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## **Introduction**

This essay aims to examine social care services for children young people and families throughout the stage of their childhood. Discussions on how children experienced work life, including the lifespan of childhood and the responsibilities of parents/guardians back in time will give us an understanding of how far we have come. Ranges of achieved policy and legislation which have impacted the changes in the social construction of childhood and families from historical to now will be shown. Governmental rights will be shown with recommendations for equality and fairness for all backgrounds to access and use for the correct purpose.

## **Definition of Childhood**

"Childhood is when children should be in school and play for them to grow strong and confident, with a loving and encouragement of their family and an extended community of caring adults. It is a precious time in which children should live free from fear, safe from violence, and protected from abuse and exploitation. Childhood means much more than just the period between birth and the attainment of adulthood, it refers to the state and condition of a child's life, to the quality of those years. In 1989, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child." As established by UNICEF (2020).

According to (Theories of Childhood | Encyclopedia.com, 2020) The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child defines a child as everyone under the age of 18 unless "under the law applicable to the child."

In England, according to (Children and the law NSPCC Learning, 2020) A child is anyone who has not reached their 18th birthday, and Child protection guidance points out that even if a child has reached 16 years of age and living independently they are still legally children and should be given the same protection and entitlements as any other child.

Theories of childhood are either a natural biological stage of development or a modern idea or invention, with what a child is, the nature of childhood, the purpose or function of childhood, and how the notion of the child or childhood is used in society. The concept of childhood, like any invention, was forged from a potent relationship between ideas and technologies within a frame of social, political, and economic needs. However, the UN Conventional the Rights of the Child (1989) created a subsequent focus on listening to the views of the child and children's rights of expression in general according to (Theories of Childhood | Encyclopedia.com, 2020).

Theorists gave us great knowledge of what childhood essentially means and that they are not the same as adults this started from the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century. Here is some basic information on some well-known theorists.

According to (Theories of 'staged' child development, 2020)

1856-1939 Sigmund Freud: Examined stages of early childhood development to explain behaviours and psychological problems.

1896-1990 Jean Piaget: Came up of theory of cognitive development based on the belief that children seek to understand and adapt to their environment and to do so they undertake certain actions as they move through progressive stages of development.

1902-1994 Erik Erikson: Understood individuals moving through a series of stages and 'crisis' points as they developed their identity; they move through as they get older and negotiation of each stage successfully contributes to healthy development.

These theories are still used today as they examine patterns of environmental and biological influence and moral development from childhood to adulthood.

## **Childhood from historical to present time and the Impacts**

In the 17th century, children were mostly seen as imperfect adults as mentioned in (In the Middle Ages there was no such thing as childhood, 2020). Learning the history of childhood, we can recognize how much change and developments were needed for us to exist today, had those policies, legislations, and laws not been put in place childhood would not have been recognized nor changed. Even in the modern world today poor countries have no choice and need help from their children to work and financially support the household. In the UK everyone under the age of 18 has the same rights under the child protection act although they may be independent and working (Children and the law NSPCC Learning, 2020).

In the historic context, we learned that there was no such thing as childhood, it only started in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, if we look further back from this date situations only worsen. To us what may be a reflex to name a baby straight after birth was not applied in that time, acts of unwanted babies mainly females were left to die whereas the wealthy employed wet nurses. During Medieval times children worked alongside adults dressing the same, doing the same tasks and hours.

Around the 19<sup>th</sup> century, children under the age of 7 would be allowed to stay at home while everyone else had to contribute to the household. Factories would hire children as they were small and cheap, children would have to crawl under the machines to keep them clean and functioning. Orphans wouldn't even get paid they would get meals and a place to sleep. Boys would work in the coal mines and must follow men and learn skills such as trading, building, farming, etc, they rarely got married before 30. Children who worked in the mines would die at the average age of 25. Girls on the other hand if they were not working outside, they were trained in the homes to be good housewife by their mother and grandmother. Skills such as cooking, cleaning, knitting were very important and needed to survive. As usual, the wealthier families had it a lot better e.g. their boys were encouraged to be playful learn to be a painter, an athlete, or musicians, etc.

The Government was aware of these problems and passed an act that made it illegal for children under the age of 9 to work in the cotton mills, however, there were no inspections done therefor another act was passed in 1833 and inspectors were in place. In 1842 the Miners act banned women and children under the age of 10 from working the mines. In 1870 Parliament said there had to be a school in every town and village and in 1880 the law stated that all children from the age of 5 to 10 must attend primary school to receive a basic education. One of the most important men who helped and pushed the changes to take place was Lord Shaftesbury he was the leader of factory and coal mine reform focusing mainly on children, he made awareness of acts through the parliament for limiting work hours and education for working children and became the chairman of the Ragged schools union, this was an organization that set up schools for the poor. I found this information on Child Labour in Victorian England - YouTube (Accessed:30.12.20).

## **Impacts and changes**

In the past the way families treated and raise children had to change, although child labor was the norm historically, we all understand that it was wrong and has evolved to the fact that it is against the law in the UK. I can understand the main reason for child labor was due to poverty and lack of knowledge of what a child is, now that knowledge is heard and understood, the UK provides education to all children according to (Constitutional Right to an Education: England and Wales, 2020) in the United Kingdom the Human Rights Act 1998, which provides as follows:

No person shall be denied the right to education. In the exercise of any functions which it assumes about education and to teaching, the State shall respect the right of parents to ensure such education and teaching in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions.

It is compulsory in England and Wales due to the Education Act 1996 places a legal duty on the guardians of children aged 5 to 16 years (known as compulsory school age), to make sure that children attends and receives full-time education, either in a traditional school or any other means that is suitable for their age, ability, and aptitude, taking into account any special needs they may have. The Act makes it a criminal offense for guardians to take their child out of school without authorization from the school.

E. Griffin (2014) wrote "Industrialization led to a dramatic increase in child labor. Professor Emma Griffin explores the dangerous, exhausting work undertaken by children in factories and mines, and the literary responses of writers including Charles Dickens and Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Child labor was not an invention of the Industrial Revolution as poor families had their children start work as soon as employment was found for them. Before pre-industrial Britain, there simply was not very much work available for children however this changed with industrialization. The new factories and mines were hungry for workers and required the execution of simple tasks that could easily be performed by children. The result was a surge in child labor – presenting a new kind of problem that Victorian society had to tackle."

in the UK children are very much protected from child labor according to Child employment, (2020) "The general rule is a young person under school leaving age (16) can get a part-time job from the age of 14, however, they can only be employed in what is considered 'light work'. Meaning they cannot do any job that may affect their health and safety or interferes with their education. Young people can start full-time employment as soon as they leave school, which is on the last Friday in June of the year that they turn 16 years old. Note that there is now a requirement for young people to continue to participate in education and training up until the age of 18. If a young person starts a full-time job at 16, they will still need to complete at least 280 guided learning hours a year in education or training."

Here is a list of jobs 14-year old's can do:

- deliver newspapers and leaflets
- work in a shop, including stacking shelves
- work in an office
- do hairdressing
- work in hotels
- work in a café or restaurant, but not in the kitchen

## **Equality in Social and Government services for children and Families**

According to (What is the Children's Act 2004? | iHASCO, 2020) "The Children's Act 2004 is a development from the 1989 Act it reinforced all people and organizations working with children have a responsibility to help safeguard children and promote their welfare. Guidelines of this Act allow anyone working in an educational or non-educational setting who are working with children to understand and follow how a child should be looked after in the eyes of the law. The purpose of this Act is to make the UK a safer place for children, each local authority will appoint a director of children's services in their area, this also allows the government to create electronic records for every child in England, Scotland and Wales which in turn makes it easier to trace children across local authorities and government services. Principles of the Act give children the right to be equal, healthy, and be happy while enjoying childhood, with the Act in place children remain safe in their environments, achieve economic stability for the future it helps make a positive contribution to their lives.

The main focuses of the Act are on the wellbeing of children, another part of the Act that people will know about is the maltreatment of a child. Their findings of these unacceptable treatments need to be reported to the relevant department. It aims to provide co-operation and relationships between teachers, parents, and guardians who might not always welcome the intervention or outside sources. The interests of children are paramount in their welfare and safeguarding anyone working with children has this responsibility."

The government has many equal support systems to help families with financial and other difficulties such as housing and social and health facilities. Financial benefits such as Tax Credits, depending on individual circumstance will receive funding to support the household. Free school meals are available for children whose guardians are not at work.

## **Interventions that support Vulnerable Children, young people and families in present times**

Only recently the UK has acknowledged and understood what learning disability along with other disability importance, now it is recognized and provides different help in areas such as school, work-place, and medical departments. According to (learning disabilities, 2020) "Over the last three decades, quality of life (QoL) has been advocated as an indicator of social care outcomes for adults with intellectual disabilities. In England, the Adult Social Care Survey (ASCS) is conducted annually by local authorities to contribute to the evidence base of the care-related QoL of people receiving publicly funded adult social care."

The Government provides help and support for children who have extra needs according to (Help if you have a disabled child, 2020)

Your local council can provide help if you have a disabled child, including:

- short break services
- holiday playschemes
- care at home
- some aids and adaptations
- financial help, e.g. money towards travel costs for hospital visits

Your council has a duty to provide these services under The Children Act 1989 Some may be free of charge while the council might ask you to contribute towards others.

Although this is available to everyone we live in a multicultural country, on the website all this is in English which will be hard for people whose first language is not English, also a lot of people born in the UK have difficulties reading and understanding English. I would recommend on the same website to provide links on the page to direct them to the language the individual may understand and audibles that can read out what is on the page will inform people who cannot read but understand English. Videos with demonstrations would also be helpful for people with learning difficulties or

## **Conclusion**

A lot more is known now and understood than a few years ago let alone back in history about childhood, a child's development as early from birth lays the foundation for their future life. Child labor is still happening in many countries today all over the world, fortunately for us living in the UK it is against the law for such acts and childhood is extremely recognized and valued here. It is everyone's duty to report any sort of unhealthy, dangerous, or exploitation that involve children anywhere and anytime. Children are vulnerable they require a great need of care, their health is valuable we need to show them how be independent but keeping them safe at the same time.

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