



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Edinburgh Research Explorer

## Care or Control? The Metropolitan Women Police and Child Welfare, 1919-1969

### Citation for published version:

Jackson, L 2003, 'Care or Control? The Metropolitan Women Police and Child Welfare, 1919-1969', *Historical Journal*, vol. 46, no. 3, pp. 623-48. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X03003182>

### Digital Object Identifier (DOI):

[10.1017/S0018246X03003182](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X03003182)

### Link:

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

### Document Version:

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

### Published In:

Historical Journal

### Publisher Rights Statement:

© Jackson, L. (2003). Care or Control? The Metropolitan Women Police and Child Welfare, 1919-1969. *Historical Journal*, 46(3), 623-48doi: 10.1017/S0018246X03003182

### General rights

Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Edinburgh Research Explorer is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

### Take down policy

The University of Edinburgh has made every reasonable effort to ensure that Edinburgh Research Explorer content complies with UK legislation. If you believe that the public display of this file breaches copyright please contact [openaccess@ed.ac.uk](mailto:openaccess@ed.ac.uk) providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.



# The Historical Journal

<http://journals.cambridge.org/HIS>

Additional services for *The Historical Journal*:

Email alerts: [Click here](#)

Subscriptions: [Click here](#)

Commercial reprints: [Click here](#)

Terms of use : [Click here](#)



---

## CARE OR CONTROL? THE METROPOLITAN WOMEN POLICE AND CHILD WELFARE, 1919–1969

LOUISE A. JACKSON

The Historical Journal / Volume 46 / Issue 03 / September 2003, pp 623 - 648  
DOI: 10.1017/S0018246X03003182, Published online: 16 September 2003

**Link to this article:** [http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract\\_S0018246X03003182](http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0018246X03003182)

### How to cite this article:

LOUISE A. JACKSON (2003). CARE OR CONTROL? THE METROPOLITAN WOMEN POLICE AND CHILD WELFARE, 1919–1969. *The Historical Journal*, 46, pp 623–648 doi:10.1017/S0018246X03003182

**Request Permissions :** [Click here](#)

# CARE OR CONTROL? THE METROPOLITAN WOMEN POLICE AND CHILD WELFARE, 1919–1969\*

LOUISE A. JACKSON  
*Leeds Metropolitan University*

ABSTRACT. *The term ‘policing’ is often used to refer to a broad range of regulatory practices, which have been associated with the development of educative and social work frameworks in the modern state. The relationship between the concepts of ‘welfare’ and ‘penalty’ (or ‘care’ and ‘control’) has been the subject of a number of recent studies of social intervention in twentieth-century Britain. However, the role of police officers themselves in the ‘policing of families’ has rarely been elaborated. From their initial appointment to London’s Metropolitan Police in 1919 until their official integration on the same terms as male officers in the early 1970s, women police officers played a significant role in the detection and prevention of child abuse, neglect, and female delinquency. Through a case study of the work of the Metropolitan Women Police branch, this article considers the negotiation of a social work ethic within policing as well as the shifting configuration of the ‘care’/‘control’ nexus in welfare legislation and professional practice. The Metropolitan Women Police tended to see ‘care’ and ‘control’ as mutually reinforcing rather than conflicting concepts. Such a formulation was resonant with the rhetoric of social work and official legislation until the early 1960s. It also reflected the philosophy of crime prevention laid down as the principal object of policing, enabling women to justify involvement in child protection and welfare as an aspect of police work.*

---

## I

In June 1939 London’s Metropolitan Police Force (the Met) launched an eight-page recruitment brochure to attract women officers, entitled *It’s a woman’s work*. The text outlined their main duties:

Actual crime, its prevention and detection, is frequently dealt with by women police, particularly if children are the offenders or the victims; but their contacts with the public are more usually of the protective or helpful kind. Tracing missing girls; constructive work in connection with young girls stranded in dangerous surroundings or children in need of care or protection; custody and escort of women prisoners; the protection of children playing in streets and public parks; these are a few instances out of many.<sup>1</sup>

\* This research has been supported by the Nuffield Foundation Social Science Small Grants Scheme and by Leeds Metropolitan University. I also wish to thank the Metropolitan Women Police Association, Ray Seale and Steve Earle of the Metropolitan Police Museum (MPM), Clive Emsley, Pat Starkey, and Alison Woodeson. Materials in the MPM are cited with kind permission of the Metropolitan Police Service.

<sup>1</sup> Metropolitan Women Police, *It’s a woman’s work* (London, 1939).

Although their areas of work expanded considerably, women police continued to be associated with 'specialist' work with women and children from their initial appointment in 1919 until their official integration on the same terms as male officers between 1969 and 1973.<sup>2</sup> Their involvement in policing was very gradually accepted by both chief constables and rank and file policemen during the first half of the twentieth century precisely because of notions of gender difference: women, it was argued, had particular skills associated with a distinct sphere of activity.<sup>3</sup> In 1939 the Met employed 155 women officers, compared to 14 in Glasgow, 13 in Birmingham, and 6 in Manchester.<sup>4</sup> This numerical presence and the survival of substantial archival material on the activities of the Met's women police make it possible to construct a very detailed case study of women's involvement in 'specialist' police work and its transformation over time.

'Welfare' work was not the exclusive prerogative of women in the police force; male officers were involved in 'social and charitable work' in boys' youth clubs, seen as a preventive measure against juvenile delinquency.<sup>5</sup> Conversely, from 1923 women were sworn in as attested Metropolitan police officers with the powers of arrest and detention, and they undertook the same basic training as men. Models of masculinity and femininity in policing were often ambiguous and contradictory and as such were subject to continual negotiation; yet gender remained a crucial axis around which police identities were constructed, positioned, and maintained. The Metropolitan Police *General instruction book*, first produced in 1829, had sought to establish that 'prevention of crime' was the 'principal object' of policing.<sup>6</sup> However, within male police culture, an emphasis on thief taking – the detection and arrest of criminals – as 'real' policing remained contested but dominant for much of the twentieth century.<sup>7</sup> Women's role in policing became accepted because it could be positioned as 'soft' policing (and hence lacking in status) through its associations with 'social' and 'welfare' work.

In 1987 Victor Bailey commented that 'historians of the welfare state tend to ignore the strand of social policy to do with crime and punishment'.<sup>8</sup> More recent studies, in part influenced by the work of Jacques Donzelot on the 'policing of families' and the emergence of the juvenile court within the modern liberal state, have focused on the association of deprivation with depravation in the

<sup>2</sup> In most forces in England and Wales formal integration resulted from the Sex Discrimination Act of 1975. The Met pre-empted the act: in 1969 women were allowed to compete for all avenues of police work and in 1973 the Women Police branch was officially dissolved.

<sup>3</sup> L. A. Jackson, 'Women professionals and the regulation of violence in inter-war Britain', in S. D'Cruze, ed., *Everyday violence in Britain, 1850–1950* (Harlow, 2000), pp. 119–35.

<sup>4</sup> Women police campaign 1940, Leeds, West Yorkshire Archive Service (WYAS), Acc. 1187, Tancred papers, box 3.

<sup>5</sup> B. Weinberger, 'Policing juveniles: delinquency in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Manchester', *Criminal Justice History*, 14 (1993), pp. 43–55.

<sup>6</sup> D. Ascoli, *The queen's peace* (London, 1979), p. 87.

<sup>7</sup> M. Young, *An inside job: policing and police culture in Britain* (Oxford, 1991), p. 191.

<sup>8</sup> V. Bailey, *Delinquency and citizenship: reclaiming the young offender, 1914–1918* (Oxford, 1987), p. 1.

minds of policy makers.<sup>9</sup> Donzelot offered a broad definition of ‘policing’, which relates to an eighteenth-century continental usage: ‘the science of policing consists ... in regulating everything that relates to the present condition of society, in strengthening and improving it, in seeing that all things contribute to the welfare of the members that compose it’.<sup>10</sup> However, whilst attention has been drawn to the role of social workers and educators in creating a ‘tutelary complex’ around child and family, police officers – in both their preventive and law enforcement capacities as members of a specific bureaucratic institution – have disappeared from view. If older histories of the welfare state ignored penal policy altogether, the recognition of a conceptual relationship between penalty and welfarism has not led as yet to any sustained historical analysis of the relationship between police officers and social workers.

*It’s a woman’s work* referred to notions of ‘care’ and ‘protection’ but it also hinted that child ‘victims’ could easily become threats to law and order if they were found in ‘dangerous surroundings’. Thus ‘care’ and ‘control’ – or welfare and the judicial – were positioned as mutually reinforcing rather than conflicting categories. Such a formulation reflected the philosophy of crime prevention laid down as the principal object of policing, enabling women to justify involvement in child protection as police work. This article aims to incorporate the ‘Police’ themselves into accounts of the ‘policing of families’ in twentieth-century Britain, to consider the negotiation of a social work ethic within the Metropolitan Police, and to examine the shifting configuration of the care/control nexus in welfare legislation and professional practice.

David Garland has argued recently that a culture of ‘penal welfarism’ – which emphasized rehabilitation rather than punishment – dominated the ‘field of crime control’ from the 1890s until the 1970s.<sup>11</sup> Garland depicts ‘penal welfarism’ as a hybrid model: like Donzelot’s ‘tutelary complex’ it is a product of the development of nineteenth-century crime control/law enforcement institutions (the police, courts, prisons) and the subsequent overlaying of the new body of ‘welfare’ experts (social workers, probation officers, etc.). The notion of a dominant paradigm, built on forms of consensus, will be discussed. However, if attention is focused on everyday practice rather than overall policy formation, tensions and resistances within the ‘field’ of crime control must be carefully acknowledged. Jane Lewis has highlighted the existence of a ‘mixed economy of welfare’ in twentieth-century Britain, locating welfare provision in terms of central and local government,

<sup>9</sup> J. Donzelot, *The policing of families*, trans. R. Hurley (Baltimore, 1997). See also P. Cox, ‘Rescue and reform: girls, delinquency and industrial schools, 1908–1933’ (PhD thesis, Cambridge, 1996); H. Ferguson, ‘Protecting children in time: a historical sociological study of the abused child and child protection in Cleveland from 1880 to the “Cleveland affair” of 1987’ (PhD thesis, Cambridge, 1992); H. Hendrick, *Child welfare: England, 1872–1989* (London, 1994); L. Mahood, *Policing gender, class and family: Britain, 1850–1940* (London, 1995).

<sup>10</sup> Donzelot, *Policing of families*, p. 7.

<sup>11</sup> D. Garland, *The culture of control: crime and social order in contemporary society* (Oxford, 2001).

voluntary organizations, the market and informal care.<sup>12</sup> If the history of social policy in the twentieth century can be viewed in terms of increasing state intervention in the lives of children and parents, it must also be seen in terms of a protracted negotiation of roles – often collaborative but occasionally competitive and sometimes antagonistic – between newly constituted sets of experts as they jostled for authority and influence. A detailed examination of the development of the Metropolitan Women Police branch (A-4) and its relationship with other ‘welfare’ workers enables us to consider the creation of separate but overlapping spheres of expertise and the formation of distinct identities in relation to notions of both gender and professionalism.<sup>13</sup> The 1933 Children and Young Persons Act, which placed a great deal of discretion in police hands, was pivotal in enabling the Metropolitan Women Police to consolidate a position of expertise in child welfare. Until 1969 – when a new Children and Young Persons’ Act located responsibility for decision making firmly in the hands of local authority social workers in an attempt to de-link welfare provision from the criminal justice system – women police officers played a significant role in the detection and prevention of child abuse, neglect, and female delinquency. This article will examine the negotiation, articulation, and discretionary nature of this role. It will consider the position of police officers in relation to child welfare legislation, the formation of a discrete professional identity for women police, and the significance of the rhetoric of welfare and penalty in daily practice.

## II

The delineation of a distinctive and expert role for women police in inter-war Britain involved a series of protracted local struggles over duties and responsibilities, the resolution of which was dependent on the personalities and viewpoints of senior policewomen and respective commissioners. It was also the result of legislative interventions, shaped by the Home Office and by lobby groups such as the National Council of Women (NCW). Although the Home Office sought to standardize pay and conditions for women by issuing the Police (Women) Regulations of 1931, their employment was not made

<sup>12</sup> J. Lewis, ‘Gender, the family and women’s agency in the building of “welfare states”: the British case’, *Social History*, 19 (1994), pp. 37–55; see also: G. Finlayson, *Citizen, state and social welfare in Britain, 1830–1990* (Oxford, 1994); J. Grier, ‘A spirit of friendly rivalry? Voluntary societies and the formation of post-war child welfare legislation in Britain’, in J. Lawrence and P. Starkey, eds., *Child welfare and social action in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: international perspectives* (Liverpool, 2001), pp. 234–55.

<sup>13</sup> Historical studies of women police in Britain have tended to focus on institutional politics and on the struggle for the appointment of women rather than women’s welfare role. See, for example, J. Lock, *The British policewoman* (London, 1979); J. Carrier, *The campaign for the employment of women as police officers* (Aldershot, 1988). Where detailed research on women’s police work has been undertaken, it has largely concentrated on the activities of voluntary patrols during the First World War: L. Bland, ‘In the name of protection: the policing of women in the First World War’, in J. Brophy and C. Smart, eds., *Women in law* (London, 1985), pp. 23–49; P. Levine, ‘Walking the streets in a way no decent woman should’, *Journal of Modern History*, 66 (1994), pp. 34–78; A. Woodeson, ‘The first women police: a force for equality or infringement’, *Women’s History Review*, 2 (1993), pp. 217–32.

compulsory.<sup>14</sup> The Children and Young Persons Act of 1933 enabled the Metropolitan Women Police to shape a distinctive role for their branch; this was a result, however, of interpretation and negotiation rather than coercion.

In 1919 the Met's first fifty women were under the supervision of Mrs Sophia Stanley. They were involved in escort duty (with juvenile and female prisoners), hospital duty (observing those who had attempted suicide), and patrol work (searching in particular for homeless and vulnerable girls in need of rescue).<sup>15</sup> As a result of cuts in police expenditure, their numbers were temporarily reduced to twenty in 1922 and Mrs Stanley was replaced by Inspector Bertha Clayden, who was based at Bow Street police station rather than at Scotland Yard.<sup>16</sup> Two women were assigned the specific duty of statement-taking from children and young women in relation to sexual offences: Inspector Lilian Wyles, an attested policewoman attached to the Criminal Investigations Department (CID) from 1922 onwards, and Miss Eilladh Macdougall, who gave her services to the Met as a 'lady assistant'. Wyles herself felt that she was 'not wanted in the CID'; she was not accommodated spatially at Scotland Yard but, rather, was expected to use her own private flat as an office.<sup>17</sup> This half-hearted approach began to shift for three reasons. First, Sir William Horwood was replaced by a series of commissioners who were more sympathetic to women's involvement in policing (Viscount Byng of Vimy 1928–31, Lord Trenchard 1931–5, Sir Philip Game 1935–45, and Sir Harold Scott 1945–53). Secondly, a new senior woman officer was appointed: Miss Dorothy Olivia Georgiana Peto became staff officer in 1930. Her position was affirmed when Trenchard promoted her to superintendent of a newly created A-4 Branch (Women Police) in 1932, which was given specific responsibility not only for the supervision of women police but also for dealing with children.<sup>18</sup> Finally, Peto was able to carve out a very particular role for the Met's women officers with the introduction of the 1933 Children and Young Persons Act.

As law enforcers, the police already had an established role to play in terms of family intervention. From 1889 onwards, child protection legislation had permitted a police constable to remove a child from its home to a 'place of safety' when cruelty was suspected, without the need for a warrant.<sup>19</sup> In 1904 local authorities and (as 'authorized persons') the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) were also allowed to remove children although this was subject to the permission of a magistrate; in emergency cases police powers could be crucial.<sup>20</sup> It was not clear, however, where responsibility lay for

<sup>14</sup> See Carrier, *Campaign for employment*, for a detailed discussion of the NCW lobbies and the 1931 Regulations; he makes little mention, however, of the 1933 Children and Young Persons Act.

<sup>15</sup> L. Wyles, *A woman at Scotland Yard* (London, 1952), p. 81.

<sup>16</sup> Lock, *British policewoman*, pp. 135–46.

<sup>17</sup> Wyles, *Woman at Scotland Yard*, p. 118.

<sup>18</sup> D. O. G. Peto, *The memoirs of Miss Dorothy Olivia Georgiana Peto* (Bramshill, 1992), p. 63.

<sup>19</sup> Hendrick, *Child welfare*, p. 55.

<sup>20</sup> The 1904 Prevention of Cruelty to Children (Amendment Act) is discussed in Hendrick, *Child welfare*, p. 55, and A. Brown and D. Barrett, *Knowledge of evil: child prostitution and child sexual abuse in twentieth-century England* (Cullompton, 2002), p. 41.

the co-ordination of child protection prosecutions. The respective expertise of the NSPCC and the police as prosecuting bodies was keenly debated during the 1890s.<sup>21</sup> The majority of cases involving child sexual assault in London were referred to the NSPCC for prosecution by the turn of the century; their solicitor William Clark Hall was seen as an expert in such cases.<sup>22</sup> However, this appears to have been an interim measure. With the involvement of Miss Macdougall as a statement-taker from 1907 onwards (in the wake of renewed anxieties about a 'white slave trade'), the CID increasingly monopolized investigation and prosecution. The role of the NSPCC as a prosecuting agency in London declined further with the employment of women officers in the Met.

The Children Act of 1908 had begun to add 'neglect' to the initial category of 'cruelty'.<sup>23</sup> The 1933 act, which consolidated, amended, and expanded the scope of previous legislation on child protection and delinquency, was shaped by the recommendations of the departmental committee on the treatment of young offenders, which had reported in 1927 and which argued that neglect and delinquency were closely inter-linked. The committee sought to extend the grounds for intervention since 'cases frequently occur in which children are living in the worst possible surroundings ... but they cannot be brought before a court until they commit an offence or are found wandering'.<sup>24</sup> The committee argued for a central role for local authorities as co-ordinating bodies and for 'closer co-operation' between local authorities and police.<sup>25</sup> Child welfare and the prevention of juvenile offending were viewed as part of the same social project. Whilst the 1927 report did not comment on the need for women police officers, other committees had recommended their appointment and, in December 1929, the NCW sent a deputation to the Home Office urging their employment in relation to child protection legislation.<sup>26</sup> Thus the association of policewomen with the enforcement of the children's acts was already recognized.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>21</sup> L. A. Jackson, *Child sexual abuse in Victorian England* (Routledge, 2000), p. 62.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 171, n. 62.

<sup>23</sup> 1908 Children and Young Persons Act, 8 Edw. 7, ch. 67, stipulated that children could be removed from parents if they were found begging, wandering or destitute; if parents were 'unfit' because of 'criminal or drunken habits'; if a child was frequenting the company of reputed thieves or prostitutes; if a child was living in a house used by prostitutes; or if parents were convicted of offences against their children.

<sup>24</sup> See Parliamentary Papers (PP), *Report of the departmental committee on the treatment of young offenders*, Cmd 2831 (London, 1927), p. 118. A new children's act was passed in 1932 but never became operational and its provisions were absorbed into the 1933 act.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>26</sup> PP, *Report of the committee on the employment of women on police duties* (London, 1920), xxii.1087; PP, *Report of the departmental committee on the employment of policewomen* (London, 1924), xii.193; PP, *Report of the departmental committee on sexual offences against young persons* (London, 1924-5), xv.905. For the NCW deputation, see Peto, *Memoirs*, p. 61.

<sup>27</sup> The 1931 Police (Women) Regulations laid down permissible duties for women officers, which included 'duties in connection with women and children reported missing, found ill, injured, destitute, or homeless, and those who have been the victims of sexual offences or are in immoral surroundings' (all situations described in the 1908 Children Act, which was then current). See Peto, *Memoirs*, p. 67.

Although the young offenders committee had assumed that ‘penal’ and ‘welfare’ frameworks were compatible, their precise relationship was a continued source of debate. As the new Children and Young Persons Bill was drawn up, the Home Office consulted representatives of the local education authorities, the NSPCC and the police. Dorothy Peto was deputed by Trenchard to represent the views of the Met, together with Superintendent White of ‘Z’ Division.<sup>28</sup> Peto and White made strong representations that children removed to a ‘place of safety’ as ‘in need of care or protection’ could be taken to a police station in the first instance. Education authorities argued that it was more suitable to take them directly to a remand home since this was ‘less penal’. The police line was accepted within the final act.

Although the 1933 Children and Young Persons Act did not make the appointment of attested policewomen compulsory, it could, nevertheless, be interpreted in such a way as to consolidate a specialist role for women officers and to expand the scope of work in which they were already engaged. Responding to the NCW lobby, it established for the first time that a female child or young person (aged fourteen to seventeen years) who was ‘detained, being conveyed or waiting’ at a police station ‘must be under the care of a woman’, whether an attested constable or a matron (schedule 31).<sup>29</sup> A new section was introduced widening the categories of children deemed to ‘be in need of care or protection’ and, as a result, strengthening the powers of police, the NSPCC, and local authorities to intervene. Where children were suffering ill treatment or neglect ‘likely to cause ... unnecessary suffering or injury to health’, they could be removed, either immediately by the police or through a magistrate’s warrant (s. 67). The definition of children ‘in need of care or protection’ also included those with an ‘unfit’ parent or guardian who were ‘falling into bad associations, or exposed to moral danger, or beyond control’ (s. 61.1). If the latter was suspected, children could be brought to the juvenile court by the police, local authorities, or the NSPCC (s. 62.2). The act did not specify what constituted ‘unfit’ parenting and its definition of neglect was considerably more general and, therefore, more discretionary, than that of the 1908 act. Finally, the 1933 act (following the 1889 legislation) entitled parents to ask magistrates to make their children subject to a protection order if they felt they could no longer cope with them (s. 64, sometimes known as the ‘beyond control’ clause). Children who had been removed from parental care in the first instance had to appear before the juvenile court within forty-eight hours, where a magistrate determined their fate (they could, for example be sent to an approved school or made the subject of a probation order). Technically the 1933 act made local authorities (via their education committees) responsible for ensuring that all welfare cases went to court (s. 62.2). This did not mean, however, that they undertook responsibility for investigation and prosecution, in which there was considerable local variation.

<sup>28</sup> Peto, *Memoirs*, pp. 71–2.

<sup>29</sup> 1933 Children and Young Persons Act, 23 Geo. 5, ch. 12.

Peto used the act to argue for the development of a specialist child protection role for the Metropolitan Women Police in meetings with both senior police officers and other statutory agencies. In the wake of the 1933 act she met with representatives of the Home Office and the London County Council (LCC) Education Authority to discuss implementation.<sup>30</sup> It was accepted that it was the duty of the police, who alone had the authority to remove children without a warrant, to take them to a place of safety. It was initially agreed that the LCC should be responsible for bringing all cases to juvenile court. It soon became apparent, however, that this was not practical: 'the local authority frequently referred these cases back to the police on the ground that we had the evidence in our possession'. At a second meeting in 1935 both parties agreed, therefore, that in all 'urgent' cases requiring some form of judicial action, legal proceedings would be undertaken by the Met (they were to give notice to the local authority and to the probation service as to when the case would be heard). The child protection work of the Metropolitan Women Police was eulogized by East London juvenile court magistrate Basil Henriques, writing in 1950. He argued that although the NSPCC was sometimes involved in proceedings for cruelty and neglect, cases involving children who were 'falling into bad associations, or exposed to moral danger, or beyond control' were overwhelmingly brought by the police. In London, he suggested, the local authority 'very rarely takes action'.<sup>31</sup>

The 1948 Children's Act set up local authority Children's Departments run by highly qualified Children's Officers who supervised teams of Child Care Officers. The act also required that more extensive liaison between agencies should take place once welfare cases came to light.<sup>32</sup> The *Metropolitan Police Orders* laid out practical instructions for its implementation: contact details were issued for all Children's Officers within the counties covered by the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) as well as information about procedure (which varied very slightly from county to county).<sup>33</sup> In 'emergency cases', the police were to telephone the Children's Officer or a Child Care Officer to inform them of the action. Details of refused charges of care or protection, as well as all 'non-urgent' cases (those which did not require immediate judicial intervention), were to be recorded on specified forms and referred to the Children's Officer for monitoring.

Whilst working closely with the Children Departments, the Metropolitan Women Police continued to work at the frontline, to undertake prosecutions for neglect and to investigate and prepare papers for 'care or protection' proceedings.<sup>34</sup> It was continually argued that women police, as a result of their patrol work, were in a better position than other professionals to play an important

<sup>30</sup> Miss Peto's memo on the 1933 act, London, Public Record Office (PRO), MEPO 2/4238.

<sup>31</sup> B. Henriques, *The indiscretions of a magistrate* (London, 1950), p. 74.

<sup>32</sup> The 1948 act was shaped by the report of the care of children committee of 1945-6 (Curtis committee), which had largely been concerned with residential provision and aftercare rather than the initial stages of investigation.

<sup>33</sup> *Metropolitan Police Orders*, 5 Apr. 1949, 7 June 1949, 8 July 1949, and 21 Oct. 1949, MPM.

<sup>34</sup> Child welfare: liaison between police and LCC, 1948-9, PRO, MEPO 2/8265.

preventive role: 'unlike any other social worker, they are out in uniform, at all hours of the day and night and they can therefore find the boys and girls in the danger spots. They too are often the first people able to get into some of the terrible homes in which children are living.'<sup>35</sup> From 1934 until 1973, the A-4 branch kept centralized indexes both of missing girls and of children who had come to attention at any point within the MPD; by 1950 there was also a separate index of 'problem families'.<sup>36</sup>

Thus the 1933 and 1948 acts entrusted child welfare to the police, local authorities and the NSPCC. The precise roles and relationship between these organizations were worked out locally as the legislation was interpreted and its frameworks were translated into everyday practice. Regional differences were exposed at national and district meetings of policewomen. In 1948 Lillian Dawes of the Met told the south-eastern conference of policewomen that 'in some Forces action in cases of cruelty to children was initiated by the police, whilst in others it was a noticeable feature that prosecutions were launched by the NSPCC'. Referring to the policy of the Met, she suggested that 'when the police knew of acts of cruelty, it was best if they carried them forward to prosecution'.<sup>37</sup> Child protection legislation vested authority in police (and consequentially, as a result of its interpretation by the Met, in *policewomen*) – as representatives of the state – to intervene within the family in the first instance, a role that continued into the early 1960s. As trained professionals they were given the discretion to make snap decisions about family circumstances: to decide whether neglect was such as could cause 'unnecessary suffering or injury to health' and would, therefore, warrant immediate removal. Where criminal proceedings against parents were deemed necessary for serious assault (under the 1861 Offences Against the Person Act) the papers were handed over to the CID to prosecute. In the vast majority of cases, however, where 'care or protection' proceedings were taken through the juvenile court, the Metropolitan Women Police would handle all the paperwork for the hearing, preparing statements and evidence.

### III

The Met's women police strove to develop a new and distinct occupational identity for themselves in relation to, first, an existing male police culture, secondly, an older tradition of voluntary welfare work, and, thirdly, a new and growing body of social workers employed by statutory agencies. This involved a careful but not always conscious negotiation of positions and the framing of both co-operative and oppositional strategies. The new occupational identity was bound up with the establishment of systems and procedures but personal

<sup>35</sup> Metropolitan Women Police Annual Report (MWPAP), 1950, MPM. The identification of women officers as 'social workers' is revealing here.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> Minutes of no. 6 district conference of policewomen, 30 Jan. 1948, Manchester, Greater Manchester Police Museum (GMPM), Nellie Bohanna papers.

dynamics remained crucial to its functioning. Sets of relationships were both fluid and inter-dependent; the inflection given to issues and problems would depend on who was talking to whom.

Although the first pioneers such as Lilian Wyles had battled to be accepted by the male establishment in the early 1920s, women's place in the Met was assured by the end of the Second World War. In 1951 one divisional commander was able to write that 'a special reason for the good relationship between our male and female officers is that it is realized by the men that women were introduced for special work with women and children, and not as a substitute for men'.<sup>38</sup> The positioning of women's work as 'special' had two significant effects. First, it created ambivalence as to whether they were, in fact, welfare workers rather than 'proper' police officers. This was a dilemma that they were insistent on resolving by rejecting the 'welfare' label, although with mixed success. Lilian Wyles criticized Mrs Stanley's attempt to establish a 'welfare department' offering clothing and accommodation for young girls in the early 1920s. She wrote in her memoirs that: 'Police are not welfare officers, and welfare officers are not police. The dividing line must be clearly drawn ... Welfare work is an integral part of all police work, but only up to a certain point.'<sup>39</sup> It was not their duty to run hostels for the homeless, but rather, in relation to the 'preventive' function of policing, to refer women and girls to the welfare workers who did. Wyles felt it was vital to stress that 'liaison between women police and all welfare organizations should, in my opinion, be of the closest character'.<sup>40</sup>

The second effect of the positioning of women's work as 'special' was the creation of a heightened sense of expertise and professionalism in comparison to uniformed male constables. This is not to say that women police were recognized as a 'profession'; rather that their identity involved a move towards a professional model which involved the delineation of a specialist expertise, careful recruitment, and training.<sup>41</sup> Over a third of the women who joined the Met in the period 1919–38 came from 'semi-professional' backgrounds; thirteen had worked as governesses or schoolmistresses, four in social work and twenty-five in medical occupations (as nurses, midwives, chemists, or chiropodists).<sup>42</sup> Although high academic attainment was not necessary, the Metropolitan Women Police attracted a small number of university-educated women in this period. The Met's police-women received the same initial training as men at Peel House (an eleven-week course during the 1930s; the thirteen-week course was established as the norm at the end of the Second World War), but this was supplemented by further specialist training during the two-year probationary period. Women officers were expected to have a thorough knowledge of the 1933 act, its application and interpretation,

<sup>38</sup> Postwar establishment, A-4 file, PRO, MEPO 2/6170.

<sup>39</sup> Wyles, *Woman at Scotland Yard*, pp. 85–6.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86.

<sup>41</sup> A. Etzioni, *The semi-professions and their organisation* (New York, 1969); R. Dingwall and P. Lewis, *The sociology of the professions* (Basingstoke, 1983); R. Reiner, *The blue-coated worker* (Cambridge, 1978), pp. 202–8.

<sup>42</sup> MPM, MWPAR, 1938.

and the scope of their own discretionary role; they were also expected to understand the causes of 'delinquency' in order to assist in its prevention.

From her initial appointment in 1930, Peto had introduced a basic 'social study' course, which had initially taken the form of a series of lectures on 'medical issues', the 'state and the family', and 'social problems'.<sup>43</sup> By 1937 these lectures had developed into a full-time three-week programme, with exams at the end; although reduced during the Second World War, the three-week course was reinstated in 1947.<sup>44</sup> Guest lecturers in 1930 and 1931 included the LCC psychologist Professor Cyril Burt (author of *The young delinquent*), as well as representatives of the National Council for the Unmarried Mother, the Charity Organization Society (COS), and the British Social Hygiene Council.<sup>45</sup> In 1939 probationary policewomen were also addressed by Miss Lilian Barker (HM Inspector of Prisons and former governor of the first girls' borstal at Aylesbury), Miss Rosalind Chambers (tutor in social studies at the London School of Economics or LSE), and Dr Laura Hutton (of the Tavistock Clinics). The course programmes highlight Peto's contacts with other women professionals (many of them pioneers). They draw attention to the significance of 'social study' in the training of women police even though the 'welfare' label remained controversial. They show that the early A-4 branch wished to draw on specialist expertise outside of policing rather than treating the university-educated with the suspicion and distrust offered by rank and file male officers.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, the LSE offered two one-year scholarships for women constables to attend a course on moral hygiene in 1932: two university graduates with social science backgrounds were chosen to attend.<sup>47</sup> Finally the programmes highlight the range of both voluntary and professional bodies with which the Metropolitan Women Police had contacts.

The delineation of responsibilities in relation to the abused or neglected child was sometimes a contested business. If in the USA it involved 'an embattled and protracted transfer of power from evangelical women to social workers', there were also moments of hostility within a much calmer British context.<sup>48</sup> In the 1920s women police officers still needed to win the argument that their duties required police status and could not be performed by volunteers. When Lilian Wyles first moved to the CID in 1922 she had not only to work with voluntary workers but also to carve out a separate 'police' identity. Although she was given

<sup>43</sup> Social study courses for probationers, PRO, MEPO 2/7619.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> For the role of the COS (renamed the Family Welfare Association in 1946) in the training of social workers see M. Roof, *A hundred years of family welfare: a study of the Family Welfare Association* (London, 1972), pp. 234–49. The School of Social Science, which had been founded by the COS in Liverpool in 1904, was transferred to the LSE where it was amalgamated with the Social Science department in 1912.

<sup>46</sup> In 1933 Lord Trenchard established the Hendon Police College to train men with university backgrounds specifically for the higher ranks. This move was opposed by the rank and file. See M. Fido and K. Skinner, *The official encyclopaedia of Scotland Yard* (London, 2001) p. 191.

<sup>47</sup> MPM, MWPAR, 1932.

<sup>48</sup> R. Kunzel, *Fallen women, problem girls: unmarried mothers and the professionalisation of social work, 1890–1945* (New Haven, 1993), p. 3.

the task of taking statements from child witnesses in all cases of sexual offences occurring north of the river, Eilladh Macdougall continued to be responsible for taking statements south of the Thames. It is clear from Wyles's memoirs that Macdougall resented and disapproved of the involvement of women in policing. Despite the shared nature of their work, the two met only once, in the year before Macdougall's retirement in 1932: 'She, who could have helped me so much over the many complex difficulties I was to meet, withheld information that would have been of inestimable value, and simply ignored me. It is hard to be ignored by men, but harder by far is it to receive such treatment from one of your own sex.'<sup>49</sup> Macdougall's background lay in evangelical rescue work with the Southwark Diocesan Association for the Care of Friendless Girls and she had, with Miss Mary Leaf, obtained a small set of lodgings for 'rescue' cases in 1907. In 1910 the home moved to 198 Lambeth Road, London, and was relabelled as the Metropolitan Police Home for Women and Children (it received a small Home Office grant).<sup>50</sup> In the years before the First World War, Macdougall's involvement in moral welfare and rescue work was seen to qualify her for statement-taking. Women police officers had to shift the agenda by showing that statement-taking was in fact police work, dependent on legal protocols and frameworks, rather than a continuation of philanthropic rescue work.

Moments of conflict between charitable/voluntary organizations and public sector professionals should not be over-stated. As Lewis has argued, voluntary organizations were integral to state policy as part of Britain's 'mixed economy of welfare'. Voluntary organizations increasingly employed paid and highly trained 'experts' to work as officers as part of their own project of professionalization. Although there was a shift in balance from the charitable/voluntary sector to the state, employees of both worked closely together rather than inhabiting distinct and antagonistic spheres.<sup>51</sup> Although painfully aware of the need to establish the 'police' scope of her work, Wyles worked hard to develop good working relationships with voluntary groups who continued to be important welfare providers throughout the period (particularly in relation to residential provision).

Although the Metropolitan Women Police recognized that welfare workers associated with voluntary organizations offered valuable services, elements within the male police establishment could be more cynical. In 1936 the Federation of Committees for the Moral Welfare of Children asked for information about all children involved in cases of indecent assault so that they could carry out follow-up rehabilitative work. In a memo prepared by the CID central office, Detective Chief Inspector Jesse Keech referred to 'female busybodies' who talked of 'a spell in the country'.<sup>52</sup> The head of the CID, Assistant Commissioner Sir Norman

<sup>49</sup> Wyles, *Woman at Scotland Yard*, p. 119.

<sup>50</sup> Metropolitan Police home for women and children (victims of criminal assault), PRO, MEPO 2/5562.

<sup>51</sup> Lewis, 'Gender, the family and women's agency'.

<sup>52</sup> Welfare work and after-care; attention to children concerned in sexual cases, PRO, MEPO 2/5889.

Kendall, noted: 'I am certain that most of our children legislation is very much hampered by well meant attempts to interfere between parents and their children on the part of people who, having no children of their own, imagine that they have been selected by heaven to look after other people's.'<sup>53</sup> Commissioner Sir Philip Game was somewhat taken aback at this unchivalrous attitude: 'it is a little hard to label them female busybodies'.<sup>54</sup> Wyles and Peto, both single women of independent means, had, in some respects, much more in common with these spinster 'female busy-bodies' than they did with male CID officers. They argued that although the moral welfare workers were volunteers, they were specially trained women who worked closely with the LCC's child care committees. The issue here, however, was not just that of 'amateur' intervention; rather it involved issues of confidentiality, trust, and parental rights. It was decided that cases would be passed on to Moral Welfare Committees at the discretion of the police. Three years later the committees complained they had received very few. Sir Philip Game argued that

the police have to consider the views of the parents of the children in these cases, and where the parents are decent people and prefer to deal with the trouble themselves, their views have to be requested unless the home conditions are so bad as to make it necessary for the local authority to be informed.<sup>55</sup>

Kendall's comments regarding women 'selected by heaven' are also revealing because they show that Wyles and Peto had themselves become respected as police officers by 1936. Wyles had gained a reputation for acting firmly and sensibly in male police eyes. In 1942 Kendall agreed that Wyles should represent the Met at a meeting on juvenile delinquency in wartime organized by the St Pancras Borough Youth Committee on the grounds that 'she can hold her own with cranks as well as most people'. There was some suggestion, although apparently unconfirmed, that this voluntary group might be 'tainted with the communist bug'.<sup>56</sup> Women officers had managed to develop an appropriate identity alongside an existing male culture that led to their acceptance; they were viewed as *bona fide* police in opposition to the 'cranks' and 'busy-bodies' outside.

The issue of confidentiality and legality, which had framed the discussion of moral welfare work, was to come up again in a series of disputes involving probation officers in the 1950s and early 1960s. By 1945 it had become an established practice in London's juvenile courts that, in care or protection cases, children's statements were taken in advance by a woman police officer and handed to magistrates to avoid the need for a child to give evidence publicly. Probation officers, who had to prepare reports and recommendations on the child and family concerned, were allowed to look at a copy of the statement but not to

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. This position did not change after the introduction of the 1948 act, although there was renewed discussion: see PRO, MEPO 2/8265.

<sup>56</sup> Juvenile delinquency in wartime, PRO, MEPO 2/6226.

retain it. Tempers were frayed and incidents arose ‘causing bad feeling’ when probation officers refused to hand reports back to women police officers at the end of the hearing. One woman constable described her visit to the probation officer: ‘Miss T— turned extremely red and looked as if she had completely lost her temper. She raised her voice and said “get out of my office. I intend to take all this statement down in shorthand. It has nothing to do with police. We are entitled to keep these statements as long as we want.”’<sup>57</sup> The police argued that care or protection statements were *sub judice* since they might contain information that could lead to further investigations and criminal proceedings against parents. Probation officers on the other hand clearly felt that the police were being obstructive by prioritizing legal/judicial frameworks over child welfare.

Inter-professional rivalries were inevitable perhaps, as different, new, and increasingly feminized occupations negotiated and carved out their role in relation to the growing industry of child welfare.<sup>58</sup> It was argued that Children’s Officers and Child Care Officers, who worked 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., five days a week, were often unobtainable when cases came to light, so that any woman police officer on duty had to find a ‘place of safety’ and begin proceedings without consultation.<sup>59</sup> Women police had to be reminded in 1960 that they needed to submit forms to both the Children’s Officer and the NSPCC where family problems or possible neglect had been identified; in some cases this had not been done.<sup>60</sup> Despite these tensions, a close working relationship was gradually constructed. Moreover, social work practices were influential in shaping the rhetoric and method of women’s policing work.

#### IV

In his analysis of the technologies of family intervention in the modern liberal state, Donzelot examined the replacement of an older system based on ‘police and judicial authority’ with a new medical and educative framework, in which prevention is favoured over punishment as ‘welfare’ is prioritized.<sup>61</sup> For Donzelot, however, these models were neither conflictual nor oppositional; rather, like a nest of Russian dolls, ‘there is an initial model, the judicial one, of which all the others are only enveloping copies’.<sup>62</sup> Social workers act as ‘aide and benefactor and as supervisor and cop’.<sup>63</sup> Likewise, British policing has never been a simple

<sup>57</sup> Children and young persons in need of care or protection: taking of statements, PRO, MEPO 2/6632. <sup>58</sup> R. G. Walton, *Women in social work* (London, 1975).

<sup>59</sup> Meetings of women inspectors and sergeants, PRO, MEPO 2/8634. In April 1956 ‘C’ Division reported problems with the closure of the Children’s Department over the weekend: ‘From 4.30 p.m. Friday to 9.30 p.m. on Monday we are COMPLETELY cut off.’ In February 1961 ‘N’ Division reported a problem with their area Children’s Officer who had allegedly told them to phone after 5 p.m. if a place of safety was required, when, in fact the office had closed. Other divisions reported ‘the utmost co-operation’.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, minutes, Apr. 1960.

<sup>61</sup> Donzelot, *Policing of families*, pp. 96–7, 105.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 98.

<sup>63</sup> D. Walkowitz, *Working with class: social workers and the politics of middle class-identity* (Chapel Hill, 2000), p. 20.

matter of arresting all those who are known to have committed offences; the issue of who is to be charged is discretionary and pragmatic.<sup>64</sup> Policing was not simply a matter of the 'judicial' but involved other strategies of surveillance. Furthermore, the stress on 'crime prevention' in British policing created an area of potential overlap with the modern social work agenda, which also stressed preventative frameworks. Police, like social workers, increasingly drew on what they considered to be an ethic of care in their dealings with families as well as on a disciplinary framework. Because decisions were based on normative judgements – the 1933 Children and Young Persons Act, for example, required an assessment of what constituted an 'unfit' parent or guardian – the notion of 'care' was necessarily bound up with mechanisms of control.<sup>65</sup> The 'judicial' cannot simply be mapped on to the British police nor the medical/educative framework on to modern social workers; both were manifestations of each other and both were present within the repertoires of these occupational groups.

The 1933 legislation linked the 'deprived' with the 'depraved', locating both child victims and child offenders within a continuum of delinquency.<sup>66</sup> In the inter- and post-war period, care and control were explicitly constructed as flip-sides of one coin within the rhetoric of social work, official legislation, and policing. Peto highlighted the preventive powers of the act:

It will be appreciated that, prior to 1933, there was no provision for dealing with adolescents in need of care or protection, or beyond control; and that therefore young people who did not respond voluntarily to help or advice from Police Officers on the beat had to be left to their own devices unless, or until, it became possible to prefer a charge of wandering abroad, solicitation, or, sometimes, of theft.<sup>67</sup>

It was this linking of 'deprived' and 'depraved' that enabled Peto to claim a significant role for women police in the administration and enforcement of the act. The 'preventive' aspect of policing involved the rescue of the 'deprived' before they became enmeshed in criminal activity.

Women police officers were called upon to deal with young female offenders; it was constantly emphasized, however, that they tended to carry out less work with real 'delinquents' than male officers.<sup>68</sup> Statistically, the number of adolescent girl offenders was far lower than that of boys. 'Depravity' for girls still meant sexual precocity rather than criminal activity.<sup>69</sup> The 'young girl problem' of the Second World War was concerned with the congregation of adolescent girls in areas associated with British and American troops: the main railway stations and places of entertainment such as Piccadilly Circus. Official responses to the problem concentrated on the regulation of female sexuality. In 1946 Peto argued in her

<sup>64</sup> For police discretion see M. Brogden, *On the Mersey beat: policing Liverpool between the wars* (Oxford, 1991).

<sup>65</sup> Although it was a magisterial responsibility to make the final decision as to whether a parent was 'fit' or 'unfit', the police were involved in decisions regarding whether to proceed.

<sup>66</sup> Hendrick, *Child welfare*, p. 182.

<sup>67</sup> Peto, *Memoirs*, pp. 65–6.

<sup>68</sup> MPM, MWPAP, 1943.

<sup>69</sup> Mahood, *Policing gender*.

annual report that the 'young girl problem' was connected both to poor home surroundings and to psychiatric problems:

When the antecedents of these young girls are studied they fall, almost without exception into the category termed in the Report of the Care of Children Committee 'deprived' – i.e. deprived of normal home life ... For the old cases which come to notice again and again some special form of treatment is urgently needed. Many of these girls are mentally unstable and if they are not adequately treated now will soon have passed out of the jurisdiction of the Children & Young Persons Act to form a permanent social problem amongst the adult population.<sup>70</sup>

Ideas of the judicial, the medical, and the educative are contained clearly within her diagnosis. The 'education' of parents, child guidance for their daughters, and, in the most urgent cases, removal to approved schools are all hinted at. The problem of the 'young girl' merged with notions of the 'problem family' in the late 1940s and early 1950s: she was clearly one of its products and, if not 'treated' would go on to become a 'problem mother'.<sup>71</sup>

Statistics cited in the annual reports of the Metropolitan Women Police show a sizeable increase over time in the volume of cases relating to the 1933 Children and Young Persons Act that were handled by women police officers (see Table 1). In the majority of cases where formal action was taken, juvenile court proceedings for care or protection resulted; only a minority of investigations led to criminal prosecutions for cruelty, desertion, or neglect. In numerical terms, care or protection proceedings increased ten-fold between 1937 and 1967. However, it is worth taking into account the five-fold increase in the number of women officers in this thirty-year period; arguably more cases came to police notice because more women were actively patrolling the beat. There are also noticeable fluctuations within the thirty years. Both in basic numerical terms and in terms of proceedings per officer, the war years seem to have led to an increase in police activity concerning 'care or protection', both reinforcing and reflecting concerns about the 'young girl problem'.

Table 1 also shows the impact of the 1963 Children and Young Persons Act, which began the process of transferring all decision making to local authorities. All cases had to be referred to the Children's Department for consultation instead of being brought directly to court by the police. Whereas the Metropolitan Women Police had undertaken 897 'care or protection' proceedings in 1963, it was only responsible for 627 such actions in 1965; it was pointed out, however, that a further 757 cases of concern had been forwarded to the local authority.<sup>72</sup> The 'beyond control' clause of the 1933 act (s. 64) was used far less frequently than care or protection proceedings, although there was a sudden jump in the use of this clause in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The 1963 Children and Young

<sup>70</sup> MPM, MWPAR, 1946. The reference here is to the Curtis committee of 1945–6.

<sup>71</sup> A. F. Philp and N. Timms, *The problem of 'the problem family'* (London, 1957). P. Starkey, 'The feckless mother: women, poverty and social workers in wartime and post-war England', *Women's History Review*, 9 (2000), pp. 539–58.

<sup>72</sup> MPM, MWPAR, 1965.

Table 1 *Metropolitan Women Police: action under the 1933 Children and Young Persons Act (and subsequent child welfare legislation)*

Year	Women officers: total strength	Care or protection proceedings	Care or protection proceedings per officer	'Beyond control' proceedings	Prosecution for neglect, cruelty, or desertion
1937	96	62	0.65	2	3
1939	155	98	0.63	17	5
1941	180	231	1.28	22	6
1943	176	399	2.26	22	26
1945	154	351	2.28	13	28
1947	194	282	1.45	8	25
1949	256	285	1.11	25	16
1951	374	539	1.44	2	14
1953	466	577	1.24	17	24
1955	499	595	1.12	9	14
1957	494	773	1.56	27	15
1959	478	732	1.53	91	14
1961	440	895	2.04	Not given	14
1963	468	897	1.91	169	16
1965	479	627	1.30	—	23
1967	544	654	1.20	—	23

*Source:* Metropolitan Police Museum, Metropolitan Women Police annual reports.

Persons Act (effective in the following year) finally removed this separate provision which had become increasingly controversial because it effectively enabled parents to take court action against their own children.

The statistics are limited in that they do not indicate the outcomes of prosecutions or proceedings. Neither do the data indicate the volume of investigative and advisory work that did not lead to formal proceedings. In 1959, for example, court action was pursued in 732 care or protection cases, 91 'beyond control' cases, and 14 cruelty or neglect cases; the A-4 index, however, received information about 7,000 cases in which there were concerns about children or 'problem families'.<sup>73</sup> As Miss Elizabeth Bather (who had succeeded Peto in 1946) wrote in her annual report for 1950, 'much of the work of women police cannot however be shown on returns. Hundreds of cases of children and young persons were during the year helped and advised or referred, either direct or through A-4 Branch, to the appropriate welfare authority.'<sup>74</sup> It was stressed that formal action was avoided wherever possible: 'every effort is made by women police to find

<sup>73</sup> MPM, MWPAR, 1959.

<sup>74</sup> MPM, MWPAR, 1950.

a satisfactory alternative to bringing a case of care or protection and much work is done in this respect with statutory and voluntary societies'.<sup>75</sup> The Women Police branch echoed the prevailing emphasis on the centrality of the family in post-war reconstruction. Finally, the statistics and, indeed, the annual reports in which they appeared, do not reveal the day-to-day detail of women's involvement with children and young persons nor the ways in which 'satisfactory alternatives' could be suggested or negotiated. To investigate the 'policing of families' at grass-roots level a different kind of source is required.

In addition to the collation of information about children and families through the central A-4 index, women police within the MPD kept their own 'story book' in each station. The majority of these books seem to have disappeared with the folding of the Women Police branch. However, two story books for one station in an outlying division have been preserved in the archive of the Metropolitan Women Police Association. Covering the years 1965 to 1970, they provide an extremely useful insight into the daily work of women police in the era before integration.<sup>76</sup> The story book functioned as a detailed diary, recording all dealings with women and children whether or not charges arose, enabling women officers working different duties to have an entire range of 'knowledge' at their fingertips. Carefully cross-referenced with a name index at the front, it provided a log of information concerning 'families that have come to our attention'. Women's work patterns varied across the MPD depending on the economic, social, and cultural geography of distinct neighbourhoods as much as on the localized organization of police duties. For example, the west end ('C' Division) acted as a magnet for children who had absconded from approved schools or run away from home; the children it dealt with were often itinerant. Women officers at West End Central, which acted as a training station, spent a great deal of time patrolling the beat on the look-out for truants and runaways or checking clubs and pubs for under-age drinkers. The two existing story books, for a much smaller station with only two women officers attached to it, reflect a different set of concerns associated with a suburban residential area. Incidents recorded in the story books can be grouped into the following predominant categories: reports from parents that children were missing from home, cases of truancy, allegations of neglect or cruelty, reports of unlawful sexual intercourse between adolescent boys and girls under sixteen, and allegations of indecent assault (often involving teenage girls and boys). Less numerous were cases of children or young girls found shoplifting or thieving.

The story books can only offer a snapshot of the work of a small number of women police officers at a particular station during a particular span of years. However, given that specialist training and supervisory structures aimed to guarantee a certain level of uniformity across the Met, they can also be seen as

<sup>75</sup> MPM, MWPAR, 1963.

<sup>76</sup> Station story books, 1965-70, London, Metropolitan Women Police Association Archive (MWPA). The name of the station is not given for reasons of confidentiality.

unique indicators of the possible frameworks and repertoires that shaped family intervention in the mid-1960s. The story books show that considerable professional discretion was necessarily exercised in the decision to prosecute or begin proceedings, to administer a warning, to refer to another agency or to take no further action. Such discretion was based on an 'external' assessment of family relationships in line with expectations about the appropriate roles of parent and child. Liaising closely with the NSPCC and officers attached to statutory bodies (Child Care Officers, local authority health visitors, and probation officers) in line with the spirit and intent of the 1963 Children and Young Person's Act, women police were often still the first point of contact.

If the archetypal police document was the dry, factual 'specimen' report studied and emulated by new recruits in the first few days of training school, the station story books kept by women police officers were very different in tone and style. Often stressing subjective and highly personal feelings and impressions, the language has more in common with social workers' casework records:<sup>77</sup> 'the child more or less does as he likes', 'mother seems a sensible type', 'he appears to me to be an objectionable person' and 'my sympathy is with the child', 'mother seems simple and ... is so lax on discipline', 'I feel this girl will come to our police notice again', 'good home, parents able to cope'.<sup>78</sup> At an official level, the annual reports of the Metropolitan Women Police tended to argue that 'poor housing, lowered moral standards and a high illegitimate birth rate' were key factors in cases of child neglect and deprivation.<sup>79</sup> Whilst they made a range of normative judgements about character and behaviour, the station story books show that policewomen did not necessarily discriminate against the poor or those living out of wedlock: 'the home is poor and untidy, but the children are cared for and well nourished' and 'they appear genuinely fond of their children ... it would appear that apathy on the part of both parents was the cause of the house being so filthy'.<sup>80</sup> A distinction was made between the bare surroundings expected of grinding poverty and the kind of dirt and squalour that was 'disgusting and in all probability verminous', which was seen as indicative of the 'problem family'.<sup>81</sup> Children were only removed as an emergency measure if it could be proved their lives were in serious danger, reflecting the wider social work focus on keeping families together; in most instances policewomen liaised with health visitors who advised mothers on cleanliness, health, and hygiene.<sup>82</sup> 'Moral' judgements were made with regard to industry or idleness. The discussion of love and affection between parent and child reflected training course lectures on psychology and,

<sup>77</sup> See Roof, *A hundred years of family welfare*, pp. 250–71 and 329–54; also M. Peplar, *Family matters: a history of ideas about family since 1945* (Harlow, 2002), pp. 64–7.

<sup>78</sup> MWPA, station story books, entries for 29 June 1965, 28 June 1965, 28 June 1965, 25 Aug. 1965, 20 Aug. 1966, 17 July 1965. <sup>79</sup> MPM, MWPA, 1963.

<sup>80</sup> MWPA, station story books, 20 Aug. 1965 and 2 Mar. 1966.

<sup>81</sup> MWPA, station story books, 6 Aug. 1965. Starkey, 'The idea of the feckless mother', p. 522, suggests that the focus on individual weakness avoided acknowledgement of social and economic causation.

<sup>82</sup> MWPA, station story books, 18 Jan. 1966.

in particular, the influence of Bowlby and Winnicott.<sup>83</sup> Informal ‘psychiatric’ assessments of parent and children were noted: ‘I left feeling dissatisfied that nothing can be done about mother, as she is obviously unstable but I cannot prove anything.’<sup>84</sup> This mental health agenda resonates with approaches adopted by both the Family Welfare Association and the Family Service Units, studied in detail by Lewis and Starkey, although the Metropolitan women do not appear to have worked with them directly.<sup>85</sup>

The majority of the cases described in the station story books were dealt with through home visits, advice, or a warning: ‘I attempted to talk some sense into her’; ‘read the riot act but doubt if this will do any good’.<sup>86</sup> The judicial – the threat of prosecution or removal of children – was invoked in order to exert influence and to demonstrate authority. Mothers and fathers might request police intervention in the disciplining of their children. Parental anxiety about adolescent sexuality often led to requests for assistance: ‘Father requested that I see J— and attempt to warn her of the dangers she is letting herself into regarding undesirable boyfriends.’<sup>87</sup> Despite the threat of the judicial, however, it was often an educative strategy that was adopted. Where parents reported unlawful sexual intercourse between fifteen-year-old daughters and an adolescent male partner, they were advised to avoid prosecution. A policeman and a woman officer usually counselled the male and female partners respectively. Women police were asked to give practical information in a world of limited choices. When parents discovered that their sixteen-year-old daughter was pregnant in 1965, a policewoman was able to advise about mother and baby homes and anti-natal clinics. Although the parents were presented as supportive of their daughter and ‘prepared to help in every way’, the stigma of having an illegitimate baby was highlighted in this case: plans were made for the girl to stay with her aunt in Scotland where she could have the baby before giving it up for adoption.<sup>88</sup> Although the ‘beyond control’ clause had in fact been removed, some parents nevertheless invoked it and in doing so did not necessarily meet police sympathy. A father’s claims that his daughter had been missing from home ‘dozens of times’ remained unsubstantiated and the woman officer who was called out became increasingly concerned about the effect of his moaning and criticism on his daughter.<sup>89</sup> The station story books show that policewomen were called upon to intervene in

<sup>83</sup> J. Bowlby, *Maternal health and maternal care* (Geneva, 1951); C. Winnicott, R. Shepherd, and M. Davis, eds., *D. W. Winnicott, deprivation and delinquency* (London, 1984).

<sup>84</sup> MWPAA, station story books, 25 Nov. 1965.

<sup>85</sup> J. Lewis, *The voluntary sector, the state and social work in Britain* (Aldershot, 1995); P. Starkey, ‘Mental incapacity, ill-health and poverty: family failure in post-war Britain’, in J. Lawrence and P. Starkey, eds., *Child welfare and social action in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: international perspectives* (Liverpool, 2001), pp. 256–72. Although the FWA and the FSUs stressed their differences, the psychodynamic approach was common to both. The Women Police, like the FSUs, used the rhetoric of the ‘problem family’.

<sup>86</sup> MWPAA, station story books, 25 Aug. 1965 and 2 July 1965.

<sup>87</sup> MWPAA, station story books, 10 Oct. 1965.

<sup>88</sup> MWPAA, station story books, 9 Aug. 1965.

<sup>89</sup> MWPAA, station story books, 28 June 1965.

disputes between parents and children, often at the request of parties involved. The entries in the story books indicate the weighing up of character, mental health, and disposition that affected the decision-making process.

The poignant narratives of child abuse that are collected in the station story books are also testimony to the necessity for judicial intervention at key moments in order to save lives; at these moments the 'judicial' is most obviously as concerned with the 'welfare' of victims as with the 'control' of law-breakers. In several cases women officers investigating alleged neglect or assault refused to leave a house until they had seen a child. In January 1968 a six-month-old baby was discovered, by two women officers, in her urine-soaked cot with open sores all over her body; the divisional police surgeon was summoned, who ordered her immediate removal to hospital. Care or protection proceedings were undertaken by one of the officers concerned, whilst detectives prosecuted the parents for wilful neglect; the father was fined £50 and the mother was placed on a probation order.<sup>90</sup>

Whilst child abuse is a brutal physical phenomenon, it is also culturally constructed in the sense that processes of labelling and publicizing bring different forms of violence to critical attention within particular epochs.<sup>91</sup> It is possible to argue that concerns about the 'white slave trade' that were voiced in Lilian Wyles's memoirs with reference to the 1920s and 1930s euphemistically veiled a panic about the sexual abuse of girls and young women. This is reflected in the Public Record Office files for this period: where the Women Police branch discusses child abuse, it is overwhelmingly in the context of sexual offences. In the 1960s child neglect tended to set the agenda and framed most of the incidents recorded in the station story books. Neglect cases were differentiated from 'cruelty' in that they were assumed to involve passive deprivation rather than active and aggressive physical assault: 'failure to provide adequate food, clothing, medical aid or lodging'.<sup>92</sup> However, the boundary was an extremely arbitrary one and both converged on an abused or marked body. In cases explicitly labelled as 'cruelty' there were also grey areas of interpretation. Acknowledgement that parents had a right to use corporal punishment if they so wished meant that cases which may have been abusive were often dealt with by a warning, although they were reported to the Children's Department and details kept.<sup>93</sup>

In aspects of their work, women police developed different perspectives to those of male officers in their dealings with women and child complainants. Elements within the male establishment found it hard to accept an argument that sexually assaulted children required special attention. Although Sir Philip Game was sympathetic to the value of aftercare, the CID central office reported in 1936 that 'they have suffered no physical harm and probably very little moral harm and I am sure they are in no need of attention on the part of a woman worker who

<sup>90</sup> MWPA, station story books, 23 Jan. 1968.

<sup>91</sup> Hendrick, *Child welfare*, pp. 242–53; R. Dingwall, J. Eckelar, and T. Murray, *The protection of children: state intervention and family life* (Oxford, 1983), pp. 1–5.

<sup>92</sup> 23 Geo. 5, ch. 12, s. 1.

<sup>93</sup> MWPA, station story books, 10 June 1967 and 15 Sept. 1967.

I understand is about seventy years of age'.<sup>94</sup> Although there was considerable silence surrounding sexual abuse between the demise of first wave feminism and the emergence of the women's liberation movement in the 1970s, the Met's women police officers were very aware of its prevalence and saw its effects on a regular basis. Lilian Wyles wrote to Edith Tancred in 1949 concerning her plans to publish her memoirs: 'I think the stress and anguish of mind caused to the child and young girl by assaults upon it and her should be brought before the public who have no knowledge for the most part of what is happening around them.'<sup>95</sup>

Yet women police also made judgements about female victims that subscribed to a particular notion of feminine virtue which reflected the mood of male colleagues. The station story books show that allegations of rape were often easily dismissed even by women officers, particularly when both parties were adolescent and the girls were known to be sexually active: 'she said she was unwilling but obviously did not make a very determined effort to fend him off'.<sup>96</sup> In another case it was reported: 'Now it appears she is pregnant. In her panic to get away with it to parents – who are useless – she concocted the story.'<sup>97</sup> Beneath these descriptions of adolescent precocity there is a sub-text: of young women confused about courtship, of an inability to articulate their wishes and desires, of the possibly predatory behaviour of certain adolescent boys. This sub-text occasionally permeates the dominant account as the following example demonstrates:

at first it seemed a malicious story ... She admitted that a little while ago she had had intercourse with him – she said against her will – but I doubt it ... I felt there was more in the story, but she had gone out ... A further visit promised in a few weeks time to see that all is well.<sup>98</sup>

The woman officer's increasing sense of unease and uncertainty is conveyed in a disrupted narrative where there is no sense of closure.

The welfare and preventive role of both male and female officers was also developed in the 1960s through the introduction of Juvenile Liaison Schemes (JLSs), following a model that had been pioneered in Liverpool from 1949 onwards. The first JLS in London was set up in 1961 in the borough of West Ham, where small mixed teams of officers aimed to counteract delinquent tendencies in children and young people by liaising with all local groups and individuals interested in child welfare. These included education authorities, head teachers, probation officers, youth club workers, parents, and shop managers.<sup>99</sup> Yet the spirit of co-operation between the NSPCC, statutory welfare agencies and police that is conveyed in the development of JLSs and the station story books conceals

<sup>94</sup> Welfare work and aftercare, PRO, MEPO 2/5389.

<sup>95</sup> Wyles to Tancred, 21 May 1949, WYAS, Tancred papers, box 5.

<sup>96</sup> MWPAA, station story books, 2 July 1968.

<sup>97</sup> MWPAA, station story books, 12 Apr. 1968.

<sup>98</sup> MWPAA, station story books, 20 Aug. 1965.

<sup>99</sup> Juvenile Liaison Schemes, PRO, HO287/620.

continued concerns regarding the preventive/'welfare' remit of policing. The Met had voiced hesitancy over the introduction of JLSs and the Ingleby committee had argued in 1960 that 'while the police Juvenile Liaison Officers did much good work, it was work which required special training and should be done by other agencies'.<sup>100</sup> By attempting to expand their 'welfare' role, male officers and mixed teams were faced with the dilemma that had confronted women police pioneers in the early 1920s: that 'welfare' work was not proper 'police' work. They were also treading on the toes of other occupational groups. Whilst the JLSs continued in the Met until 1970, they were reviewed on an annual basis and viewed as a temporary expedient.

Although the 1933 Children and Young Persons Act had depicted the models of 'care' and 'justice' as symbiotic, the mood was clearly swinging for two reasons that can be loosely identified as professional/practical, and ethical/political. First, as social workers carved out a professional niche in relationship to both state policy and perceived client need during the 1950s and 1960s, police involvement in 'welfare' work was deemed inappropriate and amateurish. Through their professional associations, social workers influenced the agendas and debates of the Ingleby committee (1958–60) and the Seebohm committee (1968), attempting to consolidate their role in relation to the state. It was argued in both reports that responsibility for child welfare was shared too broadly, which meant that children and families could easily slip through the 'welfare' net; preventive work should be co-ordinated by a single family-oriented agency (Ingleby report) or community-oriented agency (Seebohm report).<sup>101</sup> Secondly, the relationship between 'judicial' and 'welfare' frameworks – 'care' and 'control' – was increasingly problematized. The Ingleby report of 1960 argued that the two models of 'welfare' and the 'judicial' were inconsistent, based as they were on irreconcilable principles: 'criminal responsibility is focused on an allegation about some particular act isolated from the character and needs of the defendant, whereas welfare depends on a complex of personal, family and social considerations'.<sup>102</sup> Whilst reinforcing the spirit of 'welfarism' – that 'demonstrable improvements could be made in the lives of individuals and families following discernable professional involvement' – social workers were attempting to de-link themselves from the 'authority' associated with the judicial as they built up 'supportive' involvement with clients, positioning themselves as intermediaries rather than representatives of the state.<sup>103</sup> The 1963 Children and Young Persons Act assisted the transfer of discretion from police to social workers by making it a requirement that police consult with Child Care Officers before taking children to court as in need of care

<sup>100</sup> Ibid. See also PP, *Report of the committee on children and young persons* (Ingleby report), Cmd. 1191 (London, 1960), pp. 49–51.

<sup>101</sup> Ingleby report, Cmd. 1191; PP, *Report of the committee on local authority and allied personal services* (Seebohm report), Cmd. 3703 (London, 1968).

<sup>102</sup> See Hendrick, *Child welfare*, p. 225, and Ingleby report, p. 24, s. 60.

<sup>103</sup> O. Otway, 'Social work with children and families: from child welfare to child protection', in N. Parton, ed., *Social theory, social change and social work* (London, 1996), pp. 152–71, at p. 154.

or protection (rather than simply reporting their actions). The transfer of authority and responsibility was further effected through the Children and Young Persons Act of 1969 which legislated that juveniles could only be arrested where unavoidable; children would be summoned, cautioned, or dealt with in another way wherever possible.<sup>104</sup>

The desire to separate 'welfare' from the 'judicial' – and, rhetorically, to distinguish between 'care' and 'control' – not only exposed existing tensions between police and social workers but also created new ones. There were clearly those within the Met (such as those involved in the JLS) who were willing to expand their 'welfare' role to suit new social policy agendas; they were competing against a viewpoint that sought to reduce police involvement and to concentrate decision making in the hands of social workers. There were also police officers who voiced concerns that law enforcement was being ignored as a new emphasis on client needs became the order of the day.<sup>105</sup> The potential for conflict between police officers and social workers was exacerbated when the local authority welfare departments, including the Children's Departments with which Metropolitan women police officers had developed a very strong relationship over a thirty-year period, were collapsed into one large umbrella department – Social Services – in 1971. Social Services' staff were often perceived by police as immature, inexperienced, and out of their depth in their new and substantive role as lynch-pins of child welfare policy. Jennifer Hilton, then a woman police inspector at Hammersmith, wrote in 1972 that 'many social workers, especially since the expansion of the social services, are themselves young and newly independent of parental authority. This may make it difficult for them to see the necessity of providing a firm framework of consistent rules to control the young offenders that they supervise'.<sup>106</sup> She argued that Child Care Officers had played a more 'passive' role, responding to referrals by other parties (including the police). In relation to their dealings with both child offenders and child victims, the social workers associated with Social Services were characterized as 'uneasy in their new role of active interventionists in family life'.<sup>107</sup>

## V

During the inter-war period the Metropolitan Women Police branch successfully created a distinct role for women officers by drawing on existing policing

<sup>104</sup> For the police response, see J. Hilton, 'Juvenile delinquents: care or control?' *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 16 (1972), pp. 194–200.

<sup>105</sup> For police complaints about the non-prosecution of parents by social workers in relation to 'battered babies' see minutes of the national conference of senior policewomen, 1970, GMPM, Bohanna papers. For the views of social workers that police were a potential source of difficulty in the early 1970s, see E. Baher et al., *At risk: an account of the work of the battered child research department* (London, 1976). Otway, 'Social work with children and families', p. 154, points out that police were not incorporated into case conferences until 1978.

<sup>106</sup> Hilton, 'Juvenile delinquents', p. 198, argued that the treatment of offenders had tipped too much in favour of 'care'.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 194.

models – in particular the preventive and discretionary roles – and combining them with the specifically feminine sphere of child protection. The women's branch strove to maintain a feminine identity and a police identity, whilst working alongside other voluntary workers and paid professionals whose own repertoires informed the practices of women police. By the 1960s the women's branch was working most closely with the NSPCC, the probation service, and local authority statutory agencies. Women police developed styles of record-keeping and family intervention that imitated modern social casework. This locus of activity was dependent on a broadly consensual belief in a benign paternalist/maternalist state, in which 'welfare' and 'penalty/justice' were complementary concepts. Professional tensions were apparent throughout the period, emerging most clearly when judicial frameworks were challenged by voluntary workers or probation officers seeking to prioritize what they saw as the well-being of the child. For the first half of the twentieth century, however, 'care' and 'control' existed as symbiotic rather than potentially competing elements within policy frameworks. The de-stabilization of this previously close relationship, most obviously during the 1960s, led to a gradual undermining of the 'specialist' work of women police officers, whose position was based on the assumption that 'care' and 'control' were implicitly connected. By 1969, in any case, women had moved into almost all areas of policing, whilst male officers were involved in the JLSs and subsequently in the Juvenile Bureaux that reported to Social Services in the wake of the 1969 act.<sup>108</sup> The specific connection between women police and social/welfare work was, arguably, no longer tenable.

Thus the late 1960s and early 1970s saw the convergence of a number of factors which led to the fracturing of police involvement in child welfare: the creation of Social Services departments with an expanded remit, the de-linking of 'welfare' and 'justice', the souring of relationships between police officers and social workers, and the expansion of women into all areas of policing. With the dissolution of the Met's A-4 branch, the specialist police records concerning children and families that had formed the A-4 index were discontinued. Yet the tables were to turn again. The modernist faith in 'welfarism' began to collapse during the mid-1970s as critiques of social democracy emerged from the far left and then the new right.<sup>109</sup> During the 1980s British social workers were confronted with a series of crises, including inquiries into the deaths of Jasmine Beckford (1985) and Tyra Henry (1987), and the investigation into the Cleveland sexual abuse cases of 1987–8. The development of further legislation (the Children Act of 1989) and the publication of new Home Office guidelines for social work practice led in the 1990s to a focus on child protection and children's rights rather than family welfare. This was paralleled by a renewed emphasis on 'justice-oriented' rather than 'welfare-oriented' social work. Once again, policing and social work

<sup>108</sup> Lock, *British policewoman*, p. 200.

<sup>109</sup> M. Sullivan, *The politics of social policy* (Hemel Hempstead, 1992).

merged; this time, however, social workers were encouraged to replace therapy with surveillance and to adopt the language of policing.<sup>110</sup>

This study of the work of women in the Metropolitan Police prior to integration has sought to demonstrate that 'welfare' and 'policing' were not discrete entities in twentieth-century Britain. Women in the Met used their responsibilities in relation to child victims and young female offenders to develop a significant role in terms of the 'policing of families'. Clearly a wider comparative study of the work of women in other constabularies is needed. As the largest Women Police branch in Britain, the Met's women were undoubtedly influential in shaping policing protocols. However, given that both social work and policing responsibilities were devolved to local authorities and constabularies by central government, practices at a grass-roots level were variable, dependent on the local interpretation and negotiation of legislative frameworks. Whilst women officers worked most specifically with young children and adolescent girls in the period before integration, male officers were required to deal with adolescent boys and their families amidst increasing concerns about levels of juvenile delinquency. Clearly, the preventive work of male officers needs to be put under a similar microscope if the historical relationship between policing, welfare policy, and family intervention is to be more fully delineated.

<sup>110</sup> Otway, 'Social work'; D. Howe, 'Surface and depth in social-work practice', in Parton, ed., *Social theory, social change and social work*, pp. 77–97; O. Stevenson, 'Children in need and abused: inter-personal and interagency responses', in O. Stevenson, ed., *Child welfare in the United Kingdom, 1948–1998* (London, 1999), pp. 100–20.