

**An Examination of Local Authority Attitudes to the Camphill-
Rudolf Steiner School, Bielside and the Aberdeen Western
Peripheral Road (Murtle Route)**

David May BA, PhD

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Contents

Executive Summary

1. Background
2. The Remit
3. The School
4. Residential Provision for Children with Severe Low Incidence Disabilities
5. Local Authority Use of CRSS
6. Factors influencing the Decision to Refer to CRSS
7. Local Authorities, CRSS, and the AWPR
8. Conclusions

Appendix 1: Local Authority Referrals to CRSS

An Examination of Local Authority Attitudes to the Camphill-Rudolf Steiner School, Bielside and the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Road (Murtle Route)

Executive Summary

1. This report focuses on the relationship between the Camphill-Rudolf Steiner School (CRSS) at Murtle Estate, Bielside (and the CRSS at Camphill Estate), with those bodies mainly responsible for referring children to that school - the Scottish local authorities (LAs). It seeks to establish how those authorities are likely to respond to the intrusion of the proposed Aberdeen Western Peripheral Road (Murtle Route) in the vicinity of the school and considers what this might mean for the provision of residential accommodation for children with severe low incidence disabilities (SLID) in Scotland.
2. Approximately 1000 children with SLID are in residential accommodation in Scotland. Almost all the accommodation is in the independent sector. A rough estimate would suggest that perhaps one-third to one-half of these children would have the kind of complex special needs that would make a referral to CRSS appropriate.
3. LA use of residential provision for children with SLID has been in decline for some years. This has been accompanied by a trend towards greater use of schools closer to the referring LA, and a corresponding reluctance to use schools located at some distance.
4. There are a number of reasons for this:
 - The commitment at both the national and local levels to policies of inclusion resulting in a much greater willingness to explore mainstream and other community-based options before resorting to residential and specifically out-of-area placements.
 - A concern by parents and LAs to maintain family ties by placing children as close to home as possible, and a corresponding reluctance to seek out-of-area placements.
 - The expansion of locally based provision, including provision within mainstream settings, that is reducing LA dependence on out-of-area placements.
5. The school roll at CRSS has reduced significantly - by nearly one-third - since the 1996 Halcrow-Fox report, while pupil numbers on the Murtle Campus have fallen by more than a half in the same period.
6. Referrals from the two LAs adjacent to the school - Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire - have more than held up over the period, while referrals from other parts of Scotland have declined significantly.
7. The relationship between CRSS and the two adjacent LAs is one of ever-closer mutual dependence.
8. Despite a commitment to inclusion and policies and practices designed to reduce the need for out-of-area placements, all LAs are faced with a small number of children whose

educational and care needs cannot under existing arrangements be accommodated 'in-house'. This is unlikely to change significantly in the foreseeable future.

9. The demand for residential placements could well increase in the coming years, depending upon the outcome of the reviews of special needs education currently being undertaken in many local authorities (notably, Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire) and the response of parents to the enhanced rights granted to them by the *Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act, 2004*.
10. LA's for the most part, do not maintain their own residential provision. They are for the most part highly dependent on the independent sector. CRSS is one of a limited number of residential special schools in the independent sector providing for children with complex needs and severe to profound learning difficulties.
11. CRSS is not able to cater for children with the most extreme challenging behaviour, those who are physically aggressive or who offer violence to staff or other pupils.
12. LAs generally regard CRSS and the service it provides very positively. They especially value: the general high level of care; its family-centred approach; the house structure; the commitment of staff; the emphasis on community; the integration of care and education; its ability to offer a total package of care; and its holistic approach.
13. There were some concerns about: its inability or reluctance to manage the most challenging children; the level of out-of-school care; the extra costs and demands on LA's that were associated with the 40-week school year, but these were minor complaints that did not affect the high regard in which the school was generally held.
14. Officials in LAs did not directly interest themselves in CRSS's location or physical setting, although they recognized that both were distinctive features of the school and that the environment was a central concern for staff there. They acknowledged that the peaceful, secluded and low-stimulus environment that CRSS offered was an important consideration in the placements of some children, especially those with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD).
15. The Steiner philosophy did not particularly interest LA officials, although they acknowledged that it was what distinguished CRSS from other residential establishments and underpinned the whole Camphill approach.
16. Cost was not a factor in the referral decisions. CRSS's standard fees were at the lower end of the scale, although this was frequently offset by a tendency to impose additional charges to meet special needs.
17. Parental wishes were an important factor in referral decisions. This was especially the case for Aberdeen City where the school was held in high regard by many families, and in addition was seen as a local resource by officials and parents alike.
18. The general emphasis on developing 'local solutions for local problems' coupled with a concern to foster family ties meant that the proximity of the school to the LA area was

also an important consideration. This is particularly reflected in the large number of referrals to the school from Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire, but it was also a factor that entered the decision-making of other LAs.

19. The possible impact of the AWPR on CRSS was not an issue that particularly concerned LA officials at present.
20. While generally sympathetic to Camphill's position most officials seemed to think that its concerns were exaggerated. They thought that the impact of the road on the life and work of the school would be limited and that in time CRSS would adjust to the new situation.
21. No one was expecting their referral practices to be significantly altered by the presence of the road, although some conceded that the changes to the environment could make the school less suitable for some children with ASD.
22. The continuation of current referral practices in respect of CRSS, however, was dependent on receiving satisfactory assurances from the school concerning the safety of the children. LA officials had no reason to believe that these would not be forthcoming.
23. By definition, the children at CRSS have complex needs which cannot easily, if at all, be met in mainstream or non-residential settings. CRSS makes an important contribution to ensuring that there is appropriate provision for such children, and its work is highly valued by LAs. It is not however unique, neither in the work it does nor the children it takes. It is one of several establishments in Scotland (as well as others in England) and serving LA needs, some of which take even more difficult and demanding children, with even more complex needs.
24. The possibility of CRSS closing or its activities being severely curtailed as a result of the AWPR was regarded as a very unlikely prospect. If this, however, were to happen it not only would be regretted (because of the loss of a valuable institution which presently served LA needs well), but would certainly cause problems for LAs (some more than others), but only in the short term. All thought that equilibrium would be quickly restored to the system.

An Examination of Local Authority Attitudes to the Camphill-Rudolf Steiner School, Bieldside and the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Road (Murtle Route)

1 Background

- 1.1 The proposed *Aberdeen Western Peripheral Road* (AWPR) (Murtle Route) will take the form of a 31 kilometre dual carriageway, with grade separated (flyover or underpass) junctions at main intersections. Local roads will generally be bridged over or under the route.
- 1.2 In the initial planning stages a number of alternative routes were considered, however the one which early on emerged as the preferred option (Option 14, hereinafter referred to as the 'Murtle' Route), would take the road from the A90 at Charleston in the south to rejoin it north of the city near Blackdog. It would cross the Dee west of Bieldside and as it does so passes between the two Camphill communities of Newton Dee and the Murtle Estate campus of the Camphill-Rudolf Steiner School (CRSS).
- 1.3 Following detailed objections from Camphill to these proposals, Grampian Regional Council, the then responsible roads authority, asked consultants, Halcrow Fox, to carry out a study of the likely impact of the road on the two Camphill Estates. Work on this only commenced in September 1995, and the report, entitled *Proposed Aberdeen Western Peripheral Road Route Option 14: Camphill Special Needs Study* (hereinafter referred to as the *Halcrow-Fox Report*), was presented to the Council in February 1996. The Report was clearly compiled under severe time constraints and is unfortunately marred by a great many typographical errors.
- 1.4 The Report, which contained separate contributions by a number of specialist consultants - a psychiatrist, educational psychologist, agriculturist, a specialist in anthroposophical medicine, and a sociologist - as well as detailed assessments of the likely increase in traffic, noise and air pollution, was somewhat ambiguous in its conclusions.
- 1.5 While arguing that 'under normal assessment procedures the site would not be viewed as suffering unreasonable impacts' [11.1.4], it nonetheless conceded that because of the special character of the place and the populations it served, '[T]he road when built could make Murtle an unsuitable environment for treatment of some of the need it currently caters for due to noise or business' [11.1.8]. However, it concluded overall that '[T]he needs of Camphill are likely to be satisfied by the provision of suitable mitigation measure [sic] agreed with them and by them subtly altering [the] range of the pupils and villagers the[y] [sic] help'. [11.1.9].
- 1.6 The individual consultants for the most part were far less inclined to believe that the road could be so easily accommodated. The consultant sociologist in particular took a very different view. He concluded his report with the following words: 'In 1985 the Association for Child Psychology and Psychiatry Newsletter featured the Camphill School as 'a unique national resource providing integrated education, guidance and care'.....The proposed route of the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Road represents, at a minimum damage, at a maximum terminate this work [sic]. Because of the potential

threat to this unique setting it is recommended that an alternative route should be investigated. [4.14.1]

- 1.7 In February, 1996, following receipt of the report and in the face of the vigorous protests and continuing opposition of Camphill, Grampian Regional Council's Transportation and Roads Committee recommended adoption of the Murtle Route as the preferred option. While more recently further consideration has been given to alternative routes, this present report, however, is concerned only with the Murtle Route and its possible impact on the CRSS.
- 1.8 It should also be noted that at the time of Grampian Regional Council's original decision the proposed line of the road to be followed by the Murtle Route took it through land owned and farmed biodynamically by Newton Dee. Since then a realignment has been adopted that will take the road further to the west, avoiding Newton Dee (and Murtle Estate) land almost entirely, but as a consequence bringing it, and all the construction work, much closer to the Murtle Estate and the CRSS.
- 1.9 Other mitigation measures have also been introduced, among them a proposal, first advanced by the authors of the 1996 report, to put the road in a deep cutting as it passes between the estates to reduce noise and visual impact.

2 **The Remit**

- 2.1 In September, 2004 I was engaged by Jacobs Babbie, the new design consultants commissioned by and responsible to the AWPR Managing Agent, to examine the wider social issues raised by the proposed peripheral route as a complement to the work already being undertaken by my colleague, Professor James Hogg into the potential impact of the AWPR on the pupils and residents of the two Camphill communities¹. Shortly thereafter I met with officials from Jacobs Babbie and the AWPR Managing Agent to discuss the brief and I was at the time given a guided tour of both communities by a member of the Camphill staff. Apart from attendance at one or two meetings, under the auspices of the AWPR Managing Agent, to discuss the proposed study with representatives of the '*Save Camphill*' campaign, this is the only visit I have made to the site and the only opportunity I have had to observe the life and work of the community.
- 2.2 Originally it was hoped that we could agree with the *Save Camphill* campaign on a programme of work that might also be jointly executed, and, as noted in the previous paragraph, a series of meetings were held with Camphill representatives to explore that possibility. But in the end agreement could not be reached and it was decided instead that we would each separately carry out our own studies.
- 2.3 The failure to reach agreement had the effect of limiting our ambitions and restricting the scope of the work to be undertaken. Instead of a project that would be concerned with the

¹ Hogg, J. *An Evaluation of the Impact of the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (Murtle Route) on the Camphill Communities in Bielside, Aberdeen: Psychological and Policy Perspectives. Final Report.* January, 2004.

wider social issues raised by the proposal to route the road close to the Camphill communities and which would encompass the views of staff, residents, pupils and their families, as well as other significant stake-holders, such as LAs, it was of necessity decided to limit the enquiry to one important area of public concern: the threat posed by the road to the activities, perhaps even continued existence, of the two communities and the implications for the general public good if this eventuality were to materialize.²

2.4 This report confines itself to a consideration of the issues as they relate to the school alone. In it I seek to address a number of related questions:

- Where does CRSS fit into the network of services for children with special needs?
- What changes, if any, in this respect have taken place since the Halcrow-Fox Report was published in 1996?
- What use do LAs and other referral bodies make of CRSS, and what might be the implications for them if it should close or find its activities severely curtailed?
- How do LAs perceive the threat of the AWPR to CRSS, and how might they respond in the event that it resulted in its closure?
- If CRSS were to close what might be the implications for social policy, and more particularly for LAs?

2.5 In compiling this report, I have drawn heavily on the *Advisory Committee Report into the Education of Children with Severe Low Incidence Disabilities* (Scottish Executive, September, 1999) (the Riddell Committee) and on information to be found on various Camphill websites, as well as documentation provided by the *Save Camphill* campaign as part of their contribution to the AWPR consultation process. I have also benefited immeasurably from interviews I carried out in the summer of 2005 with a number of education and social work officials in local authorities across Scotland. As they talked to me in their official capacity I have refrained from identifying them personally, but I wish to record here my deep appreciation to them all for the help they extended to me in my enquiries.

2.6 I should also make it clear that other than as indicated in 2.1 above I have had no contact with members of the Camphill communities or with the families of children at the school. Nor was I given any access to the school's records. The work that the *Save Camphill* Campaign proposes itself to carry out overlapped in certain respects with our proposals, and they considered it unethical for others to engage in such study.

3 The School

3.1 The CRSS at Murtle Estate is an independent, residential school located to the south-

²The possibility of this happening forms part of Camphill's case against the road (see *The Threat to the Camphill Community* <http://www.savecamphill.org.uk/threat.htm>)

west of Aberdeen. It is bounded by the A93 to the north and the River Dee to the south. The school offers a comprehensive educational programme which follows all aspects of the Scottish 5-14 Curriculum Guidelines. It is modelled on the *Waldorf Curriculum*³ as formulated by Rudolf Steiner. This is a programme of *Curative Education*, a holistic, age-graded approach which aims to nurture the physical, intellectual and spiritual development of the individual through a combination of care, education and therapy.⁴

- 3.2 Residential placements are for 40 weeks annually, organized around normal school terms. Many residential pupils routinely go home at weekends. A number of local children attend the school on a day basis.
- 3.3 Residential care is provided in 5 houses, each of which can accommodate from 4 to 11 people. All pupils - both residential and day - are assigned to a house and share house life with houseparents, teachers, therapists and co-workers (voluntary, unpaid staff) and their families. The link between house/home and school is at the heart of the School's values and practice.
- 3.4 Although, as stated above, the Murtle Route would take the AWPR close to the boundary of the Murtle Estate CRSS and concern has therefore naturally focussed on the implications of that for the school located there, it is important to bear in mind that Murtle is only one of three campuses - that together make up CRSS - Cairnlee and Camphill being the other two⁵, although for most practical purposes the school is seen to consist of Murtle and Camphill Estates only. Cairnlee is a self-contained, separately funded unit offering a post-school programme of further education and training for young adults (variously stated as numbering between 11 and 14) aged 18-25. It seeks to bridge the gap between school and the adult world. Placements are typically funded by social work rather than education authorities. Located in Bielside to the north of the A93 North Deeside Road, Cairnlee is unlikely to be directly affected by the AWPR.
- 3.5 For most practical purposes CRSS is limited to the Murtle and Camphill campuses, and is certainly thought of in this way by LAs and other outside bodies. The Camphill campus, which incidentally is the site of the original Camphill School, is situated west of Milltimber Brae, two miles west of Murtle Estate and it too will not be directly affected by the AWPR, should the road take the Murtle Route, although some of the proposed mitigation measures could well impinge on it. For example, the Halcrow-Fox report (11.1.8) suggested that one possible response to the road taking the Murtle Route might be a reallocation of pupils between the two campuses.
- 3.6 Administratively Murtle and Camphill Estate form a single unit, but while they share some programmes, they operate largely in parallel, that is, as effectively separate, rather

³ For a description of Waldorf education see <http://www.fortnet.org/rsws/waldorf/faq.html>

⁴ Steiner, R. (1972) *Lectures on Curative Education*, London, Rudolf Steiner Press. For a more up-to-date account see Blitz, N. (1999) *Curative Education Approach to Education, Therapy and Care* *Journal of Curative Education and Social Therapy*

⁵ Hilton Farm, which lies to the north of the A93, outwith the boundaries of the Murtle Estate, forms part of CRSS, but there are no pupils resident here.

than complementary, institutions, catering for very similar groups of children and following much the same curriculum. Although, there is some scope for movement of pupils between the two campuses as need dictates and vacancies allow, children, for the most part, attend school on the estate where they are resident. It is important to note, particularly in respect to this report, that local authorities make referrals to CRSS, not directly to one or other of the two campuses. The following text refers therefore to both Camphill and Murtle Estate CRSS unless indicated otherwise.

- 3.7 The Murtle Estate is also the home to the **Amber Kindergarten**. This offers ‘an integrated form of provision which serves both special needs and non-special needs children aged 3-6 years from the local community and beyond’. [Brown Initial Report:18]⁶ CRSS has from time to time in the past had a nursery class, but this appears to be new provision, opened only in autumn 2004 in purpose-built premises. My information (which is in line with data provided by Camphill⁷) is that in June 2005 there were four children attending the nursery, two from Aberdeen city and two from the county. All four had special needs.
- 3.8 Also located on the Murtle Estate is the Camphill Medical Practice, one of a very limited number of GP practices in the UK providing anthroposophical medicine within the NHS. It serves residents of Newton Dee and the CRSS as well as increasing numbers of patients outside of Camphill. The practice did not form any part of my enquiries.
- 3.9 It is no simple matter to arrive at a commonly agreed figure for the number of pupils currently attending the school: In its *Response to the AWPR Southern Route Options Consultation (Spring 2005)*, Camphill states that CRSS ‘...offers an inclusive, comprehensive holistic education programme.....for 89 pupils aged 3-19...’ [A2.29], although it is not entirely clear whether that figure refers to capacity or actual enrolment. It does not include Cairnlee, figures for which are given separately.
- 3.10 In June 2003, CRSS was subject to an integrated inspection by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Education and the Care Commission. At that time 87 pupils, aged from 7 to 21 years, were attending the schools (70 residential + 17 day pupils). Three-quarters (66) had a Record or Statement of Needs (see 4.2), and two-fifths (34) were ‘looked after’ children.
- 3.11 Separate figures for the two campuses are not routinely provided. However both Hogg (p.7) and Brown (*Initial Report* p.12) agree on a figure of 31 children attending the school on the Murtle campus (19 boys + 12 girls) in September, 2004, 25 of whom were resident, with the remaining six day pupils⁸. Assuming a total enrolment of 89 for the 2004-05 session, as quoted above (3.7), this leaves 58 children attending school on the Camphill campus, with up to 10 of them being day pupils.

⁶ Brown, R. Preliminary Examination of the Effects of the Proposed Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route on the Camphill Communities, Aberdeen. Consultant’s Report on Behalf of the Save Camphill Campaign. Initial Report, January, 2005.

⁷ The Camphill Communities Response on Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route Consultation on Southern Route Options, May 2005 (Camphill Response), Annex A2.7

⁸ By the end of that session that number seems to have increased slightly – to 36 (29 residents + 7 day pupils) (letter dated 19th May, 2005 to the Chief Executive, Aberdeen City Council from the Save Camphill Campaign)

3.12 What is indisputable is that there has been a significant decline in enrolment at CRSS - down by almost one-third (29%) since the publication of the Halcrow-Fox report in 1996 (Halcrow-Fox Report, Appendix 3B). This reduction is confined almost entirely to Murtle, where pupil numbers have been cut by more than half (54%) in that same nine year period. The Camphill campus, on the other hand, has seen enrolment remain fairly stable - in fact up very slightly from 57 (in 1996) to 58 (in 2004-5). The result has been a shift in the prospective positions of the two campuses, with the Murtle now accounting for only 35% of total school enrolment compared with 54% in 1996. Since there is no evidence that the school currently has places it cannot fill, I can only conclude that this represents a real reduction in overall capacity, particularly affecting the Murtle campus. How much of this followed on the introduction of the *BA in Curative Education* (See Camphill Response: A2.13-2.14), with its need for additional student accommodation, and how much it reflects a response to declining demand – a question I turn to below – I am not in a position to say.

4 **Residential Provision for Children with Severe Low Incidence Disabilities**

4.1 Examining the backgrounds of the children attending CRSS in 1996 the consultant sociologist concluded that: ‘significant numbers of the pupils who are referred to the Camphill school are coming from placements which have been relatively shortlived or which can no longer provide for the growing adolescent. In particular Camphill seems to represent an option taken by local authorities when day provision is no longer sustainable and when there is no ‘in house’ provision suitable. *Taken together these data suggest that the Camphill school is providing for a very special sub-set of the special needs population.*’ [Halcrow-Fox: 4.5.5], a sub-set, he added, ‘*with very complex difficulties whose needs are difficult to meet.*’ [Halcrow-Fox 4.7.1.]. ‘*[P]lacements at the Camphill school are not routine special education placement [sic]....they are very specifically sought for children for whom other provision is not suitable.*’ [Halcrow-Fox: 4.5.7.Emphases added].

4.2 Under Section 60(2) of the Education (Scotland) Act, 1980, as amended, education authorities have a duty to open a Record of Needs (RoN) for children in their area who have ‘pronounced, specific or complex educational needs which require continuing review’ and to ensure that ‘adequate and efficient provision’ is made for them. In Scotland there are roughly 15,000 children (or 1.9% of the school population) with a RoN⁹. A RoN covers a wide range of disabilities and as a means of identifying the kind of children who would be seen as appropriate for referral to CRSS is not particularly helpful.

4.3 The Riddell Committee¹⁰, which in 1999 was asked to examine educational provision for children with complex needs, preferred the term ‘*severe low incidence disabilities*’ (SLID) to refer to those children who might require such special provision. These are children who ‘have pronounced, specific or complex special educational needs which are such as require’:

⁹ Figures from the 1997 School Census, quoted in Riddell (1999) Annex C.

¹⁰ Advisory Committee Report into the Education of Children with Severe Low Incidence Disabilities (Scottish Executive, September, 1999)

- continuing review;
- a degree of inter-agency co-operation, planning and support greater than usually required to meet the needs of children and young persons;
- a high level of educational support in one or more of the following areas: the physical environment; the curriculum; adult support and supervision; specialist resources, including Information and Communication Technology. [Riddell: 2.8].

4.4 SLID embraces the following categories of learning difficulties:

- hearing impairment;
- visual impairment;
- physical or motor impairments;
- language and communication disorder;
- social, emotional and behaviour difficulties;
- severe learning difficulties;
- profound learning difficulties;
- severe multiple/complex learning difficulties;
- profound multiple/complex learning difficulties.

4.5 While most children with SLID will have a RoN, the reverse is by no means the case. The Committee estimated that there were a little under 9000 children (1.1% of the school population) in Scotland with SLID, with quite wide local variations, ranging from 0.6% of the school population in Orkney to 1.4% in Glasgow. Aberdeen (1.3%) and Aberdeenshire (1.2%) with a combined total of 825 children were slightly above the national average.

4.6 The overwhelming majority (87%) of children with SLID are in local authority provision, with nearly half of this number (45%) in mainstream settings. Around 1000 children with SLID are not in local authority provision¹¹. There are two categories of non-LA provider: independent schools and grant-aided schools.

4.7 There are 33 Independent Special Schools (ISS) in Scotland (of which CRSS is one), with varying capacity of between 18 to over 100 places. Their numbers have been expanding in recent years, the result in large part of the increasing demand for places for children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties referred by the children's hearings or courts. In 2003, 70% of pupils in ISS had 'social and emotional' difficulties¹². LAs have little or no control over these referrals. Schools taking such children would not normally accept the kind of child typically sent to CRSS. Indeed, as the Riddell Report notes, opinion varies as to whether the growing numbers of children with emotional/behavioural difficulties fall within the definition

¹¹ In 1997 there were a further 333 pupils with SLID attending independent special schools who were not LA-funded, plus 34 from outwith Scotland, bringing the total of pupils with SLID in the independent/grant aided sector to c 1500 (Riddell: Annex C)

¹² *Independent Schools Census, September 2003* Scottish Executive, Statistics Publication Notice Education Series ISSN 1479-7569

of SLID adopted by the committee (Annex G. 2.1). While the categories are far from homogeneous or precisely defined, it is probable that more than half of special schools in the independent sector are of this kind. Other schools, like the Royal Blind School or Donaldson's College, both in Edinburgh, are of a very specialist kind, largely restricting their intake to children with specific sensory impairments. Thus provision for children with the same kind and level of disabilities as are sent to CRSS is much less than the size of the independent sector would at first sight suggest - possibly of the order of one-third to one-half, giving a total of around 600 places across the country, although without much more detailed investigation this can be no more than a 'guesstimate'.

- 4.8 Grant-Aided schools are schools whose costs are partly met by the Scottish Executive under the *Special Schools (Scotland) Grant Regulations 1990* in order to ensure a sufficiency of appropriate provision nationally. Their numbers have been in decline for some years. In 1997 there were just seven grant-aided schools, mostly located in the Central Belt. The Riddell Committee recommended that the policy be discontinued, with the money saved being reallocated to LAs. The distinction between 'grant-aided' and 'independent' school is essentially a funding one and has little relevance for LA referral practices (Riddell: Annex G.2.7). In what follows all references to the independent sector will include 'grant-aided' schools.
- 4.9 Not all provision in the independent sector is residential, although most of it is. Most residential schools accept day pupils. Since few local authorities maintain their own residential provision, they are heavily dependent on the independent sector when such accommodation is required. By and large pupils with the most pronounced and complex learning difficulties are to be found in residential provision, although home/family circumstances will be an additional determining factor.
- 4.10 The pattern of LA use of residential provision for children with SLID in recent years reveals two trends. The first is an overall decline in the use of such provision (particularly if we remove referrals of children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties from the equation). The second is a preference for schools as close as possible to the home area.
- 4.11 There are a number of reasons for this:
- the commitment at both the national and local levels to policies of inclusion resulting in a much greater willingness to explore mainstream and other community-based options before resorting to residential and specifically out-of-area placements.
 - a concern by parents and LAs to maintain family ties by placing children as close to home as possible, and a corresponding reluctance to seek out-of-area placements.
 - The expansion of locally-based provision, including provision within mainstream settings, that is reducing LA dependence on out-of-area

placements.

- 4.12 The Riddell Committee commented on these trends: 'International and national policies on inclusion, recent legislation, and the tide of educational and public opinion generally are leading [local] authorities to rethink their policies....[They] now have, or are developing, policies which explicitly state that children should be educated within their own communities except in extreme cases. Local provision is being developed accordingly' [Riddell: Annex G. 2.2.]
- 4.13 Clearly some LAs are better placed than others to move in this direction, but as Riddell noted 'even rural authorities are investing in new models of provision and expect their use of external provision to fall as their own comes on stream' [Riddell: Annex G. 2.2]. 'New models of provision', it should be emphasised, does not signify a move by LAs into the residential sector or in anyway a buildings-based approach, but rather a more imaginative one than conforms to principles of inclusion, making increased use of support workers, multi-agency working and alternative forms of care, such as foster care.
- 4.14 But there are limits to how far these developments can go. As Riddell noted: 'There are, and will always be, some young people who present constellations of needs which cannot be met by the resources available within the authority or which require an expertise which local staff do not have'. [Riddell: Annex G. 2.5].....'There is a growing demand for provision for children at the severe end of the autistic spectrum and for children with emotional/behavioural difficulties.[as well as]for places which can accommodate children with high dependency needs, arising from higher infant survival rates' [Riddell Annex G. 2.13].
- 4.15 All this would suggest that as LAs continue to embrace the policy of integrated provision, independent schools will be increasingly expected to accommodate the 'most vulnerable and damaged children', as the Scottish Independent Special Schools Group, in its evidence to the Riddell Committee, argued [Riddell: 5.17].
- 4.16 In November 2005, the system for the assessment and recording of children and young persons with special educational needs established by the 1980 Act will be replaced by *The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act, 2004*. This will see the Record of Needs give way to the *Co-ordinated Support Plan* and parents given more power to to make placement requests. In general the intention of the Act is to move the system further in the direction of greater inclusion. This has prompted many local authorities to review their special needs provision. Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire, among other LAs, are considering doing away with separate special schools provision in favour of integrating special needs firmly within the mainstream structure. This is a controversial move and a cause for some concern among parents and even a good deal of outright hostility. Aberdeenshire parents have lobbied the Scottish Executive in a bid to halt their LA's plans. A decision one way or another is not expected until 2006, but it could well have an impact on CRSS by giving rise to an upturn in demand for places. Some Aberdeenshire parents, for example, using the powers granted to them under the *Additional Support for Education* legislation, have

threatened to remove their children from LA provision and demand either home-based teaching or a residential placement should the Authority go ahead with its plans.

5 Local Authority Use of CRSS

- 5.1 In order to establish the source of referral for pupils currently attending CRSS, letters were sent to all 32 Scottish LAs requesting details of the number of children they were supporting at CRSS. Of the 22 who responded, 12 were currently supporting children at the school, while six previously did so but no longer do. We were by this means able to account for 64 (of the estimated 89 children; ie - 72%) on the combined Murtle and Camphill Estates as of May, 2005 (see Appendix 1).
- 5.2 We do not know how many of the ‘missing’ 25 were referred by those authorities which did not respond to our enquiries, by LAs outside of Scotland, or by parties other than LAs. In 1996 30% of pupils then enrolled at CRSS were not funded by Scottish LAs, a significantly higher figure than for the sector as a whole (24%). Of the 34 children from outwith Scotland who were then in independent special schools, CRSS accounted for one-third. It was in fact one of only six schools in the independent sector which took children from outside of Scotland (Riddell: Annex G)¹³.
- 5.3 Following receipt of the above information, I carried out interviews in a number of LAs to discuss special needs provision, referral policy, and use of residential facilities, with special reference to CRSS. A total of 11 interviews were completed with officials in six LAs, all of them located in the north or north east of the country. For that reason they cannot be considered representative of the national picture and so any conclusions we might be tempted to draw for the exercise should be treated with some caution. However, there was a sufficient uniformity of response from the low referring authorities (and in so far as CRSS is concerned the great majority of LAs fall into this category) to inspire a degree of confidence in the findings.
- 5.4 Close inspection of our returns suggests that the reduction in pupil numbers referred to in 3.10 above is largely attributable to a marked decline in the use of the school by LAs in the Central Belt - those serving the old regions of Strathclyde, Lothians and Central. In 1996 these three regions were together supporting 46 children at the school (ie 37% of the enrolment). Six of the 10 authorities not responding to our letter are located within these old regional boundaries, which may well suggest that they currently have no children at the school. All 25 of the ‘missing’ cases would have to be attributable to these authorities (which is extremely unlikely to be the case) before they were contributing the same proportion of referrals as in 1996.
- 5.5 The point is even more clearly made if we restrict our analysis to those LAs that were previously part of Strathclyde, where our data is most complete (see Appendix 1). Of the 125 children enrolled at the school in 1996, 25 (20%) were from this one regional

¹³ Figures in the Halcrow-Fox Report (Appendix 3B) however, suggest that only between 11% and 17% of pupils then enrolled at CRSS (up to 21 children, not the 33 as given by Riddell for the following year) were not referred by Scottish LAs.

authority. The current figure, with all but one of 12 LAs that make up the old region reporting, is just nine (of 89, or 10%).

- 5.6 Contrast this with figures for the three LAs which previously constituted the Grampian Region (which in 1996 included Moray as well as Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire). They then accounted for 30% of the school roll, whereas currently the figure is 56% (just a little short of the ‘more than 60% stated in some of the *Save Camphill* submissions)¹⁴. But what is perhaps even more revealing is that referrals from this region, in contrast to other parts of Scotland, have remained pretty stable over the period - in fact are up slightly, from 38 (1996) to 44 (2005).
- 5.7 All this would seem to be very much in line with the trends noted by the Riddell committee, and discussed in the previous section:
- Referrals overall to residential schools continue to decline.
 - Where residential placement is considered necessary, LAs look first to schools close to home.

It is not possible to say, however, with the data available to me, whether the children who are now being referred to schools such as CRSS are more severely disabled and likely to have more complex needs than was the case in the past, as the Scottish Independent Special Schools Group argued (see 4.15 above).

- 5.8 What also emerges clearly from the referral data is the ever growing mutual dependence of school and the two adjacent LAs - Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire - reflected in the relatively large number of children which these two LAs refer. For both authorities, but the City in particular (not surprisingly so since it lies within the City's boundaries), CRSS is viewed as their local residential special school. Other things being equal (though they rarely are with children with special needs), CRSS would normally be the residential school those authorities would consider first in cases where residential accommodation is thought necessary.¹⁵
- 5.9 This is part of a general trend, which is reflected in the changing pattern of referrals. Increasingly LAs are initiating dialogue, even getting into partnerships with the independent schools within their own boundaries to examine ways in which those schools might better meet local needs. In the process the status of the school and in particular the relationship between provider and funder are subtly changed: the school becomes less a national resource and much more a part of the continuum of local provision. The evidence from my interviews suggests that the relationship between Aberdeen City and CRSS is moving in this direction. This is as yet a development that is barely discernible, although the commitment to inclusion will surely give it impetus. For the time being, however, independent special schools for the most part

¹⁴ *The Camphill Communities response on Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route Consultation on Southern Route Options, May 2005 (2.31)*

¹⁵ Linn Moor, a smaller establishment, located close by at Peterculter, also has the advantage of proximity, but in its case the fact that it operates a 52 week year and is more willing than CRSS to accept children with challenging behaviour more important considerations.

(and CRSS probably more than most schools in this sector) continue to operate, if to a more limited extent than previously, on a national (even perhaps, and again particularly in the case of CRSS, an international) basis.

- 5.10 I was not able to get specific figures for the number of children with SLID each LA was currently supporting in residential provision. The problem was not simply that my respondents did not have these figures to hand, but that the category itself was problematic (see 4.7 above). The difficulties of interpretation are well illustrated if we take the case of Aberdeen City. I was given a figure of 92 children from that LA who were attending special schools in the independent sector, but based on data provided in the Riddell report (Annex G.Table 1.a.2) we would 'expect' a total of no more than 50¹⁶. Assuming 92 to be the correct figure there are three possible explanations for this discrepancy. The first is that the figure of 92 includes a significant number of children who do not have SLID. The second, that with one residential special school located within its boundaries, and another (Linn Moor) close by, the authority does not feel so constrained in its use of the independent sector as perhaps do many others. The third possibility is more intriguing still, and relates to the argument advanced in the previous paragraph, namely that for city officials CRSS in particular is effectively regarded as a constituent part of the city's special needs provision and is used accordingly. Some weight is given to this argument by the high proportion of day pupils among city referrals to CRSS, but without a detailed examination of the referral process it is not possible to come to a definite conclusion.
- 5.11 Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire apart, only five of the LAs reporting their figures to us had more than one child currently enrolled at CRSS, while ten reported no current enrolments. Extrapolating from data provided in the Riddell report suggests that only four LAs are particularly dependent on CRSS to meet their needs for residential provision: Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire are, as one might expect, well out in front and in this respect occupy a quite different place from all other LAs. Angus and Argyll & Bute send a little less than one-in-four of their children with SLID requiring provision to CRSS, followed somewhat behind by Highland with perhaps around one-in-twelve of their children, although in all three cases absolute numbers are small. The remaining 27 authorities hardly register at all.
- 5.12 My respondents were somewhat vague about the criteria they employed to identify a CRSS referral, perhaps in part because this is not how the referral process works. While they all rejected the idea of a 'Camphill type', they were equally clear that CRSS catered for a fairly special kind of child - those with moderate to severe (some talked of 'severe to profound') learning disabilities, together with other educational and social problems; children who were not only difficult for the school system to manage, but were becoming an increasing problem for families, and children who required 24-hour care. Some talked of CRSS's developing expertise in the field of autism, and noted its recent accreditation with the National Autistic Society. One official described the children his authority sent to CRSS as those with 'developmental delay, together with some behavioural and emotional disorder allied

¹⁶ Even this figure is likely to be on the high side since the overall trend in recent years has been downward (see 4.10)

to learning disabilities'. Such children, he explained, usually need a lot of help with basic self-care and social skills, which Camphill was well set up to provide.

- 5.13 On the other hand, CRSS was not generally seen as appropriate for children presenting with extreme challenging behaviour or who were physically aggressive and offered violence to other children or staff, older and physically bigger adolescents, and especially those who might exhibit uncontrolled sexuality. Such children require much closer and more specialized supervision than Camphill can provide, and LAs are inclined to look elsewhere. In any event, it was reported, CRSS is reluctant to consider such referrals and would not infrequently require a LA to take back a child who began to exhibit challenging behaviour of this kind.
- 5.14 To talk of alternatives to CRSS is not really appropriate since LA officials do not approach the referral decision in quite that way (ie surveying a range of comparable establishments) or so my respondents wished to suggest. Referral is very much a process rather than an event, in which availability is not a major consideration. It is rather a question of exploring, often over a period of time, the school's capacity for meeting the particular needs of that individual child - and his/her family. When pressed, however, other establishments mentioned included Linn Moor (used particularly by Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire - not surprisingly given its proximity - and especially for children with challenging behaviour who could not be returned home in the holidays); Daldorch House (Catrine) and Struan House (Alloa) for children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD); Harmeny (Edinburgh), Sycamore (Kirkcaldy), and Balnacraig (Perth), although I am unable to say whether in any particular referral these establishments are considered alongside CRSS. However, it is fair to say that while CRSS may well appear as 'the last resort' for some families, it is not, and cannot be, for most LAs.
- 5.15 All the officials to whom I talked held a generally positive view of CRSS. Some were much more fulsome in their praise than others. One described it as 'a centre of excellence', 'a national resource', 'the best provider in the UK for the kind of child who was typically sent there - indeed, the only provider for a certain type of child.', and he went on to suggest that it had been particularly successful in accommodating children who had to be moved when Woodlands Hospital closed: 'The transformation in those kids was fantastic'.¹⁷
- 5.16 Others were more restrained, but all seemed to hold the school in high regard and to consider it an important and valuable resource. What they particularly valued was:
- The general high level of care provided;
 - The ability of the school to offer a total package of care;
 - Its family-centred approach, as manifested particularly in its house structure;

¹⁷ I am not aware that any children from Woodlands had been transferred to Camphill as part of the resettlement programme. If this is indeed the case then what happened here was quite different from what happened when Ladysbridge (the hospital for adults with learning disabilities serving the north-east) closed at around the same time. According to my respondents, Newton Dee, which might have been seen as providing alternative accommodation to the hospital, was not involved in the resettlement programme at all.

- The commitment of staff;
 - The integration of care and education; and
 - The emphasis on community.
- 5.17 One respondent - and he seemed to be speaking here for others - suggested that what CRSS uniquely offered was 'a holistic environment - a true integration of life and work'. He also stressed that it provided a consistency of approach and a low stimulus environment which some children (and by implication the children who were routinely sent to CRSS) needed, and which the community, and many other residential schools could not provide. 'Consistency', 'predictability', 'low stimulus' and 'routine' were all words he used to describe the special qualities of CRSS.
- 5.18 In contrast to this, another respondent who, while conceding that CRSS 'did good work' and provided a good level of care for 'children with learning disabilities who had significant behavioural problems', suggested that it was not particularly good at providing consistent 24 hour care ('which was what these children needed'). He was especially disparaging about the level of evening/night care, and, although unwilling to go into detail, confessed to having 'a lot of anxieties' about the school. Every referral to the school always had to be preceded by a good deal of detailed discussion to ensure that the appropriate package of care was provided. These views were echoed by at least one other respondent.
- 5.19 The 40 week, three-term year caused some authorities some problems since during those periods when the school was closed LAs were left with the not always easy, but certainly always costly business of providing respite and other necessary support for hard pressed families. For the same reason others complained of the school practice of routinely sending many children home at weekends despite the fact that the fees were being charged on the basis of a seven-day week. One respondent, however, while acknowledging the problem, suggested that the school was always ready to work with LAs to minimize any difficulties that might arise, even to the extent of being prepared to second staff to help support children over the holiday periods. I did not, however, get the impression that this was common practice.

6 Factors influencing the decision to refer to CRSS

- 6.1 In my interviews I explored with officials some of the specific factors that might influence their decision to refer a child to CRSS and in this section I discuss the results. This analysis needs to be treated with caution. Attempting to deconstruct decision-making in this way threatens to misrepresent the process by suggesting a much more calculating and rational approach than is the case. LAs use CRSS because it works. One official, who was reluctant to answer any of my questions here, best summed up what I think is probably a more general attitude: 'We use Camphill because of its effectiveness. We don't focus on specific characteristics [of the school] but on outcomes. [Camphill produces] excellent outcomes with the most difficult and damaged children'.

- 6.2 **The (physical) environment.** The response to this was complicated and far from unambiguous. All acknowledged that CRSS's setting, its air of rural tranquility, was a distinctive feature of the school and one that set it apart from most other residential establishments. They recognized too that the environment occupied a central place in the whole Steiner/Camphill philosophy and to that extent could not be properly separated from what the school had to offer: the environment was important because the school chose to regard it as important. In particular they were concerned for the effect that any perceived degradation of the environment might have on the commitment of co-workers. And they further acknowledged that many parents, especially those who made a specific request for a CRSS placement, attached a high value to the physical setting - secluded, peaceful and above all, safe.
- 6.3 Yet at the same time they were at pains to suggest that in making their referral decisions the physical setting of the school was not as such a major consideration: after all many of the other schools they used were in urban areas. Some did concede that the peaceful, secluded environment of Camphill was a particularly appropriate placement for some children, especially those with ASD, and that this might well be a factor where such children were concerned. But by and large their position is best summed up by one respondent who stated: 'The value of the (physical) environment is overstated. What is more important is what is delivered and who delivers it.' LA's first priority was the physical safety and well-being of the child. As one official put it: 'I wouldn't place a child in any school if I thought he was not going to be safe'. However safety was ensured by good school management and proper child care practices; it was not a function of location. While there was some concern that the proximity of the AWPR, if it followed the Murtle Route, might put some children at risk, they all seemed to think that if this should prove to be the case, CRSS, like any responsible school authority, would take all necessary steps to minimize that risk - and provide the necessary reassurances.
- 6.4 One respondent tended to see the environment in more negative terms: the seclusion Camphill offered could equally be described as segregation and it ran quite counter to current policy of inclusion. People with learning disabilities - even those with profound and complex disabilities - were part of the community and should be made to feel part of the community by living in it, not by being shut away in however pleasant a location.
- 6.5 The ambivalence with which most viewed the question of the environment was well illustrated by one respondent who while denying that Camphill's rural tranquility was something that either he or his colleagues paid much attention to, nevertheless stressed the importance of the 'low-stimulus environment' which it offered for some children, particularly those with ASD.
- 6.6 **The Steiner philosophy and approach.** Once again, this was acknowledged as what was distinctive about Camphill - what made it what it was - and some respondents were ready to concede that it could well account for whatever success the school had. Yet once again, my respondents denied that it impinged in any direct fashion on their decision-making. If anything, they were personally inclined to see it as a negative factor: some suggested that they felt somewhat uncomfortable with that whole approach and the sect-like commitment of its workers. As one respondent put it: 'All that religious symbolism around the place was a bit weird at times,' but by and large they simply saw it as none of

their business.

- 6.7 **The general therapeutic environment.** None of my respondents seemed to place much value on any of the specific, Steiner-inspired, therapies that CRSS had to offer. In fact they were for the most part fairly dismissive of them. But they did attach great importance to the *general* therapeutic approach of the school and the high level of care provided. In particular, they all valued the house structure, the determined effort to integrate home (family-living) and school, and the total package of care that Camphill offered – ‘a total and integrated therapeutic approach which encloses the child completely.’
- 6.8 There was a downside to this, to which some respondents alluded. With those children who had spent many years at CRSS there was the problem of reintegrating children into their home community when schooling ended, so different, it was argued, was life in Camphill from anything the young person was likely to encounter when he or she moved back into the wider world. There was some concern that in solving the present crisis they might well only be storing up future problems for the young person, his or her family, and not least themselves.¹⁸
- 6.9 **Staff(ing).** All respondents had generally high praise for school staff, particularly the co-workers - their commitment to their work and to the children. They saw their contribution as a very important part of Camphill’s success, which they acknowledged grew out of the Steiner philosophy. However, some respondents also suggested that in recent years the balance of staff at Camphill had swung away from volunteers, fewer of whom were being recruited, towards more paid employees. While this trend, it was suggested, was more pronounced at Newton Dee than at CRSS, nevertheless, it was thought to be having a gradual and subtle influence on the way that the school was run, what it had to offer, and the kind of children it might take in the future.
- 6.10 If this is indeed the case, it does raise the question of whether some LA officials responsible for referrals, not many of whom appeared to have much recent personal experience of the school, are operating on the basis of out-of-date stereotypes. Is CRSS still characterized by its co-worker ethos or has this changed/is changing? Certainly, there is some evidence that Camphill is slowly losing some of its distinctive features, which at one time set it apart, and is becoming more like a ‘regular’ special residential school operating in the independent sector market-place.
- 6.11 **The curriculum.** Children are sent to CRSS essentially because of the care it offers, not the education. It was very often the burden on the family or its inability to go on providing care that was the determining factor. Even the education officials I talked to seemed to see the issue in these terms. So the quality of the education that CRSS could offer was not a particular issue in referrals. In any event CRSS, like all schools, is subject to regular HMIE inspections, and LAs by and large rely on this to ensure that the school provides an acceptable education for their children. There was some concern that CRSS

¹⁸ Some respondents seemed to assume that on reaching school-leaving age the typical move for most CRSS pupils was to Newton Dee or one of the transitional Steiner communities in the Deeside area, but this is not my understanding of what happens.

did not quite meet the standards set by other special schools, that it was rather old-fashioned in its approach, especially in its suspicion of modern educational technology, although in that respect, it was suggested, change was afoot. There was concern too that much of the classroom teaching was not very effectively integrated with the therapeutic work, that too many of the classroom teachers were foreign co-workers who were not familiar with UK requirements, methods, or curriculum, and in some cases even had difficulties with the language, and that the school was overly concerned with fostering a particular social climate rather than working towards precise, explicit, and formal educational goals. One respondent suggested that if his authority moved towards imposing more precise and tighter service agreements with the school then CRSS 'might well have a problem', but, as noted, this is not why children are sent to Camphill.¹⁹

- 6.12 **Cost.** All respondents acknowledged that budgets were not unlimited and that residential schooling, especially for children with very special and complex needs, was expensive, sometimes almost prohibitively so. CRSS, however, was one of the cheaper options, mainly, it was argued, because of its use of volunteers. But it was also noted by some that standard packages rarely applied. CRSS would routinely add on additional charges (in a 'quite outrageous way' according to one respondent), depending on the special needs of the child and the extra support that might be required, which could often lead to a doubling of fees. LAs had few options other than to pay up. While, however, it might remain a background consideration, no respondent suggested (or would suggest) that cost was a factor that entered into their placement decisions.
- 6.13 **Proximity.** The physical distance between school and LA is important given the policy emphasis on inclusion and the concern to maintain ties between the child and his/her family. And it is this factor that above all explains the pattern of referrals not just to CRSS, but to residential special schools generally. As noted, all six LAs, whose officials were interviewed, are located in the north and north-east of Scotland. It is, then, quite reasonable for them to see CRSS as their *local* residential special school, as by and large all of them did. Even Highland tended to think about it in this way, although no doubt for some of their children the distance between home and school was quite considerable. As discussed earlier, Aberdeen City uses the school on a routine basis for its special needs children, largely because of its proximity, and has developed a relationship with it that it does not have with other residential establishments, with the exception perhaps of Linn Moor. This special relationship was not so evident for the other LAs, but in all cases the proximity of the school to the LA was an important factor in determining its use.
- 6.14 **Parental wishes.** All officials emphasized the importance of working with families at an early stage and the need to bring them along with any decision. Where a residential placement was being sought this would generally mean involving parents in the process of selecting a suitable establishment and encouraging them to visit the schools they had initially identified before a final decision was made. Where a parent made a formal placement request (and this would involve their specifying a particular school), the LA was under a statutory requirement to accede to that request unless, a) it could demonstrate that it was able to meet the child's needs from within its own provision, or b) that the identified school was not appropriate - and this they would be reluctant to do

¹⁹The joint HMIE/Care Commission inspection team came to much the same conclusions in its 2003 report.

since not only did it risk alienating parents, but it also could lead to the expense of taking the case to appeal.

- 6.15 Given Camphill's national reputation it is perhaps not surprising that some parents would occasionally at an early stage in the process request that their child be placed in CRSS. This, however, only really affected referrals from Aberdeen City where the combination of proximity and local knowledge were important in such placement requests.

7 **Local Authorities, CRSS, and the AWPR**

- 7.1 A principle concern of my interviews was to try to establish how LAs, as the referring bodies, might themselves respond to the introduction of the AWPR. A major part of Camphill's case against the Murtle Route is that the environmental degradation that would follow would so change the character of the school and threaten the safety of pupils that LAs, on whom the school depended for its economic viability, would be reluctant to continue sending children to the school.²⁰
- 7.2 It is perhaps worth pointing out that my respondents' knowledge of the AWPR was derived mainly from what they had read and heard in the local media. While they were all aware that the Murtle Route was in some way perceived as a threat to CRSS, they were generally ignorant of the detailed proposals, and few knew of the changes that had been proposed to its alignment or construction (see 1.8-1.9 above).
- 7.3 Two general points emerged from my interviews. First, that officials were for the most part sympathetic to Camphill's position and understanding of their opposition to the road: no-one would welcome a 4-lane highway suddenly appearing outside their front-door. But second, it was clear that this was a matter that they had not given a great deal of thought to, and one which was not particularly concerning them right now. Only one official was generally unsympathetic, rejecting the Camphill position on both practical (the school would be much better advised negotiating for the best compensation package it could get) and principled grounds (children with disabilities should not be shut away in special schools in the country; they need to be made to feel part of the community, and the community in its turn needs to be made aware of its responsibilities to such children by their visible presence in its midst. The 'Camphill' case that the children it cared for were essentially different from others was fundamentally misconceived).
- 7.4 This, however, was a minority position. Respondents on the whole were of the view, as one of them put it, that 'if it (the AWPR) became an issue for them (CRSS), then it would be an issue for us' Most, however, felt that the AWPR would have only a limited impact on the school - certainly in the long-term - and that the school would readily adjust to the new situation. After all, traffic had been generally building up in the area over some years now and the school was not quite the Arcadian retreat it was sometimes claimed. Some also pointed to the fact that many residential schools for children with complex needs, which their authority happily used, operated quite successfully in an urban environment.

²⁰ See *The Threat to the Camphill Community*, <http://www.savecamphill.org.uk/threat.htm>

- 7.5 All without exception were firmly of the opinion that the presence of the AWPR would not in any way affect their referral decisions, or at least not directly. Of course that might change if they thought that the (physical) safety of children was to be put at risk. But in the end this was a problem for the school to manage, and as a responsible body the LAs would expect it to be able to do that without it becoming an issue for them. In the event that it did then the LAs would look to the school for reassurance that the children were still being properly cared for, their (physical) safety was assured, and the appropriate standards of care and education were being maintained.
- 7.6 It was acknowledged that in the even more unlikely event that the school closed or its activities were severely curtailed – although none of my respondents regarded this as a likely prospect – this would cause difficulties, especially for Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire because of the large number of children involved. Even so, they were all firmly of the opinion that any such difficulties would be temporary as other educational entrepreneurs quickly moved in to fill the gap in the market.
- 7.7 Some respondents recognized the possibility that closure might come about indirectly, as a result of staffing problems, if the volunteer co-workers in particular reacted to the road by quitting the place, leaving the school unable to find replacements. Given the special character of the Camphill staff, their commitment to the Steiner philosophy and the importance of the physical environment to that philosophy, it could not be safely assumed that they would respond to the intrusion of the road in the same way others might. To this extent, then, predictions were particularly unreliable.
- 7.8 If the school were to close, however, then my respondents would expect closure to be managed in a proper, responsible fashion allowing time for alternative arrangements to be put in place. In such an eventuality, life would simply go on and in time equilibrium would be restored to the system. In any event, since there was little practical that they, as the referring authorities, could do, and it was only a remote possibility, then there was no point in worrying about it right now.
- 7.9 Only one respondent stated that ‘it would be nothing short of a disaster’, not just for him and his LA, but for the NE of Scotland generally, because it would mean the loss of a ‘centre of excellence’ with a national reputation that brought attention and credit to the area as a whole. However, even he did not think it was a likely prospect.
- 7.10 Having said this, officials in both Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire cited the case of Templehill - another Steiner establishment (for adults with special needs), located in the rural isolation of the Mearns countryside south of Stonehaven - which closed abruptly in 2000. It apparently had had some problems in attracting and retaining staff (ironically, largely because of its rural location) and had eventually to abandon the co-worker principle in favour of greater reliance on paid staff, a move which the LA had agreed to underwrite in the form of markedly increased fees. But it had not worked out and the place had eventually closed, quite precipitously and apparently in some acrimony, leaving both LAs to find alternative accommodation for its residents. This had proved ‘a nightmare’, in the words of one respondent, which no one wanted repeated.

8 Conclusions

- 8.1 By definition the children at CRSS have complex needs which cannot easily, if at all, be met in mainstream or non-residential settings. The contention that ‘...significant numbers of the pupils who are referred to the Camphill school are coming from placements which have been relatively shortlived or which can no longer provide for the growing adolescent. In particular Camphill seems to represent an option taken by local authorities when day provision is no longer sustainable and when there is no ‘in house’ provision suitable’[Halcrow-Fox: 4.5.5] is probably more true now than when it was written in 1996. That is the nature of the referral process. No child would be considered for a residential placement until all other options had been tried and failed. CRSS, like all residential special schools, deals with the ‘most vulnerable and damaged children’.
- 8.2 However, to move from there to argue that CRSS is the *only* option for such children available to LAs is not justified.²¹ Mainstream education has failed these children and LA ‘in-house’ special provision has clearly also proved inadequate. Few LAs have their own residential provision. All are dependent to a greater or lesser extent on schools like CRSS, mostly in the independent sector, when it comes to dealing with children with very special and complex needs. But CRSS is not unique in this respect. It is one of several establishments in Scotland (as well as others in England) serving LA needs, some of which take even more difficult and demanding children, with even more complex needs.
- 8.3 We would need to carry out a more detailed study of the referral process before we could say whether there is presently sufficient capacity in the system. It may never be possible to establish this with any certainty since use is in part at least a function of availability and provision will continue to reflect perceptions of need, however imperfectly.
- 8.4 The relationship between CRSS and LAs has evolved and will no doubt continue to do so if only because the school, like other schools in this sector, must respond to changing policies and changing LA demands. The Riddell Committee was of the opinion that there would be a continuing need for residential provision into the foreseeable future, and my respondents all agreed. CRSS currently provides around one-in-seven of all residential places in Scotland for children with complex needs²², although its importance is obviously much greater for those LAs in the north and north-east, most particularly Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire. Its closure, or even a significant reduction in capacity, would undoubtedly be a serious loss for a number (although, as Appendix 1 makes clear, possibly only a minority) of LAs, certainly in the short term. But in time, as all of my respondents argued, there is little reason to doubt that market forces would quickly intervene and equilibrium eventually restored to the system.
- 8.5 CRSS’s importance is not just a question of capacity. As many commentators have pointed out, the closure of Camphill would represent the loss of more than 60 years

²¹ This would seem to be the nub of Professor Brown’s argument: “...*the children in Camphill have been placed in Camphill because their complex and particular needs could not be successfully met elsewhere.*” (Brown p.3). And again, “The implication is that Camphill provides an integrated service of residential care, education and medical/therapeutic support, for children with learning disabilities, *whose needs could not currently be met elsewhere in Scotland.*” (Brown: p.6) (emphases added)

²² For reasons discussed earlier such estimates are inherently unsafe and should be treated with caution.

cumulative experience in the education and care of children with complex needs, a loss that would not as easily be replaced as the loss of places. In addition, any change in character might well lead to the abandonment of the co-worker principle with significant financial implications (both for the school and LAs), as well as for the way that the school is run, as the *Save Camphill* campaign points out it in its submission to the consultation process (Camphill Response: 2.9-2.10; & 2.31)

- 8.6 CRSS may be thought of as unique in one important respect, that is in terms of its underlying philosophy, which for Professor Brown translates into a '*...broad vision and service dedication to holistic approaches to learning disabilities.*' (Brown Response: p.7). It is certainly the case that Camphill's formal commitment to Curative Education and Steiner's anthroposophical principles sets it apart from other residential special schools. While, as my respondents acknowledged, this may be important for staff recruitment and retention as well as for what the school has to offer, all the evidence suggests that the distinctive Steiner approach is not particularly valued by referring authorities or parents, and plays little part in the referral process²³. In any event we should not too readily assume that official descriptions of organizational practice necessarily correspond to reality or that in its actual work with children (in areas of school life that really matter, particularly to LAs, or to parents), Camphill operates all that differently from other residential special schools: '*...a broad vision and service dedication to holistic approaches to learning disabilities*', while it may well be characteristic of Camphill, is not synonymous with anthroposophy, nor is it necessarily absent from other establishments.

David May, BA PhD.
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²³ This is a finding emerging from Baron's research for the Halcrow-Fox report [4.5.14; 4.6.14] as well as from my own interviews.

Appendix 1: Local Authority Referrals to CRSS

The *Local Government (Scotland) Act, 1973* created 9 Regional authorities. These were abolished by the *Local Government etc (Scotland) Act, 1994*, which came into effect on 1st April, 1996, and were replaced by 32 unitary authorities. The table below lists the Regions as they existed in 1996 at the time of the Halcrow-Fox report with their corresponding unitary authorities, together with the number of children each authority was then and is now supporting.

Region: 1996	Number	Councils: 2005	Number
Grampian	38	Aberdeen City	*22
		Aberdeenshire	#20
		Moray	2
Strathclyde	25	Argyll & Bute	3
		East Ayrshire	1
		East Dunbartonshire	1
		East Renfrewshire	0
		Glasgow	3
		Inverclyde	0
		North Ayrshire	N/A
		North Lanarkshire	0
		Renfrewshire	0
		South Ayrshire	0
		South Lanarkshire	1
		West Dunbartonshire	0
Lothian	18	Edinburgh	N/A
		East Lothian	0
		Midlothian	0
		West Lothian	N/A
Highland	7		4
Tayside	6	Dundee	1
		Perth & Kinross	N/A
		Angus	5
Central	3	Falkirk	N/A
		Stirling	N/A
		Clackmannanshire	N/A
Fife	2		1
Dumfries & Galloway	2		0
Borders	1		N/A
Orkney	1		N/A
Shetland	1		N/A
Western Isles	0		0
England	12		
Overseas	2		
Missing Data	7		

* 13 of these 22 are day placements, including 2 attending the Kindergarten.

3 of Aberdeenshire's 20 placements are day placements. They also have 2 children attending the Kindergarten. I am unsure as to whether these 2 are included in the above figure.

The figures in the above table for 2005 refer (for the most part, at least) to the 2004-05 session. It is likely that there will have been subsequent changes.