

# WORKING TOGETHER FOR CHILDREN'S WELFARE: EFFECTIVE INTERVENTION

A RESIDENTIAL CONFERENCE HELD AT  
CUMBERLAND LODGE, THE GREAT PARK  
WINDSOR, BERKSHIRE

12th-14th SEPTEMBER 1988



*Conference Report by Edna Llewellyn*

*This year's theme was Effective Intervention. The recent cases of child sexual abuse have highlighted the need for effective intervention by all those who have responsibility for protecting, educating and caring for children. It was hoped that the formal presentations and the informal discussions in the working groups would strengthen the understanding of the need for intervening effectively and produce some constructive guidelines for prevention and detection, and for helping families where abuse has occurred.*

**The following recommendations were made:-**

- The conference wishes to emphasize the importance of training in the field of child abuse.
  - Statutory bodies responsible for training should identify the necessary levels of training for targeted groups. These include basic competence for all staff in each discipline, continuing individual and inter-disciplinary study for those involved in day to day work with families; and advanced inter-disciplinary study for those working closely together, for example in the Special Assessment Teams.
  - It is important that training addresses the needs of the whole family and of the abuser.
  - Greater recognition is necessary for training in supervision and management of workers in the field of child abuse. Attention must also be paid to practice supervision during training.
  - Accreditation should be available for practitioners working in the field of child abuse reflecting training and/or special skills.
- The conference notes that the Government believes that there is insufficient agreement about the concept of a Family Court to proceed in this direction for the time being. The conference does not agree with this view and considers that without a Family Court other measures can only be regarded as sticking plaster.
- The conference urges the Government to look more closely at the costings prepared by the Family Courts Campaign.
- The conference notes the importance of the role of *guardians ad litem* in acting as the child's representative in legal proceedings and believes that they should operate as a wholly independent service. Nonetheless there is concern about whether the Office of Child Protection would provide the best setting for guardians and urges careful consultation on this issue, including comparative costing with a family court.
- *Guardians ad litem* should consider whether they can assist in speeding up court procedures through the preparation of statements agreed by all parties to be put before the court so that the court can concentrate on disputed issues.
- The conference urges the Government to extend the provision of videolink facilities to the magistrates' court as soon as possible.
- Area Child Protection Committees should have responsibility for identifying the composition of Special Assessment Teams which should operate as multi-disciplinary groups selected from senior practitioners in each discipline to assist with individual cases as necessary.
- There should be developed codes of practice, similar to the codes of practice on access to children in care and under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act, to assist practitioners in the processes of investigation, interviewing and assessment.
- There is a need to establish schemes to explore the potential for the rehabilitation of sex offenders against children, with or without custodial sentences. These should encourage self-referral and should also provide for the different needs of adults and adolescents.

- There is a need for early and continuing involvement of parents and children, to ensure that they are consulted, informed and counselled as appropriate.
- The conference notes the Government's view that progress in work in the field of child abuse cannot be achieved by extra money alone, but the conference expresses concern that development of skilled human resources is hampered by inadequate financial resources.

**Speakers included:-**

David Mellor QC, MP, Minister of Health

Rupert Hughes, Assistant Secretary, DHSS

Jim Harding, Child Care Director, NSPCC

Anne Bannister, Team Leader, NSPCC and Greater Manchester Child Sexual Abuse Unit

Eileen Shearer, NSPCC, Rochdale Bury and Oldham Child Protection Team

Terry Simmons, Team Leader, NSPCC and Border Counties Child Protection Team

David Fryer, Director of Education, Cornwall County Council

Jane Sloan, Social Work Consultant, Cornwall Social Services Department

Ray Wyre, Therapist and Consultant

Sue Amphlett, Director, Parents Against INjustice

Bill Utting, Chief Inspector, Social Services Inspectorate, DHSS.