

## *Document Summary*

# **Safeguarding Children**

The second joint Chief Inspectors'  
Report on Arrangements to  
Safeguard Children

*Commission for Social Care Inspection, July 2005*

# Safeguarding Children

There has been significant improvement in most areas of safeguarding children since the initial report, published in 2002, but certain areas are still in need of attention, including:

- ensuring commitment to Every Child Matters is shared by all members of staff
- communication between organisations and with children
- recruitment of staff
- safeguarding children in groups that are particularly vulnerable or likely to be overlooked.

## Organisational ethos

The report highlighted a significant concern that the commitment to Every Child Matters shown at executive level is not always shared by all members of staff. The need for organisations to monitor how extensively the safeguarding ethos spreads throughout organisations is stressed. For example, the NHS audits carried out in 2003 show that the vast majority of NHS organisations have child protection procedures, but there were some doubts in these audits about whether they were put into practice throughout the organisation.

## Communication

One of the key ideas of Every Child Matters is that all agencies that work with children should share information to ensure that children do not slip through the net. However, agencies other than the social services are often unclear on how to recognise that a child is unsafe and when to refer children to social services.

Where there is pressure on resources, referrals from other agencies can often be overlooked. Other agencies then become reluctant to make referrals. Where agencies work well together (for example, some collaborations between the social services and the police), this is sometimes due to the personalities of individuals and not a result of adequate formal procedures.

There is particular concern for children that move from one council's area of responsibility to another's – all relevant information must be passed on. The report emphasises the continuing need to develop robust procedures for multi-agency communication.

Communication with children is essential in meeting the aims of Every Child Matters. In most cases, this communication was found to be satisfactory, but the majority of organisations could do more to overcome the problems posed by children who do not speak good English, or who have other communication difficulties. As these children often represent those who are most at risk, this represents a significant concern.

## Recruitment

One obstacle to safeguarding children is high staff turnover, which leads to a lack of continuity of care. This is particularly a problem in social services. More needs to be done to retain social workers.

Some organisations do not run sufficient checks on new staff, particularly temporary staff and those recruited from outside the UK. The report is keen to stress that staff should be rechecked if they move within organisations. In many cases, this is simply a question of making sure that existing procedures are followed.

## Vulnerable groups

Children whose safeguarding still needs particular improvement include disabled children, 16 to 18-year-olds with mental health problems, children seeking asylum and those living away from home, including those in young offender institutions and children who stay in hospital for long periods of time.

Since children living away from home are already in care, they are often assumed to be safe, but this is not always the case. Proper procedures need to be followed to ensure their safety and also, importantly, to ensure that the children themselves feel that they are safe.

## Safeguarding children and the Common Core

With reference to the Common Core of Skills and Knowledge for the Children's Workforce, it is clear that most of the areas for improvement relate to multi-agency working and sharing information.

As well as ensuring that staff are properly trained and have the requisite personal skills, the report highlights the need to address the procedures and protocols associated with multi-agency working and sharing information. The report praised the initiative and commitment of many individual members of staff, but found that their efficiency was often tempered by a lack of effective formalised procedures.

The report also highlights the need to improve skills in relation to effective communication and engagement with children, young people, their families and carers. There is a need to identify staff who are not confident in this respect, and to work with them to improve their personal skills.