



The Mass Observation Project

Autumn 2010 Directive

Part 1: Childhood and illness

This directive is designed to get you writing about childhood and illness – perhaps your own experiences as a child - but also your memories of other children in your family, at school or in your communities. Even if you personally did not suffer from any serious illness as a child, we would be pleased to have your general reflections on other people's experiences and your views on the treatment of sick children, past and present.

As usual, please start each part of your directive reply on a new sheet of paper with your MO number (NOT name), sex, age, marital status, the town or village where you live and your occupation or former occupation.

Remember not to identify yourself or other people inadvertently within your reply.

First - about your own childhood

Please note down here where you grew up so we have a context for what you write. It would be useful to ensure you have given us your year of birth (see box on right).

Was it in the UK? If so where.

If not, where were you living?

Was it a rural or an urban area?

Your personal experience of illness

What was the most serious illness you had as a child?

Do you have any memories of how you felt?

How did illness affect your relationships with other people such as parents, brothers and sisters, other relatives, or friends?

Healthcare professionals

What are your early memories of contact with health care professionals? Please record as much as you can – and give dates and places so we can tell how old you were and place your experience within the history of health care provision.

Doctors

Dentists

Nurses eg in school or hospital

Pharmacists

Health visitors

Other professionals?

Where did these interactions take place? At home, in a clinic, in a health centre, at school or in hospital?

PLEASE TURN OVER

Did your family ever pay for healthcare? Please describe.

Medicines

Did you take any medicines, herbal remedies or tonics such as cod-liver oil as a child? What did they taste like? Were they effective?

Where did they come from - were they made at home, bought at a chemist's, or dispensed by a doctor?

At school

What provisions (such as a special room) were made for children who were ill at your school (if you attended school)?

What was the attitude of school staff to children who felt ill or had accidents? Did you have much time away from school because you were ill, and what was the main type of illness?

In hospital

How would you describe your experience of hospital, either as an outpatient or an inpatient?

What do you recall about visiting times, hospital staff, the building, the treatment you had, the food, the beds, and your feelings about going home? Did you have an anaesthetic at any stage, and what was this like?

Disability

Would you say you had a disability of any kind as a child? This could include short sight, partial deafness, as well as more serious conditions.

How effectively do you consider this was treated, and how did it affect your experience of childhood and growing up?

Changing patterns of illness have affected the visual impact of disability on society, for example children with callipers are a rarity since the introduction of the polio vaccine. Do you have thoughts on how the visual appearance of the 'sick child' in society has changed?

Difficult memories

When you were young, did you have any experience of children dying? What do you remember about this?

In conclusion.....

Do you have any views on how changing patterns of illness have affected the experience of childhood, past and present?

Do you think the treatment of and services for sick children have improved or deteriorated over your lifetime? If so, how?

Part 2 continues on the next page

Part 2: Going to funerals

This directive is about funerals in general but also more specifically about your own experiences of funerals. We realise that some of you may never have attended a funeral so the first set of questions is for you.

Please start Part 2 of your directive reply on a new sheet of paper with your MO number and a brief biography (see page 1).

If you have *never* been to a funeral

Please write about what you think a typical funeral is like. Please say what you are basing your ideas on – perhaps stories you have heard from other people, or portrayals of funerals on the television, in films or in books?

If you were called upon to help organise a funeral for someone close to you, what do you think would be important considerations for you?

At the end of this section are questions about what you would want for your own funeral, so please answer them if you can. If this is not something you have ever thought about before now, please say so.

For people who *have* been to funerals

If you have any professional experience of funerals, please mention it and explain. It would also help us if you included information about your religious beliefs and customs – if you have any.

A recent funeral

When was the most recent funeral you attended? Please describe it in as much detail as you can remembering to avoid including too much identifying information. It's your relationships to other people that we're mostly interested in.

Whose funeral was it? Roughly when and where was it held? How did you find out about it, and why did you go?

Were you there on your own? Who else was there? Did you know any of the other people? Was anyone notable by their absence?

If you are able to, please draw a diagram showing where you were during the funeral, and explain why you were where you were. Include as many other people and features as you can.

Did you speak to other people? At what points did you speak to whom, and what did you talk about?

What did you wear, and what influenced your decision about clothing?

Did you send or take flowers, or make any donation? If so, why? If not, why not?

PLEASE TURN OVER

Who spoke at the funeral? What do you remember of what happened? How would you describe the overall 'tone' of the funeral?

What sorts of feelings did you have at the funeral? Did anything in particular arouse emotions for you? Did you express your emotions? If so, how? If not, was there a particular reason why not?

After the funeral

Did you go to a reception or tea, or wake? If so, why? If not, why not? If you did go, please tell us about it.

Would you have called it a "good" funeral? If so, why? If not, why not?

Other funerals

What have been the best and the worst funerals you have attended, and why?

Have you ever decided against going to a funeral? Please say why.

Your thoughts on funerals more generally

What – and who – are funerals for? You don't need to have been to a funeral to have thoughts on this.

Your own funeral

Have you thought about your own funeral?

Who do you think should make decisions about what happens?

If you have your own preferences, what are they and why do you have them? Have you told anyone else about these?

How important is it to you that the things you would like to happen do happen? Have you taken any steps to try to ensure that they do?

Don't feel constrained by our questions – you may want to raise other questions or deal with issues that we have not covered. As always with these directives, the intention is to get you thinking and writing and to find out what matters to you on these themes so if we miss things which are important to you, then please say so.

Please post your response to:

**The Mass Observation Archive, FREEPOST BR 2112, The Library, University of Sussex,
Brighton BN1 1ZX**

Or by email to: moa@sussex.ac.uk