

Children and young people face a variety of challenges and those who work closely with them have the crucial duty to protect and promote their welfare. Children have always faced adversities and challenges that can pose issues to the safety of a child, however with society ever changing and digital advances progressing every day, it's essential that every person that has access to the child is aware of all procedures in order to keep that child safe. In this essay the writer will critically discuss The Multi Agency model in Wales and how it promotes the welfare of children and young people whilst also identifying current challenges.

The Multi Agency model in Wales refers to professional bodies working together in order to meet the needs of children and young people. The Welsh Government (2025) state that schools, agencies, community organisations, families and other relevant parties must pursue the same goal of enhancing the quality of education and providing adequate support to the academic, social, emotional, physical and relational needs of all children and young people. The Multi Agency model involves agencies such as social services, educational settings, health services, police and other parties such as charity organisations, sports and out of school clubs. These agencies would be a part of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory which "views child development as a complex system of relationships affected by multiple levels of the surrounding environment" (Guy-Evans, 2024). In order for the systems to work effectively together The Welsh Government (N.D) ensures that agencies working with children share an understanding of professional and public expectations and routinely work together adapting a multi-agency mindset.

The Multi Agency model is grounded by multiple key legislation policies regarding children and young people. The Children's Act 1989 is the core of England and Wales Child welfare still, Lincoln (2025) recognises the act as resilient and groundbreaking as it introduced important concepts such as prioritising children's voices and outlining parents' duties. This act changed child protection laws from reactive to proactive and protective, however it took numerous tragic deaths including 4-year-old Jasmine Beckford who was murdered after being returned to her family home from care prompting the act to set the key principle being the child's welfare. (NSPCC, 2024).

In spite of The Children's Act 1989, another perceived failing led to the Laming Report (2003). The Laming report was an enquiry into the death of 8-year-old Victoria Climbié, Laming (2003) reported failures due to a lack of good practice presenting the fact numerous professionals had access to Victoria but failed to safeguard her. Laming (2003) also stated that

Victoria's case was a gross failure to the system describing the services that worked with her case as underfunded, understaffed and poorly led. These two tragic cases pinpointed key issues that needed to be addressed in order to efficiently protect children, nevertheless it must be highlighted that the system has failed numerous children.

Moving forward the Laming reports recommendations brought forward Every Child Matters (2003) policy. DfES (2003) recognises the failings of the system and states that child protection cannot be separated from policies to improve children's lives as a whole. Focus needs to be both on protecting children and maximising their potential. Despite advances made to procedures, more deaths led to the Birchard inquiry in 2004. The Inquiry urged the effectiveness of "relevant intelligence-based record keeping, vetting practices and information sharing with other agencies" (Birchard, 2004). From this inquiry The Children's Act 2004 arose, which "made provision for the establishment for a Children's Commissioner" (*The Children's Act*, 2004). It is clear that past experience and mistakes have paved positive developments, with the appointment of a children's commissioner representing the need for further child protection developments and ensuring accountability. The UK Government (N.D) states the office of the Children's Commissioner promotes "the rights, views and interest of children in policies or decisions affecting their lives".

The multi-Agency framework is also built upon legislative pieces such as The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act (2014), The Children's and Families Act (2014) and The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act (2015) which all hold the same goal of promoting wellbeing, safeguarding and ensuring a holistic view of child welfare.

As mentioned, the Multi-Agency Model can be linked to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Model. Bronfenbrenner's model is made up of five different Eco systems which the agencies in the multi-Agency belong too. The Micro system would be considered family, friends and teachers having the most direct influence, and The Exo system including Social Services and the local government. (Cherry, 2023). Cherry (2023) adds that the Model still holds significant effect of focusing on the influence families, communities, societies and the broader culture can have on a child. The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act (2014) requires "local authorities to make arrangements to promote co-operation with relevant partners" which holds the multi-agency model in regard and the importance of collaboration between Bronfenbrenner's Systems.

The Mid and West Wales Safeguarding Children Board (CYSUR) released a multi-Agency protocol (2018) which underlines the importance

of sharing information between parties, which could potentially provide vital information to a case that may have been missing. The Protocol also urges that any safeguarding concerns that are flagged must result in a strategy discussion with all relevant professionals, including health and education to further ensure gathering all available information. (CYSUR 2018). These protocols try to eliminate any further failures of the system, where information sharing could save a potential life.

It is clear that the Multi-Agency Model holds clear importance in the safeguarding of children with the benefit of information sharing throughout agencies and procedures and policies have adapted with the required change. Within the Model there are further models of Multi-Agency Work, Walker (2018) describes these as multi-agency panels, multi-agency teams, and integrated services. Integrated Services can be seen as another advantage of multi-Agency working, Integrated services include a community hub that addresses a full range of issues, The Home office states that these hubs have also been referred to as “Co-Located hub of agencies enabling real time information, decision making and communication often referred to as MASH” (The Home Office, 2014). The Home office (2014) continues to state clear benefits of MASH teams such as more accurate risk assessments and identification of needs and the ability to gather information from a wider range of sources for the best chance to support the child.

It is important to note despite multi-agency benefits being clear in theory, McManus and Boulton (2020) argue that there is wide acknowledgement of the variety of how these models are implicated in practice and little evidence of how effective they are. However, Integrated services can help aid early intervention for those children who need it, it is confirmed that early intervention is vital to “ensure that children and young people get the services they require, essential for safeguarding, protecting welfare and providing effective and efficient services” (CWDC, 2008).

Multi-Agency Panels consist of practitioners that meet regularly to discuss individuals and co-create person centred approaches. Multi-Agency panels aim to provide support at an early stage by identifying, evaluating and assessing risks whilst also creating the most appropriate support plans. (The Home Office, 2021). The Welsh Government identifies the following services as potential members of Multi-Agency Panels: Child and Adolescent mental health services (CAHMS), Family Engagement officers, Health Visitors and Ace hub Wales (2025). Each organisation would have different information and experiences with the child that they can bring to the panel to ensure effective information sharing, Although the

panel poses some of its own challenges. With the panel being made up of different organisations and conflicting schedules, the reliability of the panel meeting often enough can be questioned. It is also noted that “As many agencies are often involved, there is a possibility for disconnect across different structures, processes and systems” (Ball *et al*, 2024).

The final model of multi-Agency work is the multi-Agency Team, the team involves recruited practitioners that work under a designated team leader and share a working base and values. An example of a multi-Agency team would be an organisation such as Flying Start. The Welsh Government (2024) recognises Flying start as an organisation that helps disadvantaged families with children aged under four across Wales, it offers services such as high-quality childcare, enhanced health visiting services, parenting support and Speech, Language and developing support. This links to Maslow’s Hierarchy of needs theory as at the foundation of multi-agency teams is to ensure children’s basic necessities are met such as health and safety in order to help them further develop as “needs lower down must be satisfied before individuals can attend to needs further up” (McLeod, 2025).

Although multi-agency working has clear benefits in theory, it is important to highlight the challenges it faces in practice. As multi-agency working involves varying organisations that hold different work patterns, and pose communication barriers, priorities may become conflicted. For instance, one organisation may focus solely on the educational needs and another on the health of a child leading to collaborative barriers ultimately leading to less quality support for the child. Walker (2018) recognises the concerns of poor inter-agency communication, Professionals may be distracted by heightened workloads, lack of information and challenges connecting with other agencies to truly focus on the child.

Linking to Maslow’s Hierarchy of needs, an attachment approach can benefit some children “it can give added insight into these young peoples difficulties and thus help create the required stable and caring environments to develop resilience” (Bifulco and Davidson, 2019). However multi-agency working can lead to numerous different staff and instability for children and families. A Resilient Wales being one of the wellbeing goals of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Acts (The Welsh Government, 2016), Organisations must do their best to provide consistent and effective multi agency support.

Walker (2018) highlights another key issue to multi-agency work of conflicting training. Some practitioners may find it difficult to adapt to the holistic approach from their core training and may be trained in specific health, education or development assessments. In order to improve the

framework, The Welsh Government needs to find a way to effectively assess the multi-agency framework and adequately improve and include implementation tactics.

Although all of Wales policies centre on The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the child (UNCRC) and “working together to share best practice” (The Welsh Government, 2014). The future of the Multi-Agency Model would benefit from several recommendations. Firstly, improved training that is consistent across all professional bodies would help the collaboration between agencies, currently agencies can work off the framework separately which may cause conflicting barriers. Training could also provide information on each individual practitioner’s role in safeguarding resulting in “better understanding of each other’s perspectives, knowledge and skills can be shared, and new planning benefiting from improved understanding, trust and shared information” (Gasper, 2009). Another essential area for improvement is sharing information and the collection and management of data. The Department for Education agree that for better practice there needs to be a “functioning joint system across agencies that support the right data to be used securely by the right people” (2023). Agencies that adapt to data transparency and collaboration will be more successful in tracking progress, identifying trends and supporting children more effectively.

To conclude the Multi Agency model in Wales has made significant improvements to protecting and promoting child welfare, and it is made clear that the main goal is to provide high quality and effective support to those who need it, when they need it (UK Government, 2018) in order to decrease the risk of reoccurring failures. Ultimately it is clear that the multi-agency model would benefit from improvements made by the government. These improvements involve better funding, more adequate training, and enhanced communications between agencies. The model is the right step in the way of child protection but in an ever-changing world commitment must be made to continually improving the model and working together to create safe and supportive environments for children and young people.

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