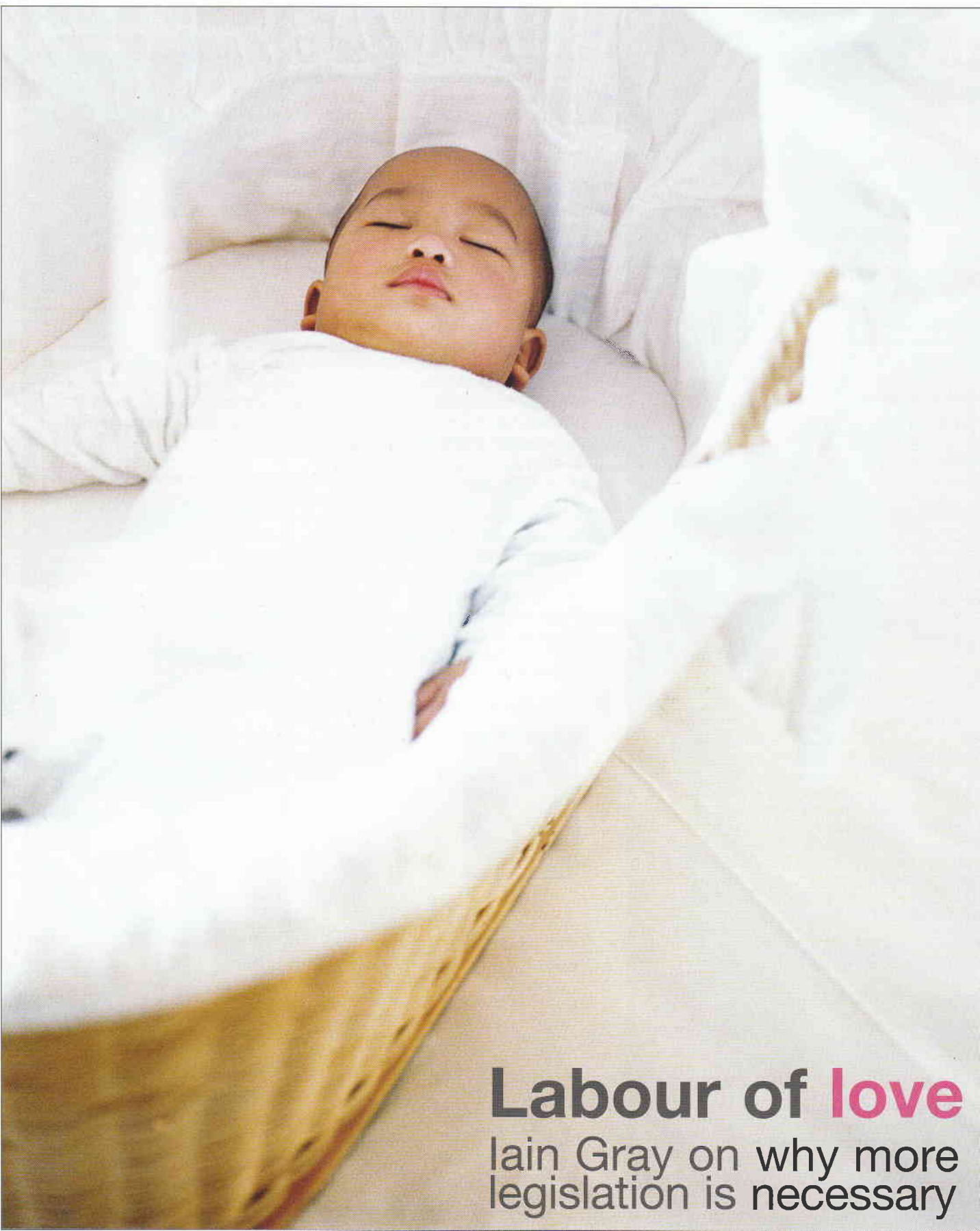


Children **in** Scotland

every child - every childhood

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Labour of **love**

Iain Gray on why more legislation is necessary

Signing up for children's services

Roger Prott describes how soldiers in Germany are now training as pedagogues – and working with children and young people from infancy to adulthood.



The role of pedagogues in children's services in Germany

Erzieher – the masculine term - or *erzieherin* (female) are best described by the term *pedagogue* not as used in the Anglophone world but in many other countries in Europe where it has a much broader meaning encompassing, not only children's educational needs, but their social and emotional development. The German name derives from the term *erziehung* meaning 'upbringing'. This job is seen as being different from that of teachers, and is more about education, care and 'upbringing'.

The initial education of this pedagogue group usually involves those leaving school with an intermediate school leaving certificate and a relevant basic vocational qualification – in some parts of Germany an A-level equivalent is required. The student then has the option of either attending college for 2 years and then undertaking a probationary practice year under supervision or attending college for 3 years with practice periods in between – amounting to one year. Students receive a 'certificate of state recognition' and their status lies between that of a nursery nurse and pre-school teacher.

German pedagogues work with children and young people from birth to adulthood in a range of services including early childhood services, residential care and school age childcare services.

In Germany, as in many other countries, over 90% of students in education colleges are female – a gender imbalance often lamented upon but surprisingly resistant to change. Now, in a remarkable development, Germany is seeing soldiers signing up to train as pedagogues – a profession which enables them to work in a wide range of services including early childhood services, school age childcare and residential care.

Military service – or an agreed alternative- is compulsory in Germany. But others choose to become professional soldiers, and if they sign up for a minimum of 8 years they are entitled to support in gaining a qualification for their return to civilian life. The majority train for professions associated with the technical skills they gain as soldiers, but a growing number are choosing to opt to develop their social, educational and caring skills. Three colleges – in Cologne, Hamburg and Berlin - are now running courses for ex-military personnel to become pedagogues. The colleges are state-run but open only to the military. In Berlin around 40 soldiers a year have enrolled on the courses. Unlike other education colleges, where the students are predominantly female and enter college at 18 or 19 years of age, the army students are older – around 30 years of age when they start and mainly male. In Berlin 96% of these students are male.

There are other differences. The soldiers taking part in the study were not only older but had a lot more life experience – some of them with experience as officers of leading and being responsible for other adults. On their course they had to recover some aspects of their childhood – for example learning about and practising children's play. But in practising some of these 'soft' skills they also have to learn to be tough. They can be laughed at

by their former army colleagues as they 'play' in the gym and have to confront prejudice with comments, for example, on the use of potties. Some of the prejudices can arise because of the predominantly female demographic of the services where they work. Some prejudice issues arise because of different leadership styles; others because of the military background of these pedagogues. College staff have to take these factors and their background into account in helping them to qualify.

However what is clear is that the soldier *erzieher* don't lack for jobs. The older and more disadvantaged the children in the services, the more popular they are; they seldom face unemployment.

Roger Prott is working as a freelance consultant for organisational and conceptual development in Germany.

Working it out: helping to shape the future of the children's sector workforce, 4 March 2009 is a major one day international conference forming part of the Working It Out Programme, a series of events and associated publications exploring workforce reform across Scotland being undertaken by Children in Scotland with the support of the Scottish Government. The conference will also launch a new EU-wide programme undertaking research and promoting discussion around the role of the early years workforce in promoting social inclusion.

The programme also included a series of four newsletters exploring developments in the children's sector workforce, encouraging debate and sharing good practice. Issue one was published in November 2008 (see <http://www.childreninscotland.org.uk/workforce/WorkforceI.htm>) and issue two will appear in March. A further 2 seminars in Aberdeen (4 February) and Glasgow (11 February) will focus on different parts of the workforce and articles exploring workforce development in the Children in Scotland magazine.

For more information visit:
www.childreninscotland.org.uk/workforce/Workforce.htm
or contact Nicola Pay on 0131 222448,
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