

Creating alongsideness  
in community practice  
as we each ask,  
'how can we improve what  
we are doing?'

Robyn Pound  
health visitor

Presentation to Adlerian Society  
London  
December 2005

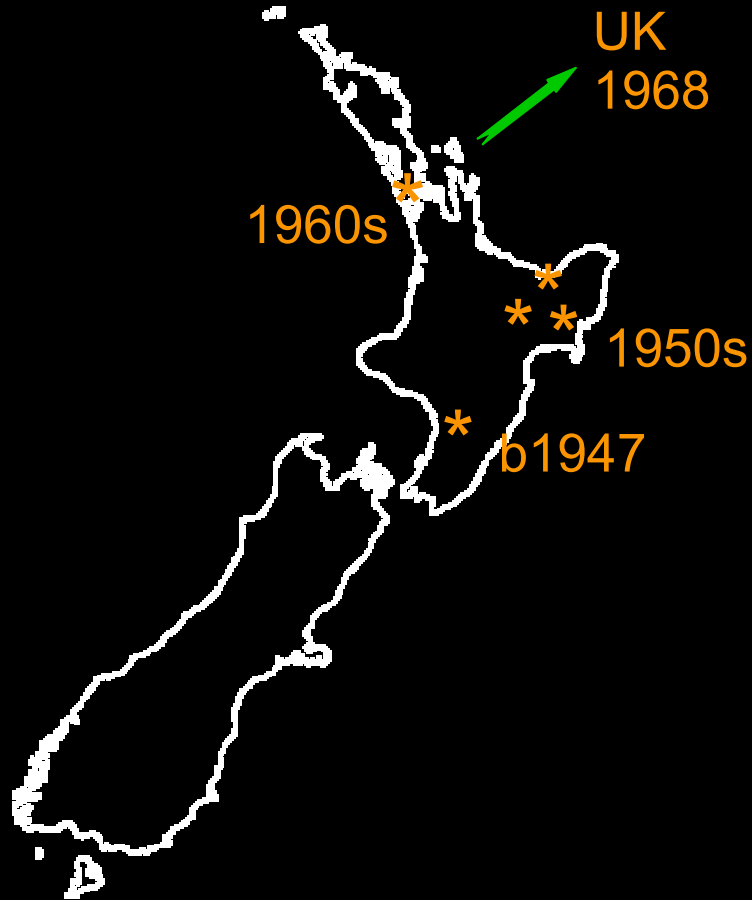
My purpose is:

- to show my journey of discovery as a health visitor, as a parent and as a person.
- to show unity between Adlerian theory (Mosak and Maniacci, 1991) and my research methodology - living theory action enquiry (Whitehead, 1989)
  - Adlerian theory helps me with what I now see as 'living my life as enquiry'
  - basic tenets are common to both research and practice
  - individual practitioner research can have academic validity

The journey started as a search  
to improve my professional practice ...  
my work became collaborative enquiry  
with families, colleagues and others

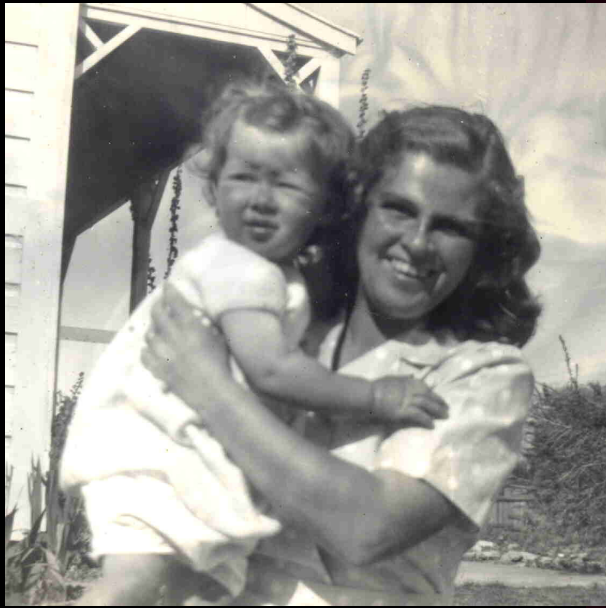
... first, some personal background that led to my research

who am I?



- born New Zealand in 1947
- second child of two (15 months gap)
- early life in remote rural communities - no electricity, shops or telephone
- egalitarian NZ climate of time
  - 'a fair go for all'
  - hierarchically flat
  - formalised in institutions
  - and local circumstances
    - new farming community, everyone in same situation and same stage of life
  - I noticed social class when I arrived in UK

early family experiences influenced my beliefs, values and motivations



exploring my early recollections I began to understand myself. I discovered roots to my sense of equality, connectedness, self reliance, independence, feelings of inadequacy, humour (Pound,2000)

Moving to Auckland I became a nurse.  
I came to UK in 1968 and became a health visitor.

## Health visiting is:

community nursing to  
promote wellbeing and prevent ill health

in families and communities  
spans primary care and public health

some context leading to the research ...

I see my work to be focused on:

# Mental health

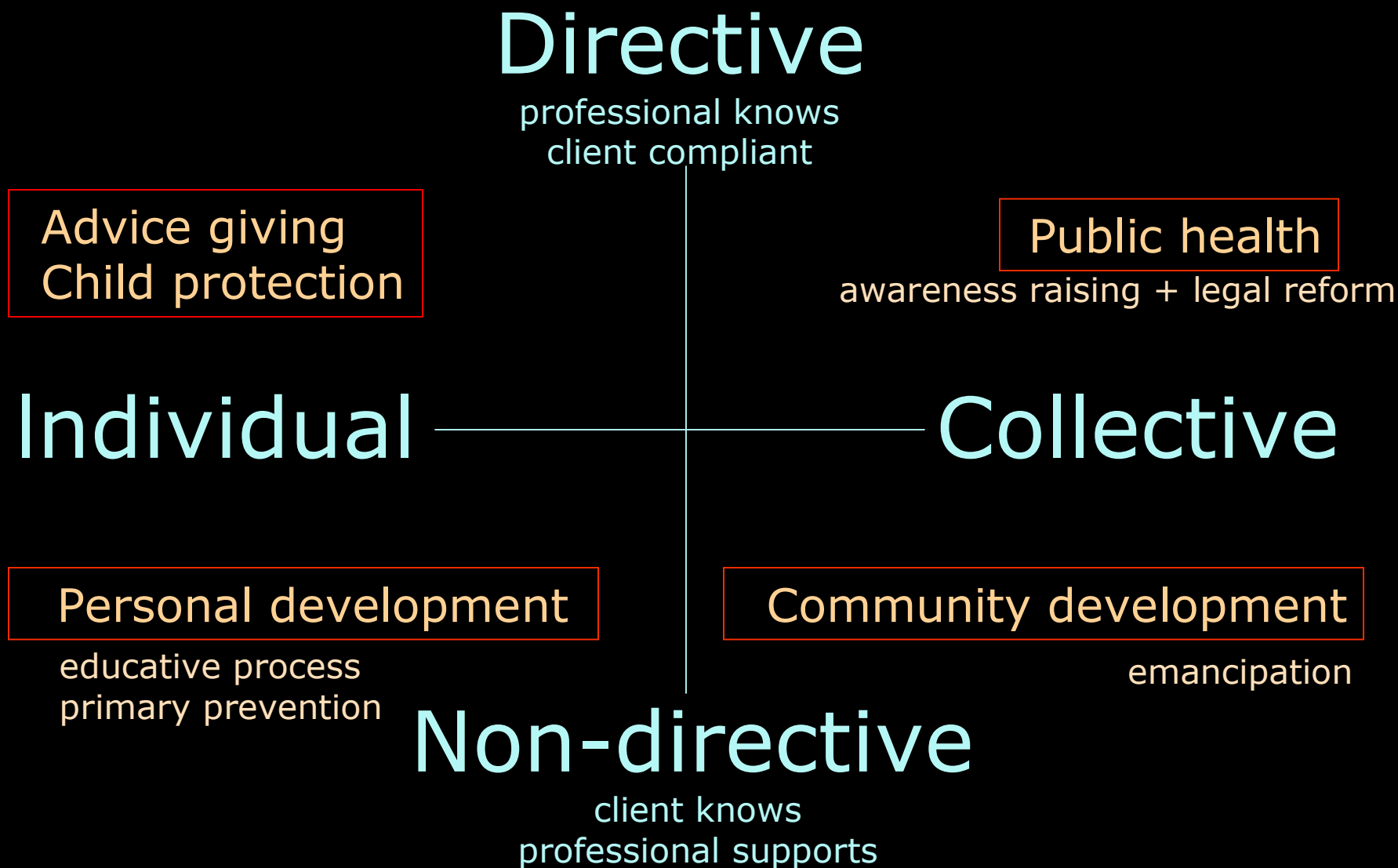
with families

- **primary activity** - promote wellbeing especially of children
- **secondary activity** - response to relationship difficulties
- **tertiary action** - protect from harm + restore well being

and with communities

- **public health** activity
- **community development** activity

and I use different strategies as described by Beattie (1991)...



This model helps to explain a shift in my focus as health visitor...



# Principles of health visiting

1. identify health needs
2. raise awareness of health needs
3. influence policies effecting health
4. facilitate health enhancing activity

*all of these principles guide my work with families...*

1989

1. identifying a health need

# smacking of children

- prevalence at the time
- long term effect on mental health
- perpetuation of societal violence
- links with child abuse
- as human rights issue

*I wanted to act earlier to improve the nurturing of children ...*

## 2. raising awareness about health need

# smacking

first I tried...

Advice giving

Directive

awareness raising - parents

Individual

Collective

Non-directive

2. raise awareness about health need  
then produced a ...

# smacking

## Do Children Need Smacks?

Smacking or a threat of punishment is a very common method of trying to change children's behaviour. Many parents find it does not work very well. This leaflet looks at why smacking is not an effective method of teaching children right from wrong. It is about helping children learn self discipline by positive means and about using fewer physical punishments.



Drawings by Emma Coulbey, aged 5 years.  
Written and designed by Robyn Pound, health visitor  
for Bath Health Promotion Department

parents' leaflet  
and began  
public campaigning

I was surprised at the passion  
for hitting children I found!



Emma Coulbey helps to put across the no smacking message

**We must spare the rod, says the Mayor**

SMACKING is one of the causes of a violent society, the Mayor of Bath Denis Lovelace said at the launch of No Smacking Week.

Chris Lovelace said if children were not smacked at an early age it would make it difficult to become a responsible member of a better society.

Launching National No Smacking Week yesterday, which is being backed by health visitors, Cllr Lovelace said it was difficult to become a responsible member of a better society.

He said: "It is not surprising that the world to become a responsible member of a better society is becoming more difficult to become a responsible member of a better society."

Children are the only section of society who are still unprotected by the law and we no longer consider it acceptable to hit children.

It is a matter of listening to children and treating them with the same respect that you would any one else."

Emma Coulbey, a five-year-old Bath schoolgirl, whose drawing was used to illustrate the No Smacking leaflet, attended the launch to show her original drawing to the mayor.

"One of the reasons we live in a violent society is because of the habit of smacking at an early age," said one of the first words of the leaflet.

Robyn Pound, who is visiting the exhibition in the Guildhall, said that parents will take this opportunity to try and not smack their children for a week and hopefully make a New Year's resolution to stop the habit all together.

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**No Smacking Week 1991**

### 3. influence policies affecting health

# smacking

I should think and act wider ...

Advice giving

Directive

Public health



parents

their extended families

**all** child interest professionals

policy change

law reform

Individual

Collective

Non-directive

# 3. influence policies affecting health

for example...

**MPs + NGOs**

**Phys of E**  
Final I

**childminders**

**Solicitors**

**Health visitors**

**Teachers**

Local authorities st



HISTORIC PUNISHING: childminder Anne Da Luke

**Anti-s**  
**to be 1**

AVON, SOMERSET and Wiltshire county councils are opposing their anti-smacking policies despite an historic judgement which gave a Surrey childminder the right to strike children. More than 80 of the 128 council authorities in Britain do not allow childminders registered with them to smack children. But a court has ruled that Sutton Through Council in Surrey was wrong to strike a

they w council remov from it childminder the right to strike children. A sp "The g anyth should so this follow. "Should there then be subsequent clarification then we will look at those new guidelines." Somerset has had an anti-smacking policy for many years, but a court has ruled that Sutton Through Council in Surrey was wrong to strike a

Does sparing the r

## Crime

**B**ATH health visitor Robyn Pound was outraged to hear of last week's court case and has called for changes in the law to let children who have been hit sue their parents. Mrs Pound, who is an active member of EPOCH, a national pressure group committed to ending the physical punishment of children and has worked as a health visitor for 18 years.



**AGAINST** Robyn Pound said the ruling is absurd and dangerous. She said: "Children in this country do not have basic human rights. They are the only section of society which is not protected by the law against violence in the family." She said: "The Bristol man would not have been able to do the same thing to his wife or even to a dog. Mrs Pound believes that the case is dangerous precedent. She said: "What the Bristol man has just further legitimated is violence in the family against children." She said: "I look just ten minutes to consider the case before making all charges. Mrs Pound said that a national pressure group is necessary to help children. She said: "EPOCH she advocates ending violence against children as a civil offence, giving parents the right to sue their parents for compensation. She said: "We need to make a change in the law so that violence against children is not accepted. We need to take away parents' rights. But parents perceive that they have the right to do anything they like to their children in the name of physical discipline. "Discipline is a very important and clear line. Their behaviour set by their parents and those limits are enforced, but not by force. Physical punishment just gives children no boundaries. Mrs Pound said that children who are hit by their parents are more likely to hit their own children. She said: "The Children's Act has failed to address the problem of violence against children. The group was behind last year's No Smacking week. Ruth Bloomfield

A spokesman for EPOCH said the council also followed the guidelines prohibiting physical punishment. Bath health visitor Mrs Robyn Pound, an active member of

Association wants Health Secretary Virginia Bottomley to re-emphasize the guidelines in the Children Act against smacking. Sutton Council's assistant

CONTROVERSY: debate rages on whether smacking is necessary to discipline children (picture posed by models)

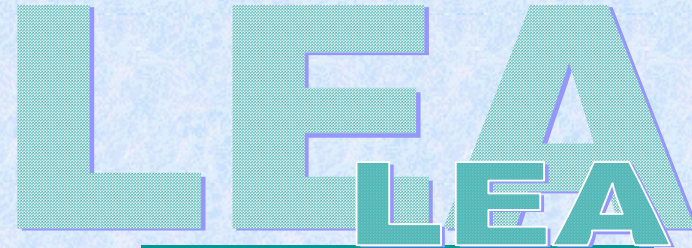
Sally Pook  
Tabback, Page 7

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**Local Education Authority**

*Behaviour Support Plan*  
*December 1998*

**BATH & NORTH EAST SOMERSET**

... but what about families?

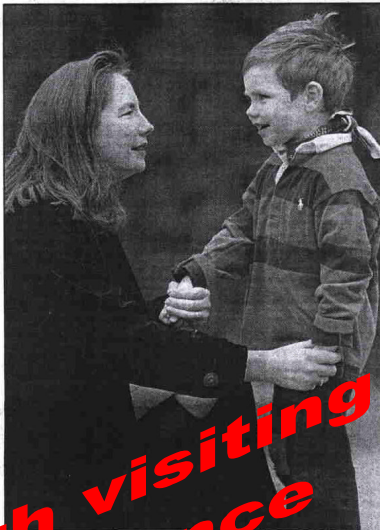
# 4. facilitate health enhancing activity

a parent and professional conference led to new ideas based on Adlerian theories

HAPPY FAMILIES: the positive parenting movement grows in Bath

## How to make friends with your children

Do you spend too much of your time shouting at the kids? Is family life more a pain than a pleasure? What you need is positive parenting, as *Chronicle* correspondent Malcolm Rigby finds out



POSITIVE parenting is not just another buzz phrase for the middle classes of the 90s. It is a real shift in outlook and approach to meet the changing needs of both parents and children as they have developed over the last 50 years.

Bath health visitor Robyn Pound, said: "I think there is a greater awareness of the need to take children seriously and be warmer with them."

"At the same time, men and women are parenting now in different circumstances

From a practical point of view the parents must have realistic expectations, and the children must have boundaries of acceptable behaviour, and both of these need to be talked about

than in any previous generation — parents are more isolated and have less support."

There is less practical help from the extended family, from the neighbourly mum next door, and the community in general. Over the years there has been a gradual moving away from authoritarian parenting. People want to have a better relationship with their children, to be friends with them.

Parents are aware there needs to be greater democracy within the family.

The media makes children listening to our children

There are alternatives in the way we have constructed a child's world, which means that children are likely to be more assertive and less prescriptive.

Children are more aware that they have a right to be heard, and they want to do things differently.

Because of all these changes, the idea of positive parenting has evolved from the anti-discipline movement to the encouragement of positive discipline.

Robyn said: "I find as a health visitor, more and more, parents are saying they don't want to use physical punishments but don't know what else to do."

"Positive parenting is about guiding and encouraging children in the process of

POSITIVE APPROACH: we are also good citizens through talking

Listening to our children

"Families have to change their style which reflects their values and beliefs. Positive parenting style is more assertive than authoritarian, being less social and more assertive."

Health visitors in Bath are embracing positive parenting as a team. In response to their interest a conference takes place next month at Bath University on the subject, organised by the Bath and West Community Trust.

One of the key speakers will be Dr Penelope Leach, author of *Baby and Child* — a bible to many parents — she is now a well-known figure in positive parenting circles.

Chairing the conference is Bath-easton primary school head Jacqui Couby, who as a teacher, has long been committed to the positive management of children's behaviour.

She said: "Bringing up children is a very skilled activity. You need to know what to do

morning, they will learn from their own experience, and facing the consequences of them, that it is possible to have a stress-free morning.

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# STEP


(Dinkmeyer + MacKay, 1989)

# CRUCIAL CS

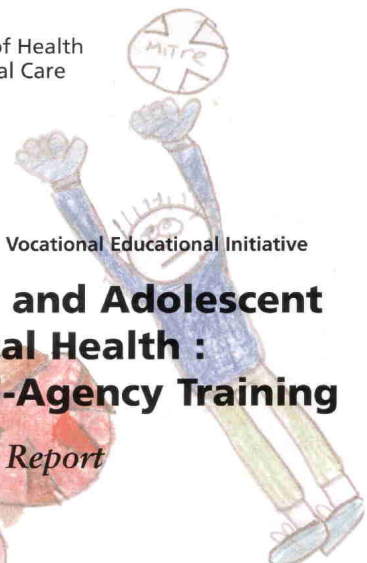
(Lew + Bettner, 1996)



1996  
parenting  
conference  
with visiting



Faculty of Health and Social Care




Continuing Vocational Educational Initiative


## Child and Adolescent Mental Health : Multi-Agency Training

*Project Report*

Funded by  
CVE

Researchers  
Yusuf Ahmad  
Philip Darley  
Paul Joyce  
Emily Ryan





University of the West of England

... but how do I use these theories?

# 1995 - 96

I enrolled for a PhD research degree because I realized I was entering new ground for health visiting at the time and answers were not to be found amongst existing theories or current knowledge.

... what did I need to know?



# reflective action research

(Whitehead, 1989)

I wanted to

- research **my own** practice
- ask about **what** and **how** as well as **why**
- start with what I already knew
- involve my caseload of families
- produce valid explanations

... finding a question changed my practice!

the question ...

How can I improve my practice  
supporting developing family  
relationships?

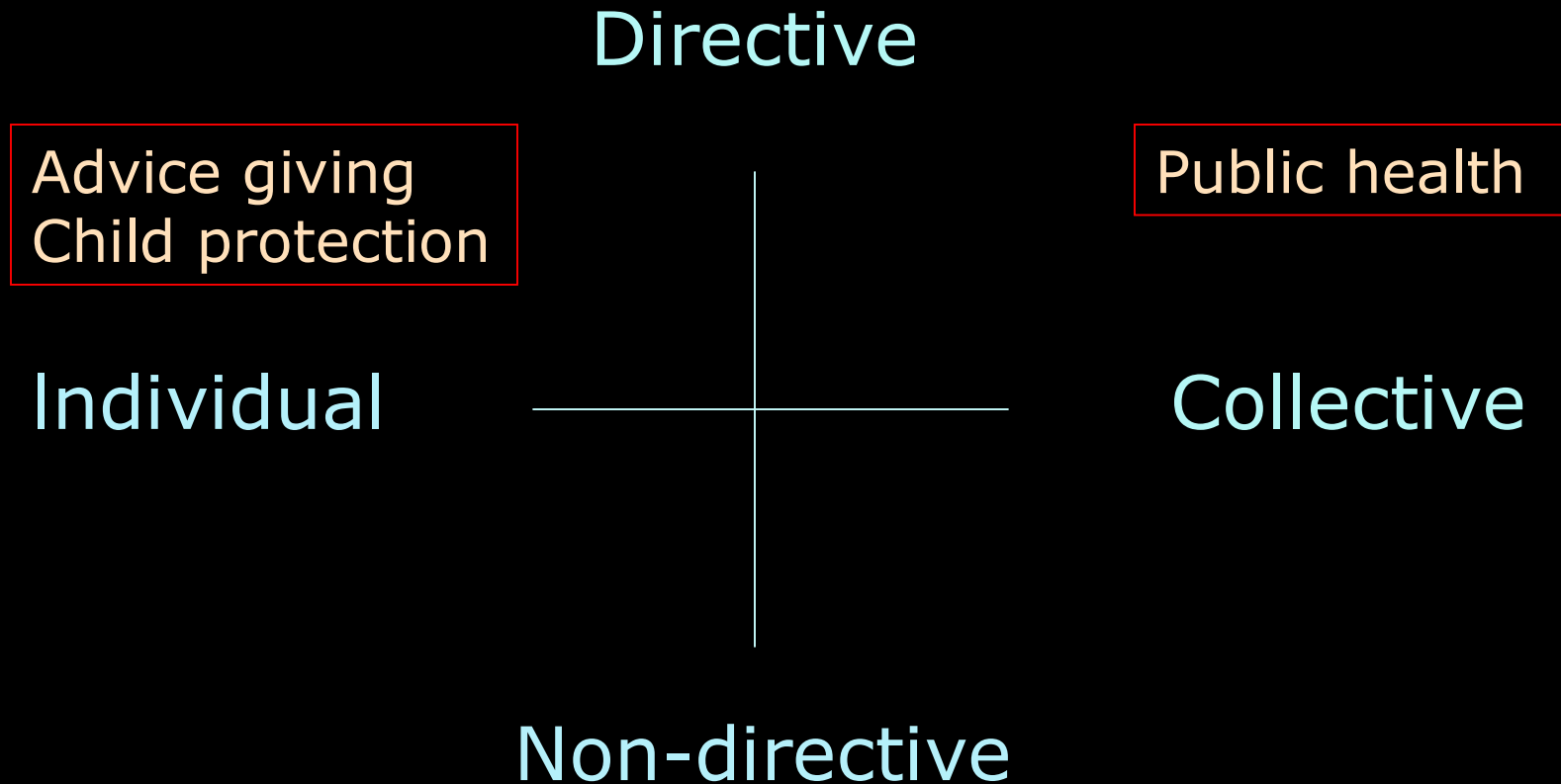
... made me ask questions about what I was doing

# reflective action research

...the process asked questions

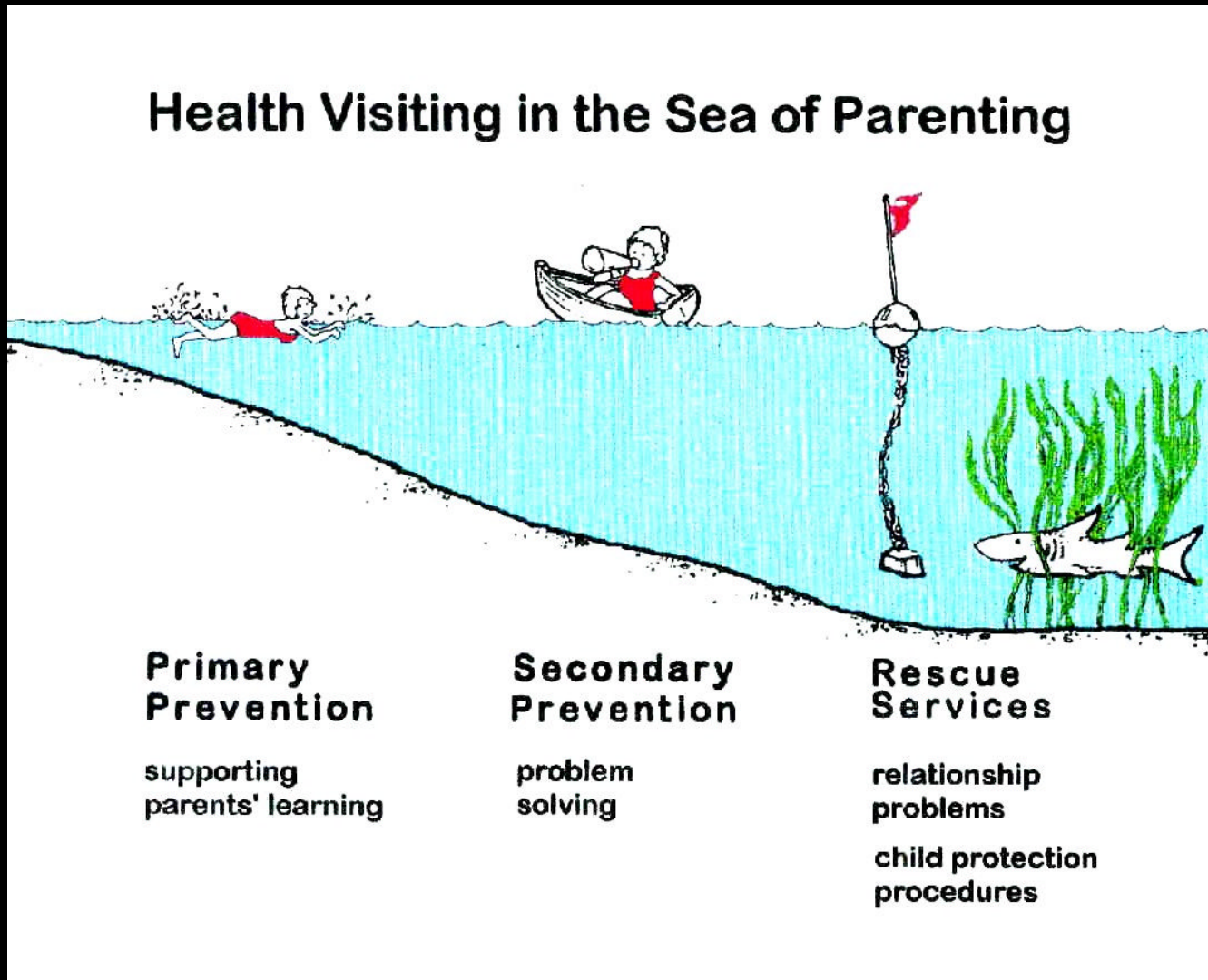
- what do I **value** about what I do? why?
- what **concerns** me about my practice? values denied?
- what can I **do** about it? Plan Do Assess Plan
- what **evidence** can I collect to show change?
- how can I check the **validity** of my insights?

I began to question what I had been doing ...



... I realized these could be critical methods of communication

I began to see myself as also a learner as health visitor, parent, researcher...



'how' do I communicate and 'what' should I know?

# reflective action research

## 4. facilitate health enhancing activity

I began with parents

... at home

by:

- checking as we went along  
(using a reflective journal)
- thinking about critical incidents
- interviewing
- questionnaire

primary educative process



# reflective action research

## 4. facilitate health enhancing activity

... I filmed a baby clinic



primary educative process

Lew & Bettner helped me value connection, humour, acceptance, responsiveness ... also containment + expertise.

My value about 'equality' broadened to become 'alongsideness'

# reflective action research

## 4. facilitate health enhancing activity

... in families' homes



secondary problem solving

qualities of democratic relations are that I respect others, reduce my power, foster autonomy, value skills, accept differences, value the process



# reflective action research

... in conversation



sharing enquiries about relationships

... alonsideness became collaborative enquiry with families, starting with their agendas but keeping mine in mind

# reflective action research

In presentations, conversation and critique at the ...

## Monday Research Group

[www.actionresearch.net](http://www.actionresearch.net)

I am fascinated by similarities in the values and processes of these educational action researchers.

... but what about families who are struggling?



# BATH City

where I work...



is beautiful and fun for tourists

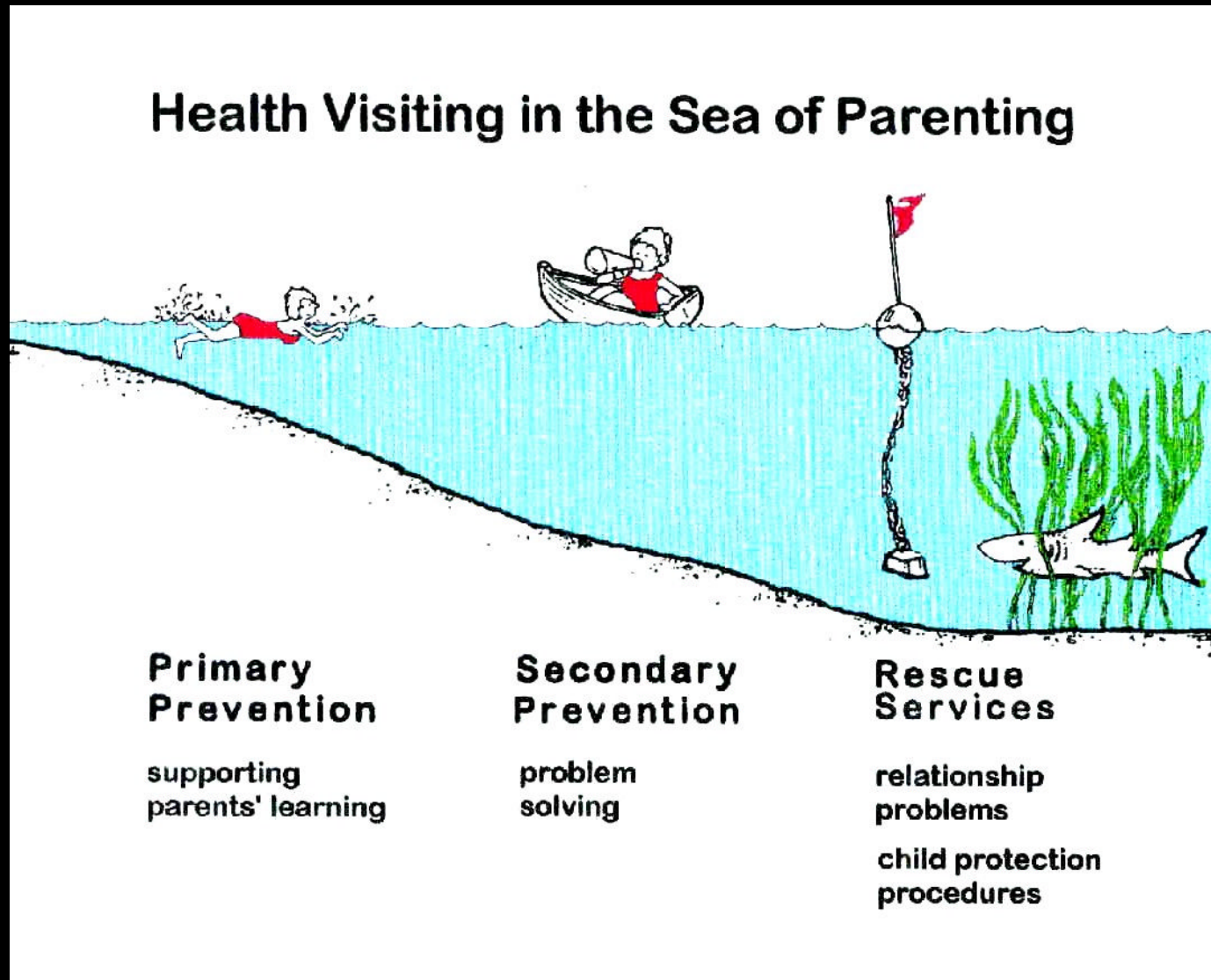




and social housing

discouraged people  
live here too

I was also working with families in deep water with greater needs



and realized I was using the same ways of being

# reflective action research

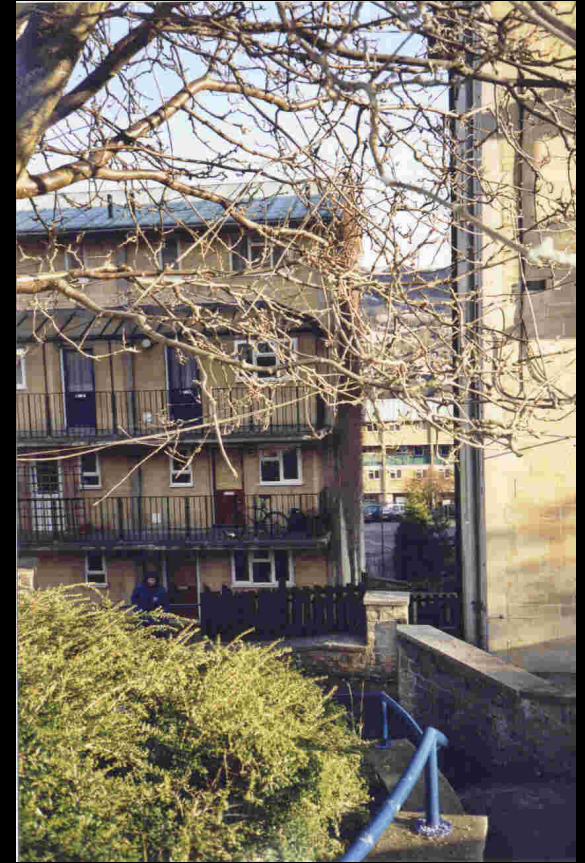
## 4. facilitate health enhancing activity

... they have the same emotional needs

These families need to experience more of the relationship qualities they may have learned not to trust

- my respectful effort is important
- to feel likeable and worth knowing
- to feel skilful and able to contribute
- to feel '*I can cope*'

tertiary rescue and restoration



alongsideness includes containment  
+ responsive responsibility as professional  
... sometimes I ask who is my client, the parent or the child?

I am thinking of Julia a young mother who had been in care herself. Her first child was removed for adoption because of her chaotic life. Keeping her next two children is paramount for her.

At times she is so depressed she doesn't cope very well. She doesn't trust Social Services and refuses their help. My role is to encourage her coping and to be hopeful. I help her avoid the gaze of social services. I try to 'be there' long term, it's been 11 years so far.

Our relationship is important to her. Julia describes me as her 'mate' but qualifies it by saying, 'I know you'll tell me if I get it wrong'. We often talk about their emotional needs and most of the time things are nearly good enough.

I constantly balance risks with the advantages of working like this. I constantly worry about not doing enough especially when things are not going well. My emotional engagement is essential. I see what I am doing here is a concentrated version of what I expect to do for everyone.

# reflective action research

I began to ...

- understand human emotional needs (Lew& Bettner)
- respect inherent human worth I find in people
- value the knowledge people already have
- start with their agenda (keeping mine in mind)
- value autonomy + the power of connection
- understand the discouraging effect of feelings of inadequacy

... and see relationships as similar in parenting, health visiting, researching  
... but discouraged isolated families need more



# reflective action research

## 4. facilitate health enhancing activity

tertiary rescue and restoration

Directive

**child protection**

containment + reciprocity

I cannot do it all myself, so  
I involve the community

Individual

Collective

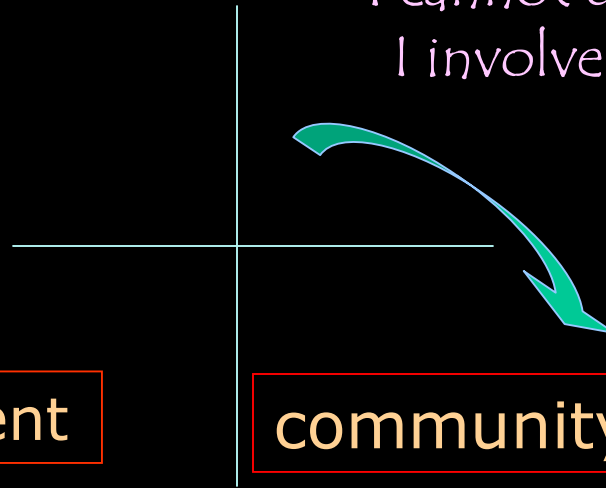
**personal development**

sense of self

**community development**

sense of community + responsibility

Non-directive



...action towards social inclusion and creating a sense of community

I see so many families coping alone

- having difficulty creating and sustaining relationships
- falling out with relatives and neighbours
- wary of professionals because of their life history
- living in social isolation

I am thinking about Lyn who described herself as a hunt saboteur as a way of explaining her anger and aggression particularly towards people in authority.

Her pregnancy resulted from a relationship involving heroin and violence.

She was edgy and wary of me but needed help to get suitable housing.

Lyn wanted a good life for her child but is plagued by self doubt and anger at injustices she sees. I said I would be there for her I enlisted her help in setting up an independent family group and crèche on the estate with no other remit than as a place to be.

It is a lifeline for her. She has moved from being hunt saboteur to working to establish complementary therapies in the estate.

the family group became possible because of other community activities ...



**before + after school clubs**  
**public consultation**  
**activity groups**  
**food co-op**  
**mental health groups**  
**complementary therapies**  
**carnival and more**

London Road Partnership

how do I explain the values motivating my decisions?

# alongside values

are an umbrella explanation for my values...

connection  
connection

self determination

respect

process of becoming

accept differences

lightheartedness

responsive responsibility

...what has research got to do with practice?

# reflective action research

- illuminates values as guiding principles
- values act as standards of judgement
- promotes collaborative reflection with all involved
- looking from the 'inside' out (rather than as observer)
- for tentative 'living' explanations
- that are context dependent (and influence social formations)
- and inclusive of the both the parts and the whole
- for evaluating, improving, understanding  
+ explaining professional practice (Pound, 2003)

to illustrate how the values are 'living' ...

my thinking continues to change in line with my emerging values

my concern is: child-centred ... parent-centred ... people becoming themselves

my action is focussed on: public health ... individual families ... people in community

change achieved by: challenging beliefs ..... parenting training ..... realised emotional needs

my work often decided from: my agenda ..... parent's agenda ..... a shared agenda

learning comes from: raised awareness ..... goal setting ..... alongside relationships

my motivating passion: children's rights ... equality ... respect & autonomy ... acceptance ... values

my aim is: less hitting .. improved relationships .. democracy .. enhanced connections

subjects: families .... myself .... people .... people in a process of becoming

research relationships: partnership .... collaboration .... co-learners in dialogue

knowledge is constructed ... knowledge is personal ... knowledge is living

**Robyn's best thinking today**

...but this doesn't show how I live my embodied values

... it is the **lived experience** of my clients that is important.

These shared experiences are also life affirming for me. The challenge is to share lived experiences that are health enhancing and find ways to explain it ... to test the validity of my claims to know what I am doing.

This is an attempt to 'bring the embodied knowledge of a practitioner into the public domain so that it can be widely shared' (Whitehead, 1989).

So in research terms ...

how do I justify alonsideness as my living theory of practice?



alongsideness is justified by its coherence across all areas of my research process. It shows:

## Unity of moral purpose

**Human rights ... equity for children ... respect of views ... protection from abuse and neglect**  
**Ethical principles in research ... beneficence ... non-malevolence ... justice ... autonomy**  
**Values .. alongsideness .. self-determination .. connection .. process .. responsibility**  
**Human emotional needs ... connect ... capable ... count ... courage**  
**Democratic relations .. shared interests .. diversity .. partnership .. responsibility**

1995  Emerging influence in research and practice 2002

and by its pragmatism

# alongsideneess

as a way of knowing and being in practice

- not only works for promoting learning and change
- but co-learners share the core values  
integrating them into their own
- alongsideneess transformed into standards for  
explaining and judging my claim to know

and finally ...

Lilla puts it simply...

If you've come to help me  
you're wasting your time.

But, if you've come because  
your liberation is bound up with mine,  
then let us work together.

Lilla Watson, Aboriginal educator  
(Wadsworth, 1997)

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