

Component 2

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ADDRESSING PERSISTENT OBSTACLES IN CHILD WELFARE: A JOURNEY TOWARDS BETTER PROTECTION

¹ **ESSAY:**

Discuss the importance and significance of safeguarding policies and procedures in the UK and refer on 2 high profile safeguarding cases in the last 20 years.

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2
In today's world ensuring the safety and well-being of children, youth and vulnerable adults is of importance. In the United Kingdom protection policies play a role in safeguarding these groups. The Care Act 2014 and The Children Act 2004 are examples of laws enacted to provide this protection (UK Government, 2014; 2004). By implementing policies and procedures we can proactively prevent instances of abuse and neglect while also taking swift action when they do occur (Higgins, 2015).

The significance of this discussion is highlighted by real-life cases, like Baby P and Victoria Climbié where the existing system failed to provide protection leading to tragic outcomes (Laming, 2003; 2009). These incidents serve as reminders of the consequences that negligence can bring.

However, it's essential to recognize that protection policy extends beyond preventing abuse and neglect. It is also important to ensure a supportive living environment that promotes the healthy and happy development of children and young individuals while also upholding the dignity and respect of vulnerable adults (Munro, 2011).

Furthermore, protection policies must adapt to the changing technological landscape. In today's era threats to the safety of children and young people extend beyond the physical realm into the virtual world. Hence protection policies must constantly evolve to effectively address these challenges (Livingstone, 2014).

Ultimately protection policy goes beyond legalities or procedures; it encompasses ethical and moral considerations as well. Therefore, this essay will delve into the significance and importance of protection policies and procedures, in the United Kingdom by referencing two cases from the past two decades.

The policies and procedures for protection are established on a set of core principles that have been developed and improved over the years. Through my experience and research on this topic I have come to understand that these principles encompass the acknowledgment of the rights to life, safety, and growth, safeguarding against harm and mistreatment, prioritizing the best interests of children as a primary consideration, and promoting their participation and listening to their perspectives (Children's Commissioner, 2020). These principles serve as the bedrock for protection policies guiding professionals in their actions and decision-making in this field.

The United Kingdom has a history when it comes to shaping policies and procedures for protection. Although the first law regarding child protection was enacted in 1889, it took decades to establish a comprehensive framework that effectively safeguards children and vulnerable adults (Parton, 2014). In the war era, various measures were implemented to strengthen protection efforts. This included establishing social services and enacting laws like the Children Act of 1948 and 1989 which marked significant milestones in how children and families are supported and protected in the United Kingdom (Department, for Education, 1989).

Protection policies and procedures are not fixed in stone. Continuously adapt to address the evolving challenges and societal needs. Over the two decades, I've noticed a notable transformation in protection policies placing more emphasis on

proactive measures, involvement, and collaboration, among different agencies (Davies, 2018).

The case of Victoria Climbié had an impact on the policies and procedures for protecting children in the United Kingdom. Victoria, an eight-year girl from Ivory Coast tragically passed away in London in 2000 due to severe abuse and neglect by her aunt and her partner (Laming, 2003). This case holds importance to me as it marked a turning point in how child protection is approached in the UK. The shocking fate of this girl not only affected me deeply but also shed light on the serious failures within the child protection system.

Victoria, who originally came from Ivory Coast arrived in the UK at the age of eight with hopes for a future. Unfortunately, she experienced levels of abuse by her aunt and her partner ultimately leading to her tragic death in February 2000 (Laming, 2003).

Despite Victoria's interactions with services such as hospitals, police, and social services during her last months alive there were missed opportunities to intervene and save her life. It is distressing to realize that with, over 12 different public service agencies being involved with Victoria before she passed away none were able to rescue her (Laming, 2003).

Victoria was taken to the hospital times due to different physical injuries and obvious signs of neglect. However, despite these signals, none of the healthcare professionals were able to recognize or report the abuse she was enduring (Laming, 2003). The police also had contact with Victoria. Failed to identify the danger she was facing.

This case shed light on the consequences that can arise from failures in communication, coordination, and understanding among various agencies. It emphasized the need for a change in how child protection is approached and underscored that protecting children is a collective responsibility (Gilbert et al., 2009).

⁶ The inquiry led by Lord Laming following the death of Victoria Climbié not only exposed numerous errors that contributed to this tragedy but also sparked a significant reform in child protection practices across the UK (Laming, 2003). It's remarkable how this single case could bring about profound change.

Lord Laming's report led to the implementation of the Children Act 2004 which aimed to enhance collaboration, among agencies and professionals involved in child protection (UK Government, 2004).

This law brought about a shift in child protection policies emphasizing the utmost importance of considering the well-being of children and ensuring that all agencies collaborate to safeguard them from harm (UK Government, 2004).

Another notable ¹¹ change was the introduction of a framework ¹³ for assessing and intervening with children in need and their families, known as the Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families (Department for Education and Skills 2000). This framework offered guidelines for evaluating children and their

families while determining the most effective ways to address their needs (Department for Education and Skills 2000).

These changes lead me to contemplate how despite the loss of Victoria Climbié there have been positive developments in how children are protected in the UK.

Apart, from reforms and policy adjustments, an important lesson I gleaned from Victoria Climbié's unfortunate case is the significance of learning from severe instances of abuse and neglect. This case sadly underscored that our systems and processes related to child protection can sometimes fail, resulting in consequences (Laming, 2003). After this incident, a new rule was introduced to ensure that when a child dies or suffers harm due to abuse or neglect thorough reviews of the case are conducted (Brandon et al., 2008). These reviews play a role as they allow us to deeply analyse what went wrong and gather important lessons that can enhance child protection measures.

The main objective of this process is to gain an understanding of the specific circumstances and decisions that led to such tragic outcomes. By doing we can implement changes and improvements that will help prevent similar tragedies from occurring in the future (Brandon et al., 2008).

However, conducting these reviews for cases comes with its own set of challenges. It is often emotionally difficult for all parties involved. Nevertheless, it is a part of our commitment to learning and progress in safeguarding children. If we truly prioritize child protection taking these steps becomes invaluable.

To summarize reflecting on the case of Victoria Climbié and its profound impact, on child protection policies and practices it is evident that this tragic incident brought about necessary changes. It emphasized the importance of learning from mistakes to effectively prevent future tragedies.

Another notable instance that had an impact on the child protection system involves Baby P, also known as Peter Connelly. In 2007 this 17-month-old boy tragically lost his life in north London due to abuse, which resulted in over 50 injuries (Parton, 2014). Like the Victoria Climbié case this incident shed light on failures within the child protection system. Prompted a comprehensive evaluation of existing procedures.

Upon examination of Peter's interactions with various services, it becomes evident that there were multiple instances where the child protection system faltered. Despite seeking attention for several injuries at different hospitals medical staff failed to identify or adequately investigate the abuse inflicted upon him.

Throughout the eight months of his life, social workers visited Peter a total of 60 times. Despite their involvement and dedication, no one was able to prevent the tragedy that ensued. Reports indicated communication issues among different child protection agencies responsible for Peter's case. Additionally, concerns were raised about the workloads placed on social workers and the resulting pressure they faced factors that

may have contributed to their inability to take effective action, in this particular situation (Parton, 2014).

After conducting a review of Ofsted Inspection, the Commission for Health and Medical Assistance and the Police Inspection all concluded that there was a failure on the part of the authorities to safeguard this vulnerable child. It was determined that the services provided were not diligent enough in managing his case.

⁹ The child protection service within the London Borough of Haringey Council was responsible for handling this case. It is worth noting that this council had previously been involved in the Victoria Climbié case, which raised concerns about their management practices.

Following the disclosure of Peter's tragic death and its disturbing details, both public and political pressure reached an unbearable level. This ultimately led to high-ranking officials resigning from their positions. Ed Balls, who served as the Secretary of State for Children, Schools, and Families at that time acted by dismissing key leaders within Haringey Council. The Council Leader and Director of Children's Services were among those held. This decision highlighted how deeply affected people were by this case.

To prevent tragedies from occurring in the future the government initiated a comprehensive nationwide review of child protection services. This review was led by Lord Laming, who had previously conducted an inquiry into the Victoria Climbié case well. The primary objective of this review was to identify weaknesses and shortcomings, within the system and propose measures to enhance child protection protocols.

Local councils were advised to assess their policies and procedures for safeguarding children. This involved evaluating the communication between agencies involved in child protection and examining the decision-making process for child welfare (Gilbert, Parton & Skivenes 2011).

Moreover, there was a focus on training and helping social workers acknowledging the pressures they may face in their responsibility to safeguard children. Efforts were made to reduce workloads enhance supervision and support, for workers and prioritize the enhancement of their working method's quality and effectiveness (Laming, 2009).

The Munro Review of Child Protection, which was implemented in response to the scandal brought about a transformation in how vulnerable children are safeguarded in the UK. I firmly believe that this change was long overdue considering the tragedies and errors that preceded it.

One of the strengths of the Munro Review was its emphasis on adopting a thoughtful system rather than a rigid compliance system in child protection (Munro, 2011). This marked a shift in approach encouraging professionals to exercise judgment and discernment instead of blindly following rules and procedures. By doing Munro highlighted the importance of critical thinking and individual assessment in each case based on what is truly best, for the child.

Additionally, the Munro Review placed importance on conducting thorough evaluations of a child's risks and needs. This underscored the significance of understanding their living situation and recognizing factors that may contribute to their vulnerability, not just focusing on obvious signs of abuse or neglect. This approach embraced a holistic perspective that centred around the well-being of each unique child and family ensuring that planning and support were tailored accordingly.

Implementing these changes was no task. It required a shift in the way child protection services operate. However, I strongly believe that these changes were essential and have had an impact on how we safeguard our most vulnerable children. It is crucial for us to constantly remember the tragedies that prompted these changes and remain committed, to enhancing and adjusting our child protection system to guarantee the safety and welfare of every child under our care.

While advancements in child protection have been made in decades there are still significant challenges that need to be addressed. It is crucial to acknowledge these challenges and take steps to improve child protection in the United Kingdom.

One major challenge lies in the need for coordination among various child protection agencies. Although there has been some improvement in cooperation since the introduction of the Children Act 2004 (HM Government, 2004) instances of communication gaps or role misunderstandings can still result in failures to provide protection (Broadhurst et al., 2010).

Another significant issue is the turnover rate among staff working in child protection services. This turnover can disrupt continuity. Lead to mistakes caused by misunderstandings of complex cases. The turnover rate, within this sector is notably higher compared to areas of social care indicating specific concerns that require attention (McFadden et al., 2015).

Additionally, there are challenges related to how child protection policies and procedures are implemented and interpreted. The Munro Review emphasized the importance of incorporating thinking into child protection but it's crucial to strike a balance and not let it overshadow established procedures and protocols (Turnell et al., 2017). We must approach this area with caution to ensure that child protection is not compromised.

When it comes to safeguarding children from abuse there are several challenges. One of them is. Preventing their exposure to harmful content on the internet. As technology advances more children gain proficiency, which unfortunately increases the number of children exposed to online abuse. Tackling these issues requires resources and knowledge that often go beyond the capabilities of traditional child protection services (Livingstone et al., 2017). Additionally dealing with jurisdiction poses difficulties since many abusers operate across international borders.

Domestic violence poses an obstacle in ensuring child protection due to its severe impact, on the physical and emotional well-being of children. The complexity intensifies as domestic violence often arises from family dynamics making it

challenging for children to seek help or be willing to do. When crafting intervention strategies, it's crucial to consider both the safety and welfare of children while also addressing the needs of domestic violence survivors who're frequently mothers (Holt et al., 2008).

When it comes to the increasing number of children entering the social care system, one of the challenges is ensuring that there are enough resources and capacity to meet the growing demand. Moreover, there are obstacles in addressing the diverse and intricate needs of these children and their families. These needs often encompass issues, like poverty, parental mental health problems, substance dependency, and other complex social concerns (Bilson & Munro 2019).

To sum up, the cases of Victoria Climbié and Peter Connolly serve as a reminder of how crucial child protection's an ongoing and never-ending responsibility. In response to these tragedies, the United Kingdom implemented reforms and took measures to enhance child protection. However, despite the progress made, there are still challenges that persist.

In today's world child protection faces hurdles such as domestic violence, digital risks, and an increasing number of children entering the care system. Policies and practices must adapt to these changes promptly and effectively to address emerging threats.

Equally important is maintaining a child approach in all aspects of safeguarding. Children should be seen, heard, and trusted without hesitation. Additionally, it is essential to provide unwavering support to professionals working in child protection while equipping them with the skills to handle the intricate nature of their work.

Ultimately safeguarding children requires a commitment from all levels of society. Whether it's professionals or politicians, parents or members of the public, we all have a crucial role, in ensuring the safety and well-being of our children.

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