Accountability

A Qualitative Study of Relationships between the Public Sector, the Voluntary Sector and Users of Health and Welfare Services in the Context of Purchase of Service Contracting

Nora Sarabajaya Kumar
Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Aston in
Birmingham

March 2003

Thesis Summary – Abstract

The University of Aston in Birmingham

Accountability: A Qualitative Study of Relationships between the Public Sector, the Voluntary Sector and Users of Health and Welfare Services in the Context of Purchase of Service Contracting

Nora Sarabajaya Kumar

Doctor of Philosophy
2003

Since Sir Roy Griffiths reported to the Secretary of State for Social Services on Community Care in 1988, the public sector (particularly national health services (NHS) and local government) in Britain, has become less involved in the direct provision of public services. Increasingly it has 'contracted out' this responsibility to extra-governmental, 'independent' private and voluntary sector organisations, co-ordinated through a quasi-market system.

In this context, voluntary sector organisations have moved from the periphery to occupy a more central role in the new processes of public policy implementation. As a result, accountability of government to the general public has become indirect and more complex. In other words, although elected policy makers are no longer always directly responsible for service delivery, they remain accountable (publicly answerable). Given that it is important that government and organisations acting on its behalf are accountable for the use of public monies, this research examined how accountability was conceptualised and practised in the new operational environment.

Using a grounded theory approach, the study explored accountability in the context of purchase of service contracting in the field of health and social welfare. Specifically using the concept of accountability, it examined the links and relationships between three 'actors' - public sector managers (local government - social services), voluntary sector managers (charities) and service users of contracted out services. A pluralistic analytical framework that draws upon concepts such as 'clans', 'exit and voice', 'networks' and 'power' is used to explain the research findings.

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my parents. First, to my late father Dr Bidhan Chandra Chatterjee FRCGP who was a great soul and a wonderful human being with a superb sense of humour. He was and continues to be an inspiration not only to me but also to his many friends, students and colleagues all over the world. It was a great privilege to have known him and an even greater one to have been his daughter. I miss him terribly. Second to my mother Mrs Kusumika Chatterjee MA, whose courage and determination is matched only by her gifted and unique ability to educate, enthuse and motivate all those around her. To you both – pronams and never enough thanks.

Acknowledgements

This study was made possible by the contribution of many individuals. Although it is not possible to acknowledge all those who have contributed to this research (for reasons of confidentiality), in the acknowledgements I would like to thank the research participants, my academic colleagues and friends, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation for supporting my fieldwork, my family, friends and last but never least our family dog.

First, I wish to thank the trustees, managers, staff, volunteers and service users of the voluntary and public sector organisations involved in this study. Confidentiality prevents these organisations and individuals being named, but I am indebted to them. They were generous in terms of their time and energy and they gave tremendous thought to their discussions with me. I am grateful for the openness with which they responded.

Second, I wish to pay tribute to Mike Tricker. I thank him for his supervision and support, not only through the PhD process, but also through the life crises that I have had to face during the course of this research. I will always be very grateful to him for his support, advice and particularly his friendship. As a supervisor, he has inspired me as well as setting high standards which I try to follow with my own students at the Centre for Civil Society, LSE.

Third, I am grateful to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation who supported my fieldwork as part of their programme of support for the voluntary and charitable sector. Had I not received a grant I would have not been able to conduct such a comprehensive and in depth study. Particular thanks are due to Pat Kneen for her tremendous encouragement. I am also grateful to the Foundation for publishing the findings of the research.

Fourth, I also wish to acknowledge my colleagues and friends in the research network, who have provided constructive criticism, encouragement and support, at different times throughout the study. In particular, my colleagues at Aston University for their advice and support - especially Professor David Wilson, and in the early stages of the research Dr Stephen P Osborne, and Julie Green (Survey Manager) for help in designing my survey questionnaire. Sara Azfar (University College London) for interpreting and translating

from Urdu to English and vice versa during the fieldwork. Patricia Day (University of Bath), Dr Julio Davila (University College London), Richard Fries (London School of Economics and Political Science), George Gawlinski (Independent Consultant), Dr Jenny Harrow (South Bank University), John Lansley (Liverpool University), Professor Julian Le Grand (London School of Economics and Political Science), Professor Maureen MacKintosh (Open University), Carl Milofsky (Bucknell University - USA), Dr Aylin Orbasli (York University), and Professor John Stewart (University of Birmingham). I am also grateful to Dr Helmut Anheier (CCS, London School of Economics and Political Science) for his encouragement. Particular thanks are owed to Dr Shirley Otto (University of London and Independent Consultant), Dr Mark Page (South Bank University) and Dr Alison Penn, (Surrey University and Independent Consultant). As my peers they have discussed and reviewed my work over the years and been critical and supportive friends.

I am extremely grateful for the support provided by my wonderful parents, my late father Dr Bidhan Chandra Chatterjee and my mother Mrs Kusumika Chatterjee. My parents are like the roots of a tree, an anchor for us all. I certainly wouldn't have been able to finish the thesis if not for their generosity and support. My father was an incredible and courageous man. My mother is an amazing and talented woman.

I would also like to thank and acknowledge the three other pillars in my life - my marvellous husband and guru, Dr Sunil Kumar; my brilliant sister Papiya Chatterjee; and my gorgeous son, Master Roshan Asitabha Chatterjee-Kumar. I thank Sunil for always having faith and belief in me and patience with me; Papiya for her love, cheery countenance, encouragement and understanding; and my son, Roshan Asitabha who as his name suggests, came into the world not only crowned with great glory, but also bringing many rays of sunlight into all of our lives. He has been a source of motivation and great joy.

I would also like to acknowledge my in laws the late Mr Raj Kumar and Mrs Rukmini Kumar and thank my mother in law in particular for helping me to look after her grandson Roshan Asitabha for six months while I was writing up.

I would also like to pay tribute to my ancestors, without whom I would not be here today. My late grandparents Dr Anukul Chandra Chatterjee and Mrs Pankajini Chatterjee and Justice Samarendra Narayan Bagchi and Mrs Binapani Bagchi.

I would like to thank my friends, not only for being patient with me, but also for understanding why I haven't been able to socialise as much as I would have liked over the last few years. They are too numerous to mention here, however they know who they are. I hope that as promised they have waited.

I would also like to acknowledge the role played by my late father's beloved golden labrador, 'Ganesh' the remover of obstacles, who I inherited. He has been a great companion. I am grateful to him for making me laugh and for giving me the opportunity during our walks together to contemplate this research in the beautiful surroundings of our wonderful British parks and countryside.

Writing a PhD can be a lonely, intense and at times a highly emotional experience. Something Professor Gibson Burrell said recently reminded me that on 'my reef of solipsism', my family have been nothing short of magnificent in supporting me. I will always be grateful to them and never be able to thank them enough.

Table of Contents

Title Page 1
Thesis Summary 2
Dedication 3
Acknowledgements 4
List of figures 14

1.0 CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION 16

1.1 Introduction 16

1.2 Why is a study of Accountability important now? 17

1.3 The Origins of this Enquiry – The Family Practitioner Committee Experience 18

1.3.1 Nomination and Membership of the FPC 19
1.3.2 Responsibilities and Accountability of the FPC 20
1.3.3 My Perception of FPC Accountability 20
1.3.4 My Accountabilities in my Two Roles 21
1.3.5 Accountability in Practice 21

1.4 Margaret Simey's (1985) Influential Essay 22

1.5 The Literature Search and Contemporary Developments 23

1.5.1 Contemporary Developments in Health and Social Policy 24
1.5.1.1 Debates of the New Right and the Libertarian Socialist Left 24
1.5.1.2 Political Context – Thatcher and Major 24
1.5.1.3 Purchase of Service Contracting (POSC) 26
1.5.1.4 The Griffiths Report (1988) and The NHS and Community Care Act (1990) 26
1.5.1.5 User Voices, The Patient's Charter (1991) and POSC 27
1.5.1.6 The Restructuring of the State 27
1.5.1.7 The Voluntary Sector's Role in the Restructured State 28
1.5.1.8 Shifting Trends and Accountability Concerns in the Enabling State 28
1.5.1.9 POSC, Civil Society, the Enabling State and the Quasi-Market 29
1.5.2 Accountability of the Public Sector 30
1.5.2.1 Key Concerns for the Public Sector 31
1.5.3 Accountability of the Voluntary Sector 31
1.5.3.1 Key Concerns for the Voluntary Sector 31
1.5.4 Key Concerns for Both Public and Voluntary Sectors – User Accountability 32

1.6 The Research Focus 32

1.7 Definitional Problems 33

1.7.1 Accountability 33
1.7.2 The Voluntary Sector 33

1.8 Selecting the Case Study Organisations 34

1.9 The Thesis 35

1.9.1 The Aims, Focus, Key Questions and Key Issues 35

1.10 The Structure of the Thesis **37**
1.10.1 Chapter Two 37
1.10.2 Chapter Three 37
1.10.2.1 The Method 37
1.10.2.2 The Data 37
1.10.2.3 The Analysis 38
1.10.3 Chapters Four and Five 38
1.10.4 Chapter Six 38
1.10.5 Chapter Seven 38
1.10.6 Chapter Eight 39
1.10.7 The Terminology 39
1.10.8 Transcribed Conversations 39

1.11 Summary and Conclusion **39**

2.0 CHAPTER TWO: CHANGING NOTIONS OF ACCOUNTABILITY **40**

2.1 Introduction **40**

2.2 What is Accountability? How is Accountability Conceptualised? **42**

2.3 Accountability of the Public Sector and the Voluntary Sector (Charities) prior to the 1990s **43**
2.3.1 Local Government 44
2.3.2 Central Government 45
2.3.3 The National Audit Office 46
2.3.4 The Audit Commission 47
2.3.5 The Ombudsman 48

2.4 Public Accountability in the 1990s **49**

2.5 Purchase of Service Contracting (POSC) and Public Accountability **50**

2.6 Accountability of the Independent Sector - Private Contractors **52**

2.7 Accountability of Voluntary Contractors (Charities) in the Independent Sector **53**

2.8 A Framework of Accountability in the Context of Purchase of Service Contracting (POSC) **53**
2.8.1 The Charity Commission as a Watchdog 56

2.9 Advantages of POSC for the Public Sector and the Voluntary Sector (Charities) **59**

2.10 Accountability Concerns and Dilemmas for Public Purchasers and Voluntary Providers (Charities) – Key Questions for the Research **60**
2.10.1 Public Purchasers 60
2.10.2 Voluntary Sector Providers (Charities) 61
2.10.3 Public Purchasers and Voluntary Sector Providers (Charities) 61

2.11 Conclusion 61

3.0 CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY 63

3.1 Introduction 63

3.2 The Research Focus 63

3.2.1 The Aim 63

3.2.2 The Key Research Questions 63

3.2.3 The Key Issues 64

3.2.4 The Study Participants 64

3.3 The Literature on Choosing a Research Strategy 65

3.3.1 Two Main Criteria – Philosophical Issues and Aim of the Investigation 65

3.3.2 The Researcher's Choices 66

3.3.3 Yin's Conditions 66

3.4 The Case Study Method as the Preferred Research Strategy 67

3.4.1 Quantitative Methods versus Qualitative Methods 67

3.4.2 The Research Strategy - Case Studies Using Qualitative Research Methods 67

3.5 Case Study Strategy - Instrumental or Collective 68

3.6 Grounded Theory Approach 68

3.7 Multiple Embedded Qualitative Case Studies 69

3.8 Methods of Collecting Evidence 70

3.9 Criticisms of the Case Study Strategy, Qualitative Methods and Grounded Theory 70

3.10 The Study Design - The Main Stages 71

3.10.1 The First Stage – Selecting the Case Study Organisations – The Rationale 72

3.10.2 The First Stage – Selecting the Case Study Organisations – The Database for the Survey 74

3.10.2.1 The Survey 75

3.10.2.2 Survey Response and Selection of Case Studies 75

3.10.2.3 Reasons for Selection of Case Study Organisations with this Profile for the Second Stage 76

3.10.2.4 Response to Participate in the Case Studies 77

3.10.2.5 Problems with Self Selection of Cases 77

3.10.3 The Second Stage - Case Studies 78

3.10.3.1 Gaining Entry 78

3.10.3.2 Setting up the Case Study Research 79

3.11 Non Participant Observation, Documentary Analysis and Interviews 81

3.12 Taping and Transcribing the Interviews 84

3.13 Sensitivity of the Subject Matter and Safety of the Study Participants 85

3.14 Interview Issues – An Accountable Research Process 86
3.14.1 Access, Comfort and Safety 86
3.14.2 Researcher and Counsellor 87
3.14.3 Sign-posting 87
3.14.4 Communication Challenges 87
3.15 Case Analysis: Method and Process 88
3.15.1 Framework rather than NUD-IST 88
3.15.2 Familiarisation 89
3.15.3 Identification of a Thematic Framework 89
3.15.4 Coding 90
3.15.5 Laddering 91
3.15.6 Indexing 93
3.15.7 Charting 93
3.15.8 Mapping and Interpretation 94
3.16 Criticism of the Analytical Process 95
3.16.1 Addressing the Macroblindness Criticism 95
3.16.2 Criticism of 'Framework' 96
3.16.3 Addressing the 'Reductionist' Criticism 96
3.17 Constraints of the Research 96
3.17.1 Accountability as a Sensitive Subject 96
3.17.2 No Councillors 97
3.17.3 No Matrix Organisations 97
3.18 Additional Issues 98
3.18.1 Reflection 98
3.18.2 Peer Review 98
3.18.3 Post it Notes, Diagramming, Card Summaries and a Highlighter Pen 98
3.19 Conclusion 100

4.0 CHAPTER FOUR: PURCHASE OF SERVICE CONTRACTING (POSC) AND THE ACCOUNTABILITY RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PUBLIC SECTOR AND THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR 101
4.1 Introduction 101
4.2 Managers' Collective Accountability Frameworks 102
4.2.1 Local Government Managers' Frameworks 102
4.2.2 Voluntary Sector Managers' Frameworks 104
4.3 Ensuring Accountability 106
4.3.1 'Contract Accountability' - The Written Documentation 107
4.3.2 'Contract Accountability' - The Processes 107

4.3.3 Performance Accountability - Monitoring Service Delivery 109
4.3.4 Network Accountability 113

4.4 Establishing and Building Trust **115**
4.4.1 Intertwining of the Sectors 117

4.5 Summary and Conclusions **117**

5.0 CHAPTER FIVE: CONTRACTING AND USER ACCOUNTABILITY **119**

5.1 Introduction **119**

5.2 The Effect of Contracting on Accountability to Users **120**

5.3 Managers' Commitment to User Accountability **121**

5.4 Service Level Agreements and Enabling Information Exchange **123**

5.5 User Information about Services **124**

5.6 User Accountability - Opportunities for Consultation and Dialogue **125**

5.7 Facilitating User Participation **128**

5.8 Barriers to Ensuring Effective Accountability to Users **129**
5.8.1 User Choice 130
5.8.2 User Involvement - User Representativeness, User Preferences and Resource Constraints 131
5.8.3 Being Accountable to Potential Users 134
5.8.4 Managers' Views about Users' Anxieties 135
5.8.4.1 Users' Feelings of Intimidation and Lack of Trust 135
5.8.4.2 Charity 137

5.9 Additional Constraints in Facilitating User Accountability **138**
5.9.1 Attitudes to Complaints 138
5.9.2 Public and Voluntary Sector Resources - Time, Human and Fiscal 139
5.9.3 Public Sector Assumptions about User Consultation 140

5.10 Current Initiatives for Ensuring User Accountability **141**

5.11 Users' Own Concerns about Both Sectors' Accountability to Them **142**

5.12 Creating a Culture of and Commitment to User Accountability **147**

5.13 Users' and Managers' Ideas for Ensuring Accountability to Users in the Future **149**

5.14 Summary and Conclusion **150**

6.0 CHAPTER SIX: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE CONTEXT OF PURCHASE OF SERVICE CONTRACTING **153**

6.1 Introduction **153**

6.2 Defining the Concepts - Bureaucracy, Market and Clan **154**

6.2.1 Bureaucratic Accountability 154

6.2.2 Government Intention – Market or Quasi-Market Accountability 155

6.2.3 Neither Bureaucratic Accountability, Nor Quasi-Market Accountability 157

6.3 Conceptualising Accountability Relationships in POSC **158**

6.3.1 Nature of and Reasons for Interdependence 159

6.3.2 Interdependence – Accountability 160

6.3.3 Accountability, Social Relations, Clan, Network and Voice 161

6.4 The Contracting Process and the Relationship between the Dyadic Network Actors **164**

6.4.1 The Dyad's Mutual Investment 164

6.4.2 The Dyad Legally Bound with Incongruent Objectives 165

6.4.3 The Dyad, POSC and Congruent Objectives 165

6.4.4 Monitoring and Transactions Costs 165

6.4.5 Dialogue, Communication and Trust between the Dyad 166

6.4.6 Strong Bonds, Strong Ties and Partnerships 168

6.4.7 An Illustration of Legally and Socially Bonded Organisations 170

6.4.8 Stable, Predictable and Able to Withstand Change 172

6.5 Uncertainty, Stability, Dependence and Power **173**

6.5.1 Resource Dependency, Mutual Investment and Social Relations 174

6.5.2 Power, Control and Interdependence 174

6.6 Exit and Voice **175**

6.6.1 Voice and the Relationship within the Dyad 176

6.7 Voice and the Relationships between the Dyad and Users **178**

6.7.1 Power and Inequality at Meetings 179

6.7.2 Power, Minutes of Meetings and Agenda Setting 179

6.7.3 Power, Language and Professional Defensiveness 181

6.7.4 Gender, Class, Race and Education 182

6.7.5 Weak User Voice and the Struggle for Political Control 182

6.7.6 Symbolic and Ceremonial Accountability 183

6.7.7 The Dyad, the Triad and Trust 184

6.8 Users' Exclusion from the Accountability Process **184**

6.8.1 Users' Own Constraints 185

6.8.1.1 Low Voice and Low Exit 185

6.8.1.2 General Unwillingness to Complain 185

6.8.1.3 Service Users Not Wishing to be Disloyal 186

6.8.1.4 Service Users Not Wishing to Boycott 186

6.8.2 Managerial and Structural Limitations 187

6.8.2.1 Discouraging Exit and Voice 187

6.8.2.2 Lack of Democratic Tradition 188

6.8.2.3 Muted Users' Voice Due to their Own Constraints 188
6.8.2.4 The Power of the Clan 188
6.8.2.5 Lack of Recognition from Managers about Users Representing Others' Views 189
6.8.2.6 Mechanisms to Stifle Service Users' Protests 189
6.8.2.7 The Symbolic Nature of Meeting with Users 190

6.9 Accountability and Users' Membership of Weakly Tied Networks 191

6.10 The Summary of the Theoretical Framework of Accountability in POSC 192

6.11 Summary 194

6.12 Conclusion 194

6.12.1 Inter-Sectoral and User Accountability – Theoretical Explanation of the Findings 194
6.12.2 Inter-Sectoral and User Accountability - Summary 195
6.12.3 Conclusion – Contract Accountability Failure, The Exclusion and Non –Accountability to Users 196

7.0 CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION 197

7.1 Introduction 197

7.2 The Original Intention and The Final Outcome 198

7.3 Accountability Definitions and Dilemmas Considered 198

7.4 The Research Questions and Research Methodology 199

7.4.1 The Respondents 199
7.4.2 Observations about the Data 200

7.5 The Case Analysis Process and the Conceptual Framework 200

7.6 Original Contribution of the Research to Accountability 200

7.6.1 The First Study of Inter-Sectoral and User Accountability 200
7.6.2 The Development and Importance of A Theoretical Framework 201

7.7 Key Findings and Implications 202

7.7.1 No Market/Quasi-Market 202
7.7.2 Evidence of A Context of Accountability due to the Electoral Process 203
7.7.3 Interdependent Partners and Exclusion of Service Users - Findings 204
7.7.4 No Exit, No Voice, No User Participation 207

7.8 Conclusion 210

7.9 Discussion 211

7.10 Future Research 214

7.11 And Finally 214

7.12 The Relevance of the Research Findings in the New Policy Context (1997 onwards) 215

8.0 POST SCRIPT: THE NEW POLICY AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT AND THE RELEVANCE OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS 216

8.1 Introduction 216

8.2 The Election of New Labour - Continuity and Change in Government Policy 216

8.3 The Modernisation Agenda for Local Government - The Third Way 217

8.4 Policy Themes and The Operational Level 218

8.5 Enhancing Community Leadership and Modernised Decision Making 218

8.6 Community Government, Democratic Renewal and Increased Accountability 219

8.7 Partnerships and Co-operation – Trust Networks 220

8.8 Democratic Participation 221

8.9 Summary – The Third Way 222

8.10 Partnership, Market, Exit and Voice 222

8.11 Initiatives, Exclusion and Inclusion 223

8.12 Conclusion – The Jury is Still Out 223

REFERENCES 225

APPENDICES

Appendix A - Letter of Introduction 244

Appendix B - Survey Questionnaire for Voluntary Organisations 245

Appendix C - Interview Schedule for Managers 254

Appendix D - Interview Schedule for Users 261

Appendix E - Further Details about the Fieldwork, Methodology and Analysis 266

Appendix F - Methodology and Analysis – Other Issues 268

List of Figures & Tables

2.1	Framework of Various Accountabilities	54
3.1	Differences between positivist and phenomenological paradigms	65
3.2	An example of codes and themes	90
3.3	Examples of themes, sub-themes and codes used to analyse the data	91
3.4	An example of an indexed transcript	92
3.5	Chart matching sub-themes with transcript summaries and respondents	93
3.6	An example of a record card summary	99
3.7	An example of a diagrammatic note (Spidergram)	100
4.1	Local Government Managers' Collective Accountability Frameworks	102
4.2	Voluntary Sector Managers' Collective Accountability Frameworks	104
4.3	Levels of Trust between Actors in POSC	116
6a	Theoretical Framework of Accountability under Purchase of Service Contracting (POSC)	155
6b	Theoretical Framework of Accountability under Purchase of Service Contracting (POSC)	155
6c	Theoretical Framework of Accountability under Purchase of Service Contracting (POSC)	158
6d	Theoretical Framework of Accountability under Purchase of Service Contracting (POSC)	170
6e	Theoretical Framework of Accountability under Purchase of Service Contracting (POSC)	173
6f	Theoretical Framework of Accountability under Purchase of Service Contracting (POSC)	180
6g	Theoretical Framework of Accountability under Purchase of Service Contracting (POSC)	193
E.1	Distribution of all respondents by sector and status (62 respondents)	266
E.2	Distribution of statutory sector respondents by ethnic origin, age and sex (9 respondents)	266
E.3	Distribution of voluntary sector respondents by ethnic origin, age and sex (38 respondents)	267
E.4	Distribution of service users who were interviewed by ethnic origin, age and sex (15 respondents)	267

CHAPTER ONE

Background and Introduction

"The Modern Welfare State is also the service delivery State. Its development has compounded the problems of making those who deliver services answerable to both those who finance them and those who use them." (Day and Klein, 1987: 1).

1.1 Introduction

The central concern of this thesis, which is about 'accountability', evolved as a result of three consecutive events. The first was borne out of personal experience as a committee member of an NHS board during the 1980s. This in turn led to the second and third – where after a review of the relevant literature the issues raised therein led to an interest in accountability in the current health and social policy context.

Although this is a thesis about 'accountability', it should be noted from the outset that the word 'accountability' is not an easy one to define. In fact, the only agreement about its meaning, is that there is little or no agreement. Therefore, the first concern of this thesis is to attempt to gain a better understanding of, and formulate a working definition for, the concept of accountability. Having considered the meaning individuals ascribe to the accountability concept - which is broadly where one has to explain (or render an account) to another - a second key concern of this research is to examine the concept of accountability in the context of purchase of service contracting (POSC).

In specific terms, this study uses the concept of accountability to explore the relationships between three 'actors' - public sector managers (government), voluntary sector managers (charities) and service users of contracted out health and welfare services. It does so by drawing on literature used in other contexts and developing a conceptual framework for understanding accountability. Accountability viewed through a combination of theoretical perspectives provides a more complete explanation for the research findings.

In order to put the thesis in context, the chapter begins by addressing issues in relation to the importance of studying accountability, where this enquiry originated and why

accountability was chosen as the subject of research. This is followed by a discussion of where the enquiry led and what the study is about. It also briefly considers the problem with definitions, specifically in relation to 'accountability' (Kramer, 1989; Day and Klein, 1987; Simey, 1985) and the 'voluntary sector' (Kendall and Knapp, 1996), as both are central to the research and are notoriously difficult to define. Finally the chapter provides a map - a structure of the thesis.

1.2 Why is a study of Accountability important now?

Although concerns in relation to the impact of health and welfare delivery on service users are not a recent phenomenon and can, in fact, be traced back to the beginning of the modern welfare state (Deakin, 1996), issues of accountability have become of increasing importance over the last few years. Thus there are several reasons why a study of accountability is both timely and important.

Firstly, scandals, which have beset the private sector (BCCI and the Mirror Group Pensioners), the public sector (parliamentary standards and public appointments) and the voluntary sector (the missing millions of the Salvation Army), albeit in varying degrees, have led to an environment, which has inevitably contributed to such concerns (Plummer, 1996: 5). As a result and in order to partly address these concerns, various committees - Cadbury, Greenbury, Nolan and the Commission on the Future of the Voluntary Sector chaired by Professor Nicholas Deakin, were established.

In addition, there are a number of other factors, which have had both a profound impact on the definition and measurement of accountability and have also meant that the need for a new conception of accountability has been sharpened.

These include the:

(a) increasing complexity of modern government;

(b) trend towards greater responsiveness in terms of customer satisfaction, TQM and cost effectiveness (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992); and

(c) advent of purchase of service contracting (POSC), which Lewis (1993) argues has profound implications not only for relationships between the sectors, but also *" ... for the future shape of the voluntary sector ...."* (Lewis, 1993: 191).

Finally, and most pertinent to this research, is the increasing importance of the voluntary sector in general. Voluntary sector organisations *"...are part of the everyday economic fabric of British society. Because of the central role they now play in the delivery of services to those in need, ...* [they] *... have earned the right to be considered an equal partner with others in the creation of national and international policies, as well as at local and regional level ...."* (Hebditch, 1991: 9).

This is not only reflected in the estimated gross income - approximately £14.2 billion in 1999 (Passey, Hems and Jas, 2000: 55), - but is also the fact that many organisations in the voluntary sector have moved from the periphery to occupy a more central role in the processes of public policy implementation. This development has generated concern in relation to the accountability of organisations that have a governmental role, *"... yet are subject neither to election nor the extensive probity and transparency standards required of local and central government ...."* (Payne and Skelcher, 1997: 207).

In the context of such developments, the origins of this enquiry and the reasons for choosing accountability as the subject of research, are considered next, as they assist in the locating and understanding the researcher's stimulus for conducting this study.

1.3 The Origins of this Enquiry – The Family Practitioner Committee Experience

My interest in accountability is not merely academic. It arose out of experience as a committee member of a public sector National Health Service body - the Family Practitioner Committee (FPC) - during the mid to late 1980s. In Freire's terms (Mclaren and Leonard, 1993: 31) this study is therefore reflective – "... *an epistemological relationship to reality* ....". In other words, experience led me to question, interpret and critically examine certain events I did not understand. I needed to make sense of my experiences. This was important for two reasons. The first was that these experiences both shape my life, and have had a profound impact on me. The second was that I considered that things did not feel quite right as they stood. However, as Foucault (1988) contends, a critique *"... is not a matter of saying things are not right as they are. It is a matter of pointing out on what kinds of assumptions, what kinds of familiar, unchallenged, unconsidered modes of thought the practices that we accept rest ... Thought exists*

independently of systems and structures of discourse. It is something that is often hidden, but which always animates everyday behaviour ... there is always thought even in silent habits ... Criticism is a matter of flushing out that thought and trying to change it: to show that things are not as self evident as one believed, to see that what is accepted as self – evident will no longer be accepted ... [it] ... is absolutely indispensable for any transformations ...." (Foucault, 1988: 154 -155). The origin of this research and motivation for the study therefore began with, in Foucault's terms, 'a critique'.

1.3.1 Nomination and Membership of the FPC

In the mid 1980s, the FPC approached a number of organisations, including several local community and voluntary organisations, to seek their nominations for a representative, who either worked and or lived in the local government catchment areas that fell within their domain. They wished to recruit someone with an appropriate background, although not a professional health practitioner[1], to serve as a lay board member.

At the time, I was an inner city community public health worker, employed by a small voluntary organisation, jointly funded by monies pooled from the local district health authority and local government, through the joint consultative committee mechanism. During a meeting of an umbrella voluntary organisation, I was unanimously elected by my colleagues to be nominated as their representative.

In due course, I contacted the FPC to find out about them and what role I would be expected to perform, if appointed. During my visit, I was informed that the selection process was fiercely competitive and it was implied that there had been several nominations. I was also mindful of being appraised. After having made various formal and informal enquiries into my educational, financial, criminal and social background, the FPC recommended my nomination to the then Secretary of State for Health in the Conservative Government. The Minister Kenneth Clarke (much to my surprise) subsequently appointed me to serve as a member.

[1] Professional health practitioner was defined as a general medical practitioner, a pharmacist, a dentist or an optician.

1.3.2 Responsibilities and Accountability of the FPC

In general terms, FPC members had some responsibility for policy making and planning, but mostly for overseeing the administration of health services that fell within their jurisdiction. In specific terms, we were responsible for three key areas. The first was for the administration of a large budget (millions of pounds sterling) to pay health practitioners providing primary health services to the local population of the 'City' - the financial district - and three boroughs in the east London geographical area. The second responsibility was for ensuring that the health practitioners complied with their 'terms and conditions of service', which included providing health care to a certain standard and quality. The third was a duty to address patients' (as they were then called) complaints. Therefore accountability to the public (public accountability) was ensured through the organisational accountability systems, mechanisms and structures that were in place both within and without the FPC.

1.3.3 My Perception of FPC Accountability

In the process of trying to carry out my role it emerged that ensuring accountability (in both my *individual* role and our joint *collective* capacities) was not as straightforward as it may have first appeared. It is one of those concepts that when it is turned into a precise definition reveals subtle distinctions. During the period of my Committee membership, which lasted approximately two years, I made certain observations about these distinctions. Specifically, I noted the ways that the Committee worked - the manner in which decisions were reached, which led to what I perceived to be our lack of accountability to the local communities, that were within our domain.

The FPC was a public sector organisation. I was of the view that, whether elected or appointed, we as its stewards were public servants and ultimately accountable to the public. In other words, we should render an account to those on behalf of whom we were acting (i.e., the public) for the 'efficient', 'economic', 'effective' and 'equitable' use of taxpayers' monies. The public had the right to receive our account and **we** individually and collectively owed a duty of account to them.

My perception of accountability was that it operated via two routes. I envisaged that given that we were (and still are) operating within a democracy, through the first route, we were

indirectly publicly accountable upwards through the chain of administrative and hierarchical structures of the National Health Service (NHS), the Department of Health (DoH) and Secretary of State (SoS) to Parliament, which was in turn accountable to the electorate at large. Although Cooper et al (1995: 75) have argued that this route is *"...too tenuous to be effective ...."*, and the 1979 Royal Commission on the NHS concluded that detailed ministerial accountability to be, in large part, a constitutional fiction, I did perceive I was a link in this chain of accountability. Second, and perhaps more tangibly, I viewed our accountability as directly laterally to the local community - especially to current and potential patients, users or consumers of health services.

1.3.4 My Accountabilities in my Two Roles

In addition, in my professional role as a community public health worker, I perceived that as an individual I had a direct route of accountability for our collective decisions at the FPC, to people in the community (the local government area) in which I worked. This individual accountability had two strands. The first was an accountability to the local people I served, which was enacted through my day to day contact with many individuals. The second was an accountability to my local statutory and voluntary sector colleagues, especially the latter, since they had elected me as their representative. I viewed the second strand of accountability as potentially having a 'domino effect'. In other words, if I carried out my duty of account to my colleagues, then in turn they would be able to ensure they were accountable to their constituencies.

1.3.5 Accountability in Practice

In reality however, the practice of accountability was perhaps not quite as clear as the concept and principle appeared to be to me. Accountability issues became particularly significant to me when I was perplexed by and did not agree with some of our collective decisions. I often challenged my fellow committee members, usually the Chair, about the constituencies we had in mind when making decisions. I was concerned about to whom we were accountable for our decisions. If, as I conceptualised it, we were individually and collectively accountable to the public (in general) and to local consumers of primary health services (in particular), our decisions on certain occasions would to my mind have certainly been very different. In my opinion, they rarely reflected this latter accountability. Instead, accountability to a number and variety of interest groups dominated decision

making including, for instance, accountability to a particular political party, or a specific professional or business concern, via direct and indirect links with members of the FPC.

This led me to question the concept, principle and practice of our individual and collective accountabilities and answerabilities.

- What did this mean about my personal accountability? To whom, for what and how was I accountable?
- To whom, for what and how were other individual members accountable?
- What of our collective accountability? In what ways were we accountable for the consequences of our decisions?

The dilemma I faced, as a committee member, was that under the doctrine of collective responsibility, even though I often did not agree with many of our collective decisions, I remained accountable for them. Should I not wish to be held accountable for decisions with which I disagreed, I had only two options. The first was to speak up and ensure that my objections were recorded in the minutes. I did this too often for my Chair's liking. The second was to resign.

1.4 Margaret Simey's (1985) Influential Essay

I began to wonder whether the questions I was raising were as a consequence of the local circumstances in which I found myself. Were they peculiar to the way I was experiencing the world or were they of more universal significance? Did similar issues perplex other people in comparable roles in other sectors? If at an individual level I faced such dilemmas, how would this translate at an organisational level? In other words, would organisations face such accountability dilemmas? I decided to explore the issue further.

I discovered Margaret Simey's (1985) articulate essay entitled "Government by Consent: The Principle and Practice of Accountability in Local Government" in which she talked about her experiences of and concerns about her role as Chair of the Police Authority in Liverpool.

As I read her work I was rather relieved and no longer felt isolated. Although the context was different, Simey (1985) was interested in similar issues. She was primarily concerned with the principle of democratic responsibility and the practice of delegated authority as the central dilemma of government. Simey (1985: 3) postulated that there could only be one answer to this dilemma – to have " ... *an effective system of accountability whereby those to whom power is delegated account for the way in which they have used it ....*". In other words, an effective accountability system is one where those who pass laws, make policy or deliver services consult and explain to those on whose behalf they claim to be acting. She identified the need for further research.

Thus, although the seeds for the research were sown with the events described previously, I decided to broaden the scope of this particular inquiry. Rather than pursue the earlier theme of the doctrine of collective responsibility and the accountability of committee members, or even a linked theme such as 'accountability and whistle blowers', I decided that I would like to study accountability in the current context. Before I could do this, I needed to conduct a more detailed literature search.

1.5 The Literature Search and Contemporary Developments

After consideration of (a) additional relevant accountability literature - Smith and Hague (1971), Day and Klein (1987) and Leat (1988), Stewart (1992); and (b) contemporary developments, I decided to pursue the topic in the field of health and social policy.

In the early 1990s, health authorities and local authorities were not only becoming, but were also recognised as becoming, increasingly interdependent. Local government was being called upon to meet NHS policy objectives made explicit through the government's Health of the Nation Strategy and community care policy (Cooper et al, 1995). In addition, since the introduction of purchase of service contracting (POSC), also referred to as the 'purchaser-provider' split, health and local authorities (social services departments in particular) began to share some comparable functions. Both *"... moved away from direct provision into a commissioning role; both are involved in needs assessment, contracting, planning and monitoring ...."* (Cooper et al, 1995: 77-78).

Given what was at the time a new policy environment for both government and voluntary sector organisations, the research would examine accountability within purchase of service contracting (POSC). Specifically, it would research whether, in Simey's (1985) terms, those who make policy, and those who deliver services, consult and explain their decisions and actions to users of these services, who are also often, but not always, voters and taxpayers.

The next section will briefly consider some of these contemporary developments before considering why accountability is of concern to the public and voluntary sectors and therefore worthy of further study.

1.5.1 Contemporary Developments in Health and Social Policy

In order to provide some context for the emergence of POSC, consideration is briefly given to some historical, economic and political factors.

1.5.1.1 Debates of the New Right and the Libertarian Socialist Left

Changes in the nature of the welfare state, and the ensuing debate about it, are influenced by a range of ideologies. Such changes are not only due to the strategies introduced by the New Right, who have been influenced by public choice theorists. They are also because of arguments put forward by the *"... libertarian socialist left ..."*, who criticise state provision as bureaucratic, paternalistic, controlling and regulating of the poor (Mayo, 1994: 12). According to Kirkpatrick and Martinez Lucio (1996), some consider that those who advocate *" ... New Right ideas*[2] *..."* (1996: 4) were able to gain currency, precisely because they were combined with other intellectual debates, expressed particularly in the organisation and management literature.

1.5.1.2 Political Context – Thatcher and Major

In Britain, Margaret Thatcher set out to 'roll-back' the state through changing attitudes and policies, by emphasising *"... the role of the free market and individualism in place of public ownership, planning and collectivism in social welfare ...."* (Mayo: 1994: 2). As a result of this, in the late 1980s, there was an intense period of social legislation, for

[2] The New Right argue that exit mechanisms, which lead to market-like pressures are the only way to reform 'inefficient' bureaucratic agencies into better quality public services.

example The Local Government Finance Act 1988, The Children Act 1989, The NHS and Community Care Act 1990, and The Charities Act 1992, among others.

According to Glennerster (1989), the legislative changes differed from the previous incremental continuation of past policies and represented a significant and new departure in policy. Taken together, they consolidated successive Conservative governments' concerted efforts to promote new management practices, with its *"... imported language of business and markets ...."* associated with tight fiscal controls and control of inputs (through top-down management and performance indicators) in local government, central government, and the NHS (Mackintosh, 2000: 2).

Pollitt (1990: 15-16) characterised these early 'Thatcherite' reforms as *"... 'neo Taylorian'..."* which *" ... proceeded on the basis that previously unmeasured aspects of the work process could and should be measured, by management, and then used as the basis for controlling and rewarding effort ...."* . The later reforms presided over by Major in the early 1990s have been described as the "... *new public management NPM ...*" (Dunleavy & Hood, 1993; Hood, 1991; Pollitt, 1990).

NPM comprised four main elements. These were:

(1) "A much bolder and larger scale use of market-like mechanisms for those parts of the public sector that could not be transferred directly into private ownership (quasi-markets).

(2) Intensified organizational and spatial decentralisation of the management and production of services.

(3) A constant rhetorical emphasis on the need to improve service 'quality'.

(4) *An equally relentless insistence that greater attention had to be given to the wishes of the individual service user/'consumer' ...."* (Pollitt, 1993: 180).

In the early 1990s, John Major's leadership (which signalled a change from the previous administration) can be distinguished from Thatcher's, as one with an interest in the question of outcomes. It focused particularly on notions of consumerism or individual consumer rights and quality improvement, as embodied in the Citizen's Charter programme (Mayo, 1994).

1.5.1.3 Purchase of Service Contracting (POSC)

Although clearly the introduction of market and quasi-market mechanisms was not new, and in fact remained a major theme within the NPM, what signified a development in the policies of the Conservative government was the application of purchase of service contracting (POSC) to the area of complex public services. These services - for instance, schools, hospitals, primary health care services (i.e., GP practices and community care) had previously been regarded as not suitable. Pollitt (1990: 11) describes these developments as the *" ... confluence of managerialism ...* [with] *... 'welfarism' ..."*. In other words, Pollitt (1990) argues that management practices employed by private sector organisations and adopted by welfare-state services represented *" ... the injection of an ideological 'foreign body' into a sector previously characterised by quite different traditions of thought ...."* (Pollitt, 1990: 11).

The introduction of this 'confluence of managerialism with welfarism' as a result of the Griffiths report and the subsequent legislation is examined here.

1.5.1.4 The Griffiths Report (1988) and The NHS and Community Care Act (1990)

Since the 1988 'Griffiths Report' on Community Care and the subsequent White Paper *Caring for People* (Department of Health, 1989a), the main aim of central policy makers has been to move the pattern of care provision away from caring for people in large institutions towards more community based care in smaller local units or in people's own homes. It was assumed that this would result in *" ... improvements in efficiency, greater choice and an increased responsiveness of services to users' needs and wants ...."* (Le Grand 1993: 1).

Other recommendations of the report which subsequently became enshrined in the NHS and Community Care Act (1990) included:

- a separation of the provider and purchaser functions via 'contracting out' local authority social services to 'independent' or extra-governmental providers (from outside the public sector); and
- together with this responsibility, a requirement to assess needs, arrange that care be provided according to contract specifications *" ...in the most cost effective manner ...."*

(Flynn and Hurley, 1993: 7) and monitor the quality of the providers' service delivery to consumers.

As a result of the NHS and Community Care Act (1990), health and social welfare services, which were previously delivered by the public sector (local government, central government or the NHS), are now being delivered not only by some public sector organisations, but also by other private or voluntary organisations from the 'independent sector'. These services are being co-ordinated through a market system by local authorities in their role as the *"... gatekeepers of care ...."* (Cooper et al, 1995: 77).

1.5.1.5 User Voices, The Patient's Charter (1991) and POSC

In addition, the NHS and Community Care Act 1990 (1990) encouraged users to make their voices heard, whilst the Patient's Charter (1991) promoted the rights of patients particularly in relation to being given detailed information on local health services.

In this 'mixed economy of welfare', purchasers make policy and buy services they consider their communities will need, while independent sector or public sector organisations tender on a competitive or negotiated basis, to deliver services. Should the independent sector organisation's bid be successful, it would be awarded a contract or a service level agreement. The purpose of the contract is to ensure that the purchaser obtains the best value for money among competing providers. This process is referred to as purchase of service contracting (POSC).

1.5.1.6 The Restructuring of the State

Despite the rhetoric of 'rolling back the state', Glennerster and Midgley (1991) and Le Grand (1990) have questioned the impact the new right has had in dismantling its structures in terms of welfare provision. This is not to suggest however that the changes that have been introduced are not fundamental. On the contrary, Le Grand (1990: 3) argues that they are, and that the state has effectively been restructured representing *" ...a major break with the past ...."*

Various scholars conceptualise this restructuring in a variety of ways. Hoggett (1991) refers to the state as a *"... highly unstable centralised decentralisation whereby the state*

retains overall control but allows different actors some degree of responsible autonomy ...." (quoted in Kirkpatrick and Martinez Lucio, 1996: 5). Deakin and Walsh (1996: 33) – refer to the *" ... enabling ... "* state, Le Grand (1993: 3 & 5) a *"quasi-market ... market[s] because they replace monolithic state providers with competitive independent ones ... 'quasi' because they differ from conventional markets in a number of key ways ....*" and Mayo, (1994: 18) - a *"mixed economy of welfare"*.

1.5.1.7 The Voluntary Sector's Role in the Restructured State

The voluntary sector's role in relation to the state has also been conceptualised in a number of ways. Seibel (1990: 47) describes voluntary organisations as *"... a tool of government action ...."*, whilst Dekker and van den Broek (1998) go further and argue that some voluntary organisations are actually a part of the state. Billis (1989: 13) on the other hand, subscribes to the view that despite taking on structural features of the state and market sectors, organisations in the voluntary sector can retain their voluntary *"roots"* and ownership.

Such debates only serve to highlight the complexity involved when trying to conceptualise the state, and the voluntary sector, and the relationships between the two. Whilst the debate is acknowledged, this thesis argues that voluntary sector organisations that are only part funded by the state, (which are the subject of this study) are separated from the state by two criteria. The first criterion is that the two sectors (voluntary and public) are legally separate entities. The second is that the public sector has elected representatives, Members of Parliament (MPs) or Councillors. These representatives are accountable to the public for policy-making and service delivery through the electoral process. The voluntary sector, on the other hand, has trustees who are more usually selected, than democratically elected, and are certainly not publicly accountable in the same way.

1.5.1.8 Shifting Trends and Accountability Concerns in the Enabling State

In addition to the legislative and policy developments that led to POSC in the 1990s, other issues that have affected the voluntary sector and have thrown into sharp focus concerns about the nature of accountability are listed.

These include:

(a) the gradual replacement of grant-aid with contracts and service level agreements;

(b) the rapid growth of the voluntary sector reflected not only in terms of increased revenue spending but also in terms of increased taxpayers' monies through contracting (contract fees increased by £78.4 million - 134%) (NCVO News, 1993, cited in Lewis, 1996: 99); and

(c) changes in its 'complimentary', 'supplementary' and 'gap-filling' roles (Wolfenden, 1978) and changes in its regulation.

This has led to concerns, which relate not only to the voluntary sector but also to the public sector. These concerns, about the nature of accountability to the tax-paying public and to users, are elaborated below.

In the public sector, these concerns relate to value for money, particularly the:

1. efficient use of diminishing resources at a time of increasing public expenditure constraints; and
2. effective use of taxpayers' monies both within and without government.

In the voluntary sector, accountability concerns relate to:

1. its effectiveness;
2. its capacity, in general, to demonstrate greater and more effective public accountability (Deakin, 1996; Nolan, 1995; Woodfield, 1987), especially given the tax exempt status of many organisations in the sector, and the changes for some organisations in relation to their role vis a vis the public sector; and
3. its volunteer governing bodies, in particular, to fulfil their accountability role and function (Deakin, 1996) which is *"... more wide-ranging than their specific legal reponsibilities suggest ...."* (Tumin, 1992: 49).

1.5.1.9 POSC, the Enabling State and the Quasi-Market

Whether conceptualised in terms of an *" ... enabling ..."* state (Deakin and Walsh 1996: 33), *" ...third party government..."* (Salamon, 1987: 37) or a voluntary sector and a public sector operating as a *"... quasi-market ..."* (Le Grand 1993: 3); the introduction of POSC, although very much in its infancy when the research began, has accountability implications for those involved. As Salamon (1987: 38) argues in relation to the American experience,

since *"... a number of different institutions must act together to achieve a given program goal, this pattern of government action seriously complicates the task of public management and involves real problems of accountability and control ...."*

The complexity of public management and the linked accountability problems, which have come about because of the formal separation of purchasing from delivery (through purchase of service contracting), are briefly examined in the following sections.

1.5.2 Accountability of the Public Sector

In the context of POSC, accountability of the public sector is, theoretically, no longer directly between them and the electorate, since the policy implementors are usually 'extra-governmental' - outside and independent from government. In other words, they are not from the public sector, but are from either the private sector or the voluntary sector. Nonetheless, elected representatives (politicians) must remain answerable for both the policy-making and the policy-implementation process, whether or not providers are public institutions.

Traditional political and the corresponding administrative and management accountability relationships are no longer appropriate for the contemporary situation. Since this is the case and because it is important that government and organisations acting on its behalf are accountable for the use of public monies, the contract has a pivotal role in terms of linking the accountability chain in the new processes of public policy implementation.

The implications of the politicians' accountability to the public for services delivered through increasingly fragmented systems means, in theory at least, that if the service provided is judged to be inadequate, extra-governmental service deliverers may face penalties and even termination of the contract or service level agreement. Given the context of major change and the impact of central government policy in terms of reducing the role of the state in service delivery, important changes have taken place in terms of state activity and voluntary sector activity. Accountability is therefore one thread in this shift, which this research goes on to examine.

1.5.2.1 Key Concerns for the Public Sector

Given the purchaser–provider split and the fragmentation in conception and execution of policy, there are two key concerns for the public sector (government) to consider. The first is about how to ensure congruence between policy objectives and implementation. The second broadly stated is *"... the reconciliation of democratic responsibility with the delegation of power ...."* (Smith, 1971: 53). In other words, how can a balance be maintained between the independence of the provider and the public accountability required when the government delegates power outside itself?

1.5.3 Accountability of the Voluntary Sector

Within the POSC framework, the role of the voluntary sector in the delivery of public services on behalf of the State has moved from the periphery. Since some voluntary organisations have moved from the margins to occupy a more pivotal role in public policy implementation, this has implications for both the public sector (government) and the voluntary sector (in this case charities).

In addition, since the charitable voluntary sector has always been important not only in historical terms but also because many have sizeable resources, some from public donations and some from tax relief privileges granted by the Inland Revenue, it is (in general terms) in the public interest to gain a deeper understanding about the nature of their accountability.

1.5.3.1 Key Concerns for the Voluntary Sector

In contrast to the public sector, of central concern to the voluntary sector (charities) when entering contractual relationships is:

(a) how can they ensure accountability to the public sector (government) without compromising their organisational autonomy and independence to represent their members and beneficiaries (Flynn and Hurley, 1993); and

(b) how can they balance their multiple, possibly conflicting, at times even ambiguous accountabilities to their many stakeholders[3] (Leat, 1988).

[3] These may include for instance accountability to users of other services, members, other donors, staff, volunteers and their governing body.

1.5.4 Key Concerns for Both Public and Voluntary Sectors – User Accountability

Of concern to both the public sector (government) and the voluntary sector (charities) is how each can ensure accountability to users, especially given the disquiet in relation to POSC and the restriction of users' influence (Richardson, 1993; Gutch, 1992). For the public sector in particular, how can it ensure user accountability when it is no longer directly implementing policy, but is delivering services to users through a third party. For the voluntary sector how can it ensure accountability to users when it is implementing government policy or delivering services on behalf of the state.

1.6 The Research Focus

Until recently, much of government policy in relation to the public sector and the extra-governmental or 'independent' sector (both private and voluntary) has been based on assumptions. Moreover, of the little research there is into accountability, no previous studies have considered accountability from the perspectives of all actors (each sector and service users).

Day and Klein's (1987) research focused on the accountability role of members of five local public sector organisations in one geographical area and Leat (1988) studied voluntary sector accountability in two metropolitan district areas.

Therefore, in order to add to the existing body of knowledge; and since it is vital that social policy decisions are informed by rigorous and robust research, this study explored whether there was, in Simey's (1985) terms, 'an effective system of accountability' in place between the public sector **(the policy makers)**, the voluntary sector **(the service deliverers)** and service users **(those on whose behalf the first two claim to be acting).**

Specifically, the research examined accountability between local government 'purchasers', voluntary sector 'providers' and between these two actors and users of contracted out health and welfare services, in eight inner-city urban, and rural locations in England.

1.7 Definitional Problems

Having explored the background, this section will briefly consider two conceptual definitions that are problematic – 'accountability' and the 'voluntary sector' - as they are central to the study.

1.7.1 Accountability

Accountability is referred to in the literature as a difficult, complex and confounding term that eludes any clear and simple definition (Kramer, 1989; Day and Klein, 1987; Simey, 1985). In fact, the only agreement about accountability is that: -

a) there is little, if any, agreement about what it means; and
b) it embraces a range of meanings.

Given the difficulties with the definition of accountability (which are considered in Chapter 2), one of the aims of the research was to arrive at a working definition of accountability in the context of purchase of service contracting.

1.7.2 The Voluntary Sector

Another term that is problematic is the voluntary sector. The term is not only all encompassing but also *" ... likely to change over time and ... in the jargon of political theory, essentially contestable ..."* (Kendall and Knapp, 1996: 24). As a result, depending on the nature of the enquiry and the context within which it is located, a number of definitions exist (see, for example, Kendall and Knapp, 1996; Kendall and Knapp, 1995; Paton, 1992; Handy, 1990; Gutch, Kunz and Spencer, 1990; Brenton, 1985).

For the purposes of this study, Kendall and Knapp's (1996) *"... structural operational definition ...."* (Kendall and Knapp, 1996: 17) which *comprises "five core criteria ... formal, self-governing, independent of government, non profit-distributing (and primarily non-business) and voluntary",* is favoured (Kendall and Knapp, 1996: 18).

The self - governing and private criteria demarcate the voluntary sector as independent from the state. Its emphasis on voluntarism and voluntary participation captures the

essence of the sector, whilst the non-profit nature, where there is no distribution of profits to owners (or directors), distinguishes it from the market.

This definition has been chosen not only because it is useful in terms of communicating the nature of the voluntary sector, but also because it includes 'charities', the category from which the case study organisations were selected. In addition, it has advantages if in the future any research needs to make a cross-national comparison based on this study.

1.8 Selecting the Case Study Organisations

Within the voluntary sector, large national charities were of particular interest for this study. The factors that influenced the decision to concentrate on this organisational form (i.e., charities) and size (i.e., large) in terms of selecting the case studies are detailed in Chapter 3.

Briefly, charities were selected on the basis that:

a) many of the organisations delivering health and welfare services are charities; and
b) charities account for not only approximately two-thirds of the income of the sector, but they also typify a major organisational type within the sector.

Since this is the case, it is important that there is more research about them.

Large organisations were selected on the grounds that not only were they more likely than smaller local organisations to be involved in purchase of service contracting (POSC), but also that they would provide more complex, possibly bureaucratic, layered and numerous accountabilities.

Additional issues that were taken into account and that influenced the selection of case study organisations included both their length of involvement with POSC and their lack of dependence on income from POSC. Those with an involvement with POSC from approximately the introduction of the legislation and with roughly only one third of their income from POSC were favoured. The reasons for this are also given in Chapter 3.

1.9 The Thesis

Since the concept of accountability is confused in the literature, and previous studies do not have a sufficient explanation for what is happening in the current context of purchase of service contracting (POSC), the gap in knowledge and lack of understanding that has arisen as a result, needs to be addressed. In addition, given my: (a) own background and interests; and (b) wish to research Simey's (1985) notion, of an effective system of accountability and apply it to the contemporary context, inter-sectoral accountability and user accountability became the subject of inquiry.

1.9.1 The Aims, Focus, Key Questions and Key Issues

The **aims** of this research are twofold. The first is, to come to an understanding of, and arrive at a working definition for accountability. The second, is to gain an understanding of accountability, in terms of the relationships and processes that take place between individuals and organisations engaged in the purchase, provision and use, of health and welfare services, in the context of POSC.

In specific terms the **focus** of this research is on accountability between:

a) local government purchasing managers and voluntary sector (charity) provider managers;
b) voluntary sector (charity) managers responsible for providing contracted out health and social welfare services and users of those services; and
c) local government managers responsible for policy-making in relation to these services and service users.

The three key **research questions** were as follows.

In order to define accountability the first research question asks what meaning people ascribe to accountability. How did they describe it?

- How is accountability conceptualised and defined by managers from both sectors and service users?

Having arrived at a working definition of accountability, the second research question examines how accountability was experienced and enacted.

- How is accountability operating within the context of POSC, given the concomitant changing relationship between public sector purchasers and charitable voluntary sector providers? How is it experienced and managed between the public sector and the voluntary sector?

The final research question is about how both sectors ensure accountability to service users.

- How is accountability enacted and managed between the sectors and users of health and social welfare services?

The **key issues** are:

- to identify **to whom and in what ways** are public sector purchasers (government) and voluntary sector provider organisations (charities) accountable;
- to identify **how public sector purchasers (government) ensure accountability to the public for policies** and programmes **implemented by voluntary sector providers (charities);**
- to identify **how voluntary sector providers (charities)**, given their other accountabilities, **ensure accountability to the public sector (government)** for implementing government policies; and
- to explore how each sector (public and voluntary) ensures accountability to users.

Given the lack of theorising in the area of accountability, the study employed a grounded theory approach to gathering and analysing the data and developed a conceptual framework, which used a range of theories in order to examine, analyse and explain the research findings.

1.10 The Structure of the Thesis

This section provides a brief summary of the six other chapters that make up this thesis.

1.10.1 Chapter Two

Chapter 2 traces the changing notions of accountability and based on a review of the literature presents a framework of the various accountabilities. As a result of the changing external environment a number of accountability dilemmas have been raised for public sector 'purchasers' and voluntary sector 'providers'. These are considered together with the research questions.

1.10.2 Chapter Three

Chapter 3 explains the aims and objectives of the research and expresses concisely the research questions raised by the literature review, in the previous chapter. Furthermore, it discusses the method, study design and analysis, all of which are briefly considered in the following sub sections.

1.10.2.1 The Method

In this study - the case study methodology was employed using a qualitative approach. The concepts that have been developed in this thesis are grounded (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) in the researcher's work during the two year period 1994 - 1996.

1.10.2.2 The Data

The study focuses on the accountability processes and relationships between:

a) two large national voluntary organisations (charities) and within these eight local organisations;
b) eight local government purchasers; and
c) several service users (including: children and young people with special needs (physical and mental disabilities); children and young people with experiences of abuse; and parents and carers of children and young people with special needs (physical and mental disabilities); and some older/elderly people using day care services.

A total of one hundred and eighteen people were interviewed. The respondents comprised managers from the public sector, managers from the voluntary sector, service users and or where appropriate their parents/carers, were interviewed in depth.

1.10.2.3 The Analysis

The *"Framework"* method developed at Social and Community Planning Research (SCPR) by Ritchie and Spencer (1994) was used to map, analyse and interpret the data.

1.10.3 Chapters Four and Five

Chapters 4 and 5 present the findings to have emerged from the case analysis process. Chapter 4 explores the accountability issues that have arisen as a result of contracting between managers in the public sector (government) and managers in the voluntary sector (charities). Chapter 5 explores the issues that have arisen as a result of contracting for user accountability for all actors – in both sectors and the service users. In order to develop a clear definition and conceptualisation of how accountability is enacted and managed within the context of contracting, both chapters piece together individual managers and service users' perceptions about and experiences of accountability.

1.10.4 Chapter Six

Chapter 6 develops a theoretical understanding and framework of accountability from the three actors' perspectives (local government managers, charitable voluntary sector managers and service users) based on the findings from Chapters 4 and 5. It draws on political science and economics literature and a range of organisational theory concepts used in other contexts, in order to conceptualise the operation of, and the processes involved in, accountability. In other words, it views accountability through a combination of theoretical perspectives, in order to provide a more complete explanation for the research findings.

1.10.5 Chapter Seven

Chapter 7 presents the conclusions, discussion and policy implications that have arisen as a result of the study. It also identifies questions for further research.

1.10.6 Chapter Eight

Since the completion of the fieldwork in 1996, as a result of the election of 'New Labour' in May 1997, and their re-election in 2001, there have been significant changes in government policy. Given that public service managers are therefore now operating within an institutional context shaped by a different set of government policies, Chapter 8 discusses some of the changes in government policy which have occurred. It also reflects on their relevance for the findings of this research study.

1.10.7 The Terminology

The terminology used in the chapters includes local government manager, voluntary sector manager, and user or service user.

Local government manager and *voluntary sector manager* refers to those 'paid' employees in either the public sector (government) or voluntary sector (charities), who were responsible for ensuring that the purchased services were delivered according to contract specifications. Although the term manager was often not reflected in their title, what was important was their role in relation to POSC and whether or not they had some management responsibility for purchasing or providing the service.

The term *user* or *service user* refers to those individuals who 'used' or 'benefited' from the services.

1.10.8 Transcribed Conversations

In the transcribed conversations the respondents are identified as local government managers (LGM), voluntary sector managers (VSM) and user (USER). The researcher's questions are indicated by capital letters.

1.11 Summary and Conclusion

This chapter discussed the origins of this study, the reasons for selecting accountability as the research topic, and the reasons why it is both timely and important. Furthermore, it explained the background and context to the research. Together with definitional problems, the aims, the focus, the key questions and the key issues were also considered. Finally, a

directional map was provided for the reader in terms of the structure of the thesis and the terminology and abbreviations used in Chapters 4 and 5 were explained.

The next chapter will consider the complex and ill-defined concept of accountability and will examine the accountability dilemmas that have been raised as a result of the introduction of purchase of service contracting (POSC).

CHAPTER TWO

Changing Notions of Accountability

> *"... the three forces of gravity are working perpendicularly to one another. Three earth planes cut across each other at right angles, and human beings are living on each of them. It is impossible for the inhabitants of different worlds to walk, sit or stand on the same floor, because they have differing conceptions of what is horizontal and what is vertical. Yet they may well share use of the same staircase". Relativity (Escher, 1990: 67).*

2.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out the issues raised in the accountability literature. It begins by defining and conceptualising accountability in broad terms. This is followed by an exploration of the concept in the context of purchase of service contracting (POSC) in the 1990s. Next, public accountability of government in a democracy, prior to the emergence of purchase of service contracting (POSC) is examined. This discussion is initiated here, because with the exception of four texts whose foci are on the accountability of public and / or voluntary and non profit organisations (Day and Klein, 1987; Leat, 1988; Kearns, 1996; Cutt and Murray, 2000) - almost all discussions of accountability are concerned with democracy and legitimacy (Stewart, 1992; Hunter, 1992; Simey, 1985; Greer, Hedlund and Gibson, 1978; Smith and Hague, 1971). Specifically, the concerns reflected are about those holding public power and their need to be accountable through the electoral process.

Consideration is then given to the changing notion of accountability of both the public (governmental) sector and the voluntary sector in the 1990s. This is followed by an examination of the principle and practice of inter- and intra-organisational accountability structures and relationships between public (governmental) 'purchasers', independent (private) and voluntary sector 'providers' (charities) in the contemporary context.

Given that accountability issues are dealt with empirically and are dispersed throughout the literature, this chapter draws them together in a framework that illustrates the different forms, levels and realms of accountability. The accountability dilemmas for contracting partners are then examined and the research questions for this study posed.

2.2 What is Accountability? How is Accountability Conceptualised?

The above questions appear to be difficult to answer since in spite of *"... endless talk on the subject ...."* (Simey, 1985: 3), in the literature the only agreement about what accountability is, is that it is *"... difficult to grapple with, ... [due to the] ... lack of agreement about its meaning ...."* (Kramer, 1989: 109). It is one of the *"... most loosely used ..."* (Starks, 1991: 135), ambivalent, elusive, ambiguous, problematic, *"... multifaceted ..."* (Kearns 1996: 179), complex and confusing terms, *"... a concept that is taken to mean everything ... [which] ... effectively means nothing ...."* (Cutt and Murray, 2000: 1). It is referred to as a *"... chameleon word ..."* (Day and Klein, 1987: 32) which evades any simple definition and a *" ... vexed issue ..."* (Hunter, 1992: 436) that has *" ...exercised academic observers ... [among others] ... for many years ...."* (ibid). Since the accountability concept encompasses *"... many meanings and dimensions ...."* (Day and Klein, 1987: 249) answers to the questions posed - What is Accountability? and How is Accountability Conceptualised? - may need to be pursued at a couple of different levels[4].

One level of response could be to attempt to separate the different strands that contribute to the notion of 'accountability' for instance, public; political; fiscal; legal; administrative; managerial; professional; and consumer and (or) the concepts that it is closely bound up with. The latter being: symbolism (Etzioni, 1968); responsibility (Day and Klein, 1987; Wadsworth, 1991); trust (Simey, 1985; Leat, 1987); public trust (Cooper, 1990); democracy (Simey, 1985; Day and Klein, 1987; Stewart, 1992; Longley, 1993); control (Simey, 1985; Day and Klein, 1987); vested interests and moral responsibility (Etzioni, 1968, Simey, 1985; Day and Klein, 1987); power (Etzioni, 1968; Simey, 1985; Day and Klein, 1987; Leat, 1987; Stewart, 1992) and legitimacy (Hunter, 1992; Longley, 1993).

At another level the response could be to draw some of these strands together to conceptualise accountability in abstract or philosophical terms and linked to this, in more concrete and practical terms. In relation to the former, in general terms, Simey (1985) regards accountability as a moral principle - the *"... basis for a relationship between ... those who govern and those who consent to be governed ...."* (Simey, 1985: 20). In relation to the latter, at a more pragmatic level in specific terms, Stewart (1992) considers

[4] I would like to acknowledge and thank Christopher Pollitt (1993) for this, as I borrowed both the turn of phrase and way of conceptualising the issues from him.

that to be accountable means to be able to: *"... account for actions taken and being held to account for those actions ...."* (Stewart, 1992: 4). The relationship between 'those who account' and 'those who are accounted to' can operate at many levels and can be between individuals, groups and (or) organisations. This definition acknowledges two important aspects of the concept. First, accountability is a relationship between people where one is always accountable to someone (or groups) never in the abstract. Second, it refers to a pattern of behaviour where obligation is a key element.

However, both the above approaches of deconstructing and then reconstructing the accountability concept have their limitations, which can only really be resolved by moving the discussion to another place and instead seeking answers to the following questions.

- **Who should be held accountable?**
- **To whom should accountability be directed?**
- **Accountability for what?**

These in turn raise issues of context. Answers to these questions are likely to vary according to the circumstances in which they are expressed. Consequently, it is perhaps more valuable to attempt to resolve some of these issues, by locating the discussion in terms of how it applies to the context which gave rise to the concerns of the thesis, namely accountability within purchase of service contracting (POSC).

2.3 Accountability of the Public Sector and the Voluntary Sector (Charities) prior to the 1990s

Prior to the 1990s, both policy-making and service provision were confined (in the main) to the public sector. Since those exercising public power were *"... expected to act as stewards of the public interest and of the public purse as well as being the providers of goods and services ...."* (Farnham and Horton, 1993: 38), policy making during this period began with the collective responsibility of the leadership. It extended through the political and administrative hierarchy to individual ministers in central government, (or in the case of local government to councillors), and finally to civil servants (or local government officers), who were responsible for policy implementation.

Although accountability and responsibility are often confused in the literature (Jabbra and Dwivedi, 1989; Day and Klein, 1987; Leat, 1985; Gates, 1983; Reagan, 1975), they are not synonymous. In the context of a "... *representative democracy ... [where] ... elections play a central part ....*" (Kingdom, 1991: 5), for instance, an appointed official or administrator is internally accountable through hierarchical delegation (Woodhouse, 1994). In the case of central government this would be to the minister, and in local government to the councillor, and via the legislature to legally account for their actions. In other words, although civil servants or local government officers may be *responsible* to the electorate, they are not properly *accountable* to the electorate. In a democracy[5], only those who are elected to Parliament or local government are accountable to the public.

> *"Accountability, from this perspective, cannot be separated from democratic processes: the fact that elected politicians are directly responsible for the delivery of services is seen as guaranteeing, in itself, accountability."* (Day, 1992: 2).

In this framework, at a formal level, accountability of the public sector although imperfect was clear and unequivocal.

2.3.1. Local Government

Within any particular local authority, although the relationship of officers to members is likely to vary according to ... *"local custom, convention and local political culture ..."* (Byrne, 1994: 291), like Whitehall, local government accountability is based on the democratic principle that councillors are elected to make policy decisions, and *"... the expert is engaged to execute those decisions"* (Byrne, 1994: 283). It has also been characterised in terms of the *"... political management of the elected members and the executive management of the appointed officers"* (ibid).

In theory, all local authorities attempt to promote the collective interests of the community as expressed through the ballot box. All questions are decided by the vote of the council as a corporate body *" ... each voice and each vote counting equally"* (Byrne, 1994: 186). The council conducts its activities through a council of members, aided by committees, which comprise members working with senior officers.

[5] Democracy derives from the Greek 'demos' meaning rule by the people (Kingdom, 1991: 4)

With the exception of matters that cannot by law be delegated to committees, committees whether vertical, horizontal, special, standing, joint or statutory, are usually required to report their discussions to the full council, which remains the ultimate decision making-body.

An aggrieved individual seeking redress from their local authority could depending on the nature of their grievance *"... contact their local councillor through his or her surgery ... approach the local authority ... write to the chief executive officer or the chair of the council ... use less formal channels ... approaching a local political party ... or voluntary organisation ...address questions to the district auditor; present their objections to the Minister; take legal action or contact the local MP"* (Byrne, 1994: 418).

2.3.2. Central Government

In terms of central government, accountability is traditionally *" ... seen as operating through the conventions of both collective and individual ministerial responsibility. Collective responsibility provides Parliament with the means of holding the government as a body accountable, and individual ministerial responsibility enables the House to focus on a particular minister ... without the need to censure the whole government ...."* (Woodhouse, 1994: 3-4).

Thus accountability for policy implementation followed the hierarchical structure upwards to the Secretary of State (SoS). According to constitutional theory the SoS would be held accountable to Parliament through a variety of mechanisms. These include *"financial accountability to the Treasury and by the Accounting Officer to the PAC ... The minister is accountable on the Floor of the House ... and before select committees ..."* which can send for individuals, as well as written documents such as papers and records, although they have no formal authority to do so and depend on the government for co-operation *" ... to individual Members of Parliament, who act on behalf of their constituents, and to the clients and consumers themselves ...."* (Woodhouse, 1994: 234); specialist tribunals; and the courts.

Since the bureaucratic, professionally orientated, hierarchical systems in the public sector were clearly linked, the accountability structures and relationships between service

deliverers, elected policy makers and the electorate (or the tax paying public), who the latter were ultimately answerable to through the democratic process of periodic elections, were direct.

Although Day and Klein (1987) challenge the *"... fundamental principle of the British Constitution ..."* (Woodhouse, 1994: 3), that *"... election ipso facto makes members accountable ..."* (Day and Klein, 1987: 228) which they refer to as a *" ...constitutional myth ..."* (ibid) - legitimacy was *"... derived from the electorate and accountability ...owed first and foremost to the electorate ...."* (Leat, 1988: 25).

> *"The responsibility of the minister to Parliament can therefore be seen as multi – layered, requiring the minister to provide a range of responses from redirection through to resignation, according to the degree of control or supervisory authority he exercises. Indirect control may allow the minister to limit accountability to redirecting or providing information. Direct control ... requires explanation, possibly amendatory action, and, in extreme circumstances, resignation ...."* (Woodhouse, 1994: 38).

This chain of direct accountability has been *"... strengthened by institutions designed to discover and report on specific aspects of performance - and equipped with the relevant professional expertise. The direct accountability chain becomes less expert and more generalist towards the top and those at the top need independent professional advice as a check on the information they receive from below ...."* (Starks, 1991: 143). Two such institutions were the National Audit Office (NAO), and the Audit Commission (AC). A third is commonly referred to as the Ombudsman.

2.3.3. The National Audit Office

The independent NAO with specific interest in central government audits and conducts investigations on value for money - in other words the economy, efficiency and effectiveness - of any bodies (government and quasi-government) that have been funded with public monies. The annual report of the Comptroller and Auditor-General (CAG) (head of the NAO and an officer of the House of Commons) is scrutinised by an all party select committee - the Public Accounts Committee (PAC). The PAC, which is principally concerned with the elimination of waste and the encouragement of financial rectitude, reports its conclusions to Parliament. Downey (1986: 12) who was the Comptroller and

Auditor-General during the 1980s, described the PAC as *"... ploughing the furrow of accountability for the past 125 years, with wide and acknowledged success ...."*. The value for money aspect in terms of economy, efficiency and effectiveness has become of increasing importance since then.

The NAO remit clearly impinges in the area of charities, as they are in effect, spending public money. It has an oversight function about good financial management and its consequences. *"At the end of the day, it is the weight of the word of the NAO and in particular the PAC. It is not that the PAC can 'order' changes, but it is so well regarded that what it says can carry great weight. More informally the PAC has a very strong influence, because it can affect the reputation of the government department* (Fries, 2000). Drewry (1988: 207 - 208) describes the PAC as having the *" ...enviable reputation as the one select committee before which even the most exalted permanent secretary can be made to tremble ... the Committee's reports can have 'seismic effects through Whitehall' ...."*.

2.3.4. The Audit Commission

In 1982, local authority auditing in England and Wales was brought under the control of a single, independent body by the Government. This non departmental public body (NDPB) - the Audit Commission – sponsored by the Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions, began work in 1983. Its role was extended to include National Health Services authorities, trusts and other bodies in 1990. Under the Local Government Act 1992, the Commission was given further additional responsibilities in relation to the production of annual comparative indicators of local authority performance. The Audit Commission appoints auditors in order to facilitate improvements in economy, efficiency and effectiveness through value for money studies and the audit process.

It has a similar remit to the NAO but differs from it in that it is not accountable to a Parliamentary Committee. Although it is periodically requested to give evidence to the Transport, Local Government and Regional affairs select committee, it is directly accountable to the public through publication of its findings. (Audit Commission, 2001a, 2001b; Woolston, 2001).

2.3.5. The Ombudsman

The third institution is the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration, appointed by the Crown, but at the service of Parliament. Commonly referred to as the Ombudsman, the Commissioner's role is to investigate complaints from the public against government departments. The Ombudsman acts on the request of an MP and can ask for oral and (or) written evidence and examine files. If the complaint is seen to be justified, the department must respond by rectifying the situation. This should put an end to the matter. If however at this stage the matter remains either unresolved or not to the complainant's satisfaction, the Commissioner reports to Parliament, which has established a select Committee to consider complaints further (Birch, 1990).

There is also a Health Service Commissioner and *"... Local Commissioners for Administration ..."* (Kingdom, 1991: 148) - local government Ombudsmen, three responsible for defined regions in England, one for Wales and one for Scotland (ibid). Their role is similar to that of the Parliamentary Commissioner. *"Aggrieved citizens may approach commissioners directly or through a councillor. When the investigation is completed, reports are sent to the complainant and the authority concerned, which is obliged to make a copy available to the public for three weeks ...."* (Kingdom, 1991: 149).

In this framework, the role of the voluntary sector (charities) in terms of the processes of public policy implementation was peripheral. Its role was to:

(a) deliver services to meet need not being met (at that time) by government;
(b) augment government service provision to provide an alternative; and (or)
(c) to exert *"... pressure for change ...."* (Leat, Smolka and Unell, 1981: 3).

Voluntary organisations (charities) were responsible for administering their own activities and were funded wholly or in part by voluntary donations and (or) through government grant aid.

In terms of statutory - voluntary relationships, accountability between the 'applicant' and the 'donor' for grant aid had two aspects. The first was to ensure that they were **legally accountable -** that those in receipt of public monies were accountable within the law and

that the actions of individuals and (or) organisations complied with the law. The second was for **fiscal accountability** - for ensuring that intended and actual expenditure matched. Since charities were neither managing nor implementing public programmes, they were also able to act as *"... a watchdog on state services ..."* holding them and others to account (Taylor, 1988: 4).

2.4 Public Accountability in the 1990s

In the 1990s, shifting trends and developments in government policy and legislation have raised various concerns about the nature of accountability. Most of these developments were alluded to in Chapter 1, but they are mentioned again here in the form of a list as a way of recapitulating. They are as follows.

- The NHS and Community Care Act, 1990 and the Children Act, 1989. These led to the public sector (particularly NHS - national health services and local government) in Britain to become less involved in the direct provision of public services and increasingly involved in 'contracting out' this responsibility to 'independent' organisations in the private and voluntary sectors.

- The rise of the *"... new public management (NPM)..."* (Dunleavy & Hood, 1993; Hood, 1991: 3; Pollitt, 1993: 180) which included government *"... attempts to slow down or reverse government growth ..."* (Hood, 1991: 3) with its emphasis on close scrutiny of public expenditure, cost cutting and attempts to reduce spending on welfare in particular.

- Shifts *"... toward privatisation and quasi-privatisation ..."* (Hood, 1991: 3) - through attempts to create surrogate markets via compulsory competitive tendering (CCT) (Cochrane, 1993) - which Le Grand (1993) refers to as a quasi-market and Pollitt (1993) as a highly managed quasi-market. In addition, there were moves towards decentralised decision-making (Hunter, 1992; Pollitt, 1993), and coupled with this the separation of political and managerial accountability (Hunter, 1992; Walsh, 1995).

- The *"... development of automation ... and a more international agenda..."* (Hood, 1991: 3).

- The growth of quangos run by a *"new magistracy"* (Stewart, 1992: 7) and general concerns about *" ... values ... [and] ... probity ..."* (Hunter, 1994: 35).

- An increase in the following:-

1. 'professionalism' (Day and Klein, 1987; Leat, 1987; Simey, 1985; Lipsky, 1978);
2. 'consumerism' (Hunter, 1994; Ransford, 1994; Pollitt, 1993; Leat, 1987) and connected with this, government emphasis on quality (Pollitt, 1993) responsiveness to service users/consumers;
3. 'Charterism' (Hunter, 1994; Ransford, 1994) - the introduction of the Citizens' Charter and its offshoots for patients, parents, passengers and victims;
4. together with declining voluntary sector income from local government due to their financial pressures and from charitable donations specifically legacies and membership subscriptions.

2.5 Purchase of Service Contracting (POSC) and Public Accountability

In the contemporary context, since services are being delivered through increasingly fragmented systems such as POSC, accountability to the general public has become indirect. The public will only be able to hold provider organisations to account for public policy implementation and their use of public monies through the purchasing authorities. Although elected policy makers are no longer always directly responsible for policy implementation or service delivery, since ensuring accountability to the public is pivotal to the enterprise of restoring trust to the institutional relationships of civil society, it is important that politicians remain accountable.

In order for the public sector to remain accountable, given POSC, control *"... through hierarchical line management is relinquished [and] ... control through ... contracts is substituted ...."* (Pollitt, 1993: 182). The user oriented contractual agreement is the vital accountability link, between government purchasers and organisations acting on

governments behalf in their role as providers, and is essential to the restoration of that trust.

With reference to the contractual relationship, both parties - the purchaser and the provider - will have to be explicit about what is being purchased and (or) provided. The basis for the relationship is that of principal and agent (Palgrave, 1899: 204). The provider (or agent) contracted to act on behalf of the purchaser (or the principal) will be required to account to the purchaser and in terms of the delegated activities. Leat (1988: 19) refers to this as *"delegate"* accountability. In addition in management terms, the agent will need to achieve a certain level of performance which may be measured quantitatively and (or) qualitatively and monitored formally and (or) informally.

In principle, in terms of contracting, only if private and voluntary organisations (charities) in the independent sector specifically ensure accountability to local or central government, can the latter in turn ensure internal accountability of officers and politicians to the public through their various mechanisms, as well as ultimately through elections. Leat (1988) refers to this aspect as *"... 'chains of accountability' ...."* (Leat, 1988: 38) and Simey as a "*... 'ladder' of accountability right from the individual citizen up to the Houses of Parliament* ...." (Simey, 1985: 30).

In theory at least, the implications of the politicians' accountability and the fact that elected officials have to stand for re-election, based on their past record against which their performance will be reviewed at a future date, is seen to guarantee accountability. This means that service deliverers (whether voluntary, public or private) may face penalties culminating in termination of the contract or service level agreement, if the provider account is judged to be inadequate. Leat (1988) refers to the existence of such sanctions as 'real' or 'proper' accountability.

Having researched alternative perspectives to this British model of accountability, namely those in New Zealand and Australia, Woodhouse (1994) challenges the notion that the system of public accountability in Britain is adequate, coherent or integrated and argues that these issues need to be addressed. This, together with shifting trends and developments outlined in section 2.4, and the move *" ...from professional and political to market-based*

accountability ...." (Walsh, 1995: xxi), have thrown into focus concerns about and sharpened the need for a new conception of accountability.

2.6 Accountability of the Independent Sector - Private Contractors

In theory the accountability of private organisations in their 'agency' role is quite clear. Since they are market driven, the 'bottom line' (financial return) forms the basis on which they make their decisions. Within a legal framework they are economically accountable to their owners (or shareholders), for profit maximisation. In addition, all limited companies are required to register with Companies House and send detailed reports and audited accounts annually. These are available for public inspection.

Should they deliver services as agents/delegates of the state, their accountability will be on the one hand primarily economic - to the owners/shareholders for ensuring a return on their equity/investment, and on the other but linked to this to government purchasers (their customers) for the 'delegated activities' - as specified in the contract - specifically for 'fiscal', 'legal', '**programme**' (how effective programmes are in achieving their intended objectives), and **'process'** (how efficiently, economically, equitably programmes are managed) (Robinson, 1971) aspects of service delivery.

In business or market terms, if public policy implementation is neither viable, nor profitable, they simply will not contract with government. Since they are market centred and are not accountable to several groups for the same or even different things, ensuring accountability is not as complicated as it appears to be in the voluntary sector (charities).

2.7 Accountability of Voluntary Contractors (Charities) in the Independent Sector

As indicated in the previous section, ensuring accountability in this sector in comparison to the private sector, appears to be more problematic. Their independence, the fact that many have no clear cut 'owners' (Selby, 1978), their not for profit nature together with their diverse, even ambiguous obligations, to a wide variety of interests (which arises because of the expectation that they are at times informally and (or) formally accountable to several actors, in different ways at different levels, for the same or different things) which Leat

(1988) and Fizdale, (1974) refer to as 'multiple' accountability, means that the rationale underpinning their decision making and therefore to whom and for what they are accountable, is not always immediately apparent. These multiple accountabilities may include, for instance, accountability to users of their other services, members, other donors, staff, volunteers, and their governing body.

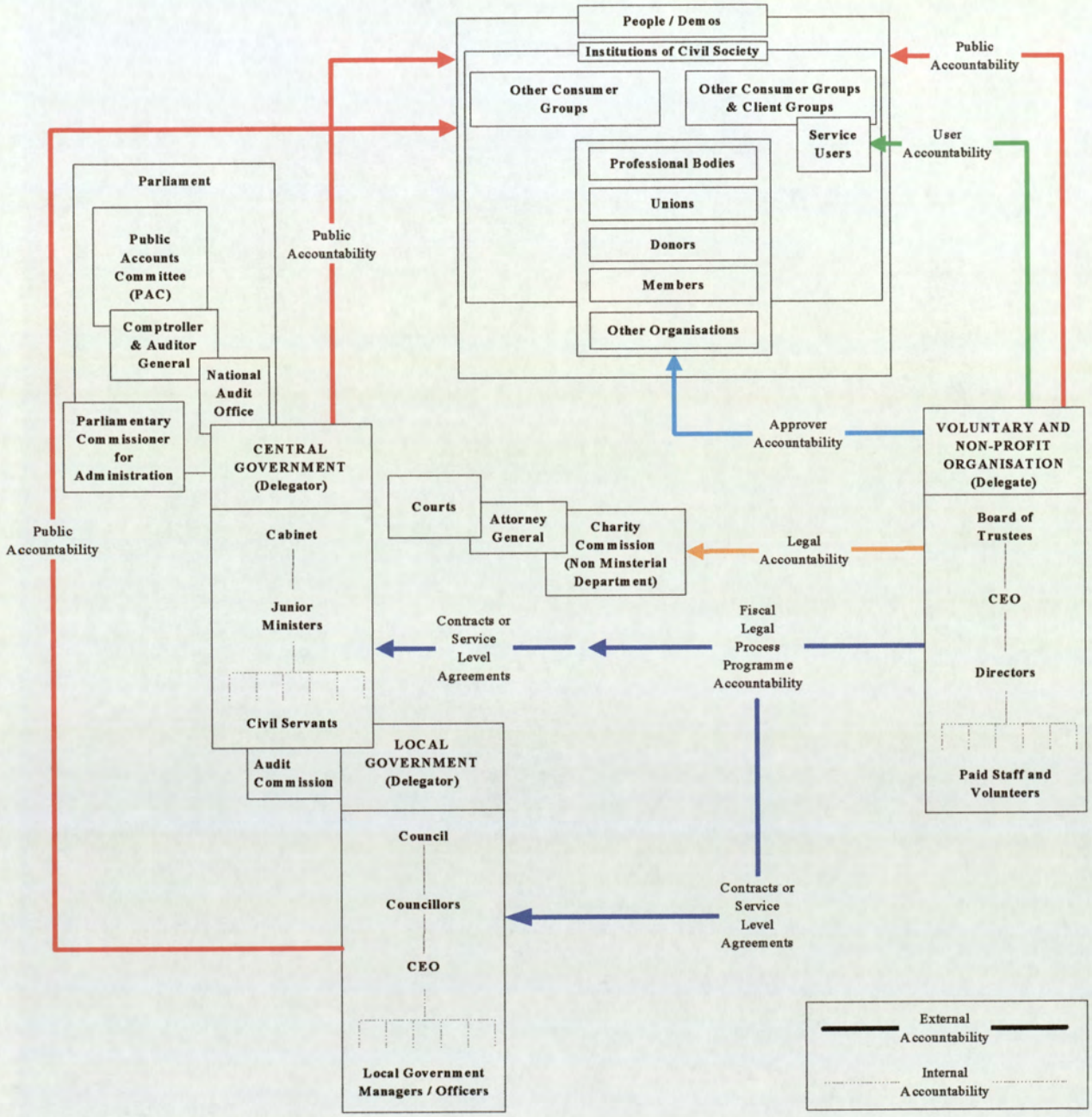
2.8 A Framework of Accountability in the Context of Purchase of Service Contracting (POSC)

The multiple accountabilities of charities in the voluntary sector are illustrated and explained by the use of a framework - Figure 2.1. Based on a review of the relevant literature and an account provided by Fries (2000), six accountabilities are illustrated. One internal accountability, which is represented by thin dotted lines, denotes relationships (usually, but not always hierarchical) between actors within organisations in each sector and five external accountabilities, for which the organisation is obliged to account for policy decisions and implementation to actors linked both within and without the organisation.

Following a similar path or chain of relationships to central and local government, internal accountability within the charity (which Leat (1988) refers to as 'structural' accountability) commences with paid staff and volunteers and extends through the management structure and chief executive officer or equivalent post holder to the volunteer board of trustees - the governing body – who are legally responsible to the Charity Commission. This aspect of accountability is covered in detail in section 2.8.1 'The Charity Commission as a Watchdog'.

Thick unbroken lines represent five different external accountabilities, each indicated by a different colour. The different colours represent different accountabilities. The red – 'public' accountability; the dark blue – 'fiscal, legal, programme and process' accountability embodied in the contract; the orange - 'legal' accountability; the green – 'user' accountability; and the light blue – 'approver' accountability.

Figure 2.1
Framework of Various Accountabilities



The charity needs to ensure internal accountability, both formal and informal, in order to be able to ensure the five external accountabilities. Although they are not in any order of preference the accountabilities are as follows.

First to: **users** / consumers / clients / service beneficiaries - individuals and (or) groups - for user/consumer driven (rather than solely professionally led) high quality services. There should also be a clear, independent, user friendly, well-publicised complaint/s procedure in place, should the service fail to meet expectations. *"This accountability is informal and links with the language of stakeholders. An organisation may wish to develop an ethos of satisfying users because at the end of the day that is what it is all about"* (Fries, 2000).

Second to the **public -** through an annual report and set of accounts. *"Public accountability is also informal and more intangible than accountability to the users because there isn't a direct relationship with the public, except through the donation process"* (Fries, 2000).

Third to **central and (or) local government -** for grant aid (for fiscal and legal aspects) and (or) contract accountability for the implementation of public policy, specifically the management of the 'contract' within which the additional accountabilities in operation are programme and process. The sanctions that a local authority has in terms of ensuring the accountability of a charity delivering services through purchase of service contracting are twofold. First, the local authority can withdraw the funding. Second, in addition to not renewing the contract, which is a powerful informal sanction, there is the legal enforcement of the contract. The force of law behind the contract is a formal sanction (Fries, 2000).

Fourth to **'approvers'** (who are a sub section of the public) and comprise other organisations, members, supporters, long term donors, informal donors and employees through their professional and (or) union bodies. These are actors that the organisation needs to carry with it, but to whom it has no direct accountability.

In terms of the latter, mutual approbation rather than formal resource exchange characterises relationships between approvers and the organisation. Securing such approval is a basic task of the organisation. In this sense, approval has close links with the concept of legitimacy, because the *"... image of the organisation embodies its claim to legitimacy in the eyes of its stakeholders, that is, the basis upon which it will be held accountable ...."* (Bovaird, 1993, cited in Osborne et al, 1995: 25), but it is also wider than that.

Approver accountability explains much of the way in which charitable organisations seek to project themselves to the outside world. In order to gain approval they may well find that they have to be accountable to their approvers in some specific ways. Although this may not be as strong as formal power-based accountability, it is an important element in the considerations of the organisation, in juggling the variety of accountabilities with which they are concerned. Approvers legitimate the mission and practice of the organisation. Charities cannot ignore approvers as they control resources that the organisation needs. Failure to respond appropriately to any concerns expressed informally or formally may lead in the end to the loss of practical resources such as funding or workers (Lansley and Kumar, 1995).

Some may observe multiple accountability as a strength - an opportunity to take into account perspectives of a range of interested parties and as another route to ensure public accountability. Others may, on the other hand, perceive this plurality of accountabilities as problematic, since organisations that are theoretically accountable to everyone for everything are in practice not accountable to anyone for anything, particularly since one, some or several of their accountabilities may conflict. Although this has always been an issue for the voluntary sector, the starker relationships involved in a contractual setting, have thrown these concerns into greater relief.

Fifth to the **Charity Commission** - for ensuring that the organisation's activities comply with the law. The charity trustees are *" ... responsible under the charity's governing document for controlling the management and administration of a charity ..."* (Charity Commissioners, 1993: 2). They *"... supervise and control the work of the officers ..."* (Charity Commissioners, 1993: 8) and are *" ... accountable for the solvency and continuing effectiveness of the charity and the preservation of its endowments."* (Charity Commissioners, 1993: 10).

2.8.1. The Charity Commission as a Watchdog

According to Richard Fries, the Chief Charity Commissioner (1992 – 1999), the role of the Charity Commission as a watchdog is complex. The following is a transcript of a discussion with him.

The Charity Commission fits into the watchdog category. It is the vehicle for the accountability of charities in the sense that under the new Charity Commission structure, set up under statute, charities have to fulfil certain routine accounting functions – the annual report of activities and the statement of accounts. The new structure has as its first requirement that charities should be transparent. It is an interesting question whether one regards that as in itself accountability – and this is a different strand as it were. Transparency of good practice is the lowest level of accountability. Being open about what you are doing and how you are financed, for all who are interested.

[Requirements of the Charity Commission vary according to the size of Charity]. Thus ... the great majority of small charities (over one hundred thousand) just have to produce an annual report of their activities and statement of accounts. It has to be available for whoever asks for it. The larger charities (which number approximately 50 – 60,000) with an annual turnover of £10,000 or more, have to send their accounts and annual report to the Charity Commission on an annual basis. This form of accountability is a formalistic rather than a substantive form of accountability – but it is material that the Charity Commission has. It acts as a watchdog, monitor, or supervisor of charities, in being able to see whether the accountability requirements are met and then what issues arise from it. That is a monitoring accountability to enable the Charity Commission on behalf of the public interest to ensure that charities operate within their legal framework and constitution and that their governance, management and finances meet minimum standards. This is not laid down in statute however and is a matter of judgement.

[Nevertheless] it is the basis for a constructive dialogue should the Charity Commission wish to enter into one, between the Charity Commission and the charity about the way it is going about its business – legal, governance and management and financial, rather than professional, for which there may or may not be other bodies for the relevant professional field. So the Social Services Inspectorate (SSI) would be the appropriate professional body for social service deliverers, for instance.

The role of the Charity Commission is to enforce the law and be a source of advice and guidance on what the law requires. It is over-simple to just call the Charity Commission a regulator. None of this is statute. It is all subject to common law requirements for charities – they may engage with political activities, campaigning ... in support of the achievement of their charitable purposes, but it has to be activity that the trustees can reasonably justify as supporting the achievement of their aims.

The Charity Commission is concerned with ensuring that charities comply with their constitutions. However, it can also help them to change their constitutions if that enables them to achieve their ultimate purpose better. The Commission's powers to intervene - its statutory powers, as opposed to its supervisory relationship with the charities, its enquiry and remedial powers are to deal with misconduct or mismanagement of the trustees or to protect the resources of the charity. That conditions the Charity Commission's whole work. It sets the

> threshold, below which, the Commission cannot intervene. The Commission may suggest to a charity that it is not happy with the way an organisation has set up its finances and suggest that the charity sets up an internal audit committee in order to ensure greater security. If the charity is sensible it will engage in some sort of discussion about this, but at the end of the day the staff and trustees may not agree. It is only if the Charity Commission judges (and if necessary gets support from the courts), that this amounts to 'mis-management' or 'misconduct', or it is putting the charity's resources at risk, that it can then override the judgement of the trustees. In accountability terms this means that charities are subject to the law and the vehicle for enforcing the law is the Charity Commission. Although the Charity Commission's role (as reflected in its general statutory duty) is to encourage good practice, it cannot enforce good practice. The Commission only has powers to remedy bad practice. Its sanctions are first to put things right - they are remedial - and only come into play when bad practice such as misconduct, mis-management or risk to property arises. This can be challenged in court.
>
> The Charity Commission is a non-ministerial government department set up under statute with the powers of the courts as well as the administrative powers given to it. It is subject to the courts by direct appeal under the Act or by judicial review in the normal legal way, but not at all to ministers for the exercise of its powers. The judicial function is separate from governmental function. It is complicated in our constitution because the Attorney General is a member of the government (minister) because he is a law officer. However, his responsibility is to uphold the law, not government policy. The law officers have a very special role in advising government and standing for the public interest.
>
> Charity trustees have no formal accountability for performance. The test of whether they are actually giving value for money is a mixture of their own procedures and the accountability the grant givers, or the contract letters set up how they account for money given. There are no shareholders to hold the trustees accountable. So there is a question about the efficiency of charities in the absence of anybody to hold them to account for that. [Having said this] where there is a member charity, where trustees are elected by the members – it may affect ethos and attitudes and policies (Fries, 2000).

Accountability clashes, between the five accountabilities illustrated, may arise for three main reasons. First, if different stakeholders' preferences, for example those of purchasers and users, do not coincide, fulfilling the accountability requirements of the former at the cost of not being accountable to the latter will compromise the provider organisation's position. Second, contractual obligations together with expanding demands may lead providers to concentrate on care provision and avoid controversial policy decisions. This may also mean that, for example, their own goals are displaced as their functions of campaigning and advocacy suffer. In this case, it is of concern because as Rose (1985: 3)

asks – *"Quis custodes custodiet?"* In other words, to *" ... whom are the guardians responsible? ...."* This may lead to situations, whereby the organisation's own ethos and position is compromised by its contractual obligations. Third, being accountable to the user may not be possible, particularly when the health, education or welfare services are compulsory, or at least not voluntary - such as for example families within the child protection system. The consumer may have no choice in terms of alternative providers and in extreme cases the service may be *"... supplied directly against the will of the recipient and enforced coercively ...."* (Pollitt, 1993: 126-7).

In the context of POSC, the charity's concern (which is inextricably linked with their fears that they will become agents of the state and lose their autonomy and independence), centres around which stakeholder (if any) will govern to whom they, in their role as contractors, are accountable for their decisions. According to Lansley (1996), organisations calculate and respond to the forms of accountability they perceive to be most important and those whose support the organisation can do least without. Hirschman (1970: 4) refers to this as an actor that has both strong *"...voice ..."* and *" ...exit ..."* opportunities. These concepts are explored in depth in Chapter 6. Leat (1988) suggests that organisations are able to do this, as many stakeholders are either unaware of, or do not insist on, their rights to accountability.

2.9 Advantages of POSC for the Public Sector and the Voluntary Sector (Charities)

Purchase of service contracting presents both the public and voluntary sectors with several of the following (albeit presumed) advantages.

For the public sector for instance the independent sector offers:

- containment of costs in terms of cheaper service provision;
- a less bureaucratic, more flexible if not *"... more effective ..."* approach (Leat, Smolka and Unell, 1981: 4);
- a *"... source of new ideas ..."* (Leat, Smolka and Unell, 1981: 4) and innovation in policy formulation and administration;
- a closer proximity to users (relative to the public sector);
- accessibility to a larger human resource base and pool of talent (Smith, 1975: 17-18);

- responsiveness to novel and immediate needs (Smith, 1975: 17-18); and
- to act as a buffer from political interference (Hague, 1971: 74).

It also enables the public sector to address the criticism that government is too large and has too many bureaucrats (Hague, 1971: 75).

For the voluntary sector, the public sector offers:

- a guaranteed income stream *"...including core funding, to stay in existence ...."* (Flynn and Hurley, 1993: 13), which may not only ensure survival, but may actually enable growth and stability from which to plan and manage effectively; and
- the opportunity to (a) influence the direction of government policy and (b) demarcate their relationship with statutory bodies (Penn, 1992).

In addition, contracting between government and extra-governmental organisations, encourages the spread of power, pluralism and the strengthening of the other sectors, in other words the private sector and the voluntary sector, which is deemed to be important to the public interest (Smith, 1975: 17-18).

2.10 Accountability Concerns and Dilemmas for Public Purchasers and Voluntary Providers (Charities) – Key Questions for the Research

However, purchase of service contracting also raises a couple of accountability concerns or dilemmas for both the public and voluntary sectors. These are explored in the following section.

2.10.1. Public Purchasers

Since elected policy makers remain accountable for policy making and implementation, given the 'purchaser - provider split', the specific concern for the public sector centres around the dilemma of how to ensure a balance between independence, control and accountability required, when it delegates power outside itself. (Smith and Hague, 1971)

In other words, how can government ensure congruence between public policy objectives and implementation, (so they can account for public monies) within POSC, given that the voluntary sector has multiple accountabilities, without diminishing the very advantages that make the voluntary sector attractive to contract with in the first place? In Simey's (1985) terms, given the demands of the contemporary situation, how can government ensure 'an effective system of accountability'?

2.10.2. Voluntary Sector Providers (Charities)

In contrast to the public sector, the dominant concern for the voluntary sector (charities), given that they have moved from the periphery to occupy a more central role in the new processes of public policy implementation, is the question of how to ensure accountability directly to government purchasers (on behalf of the public), whilst simultaneously balancing their multiple accountabilities. In other words, in the context of ensuring accountability to their multiple constituencies, do they end up being accountable to one stakeholder more than another, or to no one?

2.10.3. Public Purchasers and Voluntary Sector Providers (Charities)

A third concern of both sectors relates to their accountability to users. This has two elements. The first is whether the policy and the service are accountable to users. Linked to this, the second element is concerned with how accountability to service users is ensured.

Despite the accountability concerns or dilemmas, the public and voluntary sectors have entered purchase of service contracting (POSC) relationships because of the possible advantages they offer. Although faced with contrasting accountability perspectives, the sectors face similar challenges as they both struggle with the management of scarce resources, policy making and service delivery in ways that both *" ... serve the public interest and preserve the public trust ...."* (Kearns, 1996: 27).

2.11 Conclusion

Based on a review of the accountability literature, this chapter set out the issues raised therein. It began by examining the concept of accountability and found that it was difficult

to define. In order to get out of this conceptual cul de sac, the chapter went on to deconstruct and reconstruct the notion of accountability: (a) in terms of the concepts with which it is linked; (b) in abstract terms; and (c) in concrete terms. Specifically, it argued that accountability is a relationship within which obligation is a key element.

Given the limitations of the approach of deconstructing and reconstructing the concept, the chapter moved the discussion to the examination of accountability in a particular context. It examined accountability prior to, and after the emergence of purchase of service contracting (POSC). In doing so, it provided a framework of accountability in the context of POSC and illustrated the many and various forms.

Having set out the key issues and examined the changing notions of accountability which resulted from shifting trends and developments during the 1990s, the chapter considered the advantages of purchase of service contracting (POSC) and the accountability concerns for public sector purchasers and voluntary sector providers. In doing so, it raised key questions for the research, which will be explored further in the next chapter.

The next chapter will also explain the aim and objectives of the study and will discuss methodology, research design and analysis.

CHAPTER THREE

Research Methodology

"... people who write about methodology often forget that it is a matter of strategy not morals. There are neither good nor bad methods but only methods that are more or less effective under particular circumstances in reaching objectives on the way to a distant goal." (Homans , 1949: 330).

3.1 Introduction

This chapter is divided into four main sections. It begins by briefly returning to the research focus and the aims, key questions and key issues for the research set out in Chapter 1. It then reviews the literature in relation to the choice of research strategy and explains why **case studies using qualitative methods** were chosen as the preferred research strategy for this study. The study design is considered next, in particular the methods used to gather the information – data collection. Finally, the chapter explains the methods, techniques and processes used for extraction and data analysis.

3.2 The Research Focus

3.2.1 The Aim

The **aim** of this research is to conceptualise and understand accountability in the context of POSC and the changing relationship between government and extra-governmental organisations. Specifically, it seeks to comprehend the accountability relationships and processes between organisations and individuals engaged in the procurement, operation and utilisation of contracted out health and social welfare services.

3.2.2 The Key Research Questions

The three key **research questions** were as follows.

In order to define accountability the first research question asked what meaning people ascribe to accountability. How did they describe it?

- How is accountability conceptualised and defined by managers from both sectors and service users?

Having arrived at a working definition of accountability, the second research question examined how accountability was experienced and enacted.

- How is accountability operating within the context of POSC, given the concomitant changing relationship between public sector purchasers and charitable voluntary sector providers? How is it experienced and managed between the public sector and the voluntary sector?

The final research question was about how both sectors ensured accountability to service users.

- How is accountability enacted and managed and between the sectors and users of health and social welfare services?

3.2.3 The Key Issues

The **key issues** were:

- to identify **to whom and in what ways** are public sector purchasers (government) and voluntary sector provider organisations (charities) accountable;
- to identify **how public sector purchasers (government) ensure accountability to the public for policies** and programmes **implemented by voluntary sector providers (charities);**
- to identify **how voluntary sector providers (charities),** given their other accountabilities, **ensure accountability to the public sector (government)** for implementing government policies; and
- to explore how each sector (public and voluntary) ensures accountability to users.

3.2.4 The Study Participants

In this study the organisational respondents are public sector (local government) and voluntary sector organisations (charities). The individual study participants are local government managers, voluntary sector managers and service users.

3.3 The Literature on Choosing a Research Strategy

Prior to choosing a research strategy to employ for this research, the literature in relation to philosophical approaches and methods, the researcher's choices and Yin's (1989) conditions, was reviewed. These are explored in the following sub-sections.

3.3.1 Two Main Criteria – Philosophical Issues and Aim of the Investigation

Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe (1991) observe that when attempting to clarify the kind of strategy to employ for research there are several choices to be made. These in turn are linked to two main criteria. First, the researcher needs to have an appreciation of the philosophical issues, from which the methods are derived. Second, the researcher also needs to understand the aim or context within which the investigation is to be carried out.

Table 3.1: Differences Between Positivist and Phenomenological Paradigms

Positivist Paradigm	Phenomenological Paradigm
View the social world as objective and existing 'externally'.	The phenomenologist considers the positivist perspective as limited. The former perceives the world and reality as 'socially constructed', given its meaning by people, rather than objectively determined and existing externally.
Positivists adopted the methodology of the natural sciences, in order to establish credibility in the social sciences. Therefore they consider that the social world's properties can be measured through neutral observation and objective methods.	The phenomenologists consider their task is not to gather 'facts' and measure 'how often' certain patterns occur, rather they wish to study the social world in its natural state and appreciate the differing constructions and meanings different people place on their experiences.

Source: Adapted from Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe (1991)

The two main philosophical approaches or 'paradigms' are positivism and phenomenology. In general terms, the way that positivists and phenomenologists view the world is summarised in Table 3.1.

The positivist paradigm is inappropriate for this research as it is neither flexible, nor effective in terms of understanding processes or the significance people attach to actions.

On the other hand, the phenomenological paradigm is more appropriate as it affords opportunities for:

- close up and detailed observation;
- data collection (in a confidential setting) from respondents who would otherwise be reluctant to participate in a 'delicate' study of this nature;
- working with informants whose data can be checked against data collected from the main agents being investigated; and
- generating theory.

It is also flexible - in terms of adjusting to new issues and ideas as they emerge. In other words, by adopting the chosen strategy the researcher can for example, with reference to the phenomenological paradigm, adapt the sequence of questions and pace of the interviews, in accordance with how the conversation develops with each particular interviewee.

3.3.2 The Researcher's Choices

The researcher's choices, which are linked to these criteria (see section 3.3.1) are as follows. The first relates to the level of involvement with, or independence from, the material being investigated. The second corresponds to the sampling frame and whether it is going to be 'cross sectional' or 'longitudinal' or a combination of the two. The third, to the sequence of the theory and the data – specifically, which should come first? The fourth has a bearing on the method of data collection - whether experimental design or fieldwork methods are appropriate. The fifth decision relates to the issue of verification - whether the evidence will confirm or contradict what the researcher presently believes is true (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe, 1991).

3.3.3 Yin's Conditions

Yin (1989) adds three other conditions to these criteria and choices. According to Yin (1989), the strategy is, in general, dependent on the: type of research question under consideration;

level of control the investigator has over behavioural events; and research focus - in particular whether it is on contemporary or past events.

3.4 The Case Study Method as the Preferred Research Strategy

Pettigrew (1990: 285) observes that *"... the choice of methodology is contingent on the problems and questions under study and the state of development of any body of knowledge..."*.

The decision to select the case study method, regarded as the most appropriate for this study, was reached after consideration was given to Pettigrew (1990), and the 'criteria', 'choices' and 'conditions' noted in section 3.3.

3.4.1 Quantitative Methods versus Qualitative Methods

Put simplistically, the distinction between quantitative and qualitative methods is that the former deals with numbers and usually employs statistical techniques and the latter, usually does not. Another important feature of quantitative methods is that the process of data collection is distinct from the analysis (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe, 1991).

Quantitative methods, like for instance the large scale survey, would have been inappropriate for this research because: (a) they mainly ask 'what' and 'how much' questions; (b) the population under scrutiny is too small a sample to bear statistical validity; and (c) the data collected comprised mainly verbal descriptions.

3.4.2 The Research Strategy - Case Studies Using Qualitative Research Methods

The research strategy that evolved in this case was as a result of the nature of the contemporary social phenomena to be explored and understood - the one most likely to achieve the research aim.

Moreover, because:

- in the literature the definition of accountability is confused (see Chapter 2);

- previous studies indicated that the subject under scrutiny is of a delicate nature (see Chapter 1); and
- the type of research questions are exploratory ("to whom" and "in what ways") and explanatory ("how" questions) (see section 3.2.2), the research task is to illuminate and appreciate and understand different respondents' constructions and meanings about accountability in a real life context.

In other words, since:

(a) this was too complex for other strategies;

(b) the researcher's basic philosophical assumptions about the world are located within the 'phenomenological' paradigm (i.e. that social reality is a continually changing process of social construction – Berger and Luckmann, 1971; Giddens 1979; Checkland, 1981); and

(c) the purpose of the research is not to describe the occurrence or prevalence of an event; case studies using qualitative methods were chosen.

3.5 Case Study Strategy - Instrumental or Collective

Since the purpose of this research is to extend an understanding of the accountability processes and relationships (rather than to quantify), in order to capture the complexity inherent in the subject matter, a small scale methodology - the 'instrumental' or 'collective' (Stake, 1994: 237) case study - was chosen, rather than survey, experimental or historical strategies.

The instrumental case study is when a *"... particular case is examined to provide insight into an issue or refinement of theory. The case is of secondary interest; it plays a supportive role facilitating our understanding of something else ...."* (Stake, 1994: 237). The collective case study is the *"instrumental study extended to several cases ..."* (ibid). Researchers *"...study a number of cases jointly in order to inquire into the phenomenon ..."* (ibid).

3.6 Grounded Theory Approach

Grounded theory is a general methodology - a way of thinking about and conceptualising data - that is derived from observation - 'the ground'. The emerging 'grounded' concepts, generated from the systematically gathered data are used as the basic building blocks to develop a

theoretical understanding of the research topic. Theory, substantive or formal (also referred to as general theory) evolves and is discovered during actual research. It is induced from diverse data (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1994). Grounded theory methodology explicitly involves *"generating theory and doing social research [as] two parts of the same process"* (Glaser, 1978: 2).

A grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) - with no prior commitment to a theoretical model - was considered most appropriate for this study because:

- there are no other grounded theory studies in this area;
- although there are a limited number of empirical studies, none have developed a theoretical framework of accountability; and
- the issue of how accountability operates either between purchaser and provider organisations involved in contracting, or between them and users has not been previously explored.

This research is genuinely grounded (Strauss and Corbin, 1994).

3.7 Multiple Embedded Qualitative Case Studies

The researcher, 'theoretically sensitised' (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), prior to going out into the field, used 'multiple embedded' (Yin, 1989: 58) qualitative case studies, to address the research questions. In other words, the study employed more than a single case. It used multiple cases. These consisted of two national voluntary organisations - charities. Within the two cases, eight local charity service deliverers and eight local government purchasers were studied. Since there was more than one unit of analysis - *" ... a lesser unit than the case itself, for which numerous data points have been collected ..."* (Yin, 1989: 121) the case studies were said to be *"... embedded ..."* (ibid). In this research, these units comprised individual managers from different sectors within the local voluntary and statutory sector and service users.

3.8 Methods of Collecting Evidence

According to Yin (1989) there are six methods of collecting evidence. These include documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant observation, and physical artifacts. This research uses the first four methods. These are discussed in detail in Section 3.11.

3.9 Criticisms of the Case Study Strategy, Qualitative Methods and Grounded Theory

The main criticisms of the case study strategy, qualitative methods and grounded theory are that they lack rigour (they are not objective) and that scientific generalisation is impossible.

At the core of such criticisms, which need to be addressed, is the debate between the two philosophical positions - positivism and phenomenology - which originate from their *"... distinct ontological assumptions ... about the nature of reality ..."* (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe, 1991: 25).

In order to address the first criticism - lack of rigour – as with other strategies and methods, the research process must be made transparent. This can be ensured by documentation of procedures in terms of how the research is designed and data is collected and analysed. Checkland (1997) adds to this that it is necessary to declare the epistemology – the framework of ideas - in terms of what will be counted as knowledge and to record the process of sense making. Further criticism can be prevented if *"... equivocal evidence or biased views ..."* (Yin, 1989: 21) are not allowed to influence the direction of the findings or conclusions. Two other safeguards against lack of objectivity are: reliability – *"... the extent to which a measurement procedure yields the same answer however and whenever it is carried out ..."* (Kirk and Miller, 1986: 19) and triangulation (Denzin, 1989a; 1989b) which involves multiple sources of evidence. In other words, if the same phenomenon can be replicated and different researchers are able to make similar observations on other occasions and evidence can be substantiated by other sources, the development of converging lines of enquiry and the generalisability to theoretical propositions are greatly assisted. Put another way, this enables an

interested outsider to follow what has been done and see how the conclusions have arisen – allowing for a coherent debate, should differences in interpretation arise (Checkland, 1997).

If all these issues are borne in mind at every stage of the research, the qualitative case study using grounded theory is likely to be more accurate, reliable and robust and will therefore withstand these charges.

Yin (1989: 21) addresses the second criticism, - that scientific generalisation is impossible - by pointing out that a case study, like a single experiment, does not represent a *"... sample ..."*. Thus the researcher's objective in adopting the case study as a research strategy, is therefore not "statistical generalisation". Rather it is "*... analytic generalisation ...*" - the 'expansion of theories'.

Furthermore, although qualitative research findings cannot be generalised to the population, single or multiple case studies can be used to illustrate the beginning of a general argument, or to develop concepts that can be applied to further, later studies. Moreover, collectively, they may be used to generate a theory, or they may be reinterpreted for the development of new concepts and explanations.

In addition, qualitative research is often accused as being *"... impressionistic, subjective, biased, idiosyncratic and lacking in precision ...."* (Hammersley, Gomm and Woods, 1994: 71) [and a] *"... high risk, low yield ..."* (ibid) endeavour. On the other hand, the strengths of qualitative research are that it can reveal the complexity of cases or issues by: (a) ensuring that attention to detail is given; (b) observing non-verbal behaviour; (c) conveying experiences and perspectives; and (d) exposing contradictions and inconsistencies.

3.10 The Study Design - The Main Stages

The field study was conducted in two stages. The first stage involved data collection from secondary sources. The second stage comprised primary data collection through case studies.

3.10.1 The First Stage – Selecting the Case Study Organisations - The Rationale

Within the voluntary sector, large national charities were of particular interest for this study. The decision to concentrate on this organisational form (i.e. charities) and size (i.e. large) has already been briefly discussed in Chapter 1, Section 1.8.

They are considered here in more depth. The reasons for selecting large national charities were as follows.

(i) Large Organisations

Large organisations were selected for two reasons.

a) Since they account for more than two-thirds of the income of the sector (Hems, 1994), with 89% of gross income (estimated to be in the region of £9.1 billion in 1991) concentrated in 10% of voluntary organisations (Hems and Passey, 1996: 25), it is important that they are studied.
b) It was considered more likely that large rather than small organisations would be involved in purchase of service contracting (POSC).

(ii) National Organisations

National organisations were also selected for two reasons.

a) Organisations operating at a national level, were considered more likely to be involved in contracting than local ones.
b) It was also considered that they would provide complex, bureaucratic structures which would have more layers and numerous accountabilities, than smaller local organisations. This would further enrich the study. Because of their size and many levels, accountability was likely to be more complicated, and therefore more interesting to research.

(iii) Charities

Charities were selected for the following reasons.

Since:

a) many of the organisations delivering health and welfare services are charities;
b) charities fall within Kendall and Knapp's (1996) broad voluntary sector definition; and
c) given the fact that charities typify a major organisational type within the sector;

they were considered significant and therefore worthy of further study.

Moreover, charities as an organisational form particularly highlight the dilemma of accountability. Formally there is only one channel of accountability. The charity is accountable to the intentions of those who established it as expressed in their constitutions and governing instruments. By focusing on this part of the sector, the research could investigate whether this apparently clear and formal expression of accountability was matched in practice.

(iv) Length of involvement with POSC, Independent Means, Government Rationale for POSC with the Voluntary Sector and Adding to the Body of Knowledge

Additional factors that influenced the selection of case study organisations included their length of involvement with POSC and their lack of dependence on income from POSC. Another element of interest was to examine the assumption underpinning government rationale for POSC with the voluntary sector, in other words, the voluntary sector's proximity and responsiveness to users. Finally, it was hoped that the research would contribute to a body of knowledge about accountability. These are explored in the following sub sections.

(a) Length of involvement with POSC

Charities' length of involvement with contracting was an important criterion as it was considered that respondents were more likely to base their accounts on *experience of how purchase of service contracting affects accountability,* rather than on perceptions of how it may be affected.

Thus older and more established charities (which also tended to be large in relative terms) were selected for the study. It was considered that since they were more likely to have been involved in POSC, both since the introduction of the legislation, and for a longer period of time than small charities, they would yield a richer picture.

(b) Independent Means

Another factor that was considered to be important when selecting organisations for the case studies was that the charity should be of independent means. Charities with a large enough voluntary income (approximately two – thirds of their total income) which enabled them to remain independent from the public sector purchaser were selected. In considering this aspect, the research sought to examine whether the charities' lack of dependence on income from POSC affected their ability to negotiate and their room for manoeuvre within the accountability relationship.

(c) Government Rationale for POSC with the Voluntary Sector

Another aspect of particular interest, is that part of the premise underpinning the government's rationale for POSC with the voluntary sector is their proximity (Leat, 1988), responsiveness and accountability to service users. This premise does not discriminate between organisations within the sector. It is held to be the case irrespective of the: (a) size (large, medium or small); (b) level of operation (national or local); or (c) the segment of the institutional sector they come from (whether they are a charity, a community based or a self-help organisation). By studying the selected organisations – large national charities - the research seeks to:

(a) explore whether the assumption partly underpinning government rationale is correct; and

(b) ascertain whether factors or characteristics such as organisational size, level of operation and structure, do make a difference when considering issues of proximity, responsiveness and accountability to users.

(d) Adding to the Body of Knowledge

In addition, given the studies of accountability of local voluntary (Leat, 1988) and local public organisations (Day and Klein, 1987), a focus on organisations operating at the national level, would add to the body of knowledge about accountability.

Moreover, this study would further our understanding of accountability in general. In researching organisations operating at a different level to those in previous studies, it would not only add to the accountability literature, but would also complement it. In addition, the study would contribute to the organisational and management literature, as it would also be a study of inter-organisational, inter-sectoral and user accountability, in the modern policy context.

3.10.2 The First Stage – Selecting the Case Study Organisations - The Database for the Survey

In order to select the case studies, a database of twenty large organisations was compiled from the 'Henderson Top 2000 Charities (1995) a guide to UK charities'.

This database comprised *large, charitable voluntary organisations,* with *paid workers* and *volunteers*, a *substantial income* relative to others in the sector, operating at a *national level, and delivering health and welfare services*, sharing the following characteristics: **size** –

measured according to (a) the *number of employees* (paid workers and volunteers) and (b) *income;* **level of operation** (national or local); **type** (charity)**; classification** (social services and relief)**;** and **income portfolio** (with income from (a) the *public sector*, including the following types - grant in aid, contracts and service level agreements and (b) *voluntary sources*, including – public donations, legacies, investments, fees and charges, shops and trading income).

3.10.2.1 The Survey

Twelve, large, national charitable voluntary organisations, providing publicly funded health and welfare services, were 'purposively selected' from the original database of twenty.

A brief postal questionnaire was sent to the named chief executive officer or equivalent post holder. The purpose of this survey was twofold. One was to acquire up-to-date general background information about the organisation not available from secondary sources. This included details about: their income level from, and length of involvement with, POSC; and the governing body and public accountability of the organisation. The second purpose was to determine the charity's willingness and ability to participate in the main stage of the research - the detailed case studies.

3.10.2.2 Survey Response and Selection of Case Studies

After some encouragement (one follow-up letter and at least one telephone call) nine out of the twelve organisations responded. Based on the analysis of the returned questionnaires, six organisations were 'purposively selected', on the basis of the following criteria. Large, national, charitable voluntary organisations with:

- different configurations - two of each organisational structure - centralised, matrix and federated (Butler and Wilson, 1990);
- an involvement in contracting since the introduction of the legislation (i.e. the 1989 Children's Act, and the NHS and Community Care Act 1990);
- about one third of their total income from POSC; and
- an enthusiastic overall survey response together with an indication of their ability to participate in the main case studies were selected.

Of those short-listed, it was envisaged that three would be chosen for the next stage. The other three organisations would be placed on a reserve list in case of any difficulties with the initial selection.

3.10.2.3 Reasons for Selection of Case Study Organisations with this Profile for the Second Stage

The reasons for selecting organisations with this profile is discussed in section 3.10.1. They have been grouped together. Briefly they are as follows.

- The first was to consider whether *organisational size, level of operation, and structure affected accountability* (Butler and Wilson, 1990) especially in terms of proximity and responsiveness to service users.

- The second – the charity's length of involvement with POSC - was considered on the basis that, the more extensive the involvement the more likely respondents could base their accounts on *experience* rather than perceptions *of how POSC affects accountability.*

- The third - one third of their total income from POSC - was considered to be a significant level. It was neither too large so that they were dependent on it, nor too small, so that it was unimportant to their overall portfolio. Selected charities would have to have a large enough voluntary income for them to remain independent. Thus, the research could examine whether their lack of dependence on contractual income affected their accountability relationship. Moreover, in addition, respondents would be also able to draw some interesting observations about the relationship between contracting and accountability.

- The fourth - their overall response and commitment to participate over a fairly prolonged period - was considered essential to the successful completion of the study. Survey questionnaire responses for both these aspects were ranked on a fairly rudimentary and subjective scale from enthusiastic to reluctant. Those with an indifferent attitude, an incomplete response, and an indication of their inability to participate further, were not selected.

3.10.2.4 Response to Participate in the Case Studies

Six organisations were approached through their chief executives to discuss the next phase of the research - the detailed case studies. However, after protracted negotiations, only three agreed to take part - two with centralised structures and one with a federated structure.

In general, organisations that declined to participate gave 'bad timing' as their reason. In two of the six, the beginning of the study coincided with the appointment of new chief executives. Both regarded it as an 'inappropriate' moment to embark on and commit to a study of this nature. Unfortunately both of these had matrix structures. The third - an organisation with a federated structure - although initially keen to participate, had been unable to get the necessary agreement of all the parties concerned before the end of the field study, which took place over the course of one year.

Unfortunately, there were no other organisations with similar profiles that could be approached in their stead. So the decision was taken to research the remaining three for two reasons. In addition to their willingness and ability to be part of the research study, there was the promise of case studies that illustrated key aspects of the accountability processes and relationships between the sectors and users.

3.10.2.5 Problems with Self Selection of Cases

Nearly all research is faced with methodological advantages and disadvantages in the selection of cases. In terms of the strategy for selecting certain cases over others, researchers are usually faced with *"trade offs"* (Hammersley, Gomm and Woods, 1994: 132). As researchers *"we can never have everything we want and usually ... only gain the benefits of one strategy at the expense of what could be avoided by using another strategy, but whose use would carry other costs"* (ibid).

The fact that three of the selected six were unable to participate for the reasons given was disappointing, but since the study was not attempting 'empirical generalisation', the self selected sample only affected the research in the following ways.

- It was unable to consider whether organisational structure affected accountability.

- Although studying more than two cases would have had the advantage of increasing the researcher's confidence of extending the analytical generalisation from the findings, the disadvantages would have been: (a) the collection of less data on each case; and (b) less time to check the validity of the collected data.

- To say whether or not the self-selected organisations were likely to have been qualitatively different from others, in terms of their efficiency and professionalism would be pure conjecture. However, the fact that one of the matrix organisations was not able to get agreement from all the relevant parties before the end of the fieldwork may imply something about organisational structure and decision making. Having said this, there is no other evidence to support such speculation.

3.10.3 The Second Stage - Case Studies

3.10.3.1 Gaining Entry

In practice, gaining access to the organisations to be researched was a mixed experience. It varied according to organisation and hierarchical level of the initial survey respondent within the charity.

The first of the three organisations with a federated structure was approached through a senior manager with whom the researcher had established contact preceding commencement of the survey. Unfortunately this contact did not fulfil the promise of facilitating the researcher's access. Instead, a lot of time was wasted on negotiation and waiting. This was disappointing and resulted in the decision to use this organisation as the pilot.

On the other hand, the remaining two organisations (with which the researcher had had no contact, prior to the survey) were in the main very efficient and professional in their overall response. Both organisations - one with a federated structure and the second with a centralised structure - allocated an 'informal' research facilitator/co-ordinator - a very senior manager in the first organisation and an advisor to the chief executive in the second - to liaise with the researcher. These were used as the main case studies and were researched in more depth than was originally envisaged.

3.10.3.2 Setting up the Case Study Research

In both parent charitable voluntary organisations, the individual who responded to the initial survey was contacted informally by telephone. During the conversation, each organisation was invited to participate in the next stage of the study. In addition, the general background, motivation of the researcher and the nature of the research was explained in detail.

The researcher was subsequently asked to formally approach each organisation in writing and to telephone the initial survey respondents once again after a couple of weeks. This 'gap' would give the respondent ample time to brief and discuss the research proposal with the chief executive. The researcher 'marketed' the project as one supported by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation[6], a respected and high profile funder, as well as herself as a person with considerable experience of working within both the voluntary and public sectors, in all the various roles (volunteer, paid worker, manager and trustee). This combination appeared not only to lend credibility to the research, but also to facilitate her access to their organisations.

The contact respondents were approached once again after the designated time period had elapsed, in order to make an appointment to discuss the research further with themselves, or if more appropriate with the CEO or another key informant.

In both charitable voluntary sector organisations, the key informant 'research facilitator' together with the researcher identified respondents at both the parent organisation and local organisation levels.

Initially, the 'research facilitators' identified and approached individuals at the parent and local levels to inform them that there was a study currently being conducted and that the researcher would contact them in the near future.

Individual participants were selected on the basis of the following:

- their level within the organisational hierarchy (e.g., trustee, senior manager, project manager, volunteer and service user);
- their involvement with the purchased service (e.g., the service manager, service

[6] The Joseph Rowntree Foundation provided support for the fieldwork.

deliverers and the local government officer with monitoring responsibility for the contract/service level agreement);

- their interest in issues of accountability;
- their availability; and
- their ability to commit to the project.

Having gained entry to the parent organisations, there were an additional four separate sets of negotiations to be undertaken at different levels. These were:

- within the parent organisation;
- with the local voluntary 'provider';
- with the public 'purchaser' organisations;
- with potential individual respondents.

All respondents, including members of the aristocracy; very highly qualified experienced professionals; and service users were extremely busy people - and many (although not all) had to be persuaded of the objective and gravity of the research, before they would agree to interviewed.

Initial contact was followed up by a letter, briefly outlining the methodology and the general areas to be explored during the interviews, and a telephone call. The purpose of the telephone call was fourfold.

1. Further clarification.
2. To address any issues that had arisen as a result of the approaches either from the key informant, or the researcher.
3. To arrange interviews, visits to the organisations and meetings with users.
4. To give reassurance particularly about confidentiality, which was a prevalent concern for most respondents, particularly voluntary sector study participants and service users, throughout the study.

It was of note that, once satisfied, the response of individuals (trustees, managers and service users) and organisations (parent and local charitable voluntary organisations and

local government purchasers) was excellent. Local respondents, including service managers and service deliverers, identified the appropriate local authority contact(s). All the previous groups identified service users, who in turn identified other service users.

Two indications that they viewed the project as one worthy of support were that having been interviewed, some study participants led the researcher to others. At times they would, with the permission of their colleagues and, or service users, set up the meetings between them and the researcher. The researcher was also invited, usually by the service users, to various group meetings. Three examples of such meetings attended were coffee mornings, parent/carer/older people representative meetings and after-school clubs. Further service user respondents were identified through these groups, and in most cases a large part (if not all) of the subsequent meeting(s), were used to explore issues of accountability to users.

In only one case was the request for an interview refused. The individual concerned - a trustee - questioned the 'relevance' of the study to her, since she considered that she did 'not have anything to do with accountability'. Although somewhat bemused by this extraordinary response, given trustees' accountability role and function (Deakin, 1996; Tumin, 1992), specifically that they are responsible for the *"general control and management of the administration of a charity"* (section 97 1993 Charity Act, cited in Charity Commission, 1999: 11), the researcher had no choice but to accept this response. Thus, although the coverage of respondents at the parent and local level was thorough, this was not the case with the trustees.

3.11 Non Participant Observation, Documentary Analysis and Interviews

The research involved direct (non-participant) observation, archival record and documentary analysis and one hundred and eighteen (118) in-depth formal and informal, face to face interviews. For further details about the respondents please refer to Appendix C.

Parent and local charitable voluntary organisations and local government purchasing authorities were visited several times. Wherever possible, meetings (formal and informal) between providers, purchasing authorities and service users were attended and observed.

Documents such as: the objects; the memoranda and articles of association; the annual reports and sets of accounts; organisational hierarchy charts; copies of service level agreements or contracts between the parties; minutes of meetings with service user representatives; complaints procedures; copies of other specific confidential papers such as, for example, an internal study of contracting in one charity; and any other information available to the general public and users of those services, were collected from both the voluntary and statutory sectors.

Documents were used in two ways. First, to inform the researcher, so that not only did she not waste her respondents time, but also she could follow-up certain questions, that had been raised as a result of reading such documents, with respondents. For example, having read the contract or service level agreement, she would, on subsequent visits to the field sites, raise further questions about the document with the local service provider and the local service purchaser.

Second, documents were used to verify issues that may have been alluded to during the interviews - in other words to 'triangulate' responses.

Study participants including service users, trustees, managers and paid and (or) volunteer workers from the charitable voluntary and public sectors, were identified and interviewed in depth. Sixty-two (62) in depth 'focused' interviews together with another fifty-six (56) less formal unstructured conversations were conducted, in order to 'map' and explore further the nature of accountability - specifically the relationships and processes between the sectors, service users and other stakeholders.

It was assumed that study participants could not be expected to give more than one hour for the interviews. In practice interviews ranged from one to four hours. On average most interviews with managers and trustees lasted approximately one hour and a half, whilst those with users usually lasted less than an hour.

Individuals' interviews were based on their own perceptions of accountability and were subjective. Since there was no one 'correct' view, responses had to be triangulated from several sources. This was done principally for two reasons. The first was to clarify and verify

issues that had arisen in various accounts - in other words to check the *" ... theories-in-use ..."* (operational theories) versus the *"... espoused theories ..."* (those that are used to describe and justify behaviour) (Argyris and Schon, 1978: xxviii). For example, after interviewing the voluntary sector manager (whilst careful not to lead the respondent) the researcher would check the local government manager's and (or) user's perceptions of the same issues and vice versa. The second was in order to be able to build a composite picture of accountability, which was not reliant solely on one particular group's views.

Although for reasons of consistency and verification the focused interviews needed to cover the same areas with respondents, they were also designed to be flexible and interactive giving respondents the opportunity to raise issues they considered to be crucial to the study. All respondents, but particularly service users, were encouraged to *"... speak about their experiences ...."* (Wilson, 1993: 523). It was for this reason that a list of prompt questions was used as a data collection tool to 'guide respondents and focus the conversation'.

Ensuring the interviewing process was adaptable required great concentration and was extremely tiring. The researcher's counselling training also proved to be invaluable in these circumstances for a number of reasons. It enabled her to be empathetic, whilst remaining sufficiently detached so as not to bias the responses. Moreover, techniques including for example, 'reflective listening' were employed in order to clarify certain issues raised during interviews. In addition, it gave the researcher an awareness of the psychoanalysts' view of 'counter transference' - unacknowledged feelings towards study participants - and the necessity to address this possibility through discussion and retrospective analysis with peers.

Finally, 'listening at several levels' was employed to take note of certain nuances, such as inflection in their voice and clues of non-verbal communication, for example facial expressions. This skill and training helped the researcher to recognise, for example, when it was appropriate to delve deeper and draw people out, which was of particular use when interviewing service users.

The researcher was informed on a number of occasions, by respondents from all categories, that they felt the process of being interviewed was a 'cathartic', 'useful' and an 'enjoyable' experience that gave them a 'good opportunity to reflect' on accountability issues. Service

users in particular expressed that they felt the researcher 'understood', which was especially rewarding.

3.12 Taping and Transcribing the Interviews

Interviews were tape recorded for subsequent verbatim transcription. The costs of taping in financial, technical, and time terms were high. Financial costs included: equipment - cassette recorder, cassettes and batteries and transcription machine. Technical costs included batteries running low or even running out during interviews and bad quality tapes, which were difficult to decipher when transcribing. Other linked issues included: background noise drowning out respondents' voices; people talking off tape; respondents dropping their voices when concentrating; individuals with particularly strong accents - which somehow seemed more pronounced and difficult to understand on tape. The investment of the researcher's time for transcription of sixty-two (62) interviews (at a ratio of approximately nine hours to transcribe one hour of cassette tape) was sizeable. Since most interviews were of an hour and a half duration, each interview took approximately twelve hours to transcribe. A total of approximately 744 hours were taken for transcription.

In the longer term, some of the above adversities were overcome by ensuring that an extra couple of packets of 'long life' batteries and several high quality cassette tapes were carried at all times. Other lessons learned over time included how and where the tape recorder needed to be strategically placed, so as to best eliminate as much background noise as possible and pick up the voices of particularly quiet speakers. In addition, notes were taken during most interviews as a back up and precautionary measure.

In the final analysis, the costs of taping were probably outweighed by the benefits, especially when it came to analysing the data, both during and after completion of the fieldwork. It facilitated the researcher's ability to concentrate and focus her undivided attention on the interviewee. Since it would have been impossible to take notes at the speed of respondents' verbal answers, the researcher would have been forced to filter and extract from the interview what she thought study participants considered important. Given *"... that transcending personal biases and limitations is not easy ..."* (Miles and Huberman 1994: 38), taping gave the researcher freedom to listen, facilitated her ability to maintain as much open mindedness as

possible during the interviewing process, as well as ensure that the depth and richness of data was captured. It also gave the researcher time for reflection and the opportunity to clarify contradictions in statements at a later date, either with the study participants themselves or through documentary evidence.

Furthermore, having the tapes proved extremely useful when using a grounded theory approach (the objective of which was to generate theory from the data) during the analysis phase. Since analysing the data was such an intuitive, inductive and iterative process, being able to listen to the tapes at the same time as reading the transcripts, actually helped to jog the researcher's memory about some direct observations she had made with reference to the important unacknowledged informal side of organisations (Morgan, 1993). Otherwise this may have been lost.

Some informal conversations were not transcribed, although notes of the researcher's impressions were recorded in a field diary afterwards.

The fieldwork commenced in August 1994 and non-participant observation and interviews were conducted between January 1995 and October 1995.

3.13 Sensitivity of the Subject Matter and Safety of the Study Participants

Accountability although of apparent interest to respondents was also forbidding. In order to ensure that the study participants felt safe to talk about accountability several steps were taken.

- First - prior to as well as during every meeting and interview (particularly within the charitable voluntary sector) - many verbal and written assurances of confidentiality were given. In one case, the parent organisation only agreed to participate in the project if the researcher entered into a legal contract with them.

- Second – the researcher always tried to ensure that the interview setting was confidential. To facilitate this she requested that a private space be made available to her and that no other actor should be present during the interviewing process.

- Third - respondents were put at ease prior to the interview by the researcher briefly giving them some relevant background about herself. She suggested that the central aim of the interview was for the study participant together with the researcher to attempt to define, map and come to an understanding of accountability. This took the focus off them having to present a very positive account of their own individual and organisational accountabilities and was important in terms of ensuring that respondents felt secure.

- Fourth - the list of prompt questions was constructed so that the interview commenced with general and more innocuous topics prior to launching into the more 'knotty' and potentially difficult accountability issues. This gave the respondents time to begin to trust the researcher and become comfortable with the process.

- Finally respondents had 'control' over the taping process. In other words if they so wanted it was switched off.

3.14 Interview Issues - An Accountable Research Process

3.14.1 Access, Comfort and Safety

In order to make sure that the researcher followed an accountable research process, in other words, one where she could account for the way in which data was collected from the service user respondents in particular, she gave careful consideration to the following:

- transport for respondents to and from the venue was either provided or paid for.
- Location and payment of an interpreter with an understanding of social research.
- The language to be employed and different ways of phrasing questions were considered in advance of specific meetings, when seeking answers to the research questions about accountability, especially when relating to children/young people both with and without learning disabilities.
- Light refreshments were provided.
- A room was booked to provide a private and confidential setting.
- Service users were met in groups of at least two to increase their feelings of safety.
- Service users that were especially vulnerable (e.g., those who were at risk from physical or sexual harm/abuse) were met in the presence of others with whom they had

trusting relationships (e.g., parents/carers, service deliverers, key workers/play leaders or volunteers).

3.14.2 Researcher and Counsellor

On two occasions the researcher found that during the interview, the respondents allocated the researcher the 'counsellor' role. Having accepted the role, respondents gave detailed and harrowing accounts of issues that they faced, which were seemingly quite unrelated to the research. Respondents needed someone to listen and 'a shoulder to cry on'. Afterwards, and as agreed with the respondents, the researcher ensured that she passed on relevant information to them, with reference to appropriate services that may be of help to them locally. At a later date interviews with the same respondents were rescheduled.

3.14.3 Sign-posting

On three occasions, having had time to reflect on issues of accountability, certain service users wanted to know how they could pursue some of the issues they had raised. Again, the researcher found out about the appropriate individuals and organisations for them to contact, and wrote and telephoned those concerned, enclosing any other pertinent information.

3.14.4 Communication Challenges

The researcher also met some young people with learning disabilities. On a couple of occasions, interviewing this group of respondents proved to be extremely challenging. The young people in question had both severe learning disabilities, as well as physical disabilities and although the researcher had had a fair amount of exposure and experience to people with learning and physical disabilities, through volunteering and family contacts[7], this meant that the process of communication was extremely difficult.

This is not to say that it was not possible to conduct research with such respondents. Only that a researcher who was highly skilled and who had the appropriate training, with

7 My late father was a physician and in one of his roles he had responsibility for the health of children and young people, in what was then termed a 'special school' for the 'educationally subnormal'. My mother - a teacher - works with people with learning disabilities and has done for the last thirty years. Being a close family, we attended school and various social events and still support our mother and her students in their work. This means that over the years, we have had the privilege of knowing many individuals, who have learning disabilities.

considerable time to invest, would probably be able to find ways of eliciting more meaningful responses.

The interviews were supplemented with non-participant observation and, despite what appeared, at first, to be insurmountable difficulties in relation to collection of data, the mix of methods did yield useful results, which were noted in the research diary and were used in the analysis.

3.15 Case Analysis: Method and Process

Case study findings and reflections are based on the following. The analysis of relevant documentary evidence, such as the objects, memorandum and articles of association, the annual report and set of accounts, the contract/service level agreement and any monitoring - performance measurement systems (such as quality of service linked to the agreement). Transcribed interviews and chronologically ordered field notes of: (a) the researcher's impressions and insights based on non participant observation of the behaviour of individuals during specific meetings and visits to the organisations; and (b) conversations during informal situations (i.e. over tea or coffee, in the pub, at lunch, in corridors and in the car park) recorded in a research diary.

Since the data collected was unwieldy, unstructured, detailed, text based and micro-level, the method used to analyse it was 'Framework' - a qualitative analytic method, developed at Social and Community Planning Research (SCPR) (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994). The reasons for favouring this method over a similar and now popular one such as NUD-IST are considered.

3.15.1 FRAMEWORK rather than NUD-IST

A sample of the transcribed trustee interviews was analysed as a pilot using the qualitative software programme NUD-IST (Non numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theorising). NUD-IST was rejected in favour of 'Framework' for three main reasons. First, it seemed to take much more time to do more or less the same things using NUD-IST, as it did to use the word processor and other manual retrieval systems and therefore the benefits were far

outweighed by the costs. Had the decision to use NUD-IST been taken earlier, in other words prior to data collection, it is possible that the outcome would have been different. Second, in 1994 NUD-IST was a relatively new software programme and since face to face training was not easily available or even affordable at that time, and the training video was awful (with apologies to the Australian team), the researcher did not feel entirely comfortable with using it. Third, the researcher also felt that using a software programme did not give her a feel for the complexity in understanding the nature of accountability. Although 'Framework' operates on a very similar basis to NUD-IST, the key difference between the two is that the former enabled the researcher to get a more 'hands on' feeling for the data.

Therefore the method used to analyse the notes, the diary, the transcriptions and the documents was 'Framework' which involved a systematic 'process of sifting, charting and sorting'.

There are five key stages involved in 'Framework'. These are familiarisation, identifying a thematic framework, indexing, charting and mapping and interpretation and are described in more detail in the following sub sections.

3.15.2 Familiarisation

All relevant documents were read and re-read and tapes were listened to, in order to become familiar with the " ... *material as a whole* ... " (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994: 178). The researcher 'immersed' herself in the interview transcriptions and field notes, in order to identify and list key ideas, and emergent issues. This stage was exploratory where the questions began to be framed.

3.15.3 Identification of a Thematic Framework

During the previous stage the process of abstraction and theorisation had already begun. Following the familiarisation process, the researcher returned to the interview transcriptions and field notes in particular, to identify the key issues and recurrent " ... *themes* ... " (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994: 179), which seemed to be important for understanding what was going on.

3.15.4 Coding

Data in the transcripts was coded according to a framework within which the material was *"... sifted and sorted ..."* (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994: 179) with themes. An example of the codes and themes is set out in table 3.2.

Table 3.2 An example of codes and themes

	Themes
(1.0)	The Inter-sectoral Accountability Relationship
(2.0)	Monitoring Qualitative and Quantitative Performance
(3.0)	User Accountability
(4.0)	Barriers to User Accountability – Managers' Concerns
(5.0)	Barriers to User Accountability – Users' Concerns
(6.0)	Future Initiatives to Ensure Accountability to Users

Source: Fieldwork 1994 –1996

Within each theme, individual sub-themes were listed and allocated a code. For example, within the second theme 'Monitoring Qualitative and Quantitative Performance' - code (2.0) - the initial sub-theme was 'performance measures a negotiated and consultative process' to which the code (2.1) was assigned. Where sections of the text referred to more than one area (or code) this was noted. An example of subject chart is shown in table 3.3.

Table 3.3 Examples of themes, sub-themes and codes used to analyse the data

Respondent Number	**Theme:** *Monitoring Qualitative and Quantitative Performance* **1 Code 2.0**	**Sub-Theme**: *Performance Measures – A negotiated and consultative process* **2 Code 2.1**
O2: LGM: R1	"... there are two main meetings a year, you know where we actually look at the qualitative and the quantitative results of the agency agreement."	"The bit about this two way thing is ... [the charitable voluntary sector manager] for example always rings me and we have informal dialogue ... I don't believe in reinventing the wheel ... where it had worked in other areas ... successfully we have adapted their documents ... the provider in that sense helped me to develop ... [the performance measures] ... I very much listened to what they have to offer and said that if it is working let us have a look at it."
01:VSM R4	"... whatever we do is recorded. So anyone can come in here and see what we do. It's all logged. It's all documented. Our policies are regularly updated. [The public sector manager] is part of the advisory group ... he has difficulty attending at times, but he still gets the minutes and all our documents get sent to him. There is an annual report ... and local council visits we are happy to respond to ...quarterly performance reviews."	"In the early days [the local authority] were a heavy influence, they wanted to know everything that was going on ... and why. ... Now that input from them is minimised ... I don't see a great deal of the [local authority manager], but I know he is there if we need to talk."
Key	**O1**, **O2** etc denote the *Organisation Identification Number* **LGM** denotes *Local Government Manager* Respondents **VSM** denotes *Voluntary Sector Manager* Respondents **R1**, **R2** etc denote *Respondent* Identification Number	

Source: Fieldwork 1994-1996

3.15.5 Laddering

During the previous stage (i.e. identification of a thematic framework) and this stage (i.e. coding) the themes, sub-themes and codes went through an ongoing process of refinement. Initially there were too many themes to be manageable and therefore they had to be " ... *collapsed* ... " (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe, 1991: 111) or reduced. However the introduction of sub-themes meant they were recorded here and not lost. This process of enlarging or 'collapsing' is referred to as "... *laddering* ... " (ibid).

Figure 3.4 An example of an indexed transcript

Identification of Respondent by Organisation and Job Title		
Organisation Name		
Study Participant's Name		
Organisation Code: Respondent Type: Respondent Code		
* *What would you say were the most important strategic decisions that the local authority has dealt with in terms of this process?* **R:** I think ... formalising the contracting process and involving users more, so that we actu... have a much more user-driven service. The question posed to the respondent The answer given by the respondent	(1.0) (1.1) (3.0) (3.2)	Inter-sectoral Accountability Relationship Contract Accountability User Accountability User-Led Services
**And why was this important?* There's so much investment in the services, if you like, that we're putting out. If they're not user-led then, they are really not providing the service that people need. *Right OK* ... So I would think that that is actually, again I'm trying to keep very short ... *Sure* ... that is that, and also the accountability bit, because in the past, services - local authorities - I think could throw money at services, you know, that people said "Oh I've got a good idea" and then it was implemented. Now it's targeted and I think we can account much more for the way that we are developing these services. *(Interruption. Knock at the Door).* So I would say it's an amalgamation really, I find it very difficult to pick out the one strand, but it's the way that we are combining the thinking now, I think, that's providing the dividends for the users. Codes	(3.0) (3.2) (1.0) (2.0)	User Accountability User-Led Services Inter-sectoral Accountability Monitoring Qualitative and Quantitative Performance
* *And what has been the main benefit to the service users?* **R:** To service users I think it's because we now have a very much larger range of choice. I think that we can honestly prove that people here have greater choice than they've ever had before. Again, I have a quality issue that I want to deal with on some of this, but by and large ... I've just seen [the charitable voluntary sector manager] come back ... it looks like the community care plan I've just written - have you seen our community care plan? *No I haven't.* Right, each area has its own community care plan which is sort of under the government ... these are the things that we publish every year. There's a joint working document, which is for the whole of [this area] and this is actually signed up for by the health authority as well. Now it might be helpful if I get hold of these documents and send them to you. ... I'll get these off to you because this is my section and I'm responsible for actually producing some of this document. *Yes, sure, right.* Now it is fairly glossy but what we've tried to do is actually make it interesting for people to read so that it goes out to all voluntary groups, it goes out to a huge number of people in the area, that are actually users or providers, [*Mmm*] and across all the client groups. So it's not just the elderly, it's not just related to the Act, but across the whole lot. Sorry, what was the question? [LAUGHING]... *The question was what have the main benefits been to the users in terms of ...* Well we can now publish and are much more open about what's available. So I think the benefit to them is that they now know what the range of services are, and how we're providing them by area and they can see thro...n things like documents like this here, which we've tried to make user-fr...dly, you know, what we are saying is happening, so that they can ch...her it's happening for them. Themes	(3.0) (4.1) (2.0) (2.2) (1.0) (2.2) (3.0) (3.5) (2.2)	User Accountability User Choice Monitoring Qualitative and Quantitative Performance User Information About Services Inter-sectoral Accountability Relationship User Information About Services User Accountability Monitoring Qualitative and Quantitative Performance User Information About Services

Source: Fieldwork 1994 -1996

3.15.6 Indexing

In order to *"... apply a uniform set of ... categories systematically and consistently ..."* to the data (Mason, 1996: 111), these themes were *indexed*. An index was constructed by drawing upon: *"... a priori issues ... informed by the original research aims ..."* (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994: 180) explored in the interviews, emergent issues raised by the study participants together with analytical themes arising from repetition of certain views. The development and refinement of this thematic framework involved *" ... logical and intuitive thinking ..."* (ibid: 180). Index references were recorded in the margin of each transcript by a numerical system, which linked back to the index. Given that most interviews ran to thirty pages or more, coded text was also methodically coloured using a highlighter pen, so that it could be easily identified. An example of an indexed transcript with highlighted passages is shown in figure 3.4.

3.15.7 Charting

Six charts, with headings and subheadings for each subject area, drawn from the thematic framework, were then prepared on flip chart paper.

Figure 3.5 Chart matching sub-themes with transcript summaries and respondents

	Chart 1	**The Inter-Sectoral Accountability Relationship**	**Respondent Identification**
Code	Sub-Theme	Transcript Summary	LGM
(1.1)	Contract Accountability	• Responsibility for Contract and Monitoring (pp 5)	O1:R2
	Written and Process	• Ensuring providers know purchasers expectations (pp 1)	O2:R1
		• Different culture did cause problems initially (pp 2)	O2:R4
		• Change in view of the voluntary sector (pp 2) Prickly process (pp 5)	O2:R2
(1.2)	Trust	• Must be able to trust the staff to know what is a policy decision to be raised at the management committee (pp 16)	O1:R1
		• High degree of trust (pp 7)	O1:R2
		• Several levels of trust (pp 17-19)	O2:R1
(1.3)	Intertwining Networks	• LGM attends many meetings within the network and other colleagues are linked with others (pp 6)	O1:R2
		• Very involved in Networks (pp 8) Accountability Ensured through networks (pp 9)	O2:R1
		• Networked at all levels (pp 4)	O2:R2
(1.5)	Monitoring Services	• Challenge is to offer users what they want (pp 4)	O1:R3
		• Measure the measurable (pp 14)	O2:R1
		• Quarterly figures (pp 9) Ask Questions (pp 9)	O2:R3
		• Important things are not measurable (pp 13)	O2:R2

Source: Fieldwork 1994 – 1996

Data was taken out of its original context and rearranged on a thematic basis (i.e. for each theme across each group of respondents) in order to build up a picture of the data as a whole. Each chart had entries for several respondents. Each passage of text, which had been annotated with a particular reference was summarised and entered on the chart. Quotes from transcripts were referenced according to page numbers. An example of a chart constructed for local government managers is shown in figure 3.5.

It illustrates the kind of entries recorded together with the page referencing system.

3.15.8 Mapping and Interpretation

The purpose of this phase of the analysis - mapping and interpretation - is to search for a structure. This was approached through the following stages.

- Defining concepts (i.e. identification of a number of associated features).
- Mapping the range and nature of phenomena (i.e. identification of the form and nature of phenomenon and mapping the polarities).
- Creating typologies (i.e. linking two or more dimensions at different points).
- Finding associations (i.e. patterning responses).
- Providing explanations (i.e. explain patterns, attitudes, experiences and behaviour to address the research questions).
- Developing strategies (i.e. developing different approaches, which arise out of the material).

Once all the data had been 'sifted' and 'charted' according to core themes, information from the charts was summarised. The most common themes were identified and transcribed texts grouped together in order to ascertain major trends. The charts were cross-referenced to locations in the transcripts, notes and diary. Charts and research notes were reviewed and analysed; perceptions and experiences of respondents compared and contrasted; patterns, connections, explanations and a structure *mapped and interpreted.* As Ritchie and Spencer (1994), note this *"... part of the analytical process is the most difficult to describe. Any representation appears to suggest that the analyst works in a mechanical way, making obvious*

conceptualisations and connections, whereas in reality each step requires leaps of intuition and imagination ...." (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994: 186).

The researcher used her intuition throughout both the fieldwork and analysis process and checked out hunches and gut feelings with several points of reference. Throughout the analytical process the data was checked as sceptically as possible. Attempts were constantly made to provide alternative explanations before reaching final conclusions.

At this stage, a first draft of the findings and analysis was produced and circulated to peers. In the light of their comments the first draft was rewritten. Finally empirical data and evidence collected was linked with the literature. The theoretical framework, discussed in the Chapter 6, evolved out of immersion in, and interpretation of, the material during this mapping and interpretation phase. The grounded concepts used to develop the theoretical understanding of the research formed the basis for a grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

3.16 Criticism of the Analytical Process

'Immersion' can lead to *"... macro blindness ..."* (Hammersley, Gomm and Woods, 1994: 71), where the researcher, unaware of larger external issues, offers micro-level explanations pertinent only to the local situation. It can also lead to a lack of objectivity, where the researcher, too successful in terms of penetrating the culture of the individual or group being studied, sees everything from the perspective of the individual or group. Linked to this, is *"... selective perception ..."*, where the researcher only sees what she or he want to see, albeit subconsciously.

3.16.1 Addressing the 'Macroblindness' Criticism

As long as the potential pitfalls, of 'macro blindness' and 'selective perception', are borne in mind and rigorous procedures followed at every stage of the analytical process this weaknesses is addressed. Data was checked as sceptically as possible. Attempts were made: (a) to offer alternative explanations; and (b) not to jump to conclusions. In other words, until plenty of observations and evidence had accrued, no explanations were offered. Another safeguard

employed at this stage of the research was peer review by academic colleagues, with different philosophical positions from the researcher.

3.16.2 Criticism of 'Framework'

Since qualitative data research and analysis should be an intuitive process about 'feel', the 'Framework' approach as with many systematic approaches, can be criticised for being "reductionist" (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe 1991: 112).

3.16.3 Addressing the 'Reductionist' Criticism

In terms of addressing the criticism of reductionism, there are two issues. In the case of this study, following a systematic method did not preclude the researcher from getting a 'feel' for the issues or using her intuition throughout the fieldwork and analysis processes. Rather it did two things. First, it enabled the researcher to check out her 'hunches' and her 'gut feelings' against several points of reference. Second, it made some, although not all, of the analytical processes transparent. This transparency is important in terms of ensuring the research can be validated and scrutinised by academic colleagues.

3.17 Constraints of the Research

An investigation of accountability can be problematic for several reasons. These relate to the sensitivity of the subject and thus the possibly greater need for lengthy negotiations with reference to access. These are considered in the following sub-sections.

3.17.1 Accountability as a Sensitive Subject

The subject matter - Accountability - whilst apparently interesting, was also of a sensitive and somewhat threatening nature. In conversation with the researcher, two experts in the field Patricia Day and Diana Leat, indicated that consideration should be given to this issue prior to embarking on any study.

After much reflection, the researcher decided that it was both preferable and more ethical in terms of this research to try to persuade organisations of the value of it and make accountability less threatening, rather than disguise the real nature of the project. Several steps were taken in order to ensure that the organisations and study participants felt safe to talk about accountability. These were discussed in Chapter 3.

As a result of being 'up front' about the nature of the investigation however, the fieldwork probably took much more time than if the topic had been disguised in some way. Each part of the research process required inordinate amounts of negotiation and assurances, not just between the researcher and the actors or research participants taking part in the study, but also between them and other individuals or groups.

3.17.2 No Councillors

This issue of not disguising the topic, contributed in part to the problem of data collection from local government councillors, as one category of respondent. Although it was envisaged that the research would attempt to map accountability at all levels of each purchaser and provider organisation, access to councillors was not negotiated early enough in the project for this to have been possible during the fieldwork phase. Thus, although corresponding data was collected from trustees, it has not been used for this research, because in mapping terms it could not be matched. Specifically, it utilised and extended the concepts of - *"bureaucracy, market and clan"* (Ouchi, 1980; 1979), *"exit, voice and loyalty"* (Hirschman, 1970), *"networks"* (Granovetter, 1985; 1973; Axelsson and Easton, 1992), and *"power"* (Bachrach and Baratz, 1970; Bachrach and Lawler, 1980; Pfeffer, 1992); and Lukes, 1974) - into the realm of accountability[8]

3.17.3 No Matrix Organisations

Originally, it was envisaged in relation to the research aim[9], that voluntary organisations, specifically charities with different configurations - two of each structure – centralised, matrix

[8] Wherever these concepts are used in the rest of this chapter, they are used with reference to their respective authors indicated here in parentheses.

[9] The research aim was to define and then to examine and analyse accountability relationships between local government purchasers, voluntary sector providers and service users in the context of POSC.

and federated (Butler and Wilson, 1990) would be selected for study. This was in order to consider whether organisational structure affected accountability. However, despite drawing up a shortlist of two organisations in each category, neither one with a matrix structure was able to participate.

3.18 Additional Issues

3.18.1 Reflection

There was so much rich data that it would have been very easy to feel overwhelmed by what seemed like an impossible task. Therefore, at every stage of the process, time was taken for reflection both on my own and with others.

3.18.2 Peer Review

Another important aspect of the research process was peer review by academic friends and colleagues. It was important, both to the researcher in terms of helping her to articulate, clarify and shape ideas, and for the integrity of the research, that peers were used as sounding boards and critical readers.

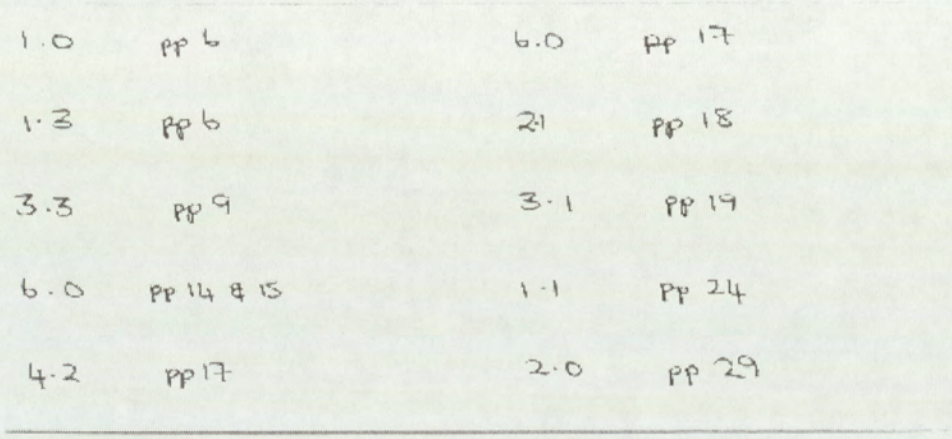
3.18.3 Post it Notes, Diagramming, Card Summaries and a Highlighter Pen

During the data analysis phase, four aids were used in addition to the 'Social and Community Planning Research Framework' analytical techniques. These were post it notes, diagrammatic notes, record cards and a highlighter pen.

Post it notes of varying sizes were very useful during the analysis phase. They were used twice. Quotations from transcriptions were identified, tagged with the relevant code with a post it note and stuck on the top of the specific page where they were located. Then a record card was attached to the front page of each transcript. The entry on the card was a summary of the post it notes. In particular, the theme, sub-theme, code and page number were recorded on one side of each record card, so that the reference to its source could be seen at a glance.

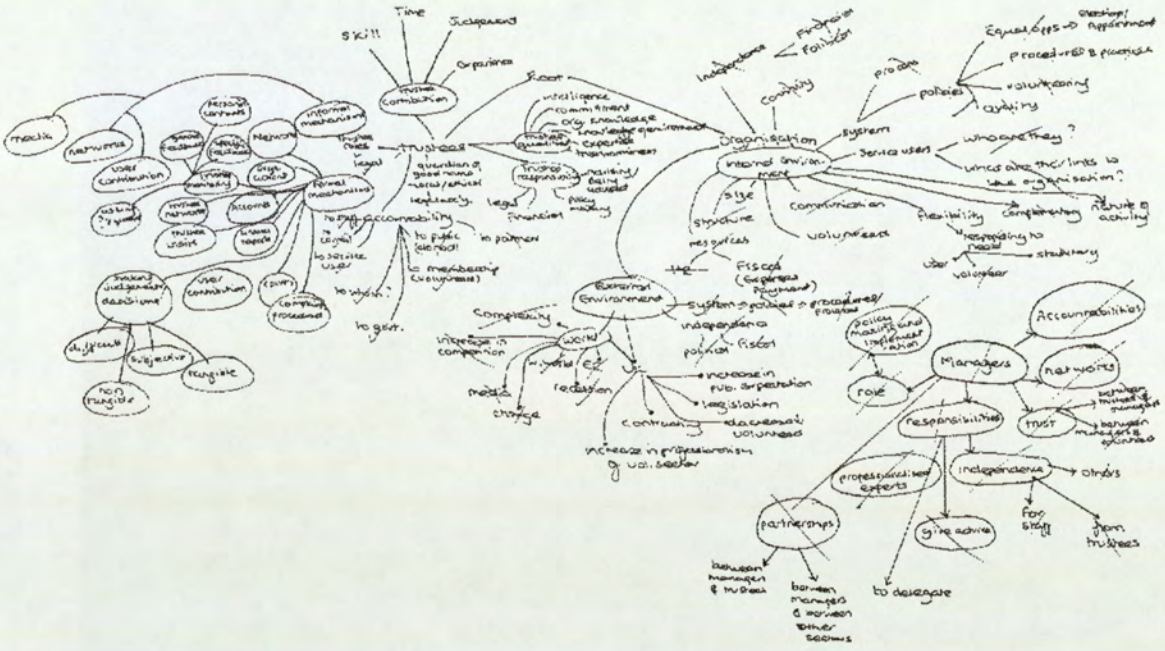
Since there was a substantial number of interviews that ran to several pages, this was of great assistance, when trying to locate themes and quotations, as it was too difficult for the researcher to keep everything in her head. Some of the quotations were then used for Chapters 4 and 5.

Figure 3.6 – An example of a record card summary.



The second occasion post it notes proved to be very helpful and were used to great effect was during the mapping and interpretation phase, specifically when trying to find associations. The most common themes were identified in terms of one word. These were stuck on flip chart paper, grouped together, moved around, visited and revisited over the course of several days.

Figure 3.7 – An example of a diagrammatic note (Spidergram)



All these activities were well worth the extra cost in time and effort as they assisted the process of clarification. Examples of the record card and diagrammatic note are given in Figure 3.6 and Figure 3.7. A highlighter pen was used to make coded text stand out on the transcripts (see figure 3.4).

3.19 Conclusion

This chapter reviewed the aims, objectives and key research questions and the literature in relation to the choice of research strategy. It discussed the philosophical basis underlying the research approach and argued the case for selecting *case studies using qualitative methods* as the preferred research strategy. Specifically collective multiple embedded case studies using a grounded theory approach. It considered methods for collecting data and evidence and explained the techniques and processes used for extraction and analysis of the data.

The insights, findings and reflections to have emerged from the research and analytical process are written up in Chapters 4 and 5.

CHAPTER FOUR

Purchase of Service Contracting (POSC) and the Accountability Relationship between the Public Sector and the Voluntary Sector

> *"Policy on explicit and implicit contract terms develops in practice through interaction and the setting of new contracting cultures. Implicit understandings may be unwritten, but once established are costly to break. Implicit contracts express the sharing of control between contracting parties ...." (Mackintosh, 2000: 16).*

4.1 Introduction

The chain of reasoning underpinning the structures of this chapter and the following chapter emanated from the application of Ritchie and Spencer's (1994) analytic method - 'Framework' - to the data. During the 'sifting and sorting' process described in the previous chapter, a number of themes and sub-themes emerged.

This chapter is presented in three main sections. The chapter begins with managers' accountability maps, which depict to whom and in what ways managers from both sectors are accountable. These maps which have been synthesised, together with other information gathered during the fieldwork, are presented as managers' collective accountability frameworks and form the basis on which the rest of the chapter is constructed.

The second section captures all the issues between all the stakeholders. Accountability relationships are examined through both formal coded relationships, and the informal - sometimes unacknowledged - side of organisations. In addition, two new concepts to have come out of the field research – namely *"contract accountability"* and *"network accountability"* (Kumar, 1997), are explained. These are followed by the third section, in which emerging themes, namely the 'difficulties with measuring aspects of performance', differing concepts of 'trust' and the 'intertwining of the sectors' are explored.

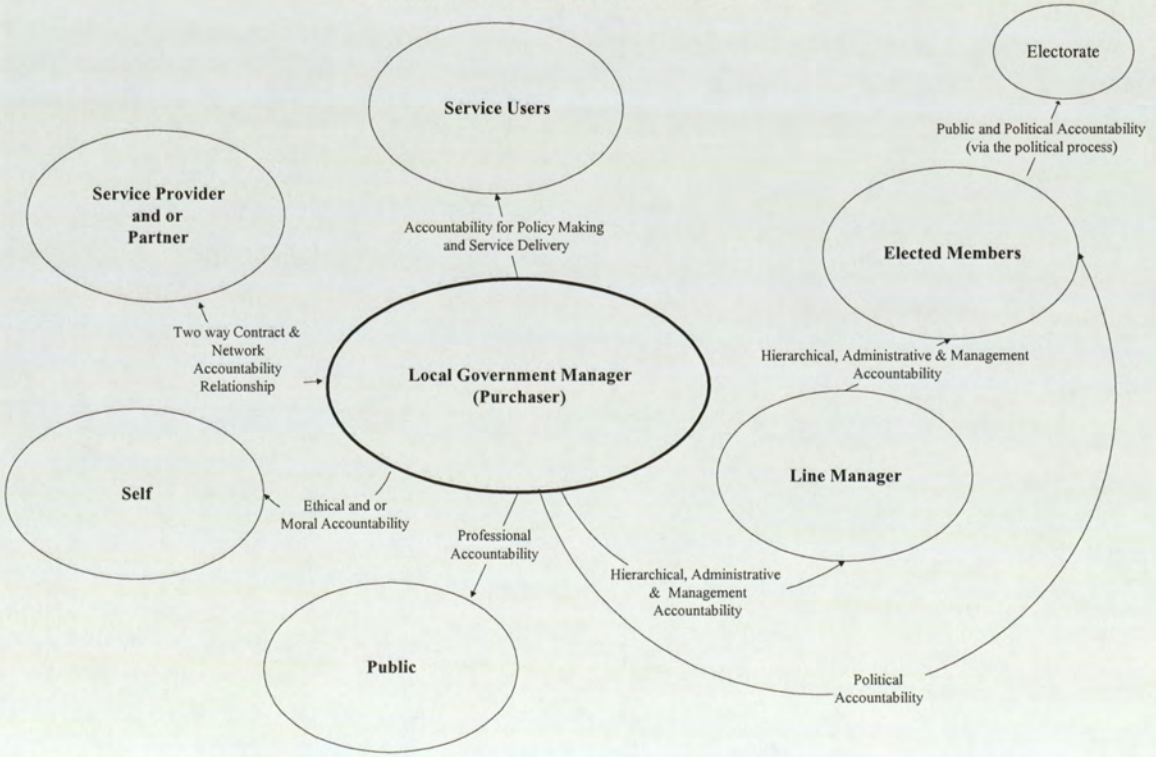
4.2 Managers' Collective Accountability Frameworks

Public and voluntary sector relationships have a historical basis to them and are not new. One of the research aims was to identify to whom and in what ways each sector is accountable under POSC. All voluntary and public sector manager respondents were therefore asked to draw or describe their accountabilities through a mapping exercise. The maps, which were intended to illustrate to whom each actor was accountable, were then supplemented by the researcher's observations and fieldwork analysis, with reference to the ways in which managers from both sectors perceived they were accountable. The resultant 'collective accountability frameworks' perceived by Local Government Managers and Voluntary Sector Managers are presented in detail in sections 4.2.1 and 4.2.2.

4.2.1 Local Government Managers' Frameworks

Within the new POSC context, and although not placed in order of preference or hierarchy, most local government managers perceived their personal and organisational accountabilities to be operating in seven directions concurrently. These accountabilities are illustrated in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1 - Local Government Managers' Collective Accountability Frameworks



The underlying/overarching philosophy or theme, was accountability to users for the service(s). Managers viewed this as informing policy making and practice particularly in relation to service quality. Although all respondents were acutely aware that this accountability aspect was more of an aspiration than an actuality, they considered it a 'principle' that the sectors needed to work towards. This aspect of accountability is considered in more detail in Chapter 5.

The next three interlinked dimensions of accountability indicated were 'management', 'political' and 'public' accountability. Respondents perceived that they were directly accountable to their line manager in terms of the organisational hierarchy. This was labelled 'hierarchical, administrative and or management accountability'. They also observed they were accountable either directly or indirectly to elected members in the political hierarchy, depending upon the manager's formal role and position within the organisation and accordingly their distance from the members. Of those interviewed all had some contact with councillors, through for instance progress/monitoring reports about contracted services and 'committee tours' where 'members' visited services. Many respondents viewed management and political accountabilities for taxpayers' monies as linked. They considered that they were directly accountable to their manager and indirectly accountable to councillors, who in turn were accountable to the public/electorate via the political processes.

In terms of public accountability some respondents also perceived they were directly accountable to the public through their regular contact with them in their 'professional' role.

Another accountability relationship mentioned by most local government managers was a personal accountability. In Figure 4.1 this aspect is identified as 'self' and was described as an ethical or moral accountability to oneself. Some managers also described this accountability as being about their integrity and probity. In specific terms, they were concerned that decisions should be reached in the fairest way possible.

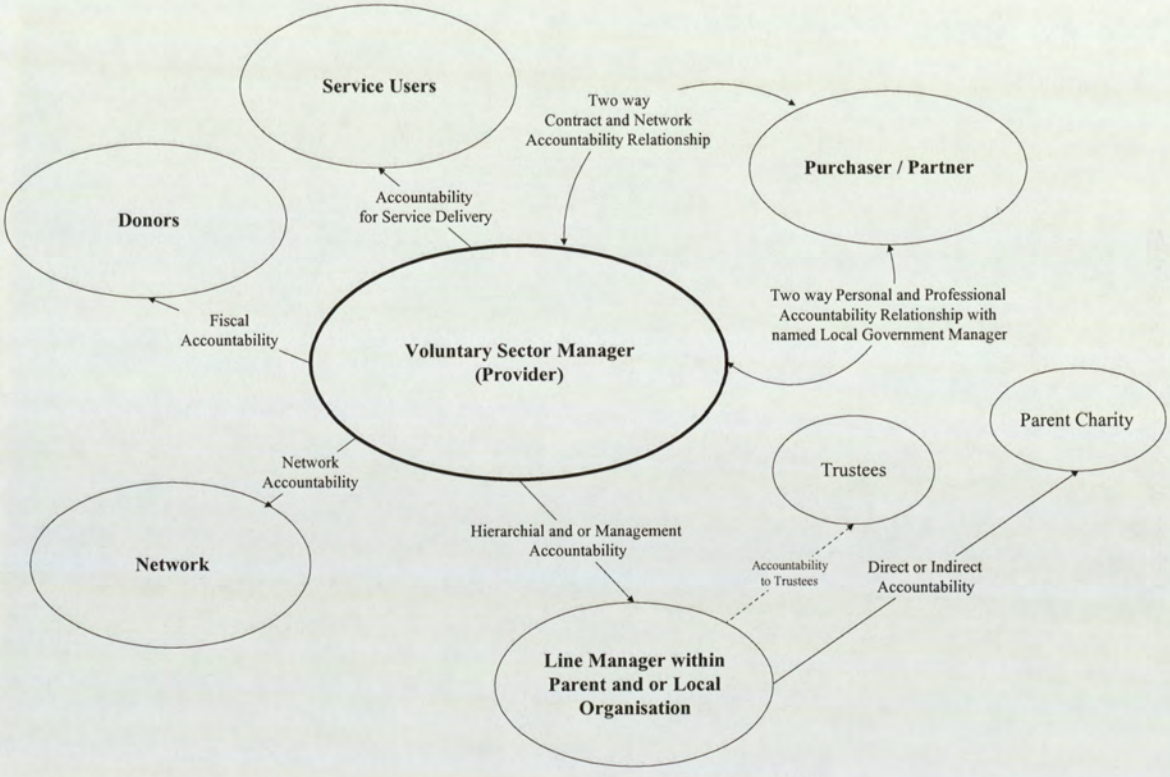
The seventh dimension of accountability was an accountability to service providers. As Mackintosh (2000: 5) also found, the purchaser referred to the provider as their 'partner(s)', in terms of supporting them in their aims. They conceptualised this as a two-

way relationship between the sectors, which was ensured not only through the contractual document but also through processes of dialogue, communication and trust and within the context of a network.

4.2.2 Voluntary Sector Managers' Frameworks

Voluntary sector managers also perceived their accountability to be operating in seven directions. These are illustrated in Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2 Voluntary Sector Managers' Collective Accountability Frameworks



Like their local government colleagues, voluntary sector managers perceived one accountability as being ultimately to the users for service delivery.

Secondly, voluntary sector managers also had a very strong sense of a two-way personal and professional accountability relationship with the purchasers which/who they, like their local government counterparts, also referred to as 'partners'. Specifically, they perceived the focus of their accountability relationship to be directly between them and the individual in the purchasing organisation with whom they interacted. Most respondents referred to

this aspect as having an accountability to a specific 'named' person. More often than not they were not only unaware of the job title of this local authority employee, but also their surname, as they tended to relate to one another on first name terms and at a much more personal level. The implications of this are explored in Chapter 6. However, some respondents were also acutely aware that if the statutory authority were to take away the local project's / service's funding, if for instance it was not perceived to be operating accountably, their parent body would have, as one respondent said 'no hesitation [in] letting us go'. In this sense, ensuring accountability to the public sector purchaser / partner was vital, as it not only indirectly ensured their accountability to the parent organisation, but also the local organisation's survival.

Like public sector respondents, voluntary sector managers conceptualised one dimension of accountability as being to their immediate line manager within their local organisation. However, unlike their public sector colleagues, who perceived a clear hierarchical line of accountability upwards ultimately (if indirectly) to the councillors, voluntary sector managers rarely (if ever) observed their line management accountability as extending beyond their immediate manager to the trustees - about whom they spoke in fairly disparaging terms.

For all voluntary sector respondents, most trustees (with one or two notable exceptions) were perceived to comprise people who were 'selected' through an informal and opaque process. They were referred to as 'the great' and 'the good' and were not perceived to be 'in touch' with the reality, which they as managers dealt with on a day to day basis. Many referred to trustees as being somewhere 'up there' [pointing upwards] and they were also often described as 'distant' and 'paternalistic'. Some managers referred to trustees' visits to services as 'Royal' tours. Most, if not all managers, considered that trustees lacked either the relevant knowledge or the appropriate experience and understanding, about the issues with which managers had to deal with on a day to day basis and on which trustees would be basing their decisions. This was of particular concern given the policy-making role of the trustees. For example, users' lives could be significantly affected should the trustees decide to withdraw a service. This point is well illustrated by one manager who said:

> *"... I suppose one of the things I find extraordinary is that ... [the minutes are] ... circulated to Trustees about ... [this project/service] ... but the Trustees have very little insight into what is actually happening here. So I don't know how they can make any sort of real judgement, what they would base it on, because of their knowledge. [Pause]. I mean it isn't a criticism, it's just, you know, an observation ... I think that it isn't right, you know, if you are a Trustee, then you have an obligation, and you should have commitment to learn about the services that you are representing or having to make decisions about"* (Voluntary Sector Manager).

Thus this accountability is illustrated as a dotted line indicating that although managers did not really perceive their accountability as being to the trustees they acknowledged in a technical sense that they were actually accountable to them. In addition, voluntary sector managers differed from their local government counterparts in terms of two other accountabilities. Firstly, their accountability map included one accountability as being 'to and through the local network', which comprised not only of other voluntary and statutory organisations, but also users.

Secondly, most respondents said that they were accountable to 'people who put the money in the collecting boxes'. Although most were unable to say in what way they were accountable to these donors, a couple did suggest that it was ensured through the annual report and set of accounts, which had by law to be available to any member of the public who requested them.

Of the seven accountabilities illustrated in the managers' collective frameworks, only three were shared between voluntary sector managers and their local government counterparts. These were accountability to: users; each other - as partners in an interorganisational relationship (IOR); and their respective line managers.

4.3 Ensuring Accountability

Accountability was seen as being ensured through both informal and formal mechanisms. Examples of these included written records (for example, contracts and monitoring documents) as well as through meetings between the sectors. In addition to these mechanisms, the processes of dialogue, communication and the building and establishment of a trust relationship between key actors within the context of one or several network(s) were also vital to ensuring accountability. These formal and informal accountability

mechanisms and processes – 'contract accountability' and 'network accountability' are explored - in the following sections.

4.3.1 'Contract Accountability' - The Written Documentation

Formal endorsement of the inter-organisational relationship was generally expressed through the 'contract' or the 'service level agreement'. 'Contract accountability' comprises two key elements - the written documentation (both the agreement and any monitoring information linked to the agreement); and the processes of establishing the documentation. The documentation – the contractual agreement and linked performance measures - were significant for three reasons:

(a) managers in both sectors considered that written records were important for reference purposes;
(b) they considered that the documents protected both the provider and the purchaser and, at times, the user; and
(c) the documents provided a focal point for the processes to take place.

4.3.2 'Contract Accountability' - The Processes

The formal processes of negotiating and establishing the agreement seem to have encouraged the public local government sector and the charitable voluntary sector (hereafter referred to as 'the actors') to enter a dialogue where they attempted to define and clarify their own role(s), limitations, strengths and responsibilities in relation to one another. Through discussion about these issues, each was forced to be explicit about their assumptions with reference to one another, and their expectations of the new relationship.

The contracting processes involved in establishing the contract document gave managers from both sectors time to overcome what they referred to as their 'teething' problems and 'humps' and for 'relationship building'. Although the 'learning curve' was found to be a steep one in most instances and setting up an agreement of this nature a difficult experience for each actor, the opportunity for dialogue appeared to be vital to:

(a) the marked shift in thinking in relation to one another, given their new roles of 'purchaser' and 'provider'; and
(b) the building of their 'partnership' and two-way accountability relationships.

Local government respondents' notion of partnerships appeared to be crucial to their views of inter-organisational accountability. They regarded the relationship as a 'partnership' which needed to be both long term and sustainable. Since local government managers saw themselves and their organisation as accountable to the public and to users of publicly funded services, they regarded that, together with their voluntary sector colleagues, they were responsible not only for purchasing services but also for 'enabling' them to happen. In other words, they wanted to ensure that appropriate service provision was made for the local community. This enabling role was well understood by one voluntary sector manager who viewed the local authority not only as the organisation to whom they were accountable for the monies they received but also as the organisation with responsibility to regenerate the economy and also to provide services that the local community needed.

> *"They are a funder but I think it is important that we don't just see them as someone who is benevolent giving us money. They are not doing it as a favour for us. It is part of their whole role as a local authority to try and regenerate the economy and try ... provide the services that are needed to regenerate the economy . ... We are answerable to them and we have to meet their criteria, but they do have a responsibility themselves to this community as the local authority that is receiving money from central government to provide the services that this community needs"* (Voluntary Sector Manager).

Accordingly, local government managers did not consider difficulties with service delivery to be the sole preserve of the voluntary sector providers; rather all respondents regarded them as a joint responsibility to be addressed and resolved together, wherever possible.

Out of the contracting processes emerged a clearer understanding of and mutual respect for the knowledge and expertise of the other and a relationship of trust (see section 4.4). In relation to the contracted service, each actor came to recognise their need for one another. They had become interdependent.

Two aspects crucial to contract accountability were the document and the inter-sectoral relationship. It was found that two-way communication and trust were as significant to the establishment of 'contract accountability', as the document itself. In other words, the processes of establishing the formal written agreement, through discussion and consultation, were vital to establishing the new accountability relationship. This was found to be the case whether the sectors had an existing relationship through grant-aid or not. In

addition, these two factors were of continuing importance in terms of the ongoing accountability relationship and monitoring performance.

4.3.3 Performance Accountability - Monitoring Service Delivery

Given the legislative framework within which both sectors are now operating, service deliverers have to provide purchasing authorities with specific information, required for statutory reasons. Prior to their adoption, additional quantitative and qualitative information for monitoring service delivery performance in relation to the contract, appear to have been discussed and developed (by either or both parties) again after ample negotiation, discussion and clarification.

As with 'contract accountability', the performance measures themselves, as well as the processes involved in reaching them, appear to have been vital to ensuring accountability both for service delivery and policy making. This was for two reasons. Firstly, measures that could be negotiated were jointly agreed and devised rather than imposed. The following quote is fairly typical of the opinions offered by all respondents involved in monitoring performance using measures and indicators.

> *"Well, there are certain things with all service level agreements that are statutory. Now whatever the agency is, you have to fulfill that, because there's part of a service level agreement that is exactly the same for every organisation, but there are other parts of it that you can actually work with your project officer on"* (Voluntary Sector Manager).

Secondly, the ongoing processes of discussion, dialogue and mediation were viewed as critical to evaluating performance (particularly 'quality'), as were the measures themselves.

> *"I'd certainly like to move towards some more qualitative form of indicators. That I think needs to be agreed through a process of negotiation. We can't as a local authority say the quality of indicators we want you to use and give the information on. I think there has to be some kind of dialogue about what those are and how they would be measured and all sorts because quality information doesn't just come from one aspect you see"* (Local Government Manager).

In addition, since managers from both sectors had given some consideration to and come to an agreement about how the measures would be interpreted, they were committed to them.

A couple of voluntary sector managers were found to be very enthusiastic about evaluating 'quality' - and they were (at the time of the study) developing projects in this area on their own initiative.

> *"... [The local government contract has] also given us certain targets which we need to work towards, particularly with regards to monitoring. I think one of the things I'm particularly interested in, is developing quality management, so it's, I think it's hopefully going to bring the service on a higher level"* (Voluntary Sector Manager).

Although performance indicators (PIs) were developed through a consultative process and therefore considered relevant and appropriate by both sectors, many local government respondents in particular, indicated they were reluctant to create too many specific quantitative PIs. Although all local government respondents recognised the value of PIs and their usefulness, in that they could for instance certainly give an 'indication' of the quality of service being provided, many also emphasised that they needed to be viewed in these terms and at times treated with a measure of caution. In other words, most respondents recognised that the measures had their imperfections and limitations.

> *"... so although you could say '[the performance indicators] are all just numbers' they are numbers that should indicate the quality of what is provided I think because they would say the source of referral is quite important. If you knew that your referrals were all from other statutory agencies, I think that would then tell you a story about accessibility for instance, so that would be one small thing"* (Local Government Manager).

Furthermore, since both sets of actors already had to provide a considerable amount of information in order to comply with statutory requirements in the legislation governing POSCs, public sector managers generally expressed a wish to encourage, as far as possible, an environment in which the public and voluntary sectors were not further constrained by additional, superfluous paperwork and bureaucracy. They often argued that this would ensure that providers would be able to have some flexibility and responsiveness to users and that both sectors would have increased room for manoeuvre.

Qualitative performance tended to be evaluated using a combination of both 'objective' measures and 'subjective' judgements using information provided by both service deliverers and local government managers with particular responsibility for monitoring. All respondents recognised that ensuring accountability for qualitative aspects of service delivery required subjective judgement, was difficult, complex and took a considerable amount of time and that accountability to users in particular needed to be facilitated. One

local government respondent said that in order to ensure user accountability, users should be involved in developing measures. The respondent felt that users' experiences need to be translated into qualitative statements which could then be developed into meaningful measures.

> *"... unless you start with the users and unless you really get their experiences and you translate that into qualitative statements, you can't - and then - I mean your criteria or your objective things are easy to measure. But it's very difficult. You can't pick qualitative data out of the air, can you? And neither can you just take it all from books, and I think people have got to 'own' it"* (Local Government Manager).

In talking about the difficulties in measuring certain aspects of performance, another manager encapsulated the opinions of most managers from both sectors, in her awareness of the need for: (a) recognition that those interventions that have the most impact on people's lives are the most difficult to measure; and (b) the need to develop trust.

> *"Well I would say it is a subjective service, because there's lots of things that are quite difficult to measure in terms of what [the voluntary organisation] does. And you can have all the agreements you like, but at the end of the day it's very hard to quantify those things. A lot of the qualitative things have to be taken - it's this trust thing ... that we were talking about before. And I would say that with [the voluntary organisation] the benefits of it ... well, the performance things that are harder to quantify are actually the things that are probably the most successful, in terms of impact. You know, how do you assess what effect it's had on someone's life or how it's benefited a child being in here, as opposed to being at home, or how it might have brought on a member of the management committee, say that they then feel able to do - their confidence is built - you know. How do you do a report that assesses all that? It's quite difficult, isn't it?"* (Local Government Manager).

Information for monitoring the contract, which was provided by the service deliverers, was in general trusted by the sectors. Agreed 'objective' measures about the service included: whether it was being operated at the 'agreed times' and was being used to its optimum; details about the sort of meals and provisions that existed for users; the way referrals were taken and background information about the users, such as their ethnicity and age; and whether meetings and reviewing processes were taking place.

Examples of objective measures used by local authority monitoring officers included:- 'checking records and log books' - that they were 'up to date and accurate'; 'seeing staff reports about the work' carried out, 'meetings held, policies developed and ways of monitoring'; how 'quickly providers responded to clients'; 'what providers found out about

clients'; 'how providers communicated information'; 'how clients were addressed [and] equal opportunities came into this quite a lot'; and 'how providers look at the training of staff through all their policies' and 'management structures and systems'.

> *"[I monitor the providers] ... in terms of training, equipment or whatever, and I go through that, and that they have had appropriate assessment themselves before they're actually allowed into a client's home and that there's an on-going commitment"* (Local Government Manager).

Examples of qualitative aspects of the service such as 'atmosphere', 'ethos', environment, or 'culture' of the organisation, for which subjective judgements were required by managers from both sectors included their 'gut feeling', 'feelings' and 'professional judgement'. Some managers observed that although it is not always easy for them to be able to 'pin ... down' or put their 'finger on' what is wrong they 'know if something is not [quite right]' not necessarily intellectually but certainly instinctively.

> *"It's when it begins to feel wrong. Again, it's very subjective ..."* (Voluntary Sector Manager).

> *"I think when you're assessing, you can get the materialistic evidence, but it's getting, trying to get hold of the 'feeling' evidence. Does that make sense? ... So it's creating the atmosphere where parents can come in and say I'm not happy with this. And I think that's the hardest part, it's creating that atmosphere, to get the parents, to get that trust where they can come in and criticise"* (Voluntary Sector Manager).

> *"Of course, ... I can monitor [performance] by visiting on a regular basis, knowing the children, feeling the atmosphere, - the tension which is not there"* ... (Voluntary Sector Manager).

In addition to being acquainted with service users, knowledge about their 'quality of life ... in terms of [their] privacy, dignity, rights and choice' was deemed to be important, in terms of enhancing managers' capability for evaluating service quality.

Less tangible facets were sampled by local government managers and senior voluntary sector managers using a variety of methods including:- 'asking discerning questions' of providers; 'inspection visits' and 'visits to the services'; 'observing and reviewing practice'; 'visits to' and 'consultation with users' individually and collectively through advisory groups; monitoring 'the client-provider interface', through for instance 'attendance at some reviews' and 'listening to parents and carers' comments in reviews'; 'comments your care

managers make to you'; monitoring 'patterns', 'building up knowledge' and 'through talking to [users to] build up a picture'.

4.3.4 Network Accountability

Another concept which emerged out of the field research was that of 'network accountability'. Network accountability is the result of discussion and information exchange in formal and (or) informal settings and can be between individuals and (or) groups in various organisations and across sectors, who are linked together at many levels throughout various networks. Examples of formal meetings that were mentioned included joint committees and planning teams, steering groups, working parties and panels.

> *"... getting the feedback from the social workers ... . By going to meetings outside, joint care planning, steering groups, fostering panels"* (Voluntary Sector Manager).

> *"I mean at the last meeting we had, I think, we had four specialist health visitors who cover all of [the County] and we have the development worker from ... [the] Carers Project - he came in. The development worker from Mencap has been a regular visitor, also the Co-ordinator of the Sitting Service for Mencap too ..."* (Voluntary Sector Manager).

Examples of informal social situations where exchanges take place that were referred to included: car boot sales; fund raising events; parties; chance meetings in corridors; social meetings over coffee; in the pub and at lunch.

Accountability of the sectors to other actors - specifically other local statutory and voluntary organisations as well as users - was ensured through 'network accountability'. Although accountability of the public and voluntary sectors - the purchasers and providers - to one another was principally ensured through 'contract accountability', it was reinforced by network accountability. An example of network accountability was given by one local government manager who epitomised the experience of most managers from her sector. She said that not only did she and her colleagues from other sections within the local government organisational structure meet together, but that her colleagues also meet with the providers in order to inform one another about what is happening in relation to the service.

> *"Well actually, we work together much more closely at local level ... meet together with ... three of us and our senior care managers, so [the] next person down from us in the team structure meet on a regular basis with [the voluntary*

> *sector manager managing the contracted service] and the managers of her day care centres to discuss - what's happening to the occupancy levels, how well our staff are introducing people to them, - so that we can inform ... the people who set the contracts, if anything needs changing and also because they are a very big provider for us and all of their clients come through us and we probably ought to talk together"* (Local Government Manager).

All the local government managers interviewed observed that concerns or errors not picked up by other monitoring mechanisms were likely to be raised by other actors in the network and brought to their attention. They believed 'word would get back to us' or 'word gets around' either through formal or informal routes.

> *"I suppose I have the opportunity for other feedback because I am in the social services department and I know that social workers, if they had a complaint would know that they could ring me up about it, if they felt that a user that they had put in touch with the centre had not received what they needed. And of course the same would go for the health authority or with education"* (Local Government Manager).

Moreover, in a couple of authorities, certain data, which was not regarded as confidential, was not only shared between departments within the local authority for example, but also sometimes between them and other organisations, such as the local health services.

Information was communicated through a variety of mechanisms and media. Examples offered include both written and verbal forms. Written forms were communicated through email, letters and publications, whilst verbal forms were communicated through use of the telephone or face to face contact.

A voluntary sector driven accountability mechanism in operation, which was found to have a common purpose but was variously referred to as the 'advisory group', the 'steering group', the 'management committee' or the 'management team', is an example of a formal multi-disciplinary, multi-organisational, multi-sectoral network, which linked representatives of users (parents, carers, children, young people and the elderly) to the purchaser, the provider and those from other sectors (health, other local government departments and other voluntary organisations). These formal fora were used for 'consultation' and information exchange - 'free flowing discussion', 'informing practice', 'debriefing', and 'lobbying' - and ensured that the purchaser and provider were accountable not only to each other but also through the network.

> *".. we have our two main funders attend all the management committee meetings as well so they are able always to report to us on policy issues from their side that we need to be aware of. Often when a discussion comes up we'll actually turn to one of these people and say what is [your organisation's] line on this or what is the County's line on this? ... And also being linked in a way to large groups like that actually helps us to work out how to ... be accountable"* (Voluntary Sector Manager).

Together with a number of other formal and informal monitoring meetings between the sectors, this formal network was regarded by voluntary sector respondents in particular, as the mechanism which: reinforced both their 'partnerships' with local government and 'contract accountability'; ensured the legitimacy (of their activities); and assured their accountability to other local network members, through the various representatives that were present at the meeting/s.

> *"... One of the reasons for these regular meetings is to make certain that things are on course and other people are happy with what you are doing ... . The fact that you are not just flying your own kite"* (Voluntary Sector Manager).

> *"... the link has to be made very closely with either voluntary agencies or care agencies that are actually involved with the clients. So I can only go by, on the whole, the information that would be passed through those networks"* (Local Government Manager).

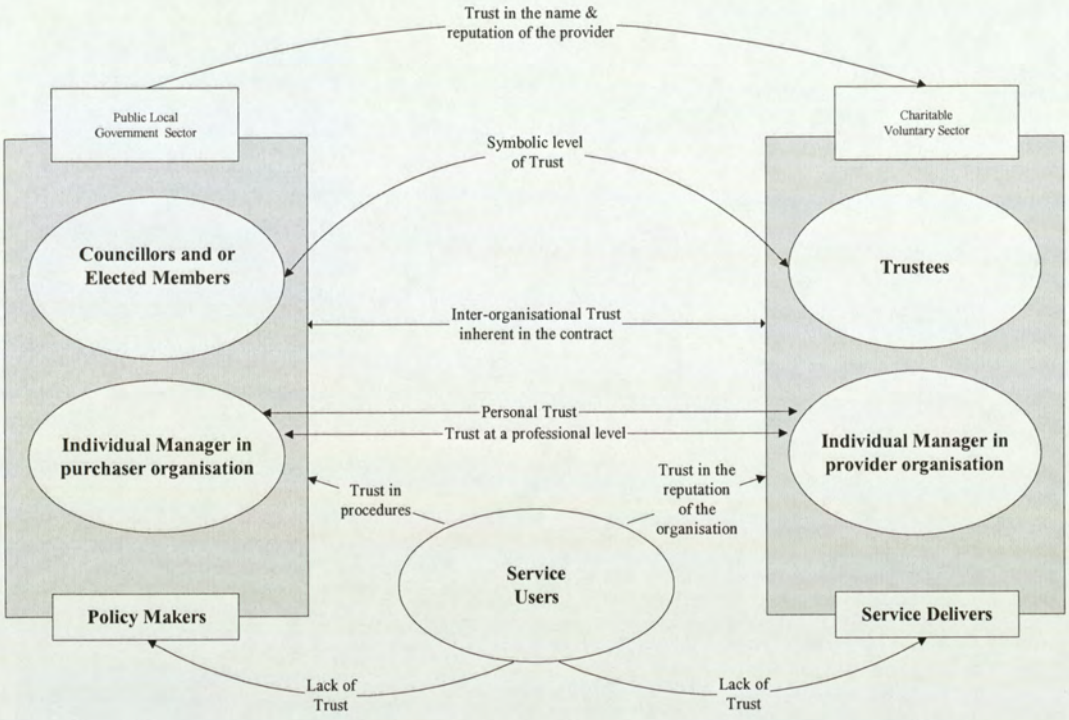
4.4 Establishing and Building Trust

Trust was a key element, which was perceived to be integral to changing the nature and practice of accountability. Over time, in other words, throughout the establishment of the contractual relationship, several levels appeared. These are illustrated in Figure 4.3.

The particular levels of trust identified by the research were between:

- individuals in different sectors referred to in Chapter 6 as *"... boundary personnel ..."* (Hall 1996: 229) - for example, a personal trust between managers representing the purchasers and managers representing the organisations providing the service, (i.e. between policy makers and service deliverers); and
- organisations in different sectors - as represented by their figureheads - for instance the trustees in the provider organisations and the councillors in the purchaser organisations - as expressed in, and inherent to, the contract/service level agreement.

Figure 4.3 - Levels of Trust between Actors in POSC



Another basis for trust was the 'brand' or the 'name' and reputation of the charitable voluntary organisation.

> *"[Trust is] ... built on [the charity's] name, you know, which comes into it obviously because if you say ... [the name of the charity people think] "Oh yes, they're a bona fide agency", and that must influence how you feel"* (Local Government Manager).

> *"... You have to make that initial assessment of the place and decide if they look trustworthy, and the place is fairly safe, and the procedures are in, and also the [charity's] name - that helps. It's known as a good ... charity. In fact, from working in social services and then coming [here], the esteem in which you're held is greater in [this organisation - this charity] than it was in social services. I don't really know why. I think it's probably just the name and the fact that we don't take your children away - the bad press"* (Voluntary Sector Manager).

In terms of the relationship between accountability and trust, between the service users and both the purchaser and the provider organisations, there was found to be mostly, but not always, a lack of trust. This manifested itself in terms of users feeling that they couldn't articulate their needs or complaints to either the voluntary sector (charity) or to local government. This aspect is explored in greater depth in Chapter 5.

4.4.1 Intertwining of the Sectors

Although inter-organisational trust seems to have developed over time, it was often expedited by the recruitment of a local, known, networked, knowledgeable, and trusted former local government, health service, or voluntary sector employee, who moved to either purchase or provide the service.

> *" [this voluntary organisation] is a very well established ... organisation, national ... organisation. I think the local authority recognised that there is quite a lot of movement between staff who work for local authority, and work for things like [this voluntary organisation] ..."* (Local Government Manager).

> *"I have a lot of trust for the voluntary organisations because that's where I come from"* (Local Government Manager).

Such individuals were likely to know their way around either the statutory or the voluntary sector. They were used to the 'custom and practice' of their former employers and were familiar with for instance, the 'language or jargon', the organisational structure and the people currently in post. If the people in post had moved on since they had left, they would often know who to approach to get the information they needed - as a couple of respondents said with reference to an old Automobile Association advertising campaign, if they did not know who to contact, then they would ... 'know a man who does'. Such intertwining between the sectors meant that a basic level of trust existed for some relationships to begin with, at both a personal and a professional level. This formed the basis for a stable foundation upon which the partners could and did build. It was further facilitated by 'networking' between former colleagues at informal meetings such as social functions and (or) formal meetings through, for example, membership of each other's decision making bodies.

4.5 Summary and Conclusions

The formal endorsement of the accountability relationship was expressed through the written contractual document. This served both as a valuable reference point for those with a continuing involvement with the service, as well as a mechanism which protected both 'partners' and, at times, the users. However, the process of establishing the written agreement was arguably as, if not more, significant to ensuring accountability as the document itself. Both aspects – the written document and the process of having negotiated it - are referred to as 'contract accountability'.

Contract accountability was based on discussion, liaison and the building up of trust and mutual respect between the partners. It was found to be operating through a circular, participatory, iterative, and partially bureaucratic process. All voluntary sector and local government respondents conceptualised accountability as a two-way relationship. It was reinforced by 'network accountability' where numerous relationships were found to be operating at all levels, with service users, across organisations and sectors and through various mechanisms. While imperfect and still evolving, 'contract' and 'network' accountability encouraged flexibility, responsiveness, and an increase in accountability to each other.

Dialogue, communication and trust were ongoing and key features of the inter-sectoral 'contract' and 'network' accountability relationships. However, both sectors also recognised that accountability for quality and accountability to users have as yet to be worked out, not only by both partners but also with users. In particular, local government managers appeared to be acutely aware that the picture of user accountability was not as cosy as the inter-sectoral accountability relationship. Although this was an area of concern for both sectors it was highlighted as a priority in terms of the local government agenda. This issue of user accountability is explored further in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

Contracting and User Accountability

> *"In the first place, ... each individual may, indeed be a worse judge than the experts; but all, when they meet together, are either better than experts or at any rate no worse. In the second place, there are a number of arts in which the creative artist is not the only, or even the best, judge. These are the arts whose products can be understood and judged, even by those who do not possess any skill in the art. A house, for instance, is something which can be understood by others besides the builder; indeed the user of a house – or in other words, the householder – will judge it even better than he does." (Aristotle translated 1948: 145 - 147).*

5.1 Introduction

As with chapter 4, the chain of reasoning that led to the structure of this chapter, emerged from the application of the 'Framework' analysis to the data. Once again, out of the 'sifting and sorting' process, the themes and sub-themes that emerged were particularly helpful for organising the findings. This chapter is considerably longer than the previous one - Chapter 4 – because, unlike the inter-sectoral accountability relationship, considerable difficulties appear to have been encountered with ensuring the user aspect of accountability.

This chapter explores the public sector's (local government) and the voluntary sector's (charity) relationship with users. It covers three key areas. The first examines the current situation in terms of: (a) the effect of contracting on user accountability; (b) the availability of information to users about services and their opportunities for consultation; and (c) the managers' (from both sectors) commitment to ensuring accountability to users. The second explores the barriers to ensuring user accountability, whilst the third reviews the initiatives for ensuring user accountability and analyses the constituent components of user accountable organisations. These include having a commitment to user accountability and creating a culture of accountability to users. The section that follows begins by looking at the effect of purchase of service contracting on accountability to users.

5.2 The Effect of Contracting on Accountability to Users

As has already become apparent in the previous chapter, the contracting process has led to efforts to clarify roles, relationships and accountabilities between the sectors. Purchasers and providers have had to become clear about: their reasons for entering the partnership; what, to whom and on whose behalf each partner is purchasing and delivering the service, and to whom and for what each is accountable.

Without exception, local government respondents observed that the contracting process has meant that there had been an increase in the awareness of users in general and that more 'questions are being asked' and demands being made by users.

> "... I think there are now more questions being asked about arrangements and maybe it is not as smooth as people thought it was ... WHO ARE THE QUESTIONS BEING ASKED BY? Oh - users. I mean I think we have got - I know we have now a quite lively carers' forum in this authority and they are quite rightly asking questions. Now we have a carers' support unit, which to some extent is trying to assist that forum in finding out the answers and I know that my divisional manager appears on local radio and gets some quite close questioning about the things he does and sanctions." (Local Government Manager).

Public sector managers described services in terms of striving towards becoming more 'user-led', 'demand-led', 'client-focussed' and 'user-friendly' than before, although they all acknowledged that they were really only beginning to scratch 'the surface of the service being truly needs led'.

> "I mean the main thing is that the services have become very much more client-focussed than they ever were before. I mean in the past it was, 'these are the services we provide'. You have a problem and therefore we can offer you this, this or this. So it was very much the client fitting in to what was being provided by the local authority ..." (Local Government Manager).

One voluntary sector manager detailed the changes to the service she managed. For instance, as a result of the new organisational structures put in place to consult users, information about the services and the services themselves have become more accessible and have developed in line with user need.

> "It's changed in as much, in that it's developed to meet the needs of the service users and how we've done that, is to ensure that service users meet with me on a regular basis. I have what's called a 'Representative Group' which is 'reps' from all the different support groups who will meet with me on a quarterly basis, and co-opted from that group is a parent who sits on our management committee. Now, if we're looking at developing services, we obviously take into account what service users require ... we now open on a daily basis, where the centre was very restricted to opening times [before], in fact people could virtually only come to groups. Well not everyone wants to come to a group, you have to recognise that you know some people don't want to belong to a group, so we do have times when people can just drop in. We have considerably developed groups, that is to say, we do have seven groups now where before there was only about three or four, and there's been developments. ... For instance, the counselling service, I think there's a wider awareness by parents on how to access services and about what their rights are and it's about having lots of information here as well, about building up an information network for parents ..." (Voluntary Sector Manager).

5.3 Managers' Commitment to User Accountability

Within the context of this new inter-sectoral relationship, all local government respondents said that they were committed to the concept of 'user' accountability. They emphasised that they perceived different user perspectives to be 'crucial' to ensuring the provision of appropriate, high quality and accountable services.

One local government manager described the formal processes the local authority followed in terms of involving users and ensuring their views were fed through at the planning stage into the drawing up of the contracts. By taking account of user views it was anticipated that services would become user-driven, 'user-led' and therefore accountable to users.

> "... our role is fairly broad because we also have to take into account the views of all our service users through various sort of consultation processes. That's fed into the planning process and the planning process then links into the contracting side ... [what] we've been trying to do is actually make it a much more sophisticated process and much more user-led. ... I'm not saying we're getting it all right, but ... we started the process ... formalising the contracting process and involving users more, so that we actually have a much more user-driven service ... There's so much investment in the services ... If they're not user-led then, they are really not providing the service that people need, so I would think that that is actually ... the accountability bit, because ... now it's targeted and I think we can account much more for the way that we are developing these services. (INTERRUPTION) ... I find it very difficult to pick out the one strand, but it's the way that we are combining the thinking now, I think, that's providing the dividends for the users." (Local Government Manager).

To this end, all local authorities in the study reported that they were working towards user 'involvement' and 'participation in decision making about services that affected them'. One respondent even said that her authority was working towards 'user-managed' services.

> "... what I would like to aim for eventually is ... user-managed services. I think there are a lot of projects that users themselves can manage. Now that doesn't happen, apart from the carers' forum, which is about to be handed over to them to manage themselves." (Local Government Manager).

However, managers from both sectors and some users recognised that the establishment of a new service and culture takes time, and that accountability to users is more complex than it may at first appear. Although both sectors had clearly made some attempts to involve and listen to users, most managers conceded that neither sector had been 'very good' at really listening to date. Since there was no experience in involving users in either sector, both the public and the charitable voluntary sector were very much developing things as they went along, keeping aspects that worked and discarding those that didn't.

> "... that's been much slower in happening than we had initially hoped just because it takes an awful lot to shift things, but that's still the intention ... we had an expectation when we went into 'Care in the Community' that we shared all our paper work with users. Now, I am not suggesting that the fact that so few of them were interested in reading it, suggests that they wouldn't be interested in reading anything, but it isn't as simple as writing out a care plan and giving somebody a copy. Involvement is different. I don't think we have got it sorted out terribly well either, so it's not for me to say the [voluntary organisation] haven't ... we haven't either" (Local Government Manager).

> "We try. I am not always sure that we take as much notice as we should - but we do try." (Voluntary Sector Manager).

Most local government respondents reported that they were only at the initial stages of this process and considered user accountability to be 'uncharted territory' for both sectors.

> "... it takes some time for all this new service to be installed for the new culture to take hold." (Local Government Manager).

> **Question:** "HOW IS THAT [i.e. - the user accountability mechanism - a meeting where the statutory sector consults users] WORKING ?" **Response:** "Alright. Up and down. It's only met about five or six times, so it's in its early stages. ... But we haven't really got very far with that." (Local Government Manager).

5.4 Service Level Agreements and Enabling Information Exchange

It was found that user accountability, like inter-sectoral accountability, was perceived to be ensured (by both sectors) by the contract or service level agreement and through the provision and exchange of information, using both written and verbal means of communication. One local government manager described user accountability in terms of being at the centre of their thinking about accountability and intrinsic to the contract.

> "[user accountability is] ... inherent in the contract ... we are asking in that specification for a fully responsive service and that the client - it's a client-centred specification ... 'this is the best way to look after an elderly person at home and these are the good principles that should be adopted', and all of that cross-references keeping that elderly person or disabled person at the centre of your thinking, that everything should revolve around their needs and their demands for what they want out of a service, and that is all wrapped into the contract." (Local Government Manager).

It is clear (from the previous chapter) that all local government managers viewed their role as 'enablers'. They referred to this role in two senses. First, they viewed it in terms of 'enabling' the voluntary organisations that provided services (in partnership with them). Second, because most of them perceived service users to be 'experts in their own needs', managers felt that in order to ensure accountability to them, users should be 'enabled' to be heard.

> "I regard an individual user as an expert on their own individual needs. Unfortunately the result of all their expertise maybe that they haven't got what they actually ought to have." (Local Government Manager).

> "... service users know what it is that they want. ... I mean certainly older people ... ought to be the best fount of knowledge of what they want. They've had a whole lifetime of having what they want, and I think the most difficult thing for older people coming to need services is that suddenly most of them cannot have what they want, in fact it's often very ... the opposite of what they want, and I think that's an absolute tragedy." (Local Government Manager).

Local government managers generally said they tried to enable users in two ways. First, they attempted to ensure that users were well informed about services and policies. If users had access to information about agreements, policies and services, they would be able to check whether the service they were receiving was the one envisaged in the service level agreement and the other documentation. Second, managers aimed to create as many opportunities as

possible, for making sure that service user voices were heard. In addition, if they also had opportunities for dialogue, they were more likely to be in a better position to hold the 'partners' to account.

5.5 User Information about Services

Local government respondents reported that they tried to ensure accountability to users in a number of ways. Many said that they attempted to keep users informed through making written documentation and publications about services available. One gave an example of an event that was organised to inform users about services. The event wasn't successful. The manager recounted that all local organisations from the local government sector, the health service and the voluntary sector got together and held a one-day event when they all publicised their services at a market stall. The lack of interest in the stall helped them to realise two things. In order to ensure that users were informed in terms of local service provision, the sectors would need to market their services to professionals, individuals and agencies that users may ask for information or help. Secondly, despite their various attempts, some information would inevitably pass certain users by.

> "There must be a problem for users and carers because until you need to know, you don't need to know. It's not the sort of thing you know. You know you buy stamps at a post office because you've always had to buy stamps, sorry it is a bit trivial an example but ... I mean I can remember when I was working in [a particular area] and we actually ... all the local organisations [in the area] ... decided to have a day when they would all have a stall and show what they did and ... [this area] is a very defined community, it has only two doctors practices in it, you can draw a boundary round it. And it was not terribly well attended at all and I think we all realised that until people need to know something like that, they don't know how to begin to frame the question. And then of course what we realised - what we needed to do was that everybody that somebody might ask should know about everything else." (Local Government Manager).

Examples of written information included the following: - 'information pamphlets', 'directories', 'guides to services', 'newsletters' and other relevant 'policy documents' for instance the 'Childrens' Service Plan' and the 'Community Care Plan'. Other references included 'Equal Opportunities' and 'Health and Safety' policies.

> "Actually the other thing ... you may be interested in ... we produced an information directory which goes out to every family when their child gets registered, and it was produced with users in mind; so it's quite simple. It's

> alphabetical and it is a guide to where to go to for services and what services may be available. It's more of a 'this is where ... I know a man who can', sort of thing; this is where to go and they'll tell you the information you want. Because we just recognise that if we try to do too much: a) people don't read things; ... and b) they go out of date so quickly. That's updated about once a year, through social services, so it's in like a loose page format." (Local Government Manager).

All local government respondents were also keen to ensure that published information was user-friendly, user-specific - (not generic but addressed to the particular client group - i.e. the 'elderly', 'children' etc), accessible, available, interesting and readable (either in large print or Braille for the elderly or visually impaired or in different languages for service users who were literate in a language other than English). Although most local government managers recognised that they had not as yet attained this goal, they were emphatic about their commitment to 'working towards' it.

> "... what we've tried to do is actually make it interesting for people to read so that it goes out to all voluntary groups, it goes out to a huge number of people in the area, that are actually users or providers ... and across all the client groups ... . Well we can now publish and are much more open about what's available. So I think the benefit to them is that they now know what the range of services are, and how we're providing them by area and they can see through things like documents like this here, which we've tried to make user-friendly, you know, what we are saying is happening, so that they can check whether it's happening for them. So I don't know if you want me to say any more about that, but I think it's in general terms, I would say that that is the main benefit." (Local Government Manager).

Although clearly not as prevalent in the relationship between the partners and users as in the voluntary-statutory relationship, dialogue, discussion and consultation were (in addition to written publications), considered to be important for ensuring user accountability.

5.6 User Accountability - Opportunities for Consultation and Dialogue

Most respondents were concerned with making sure that service users were kept informed, listened to, and had the opportunity to express their views wherever possible. They felt that accountability needed to be looked at in terms of the extent to which the sectors facilitated people to comment, informed and educated them about 'what to ask for' and 'how to ask for it' thereby forcing the policy makers and service deliverers to account to them. In addition to 'just being around, friendly, welcoming, available and accessible to

users', they provided the following as examples of formal and informal accountability opportunities.

- Writing to, visiting, or having meetings with individual users and in certain circumstances their carers, informing them of potential changes and asking for their feedback and comments (positive and negative).

> "... we actually write to people and say 'we have to change this and this is the reason why. And if you want to comment about it, do let us know, and someone will come and see you, or write to the voluntary agencies and they will lobby on your behalf, or whatever'. I think that our network is more effective because we have a good communications sort of policy, and we try and target as widely as possible whenever we do think that something - like the domiciliary charging policy - you know, that was quite contentious at one stage, but we had obviously to minimise the effect it was going to have on our clients so everyone had a visit from a care management assistant, or assistant care manager. So they had a personal visit and that included carers or, nominated - chief carers as it were. So where we have very frail people we always try to target the carer as well, the main carer, and I think the philosophy is that we try to do it right. I'm not saying that we get it right, but the point is that we try to communicate in advance of doing something that might affect somebody ... significantly, so in some senses it minimises perhaps some of the complaint process or the anxiety levels and people know that because we're going to talk about change they can talk to us a little bit about change." (Local Government Manager).

- Formal and informal meetings with users individually, collectively and or with user representatives.

> "I also informally try and see people occasionally because, as I'm helping to shape the specification for this service, I think it's actually quite important that I have face contact with clients, because although care managers are feeding into the process, they're not actually receiving the service and whilst they can give me a lot of information, I think it's actually just important occasionally to say 'Hello, how are you? and what do you really think of what's going on?' But because of my heavy schedule, I have to say that I've only managed I think five visits last year to clients and this year I've only managed two, I think." (Local Government Manager).

- Informal chats with users - face to face.

> "... I meet almost every user every week ... make a point of being at the front office during the busiest times like in the morning and in the late afternoon when people are coming and going, so that if they want to see me they can. I shout 'good morning and good evening' to them as they walk past. I make a point of doing that. I think it is really important, that they can come and talk to me." (Voluntary Sector Manager).

- At user and carer forums/fora.

> "Through the development of user forums for example, it is a way of allowing people to say "well how are you doing this?""(Local Government Manager).

Managers also said that they also tried to ensure that there were plenty of opportunities where users could build up their confidence. They attempted to support users in raising issues they may be concerned that others would think of as 'silly'.

Other instances of formal and informal accountability opportunities included the following.

- Coffee mornings, support or representative group, carer evenings or chance meetings.

> "We try here to have coffee mornings for the parents to come, without staff or with one staff and to talk about items which they are concerned about, worried about, and give them hopefully enough confidence to start to put these on the agendas. We'll support them to put it on. They may think it's daft or silly but let's discuss it. Hopefully, it's given them confidence to put it on." (Voluntary Sector Manager).

- Public meetings - although these were perceived by most local government managers to be a very expensive, logistically difficult and fairly ineffective way of consulting people.

> "The public meetings that we have are few and far between because of just that, the logistics of setting something up. It is expensive, but if [we] wanted to get real consultation (and it's something that I have a particular interest in) ... we need to have a much more peripatetic approach." (Local Government Manager).

- Meetings where purchasers and providers were present, such as - 'executive support groups', 'working groups', 'policy groups', 'assessment panels', 'reviews', 'open days' and at 'management/advisory committees', 'celebrations', 'festivals', and 'special events or days'.

> "... it is also agreed that there should be a user representation on the committee which it hadn't had before, so really right from early on after about the first couple of committee meetings I went to. There then is a mother who uses the resource who comes now to committee meetings. I am much more comfortable with that than how it was." (Local Government Manager).

> "Parents: certainly, because [the voluntary organisation's] always had a well established group to get parents' views heard through the advisory group and so on. They also have parents on the assessment panel who approve new carers. They have a direct input there ... Carers: again it's the same. They are given the

> opportunity to raise or voice anything direct themselves through their forum (which is the carers' 'support group') as well as on the assessment panel. ... Children: I think the only formal route is through the child care reviews, but I'm aware [the voluntary organisation] do have open days, celebrations and special festivals, etc, which include children." (Local Government Manager).

- Voluntary sector providers' own and or the local authority's complaints procedures, although it remains unclear how much users are encouraged to use them.

> "We have, we have to have a complaints procedure. We actually call it 'hearing the customers' view' on the basis that we would like to know when people think we have done things right, or where they have got a point of view that we think we ought to hear. ... I can't guarantee that every care manager, always tells every client, in every circumstance. But it exists because it is quite difficult, if anybody indicates that there are views that they want to make known and they don't just want to make them known to the individual worker, then there should be a procedure because then it goes beyond the individual." (Local Government Manager).

> "... one of the very first jobs I did with this project, which was before the service agreement came in, was to investigate a complaint from a service user and it was before the project had got its own complaints procedure, which is really how I came to be asked to investigate it. The user had got a complaint that she had tried to progress with the [voluntary sector manager] and didn't - wasn't satisfied with the response ... I was given the task to do, via the commissioning unit at County Hall. I think that [the] chair probably spoke to the director of social services who then filtered it down through to me. So it was a very interesting way of it being highlighted right from the start for me that you must have a particular procedure and since that time the [service] has both set up or taken on board the [voluntary organisation's own] ... complaint procedure which is very full and I have a copy of it." (Local Government Manager).

5.7 Facilitating User Participation

Most local government managers reported that at the various meetings they attended, they attempted to encourage users to feel comfortable to speak. Many also described trying to foster user involvement by offering informal 'support' and, 'advice' and some even saw their role in terms of coaching and mentoring.

> "... a lot of it is about us trying to promote people's ability to participate ..." (Local Government Manager).

Others said that they would often find that at such meetings users often asked questions that needed to be raised, in terms of ensuring accountability. If however for any reason they were not asked, managers reported that they were obliged, in their 'surrogate client' role, to make sure that on behalf of users they asked questions and checked that safeguards and monitoring mechanisms were in place.

> "Well on behalf of the service users ... we are purchasing the services and therefore ... although they are experts I think we have a role in monitoring their quality of services ... I feel very strongly about my responsibilities towards the kids to ensure that the services that are available are used to their best." (Local Government Manager).

In addition, both sectors' attempts to facilitate user participation at consultation meetings included:

- ensuring that users' care costs (for relatives - children or elderly parents) and travel costs were being met in order for them to be able to attend;
- providing interpreters (if necessary);
- conferring official status on users attending the advisory meetings, for instance 'parent adviser' and
- ensuring that meetings took place at mutually convenient times and locations.

In sum, the contracting process had led to a measure of both clarity and understanding between the sectors. There was also an increase in the awareness of users about services and their entitlements, and efforts towards the establishment of more client-focussed and accessible services. Although managers from both sectors underlined their commitment to user accountability, which they described as embodied in the contract or service level agreement, they recognised that the establishment of a new culture can be both complex and take time. Accountability to service users was further ensured through: (a) enabling and attempts to facilitate user participation at meetings; (b) the provision of information which was marketed in various ways; and (c) opportunities for consultation.

5.8 Barriers to Ensuring Effective Accountability to Users

All respondents had a number of apprehensions about the barriers to ensuring effective accountability to users, which were present in both sectors. These have been grouped into

the following categories: user choice; user involvement - user representativeness, user preferences and resource constraints; being accountable to potential users; and managers' views about users' anxieties.

5.8.1 User Choice

As far as most local government managers were concerned there were three key issues in relation to user choice. These pertained to the lack of competition, the conflict between needs and wants and the compulsory nature of some services.

First, as long as there is little competition and few alternative service providers to choose from, users cannot leave the service they are currently receiving and choose a more appropriate one or even say what they really feel.

> "... I think until we get to the stage where we can give service users a choice about whether they want to use [the voluntary organisation] or a similar local authority provision, I don't think we can expect service users to say, you know, what are the good things and what are the bad things of those two services." (Local Government Manager).

Related to the first point, the second issue was about the possibility of conflict between the needs and wants of different users of the same service. For example, if the wishes of one service user (who is unhappy with the service that is being offered and because of the lack of other options has no choice but to use it), are pitted against those of another, (who is this service user's carer and is desperate for a break) this may pose a conundrum for all parties. In such situations, although there is a dilemma in terms of whose preferences should be given priority, the service user or the carer, the local government manager being interviewed thought that the purchaser and provider organisations would *"generally take a pragmatic view"*. She added *"... the fact is, that if the daughter [is] on her way to a nervous breakdown, somebody may have to compromise somewhere ...."* (Local Government Manager). In this case, the bottom line seemed to be that since it is not possible to please everyone all the time, then unfortunately someone would have to be disappointed.

> "I would defend client choice to the end. If this place ain't for you then this place ain't for you. There may not be many other choices instead of it and I think what would make it more difficult is, if I as the user know that this is not

> the right place for me but there isn't anywhere else, and my carer is stressed out of her mind and needs me to be somewhere else for a few days ... I'm sorry but those are the situations that are the biggest conflicts ... They are about the wishes of the user and the needs of the carer. ... some users can understand and appreciate and see that this may not be what they like, but it might be what is best in the circumstances as those are, and they will go along with it because it will help them (their carer), but some can't." (Local Government Manager).

Third, some users may have been 'coerced' into having the service. Reasons for such coercion include 'poverty', and legal protection for children or for those with treatment needs in terms of 'mental health'. For this category of users the services were compulsory - they had no choice and were compelled to use them.

> "We are paid to be here. A lot of the children and families don't have an option. They have to come here sometimes, because it's part of the child protection contract." (Voluntary Sector Manager).

5.8.2 User Involvement - User Representativeness, User Preferences and Resource Constraints

Managers, particularly in the voluntary sector, were concerned about how to ensure accountability to all or most users. They had two main concerns about user involvement and accountability. The first was related to both the small numbers of users involved in consultative meetings and their 'representativeness'. These people were inevitably unrepresentative of all users, since through the existing mechanisms and structures, only a 'tiny minority' of users can actually have an input to the process. This minority is only likely to be the more 'able', vocal, and often the 'same' people. Other users lacking 'formal communication skills', or the very 'frail', 'vulnerable', 'disabled', 'young' or 'shy' are unlikely to participate. All expressed the view that although it is important and even vital to involve users, in practice it is extremely complex and difficult for many and various reasons.

Moreover, one local government manager echoed concerns expressed by his peers, when he stated that everyone was having to 'grapple' and 'struggle' with the challenge of user participation and involvement. Since to date a comprehensive system for ensuring that all service users' views are taken on board has not been developed, it remains almost impossible to ensure accountability to all. At best, sometimes all managers can hope for, is

that user representatives hear about and pass on everyone's views – whether satisfied or dissatisfied.

> "I'm not sure how well the steering group works in terms of the parents because they've only got two or three [people] which isn't very many. One of the problems with trying to get the parents involved is that the concept is brilliant, you know, but it is very, very difficult in practice often, to get parents as involved as one would wish, for a whole variety of reasons. Whether they are representative of all users, I would suspect not, unless there is a mechanism for them to feed back to all the other users and I don't think. We're struggling with this sort of issue in the wider sense as well ... everyone's needs are so different then unless you've got a very, very comprehensive system of getting everybody's views, which clearly isn't physically possible and with very clearly stated needs then ... I don't know, I can't really think how ... I'm accountable in the sense that we have a responsibility to put the child first and foremost ... and it is a constant balancing act ... it's none too easy, particularly with kids who don't have formal communication skills ..." (Local Government Manager).

> "[the service users' representative] ... seems to represent - well yes [she] does represent - a group of very satisfied users. On the other hand, does [she] get to hear about the dissatisfied users? I would hope she does, or other people on the user group I hope that they do." (Local Government Manager).

> "It's always the same parents who come along to things, you've probably met that, the articulate ... although one of the ladies you'll meet tomorrow is quite nervous, and we're very pleased that she's come on and she's actually speaking in the group ..." (Voluntary Sector Manager).

The second concern had two aspects in terms of achieving a balance between user preferences and resource constraints. Firstly, as each user is unique, their individual needs are likely to be different. Managers were perplexed by how a balance can be secured between the wants of some users, the needs of other users and the demands of yet others, particularly since some users may demand more than others, while others may actually require more.

> "Well I suppose there are two extremes, people who feel they've paid taxes all their lives and they shouldn't have to contribute to anything ... to people who think that it is disgusting, it's shameful to have to ask and will soldier on in awful circumstances till they are beyond any reasonable sort of level of help, and only dire intervention will achieve anything. You'll have met the same comments everywhere I expect, but certainly so many people cope with such difficult circumstances, frail husbands looking after frail wives, stressed daughters doing what they can ..." (Local Government Manager).

Secondly, they were concerned about opening 'Pandora's Box' in relation to achieving a balance between what users may need, with what the sectors are able to offer.

> "One of the other achievements is … I think is how we involve service users within the development of services. Because it works both ways; I mean, people can become very demanding and say 'we want this, we want that' but they also need to know that we do have restraints and those restraints are the level of staffing, the level of funding, the building we're in at the moment, just some of the things; but they need to have an understanding of how it works from our point of view as well." (Voluntary Sector Manager).

> "... I think [ensuring a balance between user preferences and what the sectors are able to offer is about the] … perception of the person and it is [about] feedback … it is the whole quality cycle ... maybe not enough providers are quite clear about the service that they are providing or the standards to which they will provide it. Maybe if those are set out quite clearly [at the beginning] then people ... taking on a service would know what the [organisation] ... is providing and what they can expect. So they can say, well okay, I know it doesn't meet all my needs, but nevertheless I'll still take it on. And again, if ... an organisation is seeking all the time the views of its users and developing its standards, it should be keeping fairly up with what its service users want. It should always be evaluating what it's doing." (Local Government Manager).

For example, an increasing regulatory environment can place restrictions in relation to service delivery and affect accountability to users. As can be seen from the following quote, one user's seemingly reasonable request could not be accommodated in one instance because of one voluntary sector worker's interpretation of European Community Health and Safety directives and regulations. The service user had recently been allowed to go home from hospital on condition that she received home care services. The service user was recovering from major surgery.

> "... there is an awful lot that they don't want to do and obviously can't do because they have got their own [rules and regulations] ... I realise this is difficult but I mean for instance ... I don't know if I am extra fussy but I was ill for a long time before I went into hospital and I hadn't been able to do a lot of housework. When I said 'oh could you clean the windows?' she [the service deliverer said she] is not allowed to clean the windows ... I left it. I realised that I would have to do it myself. ... The other thing was ... I've got a very .. I've got a porch and all the leaves blow in and I said "could [she] sweep, the leaves out of the porch?" you see because it looks untidy ... she said she was not supposed to do anything outside, [but] because it was just the porch she said "alright then" and she did it for me ... I wouldn't expect her to do gardening and what not. As I said, out of the kindness of her heart, she did it for me but I would think perhaps ... I just feel that if somebody was really incapacitated and these things would sort of ... [cause problems for service users]." (USER).

Although on this occasion the home help obliged, the service user was left with the feeling that she would probably not be able to ask for this to be done in the future. The service user was concerned about this both in relation to herself and other potential users. She felt that she needed help with certain things because she was incapacitated. If she didn't she could have done it herself. That was the whole point.

5.8.3 Being Accountable to Potential Users

Another collective concern that respondents from both sectors had was that the sectors were not accountable to potential users of their services. Although they were aware that they knew very little about these potential users of services, all local government respondents reported that they did not really know how to measure such unmet need. This was brought into sharp focus for one local government manager who discovered that a change in the local authority's organisational structure led to a substantial increase in the number of referrals that they were getting. This was found to be so even after having made an allowance for demographic factors.

From this, it became clear that under the previous structure, potential service users were not only hidden but they were actually prevented from entering the system to become actual service users.

> "We really know so little about all the people who are out there whose needs we aren't meeting but knowing what we are trying to provide ... if we were providing a service for everybody who might need it we don't really know how big it would look. I mean we are getting better at it, but it is quite difficult knowing what it ... the real dimensions - the need of most carers and clients actually is ... I think one of the things we have been aware since we've had a team just for older people is how big our referral rate is and it isn't like the referral rate from the generic teams was, and all of this ... people haven't suddenly developed stressed carers in last two years or if these have then there were people like this always about. I know what is happening demographically. You know what's happening to the older population, but even that is not what's happening to the number of people coming to us for help ..." (Local Government Manager).

A number of managers and a couple of users referred to certain ethnic minority groups as some people they were aware that were not currently being provided for.

> "I think one of the other weaknesses generally, and it's something I've been doing quite a lot of sort of personal study on, is actually really trying to address the needs of the minority ethnic groups ... in fact the number of services being used by the minority ethnic groups is very minimal, and yet we know there is a need out there, but clearly we're not providing the services which are wanted. And I think there has been quite rightly quite a lot of anger on behalf of the minority groups." (Local Government Manager).

5.8.4 Managers' Views about Users' Anxieties

Respondents from both sectors were aware of user anxieties and preferences. Specifically, they were conscious that some service users could at times experience feelings of intimidation and lack of trust. In addition, some local government respondents were concerned about the paternalistic, non-statutory nature of some of the charitable organisations in the voluntary sector. These issues are discussed in the following subsections.

5.8.4.1 Users' Feelings of Intimidation and Lack of Trust

Despite the public and voluntary sector managers' efforts to facilitate user participation in meetings, managers felt that users did not 'shape the issues'. In addition, they thought users may perceive the meetings to be alienating, too business like, run in a way that excluded them and too tightly chaired. In addition, they may 'lack confidence', 'feel they are inarticulate' or be 'intimidated' by the presence of 'too many professionals', or 'formalities'.

> "I don't think parents shape any of the issues. I think that the management committee is a little bit too rigid and too structured, in that the chair of the management committee sets the agenda with the centre manager [various people are given a slot] ... then there's five minutes left for any other business so ... because I think the way the meetings are run at the moment, they are very formal and people only talk when they - the impression I get - is that they only talk when they feel that it is appropriate to do so." (Voluntary Sector Manager).

Some service users may not even really wish to participate. This was thought to be the case in relation to some elderly users in particular. In some cases service users would really rather prefer the professionals just got on with things.

> "... how you cope with people who are saying, 'look you are professional and I trust what you say just get on and do it, please', and you are thinking - well how do I indicate really we would like you to have a think about this ... the

> trouble is it can be an excuse for doing nothing. The fact that doing something is difficult could be an excuse for not doing it." (Local Government Manager).

Moreover, it may be difficult to ensure accountability even to those users who have elected to use the service, as they may not know who to talk to. Even if they do know who to talk to, in addition to their concern about losing the one and often only service for which they may be desperate, it may not always be possible to ensure that they are able to offer their opinion in a confidential setting. Users may have also been unable to reflect how they really feel for several other reasons. For instance, based on their past experience they may not be able to trust that things will change even if they do say anything. This can lead to a great deal of anger and frustration. One manager was particularly concerned about the experiences of people with disabilities and ethnic minorities in relation to this point.

> "I think there is a lack of trust from a number of service users with the department. I know that this is particularly so with people with a physical disability, I'm talking about a very able, intelligent group of people, and also from the minority ethnic communities, and I've been told of this not only by them, but I've been told of this also by staff who've really tried to do a lot of work and have done a lot of good work, but there is still an enormous amount of anger and it's, you know, you keep on talking to us, we keep on telling you things, and you never do anything different. So what are you talking to us again for? What's new and what's different? You take our time, and I've actually heard one person say, what is it, it's your white problem so you solve it. Don't come and ask us any more. In a way, if you go on talking to people and asking them what they want, and you never make any changes and you never listen, what do you expect?" (Local Government Manager).

Service users might also be: - too frightened to complain; afraid that any comments they do make would not be kept confidential; and fearful about jeopardising their relationship with those providing the service. This could manifest itself in two ways. Users may be concerned about ruining their relationship with: (a) the individual delivering the service (someone they may usually get along well with); and (b) the organisation providing the service. In addition, they may feel anxious about making a 'fuss' over something they feel that perhaps they should not, especially since they really do not want to cause any trouble. Moreover, users may be concerned that their feedback would be perceived as criticism and their comments resented, even 'taken out' (at a later date) on the person receiving the service which could be them, their parent/relative, or their child. They may also fear losing the service.

> "... I think we check whether we are doing it right, quite regularly. But it's who to check with? I mean, if all the feedback you're getting is pretty positive, sometimes you wonder if people are just saying it because they're getting a service and if they knock it maybe they won't get a service. You feel that sometimes. Again, I've got no answers ... A parent might come in, and it's trying to get into that, and they might say "Oh everything's rosy, everything's great", but maybe they're not 100% happy all the time or whenever, but are frightened to say anything, because they don't want to lose the place." (Voluntary Sector Manager).

5.8.4.2 Charity

Some local government respondents had a couple of specific concerns about some charities. One concern was what a few referred to as the 'benevolent', and 'non-statutory' nature of 'charity'. This may have meant that for some users, rather than regarding the services as a 'right' to which they were entitled, they might feel they should be 'grateful for what they receive'.

> "... The service users are still very much on the receiving end of something that because it ...[is] ... non-statutory there is a sense of 'well we should be grateful for all we are getting'. And isn't that always the dilemma with again a charity really - the public does not have a right to that service. ... They don't have a right to it, so they will always regard it as the icing on the cake won't they? By its nature ... 'we have ... got to be grateful and not be overly critical of what we're getting'. That is a shame and I guess that is why I think there is quite a responsibility on the professionals involved to ensure that there is some questions asked and some safe guards built in ... The committee is sort of paternalistic really and [so are] the people who are on it ..." (Local Government Manager).

As one user said, she did not want to feel that she had to beg or fight in order to receive the service:

> "I would want to feel that I am not having to go to beg to the [voluntary organisation] for placements for my daughter ... [the problem is that] ... not many parents ... actually fight. It seems to be the odd few who seem to be fighting all the way for these play schemes and I am getting a bit fed up of it to be truthful now ..." (USER).

Another accountability concern for many from both sectors was 'outdated thinking', 'formal' and 'paternalistic structures'. These have to be addressed and a change in culture initiated to ensure real advocacy and proper accountability.

> "... [the users'] frailty is increasing. They're becoming much more aware of what their rights are. So I don't know if that - in terms of my thinking I just feel that we need to upgrade the modernity and the overall thinking of some of the agencies. Their culture has to change from within first before I think we can get true response in terms of advocacy and discussion." (Local Government Manager).

> "[I] ... would like to see it changed and be more informal, but you see we moved it from headquarters to here to be more informal you know ... but it still has that ... but it's something fundamental about all the meetings that come out of headquarters, they're all ... they all have that sort of flavour about them, do you know what I mean?" (Voluntary Sector Manager).

Linked to this was the issue of how some charities portrayed images which 'played on' a 'dependency model' of poverty and disability. Although such imagery, of for instance poor, downtrodden individuals, in need of help from those who are more fortunate, may raise a large voluntary income for charities, some local government managers were concerned about accountability to those who were being portrayed as using the services.

5.9 Additional Constraints in Facilitating User Accountability

The voluntary sector's at times inappropriate attitude toward complaints, the public sector's assumptions about voluntary sector consultation with users, and both sectors' lack of resources, were major constraints to ensuring accountability.

5.9.1 Attitudes to Complaints

All voluntary sector respondents reported that although their organisations had complaints procedures, voluntary organisations would not encourage people to use them, as they would be viewed as negative feedback or criticism. Such feedback, whether informal or formal would not be seen as constructive. This attitude was found to be unhelpful by two users of one particular service. They felt the organisational response towards complaints had the effect of shutting the complainant up. They also felt that this response was inappropriate as it left them with the feeling that by complaining, the level, quantity and quality of service they may be offered as a result would diminish.

> "They have said that they felt criticised - that you were criticising - and I have said 'well you shouldn't because ... it is my daughter ... if there is something I am

> not happy with I should be able to speak' ... I think they should ... not feel that parents are criticising. I think parents would then feel that they can actually speak and not worry about what they are saying and not go home and think 'I shouldn't have said that - that could reflect on what respite I am going to get'. 'Cos let us face it ... [addressed to the other respondent] you are going to say nice things so that they are not going to lose you your place ... some parents do do that though don't they?" ... (USER).

On the other hand, a number of voluntary sector managers did not take the same view as their organisations. Rather, they gave the impression that, like their local government colleagues, they viewed complaints as a healthy sign - 'a way of improving the services' and ensuring they 'didn't become complacent'. The general belief seemed to be that by ensuring that proper systems and procedures are in place and followed, complaints can be addressed, patterns detected and appropriate organisational responses found.

> "I know that certainly in my department, on the service development side, we don't see complaints as a negative thing, we actually see it as a positive way of improving services. ... Because I think we run the risk of becoming complacent if we actually don't take on board - even the smallest complaint has to be logged. Every agency that we use has to have a day book, so they record every telephone conversation that comes in from a client, or a carer ... or a care assistant. And when I do an audit, for example, I always go and look at the day book and I pick up on one or two things and then I do a trail through, to see what the response was and what ... record has been kept about their response to the query. Now that is as far as I can go for the majority of clients and then I would maybe see a pattern emerging with a particular organisation, and that's when I really can start to say 'Look, we've obviously got this wrong in this area for these clients, let's try and put it right'. Now that's the only practical thing that I can do, at that level. I think I have gone off on a tangent again haven't I? [NO]. ... I think as far as social services are concerned and sort of my section, alright, there is a commitment to look at complaints, to actually look at the way that services are provided." (Local Government Manager).

By regarding users' comments and feedback as valuable, positive and even beneficial managers from both sectors hoped that besides encouraging users to say how they really felt, their contributions would enable the sectors to develop more appropriate and responsive services and policies.

5.9.2 Public and Voluntary Sector Resources - Time, Human and Fiscal

All local government and some voluntary sector respondents described their lack of resources - time, human and financial as major constraints to user accountability. Even if

mechanisms were in place all managers (but particularly public sector respondents) were extremely pushed for time to facilitate and monitor the process.

> **Question:** "ARE YOU SATISFIED THAT THE ORGANISATION TAKES SUFFICIENT NOTICE OF ITS USERS' VIEWS?" **Response:** "I think it is something that we need to work on. [Laughing] It's a relatively new thing isn't it to consult users ... and I think it is a very difficult thing and because of the way in which we're set up - really lacking in manpower - it's something that I think is left because we just don't have the manpower to do it ... on a very small scale I did actually do a user survey. ... But I couldn't do that because I just haven't got the time." (Voluntary Sector Manager).

> **Question:** "IN TERMS OF CONSULTING WITH CONSUMERS - AS YOU'VE SAID IT'S A VERY NEW THING - SO HAVE YOU GOT ANY IDEAS ABOUT HOW YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE THAT DEVELOP WITHIN [THIS AREA] IF YOU HAD THE RESOURCES?" **Response:** "If I had the resources I would like to do more questionnaires and get feedback from [users] ... I think it would be useful if we had occasional meetings with users. But I really can't see that [our organisation has the resources] ... - in the fairly long term [we] must have the resources to do that." (Voluntary Sector Manager).

> "It has been extremely difficult to find time for it - the number of things that we are being required to do a lot of things fall to the bottom of the list." (Local Government Manager).

5.9.3 Public Sector Assumptions about User Consultation

With the exception of one manager who referred to voluntary organisations' user consultation processes as a 'grey area that we haven't tackled at all yet', nearly all local government respondents assumed that voluntary organisations consulted with users on behalf of purchasers, 'lobbied purchasers' and 'advocated on behalf of users'. Many also believed that by liaising with their 'partners' they were to a certain extent 'taking users' views into account'. However based on observation and the analysis of the interviews with voluntary sector managers and users, there was no specific evidence to support this assumption.

5.10 Current Initiatives for Ensuring User Accountability

All managers from both sectors said in one way or another that, above all, they were trying to respond to individual need. Examples of initiatives were:

- 'an audit of need' although several admitted they were not sure how to do it and were seeking money to engage help (Voluntary Sector Manager);
- 'devising a leaving questionnaire' about the service users have received and whether there was anything providers could be doing differently (Voluntary Sector Manager);
- 'developing a strategy' for the way the local authority 'consults with and involves service users' in the development and monitoring of services; development of the role of local voluntary organisations as facilitators and 'advocates' on behalf of 'potential' and 'current' users and researching 'past' users' experiences';
- 'development of a user and carer strategy and policy';
- 'talking to users to develop agreed standards for involving them' (Local Government Manager);
- 'a development consultant to heighten awareness about users and carers' (Local Government Manager); and
- 'a Childrens' representation officer' who initially may focus on producing for example 'a leaflet about how children with special needs can complain' (Local Government Manager).

One local government manager observed that to provide services and then ask users what they thought about that service was to 'start from the wrong end'. She considered that the only way to ensure user accountability was by conducting research with specific users with particular needs, find out how to best address them and then provide a service tailored to them.

> "... that's one of the key things that I've been trying to do. What's the best way of involving people? And it's going beyond consultation, I'm not just saying, here's a document, what do you think of it? It's actually saying, you know, we want to look at services for - let me take an example - we want to look at services for black, older people - or we want to look at a service for black, young women with learning disability. How can we find out what kind of service they want? You know, we can't just dig around in the air. What we need to be doing. ... We need to be going to the organisations that represent people with learning disabilities, but even more we need to be going to the families of people who got, for example, a black young female with a learning

> disability to really find out what that family want. And if we do ... if we take the needs - if we take all these different things into account, then in fact what I believe we will do, is we will really ... really get to the heart of what kind of service do we want. Because I think just consulting on, this is the service we want to provide, - what do you think? Starts from the wrong end. I think you've got to start really at the sharp end and really work that out." (Local Government Manager).

This kind of formal initial market research seemed however to be a rare phenomenon.

5.11 Users' Own Concerns about Both Sectors' Accountability to Them

Although there was a lot of documentation available about services and policies, which, on the whole, users welcomed, at times for some users this amounted to information overload. As one service user (a mother of a child with autism) put it to the researcher during coffee 'when trying to care for a child (or parent), sometimes with disabilities, often in addition to juggling the rest of our lives and family commitments, we face a lot of constraints on our time and sometimes it's all we can do to keep afloat' (User - conversation - not transcribed - from notes in the research diary). Whilst users were glad to have information, many reported that they felt overwhelmed by the jargon and that at times they felt they needed an expert to go through everything with them.

> "... I have consulted another voluntary organisation about this. They haven't got back to me yet ... I was told once that social services have got a legal obligation to provide some play provision for children with special needs and they are sort of saying 'we haven't seen this we don't know' but I think I have found it in section 18 [of the Children Act] ... I think ... but I really could do with a professional sitting down and advising ... because some of these things the jargon they use could mean totally the opposite to what I am thinking ..." (User).

Also many users described that in addition to having to research the services and their entitlements (specifically what, where and how to access them), and learning to negotiate their way through the multi-organisational quagmire - with their different structures, systems and cultures, they also had to 'push' and 'fight' to be heard. They described this in terms of having to make their point many times and in many different ways before they felt that it was taken on board. Even then sometimes it wasn't. They thought this might have happened for three reasons. First, users thought that managers felt that views expressed by

users were not representative. Second, certain service users said that they thought that they were perceived to be 'mouthy,' or a 'troublemaker' and as a result were not taken seriously.

> "Well I asked to be involved at first."
>
> **Question:** "YOU ASKED?" **Response:** "I asked and it took a few months before I actually [became involved] ... and I had to keep asking …"
>
> **Question:** "DID YOU - WHY?" **Response:** "I don't know ... I kept asking ... I know I had to actually say three or four times that I would like to go on the steering committee. ... That is something I feel really strongly about so I said 'look I want to be on whatever [the name of the committee is] ... I want to be involved with [it] ... 'and it sort of went quiet and I actually said it again. 'I want to be involved' and the lady - the head one said 'she wants to be involved with it'. So if there's issues that we feel strongly about or decision making I think we ought to be involved more .... I am hoping feedback will come back to me - as usual nothing has ...."
>
> **Question:** "FROM WHAT I AM HEARING, FROM WHAT YOU ARE SAYING, IS THERE IS A LOT OF YOU HAVING TO ...?" **Response:** "Push." (User).

Third, some users felt managers and organisations could not be trusted to take action after having consulted with them.

> "… parents were if you like 'consulted', but nothing that came out of those meetings was ever dealt with or adhered to ... [it was] absolutely terrible because when we did become involved ... we put all our concerns/views at the consultative meetings and nothing happened so what was the point - it was very frustrating." **Question:** "WELL THERE IS `CONSULTATION' AND `CONSULTATION' ISN'T THERE?" **Response:** "Absolutely!" (User).

Some users recognised however, that ensuring accountability to them was a difficult task due in part to the diversity of needs.

> **Question:** "TO WHOM DO YOU FEEL/THINK [THIS ORGANISATION] IS ACCOUNTABLE? ..." **Response:** " … it would be on different levels [depending] on what the issues were wouldn't it? You know - when you say answerable it is a wide thing isn't it?" (User).

Other users acknowledged that certain individuals in both sectors made an effort to have an accountability dialogue with them and encourage their taking part in decision making through for instance the advisory group or similar consultation meetings. However, in spite of the 'enabling' structures and encouraging individuals, users confirmed that managers' concerns about the barriers to user participation and accountability were correct.

Therefore, in addition to users: 'not knowing who to turn to'; 'being scared of losing the service'; 'not being able to articulate their needs' and 'not wishing to ask' - (see section 5.8.4.1) for instance, they lacked confidence, were frightened to disagree and thought they might hurt people's feelings.

> "It is like going back to school." (User A). "I felt like that in the beginning ... I used to be like I ain't used to say boo, you know but ..." (User B) "... there has been some issues - and I sit there and say 'Oh God' because I am too frightened to say ... and ...". **Question:** "WHAT ARE YOU FRIGHTENED OF?" **Response:** "Hurting people's feelings. You know ... I don't like to hurt people's feeling. I feel really guilty ... On Friday I felt like packing it in." (User A).

> "I feel as though I'm an onlooker here still, to be perfectly honest ... It's difficult isn't it? ... I think that, in quite a lot of cases ... you do tend to feel slightly inferior. I mean I look at myself as a parent ... [the voluntary sector manager] reassures me many, many times, that I am more than a parent. In a sense most of us are and what we have to say is important, but ... I mean I do feel that my confidence has grown within [this organisation] ... I have got to know the people a little bit better now ... and I realise that I haven't got to agree with them all the time and I can say my bit, do you know what I mean?" (User).

> "I just didn't agree with some things so I spoke up. I am not sure whether many parents would ... if the parent is still not happy ... and doesn't like to say 'no' - that is the problem - where do they turn to?" (User).

> "We feel because we are the only two mums it is difficult. ... It's very hard to criticise because they are looking after our children ..." (User).

They felt inferior and intimidated not only by the formality, but by the professionals, the power tactics, 'power titles' and certain personalities.

Most reported that they became 'silent', usually after making their initial comment because they had been made to feel inadequate in some way. Some described how they did not say another word sometimes for months or years, whilst others said that they had never spoken again. The reasons given included:

- Some lost and never regained their confidence. Those that did reported that they were 'made to feel' that they had 'said something stupid', or talked 'at an inappropriate time during the meeting', or 'under the incorrect agenda item'.

> " ... at first it is very intimidating ... It's very strange and when somebody makes you very aware that you've not done something right, that tends to shut you up for the next few meetings." (User).

- Others felt they would not be taken seriously because of their accent. 'Theirs are very posh' and mine is 'Black Country'.
- Certain users wondered what input they could really have, since some said they were 'uneducated' or 'ordinary parents' and the professionals were educated and already knew the answers.
- Others wondered about the point of the consultations as they felt that certain managers did not 'really listen' to what they were saying.

> "... that was a conflict ... now it got quite nasty because they kept on 'oh it is only draft and all this' ...but they weren't listening to me and it took me ... I had to go to [an advocate] and they came with me ..." (User).

- Sometimes the user representative was the only person of another race at the meeting and felt isolated, whilst others who did not speak English felt that, even though there was an interpreter present and that people at the meeting were very nice, they would be slowing the meeting down, which would inconvenience everybody.

> "I am not afraid of opening my mouth, if I feel it is necessary. I know not all parents are [able to] ... and not all parents [would] - maybe where English is their second language." (User).

In the case of current and potential service users and carers who did not speak English, a worker with special responsibility for ensuring user consultation and participation was found to be vital to ensuring accountability in one project. After the worker left there was a gap between the organisation and the ethnic minority community particularly those who could not speak English. This resulted in substantial unmet need.

> "... the Asian social worker was ... very good in organising things [since she left the project for another job] [the organisation] is unable to meet the demand from the community ... and the carers are under-utilised. ...[The organisation] needs an Asian social worker because there are a lot of Asians in this borough, who do not speak English very well, if at all. So it is difficult for them to articulate their needs. [The social worker] was very good because she was able to communicate and develop a rapport with many parents ... [The organisation initially] complained that we did not come forward and offer ourselves to be trained as carers but now there are many of us and a large need and now there are many of us carers without work ..." (User). [Translated from Urdu].

Despite the fact that a couple of service users from that group were represented on the advisory committee, as soon as the worker left, the accountability link appeared to break, as the users found it difficult to participate and contribute to the discussions, without her to facilitate that process.

> "I have only been able to attend it twice. It has partly to do with the fact that English is not my first language and everyone speaks English at the meetings ... [They] are very respectful and make a lot of effort with [us]. They asked us about the name [change] of the organisation and involved us in the name changing process quite early ... . We don't know that much about the project. They have given us some literature about the project but that is in English, although my children are at university and can translate. As you know we are not that confident in English. It's not that easy for us to have a conversation in English, although we have some understanding." (User) [Translated from Urdu].

Although the user liaison meetings appeared to be an excellent accountability mechanism in theory, in practice the researcher found in certain cases that they had not been functional for quite some time. One particularly sad illustration of this was when the researcher visited an elderly day care service to specifically interview the user liaison committee members. Unfortunately unbeknown to the manager, who had set up the meeting between the researcher and the user representatives, all were all found to have died several months before.

On the whole, users who were interviewed were fairly positive about the services they were receiving. In general, they said that service providers were 'caring' and 'flexible' and their main complaint appeared to be that although they felt 'lucky' to have the services, there were many other people who were not benefiting because there was so little provision.

In addition, further constraints on facilitating user accountability, were found to be attitudes to complaints - particularly in some voluntary sector organisations - and a lack of public and voluntary sector resources - time, human and fiscal, and public sector assumptions about user consultation.

5.12 Creating a Culture of and Commitment to User Accountability

It was found that users and managers tended to view organisations imbued with an organisational and managerial 'culture of accountability' as 'accountable'. Accountability in these organisations was not solely dependent upon the existing organisational enabling structures, mechanisms and procedures that were in place. Rather, managers in 'accountable organisations', of whatever structure, placed a high priority on and were committed to user accountability. User accountability was not just a matter of involving users in meetings. It was more about 'process' - how managers ensured that users were involved and were made to feel comfortable to approach any member of staff in the organisation. Users were definitely encouraged to know they had rights and to say how they felt. User views were actively sought.

> "... But I feel here that there is such a good rapport between parents and staff anyway. ... Most of the parents take the problems to the staff ..." **Question:** "DO YOU FEEL THAT IF THERE WAS AN ISSUE THAT THEY WOULD DEFINITELY LISTEN?" **Response:** "Oh yes I definitely do". **Question:** "SO THERE IS A GOOD ATMOSPHERE HERE?" **Response:** "Very good ... . If you make a suggestion or say I'd rather this was not on or I'd rather you did not encourage or discourage this it is taken on board." (User).

> "... the support if you have got a problem with anything you can just talk to the co-ordinator and she will just try her best to sort anything out ... we actually had equal opportunities - everyone is entitled to their own say - everyone has got rights - as individuals, so yes very much so ... basically if you are upset or you don't want to do something or something like that you are not happy and you just go and see [any member of staff] ... anything we say she will take it back. ... so she asks us every week ..." (User).

Voluntary sector managers' focus was on the whole ethos and atmosphere of the organisation. They cited: being 'informal', 'being democratic'; ensuring 'equal opportunities'; encouraging positive and negative feedback and advocacy on behalf of users; not 'being afraid of complaints or admitting failure'; encouraging a climate of 'trust' and continuously evaluating what they were doing as vital to creating this accountability culture. Accountable organisations were seen as listening organisations.

> "So it's creating the atmosphere where parents can come in and say 'I'm not happy with this'. And I think that's the hardest part, it's creating that atmosphere, to get the parents, to get that trust where they can come in and criticise. Because at the end of the day we're seen as the professionals, and there has been times when staff see themselves as professionals and I'm saying

> 'You are the professionals, you can't do your job unless the parents do theirs'. Team work. So that's the hardest part, it's building up that trust." (Voluntary Sector Manager).

> "If I'm not providing a good service, ... listening to them, listening to what they want, well then why am I here? Because I need to be hearing what they're saying ... but ultimately it's the children that I'm accountable to, in a sense, because ... the children come here for a purpose and a reason, and if I'm just doing 'unto them', if I'm abusing them, then I'm not better than ... their parent [who is abusing them] ... how can I be expected to try and work with the parent? Although we work with the parents, [and] the children, especially sometimes being advocates for the children, especially when it comes to ... going through case reviews, or child protection issues. People saying "Oh well we've spoken to the parents", but no - I'm concerned about this child, what are you going to do about the child? OK I know you're working with the mum or the dad, but what are you doing about the child? So ... an advocate making referrals on their behalf ... at the end of the day I'm accountable to the child." (Voluntary Sector Manager).

> "Accountability is from the organisation - to the parents and from the carers to the parents. Everybody has their own role/responsibilities we know our role and are fulfilling our responsibilities. If there are any complaints from either the parents or carer they all approach the organisation to sort out problems." (User) [Translated from Urdu].

Some service users (particularly parents, children and young people) were involved in networks. Being involved in networks gave users support and confidence, authority and legitimacy to ensure that organisations were accountable to them. Being networked enabled users to realise that the service purchasers and providers were not working in a vacuum and that other organisations would hear what was going on. This would help to foster an ambience of accountability.

> "We are being listened to more now." **Question:** "WHY'S THAT THEN, WHY DO YOU THINK YOU ARE BEING LISTENED TO?" **Response:** "I think because we've got our own support groups outside of this, [she - indicating to the other respondent] has got her support group, I've got my support group. And we both attend a regional support group of parents, so we do tend to voice our opinions. Issues are brought up. You know if we've got an issue we voice it to the parents and then we come back here. If we feel that there's an issue we'll discuss it there - we'll bring it back ... yes ... Fifteen parents there, which is good ... I'm the chair person of the parent support group for leisure services ... I'm on different committees that type of thing ... So we always know what's going on in one of the groups ..." (User A). **Question:** "AND YOU SUPPORT ONE ANOTHER?" **Response:** "Yes we do." (User B).

Managers in organisations for which user accountability was central were not only acutely aware of user networks, but also some were also involved in some of them. So these managers realised that when some users spoke at meetings, they were very often not just speaking for themselves, but were in fact also representing others' views.

> "... I mean you always get the same group of parents who want to contribute or you tend to, but yes, there were certainly other people's ideas coming through ...." (Voluntary Sector Manager).

> "Well, we have a 'representatives' committee' ... from all of the voluntary users of the group meet four times a year here and talk with [the co ordinator] about all of our fears, about the ways things are happening ... how the groups are working. She also enlightens us as to things that are going on ... with regards to special needs play schemes, education, things that she's found out that she thinks we might not have found out. We're then able to go back to our groups and inform our groups about these things that are happening. ... we've all I think, all the voluntary groups have found that very useful. And then from the reps' group, I was asked to sit on the management committee. ... Maybe that's why she asked me to talk to you ... We learn a lot from each other here. As a group I don't think we make a 'group' complaint or suggestion. We tend to do it as individuals. But within the newsletter, we share what we have done ...." (User).

Even when users were not 'networked' (and this was true particularly of most of the elderly and young people with learning disabilities in the study) their views were still considered to be of importance and a valuable contribution in itself by accountable organisations.

5.13 Users' and Managers' Ideas for Ensuring Accountability to Users in the Future

Ideas for ensuring accountability to users in future from managers in both sectors and users included: 'a users' conference'; 'development of the advocacy role on behalf of users as a recognised role of voluntary sector workers and managers'; 'making formal meetings more informal'; ensuring space for 'opportunities for questions or issues users or user representatives wish to raise within meetings'; 'availability of minutes of meetings on a notice board'; organisational mechanisms for facilitating user networking; payment and or expenses and training and support for service users.

> "Give us some money. (Chuckling)." **Question:** "FOR WHAT?" **Response:** "Pay us for what we do. Talk to parents and find their views and reporting back." (User A). "When you say give us some money - it is like the telephone

> bills we have, I mean the amount of phone calls I have to make concerning here ... you know my husband goes mad" (User B). "I have to pay £6.00 per week telephone stamps towards me phone bill." **Question:** "WHAT ELSE?" **Response:** "Well transport as well - I pick up people who lives far out ... but wants to come, so I pick people up ..." (User A). "But this is about here ... they will give transport for here ... I think we need more training on how to get grants and things like that. We did venture into it. They gave us these thick books, didn't they, and said go through it ..." (User B).
>
> "I think we could do with going on courses - assertiveness courses, [it is] difficult to speak [to] ... the agenda and everything." (User).

According to most public sector managers, a key challenge in ensuring user accountability in the future would be in making sure that both sectors will really be able to keep listening and ensuring that they get an 'accurate view'. If they were to become complacent both the policy makers and deliverers would be in danger of not ensuring that the services were relevant, responsive and flexible. If voluntary organisations deliver what users want, users will inevitably support them and ensure that local authority purchasers know about it.

> "... I think voluntary organisations have got to keep their fingers on the pulse of what is actually happening nationally. ... [telephone ringing drowns out voice of respondent]. ... Maybe they've got to listen to their users as well ... they've got to be providing what users want. Because if they're providing what users want then users are going to be saying to the authority, 'look, they're doing what I want so please pay for it'. But I still think there is this vital role for voluntaries to keep that spirit of independence and still try and look further ahead and beyond, but they will only do that by listening to users as well." (Local Government Manager).

Managers from both sectors were also concerned and proactively thinking about the issue of how to ensure accountability to service users. At the time of the study, a couple of local authority and charity managers were beginning to try to develop an understanding of the experiences of users. All local government sector managers were beginning to try to apply a number of approaches with regard to starting to take responsibility for non-accountability to users.

5.14 Summary and Conclusion

Despite the changes, for example: - users making more demands on policy makers and service deliverers; services being more needs led than before contracting; managers trying

to increase and facilitate user participation in decision-making about services that affected them, a number of difficulties were encountered in ensuring user accountability.

Local government and some voluntary sector managers' concerns about the barriers to ensuring accountability to users included issues around the themes of: user choice, user representativeness, user needs, and trust and confidentiality between the users and the service deliverers. Other concerns related to the difficulties in managing user preferences and resource constraints in an increasing regulatory environment; the non-statutory nature of charities and not knowing who the potential users of services may be.

Users' own concerns about the services they were receiving included having too much information and the need to learn to navigate their way around complex organisational structures and systems. They also described: their lack of confidence and self esteem; their feelings of intimidation and isolation and about being labelled as agitators; having to fight and push their way through organisational defences before they were heard; negative organisational responses to certain feedback which was perceived as criticism, which users were aware was at times not appreciated. Service users also reported their anxieties in relation to complaining or raising issues of concern. They worried about upsetting service providers as this could lead to anger or retaliation, which could be taken out on them or their parent, or child, at a later date. They were also afraid that if they complained about the only service, for which they were often desperate, it could be withdrawn.

In reality, with one or two notable exceptions, the critical factors of effective dialogue, communication and trust seem to have been significant by their absence in the sectors' relationships with users. Progress towards user accountable services, from either a consumerist perspective (which involves users through finding out about and addressing their needs, as well as checking that they are satisfied), and or a democratic perspective (which involves users in decision-making, as it is assumed to be their right) (Robson and Locke, 1997), was found to be extremely slow and often even non-existent.

Only two service delivery organisations were considered to be accountable to users by both managers and users. This was possible because they had structures in place, which enabled user participation in decision-making and had established an organisational ethos and

management culture of user accountability. They were committed to user accountability as a two-way process, a theme that played itself out across the entire service. User participation in decision-making about policies that affected their lives was regarded as vital in terms of informing professional practice and in relation to improving services. In these organisations, both the positive and negative views of users were considered to be of great value and were supported. Users were not seen as complainants. Concerns shared between managers and users were not considered by managers as an admission of failure. Managers in these organisations were also aware of (and some were even involved in) user networks.

Having drawn out the findings in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, the next chapter will provide a theoretical framework for understanding the accountability relationships between the public sector, the voluntary sector and the service users in the context of POSC. According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), this forms the 'grounded' basis of this thesis.

CHAPTER 6

Theoretical Framework of Accountability in the Context of Purchase of Service Contracting

"In a sense, the Market is like the trout and the Clan like the salmon, each a beautiful, highly specialised species which requires uncommon conditions for survival. In comparison, the Bureaucratic method of control is the catfish - clumsy, ugly, but able to live in the widest possible range of environments and ultimately the dominant species" (Ouchi, 1979: 840).

" ... exit requires nothing but a clear cut either - or decision, voice is essentially an art constantly evolving in new directions ... "(Hirschman, 1970: 43).

"... the industrial network approach may be thought of as making the assumption that economic systems have the properties of a liquid. On the one hand the atoms and molecules do move, and collide, but less quickly than in a gas. On the other hand inter-atomic forces are relatively strong and viscous liquids like glass do have a structure. The movement of individual bodies is constrained by the forces emanating from other bodies close to them. These relationships are strong but not immutable. Such is the picture that we believe best fits many, if not all, economic systems. Unfortunately it seems likely that one other feature of the physical analogy may also be applicable in economic systems. Liquid systems are much more complex to model ... [industrial networks] have always existed in one form or another. They are the result, we believe, of some of the basic characteristics of individuals and the organisations they create ... networks constrain but also offer opportunities; reduce uncertainty and allow specialisation; provide co-ordination but not control" (Axelsson and Easton, 1992: xv).

6.1 Introduction

Drawing on the literature from economics, sociology, political science and organisational behaviour, this chapter constructs a theoretical framework in order to understand accountability relationships from three perspectives - the public sector (in this case the local government purchaser), the voluntary sector (the charity provider) and the service users of 'purchased' or 'contracted out' services. The development of the framework is represented by a series of figures throughout the chapter.

Specifically, it applies four key approaches to conceptualise the operation of and the processes involved in accountability. These are the ideas of: Ouchi (1991; 1980; 1979) - 'Bureaucracies, Markets and Clans'; Axelsson and Easton (1992) - 'Industrial Networks'; Hirschman (1970) - 'Exit and Voice' and Dahl (1957) and Pfeffer, (1992) - 'Power'[9]. These approaches are being combined to conceptualise accountability relationships for the first time.

6.2 Defining the Concepts - Bureaucracy, Market and Clan

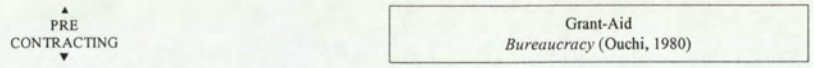
The chapter begins by employing Ouchi's (1991; 1980; 1979) framework of 'bureaucracy, market and clan', to analyse inter-sectoral, inter-organisational and user accountability relationships, both prior to as well as after, the introduction of purchase of service contracting (POSC). Accountability relationships between the sectors and the service users are analysed using these three mechanisms for mediating transactions. Under certain specific conditions, each of these mechanisms offers the most efficient means for a mediation of transactions between parties. Put more simply, each offers the lowest transaction costs – (i.e. the activities that refer to the costs of managing a transaction). This includes: (a) the costs of writing a contract; and (b) those arising from the related uncertainty and risk.

6.2.1 Bureaucratic Accountability

Prior to the introduction of 'contracts' and 'service level agreements', voluntary organisations [charities] were mostly wholly or partly funded through grant-aid - the principal government funding mechanism prior to and during the 1980s. Charities' activities were primarily monitored and accountability ensured through Weber's 'bureaucratic model' described by Ouchi (1980) as one that *"operates fundamentally according to a system of rules, hierarchical surveillance, evaluation and direction. Managers have a set of standards to which behaviour can be compared in order to ensure control. This is the norm of legitimate authority"* (Ouchi 1980: 130). This is indicated in Figure 6 a.

[9] This chapter brings together the concepts of 'clan' (Ouchi, 1980), 'networks as relationships' (Axelsson and Easton, 1992), 'exit' and 'voice' (Hirschman, 1970) and 'power' (Dahl, 1957; Pfeffer, 1992). Any reference to these concepts will be made within single inverted commas. This denotes that reference is being made to the specific authors concerned, but does so, without breaking the flow of the argument.

Figure 6a
Theoretical Framework of Accountability
under Purchase of Service Contracting (POSC)



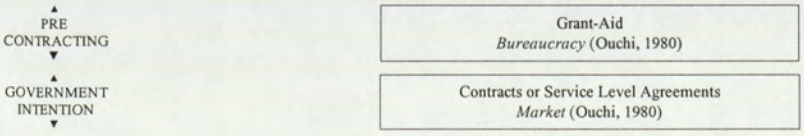
This was the case because bureaucratic relations were the most efficient means of mediation (Ouchi, 1991; 1980; 1979). Furthermore, of the charities studied, those that had previously been funded via grant-aid delivered services where *"performance ambiguity ... [was] ... moderately high"* (Ouchi, 1980: 129). In other words, because services were either highly specialised or even unique, it may have been difficult to determine their value and judge their quality. In addition, since the service deliverers and the grantors had moderately high goal incongruence, (i.e. the sectors did not necessarily share goals), both parties accepted bureaucratic forms of monitoring and accountability under these conditions (Ouchi, 1980). This was not only because this was the most efficient, but it was also the most equitable.

6.2.2 Government Intention - Market or Quasi-Market Accountability

As discussed in Chapter 1, public choice theory and the New Institutional Economics (NIE) influenced government policy in the 1980s and early 1990s. The end of the post-war consensus on the welfare state together with accusations of ignoring the real needs of service users or taxpayers, led to a change in government policy during this period.

As a result, government intention was to move away from grant-aid and bureaucratic forms of monitoring and replace this with contracts and service level agreements and market forms of accountability. This is indicated in the second box in Figure 6 b.

Figure 6b
Theoretical Framework of Accountability
under Purchase of Service Contracting (POSC)



It was envisaged that charities' activities would be co-ordinated through the market created when *" ... potential sellers are brought into contact with potential buyers and a means of exchange is available ..."* (Bannock et al, 1987: 262) or *"... quasi-market ..."* (Le Grand, 1993: 3). The quasi-market would be market in nature in the sense that it would involve *" ...the introduction of market competition between independent providers into the system of service provision"*. It would be quasi *" ... in that, unlike 'pure' markets, purchasing is not financed by consumers themselves from their own budgets; instead ... financed from a predetermined budget paid ultimately by tax revenues ...* [In addition] *... the relevant purchasing decisions ...* [were] *... not even undertaken by the consumer, but by the care manager or by some other agent within the SSD* [Social Service Department]...." (Le Grand, 1993: 3 - 4).

The introduction of the new 'quasi-market' systems and private sector managerial practices (Barnes and Prior, 1998), transformed the nature of public service delivery in Britain (Le Grand, 1993). In this system, as in a market, the transactions consist of contractual relationships between two parties and are mediated by the price mechanism *"in which the existence of a competitive market reassures both parties that the terms of exchange are equitable"* (Ouchi 1980: 130). In the context of either a market or 'quasi-market', it is assumed that the responsiveness and accountability of providers to purchaser organisations and their clients - the service users - would be ensured through the creation and extension of choice. In other words, if either the purchaser (or the service users) were dissatisfied with the quality of the services provided, they would be able to move their custom elsewhere. In this case, users of the services provided by organisation A would, if they so wished, be able to move from organisation A to one or ideally several other organisations, for instance, organisations B, C or D offering the same or at least similar services. Hirschman (1970: 4) refers to this economic response mechanism as the *" ... exit option ... "*. He describes 'exit' as the ability to find an alternative.

In a market/'quasi-market', the threat of 'exit' also ensures that each of the service delivery organisations maintain a fair price and good standard of service. If they do not they will lose their favoured status. *"Some customers stop buying the firm's products or some members leave the organisation: this is the exit option ... revenues drop, membership declines ... management searches for ways ... to correct whatever ... [has] ... led to exit"* (Hirschman 1970: 4).

According to Ouchi (1991; 1980; 1979), this mechanism of mediation is efficient when there is little performance ambiguity, as the parties tolerate relatively *"high levels of goal incongruence or opportunism"* (Ouchi, 1980: 135), and where one takes advantage of the situation, in order to benefit from it (Ouchi 1991; 1980; 1979).

6.2.3 Neither Bureaucratic Accountability, Nor Quasi-Market Accountability

Despite government policy and intention however, the study found that a competitive market/ 'quasi-market' had not been created. The reasons for this are complex and are given, together with an alternative explanation for how accountability is ensured within POSC, throughout the rest of this chapter.

In a competitive market/ 'quasi-market' there is more than one buyer and one seller. However, the research found that there was only one buyer (the public sector local government purchaser) and one seller (the voluntary organisation - charity), - a 'monopsony' and a 'monopoly' situation. In addition, there were few 'exit' opportunities for either the purchaser or the provider. In other words, there was usually only one charity with sufficient experience and expertise that was in a position to provide services on behalf of the purchaser. Thus, local government effectively had no choice but to purchase services from these particular providers, at least in the short to medium term.

Even if the monopoly situation were addressed such that there was an increase in providers from the independent sector, as indeed was the intention, it is unlikely that a competitive market/'quasi-market' would develop, at least for the foreseeable future. In relation to the services that were researched for the study, there would still only be one buyer. This was principally for the reason that budget allocation remains with the agent acting on the clients' behalf, rather than under the control of the clients themselves (Le Grand, 1993). Moreover, there would inevitably be a need for local services within the geographical boundaries of the local government area, for which there would be little, if any, competition from other local authorities.

Ouchi (1980: 133) refers to the situation where there is a lack of alternative purchasers and providers as *" ... bilateral monopoly ... "* which leads to *" ... small numbers bargaining ... "*. In other words, the current provider would have an advantage over any other bidding for the same contract for two reasons. Firstly, the current provider would have gained experience from already having done the job. Secondly, other potential providers would

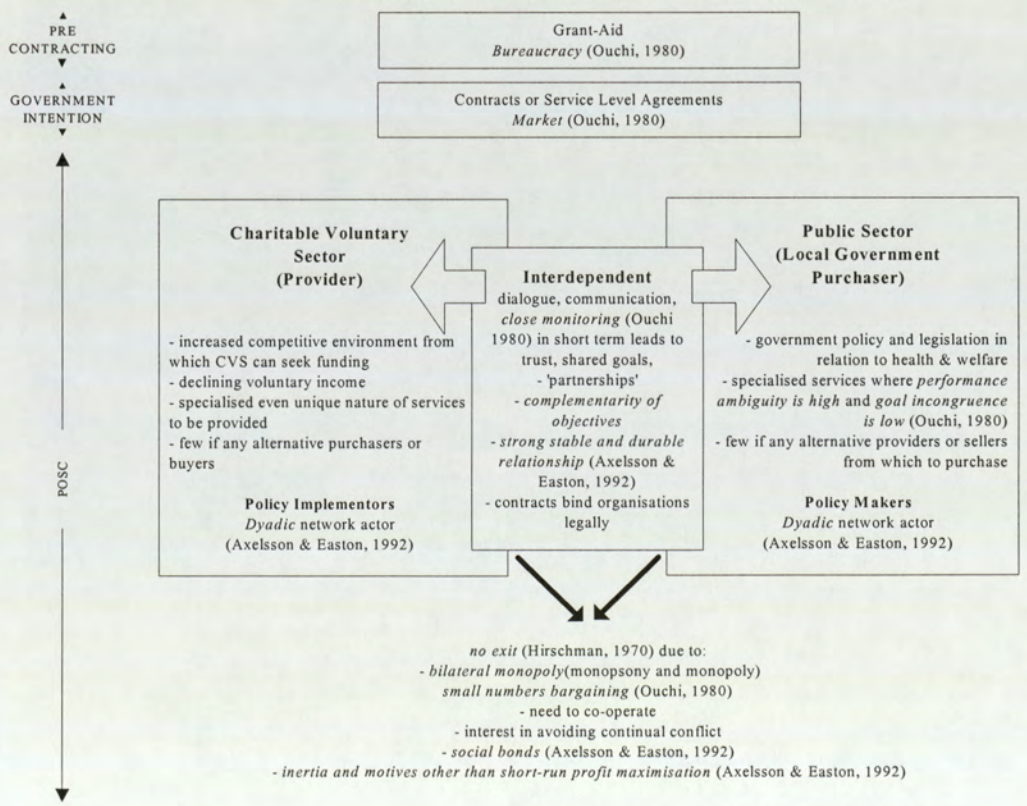
have to pay start-up costs which may be substantial and this would mean that bidding for such a contract would not be economically viable (Williamson, 1985).

Given the introduction of purchase of service contracting (POSC), the replacement of bureaucratic systems of allocation and bureaucratic mechanisms of accountability solely with market/'quasi- market' mechanisms, would have been inappropriate, as they would not ensure accountability for two main reasons. Firstly, because of the non-existence of a real market/'quasi-market' in terms of both purchasers and providers, there was a lack of 'exit' opportunities and market accountability. Secondly, because of each sectors' interdependence. This latter point is further developed in section 6.3.

6.3 Conceptualising Accountability Relationships in POSC

The study found that there was a high level of interdependence between the local government purchaser and the voluntary sector charity provider. It is crucial to understand the nature of and the reasons for this interdependence, as it is central to the way in which this thesis conceptualises accountability between the sectors.

Figure 6c
Theoretical Framework of Accountability
under Purchase of Service Contracting (POSC)



In Figure 6c, the fact that the two sectors are interdependent is indicated in the middle box, which is flanked on either side by the 'public sector' and the 'voluntary sector'. The following points made in the subsections relate to these three boxes 'interdependent', 'public sector' and 'voluntary sector'.

6.3.1 Nature of and Reasons for Interdependence

Prior to POSC, the level of interdependence between the sectors was negligible. Government made and implemented policy. Charities applied to government for a grant to implement their own charitable and policy objectives. However, under POSC the level of interdependence between the sectors has increased and become significant. The inter-linked reasons for this are as follows.

On the one hand, central government policy and legislation in relation to POSC has led the public sector (local government) to become dependent on other sectors. Since the legislation requires that a significant proportion of services have to be 'contracted out' by local government to the independent sector, the former have become dependent on the latter for delivering purchased services on their behalf. The independent sector, of which the voluntary sector is part, is now funded often through contracts and service level agreements to implement government policy.

On the other hand, initially the main reason for the charities' dependence on local government is due to the increased competitive environment from which they can seek funding. Although in this study, the voluntary sector was not, at least in the short term, solely dependent upon the public sector for their total income; in the longer term, if (as several predict) they experience a decline in their current and projected level of income from certain traditional voluntary sources (such as legacies - for instance), this may mean that they will have to cast their net wider, in order to search for finance to continue funding their service delivery activities. They may need POSC as much as the public sector.

Interdependence between the purchaser and provider was found to be further increased by: (a) the specialised and at times even unique nature of services that few organisations had the expertise and experience to deliver; and (b) the lack of a real market/'quasi-market' and hence the lack of 'exit' opportunities for either sector.

6.3.2 Interdependence – Accountability

Given the interdependent relationship between the purchaser and provider, neither market/'quasi-market' nor bureaucratic forms of accountability are appropriate for the contemporary situation. This is because in the case of market/'quasi-market' accountability,

this mechanism of mediation is not efficient due to the high performance ambiguity (in relation to the service) and high goal incongruence (between the sectors). The market/'quasi-market' relationship would fail due *"... to the confluence of opportunism with small numbers bargaining ...."* (Ouchi 1980: 133). In other words, each party would try to take advantage of the other. When a market fails, since exchange relationships can move from one domain to another (Ouchi, 1980), the inefficiencies of a bureaucratic organisation are preferred.

In accountability terms however, bureaucratic monitoring forms would be unsuitable for two reasons. In the first instance, given that POSC has been introduced, it would no longer be appropriate or even possible to monitor the contract through bureaucratic mechanisms, as they would only provide partial information. This would be problematic because without a competitive market (which would have provided reassurance that the terms of the exchange were equitable) to maintain the exchange, each sector would have to take on complete and extensive contracting. This would mean that they would incur very high costs of surveillance and enforcement. In other words, since they would have to set out a specification of requirements in the contract or service level agreement and monitor what was actually provided (which would involve a series of complex judgements), the process would become too expensive and too complex to administer (Ouchi 1979: 836).

The study found that the sectors were working *" ...in conditions of severely incomplete information ..."* (Mackintosh, 2000: 13) and with necessarily incomplete and often largely implicit contracts that:

(a) could not be specified fully in advance; and
(b) were based on unstated understandings.

In such circumstances, if it cannot be taken for granted that the other party is dealing honestly, explicit evaluation and auditing would have to increase to the point at which the

transaction costs would become so high they would be *"... unbearable ..."* (Ouchi 1980: 134).

In the second instance, since bureaucratic mechanisms fail *" ... when tasks become highly unique ... or ambiguous ... "* (Ouchi 1980: 134 - 5) bureaucratic monitoring forms would also be unsuitable. This is because in this study services were highly specialised, intangible, often delivered by people with expertise and quality was not easily judged (Watt, 1998).

As a result of failure by both market/'quasi-market' and bureaucratic forms of monitoring and accountability, and also the need to ensure accountability under POSC, other mechanisms *"... that have a lower cost but achieve the same sorts of aims as transactions costs ..."* (Le Grand, 2000), have developed. These alternative mechanisms are described in the following sections.

6.3.3 Accountability, Social Relations, Clan, Network and Voice

The rest of the chapter argues that the application of classical and neo-classical economic concepts, derived from the utilitarian tradition, which assume that rational self-interested behaviour is affected only minimally by social relations, are not by themselves appropriate to conceptualising accountability in the current context. Although at first sight Ouchi's framework is interesting, helpful, and a convenient abstraction, it only explains a fragment of what is going on. The reality is rather more complex. Rather, the research findings support Knoke and Kuklinski's (1991) observation, that individualistic explanations, which assume that facile switching among easily available alternatives takes place, ignore " ... *the social contexts within which the social actor is embedded ...*" (Knoke and Kuklinski, 1991: 173).

Thus although the study found that accountability was being partially ensured through a combination of aspects of both market/'quasi-market' (via contracts and service level agreements for instance) and bureaucratic (quantitative and qualitative) monitoring mechanisms, as " ... *in other parts of economic life, the overlay of social relations on what may ... [have begun] ... in purely economic transactions play a crucial role ...* " (Granovetter, 1985: 498). Accountability, was primarily ensured between the sectors

through the sole form of mediation remaining - the 'clan' within the context of one and or several 'networks'. The *" ... clan ... "* (Ouchi, 1980: 132) is a group with *" ... close personal connections with one another ... "* (Giddens, 1989: 295) or *" ... an organic association ... "* which despite resembling *" ... a kin network ... "* does not *" ... include blood relations ..."* (Durkheim, 1933, cited in Ouchi, 1980: 132).

Definitions of 'networks' vary. However, in relation to the research findings, Cook and Emersons' definition is useful. They conceptualise 'networks' as *" ... sets of two or more connected exchange relationships ... "* (Cook and Emerson, 1978: 725, cited in Axelsson, 1992: 243). This set of two exchange relationships between local government and the charity referred to in the industrial network literature as *" ... dyad ... "* (Smith and Laage-Hellman, 1992: 44) or dyadic network actors, were *"... linked together in such a way that events occurring in one location of the network ... [had] ... predictable consequences for events occurring in other network locations ...."* (Yamagishi, Gilmore and Cook 1988: 835). They were part of a *" ... social system involving many other actors, who ... [were] ... significant reference points in one another's decisions ... "* (Knoke and Kuklinski 1991: 173).

Since the specific focus of this research was to examine the inter-organisational relationship between the voluntary sector (charities), and the public sector (local government) and their relationships with users, the concept of exchange 'networks' used in isolation however, is not considered sufficient. Instead, networks are observed through the metaphor of 'networks as relationships' (Easton, 1992).

Although Easton (1992) acknowledges that in order to understand 'networks', relationships need to be studied, he argues that the difference between the industrial networks approach (INA) which uses this metaphor, and other perspectives[10] is that the INA's focus is on the network, rather than on the organisation, or the individual relationship. The INA adds to the interaction approach, for instance, knowledge that the focal relationship cannot be managed in isolation from other relationships. The networks in which each sector was involved were a channel to other relationships, through which they could access resources.

[10] For example: 'the interaction approach'; 'the resource dependence model'; 'theories of social exchange' and; 'communication and social networks'.

In addition, accountability of providers to purchasers and to service users for service delivery was also ensured through what Hirschman (1970: 4) refers to as the political response mechanism - *"... voice ... "* (i.e. other's say or view). 'Voice' is the way individuals can influence a service or an organisation through: (a) articulating their opinions and feedback; or (b) ensuring that their dissatisfaction and complaints are registered via their protests. This is the case irrespective of whether or not the 'exit' option exists.

Under conditions of uncertainty, loose coupling and ambiguity, where precise and reliable measurement are not always possible, the clan is the most appropriate mediation mechanism as it operates by: (a) encouraging experimentation and variety; and (b) stressing values. Clans rely upon a *" ... relatively complete socialisation process (i.e. common social agreements between members about what constitutes proper behaviour), which effectively eradicates goal incongruence ... "* between individuals and organisations (Ouchi, 1979: 833). So, although there is an information system, an outsider cannot quickly gain access to information concerning the decision rules used in the organisation (Ouchi, 1979). Moreover, since it is likely that individual and organisational interests will overlap, *" ... opportunism is unlikely and equity in rewards can be achieved at relatively little transaction costs .... "* (Ouchi, 1980: 136).

In other words, because actors do not behave as atoms outside a social context, the study found that the relationships between the sectors were not atomistic. Instead accountability relationships, which according to Easton (1992: 9) imply *" ... a measure of control over the other organisation and through that organisation, the environment ..., "* were embedded in concrete, personal relations and structures (or networks) of ongoing systems of social relations (Knoke and Kuklinski, 1991; Granovetter, 1985).

Having defined and located the concepts of 'networks as relationships', 'clan', 'exit' and 'voice', they are applied together to conceptualise the accountability relationships between the three central *" ... actors ... "* which Cook (1977: 63) defines as *" ... individuals ... collective actors or corporate groups ..."*. In this case, the purchaser and the provider on the one hand, and between them and the service users on the other.

6.4 The Contracting Process and the Relationship between the Dyadic Network Actors

In relation to this study, the research found in part that within the context of a network, the 'dyad', due to the initial *" ... mutual orientation - the precondition for the existence ... "* of their inter-organisational relationship (i.e. as a result of their transactions, in which something of value was exchanged), they developed 'dependence' on one another (Easton, 1992: 8; Ouchi, 1980).

Over time, the 'dyad's' interdependence increased. This was as a result of the formal, direct (organisation to organisation), and legal 'bond' between them (i.e. the contracting process, which cemented the inter-sectoral relationship together); and the 'investments' each had made in the relationship.

6.4.1 The Dyad's Mutual Investment

Moreover, over time each 'invested' quite heavily in the relationship, in terms of people's time and effort in the development of their expertise in relation not only to the service, but also to the requirements of the specific local authority purchaser. As the relationship became more established, the 'dyad' committed resources over and above what was required to execute their current exchanges.

In other words, they invested both in each other and in building assets for the future, within given technological and economic constraints. This included, for example, individuals from both sectors:

(a) acquiring specific knowledge in relation to one another – such as legislative requirements, funding cycles, monitoring procedures;
(b) adjusting services and processes according to one another's requirements, which Easton refers to as *" ... rhythms ... "* (Easton, 1992: 13); and
(c) developing and establishing good social relationships, so as to ensure that the policy makers and implementors were 'in sync' with one another (ibid).

Such specific investments, which Williamson (1985: 32) refers to as *"asset specificity"*, meant that the inter-organisational relationship became *" ...stable and durable ..."* (Easton, 1992: 3). This meant that not only would it be difficult for either sector to

terminate the contract or service level agreement, at least in the short term, but also that there would be little alternative use-value for the investment, should the agreement be terminated.

6.4.2 The Dyad Legally Bound with Incongruent Objectives

Local government organisations and charities were legally bound by a bureaucratic mechanism - a written document - sometimes in the form of a contract, but more usually a service level agreement. Thus the provider received money from the purchaser in exchange for delivering specified services to users.

6.4.3 The Dyad, POSC and Congruent Objectives

Prior to POSC under the system of grant-aid, each sector had its own policy objectives, which were also probably incongruent. Under POSC, given that many voluntary sector organisations (charities) became responsible for implementing government policy, the 'dyadic network actors' realised that they needed to co-operate with one another, in order to meet need more appropriately. Although during the contracting process, the initial difficulties with and time taken in establishing the relationship between the dyadic network actors was, according to Ouchi (1980), principally due to each actor's shared concern that they had only partially congruous objectives in relation to the agreement. Having established their relationship, they developed shared and congruent objectives. Therefore, at least in relation to the specific service, the goals of the charity and those of the purchasing authority moved from being incongruent to congruent, which Ouchi (1980: 129), refers to as *" ... low incongruence ... "*.

6.4.4 Monitoring and Transactions Costs

Against this background, and given the choice and circumstances, the research found that in order to increase services and effectiveness through cost reduction, knowledge and skill sharing, the dyad was not only *" ... prepared ... "* but also expected *" ... to interact ... "* (Easton, 1992: 9). In order to do so however, they had to be able to either: (a) trust each other; or (b) closely monitor each other.

Costs of carrying out transactions (or of mediating exchanges) between parties arise, according to Ouchi, (1980: 130) *"... when it is difficult to determine the value of a good or service"* either due to its *"underlying nature ... or from lack of trust between the parties ...* [in other words, a transaction cost] *... is any activity which is engaged in to satisfy each party to an exchange that the value given and received is in accord with his or her expectations ..."* or "*... the costs that attend completing transactions by one institutional mode rather than another ....*" (Williamson 1975: 1-2).

The research results showed that in the early stages of the contracting process, which was new territory for both actors, the transaction costs were high, since initially the 'dyadic network actors' did not know or trust one another. Added to this, given that the written agreement was implicit and incomplete, understandings with reference to standards needed time to develop (Mackintosh, 2000).

Each sector was initially concerned about the motives of the other and this resulted in purchasers and providers having to monitor each other very closely at the beginning of their relationship (Ouchi, 1980). This occurred for two reasons. First, the sectors were in the process of establishing a new and long-term relationship and since trust has to be earned, this took time. Second, the study found that because of the nature of the services that were involved - which tended to be both specialised and at times even unique in nature - and since the provider required expert knowledge of how best and most efficiently to deliver the service to the user, there was a lack of tangibility and some ambiguity, in performance measurement terms, in relation to particular aspects of service delivery. It was therefore difficult for the purchaser to assess certain areas of the provider's performance because of their *" ... high performance ambiguity ..."* (Ouchi, 1980: 135).

6.4.5 Dialogue, Communication and Trust between the Dyad

As the 'dyad' became knowledgeable about one another, they established 'dialogue' and 'communication' and their relationship characterised *" ... by learning ..."* (Easton, 1992: 9) and a *" ... process of mutual shaping ..."* (Mackintosh, 2000: 1) developed into one of mutual exchange, based on 'respect' for and 'trust' in one another (see Chapter 4). Their relationship, which began with the process of establishing the written agreement, developed alongside the formal contracting system and was, as Spurgeon et al (1997) also

found, arguably as, if not more significant to ensuring accountability, as the document itself.

Trust is a concept that like 'accountability' and 'the voluntary sector' has many definitions. Coulson (1998) in a review of recent American literature found sixteen. Mishra's (1996) definition is favoured in relation to this study, as it was found to be the most appropriate. Mishra (1996) defines trust as *"... one party's willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the belief that the latter party is: (a) competent, (b) open, (c) concerned, and (d) reliable ..."* (cited in Kramer and Tyler, 1996: 265). In Mishra's (1996) terms, trust is voluntary, includes a belief that the other party is trustworthy, and is based on instinct, calculation and experience (Coulson, 1998).

Coulson's (1998: 32) observations in relation to the development of trust, as a process of learning that grows through use were certainly found to be pertinent in relation to this study. In specific terms, his view that trust starts *" ... with calculation ..."* develops *" ... with experience ..."* and may eventually *"... reach a point where it is as much a matter of intuition and instinct as of calculation ..."* was found to be the case with reference to the inter-sectoral relationship.

A circular trust relationship developed between the 'dyad' or inter-organisational actors, where *" ... goodwill trust ..."* (Sako, 1992: 38), comprising *" ... mutual expectations of open commitment ..."* to one another, led to increased mutual dependence, which bred further 'goodwill trust'. In other words, one sector could not just depend on the other, to not act opportunistically, deceive the other through cheating, or withholding information, or deliberately misleading the other. The sectors were committed to one another. Put simply, they were willing to do more than was formally expected, and could trust one another.

Underlying this mutual exchange Ouchi (1979: 838) argues is a *" ... norm of reciprocity ... "* - a basic social agreement shared by all members that are party to the transaction - without which the 'transactional network' would not function efficiently (Ouchi, 1991). Moreover, since the sectors were part of a network, they also benefited from their ability to *" ... exploit network access ..."* (Easton, 1992: 9). In other words, they were able to gain access to beneficial or even vital resources.

Over time, since the dyadic network actors had certain aims, principles and values in common, they also appear to have developed shared goals specifically in relation to the contracted out service (for example, the delivery of good high quality services to users). Easton (1992: 9) refers to this sharing of goals or objectives as *" ... complementarity of objectives ... "*. Ouchi (1980: 129) describes this in terms of the actors having low *" ... goal incongruence ... "*. This, together with increased trust and the establishment of norms and institutions (i.e. the investments in the relationship), lowered the transaction costs, by reducing the time commitment required to monitor through traditional systems and formal legal contracts (The Economist, 1995).

6.4.6 Strong Bonds, Strong Ties and Partnerships

Also by this stage, since each actor had 'invested' quite heavily and specifically in the relationship they began to develop strong bonds (Axelsson and Easton, 1992). These strongly bonded relationships between 'dyadic network actors' were not only expressed in the form of the written and formal contract or service level agreement, but also as *" ... strong ... ties ..."* (Granovetter, 1973: 1363) defined by *"... emotion, obligation, range, and durability ..."* (Tilly, 1998: 50) or social bonds, which Morgan (1998: 170) refers to as the *" ... informal organisation ..."*. In general, these strong ties between the sectors were found to sustain solidarity, trust and commitment (Tilly, 1998: 50).

Moreover, this research revealed that social exchange, which was the result of associations between individuals, particularly *" ... boundary personnel ..."* (for instance, the local government manager and the local voluntary sector manager responsible for delivering the service), extended beyond each organisation (Hall, 1996: 229). Over time the dyad formed a *" ... close-knit ... dense ... network ... "* (Granovetter, 1973: 1370). This was a very important factor in terms of facilitating the smooth operation and continuation of the inter-sectoral relationship, which the 'dyad' referred to as 'partnerships'. In the new partnership, this study found as Checkland's (1997), that although contracts and contracting played a part in the accountability process, they did not drive it. Although the contract served both as a valuable reference point for those with a continuing involvement with the service, as well as a mechanism, which protected both 'partners', and at times users, it was only one half of the 'contract accountability' relationship. The other half comprised the relationship, which extended well beyond the formal contract terms.

In network analytical terms, once organisations bond together in this way, they are not " ... *free to dissolve those bonds at will ...* " (Easton, 1992: 10). The study found that this was so for several reasons. These include legal ties through the contract or similar agreement; the unique nature of many of the services being provided; the lack of competition in terms of alternative specialist providers; and the development of social ties, social links, and " ... *social capital ...* " defined as " ... *the ability of people to work together for common purposes in groups or organisations ...* " (Fukuyama, 1995: 10), between the sectors.

In addition, the costs associated with:

(a) searching for new providers;
(b) establishing new relationships;
(c) preparing and monitoring contracts, which are seldom complete;
(d) recovering and or replacing broken relationships;

far exceed *"... the normal costs of supervising a contract ..."* (Coulson, 1998: 4).

Furthermore, given:

(a) the relatively low risk associated with dealing with known providers;

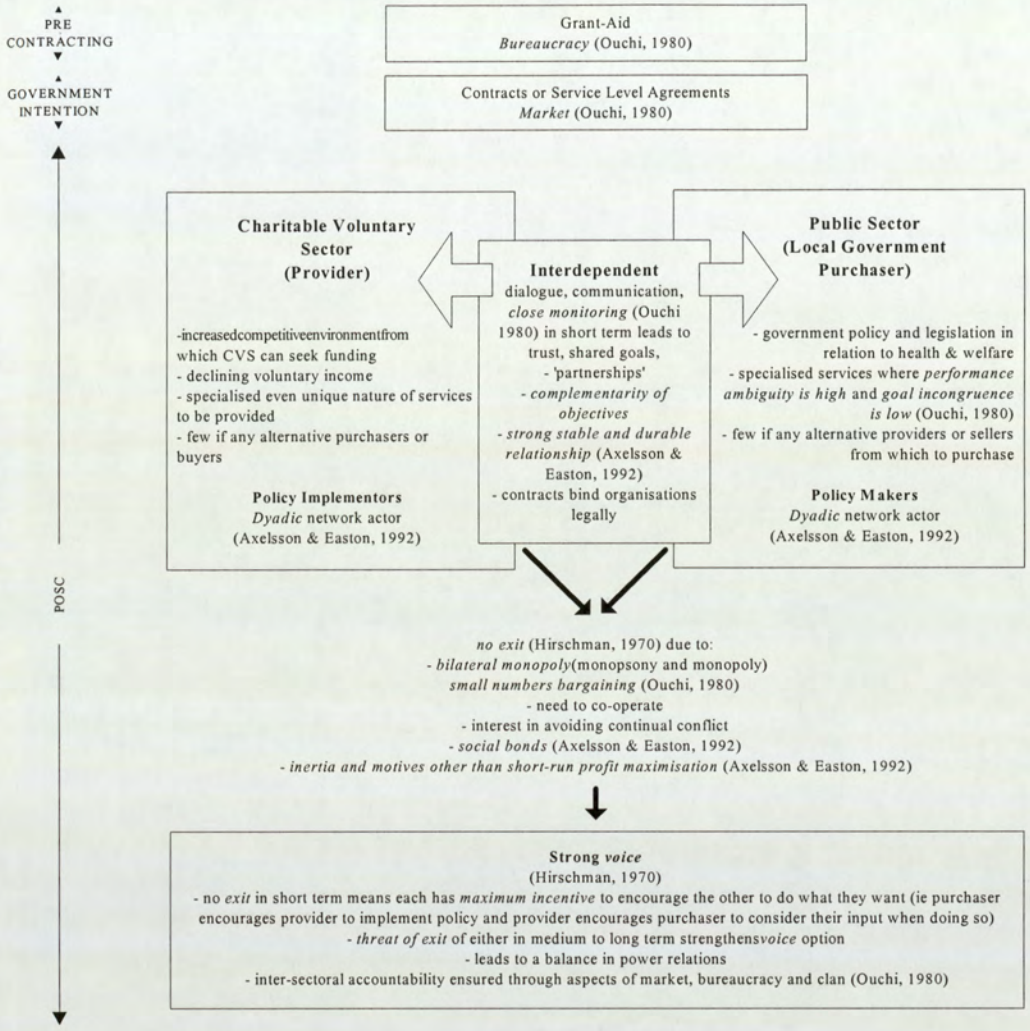
(b) the likelihood that the purchaser and provider have established personal relationships, which they value (given that the same people have probably dealt with each other for several years) (Granovetter, 1985); and

(c) that *"... cooperation between two parties at any given time increases with the time horizon of their relationship ...."* (Tirole: 1986: 201)

it was not in either party's interest to end the relationship. The 'social capital' generated as a result of the development of trust in the relationship between the sectors, meant that the stakes of not cooperating had become too high (Tirole, 1986).

The relationships between the dyadic network actors described throughout this section are illustrated in Figure 6d.

Figure 6d
Theoretical Framework of Accountability
under Purchase of Service Contracting (POSC)



6.4.7 An Illustration of Legally and Socially Bonded Organisations

A very good example of just such a legally and socially bonded organisation was brought home to the researcher when she visited a welfare service to talk to some service users (parents of children with various special needs) about accountability. The service, one of a number offered by the charity, was funded in large part by the local authority. It had its own management committee on which the users were represented.

> On the whole, the service users I interviewed felt that the project coordinator encouraged their participation in decision making and service delivery and they were very happy with the way in which the services were developing, largely due to their involvement. However, a recent issue caused alarm for many of the stakeholders in the organisation, particularly for the service users, the project

coordinator of the charity, the local authority project officer, and the director of social services.

The project provided a meeting place for parents and children with special needs. It was located within an industrial estate away from any public transport routes. As the project became more well known, more parents came with their children. More recently this caused intermittent problems, as there were not enough car and mini bus parking spaces to meet the growing need. There were however plenty of car parking spaces available in the surrounding business unit car parks, which the project coordinator and parents noticed were hardly ever used. As the users' visits were for a couple of hours in length, a few times a year only, and since the businesses had expressed their support publicly through high profile donations and local newspaper advertisements, the parents and the coordinator thought that the businesses would not mind accommodating them until they moved to bigger premises with ample car parking later in the year.

However, this assumption was incorrect. Some of the businesses did mind and decided that a representative of one of the organisations should contact the local charity and 'voice' their concerns. A managing director of one of the companies telephoned the director of the charity with whom he played golf and said that because of his accountability to his shareholders, he had a duty not to put off prospective customers. He felt that, unfortunate as this may be, the businesses may withdraw any potential future donations should the parents continue to park on their premises.

The director of the charity, fearing the loss of voluntary income telephoned the coordinator to tell her that as they had an accountability to their donors, he was therefore planning to write to users to advise them that the services would be withdrawn should they park there again. The coordinator vehemently protested and asked the director to whom he thought the charity was being accountable, to service users or to the donors? She also questioned the local businesses' accountability to the users. Why, for example, didn't the businesses themselves confront the users, perhaps even threaten to clamp their vehicles, if they were so concerned about the users' trespassing. The director informed her that during the conversation the businesses' representative had explained that they felt uneasy about complaining to the users, in part because they recognised the difficulty about parking and also because the users' children had disabilities. They did not wish to appear heartless, although they were concerned that it might affect their custom.

The co-ordinator proposed to her manager that she would ask users for their suggestions in dealing with the parking problem, since her management style was democratic and she did not believe in merely paying lip service to user participation in decision making. She also informed him that if he were to threaten to withdraw services, this would not only bring the organisations' client accountability into question, but would also break the terms and conditions of the contract with the local authority. As a consequence, the project would lose some of the current and any future statutory funding and

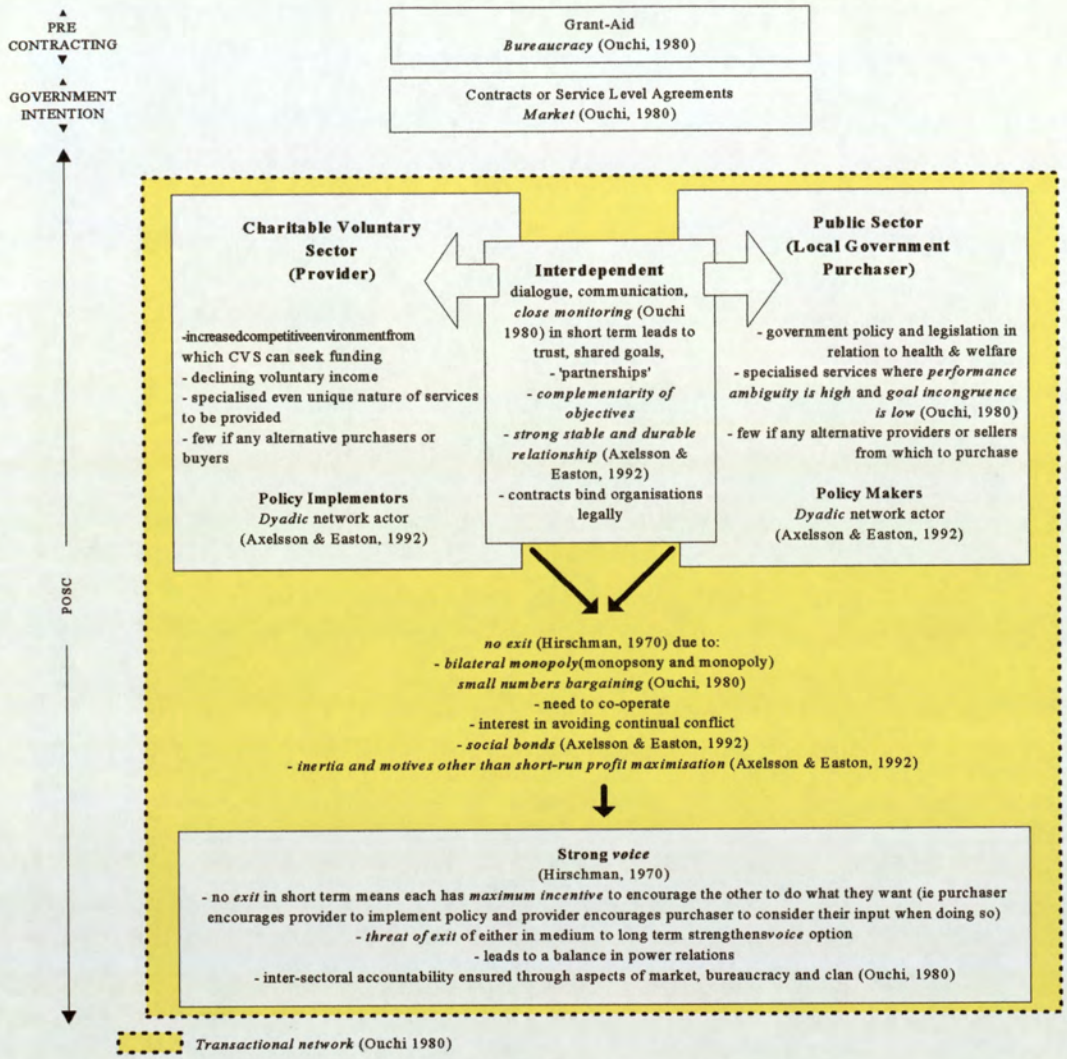
> their relationship would be jeopardised. The director informed her that he was likely to write anyway.
>
> Concerned that her protestations fell on deaf ears, the project coordinator discussed these anxieties with her colleague, the monitoring officer at the local authority, who in turn voiced her worries to the director of the charity. The director of the charity then telephoned the monitoring officer's manager, the director of social services. The latter confirmed that the contract would be broken if he wrote to users threatening to withdraw any services (Kumar, 1996: 247-249).

This case study can be used to illustrate many themes. However, in the context of network analysis, it demonstrates that one of the reasons the charity was able to remain steadfast when faced with this conflict of multiple accountabilities, was because the local charity's co-ordinator was able to draw on support from her local government network, with which she had strong ties (Granovetter, 1973). The threat of withdrawal of the service was avoided because the charity and the local authority were not only 'partners' but they were also legally bound. In addition, they were able to rely on one another due to their trust for one another. One trust relationship was at a *"... personal ..."* level between the managers from each sector and another was at an *" ... impersonal ... "* (Newman, 1998: 48) level embodied in the contractual agreement. This protected both organisations and the service users.

6.4.8 Stable, Predictable and Able to Withstand Change

In addition, it was found that because the bonded organisations relationship adjusted gradually in response to external and internal forces in the network, they were *" ...stable ..."* (Easton, 1992: 23), continuous, sustained (Granovetter, 1985) and predictable but not *" ... static ..."* (Easton, 1992: 23). In addition, as predicted by Easton (1992: 10), the study found in one particular instance that the inter-sectoral relationship was both able and well equipped *" ... to withstand a disruptive force ...."*. All aspects of the inter-sectoral relationship discussed so far are illustrated in Figure 6e in the box 'transactional network'.

Figure 6e
Theoretical Framework of Accountability
under Purchase of Service Contracting (POSC)



6.5 Uncertainty, Stability, Dependence and Power

Network connections can be positive or negative, depending on whether one relation affects the other positively or negatively. Negatively connected networks create competition for resources, whereas positively connected networks do not. When a positive connection exists, exchange in one relation facilitates exchange in another relation (Yamagishi, Gilmore and Cook, 1988: 834-5).

In this study, the 'dyadic network actors' were found to be " ... *positively connected* ... " (Yamagishi, Gilmore and Cook, 1988: 838). Their mutual and " ... *strong degree of dependence* ... " (Easton, 1992: 10), where each partner could only obtain the resource they

required from the other, together with their 'strong ties' (Granovetter, 1973) were the apparent motives for the formation of this robust inter-organisational relationship (Easton, 1992: 17). In other words, the 'dyad' decided that the benefits that would accrue from the association, in terms of the reduction in uncertainty and the increase in stability, would outweigh any costs to them. For instance, there would be a steady income stream for the provider and good quality services for the purchaser and service users.

6.5.1 Resource Dependency, Mutual Investment and Social Relations

The formation of their strong inter-sectoral relationship can however only be partly explained in resource dependency and mutual investment terms. Granovetter (1985: 498) argues that it is also related to *"... the desire of individuals to derive pleasure from the social interaction that accompanies their daily work, a pleasure that would be considerably blunted by spot-market procedures requiring new and strange work partners each day"*.

6.5.2 Power, Control and Interdependence

The downside of the dyadic relationship however relates to issues of power and control which derive *" ... from resource dependencies ... "* (Cook, 1977: 66). Although there is no clear and consistent definition of power, most organisational theorists refer to Dahl (1957), who views power in terms of one individual's ability to get another individual to do something they would not have done otherwise. The power variable, according to Pffeffer (1992 cited in Hall, 1996: 112), *"... is a relational one ..."*. Power is complex and can be used consciously or implicitly. It is only really meaningful if it is exercised in relation to another person or group. Moreover if *" ... power is asymmetrically distributed the relationship will be difficult to manage and the benefits for the junior partner less easy to realise ..."* (Easton, 1992: 10).

In terms of this exchange network, the dyad's mutual orientation and interdependency, due in part to *" ... the local scarcity of resources ..."* (Yamagishi, Gilmore and Cook, 1988: 849-850) determined the distribution of power. However, as predicted by Easton (1992), although the 'dyad' were found to be managing their 'focal' accountability relationship very well, they found it more difficult to manage their other relationships with other actors within the wider network. In this case, the power and accountability relationship between

the dyad was symmetrical – however, the dyad's accountability relationship with service users was more problematic (see Chapter 5), and the distribution of power was asymmetrical. The reasons for this are as follows.

Since each 'dyadic network actor' was not *"... mutually substitutable ..."* (Astley and Zajac, 1990: 496) they could *"... exert some amount of influence on the other ..."* (Astley and Zajac, 1990: 483). Because of this, they were dependent on each other. This resulted in there being a balance in power relations between the sectors. In other words, power was symmetrically distributed. Since the local government purchaser needed the charity to deliver non-routine, specialist services, charities became powerful in this situation because of their expertise (Hall 1996: 104). On the other hand, since the charities needed local government to fund their service delivery activities, the purchaser was in a powerful position in relation to the provider. The dyad were therefore found to have a *" ... horizontal power relationship ..."* (Hall, 1996: 117).

However, since alternative purchasers or providers were not easily available the 'dyad' could not easily change counterparts. This led to the creation of a dense web of social relations, a close knit network (Granovetter, 1985). The downside of both their horizontal power relationship and the 'web' meant that each was found to have less bargaining power and could become constrained (Axelsson and Easton, 1992). In the long run, this may lead the 'dyad' to decide that either: (a) the costs (of their being dependent upon one particular source) outweigh the benefits of the relationship; or (b) despite the choice and availability of other organisations with which to have relationships, the benefits that can accrue from a relationship with one specific organisation outweigh the costs. Under these conditions that have arisen as a result of the social relations web, the *" ... rules of optimum resource allocation fail ..."* (Easton, 1992: 6), *"... inertia ..."* is introduced *"... into the system ..."* and any increase or decrease in efficiency can be explained (Granovetter, 1985).

6.6 Exit and Voice

As a result of the 'dyadic network actors' initial 'mutual orientation' and subsequent 'mutual exchange', 'dependence', 'bonds' and 'investments' each had made in the other, each actor not only recognised their need to co-operate, but also had an interest in avoiding continual conflict. The study found that the lack of opportunities for finding alternative

providers made the 'exit' (Hirschman, 1970) option difficult. This is the case certainly in the short term. However, given the importance of social relations between the sectors it may also be difficult in the medium to long term.

The dyad found another mechanism of accountability where views and concerns in relation to policy and service delivery could be raised. This device or mechanism, which was mentioned earlier in terms of the 'clan' was 'voice' which is *"... relatively efficient as market failure increases ..."* (Paul, 1991: 16). 'Voice', according to Hirschman, (1970) is the antithesis of 'exit' a *" ... messy concept ... "* and ranges from *" ... faint grumbling to violent protest ... "* (Hirschman, 1970: 16). The idea behind 'voice' is not to escape from *"... an objectionable state of affairs ... "* (Hirschman, 1970: 30). Rather, it is to individually or collectively lobby management either directly in charge of service delivery or at a higher level, in order to change the policies and practices of the organisation, through various types of action and protest, including mobilising public opinion (Hirschman, 1970).

6.6.1 Voice and the Relationship within the Dyad

While the inter-sectoral actors addressed the problems associated with implicit contracting, they did so at the cost of creating others. Thus although in theory the mechanism of 'voice' was available to each of the 'triadic network actors' (Easton and Lundgren, 1992: 90) (i.e. each sector and the service users), in practice, the opportunities for expressing 'voice' were found to differ.

The research found that the 'dyadic network actors' used 'voice' very effectively in relation to one another, both when establishing their partnership and as part of their ongoing relationship. In the inter-sectoral relationship (i.e. between the local government purchaser and the charity) 'voice' was more often than not found to be forceful, strong and played a major role in ensuring inter-organisational accountability. The socialised explanation for this is that their relationship is embedded (Granovetter, 1985). If, for instance, the relationship resulted from the pursuit of self-interest by rational atomised individuals, the sectors would have no need for bargaining, negotiation or mutual adjustment through recurrent or continuing relationships and therefore no need for the role of 'voice' to develop in the way that it did.

Despite the lack of opportunities for either the purchaser or the provider to 'exit' and take their business elsewhere, contrary to what may be assumed to be the case under these circumstances, they remained in a powerful position vis a vis each other in terms of voicing their views. This is in part because each had the *" ... maximum incentive to cajole, threaten, and otherwise induce the ... [other organisation] ... to pay attention ... [to their] ... needs and tastes ..."* (Hirschman, 1970: 65-66). The dyad was equally vociferous with one another for the following couple of reasons.

Firstly, the local government purchaser makes policy and is responsible for its implementation. In the context of POSC, organisations from the independent sector deliver services on behalf of government. Therefore, in order for elected politicians to remain publicly accountable for policy implementation via in this case the charities, they and the public sector administrators and managers have good reason to ensure services delivered to users (who are also sometimes voters) are as promised. If they do not, service users can for instance visit their councillors in their surgeries to hold them to account, they can threaten to go to the media, or they could of course ultimately register their dissatisfaction through elections via the democratic accountability mechanism.

Having said this however, it must be acknowledged that the electoral mechanism is less than perfect. Elections do not necessarily make members accountable (Day and Klein, 1987) and they are infrequent and are not usually about one particular issue, but a range of issues influenced by other national and local events. As Rose (1985: 4) points out, *to "... make organisations exclusively accountable through the ballot box is to bury individual preferences among tens of millions of votes, and to centralise authority in a very large bureaucratic ministry ...."*.

Nevertheless, the point remains that being able to ensure accountability through the elected policy makers is an important check. As Rose (1985: 21) argues, *"Governors receive information from the governed, not in the blunt and often ambiguous form of a national election result, but in a form specific to a particular service ...."*. This can be used in part, to motivate elected officials to ensure that those who are responsible to them, deliver through the policy implementors, who may or may not be outside the public sector.

Although strongly bonded relationships define 'networks', other kinds of relationships exist in 'networks', which can have a significant effect on their operation. For instance, potential relationships *"... change the context in which a focal relationship operates, since they offer visible alternatives ..."* (Easton, 1992: 15). Thus, the purchaser and provider are far from powerless because the strength of their 'voice' as a 'mechanism of recuperation' (Hirschman, 1970: 82) is backed up by the **perception** of all concerned that there is the possibility of either actor to 'exit', although in reality, as was argued earlier, there is no possibility of 'exit' in the short to medium term. Therefore, each has an excellent motive to ensure they listen to what the other wants.

Should the provider not carry out policy as required by the purchaser, they perceive that they could lose their funding. On the other hand, should the purchaser not listen to the provider's input when making policy they could lose a very valuable service deliverer with specialist expertise. In this situation, it is well understood by both actors that there is a **possibility** of 'exit', although only in the medium - long term.

6.7 Voice and the Relationships between the Dyad and Users

In contrast, although service users were presented with a range of mechanisms and opportunities for consultation (for example membership of advisory groups) to encourage their input and enable them to 'voice' their opinions and concerns, (see Chapter 5), this study found that in most organisations the users' 'voice' remains faint, weak and at times even mute. Thus these mechanisms did not prove to be a very efficacious way of ensuring accountability to users. Service users were not 'properly' accounted to since *"... proper accountability ... requires a measure of control by customers / society in both the process and the content of accountability ..."* (Leat, 1988: 21). This is considered to be the case for two main reasons. First, although formal opportunities existed in theory, in practice they were not always functional.

Second, when they were functional, although service users sometimes attended these meetings, they found them to be very intimidating and disempowering fora in which to raise issues. This was for several reasons, many of which are illustrated in Figure 6f overleaf and are discussed in the following sections.

6.7.1 Power and Inequality at Meetings

Some service users found the nature of the occasion - a formal meeting with its seating arrangements and the employment of complex and apparently rational instruments such as bureaucratic rules and procedures, which may or may not have been intended to aid task performance (for instance, an 'agenda' and 'speaking through the chair') - to be overwhelming. Such meetings did not present an ideal context for users to feel able to speak freely, truly or sincerely. This was because not only were service users ignored when they did raise issues, but they were also discouraged from raising them. Examples given included someone else in the group pointing out to them that:

(a) they were not speaking to the correct agenda item;

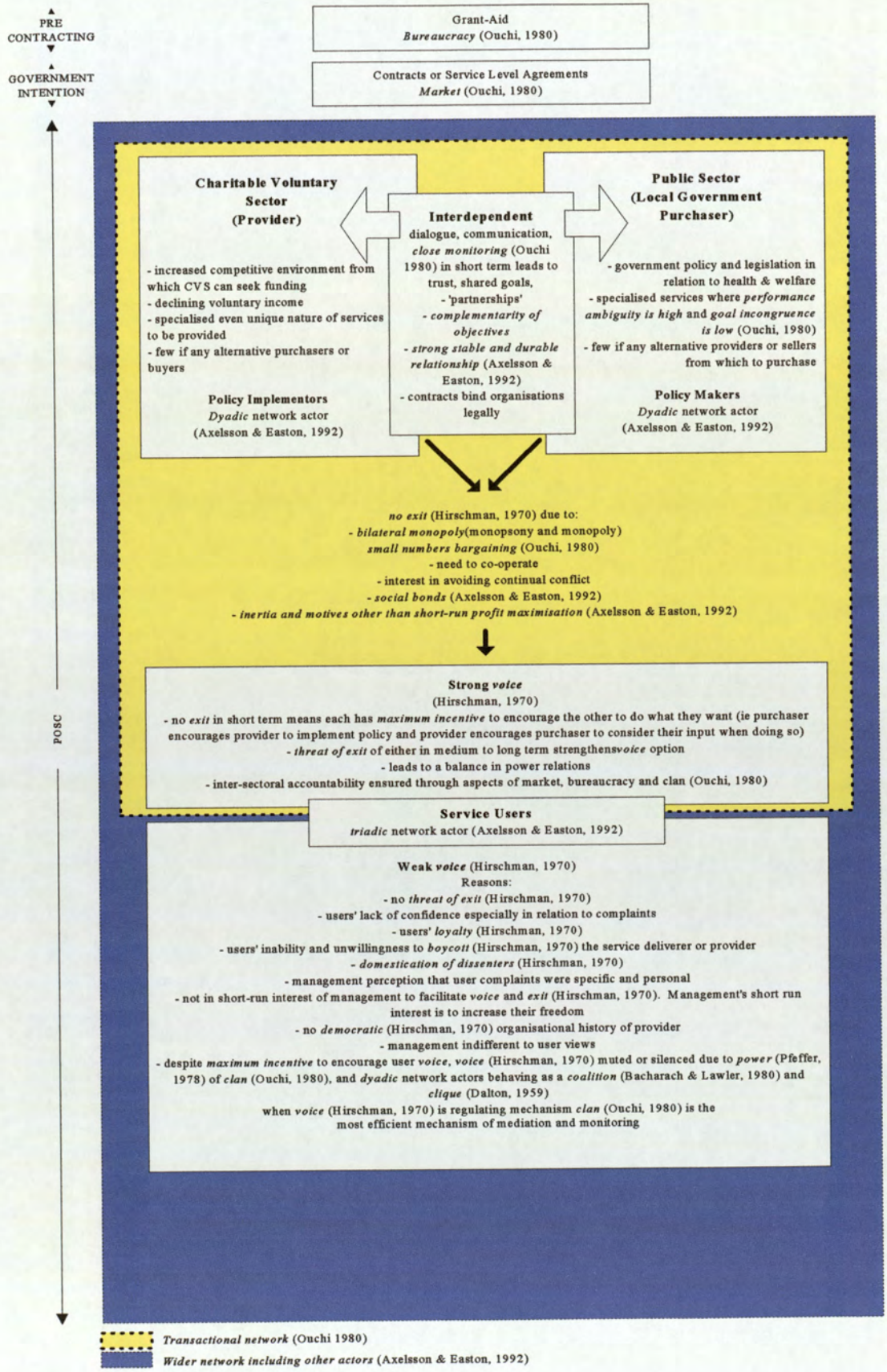
(b) the issue that they have raised was not on the agenda; and

(c) they should be brief when making contributions.

6.7.2 Power, Minutes of Meetings and Agenda Setting

In terms of this study, the research revealed that issues were kept very firmly off the agenda by denying a platform or voice to critics. Schattschneider (1960: 37) argues that this is done because the *"... only way to preserve private power ratios is to keep conflicts out of the public arena ...."*. Lukes (1974: 18) describes this situation as one that leads to *" ...nondecisions ..."*. This resulted both in issues remaining unarticulated and the avoidance of decisions. This is the most successful exercise of power, as the power-holders (i.e. those with power) can maintain their power unquestioned and ensure that conflicting views are never raised. By exercising their power in this way, those with power ensure that those without power do not either have the chance to challenge the power-holders' interests, or to see issues being debated. In addition, if and when users were successful in relation to raising their concerns, they were often not recorded in the minutes. Moreover, service users were also shut out of the process in terms of setting the agenda for these meetings. Thus getting issues onto the agenda in the first place, where users tried to do so, was not only a struggle but could also be seen as a challenge. In one instance, one such demand by a service user was met with incredulity and this created an intense visible interpersonal clash.

Figure 6f
Theoretical Framework of Accountability under Purchase of Service Contracting (POSC)



The prevention of an issue being publicly aired in this way is explained by Bachrach and Baratz (1970: 49), who describe this in terms of the creation and reinforcement of barriers to *" ... potential demands for change ..."*. In addition, Zald (1970: 225) argues that the *"... desire to avoid disruption of solidarity ..."* means that individuals and/or groups confine decision-making to safe issues. As a result, they retain power and maintain the status quo by *"... shaping, sustaining and benefiting from a favourable bias in the system ..."* (Bachrach and Baratz, 1970: 51). Lukes (1974: 23) adds to this that the prevention of conflict from arising in the first place is the most *" ... effective and insidious use of power ...."*.

6.7.3 Power, Language and Professional Defensiveness

The findings of this research resonated closely with Alexander's (1999) study on user participation at meetings. In both Alexander's (1999) research and this study, service users experienced being kept at a distance by the professionals. This *" ... distancing ... "* was achieved through the use of language, jargon and management discourse, and created *" ... a semantic barrier to inclusion ..."* (Alexander, 1999: 45). He argues that this is not only antithetical to good practice in terms of participation, but is also a very effective way of disempowering and silencing users.

In addition, both studies found that some professionals could be defensive which meant that they sometimes sent out signals to users that *" ... their professional training ... [made] ... them unassailable ... "* (Alexander, 1999: 45). Barnes and Prior (1996: 56) add to this that the *" ... dominance of ... 'expert' knowledge, and the assumption of its superiority, is one of the factors excluding lay people from exercising an effective voice in their relationships with service providers"*.

Furthermore, since this research found that service users both perceived and experienced the professionals 'not really listening to them', (see Chapter 5), this made them feel uncomfortable and think that their views were seen as somehow less relevant than those of the professionals. The effect of all these factors was that service users experienced accountability as *" ... 'power over' ... "* them, rather than as *" ... 'power for' ... "* (Wadsworth, 1991: 27) them, and this rendered user voices weak, and at times even mute.

6.7.4 Gender, Class, Race and Education

In addition, another reason that some service users may have found the meetings difficult was due to other, and perhaps not so overt, factors such as their gender, race, class, and educational background. Some of these covert factors were articulated by service users (see Chapter 5) while others, such as gender and class were noted during the course of fieldwork[11].

Gender, race, class and education are important factors in terms of accountability, for two reasons. First, many decisions made in the context of health and social welfare delivery have particular significance for women. This is because many users of services are women, in part because they take responsibility for the contacts that young children and elderly relatives have (Downey, 1986) with health and welfare services and many of whom also belong to *" ... marginalised groups ... "* (Hutton, 1999: 173). Second, those who are involved in policy-making and at the higher levels of management, not just in the public sector, but also in the voluntary sector organisations involved in the study, tended to be white, middle-class, well-educated, able-bodied men. This is not to say that they are not competent to make decisions relating to users with different backgrounds to their own. However, given their privileged background this may mean that they are 'emotionally remote from many of the issues they are discussing' (Ferlie et al, 1994). In addition, since it is likely that they will not have shared similar life experiences to the users their organisations serve, it is even more imperative that they ensure service users' views are taken on board. *"They need to know about people with different characteristics and seek their views in order that they can provide an appropriate service for them ...."* (Cooper et al, 1995: 63).

6.7.5 Weak User Voice and the Struggle for Political Control

Service users' 'weak voice' in relation to the 'dyad' was because they felt disempowered by the meetings, which were the most obvious instances of the exercise of power. A political view of these arrangements would suggest that such mechanisms *"... are often*

11 Although gender, race, class, education, status and the professions were important factors in curtailing accountability as they helped to silence service users, the thesis does not examine these factors in detail for two reasons. First, the researcher argues that all these factors are subsumed within the issue of power. Second, she further argues that to examine these issues in any depth would detract from the focus of this thesis. However, she does acknowledge that each is very important in its own right and suggests that these are perhaps areas for further research.

best understood as products and reflections of a struggle for political control. Organisational structure can be used to divide or marginalise ... rules and regulations can provide powerful weapons in gaining an advantage ... " (Morgan 1998: 165).

6.7.6 Symbolic and Ceremonial Accountability

The research found that accountability to service users through the 'voice' mechanism was therefore symbolic rather than real (Bolman and Deal, 1985). In other words, in reality the meetings, which were supposedly intended to serve as an instrument of user accountability and where service users were represented, were both " ... *ceremonial* ... " (Bolman and Deal, 1985: 162) and ritualistic in nature. That is not to say that ceremonies and rituals are not important. They are, as they serve to " ... *socialise, stabilise, reduce anxieties and ambiguities, and convey messages to external constituencies* ... " (Bolman and Deal, 1985: 159-160). However, since the purpose of these meetings was to ensure user accountability, they did not achieve this.

Instead of facilitating legitimate user participation, this study found that these meetings were used merely for " ... *informing* ... " and " ... *placation* ... " of users and actually offered limited scope for effective involvement of and accountability to users (Arnstein, 1969: 217). Arnstein (1969), in her typology of participation, characterises 'informing' as the placing of emphasis on one-way communication. In this case, the flow of information was from the 'dyad' to service users, with no channel open for feedback and no power to ensure that their views would be " ... *heeded by the powerful* ... " (ibid). She describes placation as " ... *simply a higher level of tokenism because the ground rules allow have-nots to advise, but retain for the powerholders the continued right to decide* ... " (ibid).

Unfortunately for all the reasons given, any genuine concerns raised by users viewed as contentious issues were driven underground. This was done by the 'dyad' to give the impression that all was well in terms of user accountability. This is of concern because as Arnstein (1969: 220) concludes, if the user representatives "... *are not accountable to a constituency in the community and if the traditional power elite hold the majority of seats, the have-nots can be easily outvoted and outfoxed* ....".

6.7.7 The Dyad, the Triad and Trust

The situation between the 'dyadic network actors' on the other hand could not have been more dissimilar. The sectors were engaged in an accountability dialogue which according to MaClintock and Ison (1994: 2) is *" ... a process that is often talked about, but apparently rarely understood ... "*. This dialogue took the form of *"... an ongoing process of discussion in order to resolve misunderstandings and ambiguities ... "* (Lorenz, 1991: 186). Through *" ... sustained collective inquiry into the processes, assumptions, and certainties that compose everyday experience ..."* (Isaacs, 1993: 25), the 'dyad' were *" ... led beyond their initial positions, to take account of others and move towards a richer, more comprehensive view, a 'fusion of horizons'... "* (Ranson and Stewart, 1998: 249), out of which new possibilities emerged. The 'dyad' were in a *" ... web of inclusion ... characterised by trust, support encouragement and mutual respect ... "* (Morgan, 1998: 130)

This was not found to be the case between the 'dyadic network actors' and the 'triadic network actors'. The service users were neither party to this dialogue with the 'dyad' nor part of the inclusive close-knit, dense web or network (Granovetter, 1973). Although service users were members of the network, they were only weakly tied (Granovetter, 1973) to it, because their ties were characterised by *" ... fleeting, neutral, narrrow, and discretionary ... "* features (Tilly, 1998: 50). In addition, because the 'dyad' was operating as a 'clan', it also excluded service users. Whether conscious or not, exclusion was easily achieved (Gaster and Deakin, 1998).

Furthermore, there was found to be little trust between the 'dyad' (i.e. sectors) and the 'triad' (i.e. service users). This finding – the lack of trust at least on the part of users - is explained by Barnes and Prior (1998) in their work on the welfare consumer. They argue that, given the shift from hierarchical to market systems of welfare, where users have been encouraged to relate to providers through a framework of rights and entitlements, the relationship has become complex, highly problematic and trust has become eroded.

6.8 Users' Exclusion from the Accountability Process

Other reasons for users being excluded from the accountability process are complex. For reasons of clarity they have been separated into two sub-sections: users' own constraints and managerial or structural limitations.

6.8.1 Users' Own Constraints

Users' own constraints which are discussed in the following sub-sections comprised: 'low voice and low exit'; 'general unwillingness to complain'; 'service users not wishing to be disloyal'; and the service users' 'lack of both ability and willingness to boycott services'.

6.8.1.1 Low Voice and Low Exit

First and crucially, due to the lack of perceived and actual competition amongst providers, service users' 'voice' was not backed up by their 'threat of exit' to a rival organisation. Service users and providers were well aware that users cannot receive similar services locally elsewhere. In sharp contrast to the 'dyad's' inter-sectoral experience this means that neither has, nor believes the other has options. In Hirschman's (1970) terms, they were *" ... locked in ..."* and could not *" ... therefore ensure that an effective volume of voice will be forthcoming ... "* (Hirschman, 1970: 55). He further postulates that 'voice' is impeded not only when 'exit' is possible, but also (although in a quite different way) when it is not. Hence,

> *"... the presence of the exit option can sharply reduce the probability that the voice option will be taken up widely and effectively. Exit was shown to drive out voice ... [which] is likely to play an important role in organisations only on condition that exit is virtually ruled out. In a large number of organisations one of the two mechanisms is in fact wholly dominant ... there is competitive business enterprise where performance maintenance relies heavily on exit and very little on voice; on the other hand exit is ordinarily unthinkable, though not always wholly impossible, from ... groupings [such] as family, tribe, church, and state. The principal way for the individual ... to register ... dissatisfaction ... is normally to make his voice heard ..."* (Hirschman, 1970: 76).

6.8.1.2 General Unwillingness to Complain

Second, the service users' lack of inclination to speak up, which Hirschman (1970) refers to as a 'lack of readiness to complain', together with the fact that they were often *" ... too frightened ..."* (Kumar, 1997: 26) to express any dissatisfaction, meant that they did not have a voice. This is because as Wilson (1993: 511) also found, service users may *"... think victimisation will follow criticism ...."* . Leonard (1993: 162) notes that Freire, in his theory of *'conscientisation'* observed that the lack of voice was likely to be because individuals are 'oppressed' and 'domesticated' into conformity and silence. Freire argues that it is essential to establish *" ... dialogue ..."* (ibid) if 'voice' is to be recovered.

6.8.1.3 Service Users Not Wishing to be Disloyal

Third, given that loyalty is *" ... predicated on the possibility of exit ... "* (Hirschman, 1970: 82), the fact that even the most loyal member can leave the organisation is an important factor, in terms of their bargaining power and their ability to negotiate with the organisation. If individuals are unable to 'exit', Hirschman (1970) argues that they tend to develop a strong 'voice' as they have a keen interest in ensuring that the organisation they are members of, works to their mutual advantage.

The research found that service users lacked 'exit' opportunities and although they were keen to see that the service worked well, they also lacked 'voice'. One of the reasons for this could be that they also believed that it would be disloyal of them to complain, particularly since they were often very grateful for whatever services they received especially given provider organisations in this study were 'well known' and 'trusted' charities doing their 'best' for them. In Hirschman's (1970) terms however, the service users in this study would not be construed as having loyalty to the organisation, as there is no way of telling whether they would have exited or not.

6.8.1.4 Service Users Not Wishing to Boycott

Finally, Hirschman (1970) writes about *" ... boycott ... "* - the purpose of which is to achieve policy change in the organisation. Boycott is *" ... the mirror image of the threat of exit as an instrument of voice ... "* (Hirschman, 1970: 86). In other words, once certain conditions have been met, or the purpose of the boycott has been achieved, it is understood that any individuals who have boycotted the organisation will re-enter.

In relation to this study however, it was found that most if not all users were unwilling to boycott the services. This appeared to be the case for several reasons. The first was because they were often desperate for the services and could not afford to boycott them. The second was because services were at times compulsory. This meant that service users had no choice but were compelled to use them (see Chapter 5). As Gaster and Deakin (1998: 148) point out, users *" ... cannot be equated with 'customers' in a supermarket. They often cannot choose whether or not to receive the service and they cannot go to another supplier if they don't like their first experience ...."*. Finally, service users'

feelings of intimidation and disempowerment, together with their sense of not wishing to be disloyal also prevented them from making their protest in this way.

6.8.2 Managerial and Structural Limitations

Managerial or structural limitations are discussed in the next section. They comprise the following. 'Discouraging exit and voice'; 'a lack of democratic organisational history and tradition'; muted service users' 'voice' due to their own constraints and the power of the 'clan' (who are also operating as a clique and coalition); a lack of recognition from managers about users representing views other than their own; mechanisms to stifle service users' protests; and the symbolic nature of meeting with users.

6.8.2.1 Discouraging Exit and Voice

Although it is in the long-term interest of the organisation to encourage both 'exit' and 'voice' (in order to alert management to its failings, so that they can be addressed and any deterioration in the organisation's performance can be halted), this is not the case in the short term. The organisation's short term interest is to discourage 'exit' and 'voice' and maximise its freedom by thinking of and developing *" ... a variety of institutional devices aiming at anything but the combination of exit and voice ..."* (Hirschman, 1970: 93). Thus the management displays defensive behaviour generating *" ... shared norms and patterns of conformity that prevent people from addressing key aspects of the reality with which they are dealing ..."* (Morgan, 1998: 81). In so doing, they attempt to ensure that there are not many opportunities for either service users to leave the service, or as has already been seen, for them to express too much dissatisfaction.

In Hirschman's terms (1970: 93) management strips the users of the *" ... weapons which they can wield be they exit or voice ... and ... convert, as it were, what should be a feedback into a safety valve ..."*. Given that the length of contracts in the organisations studied were short to medium term, provider management was motivated to contain both 'voice' and 'exit' in order to develop their autonomy unimpaired by either *" ... desertions ... "* (ibid) or objections of users. In this way, 'voice' where audible, became *" ... mere 'blowing off steam' as it is being emasculated by the institutionalization and domestication of dissent ... exit can be similarly blunted ..."* (Hirschman, 1970: 124).

6.8.2.2 Lack of Democratic Tradition

In the main, lip service was paid to user accountability and the encouragement of user participation. This was in part due to the fact that, of the organisations' studied, none arose from any *"... democratic ..."* tradition (Hirschman, 1970: 55). According to Hirschman (1970: 55), *" ... to develop voice within an organisation is synonymous with the history of democratic control through the articulation and aggregation of opinions and interests ...".* Furthermore, organisational structures were found to be hierarchical and bureaucratic. This is because organisations in the study were: - large (in relation to others in the sector) in terms of size of income; number of employees; and level of operation; old (i.e. over 50 years of age), paternalistic in nature. They had no plans, either immediate or in the foreseeable future, to flatten structures or to introduce any form of democracy through participation in decision making of either the workers or the users. Moreover, the organisations in the study had been established for a long time and were oriented towards provision rather than mutual aid. All these factors meant that they were not in the best position to facilitate the development of user 'voice', or encourage them to say how they really felt.

6.8.2.3 Muted Users' Voice Due to their Own Constraints

According to Hirschman (1970), power usually emanates in part from the possibility of 'exit'. Since service users cannot 'shop around', however, he argues that they would have a huge motive to stimulate recovery through their use of the 'voice' option. Nonetheless, as has already been mentioned, this research found that the level of their expression through the 'voice' option was found to be wanting. User 'voice' is muted, if not silenced, not only due to users' own constraints but also due to the power of the densely networked, and close-knit 'clan' (Granovetter, 1985; Ouchi, 1980). This is explored in the next subsection 6.7.2.4.

6.8.2.4 The Power of the Clan

Members of the 'clan' are also behaving as *" ... domain defenders who attempt to allow little change to occur ... "* (Miles, Snow and Pfeffer 1974, cited in Hall, 1996: 162). Having become 'close knit' and aware of their common goals (Morgan, 1998: 158), the *" ... nexus of informed parties ..."* (Tirole, 1986: 182) has also begun to operate as a *" ... clique ..."* (Dalton, 1959) and *" ... coalition ..."* (Bacharach and Lawler, 1980: 92), formed to advance their own individual or sectional interests. Although factors such as age,

race, gender, organisational position, educational background and values may influence the formation of coalitions, the fact that they can form across organisational boundaries, vertically or horizontally reflects the constant *" ... interplay of power variables ..."* (Hall, 1996: 120) within the network. Since true *" ... participation is about power and the exercise of power is politics. This kind of participation inevitably becomes simply a manifestation of a broader political process ..."* (Dudley, 1993: 160). As this is the case, real user participation would not be possible in this arena, as it would threaten the powerful and vested interests of the clique.

6.8.2.5 Lack of Recognition from Managers about Users Representing Others' Views

Another key concern of managers in relation to user involvement and accountability corresponded to the management's perception that each individual user's needs, wants, demands and requirements were likely to be different and therefore specific to them. Management often believed that issues with respect to service quality could therefore be dismissed (up to a point), as they were regarded as being of a personal and individual nature rather than a collective disagreement with the organisations' approach. Managers did not recognise that users' views are not necessarily personal but can be an expression of their dissatisfaction with the policies of the local government purchaser or a decline in the quality of services provided by the charitable voluntary sector provider (Hirschman, 1970: 87).

6.8.2.6 Mechanisms to Stifle Service Users' Protests

A device often used by organisations involved in the study was to confer official status on users attending advisory, consultation or management committee meetings (see Chapter 5). Hirschman (1970: 115) refers to this as a method of neutralising opposition by a process of co-opting as the *"... domestication of dissenters ..."*. He argues that users' views are effectively contained by ensuring that they are viewed as organisational actors with a responsibility for the services they are in receipt of. Whether or not well intentioned on the part of the dyad, by giving service users a role and accepting and 'legitimating' them in this way, management effectively further disempowered users and maintained control.

Selznick adds that this form of participative democracy, stifles protest because it gives the *" ... illusion of a voice without the voice itself, and so stifles opposition without having to*

alter policy in the least ... " (Selznick, cited in Bachrach and Baratz, 1970: 45). Hirschman (1970: 115-116) further argues that it subdues any rebels because in

> *"... the process, the doubter's conscience is assuaged, but at the same time his position is made explicit and predictable. This predictability means a fatal loss of power for him; his position becomes discountable. The dissenter is allowed to recite his piece on condition that he engages in 'role playing' as a 'member of the team'. In this way, he is made to give up in advance his strongest weapon: the threat to resign under protest. ... the bargain is a very poor one for the dissenter ... Why would he stand for it? ... the final policy decision can always be made to look as some middle course ... members of both dissenting groups are always made to feel that 'if it had not been for me, an even more sinister decision would have been taken ...."* .

Managers from both sectors and service users did not engage in real discourse or conversation, and without this there could be no shared understanding or learning as conversation *" ... lies at the heart of learning: learners are listeners as well as speakers ... "* (Ranson and Stewart, 1998: 249). Having said this, there were neither functioning mechanisms nor structures in place to facilitate organisational listening or learning from users through 'exit' or 'voice' (Hirschman, 1970). There were organisational devices, which allowed those who were affected by quality decline to express their feelings. However, this amounted to nothing more than allowing users to vent their feelings, if that. In those provider organisations where there was little or no accountability to users, management was not responsive to users' criticisms. As Hirschman (1970: 122) notes, *" ... those who are affected by quality decline do vent their feelings in one way or another, but management happens to be inured or indifferent to their particular reaction and thus does not feel compelled to correct its course ...."*.

6.8.2.7 The Symbolic Nature of Meeting with Users

Finally, despite the exclusion of users from the user accountability process, organisations persist with the 'ritual' of the user accountability meetings, since they serve a significant symbolic purpose. Without such mechanisms, organisations would become concerned about the *" ...efficiency and effectiveness of activities ... "* (Rallis, 1980, cited in Bolman and Deal, 1985: 181). The meetings help the organisation to believe that things are working, demonstrate that the management cares and wants to improve, and provides opportunities for the actors to share their views and opinions and have them *" ... publicly heard and recognised ... "* (ibid).

6.9 Accountability and Users' Membership of Weakly Tied Networks

The research shows that one very important check and balance that ensured the 'dyad' operates in some scrutiny beyond their own boundaries, which provided them and the users with a system of accountability, was that they were all members of wider and other close–knit, loose-knit, dense or less dense, 'networks' (Granovetter, 1973; Axelsson and Easton, 1992). As Taylor, Langan and Hoggett (1995: 35) also found, such networks ensure that *"... organisations are more 'transparent' to each other and in some sense accountable across their own boundaries ...."*.

Since behaviour is shaped and constrained by one's network (Granovetter, 1985; 1973) anything of any real concern would be picked up by individuals or groups in the same or different 'networks' through *"... network accountability ..."* (Kumar, 1997: 7). Although weak ties break more easily than strong ones (Tilly 1998: 50), since *"... whatever is to be diffused can reach a larger number of people, and traverse a greater social distance ... when passed through weak ties ..."* (Granovetter, 1973: 1366), and as users were involved in various 'networks', it is more likely that they would communicate not only with each other, but also with others about matters of concern in relation to policy and or service delivery, through these social structures *" ... they also transmit information from distant sources more efficiently ..."*.

Furthermore, the findings from Blau and Alba's (1982: 377) research, which are pertinent to this study, indicate that:

(a) the involvement of individuals in external networks has a *"... markedly positive influence ..."* on their power; and

(b) such interpersonal associations, that form a matrix of weak ties, *" ... help to break down bonds of ingroup solidarity ...."*.

These are important in terms of the influence of service users. Having such knowledge may help them in relation to addressing the clan's lack of accountability to them. If they are aware that such access to information and contacts through these networks will help not only to expand their store of knowledge, but also their domain of influence, they may choose to increase networking, and thereby become further empowered. Another finding from this study, was that service users involved in these and other 'networks' were helped

to develop competence in *"... understanding their own needs ..."* (Barnes and Prior, 1998: 141).

6.10 The Summary of the Theoretical Framework of Accountability in POSC

The accountability relationships that have been discussed throughout this chapter between the 'dyad' and 'triad' are summarised in Figure 6g, which is the sum of all the figures 6a-f. Figure 6g:

(a) indicates what the nature of accountability relationships were under the system of grant-aid (see Figure 6a);

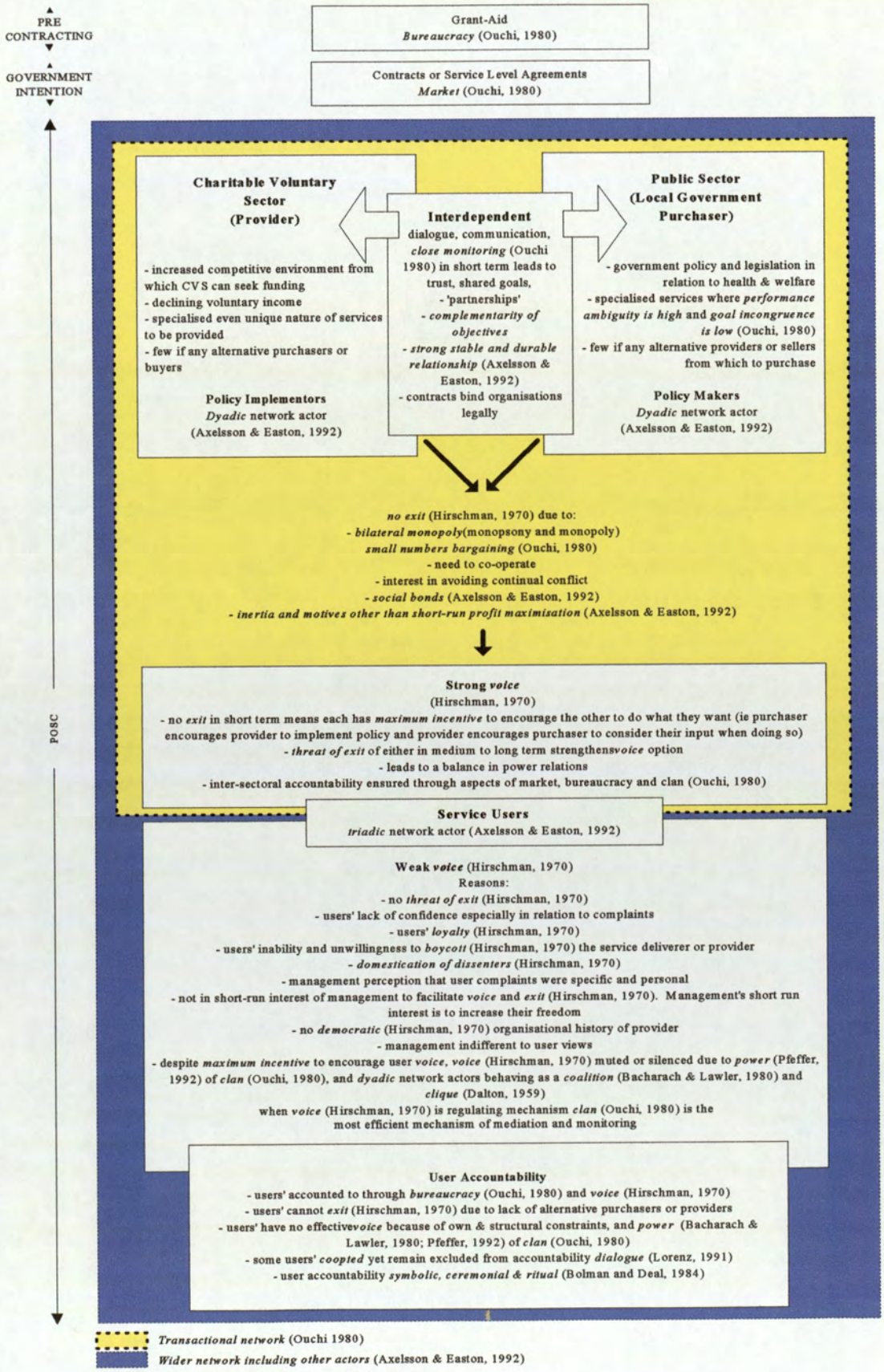
(b) identifies the way in which it was perceived that accountability would be ensured in the context of purchase of service contracting (POSC) (see Figure 6b); and

(c) conceptualises the ways in which the study found that inter-sectoral and user accountability are ensured in reality (see Figures 6c-6f).

The first two: - (a) and (b) – provided the background and context. In other words, the first summarised what happened in accountability terms prior to POSC and the second set out what was envisaged would happen. The third (c) linked the research findings to the theoretical frameworks used to explain them.

The way in which inter-sectoral, inter-organisational and user accountability was ensured is conceptualised in the central boxes shaded in yellow (transactional network) and blue (wider network including other actors) in Figure 6g, has been discussed throughout this chapter.

Figure 6g
Theoretical Framework of Accountability under Purchase of Service Contracting (POSC)



6.11 Summary

In sum, the constraints faced by users, together with the structural limitations encountered by organisations (for instance - their organisational history, the short term interests of management, managements' simultaneous disregard for user views, and silencing them through institutionalisation); are of appreciable importance when considering the balance of 'exit' and 'voice' (Hirschman, 1970). In other words, the effect of all the factors discussed was to fortify the inter-organisational relationships and accountability, through:

(a) their perception of the very high possibility of 'exit' of either actor (albeit in the longer term); and

(b) their strong 'voice' (Hirschman, 1970) in relation to one another.

The effect on users of their low 'exit' opportunities and inhibited 'voice', due to all the factors discussed, was to weaken purchaser and provider accountability to them.

Having said this however, given Granovetter's (1973) view that behaviour is shaped by one's network and that ties are important in linking 'networks' to one another, the concept of 'network accountability' (Kumar, 1997) is vital, as it provides organisations and service users with a social structure and system of accountability. This means that even if the organisational mechanisms for ensuring accountability to users are not functioning effectively due to the power issues identified earlier, organisations operate in a situation of some scrutiny beyond their own boundaries.

6.12 Conclusion

This chapter has applied a number of theories in combination to the research findings in order to conceptualise accountability under purchase of service contracting. In recognition of the fact that each theoretical approach has special insights, an eclectic approach was taken to provide a more comprehensive explanation for what was happening in the selected organisations.

6.12.1 Inter-Sectoral and User Accountability - Theoretical Explanation of the Findings

In the context of contracting, accountability is not, as was intended, wholly secured through the market/ 'quasi-market'. Instead it is operating through /within/ in the context

of a 'network' and ensured through a mix of aspects of 'market', 'bureaucracy' and 'voice'. Since there are few (if indeed any) 'exit' opportunities for either 'network actor', the 'dyad' has begun to operate as a 'clan'.

Although in a similar situation to the 'dyad' with reference to their lack of 'exit opportunities' and despite their membership of the same and other accountability 'networks', service users are only partially accounted to, through 'bureaucratic' mechanisms and also through 'voice'. Notwithstanding the service users' co-option by the 'dyad' into the small accountability 'net' (i.e. specific network meetings set up by the dyad), accountability to the users through this mechanism was found to be 'symbolic'. Users are not 'properly' accounted to, because the 'dyad' is operating not only as a 'clan' but also as a 'clique' and a 'coalition'. This results in the exclusion of service users from the accountability 'dialogue'. They have no effective 'voice' due to the 'power' and actions of the 'dyadic network actors'.

6.12.2 Inter-Sectoral and User Accountability - Summary

The findings of this research indicate that accountability is not solely operating through the market/'quasi-market'. Purchase of service contracting has encouraged the development or emergence of a new accountability relationship between local government, charitable voluntary organisations and service users. In response to contract accountability failure, accountability was found to be operating through:

(a) a mix of aspects of: market/ 'quasi-market' contractual agreements and bureaucratic mechanisms (quantitative and qualitative monitoring);
(b) the 'clan';
(c) discourse as a form of mediation; and within an interconnected group or system, referred to as 'networks'.

The public local government sector purchaser and the voluntary sector provider (charity) faced with various external environmental pressures have become interdependent. United by their common aims and interests they have developed strong dialogue, accountability relationships and a balance in power relations. This has resulted in them operating as an exclusive inter-sectoral group - a 'clan' - within a wider network. The research demonstrated that in working so closely together, they found it difficult to include any one

else in their relationship. Thus, although some service users were invited to attend the inter-sectoral meetings of this network, accountability to them through these meetings was found to be symbolic and of a ceremonial and ritualistic nature. Accountability through this mechanism was not real accountability. Users were effectively excluded from these meetings by the behaviour of the two dominant fellow group members, due to their power, and were found not to be accounted to through this mechanism. This, together with users' own constraints meant that not only were the purchaser and the provider not accountable to users, but that users were not able to ensure the sectors accounted to them. Users were however found to be members of the wider accountability network. In the two organisations that were able to demonstrate they were accountable to users, the dyad operated as *"... 'enthusiastic prospectors' ...* [who perceived] *... opportunities for change and want*[ed] *to create change and to experiment ..."* (Miles, Snow and Pfeffer (1974), cited in Hall, 1996: 162).

6.12.3 Conclusion – Contract Accountability Failure, the Exclusion and Non-Accountability to Users

The whole contracting process, which was supposed to lead to a separation between the purchaser and the provider and an increase in choice and responsiveness to users, has failed in both respects. It has actually led to: (a) a close and strong relationship between the public and voluntary sectors; and (b) an exclusion of the users from this relationship, possibly even more than was the case under the previous grant-aid arrangements. This has happened for two reasons. In order to try and correct the imperfections in the contractual process, individuals from both sectors have been forced to talk to each other much more and, because they socialise, the increased contact between them has had the effect in turn of shutting out the users. It is worth noting that in addition, according to every survey conducted to date, most quasi-market mechanisms have not ended up offering more choice to users. In fact, choice appears to have been reduced (Le Grand, 1998). Thus, paradoxically, in making the system more accountable to the funder through a series of formal and informal structures, this has led to the users becoming further disempowered and rendered the service even less accountable to them.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Conclusion

"The challenge of modern accountability is all about responding to the complexity by repairing linkages which have snapped or frayed and inventing new ones where they do not exist, and creating a framework which brings together politics and techniques in a new dialogue. ... Why not concentrate less on formal links ... and engage more in a civic dialogue to recreate at least something of the high visibility and directness of the face to face accountability with which the story of the word began." (Day and Klein, 1987: 249).

7.1 Introduction

This chapter is presented in two parts. The first looks back and briefly sums up the present state of knowledge. In particular, it summarises the research in terms of both what it set out to accomplish and how the intention was achieved. Specifically, the original questions that informed the study are revisited and the research process, the findings and explanation recapitulated.

The second part revisits the findings, draws conclusions and considers the implications. The implications of the findings of this research have been drawn together with some caution, and in full awareness that the selected organisations from either sector were not necessarily representative of the entire population involved in POSC. Nevertheless, although it is not possible to make any statistical generalisations, it is possible to expand theories from case studies - 'analytic generalisation' (Yin, 1989: 21) and such generalisations are made here.

The main claim of this research is that it has enabled the generation of significant insights into accountability, especially in relation to POSC. In doing so, it has raised issues for further debate and future research. In looking backwards and forwards, the chapter locates the context in which the thesis can be placed, thus evaluating its significance.

7.2 The Original Intention and The Final Outcome

As explained in the introductory chapter, although this thesis began as a result of the researcher's experiences as a member of an NHS committee, where her original interest focused on the doctrine of collective responsibility, the literature review, and Simey's (1985) essay in particular, influenced its research questions.

In broad terms the research examined whether there was, in Simey's (1985) terms, an effective system of accountability in place between those who make policy, those who deliver services and those on whose behalf the first two groups claim to be acting. Specifically, the study sought to discover whether there was an operational and functional structure in place to ensure accountability, between individuals and organisations engaged in the procurement (local government or public sector), operation (voluntary sector) and utilisation (users) of contracted out health and social welfare services.

To this end, it explored the accountability relationships and processes between 'the purchaser' (social service departments) and 'the provider' (charities) in the public and voluntary sectors. With reference to service users (who were sometimes but not always also voters and taxpayers) it also examined whether the public sector and the voluntary sector 'consulted with' and 'explained their decisions and actions' to them.

7.3 Accountability Definitions and Dilemmas Considered

The first chapter also discussed the reasons why it is both timely and important to study accountability. Together with certain definitional problems in relation to accountability and the voluntary sector, it briefly considered the aims, the focus, the key questions and the key issues. Finally, it provided a directional map in relation to the structure of the thesis, and the terminology and abbreviations used in the thesis were explained.

The second chapter reflected on the difficulties with the definition and complexity associated with the concept of accountability, and argued that it is confused. In reviewing the literature, the chapter also unpacked and illustrated the many and varied notions of accountability. It then gave consideration to accountability dilemmas, which have arisen as

a result of the current social policy context – namely POSC. In sum, it raised key issues that needed to be considered.

7.4 The Research Questions and Research Methodology

Difficulties associated with the concept of accountability (outlined in Chapter 2) informed the aims, objectives and the key research questions considered in Chapter 3. These were:

- How is accountability conceptualised and defined by managers from both sectors and service users?
- How is accountability operating within the context of POSC, given the concomitant changing relationship between public sector purchasers and charitable voluntary sector providers? How is it experienced and managed between the public sector and the voluntary sector?
- How is accountability enacted and managed between the sectors and users of health and social welfare services?

The research approach and the methodology employed for data collection and analysis were also explained.

Given the lack of theorising in the area of accountability, the study employed a grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Multiple embedded case studies were conducted and a range of qualitative methods was used for gathering the data. The "Framework" method developed at Social and Community Planning Research (SCPR) by Ritchie and Spencer (1994) was used to map and interpret the data.

7.4.1 The Respondents

In depth interviews of a total of one hundred and eighteen respondents comprising managers from the public sector and the voluntary sector, service users and or where appropriate their parents/carers, were conducted. Service user and carer respondents included: children and young people with special needs (physical and mental disabilities); children and young people with experiences of abuse; parents and carers of children and young people with special needs (physical and mental disabilities); and some older/elderly people using day care services.

7.4.2 Observations about the Data

Three observations can be made about the data. First its richness, as each respondent had a considerable amount to say. Although this has been of great value to the analysis, it has also been necessary to be ruthlessly - indeed painfully - selective and 'cherry pick' so that the volume of material presented in this thesis is manageable for the reader. Second, there was a high degree of consensus between managers across both sectors in their descriptions and even in their language about accountability. Third, there was a strong consensus amongst users (i.e. parents of children, children or young people with or without disabilities, the elderly) what issues were important with reference to user accountability. Such consensus was indeed noteworthy, given the variety of experiences each respondent had in different organisations within different research sites.

7.5 The Case Analysis Process and the Conceptual Framework

The findings emerging from the research and analytical process form the content of Chapters 4 and 5.

In order to define, conceptualise and explain the operation of and the processes involved in accountability, between the 'purchasers', the 'providers', and between these two actors and users of contracted out health and social welfare services, a pluralistic conceptual framework was developed and presented in Chapter 6.

7.6 Original Contribution of the Research to Accountability

The research makes two original contributions to knowledge. (a) It is the first study of inter-sectoral and user accountability in the context of POSC and as such contributes to the 'accountability' literature in general. (b) It develops a conceptual framework within which the complexities of these accountabilities can be located and analysed.

7.6.1 The First Study of Inter-Sectoral and User Accountability

Its primary contribution is that it is the first documented study of inter-sectoral (inter-organisational accountability) and accountability to service users in the context of POSC. Specifically, the research explains the accountability relationships between the sectors and

between them and the service users. In doing so, it provides a platform for dialogue between researchers, policy makers and practitioners. This research has policy relevance for three constituencies, government (local, central and the NHS), the voluntary sector, specifically service deliverers as well as self-help, campaigning and mutual-aid and community organisations, lobbying on behalf of service users.

7.6.2 The Development and Importance of A Theoretical Framework

Although there have been other studies in relation to accountability, their explanations are limited to specific and particular empirical investigations. The development of a theoretical framework capable of explaining accountability relationships is thus not only a first, but helps provide a better and more meaningful understanding of the complexities underpinning the concept of accountability. In sum, it goes beyond simple evidence based outcomes.

A second contribution of this thesis is that it developed a theoretical framework of accountability in the context of POSC, using a grounded theory approach. Various organisational theories were initially explored [for instance: *"exchange-theory"* (Levine and White, 1961); *"resource dependency theory"* (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978); *"organisational ecology"* (Hannan and Freeman, 1977); and *"game theory"* (McMillan, 1992; Rasmusen, 1989)], to see whether they could explain the research findings. They were eventually rejected as they did not really provide an adequate explanation.

Instead, a conceptual framework drawing on a range of literature from the fields of economics, sociology, management (organisational theory) and the political sciences, which has been more usually used in other contexts, was found to be more appropriate to explain the research findings. This was because together they provided the best explanation for what was happening.

The theoretical framework makes use of 'transaction cost', 'organisational culture', 'inter-organisational network' and 'power' literature. Specifically, it utilised and extended the concepts of *"bureaucracy, market and clan"* (Ouchi, 1980; 1979), *"exit, voice and loyalty"* (Hirschman, 1970), *"networks"* (Granovetter, 1985; 1973; Axelsson and Easton, 1992), and *"power"* (Bachrach and Baratz, 1970; Bachrach and Lawler, 1980; Pfeffer,

1992); and Lukes, 1974) into the realm of accountability[12]. This not only adds to the accountability literature but also to the contracting literature.

The theoretical framework enabled the analysis of not just the development of inter-sectoral and inter-organisational accountability but also each sector's (and organisation's) accountability to users. Thus it explains the sectors' behaviour, both in relation to one another, and also to users.

Developing a theoretical framework and establishing its validity through empirical evidence enables predictions to be made. This is useful to two constituents. It assists:

(a) other researchers to build on this framework and formulate new research questions; and
(b) policy makers in their understanding of accountability and the development and adaptation of policies.

The research revealed a great deal about the newly established relationship between each sector and between both sectors and service users, in the new policy environment. These are discussed in the following sections.

7.7 Key Findings and Implications

A summary of the key findings and their implications is presented in the following subsections.

7.7.1 No Market/Quasi-Market

Despite the introduction of POSC in health and welfare provision, this study found no 'market/quasi-market' structure defined as the existence of many purchasers as well as many providers. The finding that the choice of services remains limited and had not been improved by the process of contracting, is supported by the work of Le Grand (1998); Spurgeon et al (1997); Walsh (1995) and Flynn and Hurley (1993).

[12] Wherever these concepts are used in the rest of this chapter, they are used with reference to their respective authors indicated here in parentheses.

In specific terms, given the lack of a market, the study found no competition (or any potential for competition in the short to medium term) between:

(a) purchasers (either between social service departments in the same geographical proximity, or between social service departments and individuals purchasing on their own or others' behalf); or
(b) providers.

Instead there was found to be a bilateral monopoly, as a result of which there was 'no increase in choice' for service users.

The argument that the development of a market/quasi-market would provide greater accountability to users, in that they would be able to 'exit' (i.e. vote with their feet) is unlikely. This is not only because the services were very specialised, but also because of the high and (perhaps even prohibitive) costs of entering the market (not only in the short and medium term but also in the longer term).

In such a situation, mechanisms need to be put in place other than user consultation meetings, which did not work, in order to provide service users with opportunities to 'voice'. This would enable user needs and priorities to be taken into account.

If neither exit nor voice mechanisms are operational, this could lead to a deterioration of services up to the point that users may have no alternative but to stop using them. Should this occur, it is likely that this would be costly not only to them and their families, but also to taxpayers. As individuals, users may become further alienated, isolated and their physical and mental health could be affected. As a result of their isolation and ill health, they may need even more health and welfare services than before, which would have to be funded by the public, an additional cost to taxpayers

7.7.2 Evidence of A Context of Accountability due to the Electoral Process

There was no evidence of accountability demands being made by service users through their elected representatives. In spite of the argument that local government, in ensuring accountability to the electorate (which may include service users and/or their families),

would be responsive to the needs and wants of users, the study did not find any evidence either to support or refute this.

There were indications however, that although users of purchased or contracted out services did not appear to demand accountability through the mechanism of their elected representatives, councillors and local government managers were mindful that the elected representatives' mandate could be revoked by the electorate. This appeared to have some bearing on policy makers as they were all too aware of this and that for instance, they could quite legitimately be called to account and subjected to 'very close questioning' for their decisions. This was not only in terms of their decisions in general, but was also in relation to the purchased services.

The implication of this finding is important from the viewpoints of both policy makers and service users. Since councillors do not make their decisions in a vacuum, users can make use of local government structures and mechanisms to ensure that policy makers are aware of their concerns. From the policy-makers' perspective, they would have greater accountability to the public for contracted-out services, if they were to be more involved with them. In fact, in accountability terms, it would be better if the councillors not only became interested in the views of users but also liaised with them, so that their views could be fed into the policy making process.

7.7.3 Interdependent Partners and Exclusion of Service Users - Findings

Although accountability between the sectors was ensured through some aspects of bureaucracy and those associated with market/quasi-market mechanisms, this research found that accountability was mainly ensured through the 'clan' mechanism (Ouchi, 1980; 1979), through discourse as a form of mediation. Put another way, the study found that new sets of relationships between the state and the voluntary sector had emerged and this resulted in new forms of accountability. It also found that this was taking place, within an interconnected system or network.

Unlike the notion of a one-off, arms-length exchange expressed by neo-classical economics, this form of relationship and accountability has evolved as a result of the imperfections in the market. Specifically, given:

(a) the repeated working relationship;
(b) the conditions of incomplete information; and
(c) the necessarily incomplete and often largely implicit relational contracts that could not be specified fully in advance;

the public sector and the voluntary sector, (in this case local government social service departments and charities), have become interdependent.

As found by other researchers (Mackintosh, 2000; Checkland, 1997), this study also found there was:

(a) no legalisitic approach to the contracting process by either party;
(b) accountability between the sectors was ensured through a two-way dialogue and relationship;
(c) initially and formally, accountability was ensured through 'contract accountability' – the process of establishing the document, and the document itself;
(d) it was further ensured through 'implicit relational contracting'; and
(e) later, and also informally, accountability was found to be reinforced through 'network accountability' – each actor's social and professional networks (Kumar, 1997), where numerous relationships were found to be operating at many levels.

United by their common aims and interests, accountability relationships between the sectors were based on discussion, liaison and the building up of trust and mutual respect. This operated through a circular, participatory, iterative, and only partially bureaucratic process. In other words, POSC provided a focus around which people changed their relationships – the document was almost incidental in this process.

Each sector considered and described the other as a partner. In the new partnership between the sectors, there was a balance in power relations – a 'horizontal power relationship' (Hall, 1996).

Without exception, the inter-sectoral relationship between the purchasers and providers was found to be close, strong, stable and durable, and the contracting and accountability processes characterised by voice, dialogue, communication and trust. Having said this

however, there was found to be little accountability to users, the implications of which are discussed in-depth later.

Several implications arise from the interdependence of the sectors, and the resulting accountability mechanisms that have developed. The first is that because the process was imperfect and still evolving, and the sectors were responsive to and in dialogue with one another, flexibility was encouraged. In other words, when and if circumstances changed, there was *" ...a willingness to renegotiate the explicit contractual elements ..."* (Macneil, 1980, cited in Mackintosh, 2000: 15). This resulted in the purchaser and provider being able to keep the transactions costs low in relation to the contract; and their being able to continue with the development and innovation of services.

The second implication and the upside of the inter-organisational relationship, is that the process of contracting has encouraged greater clarity and accountability into the relationship, between the partners in terms of what should be provided, to whom, at what price and what standard. As Walsh (1995) and Le Grand (1998) also observed, purchasers have had to look more closely at what to provide and the quality standards to be met.

The third implication and the downside of this cosy relationship between the sectors, in which the lines between *"... collaboration and collusion ...."* (Mackintosh, 2000: 17) are at times blurred, relates to their inability and ineffectiveness in ensuring accountability to service users. Although dialogue, communication and trust were ongoing and key features of the inter-sectoral 'contract' and 'network' accountability relationships, they were not present in the relationship between the sectors and the users. In most cases, the purchasers and providers found it difficult to include anyone else in their relationship. Although some service users were invited to the inter-sectoral meetings, they were excluded by the powerful partners. Thus, neither sector really consulted with or explained their decisions and actions to service users.

In addition, and resonating closely with Walsh's (1995) and Flynn and Common's (1992) research findings, this study found that service users had no formal or informal role in relation to the contract. Moreover, service users were further excluded by the sectors, as they were not involved either in the process of drawing up, or in establishing the contents of the contractual agreement, which was an accountability document and a focus around

which the sectors were able to build their relationship and network with one another. This is of particular concern and a policy risk at the *"... heart of the contract culture ...."* (Mackintosh, 2000: 17).

Nevertheless, both sectors also recognised that accountability for the quality of service provision and accountability of policy to users had not as yet been worked out by both partners. Local government managers appeared to be aware that the picture of user accountability was not as positive as the inter-sectoral accountability relationship. Although this was an area of concern for both sectors, it was highlighted during the fieldwork, as a priority for local government to address.

Decisions about the provision of certain services that affect users clearly require inputs from the users, either individually and or through user groups. The involvement of service users in the process of specifying what should be delivered is likely to result in more appropriate and sensitive services.

7.7.4 No Exit, No Voice, No User Participation

Despite the changes that have taken place as a result of POSC - for example:

(a) users making more demands on policy makers and service deliverers;
(b) services being more needs-led than before contracting;
(c) managers trying to increase and facilitate user participation in decision making about services that affected them;

a number of difficulties were encountered in ensuring user accountability.

Since a quasi-market had not (at the time of the study) developed, this resulted in service users not being able to exercise their choice to 'exit'. If this is not possible, then it is important to ensure that users can 'voice'. Put another way, they must be able to influence the service and its development through opportunities to say how they feel.

Although it was found that there was provision for service users to be accounted to through certain voice and bureaucratic mechanisms, this study found like Le Grand et al (1998: 27) that there was only *"... anecdotal evidence of user consultations and forums ..."* and *"... no systematic information on the type, extent and consequences of such activities ...".*

Moreover, this study also found that even when the alternative to choice - the voice mechanism - existed, users were effectively excluded from using it. This was not only due to the fact that there was a lack of democratic organisational history and tradition in the charities delivering services, but also because the opportunities for 'voice' were in effect only symbolic and service users' participation in such meetings was tokenistic at best. Accountability through this mechanism was not real accountability.

User consultation meetings, at times were not functional. When they were functional, service users' voices were muted because the powerful 'clan', (who were also operating as a clique and coalition), instituted mechanisms to stifle service users' participation. This meant that users were not party to any dialogue or discussions, which would have ensured purchaser and provider responsiveness and consequently accountability to them.

Mechanisms employed to stifle user participation included: (a) their being denied a platform for raising concerns; and (b) discouraging them from contributing agenda items for discussion. Furthermore, their concerns were not recorded in the minutes. In addition, they were silenced and excluded by: - the formality of the meetings; the defensiveness of professionals attending them; being ignored and not listened to; and the use of jargon.

Users were intimidated and overwhelmed in the meetings in which they could have raised issues. If and when service users were courageous enough to raise items for discussion, they were discouraged from doing so, in several ways, by those with power. Furthermore, there was a lack of recognition from managers about users representing views other than their own. This meant that the inequality between them and the service providers was maintained thus resulting in the continued disempowerment of users.

Users also had their own constraints. They were not helped by their general unwillingness to complain or raise issues of concern. They worried about upsetting service providers, as they thought that this might lead to anger or retaliation, which they thought could be taken out on them (or their parent, or child) at a later date. They were also afraid that if they complained about the only service, for which they were often desperate, it could be withdrawn. Additional concerns that perpetuated users' further exclusion included their gender, race, class and educational background. In addition, they were unwilling and

unable to boycott services. This was compounded by the fact they did not wish to be disloyal.

Users' own concerns about services included having sometimes too much information and encountering difficulties with understanding complex organisational structures and systems. They also described:

1. their lack of confidence and self esteem;
2. their feelings of intimidation and isolation;
3. about being labelled as troublemakers;
4. having to fight and push their way through organisational defences and professional defensiveness before they were heard;
5. negative organisational responses to certain constructively critical feedback, which users were aware was at times not appreciated.

Since there was no serious attempt to develop a meaningful dialogue with service users, barring one or two notable exceptions, it was not surprising that progress towards user accountable services was found to be extremely slow and often even non-existent. Given that the critical factors of effective communication and trust were absent in the sectors' relationships with users, service users were unable to ensure that the sectors were accountable to them.

Only two service delivery organisations were considered to be accountable to users by both, managers and users. In these organisations that had a 'culture' of accountability, individuals behaved as though ensuring that the service was responsive to users was the most important priority. Thus there were mechanisms to ensure that user needs and priorities, which emerged from the organisation's consultation with users, and these were taken on board.

This was possible because they had structures in place, which enabled user participation in decision making. Developed during the course of social interaction, these organisations had also established an organisational ethos and management culture of user accountability – " ... *an active living phenomenon* ... " through which people jointly created and recreated the worlds in which they lived (Morgan 1998: 135). These organisations were

committed to user accountability as a two-way process, a theme that played itself out across the entire service. User participation in decision-making about policies that affected their lives was regarded as vital in terms of informing professional practice and in relation to improving services. In these organisations, both the positive and negative views of users were considered to be of great value and were supported. Users were not seen as complainants. Concerns shared between managers and users were not considered by managers, as an admission of failure. Managers in these organisations were also aware of (and some were even involved in) user networks.

The key factors that the two exceptional user accountable organisations shared was in relation to the individuals managing these services. They:

(a) were able to exercise a great deal of autonomy; and
(b) had a great deal of relevant personal experience similar to users.

These factors appear to be crucial to enabling them to establish a culture and context of accountability.

This has implications for:

(a) organisations and senior managers in terms of the level of autonomy and responsibility they encourage at lower levels of the organisation;
(b) who should be recruited to run such services; and
(c) training those who manage them.

7.8 Conclusion

Both the voluntary sector and the public sector demonstrated that they were clearly accountable to each other, but with the exception of two organisations in the study, none were 'properly' accountable to users. There was no sense in which decision-making had become more transparent either to users, or, as Le Grand et al (1998) found, to the public. Defensive behaviour from the clan had become a central part of the culture which prevented them from addressing the *" ... key aspects of the reality ... "* with which they were dealing (Morgan, 1998: 81).

Of the two public sector and voluntary sector organisations that were found to be accountable to users (defined as such according to all the actors), they demonstrated a commitment to user accountability. They had created a culture of accountability to users, through democratic approaches to working and empowerment.

In other words, they consulted with and explained decisions to service users, and users felt comfortable in terms of raising issues with members of staff. In these organisations, although very well aware of the complaints procedures, users did not feel they needed to use them. This was probably in part because the procedures were there. However, it was also because service users felt able to approach any member of staff (including the most senior person with whom they were on first name terms) at any time to address concerns, as soon as they arose.

Quite apart from this, the atmosphere in the two accountable organisations was palpably different from any other. Given that both organisations were working with children who had experience of abuse and were from disadvantaged families, the fact that there were warm welcomes, smiles and laughter was vital, as these organisations provided an environment in which the users felt safe. There was plenty of activity, children walked around the organisation not only as if they belonged, but also as if they had the right to be there. They were comfortable, confident and helped themselves to anything they wanted for example toys, paints, food and drink.

In addition, in these organisations the providers in particular had managed to cultivate and encourage user voice, both at the individual level as well as at the collective level. Moreover, providers that were responsive and accountable to users took their role as advocates on behalf of their service users very seriously.

7.9 Discussion

Any solution to resolving the accountability issues illustrated in 7.7.4 will rest on the degree of trust that can be generated between the dyad (the voluntary sector and the public sector) and the triad (both sectors and the service users). Only by:

(a) having a regulatory framework (Mackintosh, 2000); and

(b) by going through a similar process to the dyad in building their relationship, in other words by the three actors collaborating and arriving at a mutual understanding, will the dyad seize the opportunity to empower the individual user, encourage user control and be accountable to them.

As Mackintosh (2000) argues -

> *"An effective regulatory framework needs to develop mechanisms of openness and accountability ... It would centre on developing more open processes of partnership governance, where clients had more say in choosing partners and managing provision, thus opening up to challenge potentially cosy inter-organisation relationships ...." (Mackintosh, 2000: 18).*

One way of addressing the exclusion of users and the inequality between the dyad and the users in the short term, would be to involve users in establishing the contract as a three-way document. The involvement of the service users, professionals and management in the process of decision-making in relation to service provision, is what the Oregon experience (which involved the community in health rationing decisions) suggests (Honigsbaum, 1991).

In other words, if:

(a) it were a requirement that the sectors had not just to consult users but also to involve them in all the processes including planning, design of the services and in producing the contract and the performance measures linked to it; and
(b) users were accorded the same status as the sectors, in that they also had to sign the contract;

the institutional barriers to their inclusion could be overcome. Collaboration between the three actors would become effectively mandatory.

Service users could if necessary draw in external expertise to mediate as advocates on their behalf, if they found that as with the other meetings they were at all overwhelmed and indeed disempowered by the process. Closer links between the users and elected representatives could be established. In this way, users' views would be an integral part of

purchase of service contracting decisions and accountability to them through the contractual mechanism would be properly ensured.

In addition, consideration must be given to ensuring that user concerns are addressed. For example, where requested users should be given training, payment for their time and support from user advocates.

In the medium term, service users, current and potential, need a voice independent of both purchasers and providers.

In the longer term and the final analysis however, the only way to ensure 'proper' accountability to service users, and for the services offered to make more than a *"... marginal difference ..."* (Wilson, 1993: 523) to their already difficult lives, would be to have the service delivery organisation chaired by a user and user-managed services. User participation in both strategic decision-making and organisational governance structures is characterised as the democratic approach to user involvement (Locke, Robson and Howlett, 2001; Robson and Locke, 1997).

Given the lack of democratic history of the organisations currently delivering services through POSC, and the fact that they cannot change their history, in order to ensure proper accountability to users in the long term, these organisations need to re-examine their role. Perhaps a more suitable role for them given their expertise, name, reputation and fundraising abilities would be to become grant-givers, professional user advocates and capacity builders for user-managed, community-based and locality-based, mutual, self-help groups, associations and organisations.

Given that such mutual organisations are *"... in a weaker position without the representational forms to articulate the multiple interests of their populations ...."* (Conroy 1995: 66), the large voluntary organisations, which as Cochrane (1993) predicted have so far benefited most from the purchaser-provider partnerships in social care, could, by changing their role, encourage community and user participation and empowerment. In recognising, as Taylor (1995: 109) does, that it is likely that *"... in a more fragmented 'post-modern' environment, networks and alliances will be the foundation on which*

empowerment is built ....", they could also increase their legitimacy and become more accountable organisations to service users.

Failure to ensure accountable services, would as Poertner and Rapp (1985: 66) conclude *"... mean a continued failure to meet our public responsibility ...".* The long-term benefits that would be gained would be significant. The users would be empowered and experience better services, the providers would deploy their resources more effectively and society would benefit from increased social cohesion (Barnes and Prior, 1996; 1995).

7.10 Future Research

Although this study has revealed a great deal about the intricate relationships between the three actors - the social service departments, the charities and the service users - more could be learned from further research into the sectors relationship with users. Two specific suggestions are made here.

The first suggestion is for a deeper exploration of the power relationships between service users and service deliverers. This could include research into the impact that factors, such as gender, race, ethnicity, class and educational background, have in relation to user empowerment, their participation in decision-making, and accountability for instance.

The second suggestion is for a study of networks, ties and their impact on accountability.

7.11 And Finally ...

In conclusion, the task at hand was twofold. The first was to explore accountability within the context of purchase of service contracting (POSC). The second to use conceptual 'tools' to explain the findings. If concepts are tools their *" ... values depend on whether they do the job at hand. Just as a crystal shovel looks lovely but remains useless for digging coal, elaborate concepts glitter alluringly but break down when put to work ...."* (Tilly, 1998: 73). To continue with Tilly's metaphor, in this excavation, the tools used to explain accountability, in this case between the public sector, the voluntary sector and service users - clans, exit and voice, networks, and power – are of steel rather than crystal.

Since the pluralistic analytical framework drew on concepts to have emerged from the 'subsoil' of grounded theory, they did not break down when put to work.

7.12 The Relevance of the Research Findings in the New Policy Context (1997 onwards)

Since the completion of the fieldwork in 1996, as a result of the election of 'New Labour' in May 1997, and their re-election in 2001, there have been significant changes in government policy. Public service managers are therefore now operating within an institutional context shaped by a different set of government policies (Boyne, 2001). The post script following this chapter discusses some of the changes in government policy which have occurred and reflects on their relevance for the findings of this research study.

CHAPTER 8

Post Script: The New Policy and Institutional Context and the Relevance of the Research Findings

"The search for co-ordination lies at the heart of New Labour's reforms and yet Hayward and Wright (2000) show that horizontal co-ordination is the philosopher's stone of modern government, ever sought, but always just beyond reach ...." (Rhodes, 2000: 359).

8.1 Introduction

In this postscript the issues arising from the policies of the New Labour government are considered, specifically in relation to local government reform and the changing role of local authorities, as they take up responsibility for community governance. This is followed by consideration of such policies in relation to the research findings discussed in the previous chapter, specifically in terms of the accountability relationships between the statutory sector, the voluntary sector and service users.

8.2 The Election of New Labour - Continuity and Change in Government Policy

In May 1997 'New Labour' was elected and came to power with a commitment more to continuity than to change. In addition to their pledge not to change the previous Conservative government's spending plans for their first two years, they continued some policies from earlier administrations, the most notable being the close regulation of local authorities (Brooks, 2000). Other initiatives originally launched by the Conservative government and expanded by New Labour include: Public Sector Benchmarking (derived from the Business Excellence model); the Charter Mark Scheme (which encouraged improvement in the delivery of services); and Public Service Agreements (which demand measurable improvements in standards) (Bevir and O'Brien, 2001).

8.3 The Modernisation Agenda for Local Government - The Third Way

Despite this continuity, concerned by problems created by structural changes over the previous seventeen years (Talbot, 2001), New Labour did indicate some policy shifts from their Conservative predecessors. During 1998, the government published six consultation documents (DETR 1998 a-f), a White Paper "Modernising Local Government: In Touch with the People" (DETR, 1998g), and a Local Government (Best Value and Capping) Bill. Although only in draft form, this was followed by another Local Government (Organisation and Standards) Bill and a Command paper "Local Leadership, Local Choice" (DETR, 1999). In addition, the " ... modernisers ..." also published " ... extensively in local government practitioner journals ..." (Brooks, 2000: 595).

New Labour considered that the quasi-market reforms of the 1990s hindered co-ordination between health and social services and the development of collaborative relationships (Glendinning, 2002). In partially retreating from the belief in competitive markets as a solution to the problems of public service provision (Knapp et al, 2001), they abolished compulsory competitive tendering (CCT) and the NHS internal market, and introduced their vision - a modernisation agenda/project for local government. Associated with Etzioni (1997, 1995) Hutton (1997, 1995) and Giddens (1998), New Labour employs a succession of terms to describe their vision, which range from 'community' and 'stakeholding' to 'the third way' (Bevir and O'Brien, 2001).

In the Local Government Act (1999), New Labour established 'Best Value' in government services as the centrepiece of their policy to modernise local government. Central to New Labour's plans to modernise local government was the introduction of change into the political structures - a revitalisation of the constitutional arrangements. Brooks (2000) summarises these in terms of the following inter-linked policy themes – 'democracy' 'leadership', 'community', and 'regulation'. In so doing, New Labour indicated a search for what Rhodes refers to as 'a new operating code' (Martin, 2000).

8.4 Policy Themes and The Operational Level

At an operational level, New Labour's stated policy objectives, in relation to the modernising project, were to:

- enhance local democracy;
- improve local leadership; and
- develop the role of local councils in their community.

In specific terms, these policy themes were aimed at:

(1) encouraging councils to provide community leadership and modernise decision-making; and
(2) enhancing local public participation and improving service delivery.

In pursuing these themes, the objective of New Labour, and the modernisers in particular, were to reshape the relationship between government and the public. These themes are discussed briefly.

8.5 Enhancing Community Leadership and Modernised Decision Making

New Labour emphasised the importance of leadership, democracy and accountability within local government. Their commitment to enhancing local community leadership and representation, and providing a new representative role for local government, coincided with an interest in the introduction of New Public Management (NPM) into local government. This, as has been discussed elsewhere, covers many varieties of public sector reform (Hood, 1995; Rhodes 1998).

New Labour envisaged that the traditional committee structure could be replaced with three new forms of executive leadership:
(a) a directly elected mayor with a cabinet of senior councillors;
(b) a cabinet system with a leader either elected or appointed from the councillors; or
(c) a directly elected mayor with a council manager (Brooks, 2000).

Under the new arrangements, New Labour considered that political leaders would become 'civic entrepreneurs'. They would build coalitions of interests and develop opportunities for their communities (Leadbeater and Goss, 1998), whilst backbench councillors would become scrutinisers and more effective representatives for their communities (DETR, 1998g: ch.3).

Quite unlike the committee structures of the past, the executive would enable members of the community to identify the responsible decision-maker, thereby leading to more effective accountability. The New Labour government considered that such an enhanced role would introduce greater efficiency, transparency and accountability in local government's decision-making, by making it less unwieldy, more effective and more responsive to the community.

8.6 Community Government, Democratic Renewal and Increased Accountability

Derived from a model developed by Stewart (1996) amongst others, New Labour envisaged that through their modernisation project 'community government' (Brooks, 2000) would revitalise local democracy and increase accountability, through a new strategic role for local authorities.

The transition from CCT to Best Value with its emphasis on "... consultation ... and Better Quality Services ..."(McCartney, 2000: 2) shifted the locus of decision-making to the local level. New Labour promoted 'joined-up' government, delivering public services by steering networks of organisations (Rhodes, 2000) or partnerships (Glendinning, 2002), as another key element of Best Value, and the solution to such problems.

Best Value was intended to create the conditions under which there was likely to be greater interest from other sectors, in working with local government, to deliver quality services at a competitive price. Thus, the promotion of local partnership arrangements between purchasers and providers and other agencies was emphasised and the strengthening of local government's powers to enter them were encouraged, as a means of tackling cross-cutting issues, client groups or communities (Martin, 2000).

Concerned that public services should offer "... choice and services better suited to individual needs .... " (Parliament 1998: 38), New Labour recognised that:

(a) the service should be provided by the sector(s) that can deliver it most efficiently and effectively; and

(b) institutional needs and organisational convenience should not be put ahead of the needs of users. New Labour therefore adopted a pluralist approach to public service delivery.

In addition, by driving up service standards in line with the increasing expectations of users (Martin 2000), the community and users were to be given a role in determining spending priorities and setting performance targets. Community government would create the conditions for a culture of flexible working and continuous improvement and thereby ensure that local government delivers improved services and is responsive and accountable.

8.7 Partnerships and Co-operation – Trust Networks

New Labour's trust networks include co-operation between:

- different statutory agencies (and the professionals who work in them);
- organisations from different sectors (i.e., statutory, voluntary and private sector organisations);
- organisations and individuals (e.g., providers - front line staff, outside experts and service users); and
- statutory organisations and local communities.

The partners, institutional and individual, are envisaged as having reciprocal rights and responsibilities (Bevir and O'Brien, 2001).

The acceptability of partnership developments is closely linked to notions of democratic accountability and responsiveness. In introducing community government, New Labour introduced fundamental change, which was addressed towards altering cultures and attitudes within local government, and creating opportunities for democratic participation.

8.8 Democratic Participation

Given that public " ... participation lies at the heart of the Labour government's modernisation agenda ..." (Lowdnes et al, 2001: 205), New Labour required local government to consult with their localities on the effectiveness of service delivery.

In placing this statutory requirement on local authorities, they signalled that closer consultation with and feedback from service users, was not only highly desirable, but also essential, in order to ensure that services – and the means by which they are provided – were acceptable.

Community government would ensure democratic renewal through the introduction of new and innovative forms of democracy into the practices of representation and participation, such as for instance, deliberative forums (Hall et al, 1998) where all opinions would be heard and none excluded.

Proposals to increase participation both challenge traditional forms of representative democracy and are more far reaching (Brooks, 2000). By being responsive and accountable, New Labour envisaged that community government would enable diverse forms of social action. Examples include:

- interactive web sites;
- citizen's panels (consisting of a larger representative sample of the population who not only discuss specific proposals but also develop broader ideas about future service provision);
- citizen's juries (consisting of a small number of lay members who scrutinise specific proposals);
- visioning;
- community planning; and
- a people's panel – comprising 5000 members – a cross section of the population (Bevir and O'Brien, 2001; Lowndes et al, 2001; 1998).

8.9 Summary – The Third Way

In this postscript, key developments in public policy under New Labour, have been reviewed. New Labour's public philosophy - the third way – exemplifies the shift from the providing state of Old Labour, and the minimal state of Thatcherism, to the enabling state, which envisages a society of stakeholders and is characterised by co-operation and partnerships.

In this philosophy, the currency is neither authority (bureaucracy), nor price competition (markets) rather it is trust (networks) (Rhodes, 2000). The pursuit of better services and improved governance of those services, through 'joined-up' government and partnerships, or networks of organisations delivering public services is the third way in action. In the conclusion section, these key developments are considered and discussed in relation to the research findings.

Since the completion of the fieldwork, existing evidence of the impact of reforms and the modernisation project has been both limited and mixed (Bevir and O'Brien, 2001; Brooks 2000; Glendinning, 2002; Knapp et al, 2001; Lowndes et al, 2001; and Martin, 2000). Thus, whilst some issues raised in the discussion and conclusion chapter have been addressed, others have (as yet) not. Both are briefly discussed here.

8.10 Partnership, Market, Exit and Voice

The terminology has been altered to the 'third way', and 'partnership' arrangements between purchasers and providers and other agencies are certainly emphasised, which includes voluntary and community sector involvement in the planning and delivery of public services (Treasury, 2002). Nevertheless, in addition to government recognition that implementation of the 'Compact' has been patchy (Cabinet Office, 2002), Knapp et al (2001) argue that the trend in market development has not been reversed. It has only been partially redirected by the Blair government. Reforms in social care, which are still influential today, were promoted in the 1990 NHS and Community Care Act. Thus social care services continue to be provided through the market or market like arrangements.

In this context, New Labour's agenda to increase democratic participation and provide service users with opportunities to 'voice' has become even more crucial in ensuring increased user accountability and public accountability. However, according to Lowdnes et al (2001) and Brooks (2000), the notion that the growth in participation initiatives represents democratic enhancement, needs to be treated with some caution.

8.11 Initiatives, Exclusion and Inclusion

In their study, Lowndes et al (2001) found that whilst many initiatives did indeed provide opportunities for individuals or groups to articulate their preferences – they also found that they were often deliberately designed to discriminate in favour of certain groups/areas.

Brooks (2000) adds to this perceived weakness, concern about the strength of deliberative forums in overcoming the difficulties of exclusion, evident elsewhere in society. She argues that, whether by deliberative forums or other processes, consultation risks merely framing the questions that reflect the dominant discourse. Factors such as gender, education and ethnicity lead to exclusion. Thus, for Brooks (2000), there remains the question of: 'whose voice predominates, when some opinions are considered more worthwhile and weightier than others?'.

8.12 Conclusion – The Jury is Still Out

Given that evolutionary changes draw on elements of previous initiatives (Knapp et al, 2001; Talbot, 2001; Martin, 2000 and Brooks, 2000); and many initiatives are still in their infancy; it is perhaps too early to ascertain the impact of these reforms. Judgement in relation to the impact of government policy on user participation must therefore be held in abeyance for now.

As argued in Chapter 7, only by addressing issues in relation to power, through for instance, the involvement of users in the planning, delivery and monitoring of services, together with support for **all** of them, to develop and articulate 'voice', will an accountability culture be firmly established.

Despite New Labour's commitment to revitalising local democracy, since there is very little evidence of significant progress towards either so far, this raises continuing questions about: (a) the benefits of current proposals for service users; and (b) the adequacy of governance arrangements within partnerships - neither of which has been clearly established (Glendinning, 2002). Thus, whilst misgivings remain, as to whether community leadership is sufficiently robust to meet the challenge of social exclusion and provide a more cohesive, inclusive form of government (Lowndes et al, 2001; and Brooks, 2000), for now, and only for now, the jury is still out.

References

Alexander, M. (1999), *Primary Care Groups and Participation: Towards Power-Sharing*, MA Dissertation, Centre for Community Care and Primary Health Care, London: University of Westminster.

Allen, I. and D. Leat, (Eds.) (1994), The Future of Social Services: Accountability, Planning and the Market, London: Policy Studies Institute.

Argyris, C. and D. A. Schon (1978), Theory in Practice: Increasing Professional Effectiveness, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Aristotle (1948), The Politics, (translated by Sir Ernest Baker), Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Arnstein, S. R. (1969), "A Ladder of Citizen Participation," Journal of the American Institute of Planners, 35 (4): 216-224.

Aronowitz, S. (1993), "Paulo Friere's Radical Democratic Humanism". In P. McLaren and P. Leonard (Eds.), Paulo Freire: A Critical Encounter, London: Routledge, 1-7.

Astley, G. W. and E. J. Zajac (1990), "Beyond Dyadic Exchange: Functional Interdependence and Sub Unit Power", Organisational Studies, 11: 481-501.

Audit Commission (2001a), "Code of Audit Practise: Accountability and the Role of External Audit", 8 January, 2001: http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/publications/codepractice.shtml.

Audit Commission (2001b), "Inside the Commission: History", 8th January, 2001: http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/itc/history.shtml.

Axelsson, B. (1992), "Network Research: Future Issues". In B. Axelsson and G. Easton (Eds.), Industrial Networks: A New View of Reality, London: Routledge, 237-251.

Axelsson, B. and G. Easton, (Eds.) (1992), Industrial Networks: A New View of Reality, London: Routledge.

Bachrach, P. and M. S. Baratz (1970), Power and Poverty: Theory and Practice, New York: Oxford University Press.

Bachrach, S. B. and E. J. Lawler (1980), Power and Politics in Organisations, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Bannock, G., R. E. Baxter and E. Davis (1987), The Penguin Dictionary of Economics, London: Penguin.

Barnes, M. and D. Prior (1995), "Spoilt for Choice? How Consumerism can Disempower Public Service Users", Public Money and Management, 15 (3): 53 - 58.

Barnes, M. and D. Prior (1996), "From Private Choice to Public Trust: A New Social Basis for Welfare", Public Money and Management, 16 (4): 51 - 57.

Barnes, M. and D. Prior (1998), "Trust and the Competence of the Welfare Consumer". In A. Coulson (Ed.), Trust and Contracts: Relationships in Local Government, Health and Public Services, Bristol: Policy Press, 129-142.

Berger, P. L. and T. Luckmann (1971), The Social Construction of Reality, Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Bevir, M. and D. O'Brien (2001), "New Labour and the Public Sector in Britain", Public Administration Review, 61 (5): 535-547.

Billis, D. (1989), "A Theory of the Voluntary Sector: Implications for Policy and Practice," Working Paper 5, London: The Centre for Voluntary Organisation, The London School of Economics and Political Science.

Billis, D. and M. Harris, (Eds.) (1996), Voluntary Agencies: Challenges of Organisation and Management, London: Macmillan.

Birch, A. H. (1990), The British System of Government, London: Unwin Hyman.

Blades, S. D. and C. Milofsky (1992), "Accountability of Health Charities". ARNOVA, October 31 - November 1, Yale University.

Blau, J. R. and R. D. Alba (1982), "Empowering Nets of Participation," Administrative Science Quarterly, 27 (27): 363-379.

Bolman, L. G. and T. E. Deal (1984), Modern Approaches to Understanding and Managing Organisations, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Bovaird, T. (1993), "Current Approaches to Performance Assessment in the Public Sector. Pure Symbolism, Limited Learning Systems in the Beginnings of TQM?". Public Productivity Working Group, International Institute of Administrative Sciences University of Leuven.

Brenton, M. (1985), The Voluntary Sector in British Social Services, Harlow: Longman.

Brooks, J. (2000), "Labour's Modernisation of Local Government", Public Administration, 78(3): 593-612.

Burgess, R. G. (1984), In the Field: An Introduction to Field Research, London: Allen & Unwin.

Burrell, G. (2001), "A Conversation about Research", Verbal Discussion, November 2000, Warwick University.

Burell, G. and G. Morgan (1979), Sociological Paradigms and Organisational Analysis, London: Heinemann.

Butler, R. J. and D. C. Wilson (1990), Managing Voluntary and Non-Profit Organisations: Strategy and Structure, London: Routledge.

Byrne, T. (1994), Local Government in Britain: Everyone's Guide to How it All Works, London: Penguin.

Cabinet Office (2002), Private Action, Public Benefit: A Review of Charities and the Wider Not-For-Profit Sector, London: Strategy Unit, Cabinet Office.

Charity Commission (August 1999), "Responsibilities of Charity Trustees: A Summary", 4 May, 2000: http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk/pdfs/cc3(a).pdf.

Charity Commissioners for England and Wales (1993), Responsibilities of Charity Trustees, CC3, HMSO.

Checkland, P. (1981), Systems Thinking, Systems Practice, Chichester: Wiley.

Checkland, P. (1997), "Rhetoric and Reality in Contracting: Research in and on the National Health Service". In R. Flynn and G. Williams (Eds.), Contracting for Health: Quasi-Markets and the National Health Service, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 115-134.

Children's Act (1989), Children's Act, Elizabeth II, Chapter 41, London, HMSO.

Cochrane, A. (1993), Whatever Happened to Local Government?, Buckingham: Open University Press.

Commission on the Future of the Voluntary Sector (1996), Meeting the Challenge of Change: Voluntary Action into the 21st century, London: National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) Publications.

Committee on Standards in Public Life (the Nolan Committee) (1995a), First Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life, London: HMSO.

Committee on Standards in Public Life (the Nolan Committee) (1995b), Issues and Questions - Local Public Spending Bodies, London: HMSO.

Committee on the Financial Aspects of Corporate Governance (1992), Report of the Committee on the Financial Aspects of Corporate Governance (report with code of Best Practice), London: Gee (a division of Professional Publishing Ltd.).

Committee, W. (1978), The Future of Voluntary Organisations, London: Croom Helm.

Conroy, P. (1995), "The Voluntary Sector Challenge to Fortress Europe". In G. Craig and M. Mayo (Eds.), Community Empowerment: A Reader in Participation and Development, London and New Jersey: Zed Books, 59-69.

Cook, K. S. (1977), "Exchange and Power in Networks of Interorganisational Relations", The Sociological Quarterly, 18: 62-82.

Cook, K. S. and R. Emerson (1978), "Power, Equity and Commitment in Exchange Networks", American Sociological Review, 43: 712-739.

Cooper, L., A. Coote, A. Davies and C. Jackson (1995), Voices Off: Tackling the Democratic Deficit in Health, London: Institute of Public Policy Research.

Cooper, T. (1990), The Responsible Administrator: An Approach to Ethics for the Administrative Role, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Corbin, J. and Strauss, A. (1990), "Grounded Theory Method : Procedures, Canons, and Evaluative Criteria", Qualitative Sociology, 13, 3-21.

Coulson, A., (Ed.) (1998), Trust and Contracts: Relationships in Local Government, Health and Public Services, Bristol: Policy Press.

Coulson, A. (1998), "Trust: The Foundation of Public Sector Management". In A. Coulson (Ed.), Trust and Contracts: Relationships in Local Government, Health and Public Services, Bristol: Policy Press, 3-8.

Cutt, J. and V. Murray (2000), Accountability and Effectiveness Evaluation in Non Profit Organisations, London: Routledge.

Dahl, R. (1957), "The Concept of Power", Behavioural Science, 2: 201-215.

Dalton, M. (1959), Men Who Manage, New York: John Wiley.

Day, P. (1992), "Accountability". Paper presented at the Rowntree Symposium, 19-20 November, University of Birmingham, Birmingham.

Day, P. and R. Klein (1987), Accountabilities: Five Public Services, London: Tavistock.

Deakin, N. (1996), Meeting the Challenge of Change: Voluntary Action into the 21st Century. The Report of the Commission on the Future of the Voluntary Sector, London: National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) Publications.

Deakin, N. (1996), "What does Contracting do to Users?". In D. Billis and M. Harris (Eds.), Voluntary Agencies: Challenges of Organisation and Management, Houndmills: Macmillan, 113-129.

Deakin, N. and K. Walsh (1996), "The Enabling State: the Role of Markets and Contracts." Public Administration, 74: 33-48.

Dekker, P. and A. van den Broek (1998), "Civil Society in Comparative Perspective: Involvement in Voluntary Associations in North America and Western Europe", Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organisations, 9 (1): 11-38.

Demone, H. W. and M. Gibelman, (Eds.) (1989), Services for Sale: Purchasing Health and Human Services, New Brunswick, USA: Rutgers University Press.

Denzin, N. K. (1989a), Interpretive Interactionism, Newbury Park, California: Sage Publications.

Denzin, N. K. (1989b), The Research Act, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Denzin, N. K. (1994), "The Art and Politics of Interpretation". In Denzin, N. K. and Y. S. Lincoln, (Eds.), Handbook of Qualitative Research, Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.

Denzin, N. K. and Y. S. Lincoln, (Eds.) (1994), Handbook of Qualitative Research, Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.

Department of Health (1989a), Caring for People: Community Care in the Next Decade and Beyond, Cm 849, London: HMSO.

Department of Health (1991), The Patient's Charter, London: HMSO.

DETR (1998a), Modernising Local Government: Local Democracy and Community Leadership, London: DETR TSO.

DETR (1998b), Modernising Local Government: Improving Services through Best Value, London: DETR TSO

DETR (1998c), Modernising Local Government: Improving Local Financial Accountability, London: DETR TSO.

DETR (1998d), Modernising Local Government: Capital Finance, London: DETR TSO.

DETR (1998e), Modernising Local Government: Business Rates, London: DETR TSO.

DETR (1998f), Modernising Local Government: A New Ethical Framework, London: DETR TSO.

DETR (1998g), Modernising Local Government: In Touch With The People, CM 4014, London: DETR TSO.

DETR (1999), Local Leadership, Local Choice, CM 4298, London: DETR TSO.

Dey, I (1993), Qualitative Data Analysis. A User-Friendly Guide For Social Scientists, London: Routledge.

Downey, G. (1986), "Public Accountability: Fact or Myth," London: National Audit Office: London.

Downey, P. (1986), Accountability and Democracy in London's Health Services for the Health Panel of the Greater London Council, London: Greater London Council.

Drewry, G. and T. Butcher (1988), The Civil Service Today, Oxford: Blackwell.

Dudley, E. (1993), The Critical Villager, London: Routledge.

Dunleavy, P. and C. Hood (1993), "From Old Public Administration to New Public Management," London: Public Policy Group, London School of Economics and Political Science.

Durkheim, E. (1933), The Division of Labour in Society, New York: Free Press.

Easterby-Smith, M., R. Thorpe and A. Lowe (1991), Management Research: An Introduction, London: Sage Publications.

Easton, G. (1992), "Industrial Networks: A Review". In B. Axelsson and G. Easton (Eds.), Industrial Networks: A New View of Reality, London: Routledge, 3-27.

Easton, G. and L. Araujo (1992), "Non Economic Exchange in Industrial Networks". In B. Axelsson and G. Easton (Eds.), Industrial Networks: A New View of Reality, London: Routledge, 62-84.

Easton, G. and A. Lundgren (1992), "Changes in Industrial Networks as Flow Through Nodes". In B. Axelsson and G. Easton (Eds.), Industrial Networks: A New View of Reality, London: Routledge, 89-104.

Economist (1995), Management Focus: Trust in me, The Economist, 337 (7945), 16th December, 83.

Escher, M. C. (1990), The Graphic Work, Berlin: Benedikt Taschen.

Etzioni, A. (1968), The Active Society: A Theory of Societal and Political Processes, London: Collier-Macmillan.

Etzioni, A. (1995), The Spirits of Community: Rights, Responsibilities and the Communitarian Agenda, London: Fontana.

Etzioni, A. (1997), The New Golden Rule: Community and Morality in a Democratic Society, London: Profile.

Farnham, D. and S. Horton, (Eds.) (1993), Managing the New Public Services. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Faulkner, D., J. Swann, S. Baker, M. Bird and J. Carty (1991), Professional Development in Action: Methodology Handbook, Milton Keynes: Open University.

Ferlie, E., L. Ashburner and L. Fitzgerald (1994), "Corporate Governance and the Public Sector: Some Issues and Evidence from the NHS", Coventry: Warwick University.

Fizdale, R. (1974), "The Voluntary Agency: Structure vs. Accountability", Social Casework, October: 478 - 483.

Flynn, N. and R. Common (1992), Contracting for Care, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Flynn, N. and D. Hurley (1993), The Market for Care, London: London School of Economics and Political Science.

Flynn, R. and G. Williams, (Eds.) (1997), Contracting for Health: Quasi Markets and the National Health Service, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Flynn, R., G. Williams and S. Pickard (1997), "Quasi-Markets and Quasi- Trust: The Social Construction of Contracts for Community Health Services". In R. Flynn and G. Williams (Eds.), Contracting for Health: Quasi-Markets and the National Health Service, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 47-64.

Foucault, M. (1988), Politics, Philosophy, Culture. Interviews and Other Writings 1977 - 1984, New York, London: Routledge.

Fries, R. (2000), "Transcription of Discussion about The Charity Commission and Accountability", Interview, 9th November 2000, Centre for Civil Society, London School of Economics and Political Science.

Fukuyama, F. (1995), Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity, London: Hamish Hamilton.

Gaster, L. and N. Deakin (1998), "Quality and Citizens". In A. Coulson (Ed.), Trust and Contracts: Relationships in Local Government, Health and Public Services, Bristol: Policy Press, 143-156.

Gates, B. L. (1983), "Social Program Implementation: The Demand for Accountability". In R. M. Kramer and H. Specht (Eds.), Community Organisation Practice, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 403-420.

Giddens, A. (1979), Central Problems in Social Theory, London: Macmillan.

Giddens, A. (1989), Sociology, Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Giddens, A. (1998), The Third Way: The Renewal of Social Democracy, Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Glaser, B. (1978), Theoretical Sensitivity, Mill Valley, California: Sociological Press.

Glaser, B. and A. Strauss (1967), The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research, Chicago: Aldine.

Glendinning, C. (2002), "Partnerships Between Health And Social Services: Developing A Framework For Evaluation", Policy & Politics, 30(1): 115-127.

Glennerster, H. (1989), "Common Principles?". In H. Glennerster, A. Power and T. Travers (Eds.), A New Era for Social Policy: A New Enlightenment or A New Leviathan?, London: London School of Economics and Political Science, 1-6.

Glennerster, H. and J. Midgley, (Eds.) (1991), The Radical Right and the Welfare State: An International Assessment, Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Glennerster, H., A. Power and T. Travers (1989), "A New Era for Social Policy: A New Enlightenment or A New Leviathan?," The Welfare State Programme Working Paper WSP/39, London: London School of Economics and Political Science.

Granovetter, M. S. (1973), "The Strength of Weak Ties", American Journal of Sociology, 78 (6): 1360-1380.

Granovetter, M. S. (1985), "Economic Action and Social Structure: The Problem of Embeddedness", American Journal of Sociology, 91 (3): 481-510.

Greene, J.C (1994), "Qualitative Program Evaluation: Practice and Promise". In Denzin, N. K. and Y. S. Lincoln, (Eds.), Handbook of Qualitative Research, Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.

Greer, S., R. D. Hedlund and J. L. Gibson, (Eds.) (1978), Accountability in Urban Society: Public Agencies Under Fire, Urban Affairs Annual Reviews. Beverly Hills: Sage.

Griffiths, S. R. (1988), Community Care: Agenda for Action, London: HMSO.

Guba, E.G. and Y.S.Lincoln (1989), Fourth Generation Evaluation, California: Sage.

Gutch, R. (1992), Contracting Lessons from the US, London: National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) Publications.

Gutch, R., C. Kunz and K. Spencer (1990), Partners or Agents? Local Government and the Voluntary Sector: Changing Relationships in the 1990s, London: National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) Publications.

Hague, D. C. (1971), "The Ditchley Conference: A British View". In B. L. R. Smith and D. C. Hague (Eds.), The Dilemma of Accountability in Modern Government: Independence versus Control, London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 70-99.

Hakansson, H. and J. Johanson (1992), "A Model of Industrial Networks". In B. Axelsson and G. Easton (Eds.), Industrial Networks: A New View of Reality, London: Routledge, 28-34.

Hall, D., E. Dunstan and M. Hobson (1998), Democratic Practice: A Guide, London: LGA/LGMB.

Hall, R. H. (1996), Organisations: Structures, Processes, and Outcomes, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Hall, W. and S. Weir (1994), Democratic Audit: Ego Trip: Extra-governmental Organisations in the United Kingdom and their Accountability, London: Charter 88 Trust.

Hammersley, M. and P. Atkinson (1983), Ethnography: Principles in Practice, London: Tavistock.

Hammersley, M., R. Gomm and P. Woods (1994), Educational Research Methods: Study Guide, Milton Keynes: Open University.

Handy, C. (1990), Understanding Voluntary Organisations, London: Penguin.

Hannan, M. T. and J. H. Freeman (1977), "The Population Ecology of Organisations", American Journal of Sociology, (82): 929-964.

Hayward, J.E.S and V. Wright (2000), "Governing from the Centre: Policy Co-Ordination in Six European Core Executives". In R.A.W. Rhodes (ed), Transforming British Government: Volume 2 - Changing Roles and Relationships, London: Macmillan.

Demone Jr, H.W and M. Gibelman, (Eds.) (1989), Services for Sale: Purchasing Health and Human Services, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Hebditch, S. (1991), "An Equal Partner", NCVO News, (March): 9-10.

Hems, L. (1994), "The Income of Large Voluntary Organisations in Relation to the Sector", Verbal Communication, January 29th, Aston University.

Hems, L. C. and A. Passey (1996), The UK Voluntary Sector Statistical Almanac 1996, London: National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) Publications.

Henderson (1994-1995), Henderson Top 2000 Charities: A Guide to UK Charities, London: Hemmington Scott Publishing.

Hirschman, A. O. (1970), Exit, Voice and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organisations and States, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Hoggett, P. (1991), "A New Management in the Public Sector", Policy and Politics, 19 (4): 143-156.

Homans, G. C. (1949), "The Strategy of Industrial Sociology", American Journal of Sociology, 54: 330-339.

Honigsbaum, F. (1991), Who Shall Live? Who Shall Die? : Oregon's Health Financing Proposal, London: Kings Fund.

Hood, C. (1991), "A Public Management for All Seasons?", Public Administration, 69 (1): 3-19.

Hood, C. (1995), "Contemporary Public Management: a new global paradigm", Public Policy and Administration, 10 (2): 104-117.

Hunter, D. (1994), "Accountability: Issues for the Future". In I. Allen and D. Leat (Eds.), The Future of Social Services: Accountability, Planning and the Market, London: Policy Studies Institute, 34 -39.

Hunter, D. J. (1992), "Accountability and the NHS", British Medical Journal, 304 (February): 436-438.

Hutton, W. (1995), The State We're In, London: Jonathan Cape.

Hutton, W. (1997), The State to Come, London: Vintage.

Hutton, W. (1999), The Stakeholding Society: Writings on Politics and Economics, Cambridge, England Mass: Polity Press.

Issacs, W. (1993), Taking Flight: Dialogue, Collective thinking, and Organisational Learning in Organisational Dynamics, report from the Centre for Organiational Learning Dialogue project, Massachussets: Massachussets Institute of Technology.

Jabbra, J. G. and O. P. Dwivedi, (Eds) (1989), Public Service Accountability: A Comparative Perspective, West Hartford, Conn: Kumarian.

Kearns, K. P. (1996), Managing for Accountability: Preserving the Public Trust in Public and Non Profit Organisations, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Kendall, J. and M. Knapp (1995), "A Loose and Baggy Monster: Boundaries, Definitions and Typologies". In J. D. Smith, C. Rochester and R. Hedley (Eds.), An Introduction to the Voluntary Sector, London: Routledge, 66-95.

Kendall, J. and M. Knapp (1996), The Voluntary Sector in the United Kingdom, Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Kingdom, J. (1991), Local Government and Politics in Britain, Hemel Hempstead: Philip Allan.

Kirk, J. and M. L. Miller (1986), Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research, Beverly Hills, California: Sage Publications.

Kirkpatrick, I. and M. Martinez Lucio (1996), "Introduction: the Contract State and the Future of Public Management", Public Administration, 74: 1-8.

Knapp, M.R.J., B.Hardy and J.Forder (2001), "Commissioning for Quality: Ten Years of Social Care Markets in England", Journal of Social Policy, 30 (2), 283-306.

Knoke, D. and J. H. Kuklinski (1991), "Network Analysis: Basic Concepts". In G. Thompson, J. Frances, R. Levacic and J. Mitchell (Eds.), Markets, Hierarchies and Networks: The Coordination of Social Life, London: Sage, 173-182.

Kramer, R. M. (1989), "From Voluntarism to Vendorism: An Organisational Perspective of Contracting". In H. W. Demone. Jr and M. Gibelman (Eds.), Services for Sale: Purchasing Health and Human Services, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 97 - 111.

Kramer, R. M. and B. Grossman (1987), "Contracting for Social Services: Process Management and Resource Dependencies", Social Services Review, 65 (1): 33-55.

Kramer, R. M. and T. R. Tyler, (Eds.) (1996), Trust in Organisations: Frontiers of Theory and Research, London: Sage.

Kumar, S. (1996), "Managing Accountability in Voluntary and Non Profit Organisations". In S. P. Osborne (Ed.), Managing in the Voluntary Sector: A Handbook for Managers in Charitable and Non Profit Organisations, London, Boston, MA: International Thompson Business Press, 237-252.

Kumar, S. (1997), Accountability in the Contract State: The Relationships between Voluntary Organisations, Local Government and Service Users, York: YPS for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Lansley, J. (1996), "Membership Participation and Ideology in Large Voluntary Organisations: the Case of the National Trust", Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organisations, 7 (3): 221-240.

Lansley, J. and S. Kumar (1995), "Approvers and Accountability". Researching the UK Voluntary Sector, 7-8 September, London: National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) and Non Profit Studies.

Leadbeater, C and S. Goss (1998), Civil Entrepreneurship, London: Demos/Public Management Foundation.

Le Grand, J. (1990), Quasi-Markets and Social Policy, Bristol: School for Advanced Urban Studies.

Le Grand, J. (1993), "Quasi-Markets and Community Care", Studies in Decentralisation and Quasi-Markets Working Paper 17, Bristol: School for Advanced Urban Studies.

Le Grand, J. (2000), "Discussion with Professor Le Grand at the LSE in relation to the Theoretical Framework (Chapter 6)", 20 December.

Le Grand, J., N. Mays and J.A. Mulligan, (Eds.) (1998), Learning from the NHS Internal Market: A Review of the Evidence, London: Kings Fund.

Leat, D. (1987), "Voluntary Organisations and Accountability: Theory and Practice". Coventry: Department of Sociology, University of Warwick.

Leat, D. (1988), Voluntary Organisations and Accountability, London: National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) Publications.

Leat, D. (1993), The Development of Community Care by the Independent Sector, London: Policy Studies Institute.

Leat, D. (1996), "Are Voluntary Organisations Accountable?". In D. Billis and M. Harris (Eds.), Voluntary Agencies: Challenges of Organisation and Management, Houndmills: Macmillan, 61-79.

Leat, D., G. Smolka and J. Unell (1981), Voluntary and Statutory Collaboration: Rhetoric or Reality, London: Bedford Square Press.

Leat, D., S. Tester and J. Unell (1986), A Price Worth Paying? A Study of the Effects of Government Grant Aid to Voluntary Organisations, London: Policy Studies Institute.

Leonard, P. (1993), "Critical Pedagogy and State Welfare: Intellectual Encounters with Freire and Gramsci, (1974-86)". In P. McLaren and P. Leonard (Eds.), Paulo Freire: A Critical Encounter, London: Routledge, 155-168.

Levine, S. and P. E. White (1961), "Exchange as a Conceptual Framework for the Study of Inter-organisational Relationships", Administrative Science Quarterly, 5: 583-610.

Lewis, J. (1993), "Developing the Mixed Economy of Care: Emerging Issues for Voluntary Organisations", Journal of Social Policy, 22 (2): 173 - 192.

Lewis, J. (1996), "What Does Contracting Do To Voluntary Agencies?". In D. Billis and M. Harris (Eds.), Voluntary Agencies: Organisation and Management in Theory and Practice, London: Macmillan, 98-112.

Lincoln, Y. S and E. G. Guba (1985), Naturalistic Inquiry, Beverly Hills: Sage.

Lipsky, M. (1978), "The Assault on Human Services: Street Level Bureaucrats, Accountability and the Fiscal Crisis". In S. Greer, R. D. Hedlund and J. Gibson (Eds.), Accountability in Urban Society: Public Agencies Under Fire, Beverly Hills: Sage, 15-38.

Lipsky, M. (1980), Street Level Bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Services, New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Local Government Act (1999), Improving from Within: Local Government Improvement Project – Final Report And Recommendations, London: Local Government Association.

Locke, K (2001), Grounded Theory in Management Research, London: Sage Publications.

Locke, M., P. Robson and S. Howlett (2001), "Users: At the Centre or the Sidelines?". In M. Harris and C. Rochester (Eds.), Voluntary Organisations and Social Policy in Britain: Perspectives on Change and Choice, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 199-212.

Longley, D. (1993), Public Law and Health Service Accountability, Buckingham: Open University Press.

Lorenz, E. H. (1991), "Neither Friends Nor Strangers: Informal Networks of Subcontracting in French Industry". In G. Thompson, J. Frances, R. Levacic and J. Mitchell (Eds.), Markets, Hierarchies and Networks: The Co-ordination of Social Life, London: Sage, 183-192.

Lowndes, V., L. Pratchett and G. Stoker (2001), "Trends in Public Participation: Part 1 – Local Government Perspectives", Public Administration, 79(1): 205-222.

Lowndes, V., G. Stoker, L. Pratchett, D. Wilson, S. Leach and M. Wingfield (1998), Enhancing Public Participation in Local Government, London: DETR.

Lukes, S. (1974), Power: A Radical View, Basingstoke: Macmillan Press.

Mackintosh, M. (2000), "Flexible Contracting? Economic Cultures and Implicit Contracts in Social Care", Journal of Social Policy, 29 (1): 1-19.

Macneil, I. (1980), The New Social Contract: An Inquiry into Modern Contractual Relations, New Haven: Yale University Press.

Martin, S (2000), "Implementing 'Best Value': Local Public Service in Transition", Public Administration, 78 (1): 209-227.

Mason, J. (1996), Qualitative Researching, London: Sage Publications.

Mayo, M. (1994), Communities and Caring: The Mixed Economy of Welfare, Basingstoke: Macmillan.

McCartney (2000), "Speaking Notes for Standards Conference 2000", 5 October, 2001: http://www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/ministers/2000/speeches/mccartney/standards2000.html.

McClintock, D. and R. Ison (1994), "Responsible (Response-able) Design Metaphors". World Congress 3 On Action Learning, Action Research and Process Management, University of Bath, England.

Mclaren, P. and P. Leonard, (Eds.) (1993), Paulo Freire: A Critical Encounter, London: Routledge.

McMillan, J. (1992), Games, Strategies and Managers, New York: Oxford University Press.

Miles, M. B. and A. M. Huberman (1994), Qualitative Data Analysis, Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.

Miles, R. E., C. C. Snow and J. Pfeffer (1974), "Organisation Environment: Concepts and Issues", Industrial Relations, 13: 244 - 264.

Mishra, A. (1996), "Organisational Responses to Crisis: The Centrality of Trust". In R. M. Kramer and T. R. Tyler (Eds.), Trust in Organisations: Frontiers of Theory and Research, London: Sage Publications, 261-287.

Morgan, G. (1993), Imaginisation: The Art of Creative Management, Newbury Park, California: Sage Publications.

Morgan, G. (1998), Images of Organisation, San Francisco, Thousand Oaks: Berrett-Koehner and Sage Publications.

NCVO (1993), The Ups and Downs of Local Funding, NCVO News, 47 (4 -7 September).

Newman, J. (1998), "The Dynamics of Trust". In A. Coulson (Ed.), Trust and Contracts: Relationships in Local Government, Health and Public Services, Bristol: Policy Press, 35-51.

NHS Community Care Act (1990), National Health Service and Community Care Act, Elizabeth II, Chapter 19, London: HMSO.

Nolan, L. (1995), Standards in Public Life: Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life, London: HMSO.

Olesen, V (1994), "Feminisms and Models of Qualitative Research". In N. K Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln, (Eds.), Handbook of Qualitative Research, Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.

Osborne, S. P., T. Bovaird, S. Martin, M. Tricker and P. Waterson (1995), "Performance Management and Accountability in Complex Public Programmes", Financial Accountability and Management, 11 (1): 19-37.

Osborne, D. and T. Gaebler (1992), Reinventing Government: How the Entrepreneurial Spirit is Transforming the Public Sector, Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley.

Ostrander, S. A., S. Langton and J. Van Til, (Eds.) (1987), Shifting the Debate: Public /Private Sector Relations in the Modern Welfare State, New Brunswick, USA: Transaction Books.

Ouchi, W. G. (1979), "A Conceptual Framework for the Design of Organisational Control Mechanisms", Management Science, 25 (9): 833-848.

Ouchi, W. G. (1980), "Markets, Bureaucracies, and Clans", Administrative Science Quarterly, 25: 129 -141.

Ouchi, W. G. (1991), "Markets, Bureaucracies and Clans". In G. Thompson, J. Frances, R. Levacic and J. Mitchell (Eds.), Markets Hierarchies and Networks: The Co-ordination of Social Life, London: Sage Publications, 246-255.

Palgrave, R. H. I., (Ed.) (1899), Dictionary of Political Economy, London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd.

Passey, A., L. C. Hems and P. Jas (2000), The UK Voluntary Sector Almanac 2000, London: National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) Publications.

Paton, R. (1992), "The Social Economy: Value Based Organisations in the Wider Society". In J. Batsleer, C. Cornforth and R. Paton (Eds.), Issues in Voluntary and Non Profit Management, Wokingham: Addison-Wesley / Open University, 3-17.

Paul, S. (1991), Strengthening Public Service Accountability: A Conceptual Framework, Washington DC: World Bank.

Payne, T. and C. Skelcher (1997), "Explaining Less Accountability: The Growth of Local Quangos", Public Administration, 75: 207 -224.

Penn, A. (1992), *The Management of Voluntary Organisations in the Post War Period with Special Reference to National Local Relationships*, Unpublished DPhil, University of Sussex, UK.

Pettigrew, A. M. (1990), "Longitudinal Field Research On Change: Theory and Practice", Organisation Science, 1 (3): 267-292.

Pfeffer, J. (1981), Power in Organisations, Marshfield, Mass: Pitman.

Pfeffer, J. (1992), Managing with Power: Politics and Influence in Organisations, Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Pfeffer, J. and G. R. Salancik (1978), The External Control of Organisations: A Resource Dependence Perspective, New York: Harper & Row.

Plummer, J. (1996), How Are Charities Accountable?, London: Demos.

Poertner, J. and C. A. Rapp (1985), "Purchase of Service and Accountability: Will They Ever Meet?", Administration in Social Work, 9 (1): 57 - 66.

Pollitt, C. (1990), Managerialism and the Public Services, Oxford: Blackwell.

Pollitt, C. (1993), Managerialism and the Public Services: Cuts or Cultural Change in the 1990s?, Oxford: Blackwell.

Ponting, C. (1989), Whitehall: Changing the Old Guard, London: Unwin.

Rallis, S. (1980), "Different Views of Knowledge Use by Practitioners," Boston: Unpublished Qualifying Paper, Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Ransford, J. (1994), "Whither Local Government?". In I. Allen and D. Leat (Eds.), The Future of Social Services: Accountability, Planning and the Market, London: Policy Studies Institute, 27-33.

Ranson, S. and J. Stewart (1998), "Citizenship in the Public Domain for Trust in Civil Society". In A. Coulson (Ed.), Trust and Contracts: Relationships in Local Government, Health and Public Services, Bristol: Policy Press, 243-265.

Rasmusen, E. (1989), Games and Information: An Introduction to Game Theory, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Reagan, M. D. (1975), "Accountability and Independence in Federal Grants in aid". In B. L. R. Smith (Ed.), The New Political Economy: The Public Use of the Private Sector, London: Macmillan, 103-117.

Rhodes, R.A.W (1998), "The Changing Nature of Central Government in Britain: the ESRC's Whitehall Programme", Public Policy and Administration. 13(4): 1-11.

Rhodes, R.A.W (2000), "The Governance Narrative: Key Findings and Lessons from the ESRC's Whitehall Programme", Public Administration, 78(2): 345-363.

Richardson, J. (1993), Reinventing Contracts. Transatlantic Perspectives on the Future of Contracting, London: National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) Publications.

Ritchie, J. and L. Spencer (1994), "Qualitative Data Analysis for Applied Policy Research". In A. Bryman and G. Burgess (Eds.), Analysing Qualitative Data, London: Routledge, 171-194.

Robinson, D. Z. (1971), "Government Contracting for Academic Research: Accountability in the American Experience". In B. L. R. Smith and D. C. Hague (Eds.), The Dilemma of Accountability in Modern Government: Independence versus Control, New York: Macmillan, 103-117.

Robson, P. and M. Locke (1997), "Accountability and User Involvement". In P. Palmer and E. Hoe (Eds.), Voluntary Matters: Management and Good Practice in the Voluntary Sector, London: The Media Trust and The Directory of Social Change, 329-360.

Rose, R. (1985), "Accountability to Electorates and the Market: The Alternatives for Public Organisations", Studies in Public Policy Working Paper 144, Glasgow: Centre for the Study of Public Policy, University of Strathclyde.

Royal Commission on the NHS (1979), Royal Commission on the NHS, Cmnd 7615, London: HMSO.

Sako, M. (1992), Prices Quality and Trust: Inter Firm Relations in Britain and Japan, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Salamon, L. and H. K. Anheier (1999), "Civil Society in Comparative Perspective". In L. M. Salamon, H. K. Anheier, R. List, S. Toepler and S. W. Sokolowski (Eds.), Global Civil Society: Dimensions of the Nonprofit Sector, Baltimore: John Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies, 3-39.

Salamon, L. M. (1981), "Rethinking Public Management: Third Party Government and the Changing forms of Government Action", Public Policy, 29 (3): 255-275.

Salamon, L. M. (1987), "On Market Failure, Voluntary Failure and Third Party Government: Toward a Theory of Government - Non Profit Relations in the Modern Welfare State". In S. A. Ostrander, S. Langton and J. Van Til (Eds.), Shifting the Debate: Public Private Sector Relations in the Modern Welfare State, New Brunswick, USA: Transaction Books, 29-49.

Schattschneider, E. E. (1960), The Semi-Sovereign People, Hinsdale, IU: Dryden Press.

Seibel, W. (1990), "Government/Third- Sector Relationship in a Comparative Perspective: the Cases of France and West Germany", Voluntas: The International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organisations, 1 (1): 42-60.

Selby, C. C. (1978), "Better Performance from Non Profits", Harvard Business Review, 56: 92-98.

Silverman, D. (1995), Interpreting Qualitative Data: Methods for Analysing Talk, Text and Interaction, London: Sage.

Simey, M. (1985), Government by Consent: The Principle and Practice of Accountability in Local Government, London: Bedford Square Press.

Smith, B. L. R. (1971), "Accountability and Independence in the Contract State". In B. L. R. Smith and D. C. Hague (Eds.), The Dilemma of Accountability in Modern Government: Independence versus Control, New York: Macmillan, 3-69.

Smith, B. L. R., (Ed.) (1975), The New Political Economy: The Public Use of the Private Sector, London: Macmillan.

Smith, B. L. R. and D. C. Hague, (Eds.) (1971), The Dilemma of Accountability in Modern Government: Independence versus Control, London: Macmillan.

Smith, P. C. and J. Laage-Hellman (1992), "Small Group Analysis in Industrial Networks". In B. Axelsson and G. Easton (Eds.), Industrial Networks: A New View of Reality, London: Routledge, 37-61.

Spurgeon, P., P. Smith, M. Straker, N. Deakin, N. Thomas and K. Walsh (1997), "The Experience of Contracting in Health Care". In R. Flynn and G. Williams (Eds.), Contracting For Health: Quasi-Markets and the National Health Service, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 135-152.

Stake, R. E. (1994), "Case Studies". In N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), Handbook of Qualitative Research, Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, 236-247.

Starks, M. (1991), Not for Profit, Not for Sale: The Challenge of Public Sector Management, New Brunswick, USA: Transaction Books.

Stewart, J (1996), Further Innovation in Democratic Practice, Birmingham: School of Public Policy Occasional Paper 3, University of Birmingham.

Stewart, J., N. Lewis and D. Longley (1992), "Accountability to the Public". European Policy Forum for British and European Market Studies, 9 December, Westminster.

Strauss, A. (1987), Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Strauss, A. and J. Corbin (1994), "Grounded Theory Methodology: An Overview". In N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), Handbook of Qualitative Research, Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, 273-285.

Talbot, C (2001), "UK Public Services and Management (1979-2000): Evolution or Revolution?" The International Journal of Public Sector Management, Volume 14 (4), 281-303.

Taylor, M. (1988), "Into the 1990s: Voluntary Organisations and the Public Sector", London: National Council for Voluntary Organisations and the Royal Institute of Public Administration.

Taylor, M. (1995), "Community Work and the State: The Changing Context of UK Practice". In G. Craig and M. Mayo (Eds.), Community Empowerment: A Reader in Participation and Development, London: Zed Books Ltd, 99-111.

Taylor, M., J. Langan and P. Hoggett (1995), Encouraging Diversity: Voluntary and Private Organisations in Community Care, Aldershot: Arena.

Thompson, G., J. Frances, R. Levacic and J. Mitchell, (Eds.) (1991), Markets, Hierarchies and Networks: The Coordination of Social Life, London: Sage.

Tilly, C. (1998), Durable Inequality, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Tirole, J. (1986), "Hierarchies and Bureaucracies: On the Role of Collusion in Organisations", Journal of Law, Economics and Organisation, 2 (2).

Treasury (2002), The Role of the Voluntary and Community Sector in Service Delivery, London: HM Treasury.

Tumin, W. (1992), On Trust Report: Increasing the Effectiveness of Charity Trustees and Management Committees, London: National Council for Voluntary Organisations and Charity Commission.

United Kingdom Parliament (1998), Public Services for the Future: Modernisation, Reform Accountability, Cmnd.4181.

Van Maanen, J., (Ed.) (1983), Qualitative Methodology, Beverly Hills: Sage.

Wadsworth, Y. (1991), Everyday Evaluation on the Run, Melbourne: Action Research Issues Centre.

Walsh, K. (1995), Public Services and Market Mechanisms: Competition, Contracting and the New Public Management, Basingstoke: Macmillan Press.

Watt, P. A. (1998), "White-Collar Services in Local Government: Competition and Trust". In A. Coulson (Ed.), Trusts and Contracts: Relationships in Local Government, Health and Public Services, Bristol: Policy Press, 183-205.

Weir, S. and W. Hall, (Eds.) (1994), Ego Trip: Extra Governmental Organisations in the United Kingdom and their Accountability, London: Charter 88 Trust.

Williamson, O. E. (1975), Markets and Hierarchies Analysis and Antitrust Implications: A Study in the Economics of Internal Organisation, New York: Free Press.

Williamson, O. E. (1985), The Economic Institutions of Capitalism : Firms, Markets, Relational Contracting, New York and London: Free Press Collier-Macmillan Publishers.

Wilson, G. (1993), "Users and Providers of Community Care", Journal of Social Policy, 22 (4): 507-526.

Woodfield, P. (1987), Efficiency Scrutiny of the Supervision of Charities, London: HMSO.

Woodhouse, D. (1994), Ministers and Parliament: Accountability in Theory and Practice, Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Woolston, S. (2001), "Accountability of the Audit Commission", e-mail, 3 August, London.

Yamagishi, T., M. R. Gillmore and K. S. Cook (1988), "Network Connections and the Distribution of Power in Exchange Networks", American Journal of Sociology, 93 (4): 833-851.

Yin, R. K. (1989), Case Study Research, Newbury Park, California: Sage Publications.

Zald, M. (1970), Organisational Change: The Political Economy of the YMCA, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Appendix A

Letter of Introduction

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

ACCOUNTABILITY CASE STUDIES OF SELECTED PUBLIC AND VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS

This is to introduce Mrs Sarabajaya Kumar who is conducting interviews for a research project funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. This involves focused interviews with managers and service users in a number of carefully selected charities and government organisations. The research has the following aims:

> To develop and understanding of accountability processes and relationships between the users and the voluntary and public sectors within the contract culture.
>
> To explore how the sectors balance their multiple accountability relationships between their various stakeholders.

The findings will be summarised in a report for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. It is hoped that the findings will be disseminated in a seminar aimed at policy makers and managers in the public and voluntary sectors. It is intended that the research will assist them in their decision making, with specific reference to developing appropriate accountability forms.

The interview will last between approximately 45 minutes and one hour. All interviews will be confidential and no information will be used which will enable individual respondents to be identified.

The project is being carried out by Sarabajaya Kumar at the Voluntary and Non Profit Research Unit. Should you require any further information about the project, please do not hesitate to contact Stephen Osborne by letter, telephone (0121 359 3011 extension 4923) or fax (0121 359 1148).

1 should like to thank you very much, in anticipation for your help in this project.

Yours faithfully

Stephen P Osborne
Joint Director of the Voluntary and Non Profit Research Unit

Appendix B

Survey Questionnaire for Voluntary Organisations

Date: 2nd Dec 1994

Dear

ACCOUNTABILITY CASE STUDIES OF SELECTED PUBLIC AND VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS

The Voluntary and Non Profit Research Unit has received funding from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation to conduct research on accountability, within the context of purchase of service contracting. Your organisation is one of the leading public and voluntary sector organisations that has been carefully selected from the 'Henderson Top 2,000 Charities 1994' for this study.

As a part of this research, I am sending this questionnaire to twelve Chief Executive Officers of major charities involved in health and welfare service delivery, to gather factual background information, about their organisations.

I would be very grateful if you would help, by filling in the enclosed questionnaire and returning it to me, in the stamped addressed envelope. All answers will be treated in strict confidence and only processed by me.

If you need any additional information, please telephone me at home on (071) 622 3417 or leave a message at Aston University with Jean Elkington on (021) 359 3011 extension 4610 and I will return your call. Alternatively you could send me a fax on (021) 359 1148.

I look forward to hearing from you and thank you for your help.

Yours sincerely,

Sarabajaya Kumar
Research Associate
Voluntary and Non Profit Research Unit
Aston Business School
Aston University

ASTON
BUSINESS
SCHOOL

ACCOUNTABILITY CASE STUDIES OF SELECTED PUBLIC AND VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS

Recent changes in government policy for the provision of services at local and national levels, have raised new issues of concern with specific reference to accountability of both the voluntary and public sectors, involved in contracting.

Little is known about accountability within the context of purchase of service contracting. This research project, funded by the **Joseph Rowntree Foundation**, proposes to make a contribution to the understanding of accountability. Specifically it will examine whether the accountability mechanisms currently in place, involve and empower service beneficiaries.

It is intended that the research will assist policy makers and public and voluntary sector managers, in their decision making, with reference to developing appropriate accountability forms.

I would be very grateful if you would help, by filling in the enclosed questionnaire and returning it to me, in the stamped addressed envelope. All answers will be treated in **strict confidence** and only processed by me.

I would be especially grateful if you could return the completed questionnaire by **9th January 1995.**

If you need any additional information, please telephone me at home on **(071) 622 3417 or** leave a message at Aston University with Jean Elkington on **(021) 359 3011 extension 4610** and I will return your call.

Thank you for your help.

Sarabajaya Kumar
Research Associate
Voluntary and Non Profit Research Unit
Aston Business School
Aston University

Some definitions to help you complete this questionnaire.

Definition of Governing Body for the Purposes of this Survey.

The governing body is the group of people who have ultimate legal responsibility for a voluntary organisation or charity's activities.

Definition of Contracts and Service Level Agreements for the Purposes of this Survey.

Contracts and Service Level Agreements are the mechanism by which a growing number of statutory authorities purchase specified services from voluntary and independent organisations. They have arisen with the emergence of compulsory competitive tendering, the `mixed economy' of community care and the contracting out of services by local and central government departments.

This questionnaire is designed to find out:

Section A. Some up to date general background information about the organisation.

Section B. Some specific information about the governing body.

Section C. Some specific information about the public accountability of the organisation.

Section A. General Background of the Organisation.

1. What category best describes the field of work of your organisation?
Your may tick more than one box.

- Accommodation ☐
- Business and Professional Associations, Unions ☐
- Culture and recreation ☐
- Economic development ☐
- Education and research ☐
- Environment and animals ☐
- Health care ☐
- Law, advocacy and politics (e.g. elderly, children) ☐
- Religious activities ☐
- Social care and development ☐

Other (please specify) .....

2. What is you geographic area of operations (please tick **one** box)

- International ☐
- National ☐
- Regional (more than one county) ☐
- GLR ☐
- Local (with one county) ☐
- Other **(please specify)** .....

3. What is the size of your organisation in terms of numbers of staff?

- Total Employees ☐
- Full Time Equivalent ☐
- Estimated total number of volunteers (please include those involved in fundraising and service delivery) ☐
- Estimated average hours per volunteer per month ☐

4. What is the total membership of the organisation? ☐

5. What is the size of your total organisation in terms of annual income for the current financial year?

Please state £ ☐

6. Sources of finance (please enter amounts to total as per **question 5**)
*(See definition of 'contracts and service level agreements' on **page 2**)*

Voluntary Income (for example Covenants, Legacies, Other Gifts, Trading, Rent, Investments and Public Donations) £ ☐

Central Government
- Contracts and Service Level Agreements £ ☐
- Central Government Grants and Fees £ ☐

Local Government
- Contracts and Service Level Agreements £ ☐
- Local Government Grants and Fees £ ☐

Health Service
- Contracts and Service Level Agreements £ ☐
- Health Service Grants and Fees £ ☐

Section B. Governing Body of the Organisation.

7. What is your governing body called? (Please tick **one** only)
*(See definition of a 'governing body' on **page 2**)*

- Executive Committee ☐
- Management Committee ☐
- Board of Governors ☐
- Board of Trustees ☐
- Management Board ☐
- Council ☐
- Steering Committee ☐
- Court ☐
- Other **(please specify)** .....

8. How often does your governing body meet? (Please tick **one** only)

- Weekly ☐
- Fortnightly ☐
- Monthly ☐
- Every six weeks ☐
- Every two months ☐
- Every three months ☐
- Three times a year ☐
- Annually ☐
- Irregularly / as and when needed ☐
- Other **(please specify)** .....

9. How long do the meetings normally last? (Please tick **one** only)

- Less than an hour ☐
- 1, but less than 2 ☐
- 2, but less than three ☐
- 3 hours / half a day ☐
- More than half a day but less than a day ☐
- Whole day ☐
- Other **(please specify)** .....

Section C. Public Accountability of the Organisation.

In some types of organisation members/officers actions are governed by certain rules. The following questions are asked in the light of this fact.

In order to answer the following question please tick the boxes below.

10. If members of the public wish to, can they find out the following background information about the organisations' governing body?

	No	Yes	If yes, what is the source of this information? Annual Report	Other (**please specify**)
a. Names of members of the governing body	☐	☐	☐	....
b. Their age	☐	☐	☐	....
c. Their occupation	☐	☐	☐	....
d. Their political affiliations	☐	☐	☐	....
e. Their interests and qualifying experience	☐	☐	☐	....
f. Whether they live and/or work in the area for which they are responsible	☐	☐	☐	....
g. The fees they receive for their services	☐	☐	☐	....

11. Can any of the following **attend board or committee meetings?**

	Yes	No	Are there any exceptions?
Members of the public	☐	☐	.....
Service beneficiaries	☐	☐	.....
Members of the organisation	☐	☐	.....

12. Can any of the following **inspect minutes of board or committee meetings?**

	Yes	No	If yes, please give more details.
Members of the public	☐	☐	.....
Service beneficiaries	☐	☐	.....
Members of the organisation	☐	☐	.....

13. Can any of the following inspect **board policy papers or committee meeting documents?**

	Yes	No	If yes, please give more details.
Members of the public	☐	☐	.....
Service beneficiaries	☐	☐	.....
Members of the organisation	☐	☐	.....

14. Are there any **rules within the organisation's constitution governing members conduct** (for example are members allowed to speak or vote on matters where they have a financial or other interest)?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Please specify

.....

.....

.....

15. Could governing body members and/or senior managers be surcharged by purchasers (ie required personally to **bear the costs of any public losses** through their `wilful misconduct')

Yes ☐ No ☐

Definition of `Wilful Misconduct' for the Purposes of this Survey.
'Wilful Misconduct' means intentional behaviour such as professional negligence, that is regarded as

If the surcharge is above a specified level would they be disqualified from office?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Please specify

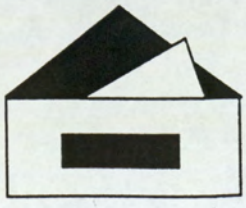
.....

.....

.....

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR HELP

Please return the completed booklet in the enclosed s.a.e. to:



Sarabajaya Kumar
The Voluntary and Non Profit Research Unit
Nelson Building
Aston Business School
Aston University
Birmingham B4 7ET

Appendix C

Interview Schedule for Managers

The questions I'm about to ask you will cover the following areas.

Section 1	is about the role of the organisation.
Sections 2 & 3	are about the contract, the local authority and the voluntary organisation.
Section 4	is about your role.
Section 5	relates to evaluating performance
Section 6	to the delivery of services and users.

Finally, I will ask you some personal details.

1. Ask permission to tape interview for transcription purposes.
2. Show letter of introduction.
3. Assure confidentiality.

Questions for the study of Accountability – Managers (Public and Voluntary Sectors).

The role of this organisation (local authority or voluntary organisation).

1. **Please describe the role which your organisation plays?**

2. **Have your organisation's core services changed in the last five years?**
   Yes/No.
   If yes,

A Very Great Deal	[ ]
A Lot	[ ]
Some	[ ]
A little	[ ]
Not At All	[ ]
No	[ ]

   If so, in what ways?

3. **What would say were the most important strategic decisions that your organisation has dealt with in the last five years?**
   Issue\Decision Why was this important?

4. **What would you say have been your organisation's achievements in the last five years?**

Achievements.	What have been the main benefits to the service users?

5. **What would you say are the main strengths of your organisation?**

6. **What would you say were its main weaknesses?**

7. **What would you say are the main issues/challenges facing this organisation (local authority or voluntary organisation) in the next few years?**

8. **In what ways, if any, would you like to see the function(s) of this organisation (local authority or voluntary organisation) change or develop in the next few years?**

9. **Do you currently have responsibilities for a particular aspect of this organisation's activities?**
   Yes/No.
   If yes please provide brief details.

The contract and this voluntary organisation.

1. **Are there any equal opportunities policies, targets or monitoring in place with specific reference to women, people from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, service users or people with disabilities related to the contract?** Yes / No. Please describe … or may I have a copy.

2. **Do you attend the Advisory meetings?**

3. **What were the most important issues discussed at the last few (3?) meetings you attended?**

4. **Do you feel that you can shape the issues and get issues on the agenda? How?**

5. **Do you feel that users/clients (i.e. parents, carers, and children) shape and get issues on the agenda?**

6. **How do you know? Do you meet them?**

7. **Are there performance measures linked to the contract? Are these qualitative and quantitative?**

8. **What about trust?**

The local authority and this voluntary organisation.

1. **What is your relationship to the organisation? Could you draw this for me and relate it to accountability?**

2. **What do you see as your role?**

3. **Ultimately you are responsible to Councillors who are accountable for the work of the local authority – is that what it feels like?**

4. **The voluntary organisation manager is accountable to the trustees of the voluntary organisation. Does that mean that there are any tensions between what the voluntary organisation wants and what the local authority wants?**

5. **Do you ever meet the trustees of the voluntary organisation?**

6. **Do councillors from the local authority meet people from this voluntary organisation? If so who, where and when?**

7. **The local authority is contracting with this organisation and presumably with other organisations. Does it matter to the local authority that their boards are not elected (as yours is) and made accountable in this way?**

8. **Where does the democratic accountability for the myriad of policies and decisions they actually make lie?**

Your role and the organisation.

1. **How would you distinguish between your role and the role of the manager of the local authority or voluntary organisation?**

2. **Do you think there are overlaps between the roles carried out by local authority officers / managers and this voluntary organisation's manager; or are they each very specific?**
   If so, what are they?

3. **Whom do you regard as the "experts" in the organisation in relation to service provision?**

4. **Can or should you challenge the views of such "experts"?**

5. **Is there a need for independent "expertise" from outside the organisation?**
   Yes / No.
   If yes, why?

6. **Are the roles of the local authority and the voluntary organisation changing given the contract culture?**

7. **Could you identify any conflict of interest between the sectors which make it difficult for you to achieve your aims?**

8. **What do you like best about being a local authority or voluntary sector manager? What gives you most satisfaction in your work?**

9. **What do you like least? What gives you most dissatisfaction in your work?**

10. **What sources of information do you need to have in order to carry out your functions (i.e. does it get filtered by the local authority or voluntary organisation's staff / managers)?**

Evaluating performance.

1. **What are the criteria of performance which you, as a manager, are looking for from the voluntary organisation?**

2. **What are the criteria of performance which councillors/trustees are looking for from the voluntary organisation?**

3. **How do you monitor and assess the services provided in the light of these criteria?**

4. **How do the councillors/trustees monitor and assess the services provided in the light of these criteria?**

5. **What information do you use and how do you obtain it (e.g. statistics, visits, personal contacts)? What information do councillors/trustees use and how do they obtain it?**

6. **What are the main problems, in your view, in assessing performance?**

7. **What are the main problems, in your view, for councillors/trustees in assessing performance?**

8. **Do you, as a manager, see it as your job to make value for money assessments about this voluntary organisation, for (and on behalf of) the local authority?**

9. If so, **how** do you do it?

10. **To whom,** are you accountable as a Manager?

11. **For what** are you accountable as a Manager?

12. **What does accountability mean to you as a manager? Does it mean that you are formally answerable to someone else, or that you have a responsibility towards the community at large or groups within it? What do you consider to be your "constituency" in your role?**

13. **Do you see any problems or conflicts in exercising accountability as you define it? Do you see a difference between responsibility and accountability? Especially within the context of purchase of service contracting?**

14. **Are voluntary organisation's services funded by the local authority more or less accountable than they used to be? If this has changed what are the reasons?**

15. **Do you have any particular group of people in mind when considering the services?**

Service delivery and users/beneficiaries.

1. **What do you consider to be the end-product or the objectives of the services provided by this voluntary organisation?**

2. **Has what you are doing been affected/changed by the Charity Act and /or the NHS and Community Care Act and /or the Children's Act? Are government guidelines and circulars important and do they influence what this voluntary organisation does?**

3. **Are the services shaped by local circumstances and pressures? If not should they be? How?**

4. **Do users of the services come to you for help and advice?**

5. **Who deals with user queries?**

6. **Are you available by telephone or personal visits or through a surgery or similar system? How does this feed back into the local authority and this voluntary organisation?**

7. **Which of the facilities and services your organisation helps to provide would you say were most important from your community's point of view?**

   Most imp't Why?

8. **Do you take any special steps to consult members of the community about their views on organisational policy matters?**
   Yes/No
   If so what does this involve?

9. **How do you hear/how do councillors/trustees hear about how the community/users feel about services?**

10. **What methods do you know of, by which service delivery beneficiaries (users) of this voluntary organisation can take their views to the local authority/ voluntary organisation managers and/or councillors / trustees of the voluntary organisation?**

11. **Do you think these methods are adequate?**
    Yes/No

12. **If not, what other methods do you think should be available?**

13. **Are you satisfied that the local authority and this voluntary organisation take sufficient notice of its users' views?**
    Yes/No

14. **What is your relationship with the local authority / voluntary organisation? How do you work together?**

15. **If not already in place are there any plans to require the organisation to increase accountability, whilst retaining independence from the local authority?**

Personal Details

Finally to help us compare the views of different respondents it would be useful if you would tell me a little bit about yourself.

1. Name:

2. Age: (Under 30; 30-49; 50-64; 65 or over).

3. Job Title:

4. Male/Female :
5. Which ethnic group do you belong to?
   (White; Black Caribbean; Black African; Black other; Indian; Pakistani; Bangladeshi; Chinese; Other Asian; Other (please specify)).

6. Are you registered disabled or do you have any special needs which affects your ability to volunteer/ participate in organisational work? If yes would it help to have support materials in any particular format (i.e. Audio-tape, Braille).

7. Which of these do you have access to at work?
(Telephone; PC; Modem; Fax; Email).

8. Are there any other comments you would like to make regarding your role or the role of your organisation?

9. Do you have any other comments, which seem to you to be relevant to this interview?

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME.

Appendix D

Interview Schedule for Users

The questions I'm about to ask you will cover the following areas.

Section 1	is about the role of the organisation.
Section 2	is about your personal interest and the organisation
Section 3	is about your role and the organisation.
Section 4	relates to evaluating performance
Section 5	to the delivery of services and users.

Finally, I will ask you some personal details.

1. Ask permission to tape interview for transcription purposes.
2. Show letter of introduction.
3. Assure confidentiality.

Questions for the study of Accountability - Users.

The role of the organisation.

1. **Please describe the role which the organisation plays?**

2. **Have your organisations' services changed in the last five years? If so in what ways?**

3. **What would you say have been your organisation's biggest achievements in the last five years?**
   Achievements. What have been the main benefits to you as users?

4. **So has it made a major difference to the quality of your life?**

5. **And what would say was its main problems/weaknesses?**

6. **In what ways, if any, would you like to see the organisation change or develop in the next few years? What needs do you have that the organisation can help you with?**

Personal interest and the organisation.

1. **Do you currently have responsibilities for a particular aspect of the organisation?**
   Yes/No. If yes please provide brief details.

2. **Are you invited to attend the meetings of the Advisory/ Management group?**

3. **Do you consult with others or meet with other users or do they phone you up?**

4. **What were the most important issues discussed at the last few (3?) meetings you attended?**

5. **Do you feel that you can shape the issues and get the issues on the agenda of the organisation?**

6. **What would you do if you wanted to complain?**

7. **Would you like to be more involved in the decision making of the organisation? How?**

8. **Do you ever meet the trustees of the local or the national branch of your organisation or councillors of the local authority or managers of either?**

Your role and the organisation.

1. **Whom do you regard as the "experts" (with special/most knowledge/skill about the work) in the organisation?**

2. **Can or should parents challenge the views of these experts?**

3. **What do you like best about being involved with your organisation? What gives you the most satisfaction in your role?**

4. **What do you like least? What gives you most dissatisfaction in your role?**

Evaluating performance.

1. **What needs that you have that this organisation can help you with?**

2. **How do you monitor and assess what the organisation does?**

3. **What information do you use and how do you get it (e.g. statistics, visits, personal contacts)? Do you feed this information back to this organisation?**

4. **What are the main problems, in your view, in assessing performance?**

5. **What does accountability mean to you as a user? Does it mean that the organisation is formally (officially) answerable to you or your group? Or that the organisation is formally accountable to the local authority?**

6. **To whom do you think your organisation is accountable?**

7. **Do you think that the organisation is accountable to their service users as well? For what is your organisation accountable? Is it the same as before, worse, better or no different? If this has changed what are the reasons?**

8. **In what ways is this organisation accountable?**

9. **The local authority pays the organisation to deliver the services. If there is any conflict of interest between the local authority and the voluntary organisation who do you think that the organisation is accountable to first?**

10. **Do you or the organisation asks the service users what they want? Do they have a group?**

11. **How do all those involved in providing services via the organisation (i.e. local authority monitoring officers, workers, and managers hear about what the community feel about the services from users, parents, children and carers?**

Service delivery and beneficiaries.

1. **Are the services shaped by local circumstances and pressures? If not, should they be?**

2. **Do other service users come to you for help and advice?**

3. **Who deals with queries in this organisation?**

4. **Which of the services that this organisation provides would you say were most important from your point of view?**
   Most Important Why?

5. **Does this organisation listen to you and implement your advice in their policies?**

6. **Does this organisation take any special steps to consult members of this community about their views on organisational policy matters?**
   Yes/No. If yes, what does this involve?

7. **How do workers, managers, trustees and councillors in the voluntary organisation and the council hear about how the community and the service users feel about services?**

8. **Do you think that these methods are adequate? If not, what other methods should be available?**

Personal Details

Finally to help us compare the views of different respondents it would be helpful if you would tell me a little about yourself.

1. Name:

2. Age: (Under 30; 30-49; 50-64; 65 or over).

3. Role Title:

4. Male/Female:

5. Which ethnic group do you belong to?
   (White; Black Caribbean; Black African; Black other; Indian; Pakistani; Bangladeshi; Chinese; Other Asian; Other - please specify).

6. Are you registered disabled, or do you have any special needs which affects your ability to volunteer/participate in organisational work? If yes, would it help you to have support materials in any particular format (i.e. Audio-tape, Braille).

7. Are there any other comments you would like to make regarding your role or the role of the organisation?

8. Do you have any comments which seem to you to be relevant to this interview.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME.

Appendix E

Further Details about the Fieldwork, Methodology and Analysis

Breakdown of the Respondents

A total of one hundred and eighteen (118) people took part in this research. Information relating to the status of the respondent (statutory and voluntary sector only), ethnic origin, age and sex was collected from sixty-two (62) of them. For the remaining fifty-six (56) respondents, which comprised forty-seven (47) service users and nine (9) field staff and volunteers, research was conducted through: (a) focus groups; and or (b) focused conversations. No data with reference to their ethnic origin, age, or sex was collected.

The following four tables indicate the distribution of the sixty-two (62) respondents by sector, status, ethnic origin, age and sex.

Table E.1: Distribution of all respondents by sector and status (62 respondents)

	Statutory	**Voluntary**	**Service Users**
Total Interviewed	9	38	15
Respondent Status of Statutory and Voluntary Sector Interviewees			
Trustee			
Councillor			
Senior Manager	9	19	
Financial/Project mgr		19	
Field Staff			

Table E.2: Distribution of statutory sector respondents by ethnic origin, age and sex (9 respondents)

Status	All Senior Managers
Ethnic Origin	7 White 1 Black Caribbean 1 Indian
Age	6 (30-49) 3 (50-64)
Sex	7 (Female) 2 (Male)

Table E.3: Distribution of voluntary sector respondents by ethnic origin, age and sex (38 respondents)

Status	19 Senior Managers	19 Project Managers
Ethnic Origin	18 White 1 Black Caribbean	17 White 1 Pakistani 1 Refused to Answer
Age	1 (Under 30) 11 (30-49) 7 (50-64)	1 (Under 30) 14 (30-49) 4 (50-64)
Sex	3 (Female) 16 (Male)	15 (Female) 4 (Male)

Table E.4: Distribution of service users who were interviewed by ethnic origin, age and sex (15 respondents)

Ethnic Origin	12 White 1 Black Caribbean 2 Pakistani
Age	2 (Under 30) 7 (30-49) 1 (50-64) 5 (Over 65)
Sex	All Female

Appendix F

Methodology and Analysis – Other Issues

Summary of the Analytical Process

Having embarked on this research after becoming *"... theoretically sensitised"* (Strauss and Corbin, 1994: 277; Glaser, 1978) or theoretically oriented (see Chapter 2), *the "... field-based story ..."* (Locke, 2001: 122) with its emergent themes, was presented and analysed in the form of the 'Findings' summarised in Chapters 4 and 5. Existing theorising was held in abeyance until the meaning assigned to the empirical observations had stabilised (Locke, 2001). A conceptual scheme or *"... a theoretical story ..."* (Locke, 2001: 122), comprising relational concepts - observable relationships between the theoretical elements and other work - evolved thereafter.

Grounded and Inductive rather than Deductive

Although presenting the research in this way may give the appearance, either that the researcher had a particular story in mind from the earliest stages, or that she had moved from an 'inductive' to a 'deductive' approach, this was not the case.

The approach taken for this research was a combination of a 'grounded theory' approach and the evolving contingencies of life and therefore may not necessarily appear in ways that other grounded theorists recognise it. The use of 'grounded theory' in this research was as Strauss and Corbin (1994) predict, adapted by the researcher to the circumstances in which it was used. As they argue the actual use of 'grounded theory' varied accordingly -

"... with the specifics of the area under study, the purpose and focus of the project, the contingencies faced during the project and perhaps also the temperament and particular gift or weaknesses of the researcher ...." (Strauss and Corbin, 1994: 276).

This very strength of the 'grounded theory' approach can however also be said to be its very weakness. Nevertheless, the key aspect – theoretical coding (i.e., conceptualising how the substantive codes relate to one another) was carried out.

Linking the Data and the Theory

The 'discourse' in the transcripts was analysed and emergent understandings written up as the 'Findings' chapters. The 'Findings' chapters enabled the generation of ideas that gave shape to the researcher's thoughts about what may be theoretically possible.

As Glaser (1978) notes, researchers may not know which literature is relevant until analysis is well advanced. This is certainly what materialised in relation to this research. In this study, the framework to which the 'grounded theory' research contributed was not established until after the 'field-based' story had been told (and the 'Findings' published, by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, in 1997). In other words, the researcher made sense of what she had learned only when she went through the process of writing the 'interpretive text'.

The 'Accountability' literature reviewed in Chapter 2, was empirical, concentrated on formal aspects and only alluded to informal aspects of accountability. In seeking to explain and to link the 'field story' with the 'theoretical story', literature neither related to 'Accountability', nor read prior to the telling of the 'field based story', was reviewed. To explain the 'Findings' therefore required drawing on different sets of literature.

Thus, at this stage, the researcher considered what reading and research experience(s), as well as explicit theories emerging from the data analysis, would be useful when played *" ... against systematically gathered data ..."* (Strauss and Corbin, 1994: 277). Literature was scrutinised for theories relating to the emerging theory, which was developed through a continuing conversation with the data. The 'Findings' and the 'theoretical elements' were integrated in the subsequent theoretical framework chapter, which is conceptually dense. The research is therefore 'grounded' as it was generated and developed *"... through interplay with data collected in actual research ..."* (Strauss and Corbin, 1994: 274).

The elements of the analysis used for the theoretical framework are summarised in general terms at the end of each 'Findings' chapter (see sections 4.5 and 5.14), and are brought together in Chapter 6 (see sections 6.12.1 and 6.12.2).

In terms of addressing the question raised, in relation to which elements of the analysis produced which elements of the final model – the logic is rather difficult to map. This is

because as Ritchie and Spencer (1994) and Denzin (1994) acknowledge, the interpretive process is an 'art', which requires intuition, imagination and creativity. Having said this, the method or route followed, was similar to, yet different from, the one carried out in relation to analysing the data, using 'Framework'. It was similar in that it followed a comparable iterative process, which Dey (1993: 264) refers to as *a " ... series of spirals ... loop[ing] ... back and forth through the various phases ...."*. It was different because the relationship under consideration was now between the 'Findings' and the literature, rather than between the data and the 'Findings'.

Although each finding was initially considered by itself, after 'familiarisation' and 'immersion' in the literature, both the 'Findings' and the literature were considered and discussed as a whole. As a result, they became interwoven and inter-linked with each other. The first 'field story' (Chapter 4) which is integrated with the 'theoretical story' (Chapter 6) until section 6.5, follows a fairly logical and linear route. At this point, however, the concept of 'Power' was introduced, and the links between all three Chapters (4, 5 and 6) were established, as all actors were involved in various ways. From this point, the inter-weaving between the three chapters is dense and there is full integration between the 'Findings', analysis and theoretical elements.

'Framework' – Rather than other paradigms

During the data collection phase, it became apparent to the researcher that the data being gathered was particularly voluminous, especially the transcripts of the interviews and conversations. This led her to consider using computer software that claimed *"... relationships to grounded theory methods ...."* (Strauss and Corbin, 1994: 277) – NUDIST.

Since attempts to use NUDIST proved to be unsuccessful (for reasons discussed in 3.15.1), the researcher discussed her concerns with peers, one of whom was facing similar issues in their research. The researcher was introduced to 'Framework', an analytical approach developed by two researchers at 'Social and Community Planning Research' (now the National Institute of Qualitative Research).

Jane Ritchie and Liz Spencer (1994) have refined and developed 'Framework' over several years. Their experience and description of the application of 'Framework' was not only very accessible, but also well documented and explicit. Their illustrations and summaries of their research, revealed that: (a) they not only had experience of working on similar projects (i.e., sample size, type of data and time-scale) to this one; but (b) the researcher could also relate to the examples given. Moreover, since the 'Accountability' research was: (a) applied; (b) in the social policy field; (c) funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation - who required a policy report; (d) and given that the researcher could access informal training, in relation its' application; it was considered an appropriate analytical tool for this research.

Ritchie and Spencer's 'Framework' also seemed to be sympathetic to NUDIST, in that it appeared to follow a similar logic. Obviously, the key difference between the two, is that whilst NUDIST is a software package, 'Framework' is a manual system. Nevertheless, whilst the advantage of using the former over the latter appears to be that the *" ... software provides a set of procedures which can replace or facilitate the mechanical tasks involved in analysing data ..."* (Dey, 1993: 267): in the final analysis, no analytical tool or approach can replace the creative and conceptual tasks of the researcher.

The decision to employ Ritchie and Spencer's (1994) analytical approach, rather than Strauss and Corbin's paradigm model (1990), or Glaser and Strauss's (1967) theoretical coding model, was therefore a positive decision *for* 'Framework', rather than a decision *against* the grounded theory models for analysis.

Framework and Grounded Theory Analysis

In employing 'Framework', the stages followed were:

1. familiarisation;
2. identifying a thematic framework;
3. indexing;
4. charting;
5. mapping and interpretation.

In relation to this research specifically, data was indexed or labelled (Strauss and Corbin, 1990; Glaser and Strauss, 1967), according to key themes and concepts, which drew on emergent issues raised by respondents. In grounded theory terms: *'in vivo'* codes were developed. Data was charted (i.e., comparing incidents applicable to each category) and relationships between concepts mapped and interpreted (i.e., integrating categories and their properties). The theoretical framework was built through the employment of the constant comparative method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

The five stages involved, mirror the 'grounded theory' approach, in that data was gathered, systematically analysed and reconstructed into a story through the development of *a " ... completed theoretical framework ...."* (Locke, 2001: 45). This is what made the research grounded.

As Strauss and Corbin (1994: 274) note the *"... major difference between this methodology and other approaches to qualitative research is its emphasis upon theory development ...."*

Reflexivity, Peer Debriefers and Story telling

It has been argued, and is indeed accepted, that the researcher:

(a) *" ... is part and parcel of the setting, context, and culture he or she is trying to understand or represent ...."* (Altheide and Johnson, 1994: 486);
(b) cannot disentangle themselves from the observed;
(c) is an active participant in the construction of the world (Burrell and Morgan, 1979); and
(d) will bring their own interpretation to an account/text (Guba and Lincoln, 1989).

Given that *" ... no data is 'pure' data as all are mediated by our own reasoning as well as that of participants ...."* (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983 cited in Silverman, 1993: 208), and that views about the topic of interpretation can conflict (Denzin, 1994), the researcher sought to authenticate her inductive interpretation (Greene, 1994), her telling of the story, which was grounded in concrete empirical material (Denzin, 1994) or case studies. Concern in relation to reflexivity - what the individual researcher brought to the inquiry - and biased inquirer opinion were addressed through reflection with a panel of peers – peer debriefers (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

The peer debriefers audited and reviewed the findings and the researcher's interpretation of those findings. The panel consisted of three men and two women. They had different disciplinary backgrounds (i.e., a geographer, a social psychologist, an historian, a psychologist and an economist). The age group range was from early 40's to early 50's and the peer debriefers were all white, although not all British.

What was remarkable for the researcher, (a sociologist, in her 30s, British and of Indian origin), was that despite their many differences, for the most part, the peer debriefers and the researcher shared similar views in relation to interpretation of the research findings. A partial explanation for this could be that we all shared similar value orientations (Greene, 1994).

An Accountable Research Process

The thesis was an interpretive work. In the tradition of 'post-colonial deconstructive' thought and 'post modernism' (Olesen, 1994), it attempted to create a space for hearing multiple voices/perspectives of those that were studied – a major strand of 'grounded theory'.

The researcher asked the question about 'Accountability' and in adhering *"to complex sets of methodological principles connected to postpositivist foundational systems of meaning (i.e., good science)"* (Denzin, 1994: 512), she traced the accountability concept as precisely as possible. In other words, the researcher tried to follow an accountable and transparent research process, by providing details of how the research problem emerged, how different data sources were triangulated and how she conducted herself, she hopes, in an ethical manner, and with integrity.

At each stage of the research, although alone, the researcher bore in mind the issue of replicability and tried to ensure that her conclusions could be verified by others. This she did in the hope of satisfying potential critics who might have a more positivist orientation (Miles and Huberman, 1994).