

ECIE5010

Keeping our Children Safe

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Multi-agency was introduced to Wales in 1989, following the momentum from the Children's Act. The requirement was that local authorities and other agencies would collaborate and work closely together, to promote the welfare and safe-guarding of children in Wales. (Moorhead,

2020). Multi-agency was set up to support the effectiveness of safeguarding and child-protection. Safeguarding is to prevent any problems happening to a child and child protection is helping the child once there is a serious form of concern. The multi-agency roles are to safeguard these children and prevent them from harm. You can see how important these roles of the multi agencies can be when realises how much responsibilities they have for the welfare of the children. We want the multi- agencies to have the biggest impact when safeguarding a child and not let it get as far as child protection. (NSPCC, 2024) The main purpose for this intervention is to strengthen prevention, identifying concerns, and responding to risks. It is a service to make sure that children under the age of 18 have the rights to be looked after and protected from ill treatment, abuse and neglect. UNICEF, 1989 highlighted the importance of children's welfare making articles to show everyone how important children's up bringing is as they are vulnerable and their needs, need to be met for them to live a happy and rewarding life. Article 3 the best interest of the child, the adults decisions should be the best for that child and the Government should make sure that the decisions are the best for them making sure they are being looked after and protected. This will be the responsibility of the adults working with the children in their job roles. Article 18 is the responsibility of the parents for bring up a child. To consider what is right for the child. Article 19 is the protection against violence, it's the job of the government to protect our children from violence, abuse and being neglected by who is looking after them. Article 24, children have the right to the best care possible, that includes clean water, healthy food and a clean and safe environment for them to live in. These are the articles are for everyone, both adults and children should be aware of them to understand what is acceptable. Working collaboratively with a range of different professionals from different areas and different agencies can share key information and to provide the best support for the individuals involved. Sharing information is a key aspect of multi-agencies, following a holistic approach where the whole situation is looked at not just parts, giving the case a more detailed and tougher plan to work on. Allowing different agencies will have different perspectives which will allow every area to be covered and hopefully providing help and support for the whole family, whether that is getting help for the parents for drug or alcohol abuse or to support families that are struggling with money and providing for the children, a parent that is in a domestic situation themselves, hopefully the multi-agencies would be there to provide the care for all of the family, having the best interest of that child. With more people involved there is a higher chance of better ideas and people with more expertise providing different strategies solutions to be involved sharing the responsibilities but having the same goal towards the same concerns after assessing the individuals' needs and risks (NSPCC, 2023). Working together will provide more information to have a more detailed case with assessments from all parties providing the move effective evidence from a rage of sources. This will only help support the child sooner than working with a few agencies, progression can be faster, and changes can be made sooner with the right people involved in the case. With them working together, the workload can be reduced and given to the area that is needed and will be able to best support that child, it's not a case of giving the workload to a different sector but to provide work and then working together, using each other's knowledge to reach better results. Smaller workloads will hopefully impact the time spent on a case where they are able to work faster and more efficiently together making sure that child is getting the help they need fast (Caton, 2013). According to Cardiff University, 2024, this is what the Government want to show as good practice. The idea is for any adults that are involved with children such as schools, hospitals,

social services, police, adults that are running clubs, that they make the disclosures and any forms of concerns they have passing on the information to the necessary agency, to follow through with the concern. We have services that will offer different help for the case in hand, we have services that will be part of the child's life from the start such as health visitors, doctors, then starting school the child would have a range of different adults that would be able to provide them with help and looking out for anything that seems unusual or concerning. If any members of staff have concerns, they would then have to report it. These could include any of the children's needs not being met. (McLeod, 2025) Following Maslow's hierarchy of needs he explains that the child needs a variety of needs to be met for them to learn develop and to be living a happy and healthy life. The first stage is having basic needs such as water and food, as you climb up the pyramid children need health and security, family and love, respect and self-esteem, ending on self-belief. This then is backed up with the theory of the children's right UNCRC as explained above. It is believed that if these needs are not being met the child will not be able to further themselves in the hierarchy of needs and could need some help from the local authorities. If the basic needs of food and love is not shown to the child there is a safeguarding concern. 'Section 58 of the Children Act 2004 limited the use of the defence of reasonable punishment so that it could no longer be used when people are charged with offences against a child such as causing actual bodily harm or cruelty to a child.' (GOV, 2007). This was a vital law for children in Wales to protect them from physical abuse, no child should experience being hit as a form of punishment or ill-treatment.

Well this is what is meant to happen, but unfortunately this is not what is happening, there has been a series of cases that have proven that the multi-agency approach isn't working and the problems that are happening through the system have some very serious effects to the children involved and even death. Cases like 'baby P', are the sad cases of the issues like lack of communication, lack of professionalism and just an all-round failure in the system.

Baby P, the headline from the BBC News 26 October 2010 was killed by his mother and partner after months of abuse.

'was failed by all agencies'.

'reveal the incompetence of social workers, doctors, lawyers and police'

'horrific death could and should have been prevented'

'multiple failings'

These are worrying headlines and even worse the truth, a poor innocent 18-month year old boy died in his own home because he was failed by the system and the children's act. (Sellgren, 2010).

So, when looking at this case how did the system fail. It was said there was lack of communication between the agencies. Information was not passed on or even reported in the correct way and concerns were not passed on for anyone else to deal with. Baby P had suffered more than 50 injuries, such as bruising to his head and chest and had been, fallen down the stairs and visited 60 times by the authorities in the eight months before his death, living in dirty and smelly condition, smells of urine and dogs, and failed to report that the mother's partner was violent.

How could this information not be dealt with, you can see the concerns straight away not following the UNCRC, Maslow's hierarchy of needs and unexplainable physical marks. This was a severe safeguarding concern as well as evidence showing child protection.

Other barriers that have been highlighted are difference of opinion, different views to what people think are concerning or urgent, some people may not see the problem and not follow through with a report. Different staff being involved so miss out information and not fully aware of the details of the case, missing out vital pieces of information. When these agencies must meet, finding a time place for them all to come together which could be up to five different sectors. If they meet and one agency can't make it that can be a major part missing to the case with information needed to give the best support. You haven't got the full evidence or information to be making the best plan forward resulting in miss judgment. As we are aware we are experiencing cuts in education, NHS, social services, if there is lack of funding, lack of workers, more pressure on staff no one can-do their job properly making cuts will only reduce the work resulting in cases not being dealt with resulting mistakes happening and children being unprotected by the multi-agencies (Samuel, 2011).

Realising there was a problem and the importance and recognising it was crucial for supporting vulnerable children, formal multi-agency safeguarding hubs (MASHs) were developed in 2011 in response to failures in safeguarding practices. The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 further strengthened the framework for multi-agency working. Another issue that was highlighted was in cases the parents were asked and explained the situation; the parents had too much power in controlling what was said and was believed by authorities. Listening to the child is key to safe-guarding practice, its through their words and life experiences you can fully understand the severity of the problem, and the most effective action can take place to safe-guard them. The children's voice was brought out enabling children to realise they are listened to, and they should and have got a chance to talk and be listened to. UNCRC reinforces this as article 12 states that a child has a right to be listened to and to be taken seriously when it affects them. The children Act 1989, supports this by the national legislation and guidance which states that professionals are encouraged to consider the child's rights (NSPCC, 2024).

Looking back at the how multi-agencies promote the welfare of children, in theory it works and we hope that cases have been benefited from the work that they do, but it is also clear that there is still a lot of improvements and lessons learnt for there to be no more tragic deaths for the vulnerable children in Wales. We need to support the agencies, and everyone needs to make it their job to protect children from harm, abuse, neglect and ill-treatment.

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