

Policy and Practices of Exclusion: A comparison of high and low excluding jurisdictions within the UK

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Excluded Lives

The political economies of
school exclusion and their
consequences

Overarching aim: To undertake a home-international comparison to understand the contextual and institutional processes that lead to different types of school exclusion (official and ‘hidden’) and the consequences for excluded young people, their families, schools and other professionals across the UK.



Northern Ireland
• Population 2m



Scotland

• Population 5m



England

• Population 56m



Wales

• Population 3m



UK Rates of School Exclusion 2018/2019

Duffy et al 2021

Jurisdiction	N. Ireland	Scotland	Wales	England
School Population	322,721	697,989	434,655	8,196,605
Permanent Exclusions	30	3	246 (0.06%)	7894 (1%)
Temporary Exclusions	4549 (1.4%)	14,987 (2.1%)	19,701 (4.3%)	438,265 (5.36%)

Inequalities given the consequences of exclusion

- Pre-requisite of inclusion is presence and access to education
- Decisions, choices and opportunities made and taken in childhood will crucially affect their position as adults
- Exclusion from school may be regarded as both a prior and outcome of social exclusion. Young people who are excluded often come from disadvantaging circumstances. Exclusion from school frequently has long term negative consequences in terms of gaining access to the benefits of a position in the mainstream of society. An understanding of the extent of the problem is important in bringing to the attention of the public and policy makers a key feature in the processes of social exclusion and marginalisation. Daniels et al 2022

England & Scotland Policies and Government Guidance*

- challenging behaviour could be seen as requiring punishment
- exclusion a legitimate sanction
- individualised discourses of behaviour and responsibility, also of unmet needs
- influence of school related factors (e.g. pedagogy, curriculum, physical environment of the school) is largely missing
- it does not provide advice on how to *do* early intervention or prevent exclusions
- guidance explains how to *do* school exclusion- legal
- challenging behaviour requires a holistic approach, and recognition that 'all behaviour is communication
- welfare-based intervention
- positive effect of school connectedness, strong teacher/pupil relationships, and the need for curricula input that teaches pro-social skills.
- practical information and signposting to services to help with preventing exclusion
- aim of keeping ' ... all children and young people fully included, engaged and involved'

Trajectories of Young People at Risk of Exclusion from Secondary Schools

- Aim: To understand the details and complexities of practices in action- as distinct from policy guidance.
- How are professionals in the different jurisdictions responding to young people at risk of exclusion?
- Interviews with Pastoral Leads and Special educational needs co-ordinators who identified two or three young people who were at risk of exclusion

Jurisdiction	Schools	Student Case Studies
England	11	34
Northern Ireland	4	8
Scotland	6	16
Wales	7 (inc. 2 AP)	20
Total	28	78

Interviews

- Time 1:

- What triggered their concern about each of the case study students?
- What was the aim of the intervention? How well did they feel the intervention strategies worked? Did they encounter any difficulties?
- Who else currently worked with the students?
- What they were wanting to work on next?

- Time 2: (5-9 months later)

- If anything had changed for the case study student inside and outside of school?
- Whether they continued to use the strategies and if they had worked on other things? how and why they were chosen and what was the intended outcome?
- If the strategies/interventions were effective in achieving the outcome?
- Who else had been involved, what had they been working on and how effective it had been?
- What barriers they had encountered, and what had helped
- Whether the student's level of risk had changed, and in what ways?

Analysis

- 1st stage: Risk trajectories (Escalating risk, de-escalating risk, same level or uncertain) were used to group case study students within each jurisdiction for analysis; to examine the triggering concerns staff expressed, the aims they had for intervening, the strategies and approaches they used and the outcomes that resulted.
- 2nd Stage: Researchers within each jurisdiction then explored factors that contributed to the differences in outcome; how schools accessed the resources they needed and what staff perceived as the barriers and supports to successful interventions.
- 3rd Stage: cross jurisdiction comparison, based on jurisdiction reports. Sharing of cross jurisdiction report for comment/additions

Jurisdiction	De-Escalating Risk	Escalating Risk	Same (and Queries England)
England N= 34	15 (44%)	11 (32%)	8 (24%)
Northern Ireland N=8	2 (25%)	3 (38%)	3 (38%)
Scotland N=16	4 (25%)	11 (69%)	2 (13%)
Wales N=20	6 (30%)	12 (60%)	2 (10%)

Perceived Levels of Changing Risk at Time 2

Jurisdiction	Explanations for Differences in Outcome <i>Within</i> Jurisdictions
England	<p>Staff calibration of risk</p> <p>Older pupils, staff had clearer aims- more often linked to strengths and interests</p> <p>Staff knowledge of the young person</p> <p>Identification of SEN</p> <p>Disadvantage and home life</p> <p>Gender (?)</p>
Northern Ireland	<p>Parental Engagement & Support</p> <p>Nurture Provision</p> <p>Whole School Communication</p> <p>Schools limited Influence over External Factors</p> <p>Geography of Supports</p> <p>Structured Environments</p> <p>Personal Conversations</p>
Scotland	<p>Contextual Factors- being looked after, adopted, multiple adversities facing families, major life changes</p> <p>Intervention type- face to face regular contact with an adult who cares</p> <p>Attendance</p> <p>Time, persistence and relationships- schools responsibility and concern wellbeing</p>
Wales	<p>No difference between high and low excluding schools</p> <p>More stable home life</p> <p>Smaller class sizes</p> <p>Relationships between school and parents</p> <p>Improved attendance</p>

Cross Jurisdiction:

- Why did the jurisdiction with the **highest** level of exclusions have the **greater** proportion of young people whose risk level was perceived to be **de-escalating** and the jurisdiction with the **lowest** levels of exclusion had the **highest** proportion of young people whose risk was seen to be **escalating**?
- Risk is commonly seen as indicative of the need for support- where risk is seen as escalating, there is more likely to be increases in targeted support [in Scotland those with escalating risk received more interventions].
- Conversely where risk is seen to reduce, there is a perception that no additional support is needed.

Why are there differences in calibrating risk?

- Judgements of changing risk in Scotland reflected what was happening outside- the whole child
- *“participants judged that the risk of exclusion had decreased but overall risk had increased. This may reflect Scottish Government’s approach to exclusion, which encourages schools to focus on prevention and consider all aspects of a child’s life before excluding.”*
- Further
- *“a lack of clarity about the young person’s situation was interpreted by participants as increased risk.”*
- *“The focus on relationships and wellbeing in Scotland encourages school staff to know the young people well and to consider the whole child when making judgements about risk rather than focusing narrowly on risk within the education setting.”*

In contrast: In England

- Large school size seen to impact on contact with students ..*we've got over 70 EHCPS, 300 kids on SEND registered We haven't got enough classrooms to offer withdrawals or interventions...*
- Inspection of English schools- staff did not know young people well enough to identify SEND need
- Staff are looking for a diagnosis from a specialist that explains the behaviour as well as guidance on what type of support is appropriate
- Schools identified a lack of alternative provision, including a lack of special school placements as a problem
- but the growth in this sector serves only to confirm an expectation that mainstream schools can and should only meet a fairly narrow range of student needs, rather than the diversity indicated by the descriptor mainstream.

Not all negative in England.. What we need more of

- Some members of staff talked directly about the difficulty of navigating the culture of the school:
- *“.. they need to change their approach, but how do I have that conversation when they’re two assistant headteachers who are...much more experienced than me, but how do you have that conversation with them without them being defensive?.. they need to change their approach”*
- *“we have little radios. So, we’re supposed to be on a rota, but as soon as I hear the name of one of my kids, [I want to] get up and go to them to try and resolve that situation before somebody creates another issue for them. I mean, they were crying for his head on a chopping board – ‘You need to exclude and he needs this...!’ Does he really? you know... And I said to the head, ‘I’m not giving him an exclusion because our staff were at fault.’ He’s not having an exclusion because we didn’t deal with it appropriately, so I don’t feel it’s fair”*

Staff mediation in England

- *“I created a little mini video, and actually said, ..when he's saying this, this is actually what he means. **These are the signs and indicators.** And so staff were able to do that. So when he was in lessons, actually, he was doing okay”*
- *“some staff didn't like it, when I'd say this person has said that actually, when you make them sit here, it makes them feel like... ‘Don't be ridiculous. I need them to sit there.’ But actually, **why can't they sit in a place actually, that makes them feel more calm?**”*
- *“Pete's view is when I stand up in front of the class, I will stand like this, and the class will be silent. And I said, Peter, people don't do that. And I said, I'm a small woman, and they'll do it for you, because they know that you're going to bite them. I said, but **we don't get students to behave because of that fear factor...** And so I've kind of had to really battle it out. And so the session that I ran with staff was not asking you to shout, and I'm not asking you to be, you know, the biggest personality in that room.. I'm going to give you is a series of tools for you to use with your classes. And I'm going to help you to recognise which tools to use for which situations.*
- *“it's not just about behaviour, **it's about engagement.** So the second session that we've done with staff has been about ‘engaging students in your lesson.’”*

Pipeline to disengagement to exclusion

- *“for this particular student, because he **had gaps in his educational experience due to suspension**, etc. And being able to, you know, **going into AP and back in again**, I think that he then felt that he wasn't able to kind of keep up with the pace of things in school. So then he initially started acting up to kind of mask that, which then irritated the other students, because they'd be like, Oh, God, we just want to get on with the lesson. So then it creates like a negative impact. So I don't think that he ever really felt that he belonged to the school”*
- *“we had to at one point, put him on a **reduced timetable** to re engage him with school [and]to build that up again.. And you know, that sense of belonging that [is] then affected.. as well.”*
- *“You kind of separate children off”*
- *I think he certainly felt that there are adults that he could speak to, but I think that's because quite often, **they're flooded with adults**, because they'll come into school, and they'll be mentored by an adult. So in a way, **you kind of almost create the exclusion through your intervention for the child**. I do think he felt safe, but I certainly don't feel that he felt part of his peer group.*

Some Concluding Thoughts

- Instability of many young lives
- Develop more agile responsive systems- funding, data systems, curricula...
- Review of school strategies to identify ones that serve to marginalise
- Strategies need to promote engagement and belonging
- Up-skilling of staff
- Conversations with young people and their parents
- More a sense of seeing a situation through the young person's eyes
- *“And I spoke to [Head teacher], about the relationships between adults and children here at [English School Name] and .. what do they really look like? And so when we're thinking about that behaviour policy, it's about, we're not just going to change it, I'm actually going to do some consultation. So I'm going to do some group work with a group of staff. And with a group of students.”*

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