NSPCC

SUBMISSION TO

THE VICTORIA CLIMBIÉ INQUIRY

SERVICE PROVISION AND DELIVERY

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Registered Charity No: 216401
Service Provision and Delivery

"Delivering the service - who does it and how?"

The problems in the current system
Assessing the requirements of, and providing services for, safeguarding children cannot be done by one agency alone. These services require close working relationships between various agencies, notably social services, education, health, and the police. The nature of those relationships is central to the success of all our efforts to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

The Children Act 1989 maps out a clear direction for interagency working and sets the framework for a more focused and effective multi-agency approach to child welfare and protection. However, the failure of professionals from different agencies to communicate and work together effectively was a problem repeatedly reported by inquiries into child deaths in the 1970s and 1980s, and of more recent case review reports in the 1990s. Recent NSPCC research shows that agencies still communicate badly with each other and have poor working relationships. Hierarchy and status affect the way professionals respond to each other, and there continues to be confusion over roles, the sharing of ‘confidential’ information and agency priorities. These longstanding problems have also featured significantly in the Phase 1 hearings of the Victoria Climbié Inquiry.

The ‘Working Together’ guidance which accompanies the Act established the framework for how all the agencies should work together to promote children’s welfare and protect them. The local authority social services department, deemed the lead agency within the legislation and guidance has in practice become the dominant agency, both in relation to service delivery and within the ACPC structure.

This clearly causes problems in the way the agencies co-operate. Despite their significance, the health and education services and the police do not make as effective a contribution as they could, or would like to. This is either because they adopt a ‘hands off’ approach, leaving the work to social services, or they experience a ‘keep off’ message as social services dominate both at operational and strategic level. Research into the role of health workers on ACPCs illustrates this quite clearly:

“…the length of meetings and the dominance of social services related issues prevents the involvement of other professionals who would have a great deal to contribute towards child protection issues.” (NHS ACPC member, regional survey)

The wording of section 27 and section 47 of the Children Act 1989 compounds the problems. These sections detail which agencies should support the local authority when it is carrying out its duties in relation to children in need of protection. Neither the police nor GPs are named in these sections. There are also ‘get out’ clauses for the other agencies who should comply with the local authority’s requirement: ‘if it is compatible with their own statutory or other duties and obligations and does not unduly prejudice the discharge of any of their functions.’
The lead roles of the local authority in relation to the social care of the child and the police in relation to the investigation of crime stand but there need to be stronger statutory requirements in relation to health and education to enable them to prioritise child protection as part of their core business.

All the main agencies, social services, the police, health and education have important contributions to make to the investigation, assessment and delivery of services for safeguarding them and promoting their welfare. Each agency has its own management structure, culture and values. While a system that rests on the necessity of collaboration is vulnerable to failures by any of the collaborators, significant changes could be made to considerably reduce the risk of those failures occurring.

Health and education agencies have difficulties balancing their responsibilities towards safeguarding children with their specialist work. Designated child protection professionals in health and education fulfil their responsibilities in addition to their main roles as, for example, teachers, doctors, or nurses. For most professionals, membership of an ACPC is taken on as an additional responsibility to the main duties of their job.

The NSPCC is putting forward a number of proposals for changes to the current provision of services which we believe will strengthen the child protection system and ensure that children are better protected.

i. In what ways, if any, should the current provision of services be modified to ensure that every child is properly protected?

The NSPCC believes that the relationship between the agencies requires tighter definition. The existing ACPC structure should be matched by a corresponding multi-agency structure for service delivery to improve case-by-case management. There needs to be a framework for the multi-agency approach to safeguarding children, which enables responsibility to be shared more evenly, enhances the strengths of the main agencies, and increases clarity of role and accountability.

There is also a need for a stronger national framework, which sets outcomes and standards to ensure that work to safeguard children is properly resourced, prioritised and quality assured. The UK Government and the National Assembly for Wales should be more proactive in overseeing and monitoring the services and systems. The NSPCC wants to see a Child Safeguarding Board for England and one for Wales established to provide such a focus.

1) Child Safeguarding Teams
We recommend that multi-agency Child Safeguarding Teams (CSTs) should be established across England and Wales to bring together all relevant local agencies responsible for the assessment of, and investigation into, children’s welfare. As with the YOTs model, initial pilots should be established and evaluated.

The CSTs would take on local authorities’ duties under the Children Act 1989 to undertake section 47 investigations, and meet the requirements of ‘Working Together’ for handling individual cases. The CSTs would also carry out integrated needs-led assessments using the Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their
The teams would be responsible for commissioning and referring children and families on to the necessary family support and therapeutic services, and for providing strong links with other mainstream services such as health visitors.

CSTs would provide the basis for an integrated approach to children, ensuring that a child’s need for support and protection were assessed simultaneously. To suggest either an ‘in need’ or ‘in need of protection’ team approach would reflect and perpetuate the dichotomy within current legislation and guidance. The current practice of classifying children into section 17 (in need) of the 1989 Act or section 47 (in need of protection) gives rise to one of the most significant concerns about the current system. The distinction results in ineffective and often dangerous practice and prevents a flexible and dynamic response. There must be recognition that a child’s circumstances can change, and that just as protection issues can quickly arise in a family support case, support is vital for children and families where there are protection issues.

The NSPCC proposes that the chief executives of local authorities with social services and education responsibilities should have a statutory duty to ensure that child protection and welfare services are provided or co-ordinated through CSTs locally. These services would adhere to outcomes and national standards set by the Child Safeguarding Board (see below).

Local authorities should be required to discharge this duty in conjunction with the health authority, Primary Care Trusts (PCTs), the police authority and other relevant local agencies. The staff of different agencies should work as an integrated team under single line management rather than working, as now, on a co-operative basis managed by their own agency.

At operational level, the NSPCC propose that the teams should include social workers, education and health staff and police officers, but they could also involve individuals from other agencies and organisations, including the voluntary sector.

These proposals for CSTs are intended to bring together existing staff, services and the ACPCs on a more effective inter-agency basis, we do not propose that ACPCs have operational responsibility for the teams. However, the two would need to develop a close relationship.

A multi–agency team approach is not a new idea and there are many examples of where this works well, such as within the mental health field, the Sure Start initiative and the Youth Offending Team (YOT) model. This is the right time to develop and formalise the approach in relation to safeguarding children. We believe this is the way to create a seamless and effective response to promoting children’s welfare and ensuring that protecting them from abuse remains a high priority.

2) Area Child Protection Committees
There is a need for a powerful body to oversee child protection work within the local authority to ensure that the inter-agency system works well at local level. It is vital that there is a stronger mechanism in place to ensure that professionals working with children, whatever their differing perspectives and priorities, do work together.
effectively and are held accountable for their actions. Strengthened ACPCs with a more clearly defined and extended role would help to achieve this.

Under the ‘Working Together’ guidance local authorities are advised to form Area Child Protection Committees (ACPCs) to safeguard children in their area. Research has revealed that though the bodies are considered to be performing useful functions, there are wide variations in how they operate, and their status, resources and membership hamper their effectiveness. Hallet found that:

“There was a gap between an ideal of ACPCs as dynamic, corporate, pro-active bodies and a perceived reality of them as somewhat slow [and] cumbersome with unresolved difficulties about membership, particularly the capacity of all members to represent their professions and agencies and to ensure effective implementation of ACPC policies”.

An NSPCC internal consultation with NSPCC’s ACPC representatives shows that, while the local inter-agency approach is broadly supported, there is a need for change and that, in particular, problems of role, authority, membership, and resources remain.

The NSPCC proposes that the chief executive of the local authority should be placed under a statutory responsibility to convene the ACPC (rather than being advised as now under ‘Working Together’ guidance). The committee should be comprised of representatives of the authority’s social services and education departments, the police, local health authorities and local voluntary agencies and have a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in the area. All these agencies should have a statutory responsibility to provide funds at agreed levels and a senior representative to participate in the work of the committee. Their executive functions should be outlined in statute to ensure the purpose and role of ACPCs is clear. The detail of our proposal for strengthening ACPCs is outlined below.

We believe that CSTs, which pull together all the main agencies responsible for children’s welfare, coupled with stronger ACPCs, will create a more consistent and effective child protection system at a local level.

### 3) Child Safeguarding Board

In addition to changes at a local level there is a need for a much stronger national focus on the issues relating to protecting children and promoting their welfare than we have at present.

The NSPCC proposes that a new body, a Child Safeguarding Board, should be established in England and Wales to create a stronger national focus for issues relating to safeguarding children, and provide a coherent framework for the work of local agencies.

At a local level a strategic and operational approach to safeguarding children is essential, but there is also a need for government and the devolved assemblies to assume a much stronger and more active role in overseeing the system for safeguarding children in the UK. A significant failing of the current system is the variation in the quality of services which children receive, dependent on where they
live. A “postcode lottery” is not acceptable: the need to protect children is not variable.

The NSPCC does not advocate a more centralised system but one where the Government ensures that safeguarding children is given a high priority and there is uniformity in the standard of protection children receive, regardless of where they live.

The Board should monitor the operation of the child protection system as a whole and of local agencies working to protect children and promote their welfare. It should have the power to require local agencies to provide information on their performance. The Board should draw up national standards for the work of Child Safeguarding Teams and provide advice to ministers on the operation of the child protection system.

To ensure there is more effective inter-agency working we need a radical solution. The NSPCC believes that multi-agency teams, more powerful and consistent ACPCs, and a new national board to give child protection and welfare a clearer national focus could achieve that.

**ii. Is there a need for greater clarity about individual accountability throughout organisations and a greater understanding about individual roles and responsibilities when working in partnership with other agencies?**

1) **Child Safeguarding Teams**
Clear lines of accountability and responsibility are essential: operational staff would be responsible to the team manager, who would ultimately be responsible to the chief executive of the local authority. The teams could be established in one of three ways:

- by establishing multi-agency teams under the line management of the social services department;
- by developing a joint employing agency, where staff are directly employed by the agency but maintain a dotted line to their parent agencies for professional practice issues;
- by setting up multi-agency teams in the same way as the YOT model, where the teams are jointly funded by all the partners and staff are seconded in from each of the agencies. Within this model each member of the team continues to work under the terms and conditions of his or her parent agency.

This requires further exploration to determine the most successful approach for safeguarding children. Whichever model is chosen, a team member’s first line of accountability would be to the CST’s manager. However, it would be essential for each team member to maintain his/her professional identity and strong links into his/her parent agency. Professionals would have to maintain independence and question others’ judgements, perceptions and analysis. The role of the team is to enhance the different skills of the professionals involved in a collaborative way, not to blur professional boundaries, and develop a one-dimensional approach.

2) **Area Child Protection Committees**
The chief executive of the local authority providing education and social services would be responsible for convening the ACPCs. Ultimate accountability to the
Secretary of State in England and Minister for Health and Social Services in Wales would rest with him or her. The chief executive would chair the ACPC or appoint an independent chair.

Each of the agencies would be under a statutory duty to commit funds and staff time to the ACPC. ACPC roles could be written into individual job descriptions rather than being added on to existing commitments. The chief executive of the local authority would appoint dedicated full-time posts to fulfil the administration and policy work of the ACPC. The post-holders would be accountable to the chief executive.

3) Child Safeguarding Board
The Board would be accountable to the Secretary of State for Health in England, and in Wales to the Minister for Health and Social Services. Our proposals also make the chief executives of local authorities directly accountable to the Secretary of State/Minister for Health and Social Services but they would have contact with the Board on issues regarding standards and performance. There would be stronger lines of accountability and responsibility between the Board and the statutory ACPCs, hence the requirement for the Board to oversee the business plans.

The Board would develop links with the Children’s Commissioners; Child Death Review Teams; Social Services Inspectorate and other new key bodies, such as the Social Care Institute for Excellence, the General Social Care Council and the Care Council for Wales.

The Board would also be required to implement the National Service Framework as it applies to children in need of protection and to link with the Children and Young People’s Unit and the Strategy for Children.

iii. Would a lead child protection agency get in the way of effective working in partnership arrangements and blur professional lines of responsibility?

It is clarity of role that is essential. We consider that there is a need for a more even balance of responsibility and greater clarity of role in the multi-agency child protection system. While social services departments are the lead agency within the current system the other main agencies - the police, health and education - have important contributions to make to the investigation, assessment and delivery of services for safeguarding children and promoting their welfare. Our proposals are designed to enhance the strengths of all the agencies to ensure a stronger multi-agency response to and a clearer focus on child protection.

The Child Safeguarding Board would provide the lead national focus for safeguarding children that is so desperately needed. An overarching strategic approach to safeguarding children would help to ensure that all the agencies fulfil their individual and collective responsibilities to protect children.
iv. What advantages, if any, would come from the establishment of a multi-disciplinary child protection agency and how would it operate?

We believe that there must be effective multi-agency teams at local level with a stronger national focus through a Child Safeguarding Board in England and Wales, rather than a single child protection agency.

The benefits of a multi-agency team approach
The multi-agency team approach would enhance operational efficiency and, we believe, improve child protection practice. It would improve the information exchange, the co-ordination and the response of the different professionals within the team throughout the investigation and assessment of a child’s needs. Signing up to a team ethos, its principles and standards would lead to greater clarity about thresholds for intervention and approaches to individual cases. It would also improve shared decision-making.

Co-location of key professionals and changes in working practices would lead to a change in culture and attitudes. It would allow for a more flexible approach to children and families, the development of real teamwork and greater consistency. The failure of professionals to co-ordinate their activities properly has a detrimental effect on children and their families. A more effective collaborative approach would build trust between professionals, and between professionals and families. It would offer families ‘one-stop’ service and support, ensure the involvement of all the relevant agencies throughout the process and allow for focused prevention and therapy.

In addition to greater flexibility, a multi-agency team approach would also help to resolve some of the complaints and difficulties that professionals have with the current system. Teachers consistently highlight difficulties referring their concerns to social services and complain of lack of feedback when they do. Social workers experience difficulties and frustrations with the referrals they receive from teaching staff, saying that many are unclear, poorly timed and that staff are unfamiliar with their responsibilities under the ACPC procedures. Similar difficulties are experienced between health and social services.

In multi-agency teams, education representatives could perform a liaison role and ensure that schools pass on relevant information, receive feedback and know what their responsibilities in the investigation and planning process are. They would also be able to provide expertise where there are significant education issues or where the school is a vital part of the protection plan. Similarly, the presence of health representatives on the teams would provide a vital link with mainstream health services, leading to an improved understanding of roles, responsibilities and systems, particularly in relation to paediatricians, health visiting services and adult psychiatry.

A multi-agency structure would enhance the strengths of the different agencies. In certain circumstances, such as when a crime has been committed, the police could take the lead. Another case may benefit from a joint social work/health approach. Effective joint working is already taking place between some professionals and in some local authorities. However, we believe that working practices in all areas could only be improved by this new structure.
The teams would counter the ‘inward looking’ nature of agencies and the preoccupation with an individual agency’s agenda and core responsibilities.

v. Is it possible to create a virtual child protection agency through the improved use of modern information technology?

Investment in information technology which enables agencies to share information effectively is needed. The ‘integrated children’s system’ (ICS) is designed to achieve better co-ordination of information; its implementation needs close monitoring and evaluation. However protecting children requires good professional communication and close collaboration based on trusting relationships. It necessitates a high level of skill from the individuals involved. While modern technology can enhance the sharing of information, it will be most important to develop systems and processes which ensure that professionals in the multi-agency system can work together effectively in the field.

vi. Should more be done to harmonise and simplify local policies and procedures? What more should be done to ensure that national and local guidelines, procedures and protocols are put into practice?

The NSPCC believes that the child protection system could be far more effective if the current guidelines were effectively implemented and overseen at both a local and national level. There are two ways in which this could be achieved, through a stronger ACPC structure and through the establishment of a Child Safeguarding Board to provide a stronger and more consistent nation-wide focus for issues relating to children’s welfare and protection.

1) Area Child Protection Committees
There is a need for a powerful local body to develop a strategic overview for safeguarding children, which also has the authority to ensure that local multi-agency arrangements are working effectively. Stronger mechanisms are needed to ensure that professionals working with children, whatever their individual perspectives and priorities, work together effectively and are held accountable for their actions. Amending the Children Act 1989 to put ACPCs on a statutory basis would help to achieve this.

a) Problems with the current arrangement
There is wide variation in the committees’ abilities to undertake strategic planning, and develop and oversee the implementation of interagency protocols. Where ACPCs have dedicated posts the committee is able to deal with a significantly greater volume of work. Discrepancies arise for the following reasons:

- Funding: reliant on individual agency commitments in the locality;
- Staffing: there is huge variance in the time that individuals can dedicate to ACPC business. The functioning of the ACPC is largely left to the commitment of individuals at a local level;
- Accountability: activities are determined locally and as they are not on a statutory basis neither the Government, nor the devolved assemblies oversee or monitor any of their functions, except in relation to serious case reviews, which in itself is a very recent development.
The problem lies in the fact that ACPCs are not named in the Children Act 1989 but only in the section 7 guidance accompanying the Act. Section 7 of the Local Social Services Act 1970 requires local authorities in their social services functions to act under the general guidance of the Secretary of State. As such the guidance does not have the full force of statute but should be complied with unless local circumstances indicate exceptional reasons to justify a variation.

The Secretary of State has the power to direct social services alone on how they exercise their functions under this Act. Therefore there are no statutory responsibilities on the other agencies named in the guidance to fulfil their functions. This needs to change to develop a system where all the agencies share responsibility and contribute more substantially.

b) **Strengthening the existing ACPC structure**
ACPCs should have a much stronger, clearer and extended function. This could improve outcomes for children and play a key role in the prevention of, and response to maltreatment. An amendment to the Children Act 1989 naming ACPCs and putting them on a statutory basis would have the following benefits:

1) All the agencies/authorities would be named in the Children Act 1989, giving each a statutory responsibility to provide representatives/resources to the ACPC;
2) The executive powers, roles and functions of the ACPC could be outlined in the Act to minimise confusion and ensure greater uniformity;
3) ACPC policy would have the full force of statute;
4) The UK government and devolved assemblies would have stronger responsibilities in relation to overseeing the ACPC structure.

**c) Extension of ACPC roles**
Strengthened and properly funded ACPCs with a full-time, wholly dedicated staff could considerably extend their roles and functions to include the following:

1) An advice service, independent of direct service providers, for members of the public, carers and professionals, giving them advice about how to respond when they are concerned about a child;
2) Development of interagency protocols that crucially include guidance on information sharing;
3) Take a leading role in developing the Children and Young People’s Strategic Plan;
4) Take responsibility for the enforcement of guidance such as ‘Working Together’ to Safeguard Children’ and in developing a positive child protection culture locally;
5) Build in user involvement to ensure support mechanisms for children and families within the area, such as advocacy and complaints services;
6) Ensure that the requirements for continuous multi-agency training within ‘Working Together’ are met;
7) Overseeing and monitoring the rates of child maltreatment including child deaths, Child Death Review Teams (CDRTs) would be developed to complement the existing role of the ACPCs in relation to this.
2) Child Safeguarding Board
The Board would develop an overarching strategy for safeguarding children that would include a national framework for the prevention and response to maltreatment. The framework would be based on an evidence-based understanding of the extent of the problem of maltreatment, including data on the incidence of abuse and regular prevalence research.

The Board would oversee the development and implementation of both the existing guidance, which relates to safeguarding children, and any new guidance developed to correspond with the new team structures and strengthened ACPC model.

The NSPCC proposes that the Board should have the following roles and responsibilities:

a) National Standards
The Board would advise the Secretary of State for Health in England and the Minister for Health and Social Services in Wales on the national framework standards for the prevention and response to maltreatment. This would include standards for the operational delivery of the safeguarding teams and the work of the ACPCs. We believe this would include national child protection procedures to ensure national consistency and save local resources. The Board would issue guidance on:

1) Standards for the work of CSTs including establishing the teams (team building and training programmes) and protocols for intervention, investigation and assessment;
2) Disclosure of information between the agencies and issues relating to the Data Protection Act and the Human Rights Act;
3) The statutory funding arrangements for each of the partner agencies;
4) The work of ACPCs.

b) Evaluation and monitoring
The Board would monitor and evaluate the systems and services for safeguarding children. This would include the following:

1) Setting and evaluating the overarching strategy for safeguarding children, to include a national framework for the prevention and response to maltreatment;
2) Specifying outcomes for ACPCs and overseeing their business/strategic plans on an annual basis to ensure they include; details of how outcomes will be met and how they will monitor rates of child maltreatment at a local level;
3) Evaluating the effectiveness of the CSTs by monitoring and evaluating outcomes for children in receipt of their services;
4) Producing a national evaluation report to disseminate good practice and generate learning;
5) Overseeing the serious case review process, producing an annual report and disseminating common themes and trends from serious case review reports.
vii. What more can be done to ensure that delivery of services is sensitive to the needs of children and carers from ethnic minorities?

Current problems
Providing appropriate services to black and minority ethnic children and their families presents many challenges, particularly in areas with diverse populations, such as many inner London authorities. Traditionally, black and minority ethnic children have been over-represented within child protection systems and under-represented within support services.\textsuperscript{xiii}

There are no official statistics on the incidence of abuse in relation to ethnicity from which to gain a clear understanding of the current situation and the need for appropriate service provision.

Social work professionals working with people from different ethnic, racial, cultural groups face a variety of challenges. Racial and cultural stereotyping of black families can lead to inappropriate interventions as well as a failure to protect black children from abuse. Different interpretations of the meaning of cultural identity can cause problems in the assessment of and intervention with black and minority children and their families.

Complex emotional dynamics exist in cases of child abuse. Research illustrates that social workers, and other professionals are affected by the dynamic between themselves and families which affects their capacity to exercise objective judgement\textsuperscript{xiv}. In work with black and minority ethnic children and families this has, on occasion, led to ‘positive stereotyping’ where the family are attributed strengths on the basis of their ethnicity rather than an accurate assessment of the problem. This can lead to the potential for abuse being discounted, as in the case of Tyra Henry. Inadequate understanding of issues relating to diversity has led either to professionals dismissing the significance of cultural factors or relying on cultural assumptions to explain behaviour.\textsuperscript{xv}

Improving the delivery of services to ethnic minorities
The NSPCC believes that there should be stronger guidance to local authorities, service providers and the ACPCs on issues relating to diversity and child protection. The Child Safeguarding Board should produce a national standard on diversity as part of its framework for the work of local agencies on the prevention and response to maltreatment. These should ensure that;

- All child protection policies, strategies and action plans reflect a commitment to equality and diversity ensuring the needs of black and minority ethnic children are met;
- All agencies providing services to children demonstrate competence in assessing the needs of children in a culturally diverse setting;
- All agencies providing services provide information materials and interpretative services in the language of the family, to enable them to fully comprehend and participate in child protection processes.
viii. Is there need for greater clarity in organisational accountability and local arrangements?

The NSPCC believes that there is a need for greater clarity in organisational accountability and local arrangements.

We believe there are two main priorities at local level: effective collaboration between the professionals responsible for the protection and welfare of children and increased and sustained investment in children’s services.

1) Effective collaboration

The current system is not working effectively enough. We need to create a system for safeguarding children which ensures that professionals collaborate effectively and which inspires trust and confidence among children and their families. All the agencies responsible for safeguarding children must work in partnership regardless of their differing cultures, values and respective approaches. Opportunities for multi-agency training to develop good co-operation must be made available. Inter-agency protocols must be in place and monitored to ensure they are working. Information sharing and data protection issues have to be addressed to solve the confusion which is affecting professional practice. There is a need for strong management, agreed standards and clarity of role. One of the biggest challenges would be to create a child protection system that is itself ‘joined up’ to other services such as mental health and family support.

The current system is not working effectively enough. Social services across the UK are experiencing a recruitment and retention crisis. Rewards are few and ‘siege mentalities’ develop as social workers take the main responsibility for cases in a supposedly joint agency system. Management accountability sometimes appears to be non-existent. Social workers, particularly those working with children and families, are demoralised. The creation of effective multi-agency teams to share this responsibility would give children and families work the boost it so desperately needs.

2) Increased investment in children’s services

Although the Government’s Standard Spending Assessment (SSA) for children’s services has increased, much of the additional money has been earmarked for specific schemes like Sure Start and Quality Protects rather than directed at core budgets. This acts to the detriment of social services and other vital services such as health visiting, particularly when staff transfer to new initiatives.

The Association of Directors of Social Services, council treasurers and the Local Government Association demonstrated the huge pressures on core services for children in a budget survey at the beginning of the year. It revealed that 64 per cent of the projected social services overspend of £200 million for 2000/2001 was attributable to children’s services.

Given the large overspend on children’s services, it is not surprising that local authorities are protesting that the Government’s Standard Spending Assessment (SSA) is now outdated. Local authorities have been forced to spend more on children’s services to meet the rise in the number of children in care, the extra
pressure of children in need and children in need of protection and the high cost of
agency staff and independent fostering placements.

The NSPCC believes that the Government should prioritise the compensation of
children’s services for the enormous costs they are now facing. The Treasury’s
under-spend on public finance should be used to relieve pressure on social service
departments through next year’s Revenue Support Grant. Otherwise, social services
departments will fail to meet their obligations to assess and meet the needs of our
most vulnerable children.

If we invest in our children, we know they will stand a better chance. If we do not,
their future will be jeopardised. Failure to invest in our most vulnerable children
deprives them of their childhood and increases the risk that they will be unable to
contribute to society and support the next generation as workers and as parents.

The Barnardo’s report ‘Counting the Cost of Child Poverty’\textsuperscript{xvi} illustrates through a
number of case studies that early intervention in children’s lives is much cheaper than
dealing with the later problems created by inaction. Lack of resources must not allow
children in need to fall through the gaps in provision of child protection, family
support, education and health services.

**Conclusion**

To ensure that appropriate services are delivered to children and their families, the
relationship between agencies and the responsibility placed on them requires tighter
definition. A stronger national framework is needed to ensure that work to safeguard
children is properly resourced, prioritised and quality assured. We need a system for
safeguarding children which both ensures that the key professionals collaborate and
work together effectively and inspires trust and confidence among children and their
families.

**The NSPCC recommends:**

1) A statutory duty is placed on chief executives of local authorities with social
services and education responsibilities to ensure that children are safeguarded
through multi-agency Child Safeguarding Teams (CSTs);

2) The Children Act 1989 is amended to place Area Child Protection Committees
(ACPCs) on a statutory footing, with their membership and executive functions
set out in the legislation;

3) The Government establishes a Child Safeguarding Board, both in England and
Wales, to provide a strong national focus for issues relating to the welfare and
protection of children;

4) An amendment is made to section 27 and section 47 of the Children Act 1989 to
place a stronger duty on agencies to work together to support children in need/in
need of protection;

5) The Government provides the necessary funding to ensure the changes are
properly implemented and set the statutory funding arrangements for each of the
agencies.


\textsuperscript{2} M. Baginsky (2000) *Child Protection and Education*, NSPCC Policy, Practice and Research Series,
London: NSPCC.


ibid., p.335.


