

Briefing Paper 11

Safeguarding and Child Protection

National Assembly Elections 2007

“Social workers are talking about this being a massive problem with young girls, but nobody knows what to do about it.”

Child Protection Practitioner
Out of sight out of mind: Child Sexual Exploitation
Barnardo's Cymru



Save the Children

Achub y Plant



NSPCC 

**Dim mwy o greulondeb i blant. DIM.
Cruelty to children must stop. FULL STOP.**



**Barnardo's
Cymru**

**RHOI'R DYFODOLYN ÔL I'N PLANT
GIVING CHILDREN BACK THEIR FUTURE**

Safeguarding and Child Protection

Articles 9, 19, 20, 25 and 39 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child provide children and young people with the rights to protection and support services. These rights are reflected in the Welsh Assembly Government's seven core aims. Core aim three relates to ensuring children and young people are protected and are free from abuse, neglect and exploitation.

What has been achieved since 2003?

The Children Act 2004 introduced a number of new safeguarding structures, including the replacement of non-statutory Area Child Protection Committees with statutory Local Safeguarding Children Boards. The establishment of LSCBs in October 2006 is intended to ensure that safeguarding plays a key role in the development of local services and that local agencies are held to account for their responsibilities. The Children Act 2004 also introduced a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children on a number of agencies. The Children's Commissioner for Wales' Clywch Inquiry has also led to a refocus on child protection in schools, including the commitment to develop a draft school counselling strategy, and there have been developments in ensuring people who may pose a risk to children do not get employed in schools, with the General Teaching Council for Wales getting new powers to check new members and the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Bill being introduced in Westminster. Children and young people have been recognised in the Welsh Assembly Government's definition of domestic abuse and there is a clear understanding of the impact that domestic abuse can have on children and young people. Welsh Assembly Government has also responded to some of the recommendations of the 2005 scoping study of child sexual exploitation in Wales. A national review of local protocols for children at risk of sexual exploitation and their current implementation is to be undertaken in autumn 2006. The National Assembly has continued its commitment to promoting positive parenting and its opposition to the defence of reasonable chastisement.

What are our current concerns?

The provision of therapeutic services for children and young people who have experienced abuse, particularly sexual abuse, remains patchy despite WAG's 2001 Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services strategy "*Everybody's Business*". Wales still has high numbers of children and young people in the care system and this appears to be a number that is rising. Between a quarter and a third of all cases of sexual abuse in the UK involve children or young people as perpetrators. Services and policy designed to address children's harmful sexual behaviour are still in their infancy in the UK and in Wales in particular. Although services do exist in some areas, many areas of Wales have no specialist services to meet the needs of children and young people exhibiting these behaviours. Very little is known about the prevalence and nature of child sexual exploitation in Wales. A scoping study undertaken in 2005 identified over 180 separate cases where children and young people were being sexually exploited or were at risk of sexual exploitation. Non-child protection professionals still need more opportunities to access training around safeguarding and child protection, in order to feel confident in recognising abuse and referring appropriately. An NSPCC survey in 2005 highlighted that across the UK a quarter of people who had concerns about a child had done nothing about it. The public need to be provided with information to be able to act on their concerns. We also have concerns that neglect continues to be a category of abuse that professionals find hard to recognise, so we believe that more training needs to be made available as well as looking at effective ways of tackling neglect. Research shows that children and young people with a disability are more likely to experience

abuse than none disabled children and young people. We are concerned that there are still many barriers preventing these children receiving the support that they need and professionals from recognizing the abuse being suffered.

Recommendations:

We call on the Welsh Assembly Government to:

- Give urgent consideration to the comprehensive resourcing of both CAMHS and the NSF for children and young people with mental health problems in Wales, up to the age of 18, to ensure that vulnerable children and young people can get access to services when they need them.
- Commission a detailed analysis of the shortfall in current provision including examining which children are not receiving services through CAMHS and why not. This should form part of the mid point review of the CAMHS strategy "*Everybody's Business*".
- Develop a national strategy for Wales in relation to children with harmful sexual behaviours to promote the need for local protocols and the development of specialist services which provide coverage for the whole of Wales.
- Ensure Children and young people receive information and support through the PSE curriculum on appropriate relationships and what to do if they are worried about abuse, including information about support services such as ChildLine.
- Ensure all schools provide an independent counselling service and information on other listening services for any child who needs support, as recommended by the Children's Commissioner for Wales' *Clywch Inquiry*, in particular supporting those children who have problems or difficulties they cannot deal with. This should be core to every school. Such a service should be universal, independent of the school and based on the self-referral principle, that is, it should enable children to seek help themselves. There should also be other services in place, including peer support, group work and curriculum and classroom activities. This must be underpinned by training for all staff in child mental health, child welfare and safeguarding.
- Continue to support action to strengthen safeguards for children and young people who are at risk of or are abused through sexual exploitation through: support for consistent and appropriate implementation of local protocols; multi-agency training on identification and associated safeguarding actions; and support for the development of specialist services on a regional basis.
- Seek to develop a public education campaign to promote positive parenting and ensure that parents can access parental support when they need it. We welcome the National Assembly's commitment to promoting a message of positive parenting and its support for equal protection for children and young people.
- Enable all children and young people to access independent advocacy when they need to, particularly those within the child protection system or those who are particularly vulnerable.
- Establish a system of guardianship to ensure that the best interest principle is maintained and that separated children are supported through the asylum process.
- Fund an annual survey of the incidence of child abuse and neglect.
- Consider the findings from the 2003 report of the National Working Group on Child Protection and Disability "*It doesn't happen to disabled children*", in order to improve the way in which child protection services respond to the needs of disabled children.
- "Implement the recommendations of "Keeping us Safe" – the report of the Welsh Assembly Government's Safeguarding Vulnerable Children Review".

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