witchcraft. These programmes have been broadcast within each of the assessment phases: 'Saving Africa's Witch Children' (2008); 'Return to Africa's Witch Children' (2009); 'Britain's Witch Children' (2010); with each programme generating media coverage.

The first programme, 'Saving Africa's Witch Children', was shown in 2008 and followed the work of Stepping Stone Nigeria¹²⁵. Following the programme, legislation was enacted in Nigeria to make it illegal to brand children as witches and some pastors

[125] UK-based charity working with children in Africa's Niger Delta who had suffered abuse after being labelled by Christian pastors as witches. <http://www.stepsingstones-nigeria.org/>

were arrested. In 2009, 'Return to Africa's Witch Children', followed up the progress and found that the number of children who used the Stepping Stone (Nigeria) child refuge had increased.

The most recent Channel 4 Dispatches programme, 'Britain's Witch Children', was broadcast on 26.07.10. The four groups, Trust for London, and several members of the Advisory Board were approached by producers. Representatives from VCF, AFRUCA and CFC were featured on the programme. Following the broadcast, AFRUCA hosted a de-briefing seminar (29.07.10 at Trust for London), attended by 35 delegates, including representatives from CCPAS and CFC. The seminar raised some emotive discussions^[126] and whilst the majority in attendance felt the programme was necessary, the overriding feeling was that of dissatisfaction and disappointment in relation to the televised version^[127].

Although key stakeholders in the initiative agreed that the July 2010 Dispatches programme brought renewed interest (since the 2009 programme), some key interviews had been left out of the edited broadcast, (e.g. police). 'Gaps' were present, such as the 'good work' on this issue, how pastors are investigated, and the challenges they face with this work. It was felt that these 'gaps' could have prevented the programme from being considered as one-sided and not constructive.

This Dispatches programme received coverage, including several broadsheet articles^[128]. The articles were generally constructive and balanced, in that they had been briefed by Trust for London's press response, had liaised with the groups, thus aware of the aims of the initiative and the groups' work. Within the initiative, CCPAS and Trust for London ensured the following was posted in The Guardian: 'viewers of the programme need to understand that, shocking as these instances undoubtedly are, huge progress have been made over the past few years in developing and implementing effective child protection policies in African churches in the UK'^[129].

Other responses in the media were from various organisations directly aligned with churches, who posted responses on the internet. These anticipated public reactions to negative practices within churches and aligned with the condemnation of these. One response stated; "*We wholeheartedly condemn churches abusing or encouraging the abuse of children, in particular any church that brands children as witches or demon-possessed.*" Some of these organisations expressed disappointment that the positive work of such organisations as CCPAS was omitted from the final broadcast. In particular, there was concern about the absence of faith commentators condemning the practices shown in the programme.

The involvement that the initiative/groups have had in the latest Dispatches programme could also be interpreted as a measure of the success of the initiative at this final assessment phase. One key interviewee felt that the groups were "*confident and empowered*" to appear on TV and this has been a result of the initiative^[130]. Staff from three of the groups also undertook media interview training (April 2008) as part of the initiative, which was commissioned by Trust for London from the Media Trust.

AFRUCA's de-briefing event following the latest Dispatches programme (29.07.10) was also used as a platform to discuss their current activity which calls to criminalise the branding of children as witches or as being possessed by evil spirits. A spokesperson

[126] Source: observation 29.07.10.

[127] Source: metropolitan police interview 03.11.10.

[128] The Independent, 25.07.10; The Guardian, 27.07.10 (this was online as part of 'Comment is Free' blog); The Observer, 01.08.10.

[129] Source: The Guardian Online, D. Pearson, 27.07.10.

[130] Source: key stakeholder interview: 17.11.10.

at AFRUCA stated; *“The Dispatches programme was a very powerful reminder of the terrible consequences the branding of children as witches can have on the children concerned.....Our proposal for a law to ban the branding of children as witches has become necessary in order to protect children. Such a law will empower many people, especially Christians who are outraged at the way their religion is being used to harm children, to act”*¹³¹.

There is a divergence of opinion within the four organisations about whether new legislation is the best way forward. The Congolese Family Centre supports this call for new legislation in the UK; *“We need legislation so that parents cannot send children back due to labelling. The British Government need to say that labelling is an offence and this will be a full stop”*¹³². CFC is currently working more closely with AFRUCA and aims to strengthen their working links in future work; *“We are backing up their policy work with our community approach”*¹³³. On the other hand, VCF and CCPAS are clear that they do not see new legislation as the best way forward and argue that the existing legal framework is sufficient to address child abuse linked to belief in Witchcraft and Spirit Possession.

All four organisations have had regular contact with and coverage in the media including: BBC Radio 4, BBC World Service, CNN, BEN TV, Community Care, Premier Christian Radio and Revelation TV.

In conclusion, some constructive coverage has been generated by the initiative. Ultimately, the impact of the initiative in terms of media coverage will depend on the dissemination of this report and the findings of the evaluation.

[131] Source: The Scotsman, E. Foster, 28.07.10.

[132] Source: interview with CFC 26.10.10.

[133] Source: interview with CFC 26.10.10.

7.10 Other Outcomes

7.10.1 Individual Cases: a survey of cases referred to the organisations

The evaluation of this initiative has shown that the state of knowledge at the outset of the project regarding cases of Witchcraft and Spirit Possession in these communities in the UK has been superseded by a more contextualised and nuanced understanding. This is demonstrated by an analysis of the examples of individuals who came to the attention of the organisations. These examples show that:

- (a) Most referrals relate to concerns about child protection issues and abuse not necessarily involving suspicions of witchcraft
- (b) Suspicions of Spirit Possession and Witchcraft are always linked with a child protection issue
- (c) 'Branding', i.e. the process by which a child is publicly declared as being a witch or possessed by spirit, was rarely encountered in this initiative
- (d) Adults are accused of witchcraft, usually in circumstances of interpersonal conflict
- (e) Country of origin (if known): Congolese (3), Nigerian (1) Angolan (1)

The referrals of individual cases recorded by the four organisations in the initiative can be categorised as follows:

1. There have been two current (not retrospective) cases identified by the groups of children accused of witchcraft to the extent that s/he was assessed at potential or actual risk of significant harm and deliverance was planned or affected¹³⁴. The two cases were:

● **A case of suspected spirit possession where the young man was diagnosed with autism.** In this case the 15-year-old boy had an episode of violence in which the police was involved leading to a Section 47¹³⁵ investigation by children's social care. The parents were unwilling to communicate because they thought that the social workers were from the Devil, because the boy was possessed.

● **A case of a father accusing two children of being possessed and planning deliverance.** The children were not taken for deliverance following advice from an organisation in the initiative. The children were taken into care and the father was charged with assault.

In both cases, the organisations involved were able to improve communications with the families and between families and children's social care.

2. Numerous **referrals to the organisations from families, family members and young people** who have expressed concerns about a child's well-being, but not always focussed on issues of Witchcraft and Spirit Possession.

- The most numerous referrals are made for advice regarding issues arising from contact with UK statutory services about child protection issues, most commonly relating to an issue of not understanding why statutory agencies are involved.
- The daughter of a couple in divorce proceedings was described by the father as a witch.

^[134] There have been some references to retrospective cases where there was an alleged branding, though no actual referrals have been evidenced.

^[135] Section 47 of the Children Act 1989 refers to the legal duty that local authorities have to investigate where children are considered to be at risk of 'significant harm'.

3. Examples of **referrals from professionals** (in social care and educational settings) seeking assistance with cases where they wonder if or suspect that Witchcraft and Spirit Possession might be present (see Section 7.6 for discussion).
- A child's school reported that a child had been accused by a church leader of being a witch as the parents were having some difficulties. Statutory services were already involved through concerns about neglect and the school wished to obtain the support of an organisation to support the family. Support was offered and the issue was resolved through discussion with no recourse needed for legal action.
 - A Women's Refuge reported two cases of potential witchcraft, involving accusations by the father that the child was a witch and in one of these, the father planned to have the child sent to Africa. These cases already included known or suspected intimate partner violence.
 - A case referred by the court for assessment of a child who had, unusually, described herself as a witch. The case involved a father who had been separated from his daughter and who was assessed to need help in parenting skills.
 - Case of divorce involving parents who described their child as a witch. Advice was given to the solicitor.
 - Referral by a London school from a teacher who was concerned that a child was disturbed by something they had witnessed in the family home, possibly witchcraft. Following attendance at training through this initiative, the teacher obtained advice on what signs they could look for to see if the child is disturbed or is witnessing witchcraft at home.
 - Referral by a social worker who had attended training; A neighbour had heard a child screaming in the middle of the night and had called the police. The child was having a nightmare and woke up crying, shouting "*leave me alone, stop strangling me*". The girl asked her parents to call the pastor to come and pray for her. The Police investigated the incident and it was resolved.
 - Solicitor/Advice Agency representing a mother whose teenage daughter was taken into local authority care because her mother had planned to send her daughter for a ritual linked to maintaining her daughter's virginity. The organisation believed this was a misinterpretation of a cultural issue, not a case of spirit possession.
 - Advice was given to a social worker on the case of a child with disability being abused physically.
 - A social worker discussed a child who had been sexually abused and who manifested challenging behaviour to foster carers. The carers attributed the behaviour to evil spirits.
 - A social worker suspected a mother of abusing her daughter due to belief in spirit possession. The child has challenging behaviour which the mother attributed to spirit possession. Following training from an organisation in the initiative, the social worker was able to identify emotional abuse.
 - A case worker discussed a case of a child who complained she had been called a witch by an uncle and a cousin. Through follow up discussion the case worker was able to explore the issues with the family and satisfactorily resolve that the risks of harm were not substantial.

4. Referrals from **church organisations** regarding **child protection issues**

- Cases of young people alleging retrospective sexual abuse: two within and one outside the family.
- A pastor of a church refusing to have a CRB check.
- Over 30 contacts from a large church organisation following a large church training event. All of these alleged abuse, current and retrospective, but no allegations of witchcraft.

5. Referrals from **church organisations** about **suspicious of Witchcraft and Spirit Possession**

- An adult delegate in a training session reported being accused of witchcraft by a pastor. Investigation showed allegations of intimate partner violence and children were supervised by a child protection agency.
- An adult delegate at a training session was accused of witchcraft by a church leader when her husband was accused of having an affair. Divorce proceedings followed.

6. Referrals from **family members** making **allegations against pastors**

- An allegation of sexual assault by a pastor on a female adult. During the praying session a ritual practice would take place whereby the Pastor would both pray for the woman and bath her in anointed oil – he requested that she prayed for up to 10 hours per day in order that ‘good will in her life would come to pass’. There were concerns about the children’s safety whilst the mother prayed.
- A Pastor who had recently arrived in the UK and was specifically targeting single women and mothers who were experiencing difficulties and/or had requested prayers. He would attend their place of residence at midnight and would encourage women to bathe naked in a bath tub followed by the Pastor anointing their bodies with oil – which would then assist in removing any evil spirits surrounding them. In at least two cases it was reported that during the process the women had been given a form of drink/liquid which had temporarily altered their state of mind. The issue caused further concern as children were present during the ritual, although the degree of understanding and involvement regarding the children is uncertain.

7.10.2 Trust for London’s special initiative model

The Trust for London requested that its strategy for creating a special initiative to address this issue be included within the scope of the evaluation to establish the extent to which it was effective and was experienced as helpful or unhelpful by the funded organisations.

A key element of Trust for London’s strategy was setting up an Advisory Group that meets three times a year, chaired by Baroness Howarth OBE and comprised of Trustees, representatives from key stakeholders, such as the Metropolitan Police and Local Safeguarding Children’s Boards and key people from the funded organisations.

At the stage of the interim report (December 2009), the benefits and drawbacks of the Advisory Group were the subject of a separate study undertaken by Kate Tindall^[36] in September 2009. Face-to-face and telephone semi-structured interviews were conducted of a sample of 13 members of the Advisory Group. These included members of

[36] Kate Tindall of the Tindall Foundation in New Zealand completed this study as part of a Postgraduate Certificate in Grant-making, Philanthropy and Social Investment at Cass Business School.

organisations funded, the police, experts in safeguarding children, trustees and staff of Trust for London.

The findings concluded that the Advisory Group is meeting its aims and terms of reference and that this was imperative to the success of the Special Initiative. Generally relationships were positive, and members were happy with the way the group worked as part of the initiative.

Key Points:

- Project update reports keep organisations and evaluators on track, allowing for reflection, and focus on objectives, as well as keeping the external members of the Advisory Group engaged in the project work.
- The format of the meetings and participation from members allow for an environment where sharing and learning comes about through discussion. Interviewees remarked on the quality of the discussion.
- Trustee involvement allows for learning at the Trust and forms a relationship between funder and funded.
- The Advisory Group is well coordinated and chaired. However, there was some concern that the size and formality of the meetings might discourage some members from contributing.

In the final year of the initiative, further feedback has been obtained from funded organisations and key stakeholders about the Advisory Group and wider aspects of Trust for London's strategy. The feedback supports the earlier view that the regular Advisory Group meetings were helpful because they promote partnership working between the agencies¹³⁷. This is supported by feedback from the Chair of the Advisory Group, who felt that the organisations began with respect for each other and some experience of joint working, but there was a level of initial uncertainty. She felt that, as the Advisory Group developed, there was more openness between the organisations¹³⁸.

Although not all organisations have experience with other funders, they described Trust for London's approach as being supportive without being intrusive. For example, showing a keen interest in the way projects have evolved and providing support and advice when necessary without getting involved in day-to-day aspects. The various courses that Trust for London has provided, e.g. fund raising and media training, have been described as useful and the recent campaigning course was described as a 'revelation' by one organisation. Though some organisations already had established links, the additional networks provided by the Advisory Group were described as helpful. The involvement of other stakeholders in the Advisory Group was regarded as helpful and relationships between them and the funders were regarded as 'generally good'. One comment was the broad aims were the same for the organisations, but the strategic aims for the separate projects have been quite diverse because of the different approaches.

Feedback received from the Chair of the Advisory Group was that there were two aspects of the Trust for London strategy that were particularly noteworthy. Firstly, Trust for London was willing to take on a difficult topic that other funders may find too challenging. As such, they "reached parts that other funders do not reach". Secondly, they created specific structures to ensure that funded organisations learnt from each other and developed a more collective voice¹³⁹.

^[137] Source: Written feedback, November 2010; Interview, October 2010.

^[138] Source: Interview, December 16 2010.

^[139] Source: Interview, 16 December 2010.

Turning now to the evaluation process. As discussed earlier in Section 6, the main direction of work in the initiative was towards discovery of new knowledge whereas the aims of the initiative are driven by outcomes. Consequently, this tension came out in the data as a common theme across the organisations was that there was an expectation of being able to show outcomes for the activity but the organisation felt that this was challenging to do. A recurring question that the organisations expressed to the evaluators was 'how do you measure the impact?' Whilst this is true across a wide range of activities, it is particularly challenging when working with something that is taboo because people do not want to talk about it.

Feedback on the process of evaluation itself was obtained. At the final stage of the initiative, the organisations were describing feeling positive whilst acknowledging their mixed feelings at earlier stages. One comment captures some of this:

“The process of being evaluated as a small organisation has helped us to build a lot of strength. The main problem we faced before was to be evaluated and meet the need of the funders and the community, so we needed the support that came with being evaluated”.

The tension between meeting the needs of the funders and the community is familiar to many voluntary organisations, particularly those that are close to their community because their two forms of accountability can entail very different expectations. When the community and funders both understandably feel a sense of ownership but expect different things from it, staff and leaders can feel this tension. In this quote, the evaluation was described initially as *“the main problem”* and latterly as a source of support to think through these dilemmas.

Whilst these tensions are inherent in funding relationships, good communication can play an important role and the communication between Trust for London and the funded organisations was regarded as particularly good. This was expressed at the practical level as *“there was always good communication by emails and phone”* or at more fundamental level. As one representative stated *“Other funders should use this type of approach and be evaluated like this. It means there are no gaps in communication; funders, you (evaluators) and us”*¹⁴⁰.

The feedback from funded organisations was generally positive but the complexities of the funding relationship mean that it can be difficult for funded organisations to speak openly about aspects that they found difficult. Feedback from other stakeholders can provide a less compromised position. Feedback from a local authority representative was positive about the work of both Trust for London and the funded organisations, describing it as a “colossal amount of work” but there was a danger that locating the work with voluntary agencies would allow local authorities to ‘wash their hands of responsibility’ and marginalise the work. Local authorities were regarded as not wanting to address the issue because of fear they would be seen as stigmatising particular communities. The initiative was regarded as having brought the issue to the fore but having only ‘scratched the surface’¹⁴¹.

[140] Source: Interview with organisation, October 2010.

[141] Source: Interview with representative from local authority, November 2010.

Feedback from a representative from the Metropolitan Police Service provided a positive endorsement of Trust for London's role as *"stepping in"* and taking over earlier work that the police were unable to continue and have done a *"fantastic job"*. The representative described being *"sceptical"* about evaluation at first but now thinking that it has been the right thing to do because it has *"helped give the project structure and resilience and ensures that the aims are being delivered and that things are kept on track"*¹⁴². The initiative was described as helping the Congolese community *"immensely"* because initially they were a *"fragmented community"*. The organisations have worked well with the Congolese community especially recognising when there was distrust with pastors and *"it helped with some really deep rifts"*. Reviewing the whole initiative, the representative stated that the conclusion of the initiative was the Channel 4 Dispatches Programme, stating:

*"It is a measure of the success that the groups felt confident and empowered to appear on TV and this has been a result of the initiative"*¹⁴³.

[142] Source: Interview with Metropolitan Police Service representative, November 2010.

[143] Source: Interview with Metropolitan Police Service representative, November 2010.

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Appendix 1: Summary of data obtained by evaluation team
(May 2008 – November 2010)

	VCF (evaluative work began July 2008)	CFC (evaluative work began July 2008)	AFRUCA (evaluative work began July 2008)	CCPAS (evaluative work began July 2008)	TOTALS
Formal meetings between the evaluation team and the organisation	5	3	7	3	18
	6	3	4	2	15
Observations of training events	Somali parent workshop (09.07.09)	Parenting Training Programme (19.05.09)	Consultative meeting with Church leaders in Southwark (18.10.08)	Training event at Gospel Church (25.10.08)	15
	Somali parent workshop (24.11.09)	Youth Forum (14.11.09)	Seminar - for practitioners (22.06.09)	Training day event for a large international church organisation (09.10.10)	
	Adjo parenting workshop (04.12.09)	Parenting group (17.04.10)	de-briefing following ch4 dispatches (29.07.10)		
	Somali parents workshop (27.01.10)		AFRUCA network conference, 22 October 2010		
	A London Borough Strategic Partnership board (09.06.10)				
	Safeguarding seminar (15.06.10)				

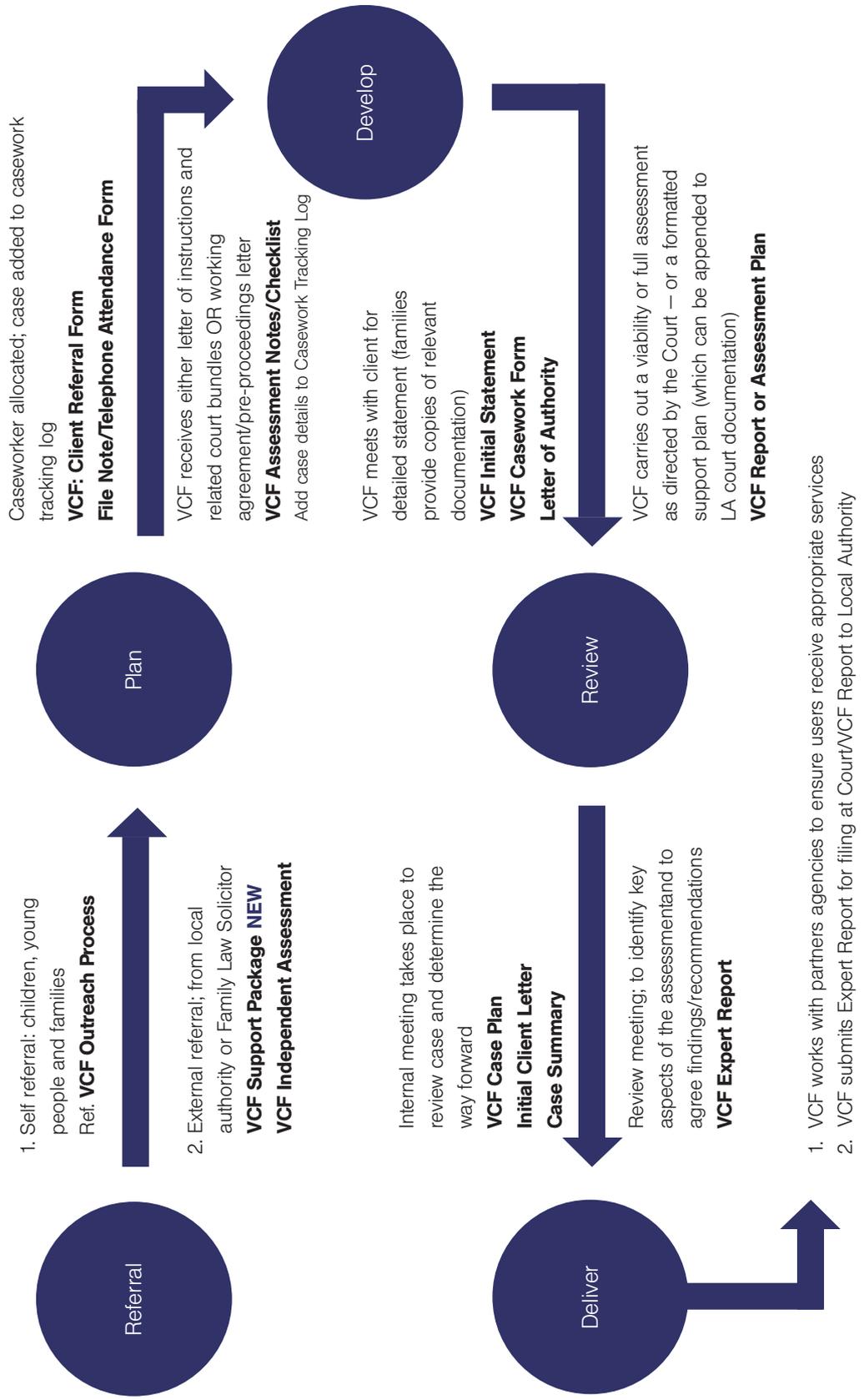
Appendix 1: Summary of data obtained by evaluation team
(May 2008 – November 2010) continued

	VCF (continued)	CFC (continued)	AFRUCA (continued)	CCPAS (continued)	TOTALS
Feedback forms received/ analysed	√	√	√	√	
Other forms of data	√ (flowcharts of working models)	√ (DVDs of TV programmes)	√ (brochures and leaflets)	√ (DVDs and training materials)	
Interviews with key contacts attached to group	2	2	2	5 (delegates at 091010 event))	11
	AG (20.01.10)	LB (01.10.08)	PE (16.05.09)	Seminar feedback forms	
	PI (26.02.10)	EMA (03.06.09)	SC (19.05.09))		
Interviews with key others (beginning and end of initiative): Advisory Board members, Police Force, staff in children's and local authority services, a London borough refugee council					11

Appendix 2: VCF casework model

Advocacy Casework: Process

VCF – The Victoria Climbié Foundation UK





The organisations in the evaluation

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