Safeguarding Children and Young People
A guide to integrated practice

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Christina Thurston
Introduction

Safeguarding children and child protection are too seldom considered to be everybody’s business.

(Laming Report, 2003)

In Britain at least one child dies each week as a result of adult cruelty. It has been estimated that about 5,000 minors are involved in prostitution in Britain at any one time. In 2003 there were about 384,200 children in need in England. Of these 69,100 were looked after in state care while the rest were in families or living independently (DfES, 2003a). By the end of 2002, 21 per cent of children in Britain were living in poverty, increasing their risk of neglect (DWP, 2003). One quarter of all rape victims are children. Seventy five per cent of sexually abused children do not tell anyone at the time. Each year about 30,000 children are on child protection registers. Recorded offences of gross indecency with a child more than doubled between 1985–2001 but convictions against perpetrators actually fell from 42 per cent to 19 per cent. Fewer than one in 50 sexual offences results in a conviction. Plus there is still a major shortfall in supervision and treatment of sexual offenders thus reducing the opportunity to lessen re-offending.

This sample of statistics conveys the scale of the problem facing those who care about children’s welfare and want to safeguard them. Individual and family level factors have historically dominated the analysis and locus of child protection legislation, policy and practice. With the publication of Every Child Matters (DfES, 2003b), The Children Act 2004 and the creation of integrated Children’s Trusts there is now an opportunity to ensure that the community level factors inherent in child abuse and neglect are fully considered. There is now a more intensive focus on integrated work in safeguarding children and young people. This means reinforcing the conclusions drawn from evidence that demonstrates that child abuse is everybody’s business. And this does not just mean every professional working with children but the whole community where children and young people live, work, play and are educated.

The police always remind us that they cannot stop crime without the help of the community and it is the same with safeguarding children. An African proverb states that ‘It takes a whole village to raise a child’, while ancient Maori custom expects whole communities to get involved when a family has a problem. This is not a manifesto against professionalism but an illustration of a neglected area in modern welfare organisation which has lost sight of the fundamentals in our technocratic and bureaucracy driven culture. Your task is to find innovative ways to engage communities in safeguarding children by encouraging and enhancing people’s protective instincts.

Who this book is for

This book aims to provide a resource for practitioners in a variety of community contexts, in voluntary or statutory agencies, who may encounter situations where concerns are expressed about the welfare and safety of a child or young person.
This could be in child protection, primary care, youth offending teams, family support, looked after children, youth work, paediatric nursing, fostering and adoption, education, probation, and child and adolescent mental health services. The guide aspires to provide a foundation of contemporary knowledge, research, innovative ideas and practical guidance that will offer you support. It is written within the context of new government guidelines and legislation following the murder of Victoria Climbé, Jessica Chapman and Holly Wells. The accessible format is designed to create the basis for informed, reflective, confident practice. It will help your individual study, teambuilding exercises and inter-agency training.

**Enduring solutions**

The government response to recent cases of child deaths where public services are involved it should be remembered, is a political reaction identical to previous occasions when children have died and immediate answers are sought. Instead of dealing with symptoms and searching for scapegoats in this guide we aspire to tackle causes and look for enduring solutions to the unacceptable scourge of child abuse and neglect. Prevention is better than cure so we have tried to include ideas and resources for staff trying to minimise the risk of child abuse in the first place as well as clarity where swift action needs to proceed in child protection cases. Supporting families and vulnerable parents needs to synchronise with child protection agency procedures where children are perceived to be at risk of harm.

The disproportionate numbers of poor families subject to investigation and surveillance is a reminder that safeguarding children can only be as effective as the government’s commitment to reducing economic inequality and social exclusion. These figures illustrate the importance of acknowledging the multiple disadvantages experienced by many families where intolerable stress places some children and young people at increased risk of abuse. The bias in official statistics also conspires to mask child abuse where it can be skilfully hidden behind the façade of middle class respectability and material wealth (DoH, 2002; NCH, 2000).

**England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland**

Within Britain there is much diversity in the legislative and governmental guidance for safeguarding children and young people. This text generally is based on English law for reasons of space and the avoidance of confusion. The Scottish system operates under its own legal system and system of guidance, while in Northern Ireland the health and social services boards make up a very different organisational context for child protection work. The devolved national assemblies in Scotland and Wales further add to this diversity. However the book contents have been adapted and designed to provide significant learning opportunities for practitioners in all the constituent countries of the United Kingdom who will find much of value here.

**Content of guide**

The guide is designed as a practical manual for use by busy practitioners, trainers and professional education providers requiring evidence-based knowledge and guidance to enable staff to engage with children, adolescents, young people and their families in a supportive context.

It aims to help you articulate with the needs and agenda of children and young people whose safety is causing concern. The 36 activities are designed to stimulate your reflective capacity and
together with the practice guidance, offer you resources to bring to bear on the difficulties faced by your clients, service users, students or patients. (They are reproduced at the back of the book for ease of photocopying.) This book covers the wider policy and legal context of safeguarding children and young people and how services for this group of young people are organised and delivered.

Working in the field of safeguarding children and young people is an awesome undertaking. It covers the majority of the most intense and rapidly changing periods of human growth and development, within which are laid the foundations for much of what will transpire in the rest of a person’s life. Your contribution is therefore crucial bringing as it does a professional dimension to a child or young person’s experience at a time when effective intervention can make a difference for the present and their future. We have sought to provide a varied menu to choose from of accessible and useful resources and information gleaned from contemporary sources of evidence-based literature and quality research, as well as from our combined experience in social work and nursing of over 40 years in child protection work. These resources are designed to be applied in whatever context you practice, from primary through to specialist levels of support in voluntary or statutory agencies.

Chapter 1 provides the reader with up to date information about the new organisational arrangements within which child protection and safeguarding children practice is taking place following a period of significant legislative activity in children’s welfare services.

Chapter 2 examines the crucial role of primary care and early intervention in preventing harm or neglect to children and young people. The rights of children and specific skills in helping them are emphasised.

Chapter 3 considers the causes, signs, symptoms and effects of child abuse. These are described, discussed and analysed to enable the reader to develop important assessment skills.

Chapter 4 explores how important multi-disciplinary and inter-professional care is in helping locate your practice within the appropriate network of statutory and voluntary resources to fulfil the aim of holistic support.

Chapter 5 provides readers with practical tools for assessment and risk management, the focus of which will to help in complex work involving children and young people. Developmental and attachment theories are utilised particularly to aid in designing family support intervention.

Chapter 6 examines the process of protection by analysing elements of the legal and practice guidance available to practitioners to provide accessible information vital to effective intervention.

Chapter 7 focuses specifically on the needs, rights and responsibilities of young people as they struggle with the challenges involved in negotiating transitional points in their development. Staff are offered advice, guidance and practical skills to help safeguard the welfare of young people.

Chapter 8 describes and discusses culturally competent practice in order to distinguish the particular needs of a diverse multi-cultural and ethnically rich society. This forms part of a discussion on achieving socially inclusive anti-discriminatory practice.

Chapter 9 examines the subject of reviews and details how to end child protection work safely using knowledge and theory from a wide variety of sources underpinned by evidence-based practice.
Collaborative and co-operative, working together are too easily reduced to rhetorical devices as a kind of professional comfort blanket. In this text we deconstruct and analyse these concepts and maintain this critical focus centre stage to enable staff to embody the practice in meaningful ways directly in their work.

Partnership practice and service user evaluation is a growing area of interest in practice. This concept is developed and applied to the area of safeguarding children and young people throughout the book to illustrate the potential of an empowering, child-focused design and delivery of effective services that meets the needs and responds to the agenda of young people themselves.

A selected list of organisations that can offer resources that are directly or indirectly accessible to children and young people, as well as to parents and practitioners, has been included at the end of the book.

**Terminology**

The terminology in this book has been kept as accessible as possible within the confines of the editorial guidelines and the intended audience. It is necessary however to explain how certain terms have been used in order to at least offer the reader some context to understand their use.

We use the terms *child protection* and *safeguarding children and young people* synonymously throughout the text to reflect the current transitional phase of policy guidance and literature on this subject.

*Culture* is used in places where it is specifically defined but elsewhere it is used in the sense of the organisation of experience shared by members of a community including their standards for perceiving, predicting, judging and acting.

*Black* is used in the contemporary accepted sense of meaning that group of people who by virtue of their non-white skin colour are treated in a discriminatory way and who experience racism at the personal and institutional level every day of their lives.

*Race* as a term is declining in use due to its origins in meaningless anthropological classifications by early imperialists seeking to legitimise their exploitation of indigenous land and wealth. It is a social construction but one which is still found in statutes, policy material and in common parlance.

*Ethnicity* is subject to much definitional debate in the literature but for clarity and brevity the term is used throughout this text to mean the orientation it provides to individuals by delineating norms, values, interactional modalities, rituals, meanings and collective events.

*Family* is also a term around which there is some debate as it is both a descriptor and a socially prescribed term loaded with symbolism. In this book the term family is used to embrace the widest ethnic and cultural interpretation that includes same sex partnerships, single parent, step family, kinship groups, heterosexual partnerships and marriage, extended family groupings and friendship groups or community living arrangements.

**Learning objectives**

These overarching learning objectives have been designed to articulate new initiatives in building capacity and skills in the children and young people’s workforce. They harmonise with interprofessional knowledge, skills and competencies required to enhance more effective collaborative work in child protection. A combination of practical skills development and evidence-based
Contribute to the understanding and assessment of the needs and problems of children, adolescents and young people to ensure they are safeguarded and protected from harm.

Communicate and engage with young people in a process of partnership practice that enables them to identify and articulate their needs and agendas.

Demonstrate critical understanding of current policy and legal aspects of safeguarding children, young people, and their families.

Demonstrate knowledge and awareness of the importance of socially inclusive and culturally competent practice.

Communicate effectively in partnership with multi-disciplinary staff to collaborate and co-operate in delivering the care needs of children, young people and their families.

Contribute to the effective planning, use of methods and models of intervention and reviews with children and young people and their carers or parents.

Demonstrate knowledge of the requirements for evidence-based practice and the importance of effective evaluation in safeguarding children and young people

Learning profile

Below is a list of the learning objectives for each chapter outlined above. You can use it to evaluate your current understanding of safeguarding practice, and to decide how the guide can help you extend this. The profile is for general guidance or for use by trainers and educators. You might like to use it particularly in the early stages of your learning, or for further professional development in planning with peers and your employer. In training and professional education contexts the profile can be adapted for groupwork, teambuilding and inter-agency collaborative learning.

For each of the objectives listed below, tick the box on the scale that most closely corresponds to your present knowledge. You can use this to determine in how much detail you will need to study each chapter. At the end of the book you will find an identical list of objectives and the same scale – by completing this Learning Review you can gauge how much your learning has developed and on what areas you still need to work.

Chapter 1. A New Working Environment

I can: Not at all Partly Very well

Describe how changing patterns of service delivery are influencing professional relationships.

Demonstrate understanding of the impact of new legislation, policy and guidance on safeguarding children and young people.

Describe the obstacles to, and ways to achieve effective multi-disciplinary work.

Understand the principles of integrated working.
Chapter 2. Primary Prevention and Early Intervention

I can: Not at all Partly Very well

- Acknowledge the rights of the child and young person across organisations whether survivor or offender.
- Achieve an understanding of the family and its place in the community.
- Understand the preventative framework required when working with children, young people and their families.
- Reflect on individual skills and practices undertaken to promote children’s physical, psychological and social well being.

Chapter 3. Children and Young People at Risk

I can: Not at all Partly Very well

- Understand modern explanations for child abuse.
- Describe risk and resilience factors in children and young people.
- Explore and understand the types and causes of abuse.
- Identify the signs, symptoms and effects of abuse.

Chapter 4. Collaborative Care

I can: Not at all Partly Very well

- Comprehend the necessities of collaborative working across organisations.
- Identify the barriers in the system against collaborative working and the approaches required for effective working together.
- Review effective strategies for inclusive, integrated practice.
- Reflect on the core skills required for working collaboratively across organisations including during inter-professional meetings.

Chapter 5. Assessment and Risk Management

I can: Not at all Partly Very well

- Develop familiarity with contemporary assessment tools for work with children and families.
- Utilise developmental theories and models for assessing children and young people’s welfare.
- Recognise assessment as part of the continuum of care and therapeutic support necessary for safeguarding children and young people.
- Understand the key issues and skills relevant to effective risk management in child protection work.
Chapter 6. The Process of Protection

I can: Not at all Partly Very well
Understand the importance of clear planning and co-ordination for safeguarding children and young people. □ □ □
Be clear about the stages of the child protection process and the legal framework supporting it. □ □ □
Develop competence in using the provisions of the Children Act 1989 to safeguard children and young people. □ □ □
Understand the ways in which the Human Rights Act 1998 can be used to support the welfare of children and young people. □ □ □

Chapter 7. Supporting Young People’s Transition

I can: Not at all Partly Very well
Reflect upon the reason for and effects of risk taking behaviour in young people. □ □ □
Understand the preparatory work required to support young people through transition from child to adult services. □ □ □
Reflect on my changing role with the young person during and after transition. □ □ □
Understand the communication issues and opportunities between practitioners and children and young people. □ □ □

Chapter 8. Social Inclusion and Cultural Competence

I can: Not at all Partly Very well
Describe what is meant by social inclusion and cultural competence. □ □ □
Illustrate the importance of anti-discriminatory practice to safeguarding children and young people. □ □ □
Explain what changes can be made to contemporary practice to meet the needs of a diverse society. □ □ □
Describe the elements of socially inclusive safeguarding practice. □ □ □

Chapter 9. Reviewing and Ending Safely

I can: Not at all Partly Very well
Demonstrate the importance and purpose of a child care review. □ □ □
Understand the significance of enabling the child to express their views. □ □ □
Ensure that transfer of cases happens speedily with maximum inter-agency communication. □ □ □
Describe the importance of reflective practice and supervision. □ □ □
Using this guide

The exposition in the main body of the text will draw on a variety of sources, including government policy and best practice guidance, social, educational and health care theory and research findings. This will provide you with relevant information and knowledge to create the framework within which you can absorb, understand and then practically apply changes in your working context.

The activities you will be asked to complete are designed to help you recognise and understand aspects of practice which you might not previously have known about or considered, and will help you to develop self-awareness by inviting you to relate your experience to the issues being explored. The temptation is to skip the activities – try not to because they can be valuable in ways you might not anticipate at first sight. They are designed to give you the opportunity to bring your own experience into the learning process, but also your responses will build up into a resource which you can draw on in current practice contexts and future personal and professional development.

With this in mind, it is useful to keep a separate booklet in which to write your responses. Think of this as a form of learning journal, and record things such as experiences at work which seem to you to relate to specific activities you have completed from the workbook. This can provide useful practice material for future reference and revision on your own, in supervision or during consultation.