



**The Michael Sieff Foundation**

Working together for children's welfare

**The Michael Sieff Foundation Anniversary Conference  
20 YEARS ON**

**Preventing the abuse of children and young people and  
protecting their emotional and mental health**

**19<sup>th</sup> - 21<sup>st</sup> November 2007  
at Cumberland Lodge, Windsor Great Park**

**Panel Session**

**Chris Cuthbert, Deputy Director of the Social Exclusion Taskforce in the Cabinet Office**

I would like to reflect on some of the key themes that have resonated with me as we've been in conversation and discussion over the last few days. Those key themes are early intervention and prevention, the theme of what works or identifying what works and the importance of collaboration or as we've always called it joined up responses to joined up problems and linked to that taking a family centred approach.

First of all then early intervention and prevention. This means going right back to the earliest possible stages of pregnancy. Pregnancy and the first two years of a child's life are absolutely vital to children's life chances. The evidence on this is absolutely irrefutable. Pregnancy and child birth offer a magic moment of opportunity when parents and that includes dads, are highly receptive to support. Maternity services can of course play a really vital role in this prevention agenda. Government investment in the family nest partnership demonstration programme aims to cast a spotlight on the importance of this period in children's lives and to help to build the evidence base for health and prevention and promotion work. There are a range of gaps in support that do need to be addressed and that we need to look at more carefully.

This progressive pre-birth agenda as the Fabians have called it, is an important step in the right direction. I should add a word of caution. Whilst we have argued that it's never too early to act preventatively the work of Leon Feinstein and others on the cohorts have shown that it is never too late. There is a vital role for support both to prevent the escalation of problems and to promote well-being right throughout the life course. Research from a range of fields on developmental pathways is helping to improve our ability to provide more timely support but also to ensure that interventions are much more closely matched to specific needs which leads me on to my second theme which is about identifying what works.

The government set itself a very high threshold and the bold commitments about evidenced based policy making are really challenging and we haven't always got it right but there are of course a range of examples where the commitment to evidence based policy making has been demonstrated ranging from the creation of interventions such as the child trust funds right through to the more recent announcement of the national academy of parenting practitioners and you heard from Stephen Scott about the important role that that work will be taking. New programmes such as the family nurse partnership and multi systemic therapy which Geoffrey Baruch talked about yesterday are being considered and evaluated.

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Whilst these programmes have achieved very impressive results over on the other side of the pond, we can't simply assume that such results will automatically be replicated in a UK context and it's therefore really encouraging to see a commitment to building the evidence base before developing options for national roll out. Again we need to tread with caution. Whilst rigorous research is important we've heard and the debate just now has reflected that we need to be vigilant to ensure that we're measuring programmes against the outcomes that they are actually designed to implement and according to the timescales within which they were originally expected to deliver. With this mind I would personally argue that those ready to proceed on the basis of very early intervention they should have faith and we of course need to learn and adapt on the basis of informative research findings but we should allow programmes sufficient time to bed in and to deliver what they are actually designed to deliver.

The code of practice in terms of evaluation which is being developed between the government chief research officer's unit, Barnardos and Research in Practice I think may help provide some opportunities for some of the issues Leon was alluding to around greater consistency in terms of what are the standards of evaluation that are appropriate in different circumstances and as was just mentioned the centre for excellence in children's services which DCSF colleagues are developing and working up again presents an opportunity for us to make some headway in this area.

My third theme is about collaboration or joined up solutions to joined up problems. One of the key messages that I take away from this conference is the importance of understanding the whole family situation in order to get to the root causes of complex problems. Problems are not neatly confined to single issues and the problems of individuals do not exist in isolation. Of course the best front line practice has always been about thinking family in this kind of way yet all too often services see families through the lens of one profession or service and work with one particular set of problems or one family member. We'll only be able to truly think family when we have effective collaboration between different agencies working with families. There has been huge progress and EMC's introduced an important dynamic promoting greater co-ordination between services for 0-19 year olds and importantly it's introduced and encouraged a sharper focus on tailoring and centring services around the family and the child and we are getting better at recognising the crucial role of the voluntary and community sector in reaching out to some of the most disadvantaged families. But given what we know about the importance of the home environment and the crucial parent faced risk factors on children's life chances, my final thought that I want to leave you with is that there really is a very strong case for looking at how this logic of collaboration and greater co-ordination and a more family centred approach might be extended beyond what we see as traditional children's services to embrace a much wider range of adult services as broad as Job Centre Plus or housing officers in working with their clients as parents and as family members.

### **Caroline Lindsey Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist.**

I was until recently a full-time consultant at the Tavistock Clinic as a child psychiatrist. I have spent a lot of time in the last five years working closely with the Department of Health. But I am not a civil servant and not a representative of the Department. All I am able to do is to take back some of the very interesting and important and challenging recommendations and discussions of the two and half days to the department. That is important because the programme has considered in a really unique way at many different levels the challenges facing children and their families today. In other words by actually addressing what is our current state of evidence, what do we know about the current state of the health and well-being of the children, what works and not least the most terrible challenges that our society poses today to the future of the

next generation. Putting that together in such a way that we couldn't just focus on one aspect of it but had constantly to move from one level to the other has been a really enriching experience and avoids the risk that we go down an either or way of thinking and at all the times in this conference been thinking both and in a very systemic way moving across the levels in a reflective way I have found extremely energising.

From the point of my particular interest the theme of mental health and its promotion and the treatment of children who have mental health problems has been running through the conference but I have felt that in many ways has not been directly addressed at the sort of level that I am preoccupied with. So I'm taking the opportunity to say something about what the challenges for CAMHS services embedded in a lot of the recommendations you're making. That is to say that we remain a service which has been alluded to by lots of speakers here during the conference as one which is very good when you can get it but often not available. It is heartrending that we're still sitting here hearing people say you can't get hold of CAMHS or you can't help for the people who really need it when they need it. I would hope that at this stage we wouldn't be hearing that so much and so I just want to make sure that actually the evidence we have that CAMHS has actually improved enormously is available to you. I'm not going to say all things that are in the review but it's very clear from the CAMHS mapping and from other evidence that we do have that there has been a considerable growth in the specialist CAMHS workforce over the last few years. There is a huge threat to do with the destruction of the NHS that a lot of the new funding has been cut again but we did see an upsurge of enthusiasm and development and of implementing all the recommendations which were in our standard 9. It is still not adequate and we still have a very small workforce and will never have enough which is why all our discussions here about creating primary workforces which are capable of promoting health and well-being for children are crucial.

I would like to recommend that those of you who are familiar with the recommendations in the children's NSF go back and have a look at them because they actually cover in the five core standards, in the maternity standard, most of the things which you are recommending are already recommended and are therefore actually government policy. It's a very important lever which should be being used by all services, by all providers whether they're in the voluntary sector or the statutory sector to say this is what we're supposed to be providing. We go so quickly from one policy to the other, that the very important carefully worked through, three or four years developing policies get left a bit on the shelf. Every Child Matters was seen as the overarching policy document and the NSF was seen by many people to hang from it, to actually contain the detail that's required to put Every Child Matters into place.

The government has committed itself to another PSA target which we weren't sure that they would of improving emotional health and well-being and CAMHS going through now for the next Comprehensive Spending Review. It continues to expect the provision of comprehensive CAMHS services. It is important for this conference to note as it hasn't been there before as part of the PSA target which is to be measured. What is more concerning is that after 2009 the outputs and CAMHS are going to be measured by an outcomes measure which is only just being developed and we are waiting for SDQ to see whether CAMHS is doing their job properly. So they are moving from the position of having said you've got to create a well resourced CAMHS to do the job to say well now let's see how well they're going to do it. About that I have concerns but the Department of Health has put CAMHS on the map in the last few years, although there are enormous threats and challenge in the way the NHS is being driven right now.

## **Bob Ashford, Youth Justice Board**

One of the constant themes has been around partnership in many of the discussions and not least the one on the age of criminal responsibility, when we consider the issue whether in welfare or a criminal justice response. We need to make both those responses because we aren't just talking about young people and young people's needs, we are also talking about sometimes the victims of those young people and be they children or be they adults and community needs as well. In the new relationship between the Youth Justice Board and the Ministry of Justice and the Department of Children, Schools and Families, we are jointly responsible to both those ministries. That presents some challenges in terms of having dual responsibility but it also presents I believe some excellent opportunities because for the first time DCSF is now responsible for us, it's responsible for youth offending, it's not somebody else's business and to my mind with responsibility comes responsibility in a joined up way. So I'm looking forward to the new working arrangements and I think they will begin to produce some good results. They already are in fact because you've already mentioned the children's plan, work led by DCSF but involving other government departments.

There is also a youth crime action plan led by the Home Office but involving officials including myself from DCSF, the Ministry of Justice, ACPO and others which will be launched some time in spring 2008. It is looking at early intervention and prevention, working with young people on community sentences, the secure estate and resettlement and there are some fairly blue sky ideas that are coming through in those discussions.

The Youth Justice Board and local youth offending teams have been responsible for delivering on youth justice. Now local authorities and their partners are also responsible for delivering on youth justice so we have indicators around reducing the number of first time entrants. We all want to see fewer young people coming into the criminal justice system, we have indicators around reducing offending or re-offending by young people, indicators around improved accommodation, mental health, custody etc. There are conflicting indicators and part of this process has been to make sure that indicators and targets were complementary. At the moment we all know there's a tension between offences brought to justice and reducing the number of first time entrants and the YJB. Our target is to reduce the number of first time entrants to the youth justice system which happily it looks like we're actually going to achieve by next March. At the same time the Police have a target to bring more offences to justice. There is some evidence that that's being achieved through more young people being targeted by the Police. The indicator set and the new performance framework for the Police which is currently being developed has taken cognisance of those conflicts and really again I'm optimistic that we're going to see some better understanding and partnership arrangements in terms of those separate indicators.

Targeted development youth support teams – TYS – came out of youth matters and is trying to establish in every local authority area more joined up partnerships, rather like a youth offending team but a general service to all young people. Young people in need, vulnerable young people, bringing together a connection service, the youth service, youth offending teams and the Police to actually identify those young people.

Ed Balls said at our YJB convention last week and I quote: 'we are going to be looking at providing the same status for young people leaving custody as that for young people leaving care. It is not as good as all young people in custody having looked after children status but in terms of those young people leaving custody, in terms of their successful resettlement, that will should improve outcomes for those young people and again for their local communities.'

Finally I will say that I came to this conference for the first time five years ago. The debate then was about young defendants and the need to do something more to help prepare young people in the youth court system. I am pleased to say that the recent inspection of youth courts actually identified and highlighted the need to work better and prepare young people for the youth court. It has been taken up as a theme by HMCS and they are looking at developing materials. I'm not sure how far that's going to go in terms of money but there is some movement on that which I know many people in this room have been anxious about and being trying to do something about for a good many years as has this conference.

### **Philippa Goffe, Ministry of Justice**

I hope to contribute to your discussions because of my involvement as the Head of the Community Services Team. The creation of the new joint youth justice unit is a good demonstration from the current government that they're thinking of the need for joined up working which meets some of the issues that are being raised at the conference. It obviously was a major change to provide that the youth justice joint responsibility between the Ministry of Justice and the DCSF. Our unit has been melded with DCSF to create this new joint youth justice unit with the offender education section joining us from DCSF. The key aims of the unit are to deliver a reduction in offending by young people and to deliver the every child matters agenda to all people within the youth justice service. We hope that this new partnership arrangement will provide a good driver to achieve some of the aims that we've been expressing here.

Prevention work is being led by DCSF and our aim on the criminal justice side is to reduce offending. What we would like to see ultimately is success from that and for that resource to be able to be transferred back over to the prevention side. This is obviously our long term aim I don't think we can achieve this overnight but the measures we are taking we hope will help us to deliver that overall aim.

I am the lead official for the Criminal Justice and Immigration Bill. You've seen Part 1 Extension of Referral Orders and five schedules. The main bulk of it is delivering the youth rehabilitation order which is the new genetic community sentence for young people. The whole purpose of this is to link in with the new scaled approach that the youth justice board are developing which is a risk based assessment process for young people. The new sentence will go with this new scaled approach to provide tailored sentences for individuals based entirely on their risk of offending. Some of the results from the pilots were quite interesting and showed that there was actually a reduction in the length of sentences recommended as a result of using this new approach.

We are also focussing on the restorative justice approach. I'm extending the use of Referral Orders in the Bill so they will be available for young people. At the moment they're restricted to only first time guilty plea offenders but it will be allowed on second offence if they haven't previously had a Referral Order. It's widening out because that is proven to be the most successful community sentence for juveniles available. There is also a focus on delivering a range of community interventions and to limit those people going into custody to only the most serious cases where there's an issue of needing to protect the public. We've got intensive supervision and surveillance and intensive fostering put at the top of the YRO (Youth Rehabilitation Order) as being set as direct alternatives to custody. I've been developing the proposals for the children's plan looking at the potential development in terms of intensive fostering in particular because that is only being piloted at the moment by the YJB.

This new work has been around for a few years now but we are now making good progress with a commitment to change. We want to reduce the level of offending, we want to keep people below the criminal threshold. We understand the points being made about this concern that juveniles are being brought in to the criminal justice system too quickly. Again that's why there has been a focus on developing more out of Court disposals because we don't want people being brought into the Court and escalating up the system and hopefully all these measures will be brought together.

We want Local Authorities to take on responsibility for the delivery of education in custodial settings with the requirement that they meet the same standards as people outside custody. There is a firm commitment to improving the level of delivery of education service within custodial settings.

We are asked whether there should be a Minister for all matters relating to children. The aim and aspiration of this model is that we should develop effective dual key decision making around those key areas.

**Jeanette Pugh, Department for Children, Schools and Families was unable to attend the panel session. She sent a note about current work in the Department.**

The Children and Young Persons Bill will strengthen the legislative framework underpinning the care system, ensuring the right structure is in place to enable children and young people to receive high quality care and support. It will also ensure that those entering the care system are able to share the same aspiration as those in supportive family homes. It will enable the Department to test out a new model of social work provision by allowing local authorities to pilot social work practices, help bring about greater educational stability by ensuring that children in care do not move schools in key stage 4 and increase the support available for children in care at school by putting the role of a designated teacher on a statutory footing. It will introduce more checks and balances into the care planning and review system and ensure the voices of children in care are heard by strengthening the role of the independent reviewing officer to make those services independent from local authorities where necessary.

We will ensure that local authorities make effective contact with children in care by extending the duty of the social worker to visit children placed in children's homes and those in youth custody. We will make independent visitors available to a wider group of looked after children, improve the support for family and children carers, ensure appropriate and continuing supervision of children in long term residential placements made by health and education services and give foster carers access to an independent review mechanism.

Consultation on the children's plan has been carried out so that it reaches the grass roots and is not just a debate between experts and professionals. We have gathered a range of opinions and suggestions from people across the country. These will feed into the children's plan that will be published at the end of this year, so I think I'm probably not going to say much more about that because we're obviously expecting further detail which isn't in this which I think I had expected.