

THE MICHAEL SIEFF FOUNDATION

THIRTY
YEARS
PLUS



1986 – 2017

*Working
together for
children's
welfare.*

CONTENTS

Contents	3
Introduction	4
Thoughts from - The Founder	6
The Chairman of Trustees	8
The Trustees	10
Past President	15
Conference Reports 1986-2011	16
Foundation Work since 2012	22
Child Maltreatment	22
Youth Justice	22
Other areas of Focus	25
Special Educational Needs	25
Conclusion from the Secretary to the Foundation	26

INTRODUCTION



The Michael Sieff Foundation is a registered charity which has been at work since 1987. The Foundation is dedicated to improving policy and practice for the well-being of children and young people.

The Foundation achieved these objectives by organising conferences bringing together people with wide ranging responsibilities for vulnerable children and young people, resulting in action being taken in practical ways. Since research shows the best outcomes for children depend on multi-disciplinary work, the Foundation encourages multi-agency collaboration. The website provides a resource for the holding of material presented at its conferences and seminars, with links to other like-minded organisations.

Since 1987 the Foundation has made a significant contribution to policy and practice in the sphere of child protection, the social re-integration of young offenders, combating cross border paedophile activity, improving the conditions for children giving evidence in court, work with early years' children and the welfare of children in primary schools. Currently the Foundation is seeking to ensure implementation of the recommendations of the Parliamentarians' Inquiry into the Youth Justice system.

The Foundation will consider promoting and sponsoring with other funding bodies, collaboration on matters of policy development and implementation of issues relating to children and young people. It is not a grant making body.

On conclusion of a cycle of conferences from 2008 to 2011 the Foundation adopted a different approach for our continuing work. We decided to work in partnership with other like-minded organisations in order to build on our reputation for promoting conferences and our resources

for networking. The Foundation offers internal expertise on specific subject matter, database pooling, assistance in Parliamentary promotion where appropriate and subsidy or underwriting.

We focus on areas where we have historical knowledge and emotional capital and where there is a reasonable likelihood of a successful outcome. Where there have been concrete findings and recommendations, they have been promoted by Parliamentary Briefings, Lobbying and the use of social media via our website, MailChimp list and Facebook site.

Across the years the Foundation's work has been made possible by the generosity of donors a number of whom have wished to remain anonymous. However, it is right that we should acknowledge a grant in respect of our work on Youth Justice from the Nuffield Foundation, a grant for our general work with vulnerable children from the Paul Hamlyn Trust, and testamentary gifts from the estates of Rupert Hughes CBE and David Jefferies CBE. Both Rupert and David gave invaluable service to the Foundation as trustees over many years.

**SINCE 1987 THE FOUNDATION HAS
MADE A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION
TO POLICY AND PRACTICE IN THE
SPHERE OF CHILD PROTECTION.**



**Lady Elizabeth
Haslam, Founder**

Elizabeth established the Foundation in 1987 in memory of the life and work of her husband Michael Sieff. Elizabeth has a background of welfare work in industry and the community.

I am heartened to know that our work over 30 years has resulted in real improvements in child protection policy and practice because of the successful adoption by delegates and others of initiatives debated at our in-depth conferences. Soundings we have taken show there remains a real need for this joint co-operative work, so our activities will continue in tried, tested and also novel ways.

It all began after a series of tragic but avoidable deaths of vulnerable children because different departments were not communicating or cooperating properly with each other. The death in 1984 of Jasmine Beckford – a little girl of three years, killed by her stepfather, while in the care of Brent – stays in my mind, because this tragedy inspired me to launch The Michael Sieff Foundation.

The subsequent Inquiry Report re-emphasised the need for better co-operation between professionals supporting children. That reinforced my determination to set up the Foundation as a registered charity in 1987 – in memory of my late husband Michael Sieff, who had a passionate belief in young people and a profound interest in their education, welfare and future needs.

The case was followed by the Children Act 1989, landmark legislation, the guidance document for which was finalised after a searching review by those attending our conference that year. Though impressive progress has been made since, further deaths of children are tragic reminders of the need for continuing improvement and constant vigilance.

Over the years I have been warmed and humbled at the goodwill that the Foundation has generated and experienced; so many people, friends and trustees, have generously given their time and energy to a small charity that has promoted change, resulting in better outcomes

in the field of child protection, and more recently youth justice. The Foundation does not seek to replicate the admirable work of other agencies, governmental, voluntary and charitable, but we do seek to provide a forum for reviewing practical aspirations and actions.

Clearly there is a great deal more work to be done. As we are small, we are flexible, we have been, and will be able in the future to change direction, aiming our experience, energy and concentration into areas of child protection important of the moment.

After 30 years The Michael Sieff Foundation re-affirms its commitment: **WE WILL ALWAYS STRIVE TO IMPROVE THE LIVES OF CHILDREN IN NEED.**

And we welcome the involvement of others to achieve this worthiest of all causes.

Further information on Lady Haslam's work is available from her website at www.ladyhaslam.com

**OVER THE YEARS I HAVE BEEN
WARMED AND HUMBLED AT THE
GOODWILL THAT THE FOUNDATION
HAS GENERATED AND EXPERIENCED**



**John Tenconi,
Chairman**

John has been Chair of the Trustees of the Michael Sieff Foundation since 1 January 2007. He is a Barrister, Director of Monarch Assurance plc, and Non-Executive Director of a number of companies in the technology and financial services sector.

A country's greatest asset is the next generation, which is why I agreed to accept the position of Chair of the Foundation.

It is important economically and socially that children have every advantage and opportunity possible in order to contribute meaningfully to the country's ongoing prosperity. In addition, it is our natural duty as parents and members of society to do our best to help children maximise their potential and bestow on them the advantages, which many of us have enjoyed during our young years so that they may fully enjoy happy and rich childhoods and grow into well balanced adults, who can take their place in society with maximum effect.

Regrettably many children still do not enjoy these benefits and advantages when they suffer mental or physical disadvantage or are subjected to abuse, deprivation and cruelty. They risk falling into a cycle of disadvantage and indeed potential criminalisation and missing their chances of happiness and developing fully their potential. Instead of enjoying their childhoods and contributing to society in later life they become a very substantial cost to society and risk having wretched and unfulfilled lives.

The UN charter sets standards for the way in which, we as a civilised society should behave towards, protect and develop children, yet even in this country many of our practices and attitudes fall short of those benchmarks. We must do better.

From the start in 1986 our residential and day conferences were very successful (see reports at www.michaelsieff-foundation.org.uk). In 2012 it became clear that the model had become less relevant in delivering our aims as the ravages of the 2008 financial crisis took effect and

government and local authority budgets were cut ever more deeply.

As a result, the Trustees refocused the Foundation onto specific projects of topical concern and where analysis showed that we could make a difference and bring about change by working with our partners to highlight issues, develop solutions and then follow up with decision makers to bring about change.

The Michael Sieff Foundation strives to remind those in authority about their obligations to vulnerable children. It uses its influence to work with like-minded organisations to bring about positive change in society's treatment of vulnerable children and hopefully help them to achieve their potential. It has been and continues to be a privilege for me as Chair of Trustees to help to shape its initiatives to these ends and to see the successes we have managed to achieve.

**IT USES ITS INFLUENCE TO WORK WITH
LIKE-MINDED ORGANISATIONS TO BRING
ABOUT POSITIVE CHANGE IN SOCIETY'S
TREATMENT OF VULNERABLE CHILDREN**

TRUSTEES



Maggie Atkinson

Maggie is a qualified teacher and former Director of Children's Services. She was president of the Association of Children's Services (ADCS) in 2008-09 and the Children's Commissioner for England from 2010 to 2015. She is now a management consultant and serves several organisations as a Non-Executive Director or Trustee.

I became a Sieff Foundation Trustee because I had experienced the work of the Foundation and the prompting its work gives policymakers, and many professions and disciplines, to address issues of social justice and equalities for children and young people.

Sieff chooses to focus its work on the marginalised, vulnerable and voiceless, including those whose lives have brought them into conflict with the law. Some of what the Foundation champions is uncomfortable for and challenges those making decisions, setting policy direction, or undertaking work in the field. The Foundation is known for being an evidence-driven, fearless organisation that works to bring vital issues to the notice of those who can and should do something about them for the good of the young. Being a trustee makes you think deeply and three-dimensionally about, and seek to act on, issues of social justice and injustice faced by children and young people who cannot act to change things.

The Foundation's challenges to those who can affect policy and should do so, working with researchers and opinion shapers, is invaluable. Coming from a wide range of professional backgrounds, the Trustees create ways of looking at crucial issues that would not be possible were we all experts in the same disciplines. As a small organisation, in a busy and sometimes noisy policy and practice landscape, the Foundation remains both influential, and listened to. It is a pleasure as well as a challenge to serve.



Ian, Lord Blair

Ian was the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis ('Scotland Yard') from 2005-2008. He now sits as a crossbench peer in the House of Lords. He is chair or trustee of a number of charities and writes and lectures extensively. He holds a number of academic positions both here and abroad.

I was pleased to be invited to become a Trustee of the Michael Sieff Foundation in 2015 because I think it is one of the very few organisations which genuinely occupy a middle ground across the criminal justice system, especially with young people, with an intent and capability to bridge the divides between the separate budgets and policies of the many statutory agencies in this field. What Sieff seeks to do in all its work is to provide safe spaces for agencies and relevant charities to work, not as isolated platoons lightly touching many lives, but as unified battalions doing common, long term good for the most disadvantaged.



John Drew, CBE

John was Chief Executive of the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales from 2009 to 2013 and prior to that had spent a decade as a Director of Social Services and Housing in the east London Borough of Redbridge. He worked as a children's social worker from 1974, qualifying in 1978. Since retiring in 2013, he has had a number of non-executive and part-time roles. He is a Visiting Professor at the University of Bedfordshire and chairs the Medway Safeguarding Children's Board. He was Secretary to the Laming Inquiry into children in care and the criminal justice system.

I was delighted to accept an invitation to join the Foundation as a Trustee in 2017 because of the high regard in which I held the previous work of the Foundation. Of the current agenda, pressing for reforms in the way in which the youth justice court systems often collide with children seems particularly important.



Shauneen Lambe

Shauneen is the executive director of Just for Kids Law, a charity that provides holistic representation to vulnerable children and young people and drives systemic change through strategic litigation and policy reform. She was called to the bar in England and Wales in 1997 and qualified as an attorney in Louisiana, USA in 2000 where she represented people facing the death penalty. In 2006 she set up Just for Kids Law with Aika Stephenson.

Through Just for Kids Law we have established; the Youth Justice Legal Centre, a centre providing knowledge and expertise on youth justice law, Let Us Learn - a youth led campaign for student finance for migrant young people, Advocacy Year – a graduate scheme offering a year in the community to those considering a career in law advocating on behalf of under-supported young people.

I joined the board of Sieff because I was so impressed with their ability to command a dialogue to effect change for vulnerable children and young people. It is an organisation that truly punches above its weight and what most impressed me was not just the thought leadership but the investment in converting the research into reality. I am also a board member of the Baring Foundation, Ashoka UK and the Centre for Justice Innovation.



Francis, The Earl of Listowel

Francis is a Crossbench Peer, and Treasurer of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Children and Vice Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group for looked after children and young people, a Patron of Become and the Institute for Recovery from Childhood Trauma. He is a Trustee of the Brent Centre for Young People (a mental health service for adolescents).

I am honoured to have been a Trustee of the Michael Sieff Foundation since 2005. It has provided me with the opportunity to learn from the expertise of the Trustees who have been involved in the last twelve years and from the conferences and meetings the Foundation has organised. These experiences

have informed my work in Parliament on the age of criminal responsibility, early years education and the recent Children and Social Work Act.

Now, more than ever, in this divided time, we all need to work together to promote the welfare of children. By building relationships between professionals and politicians, by working with civil society, Sieff enables the widest cooperation in the interests of children.



Chris Stanley

Chris is a retired senior magistrate and was formerly Chair, Youth Court panel and Kent Magistrates' Association. He is a Trustee of the National Association for Youth Justice and Transform Justice and Associate of the Standing Committee for Youth Justice. He was Head of Policy and Research at Nacro.

Before becoming a Trustee, I had attended Sieff conferences and events over many years. My particular interest is in children and young people who offend. The Foundation has always attracted many influential and respected experts to its conferences and played an important part in promoting new policies and practices in child care. Young people who offend should be treated as children first. They often have overwhelming welfare needs and only by addressing these needs can we hope to reduce their offending. We need a holistic approach to all children, whether involved in crime or in need of care; they should be dealt with in a system that brings them together in the same venue: a unified family court.

When I became a Trustee I asked if I could lead a new initiative to remove the separate approaches to children. This led to the formation of the 'Care and Crime Together?' group and the Parliamentarians' Inquiry, chaired by Lord Carlile, into the Youth Court. Since the publication of the Inquiry's influential report, the Michael Sieff Foundation has been regularly encouraged by agencies in the field to continue to coordinate new approaches and changes to the law to achieve the recommendations in the Report.



Dr Eileen Vizard CBE

Eileen is a Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist, Honorary Consultant in the Child Care and Consultation Team in Great Ormond Street Hospital, an Honorary Senior Lecturer in the UCL Institute of Child Health and Visiting Professor at New York University in London. She assesses children and families involved in the Family Courts and children and young people involved in the criminal courts, both as child witnesses and as child defendants. She has written widely in the field, lectures and teaches nationally and internationally and consults to government and to policy makers in relation to child welfare.

The ramifications of child maltreatment can be seen in the lasting impact upon the child's own development, upon family functioning and in the impact on society as a whole and on subgroups which are affected by more organised forms of child maltreatment. The long term financial costs of the abuse of individual children and of organised abuse result in a great burden on the public purse. Most of these costs could be avoided if child maltreatment was identified earlier.

Through its pioneering work in relation to child welfare over the last 30 years the Michael Sieff Foundation has provided various forums for the presentation of new thinking, new research, new service provisions and the discussion of policy dilemmas arising for government and for those working with abused children and their families.

Former Trustees include Dr Arnon Bentovim, Mrs Marianne Bentovim, Michael Bowes QC, Barbara Esam, Baroness Valerie Howarth, Peter Harris (formerly the Official Solicitor), Rupert Hughes CBE, David Jefferies CBE, Trevor Philpot and Stephen Pizzey.



Past President

The Right Honourable The Lord Laming

It is both an honour and a pleasure to offer my warmest congratulations to the Michael Sieff Foundation on the impact their work has had during the past 30 years. Here we have a wonderful illustration of how a small organisation can achieve great results. By their clear vision, sound values, imagination and determination the Foundation has promoted high quality standards of work, across organisational boundaries, both to protect vulnerable children and young people from abuse or neglect and also to promote their wellbeing.

Yet the task is far from complete. All too often there are very disturbing reports of opportunities missed that would have prevented hardship, injury or worse to defenceless young people. The avoidable criminalisation of young people, especially those in the care of the state, remains a matter of very great concern. Very often these young people have insufficient support after a period in custody.

The need for the work of the Foundation remains and looking to the future it will be possible to build on the experience they have gained over 30 years. The work of the Foundation deserves our support as we wish it continued success.

**ALL TOO OFTEN THERE ARE VERY DISTURBING
REPORTS OF OPPORTUNITIES MISSED THAT
WOULD HAVE PREVENTED HARDSHIP**

CONFERENCE SUMMARIES

Full reports on many of the conferences are available. Summaries and papers presented at later conferences can be found on the Foundation website at <http://www.michaelsieff-foundation.org.uk/conference-archive>

SEPTEMBER 1986

WORKING TOGETHER FOR CHILDREN'S WELFARE

The Foundation's pre-launch conference explored the management of child abuse, noting that agencies were still considering the lessons to be learnt from the Jasmine Beckford Report. Comments were made on a draft DHSS circular.

OCTOBER 1987

WORKING TOGETHER FOR CHILDREN'S WELFARE

The conference reviewed recent cases of physical and sexual abuse of children, highlighting the need for training all professionals involved in this area of work.

SEPTEMBER 1988

WORKING TOGETHER FOR CHILDREN'S WELFARE: EFFECTIVE INTERVENTION

Child sexual abuse cases demonstrate the need for effective intervention by all those who have responsibility for protecting, educating and caring for children.

SEPTEMBER 1989

RESTORING CONFIDENCE IN A CONTEXT OF CHANGE AND CONFUSION

Strengthening understanding of the need for restoring confidence and producing constructive guidelines for dealing with child abuse.

SEPTEMBER 1990

PARTNERSHIP AND THE CHILDREN ACT 1989

Delegates examined different perspectives and considered the implications of the Act on partnership between the professions concerned with the welfare of children.

SEPTEMBER 1991

IMPLEMENTING THE CHILDREN ACT AND MANAGING SIGNIFICANT HARM

An exploration of the newly introduced concept of Significant Harm.

**SEPTEMBER
1992**

CHILD PROTECTION IN RESIDENTIAL CARE
Considerable public concern was expressed about the welfare and protection of children in residential care.

**FEBRUARY
1993**

CHILD PROTECTION IN RESIDENTIAL CARE
Follow-up workshop to the September conference bringing together managers of residential children's homes and others concerned with the protection of children.

**SEPTEMBER
1993**

CHILD PROTECTION AND THE CRIMINAL LAW
Conflicting requirements of the civil law relating to child protection and the criminal law concerned with prosecution was a central theme.

**MARCH
1994**

CHILD PROTECTION AND THE ROLE OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM
Teachers are in the best position outside the family to observe children and to listen to them. How do we ensure good communication between them and other professionals?

**SEPTEMBER
1994**

FAMILY SUPPORT IN PROTECTING THE CHILD
Relationships, similarities and differences between family support, child protection and preventative work from the points of view of the Children Act and those charged with implementing it.

**APRIL
1995**

CHILDREN IN THE CROSSFIRE
No one disputed the principle that the interests of children should be the primary consideration, but opinion was divided about where the balance should lie between the interests of particular children involved in a criminal trial and children in general who need protection.

**SEPTEMBER
1995**

CHILD PROTECTION RESEARCH INTO PRACTICE: WHO TAKES THE RISKS?
More progress will be made if we spread good practice rather than pillory the bad. Some good practice is not even shared between teams in the same authority.

**FEBRUARY
1996**

CHILD SEX TOURISM: THE NEED FOR AN URGENT UK RESPONSE

The conference was timed to coincide with the passage through Parliament of a Sexual Offences Bill which enabled trial in the UK of sexual offences committed against children overseas.

**SEPTEMBER
1996**

CHILD PROTECTION: 10 YEARS ON

There was much analysis of the social and economic environment in which children's services are operating and how that is likely to develop. This was unremittingly gloomy. In sharp contrast were presentations of work in Kent and Earls Court – shining examples of best practice, delivering services with optimism and enthusiasm.

**SEPTEMBER
1997**

KEEPING CHILDREN IN MIND: BALANCING CHILDREN'S NEEDS WITH PARENTS' MENTAL HEALTH

An in-depth assessment of children at risk due to parents with mental health problems and learning difficulties.

**JANUARY
1998**

MORAL OPPORTUNITIES – 16 TO 18 YEAR OLDS LEAVING CARE

Summed up in a closing address by Gordon D'Silva: 'How on earth can we expect young children, our own sons and daughters, to leave home and be on their own at 16? Can we honestly expect them to survive, no! It is morally reprehensible, yet as a society we permit this and we continue to promote this. This is a moral issue and the title of today's conference is the correct one.'

Some progress 20 years on?

**SEPTEMBER
1998**

VIOLENCE BETWEEN PARENTS – CHILDREN AS VICTIMS

Violence within the family must not be overlooked. Action being taken by the Government, police, local authorities and other agencies to combat domestic violence.

**FEBRUARY
1999**

**CROSS-BORDER PAEDOPHILE ACTIVITY
AND THE TRAFFICKING OF CHILDREN FOR
SEXUAL PURPOSES**

The conference reviewed the progress of discussions initiated at the conference in February 1996.

**SEPTEMBER
1999**

QUALITY PROTECTS

An early review of a government initiative to improve children's services and transform the life chances of vulnerable children and families.

**JUNE
2000**

**A SECOND CHANCE – THE EMPLOYMENT
AND TRAINING OF CHILDREN WITH
CRIMINAL RECORDS**

Ways of preventing children and young people from ending up in prison, whether as first time or as repeat offenders.

**SEPTEMBER
2001**

THE NEEDS OF OFFENDING CHILDREN

Action to reduce recidivism and advance the care of children charged with crimes, leading to improved outcomes for child, family and community.

**APRIL
2002**

**CHILD DEFENDANTS: IS THE LAW FAILING
THEM?**

Legal conference and recommendations for reforming the youth justice system.

**SEPTEMBER
2002**

**YOUNG PEOPLE IN PRISON: PREVENTION,
POLICY AND PRACTICE**

The case for a coordinated strategy to keep young people out of prison and prevent re-offending.

**SEPTEMBER
2003**

**ENSURING EFFECTIVE INTERVENTION IN A
CHANGING WORLD**

Wide-ranging issues relevant to the Green Paper Every Child Matters.

**SEPTEMBER
2004**

**CHILDREN'S SERVICES: HOW TO ACHIEVE
GOOD OUTCOMES**

New legislation starts a long-term programme of change for children requiring unprecedented partnership and commitment by all concerned.

**SEPTEMBER
2005**

EVERY YOUNG PERSON MATTERS

The focus is on how services for young people can contribute to five outcomes: being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution to society, and economic well-being.

**JULY
2007**

THE FUTURE OF CARE PROCEEDINGS

The Government has been considering care proceedings in the light of what appears to be its view that they are unnecessarily expensive. There are crucial issues for discussion and action.

**NOVEMBER
2007**

**MICHAEL SIEFF FOUNDATION,
20TH ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE**

Preventing the abuse of children and young people and protecting their emotional and mental health. Following this general conference it was decided to embark on an age related series of conferences focusing on early intervention.

**SEPTEMBER
2008**

**FROM CONCEPTION TO RECEPTION:
EARLY YEARS INTERVENTION**

Promotion of positive interaction between child and parents and between parents and child. This perspective should be valued within the community and the neighbourhood, in universal services and targeted services. There needs to be a shared understanding of child development.

**SEPTEMBER
2009**

**THE RECEPTION YEARS: ENSURING
CHILDREN'S WELL-BEING FROM 3 TO 5
INCLUDING PREPARING FOR SCHOOL**

Consideration of the issues involved in bringing up children in modern society from the important stage of a child's life before the start of school and the transition into school to the end of the reception year.

**FEBRUARY
2010**

**EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE:
MAKING INVESTMENT COUNT**

Workforce training and development was seen to be a critical priority together with improvement in pay and conditions : necessary recognition of a status. This seminar was organised jointly with the National Children's Bureau as a Parliamentary Briefing and follow up to the September 2009 conference.

**SEPTEMBER
2010**

**PROMOTING THE WELL-BEING OF THE
PRIMARY SCHOOL AGE CHILD**

Yet again the importance of and understanding of child development was emphasised. The effect on the brain of early life experiences was brought to light. The need for training of teachers on the well-being of children was recognised. The September conference was followed by a Parliamentary Briefing in May 2011.

We had organised a conference for 20 and 21 September 2011 on child mental health. It had to be cancelled for lack of attendance. There appeared to be two reasons: a lack of funding, especially from local authorities and health authorities, plus reluctance on the part of employers to release staff (particularly more senior staff) for residential conferences. This was somewhat unfortunate, since a debate then on child mental health policy would have been most timely.

REVIEW OF FOUNDATION WORK SINCE 2012

CHILD MALTREATMENT

In 2012 the Foundation worked with Child and Family Training and the Lucy Faithfull Foundation to organise a national conference entitled ‘Eradicating Child Maltreatment’. The national and international presentations were subsequently gathered into a text edited by Arnon Bentovim and Jenny Gray, and published in 2015 by Jessica Kingsley www.jkp.com/uk/eradicating-child-maltreatment

As a result a series of practitioner guides focusing on parenting, direct work with children and young people and the family were developed. Modules from all the practitioner guides can be used in different combinations to meet the identified needs of the children, parents and care-givers and the family.

See www.childandfamilytraining.org.uk

At a subsequent Parliamentary Briefing in February 2013 the question of how to eradicate child maltreatment was addressed. We concluded that we need good quality health, care and social systems to eradicate poverty, war and hunger; evidence based approaches to help develop universal and targeted ways of working to prevent the development of abusive parenting and its negative impact on children; and to apply this prevention approach to co-ordinate work between professionals to combat particular forms of abuse ; extensive training in the recognition and response to child maltreatment, and assessment, analysis and decision making at the earlier and later stages of intervention using a multi-level approach.

YOUTH JUSTICE

In the late 1990s and early 2000s the Foundation had further developed its interest in the welfare needs of children caught up in the Criminal Justice System and organised a number of conferences. Subsequently the Young Offenders Strategy Group was set up by Trustees. Outputs from this group (which later became the Young Defendants’ Group), included organising a

Conference on Young Defendants in April 2009 to mark 100 years since the Children Act 1908.

It has always been a principle adopted by the Foundation that the age of criminal responsibility in England and Wales, currently ten years, is too low. Following the conference in 2009, a letter co-signed by 32 national organisations was published in the Times in 2010 urging the age of criminal responsibility be raised substantially from 10 years old in line with other countries. (See www.michaelsieff-foundation.org.uk) Regrettably political and media opposition persists. We have therefore focused on other more achievable objectives.

In 2012 the Foundation established a new Action Plan for the Young Defendants' Working Group, looking to achieve better recognition of the statutory requirements to consider the welfare of young defendants and reduce offending; a reduction in the number of young people in custody; and better support, information and services available to young defendants, their families and carers.

A seminar in January 2013 led to the setting up of a Parliamentarians' Inquiry in November 2013 chaired by Lord Carlile, which the Foundation co-sponsored with the National Children's Bureau. The report into the operation and effectiveness of the youth justice system was published in June 2014 and paved the way for changes consistent with the Action Plan. The Foundation has continuously promoted implementation of the recommendations of the Carlile report. Considerable progress has been made.

The Foundation has persisted in seeking extension of the powers of the Youth Court. More serious crimes are now often tried at in that venue, which is patently more appropriate than the Crown Court. Further consideration is still required.

Criminal records imposed during childhood all too easily blight the future life of a child. The Foundation has supported the Standing Committee on Youth Justice on their initiative to bring about radical change in this area.

The inadequacy of legal representation of young people has been well evidenced and we have supported the Bar Standards Board and the Inns of Court College of Advocacy on their work to achieve improved advocacy competence.

Another of the recommendations which the Foundation has sought to promote is that of problem solving courts. In October 2014 we contributed to a conference organised by the High Sheriff in Northampton. This proved to be an important development because the then Chair of the local Youth Court Bench became interested in introducing a problem- solving approach in his local bench. He showed it could work.

Why do young people commit offences and what can the courts do to help, rather than merely convict and sentence? After publication of the Report a meeting was convened with attendance from representatives from the Magistrates' Association, National Children's Bureau, the Family Drug and Alcohol Court, the Children's Commissioner, Judicial College and the Youth Justice Board. This group was later joined by the Ministry of Justice and the Centre for Justice Innovation. The Centre is now being funded by the Nuffield Foundation to research feasibility projects. To achieve real success a full national project will require senior judicial approval. The wheels grind slowly.

Following the publication of the Carlile Inquiry Report the Ministry of Justice established a Review conducted by Charlie Taylor which reported in 2016. Its Terms of Reference included consideration of the nature and characteristics of offending by young people aged 10-17 and the arrangements in place to prevent it; and how effectively the youth justice system and its partners operate in responding to offending by children and young people, preventing further offending, protecting the public and repairing harm to victims and communities, and rehabilitating young offenders. Subsequently he was appointed as Chief Executive of the Youth Justice Board, so we remain positive that his proposals, many of which

followed the principles proposed by the Carlile Inquiry Report, will ultimately be implemented. Political developments unrelated to youth justice have proved unhelpful but our work continues undaunted on all these fronts.

OTHER AREAS OF FOCUS

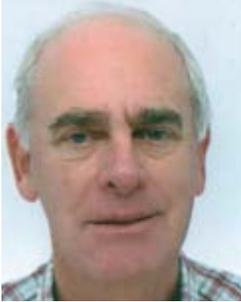
Other areas have been explored: mentoring, pedagogy, safeguarding, self-inflicted deaths in custody, involvement of children in care in the justice system, privatisation of child care, and court closures in the context of the diminishing population of young defendants in the youth court.

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The evidence from the Parliamentarians' Inquiry demonstrated that young people with a range of hidden disabilities are over-represented in having poor educational and life outcomes, especially in relation to employment, mental health difficulties and offending. The Trustees have agreed to sponsor a multi-disciplinary meeting to investigate the impact of the reforms in the Children and Families Act 2014, with particular reference to the introduction of Education, Health and Care Plans and the detailed evidencing of educational need to provide effective educational and parenting support for children and young people with hidden disabilities.

**THE INADEQUACY OF LEGAL
REPRESENTATION OF YOUNG
PEOPLE HAS BEEN WELL EVIDENCED**

CONCLUSION FROM THE SECRETARY TO THE FOUNDATION RICHARD WHITE



Richard has been the Secretary to the Foundation since 1 January 2007. He was formerly Chair of the Trustees. He practised as a solicitor specialising in child law from 1972 to 2012 and wrote widely on the subject. He is now a Tribunal Judge of the First-tier Tribunal (the Social Entitlement Chamber) (and formerly of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal) and Honorary Professor of Child Law at Cardiff University.

The Foundation is essentially a forum for professionals and policy makers to share experience about common concerns, with the objective of inspiring, prioritising, promoting and taking actions to resolve them. Our direct lobbying activities help to get reforms, though we know – particularly from our focus on much needed improvement in youth justice – what a prolonged challenge it can be.

As can be seen from the review of our activities over the last five years the need for new initiatives, so evident at my first Sieff conference in October 1987 – the year the Foundation was launched – remains compelling today. We have the strategy, the determination and the goodwill of other organisations to succeed. Significantly we are fortunate to have as our driving force dedicated trustees who are greatly respected for their professionalism and prowess.

What most impresses me after 30 years' involvement with the Michael Sieff Foundation is the recognition that when charities and organisations work together for the well-being of children the ability to achieve progress is much enhanced. Continuing that objective remains our core commitment.

The Foundation is always grateful to receive donations or grants towards its work. Should anyone be interested in making such a charitable donation then please contact Richard White or John Tenconi in the first instance at richard@michaelsieff-foundation.org.uk.

The Foundation benefits from gift aid and will always respect confidentiality if required. Alternatively an easy way to make continuing small donations at no cost is via the Give as you Live website at <https://www.giveasyoulive.com/join/michaelsieff>

**The Michael Sieff Foundation's
anniversary brochure
THIRTY YEARS PLUS**

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