



Australian Government

Australian Institute of Family Studies

AIFS Seminar Series

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— *please turn off mobile phones* —

Safeguarding and Protecting Children Across the UK

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for UK-wide Learning in Child Protection
(CLiCP)



Centre for Learning in Child Protection



NSPCC 
Cruelty to children must stop. FULL STOP.™

What CLiCP do

- Conduct comparative analysis and critically assess developments in child protection policy across the UK
- Conduct primary research to address gaps in existing child protection knowledge
- Monitor and analyse the content and direction of UK child protection systems
- Disseminate findings and contribute knowledge to inform the policy making process throughout the UK

Why undertake intra-UK comparative analysis?

- Devolution created new possibilities for child protection policy to diverge
- Devolution expected to bring greater policy innovation - the devolved nations regarded as 'policy laboratories' (Jeffrey 2005), notion of policy transfer, learning lessons from one another
- Little systematic examination of developments across the UK - UK seen as a single unit of analysis despite differences prior to 1999
- Devolution challenged the notion of the UK welfare state and UK social policy; Wales, Scotland and N Ireland now welfare states in their own right

Methodology

- Existing methods for comparative research inappropriate (Bromfield and Holzer 2007)
- Difficult to obtain cross national indicators for child protection
- New methodologies borrowed from political science emerging (Adams and Robinson 2002)
- Cross country case study approach – allows the researcher to tell a country specific ‘story’ and enables issues and themes to be developed gradually as the ‘story’ unfolds (Bolderson and Mabbett (1997)
- Documentary data, site visits, face to face interviews

Overarching children's policy frameworks

England	Every Child Matters Change for Children (2004)
Wales	Children and Young People Rights to Action (2004)
Northern Ireland	Children and Young People – Our Pledge: A Ten Year Strategy for Children and Young People (2006)
Scotland	Getting it Right for Every Child (2008)

National Outcomes

England	Healthy; stay safe; enjoy and achieve; make a positive contribution; achieve economic wellbeing
Wales	Have a flying start in life; have a comprehensive range of education and learning opportunities; enjoy the best possible health and are free from abuse, victimisation and exploitation; have access to play, leisure, sporting and cultural activities; are listened to, treated with respect and have their race and cultural identity recognised; have a safe home and a community which supports physical and emotional wellbeing; are not disadvantaged by poverty
Northern Ireland	As England plus rights
Scotland	Safe; healthy; achieving; nurtured; active; respected; responsible; included

Key legislation

England	Children Act 1989 Children Act 2004
Wales	Children Act 1989 Children Act 2004 New Children's Measure?
Northern Ireland	Children Northern Ireland Order 1995 New Safeguarding Bill
Scotland	Children Scotland Act 1995 New Children's Hearings Bill SG favours guidance rather than legislation

Thresholds

- Across the UK if statutory services have reasonable cause to suspect a child is suffering, or likely to suffer, 'significant harm', they have a duty to make child protection inquiries
- Significant harm not well defined in legislation or guidance
- If a child is not at risk of significant harm there may still be a duty to provide services if he or she is a 'child in need'
- Threshold for referral to the children's hearings system - if child is in need of compulsory intervention; grounds set out in legislation
- Thresholds for statutory intervention have not changed

Inter-agency guidance

England	Working Together to Safeguard Children (2010) 390 pages
Wales	Safeguarding Children: Working Together Under the Children Act 2004 (2006) 334 pages
Northern Ireland	Co-operating to Safeguard Children (2003) 122 pages
Scotland	Protecting Children – a Shared Responsibility (1998) New Draft National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (Nov 2010) 154 pages

Management of individual cases

- Concerns raised → referral to children's social care/social services/social work services, the police, NSPCC or a Children's Reporter
- Investigation and assessment; emergency protection measures
- Case conference, child protection plan/registration
- Review, deregistration
- Little change in the way individual child protection cases are managed

Language/definitions

- Change of language from child protection (narrow focus on high risk cases) to safeguarding (widening of net, not just those at highest risk)
- More child focused - need rather than risk
- Guidance still refers to physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, emotional abuse
- New risks identified – e.g. fabricated illness, risks posed by ICT, forced marriage and honour based violence, child abuse linked to belief in spirit possession or witchcraft, children missing from education, unaccompanied asylum seeking children, children affected by gang violence

Key structures for protecting children

England	Integrated education and children's social care departments (Directors of Children's Services, Children's Trusts) Statutory Local Safeguarding Children's Boards
Wales	Non integrated Social Services Departments (Directors of Social Services, Children and Young People's Framework Partnerships) Statutory Local Safeguarding Children's Boards
Northern Ireland	Integrated Health and Social Services Boards and Trusts Non statutory Area Child Protection Committees being replaced by a single Statutory Safeguarding Board for NI and 5 Safeguarding Panels
Scotland	Some integrated education/social work departments, most not integrated with Directors of Social Work Non statutory Child Protection Committees Scottish Children's Reporters Administration

Integrated assessment frameworks

England and wales	The Framework for the Assessment of Children's Needs and their Families The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) (Wales?)
Northern Ireland	Understanding the Needs of Children in Northern Ireland (UNOCINI)
Scotland	The GIRFEC Practice Model – My World Triangle, Resilience Matrix New risk assessment model?

Child death review processes

England	Statutory Serious Case Reviews Statutory Child Death Overview Panels
Wales	Statutory Serious Case Reviews All Wales Child Death Review Process pilot
Northern Ireland	Case Management Reviews will become statutory under new Safeguarding bill
Scotland	Non statutory Significant Case Reviews

The direction of reform

- Refocusing of children's policy, not radical overhaul
- Change has been around better accountability, integration, prevention and early intervention
- Change in policy direction from protecting a small number of children from abuse and neglect to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children - will only work if services are available and effective
- All parts of the UK approach child protection in broadly similar ways; child protection processes relatively unchanged
- All parts of the UK have retained the core elements of a forensically driven child protection system

So what?

- Is policy divergence a good thing - does it matter if different parts of the UK do things differently?
- Is devolution leading to different outcomes across the UK?
- Are children and families getting the same level and quality of service across the country?
- How can we identify and share good practice?



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