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**The increasing length and complexity of central government guidance about child abuse  
in England: 1974-2010**

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## **The increasing length and complexity of central government guidance about child protection in England: 1974 - 2010**

### **Abstract**

The purpose of this paper is to describe and outline the growth of government guidance on child protection in England from 1974 to 2010. In the process it will be suggested that such analysis provides important insights into the changing nature of child protection policy and practice during the period in terms of its priorities, focus and organisation. What becomes apparent is not only that the guidance has grown enormously in length, detail and complexity but also that the object of concern has shifted from 'non-accidental injury', to 'child abuse' to 'safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children'.

## **Introduction**

In May 2010 a new Conservative/Liberal-Democrat Coalition government came to power and one of its first acts was to establish an independent 'Review of Child Protection' to be chaired by Professor Eileen Munro to provide a final report in April 2011. In his letter to Professor Munro announcing the establishment of the review, Michael Gove, the Secretary of State, said:

I firmly believe we need to reform frontline social work practice. I want to strengthen the profession so social workers are in a better position to make well-informed judgements, based on up to date evidence, in the best interests of children, *free from unnecessary bureaucracy and regulation*. (Gove, 2010, p1, emphasis added).

Concern about the growth of bureaucracy and regulation in children's social work was not new (Howe, 1992) and was something that Eileen Munro had drawn attention to on numerous occasions (see, for example, Munro, 2004). They were also issues which had been commented on by Lord Laming in his Inquiry Report into the death of Victoria Climbié in 2003:

Judging by the material put before the Inquiry, the problem is less about the ability of staff to read and understand guidelines, and more about the huge and dense nature of material provided for them. Therefore, the challenge is to provide busy staff in each of the agencies with something of real practical help and manageable length. The test is of ensuring the material actually helps staff do their job. (Laming, 2003, para.1.61, p12).

In order to prevent 'such a terrible event happening in the future' (para.1.66) Lord Laming was convinced that:

The answer lies in doing relatively straightforward things well. Adhering to this principle will have a significant impact on the lives of vulnerable children. (para.1.66).

At the core of the child protection system in England is government guidance which provides the framework for policy and practice and which local authorities, and other social care, health and criminal justice agencies are required to implement in their local areas. This guidance has been revised over a nearly forty years and the most recent version was published in 17 March 2010 (HM Government, 2010). What becomes evident, however, is that at each stage of revision the guidance has become longer, more detailed and more complex; including the revision following Lord Laming's Inquiry Report into the death of Victoria Climbié (HM Government, 2006). This is, therefore, a particular challenge for anyone wishing to reform the child protection system in England in order to free it 'from unnecessary bureaucracy and regulation'.

These changes in guidance result from a variety of social, media and political influences which I have discussed in detail elsewhere (see for example: Parton, 1985; 1991; 2006a; Frost and Parton, 2009) but which are not the focus of attention here. The purpose of this paper is much more modest. It aims to describe and outline the growth and development of government guidance on child protection in England between 1974 and 2010. In the process I will suggest that we are provided with important insights into the changing nature and aims of child protection policy and practice during the period particularly in terms of its priorities, focus and organisation. What will become apparent is not only that the guidance has grown

enormously and become more detailed but that also the object of concern has broadened from 'non-accidental injury', to 'child abuse' to 'safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children', These developments are summarised in Table 1, which I will discuss in more detail in the remainder of the paper.

[Table 1 here]

### **The Beginnings of the Contemporary Child Protection System**

The contemporary child protection system in England was effectively inaugurated with the issue of the DHSS circular entitled *Non-Accidental Injury to Children* (DHSS, 1974) in the wake of the public inquiry into the death of Maria Colwell (Secretary of State, 1974) and followed earlier guidance in relation to 'battered babies' (DHSS, 1970; DHSS, 1972). The system was refined in a series of further circulars throughout the decade (DHSS, 1976a; 1976b; 1978) and by 1980 the problem to be addressed had been officially reframed as *child abuse* (DHSS, 1980) which was made up of physical injury, physical neglect, failure to thrive and emotional abuse but did not include sexual abuse.

The primary focus of the system was to ensure that a range of key professionals were familiar with the signs of non-accidental injury to children (and subsequently child abuse) and that mechanisms were established so that information could be shared between them.

Coordination between agencies and professionals in relation to particular children was seen as key for improving practice, and the roles of paediatricians, GPs, health visitors and the

police were soon seen as vital. However, it was social service departments that were constituted as the 'lead agency' and local authority social workers who were identified as the primary statutory professionals for coordinating the work and operating the system.

There were a number of key elements. *Area Review Committees*, subsequently retitled *Area Child Protection Committees* (ACPCs) (DHSS, 1988), were established in all local authority areas as policy-making bodies in order to: coordinate the work of the local agencies; develop interprofessional training; and produce detailed *procedures* to be followed where it was felt a child had been abused or might be at risk of abuse. In such situations there was to be a system of *case conferences* so that the relevant professionals could share information about a particular child and family, make decisions on what to do and provide an ongoing mechanism for monitoring progress. Where it was felt a child protection plan was required the child's name and details would be placed on a *child protection register*. The register could then be consulted by other professionals to establish whether the child was currently known.

*Non-Accidental Injury to Children* (DHSS, 1974) was circulated in the form of a memorandum. It was just seven pages long and had one footnote which included four references, three of which were to previous DHSS circulars, plus reference to an article from the *British Medical Journal* entitled 'Non-Accidental Injury to Children: A Guide to Management' (Working Party in the Department of Child Health, University of Newcastle upon Tyne, 1973).

The first central government *guidance* had the title *Working Together* and was published in 1988 (DHSS, 1988) on the same day as the publication of the public inquiry into the events in Cleveland the previous year (Secretary of State, 1988). While it explicitly built on the

consultation document published two years previously (DHSS, 1986) it had been considerably redrafted to take account of the Cleveland Inquiry where a major concern had been the inappropriate and possibly excessive intervention of state welfare professionals into the privacy of families on the basis of uncertain and questionable evidence of sexual abuse (see Parton, 1991, pp.121–135). While the guidance broadened the definition of child abuse to include sexual abuse it was primarily concerned to ensure that professionals maintained a balance in their work between protecting children from abuse and protecting the privacy of the family from unnecessary and unwarranted intrusion – the issue which was to lie at the heart of the 1989 Children Act (Parton, 1991). The 1988 *Working Together* was 72 pages long, made up of 48 pages of guidance plus nine appendices of 24 pages. Appendix One consisted of references to 11 items of ‘related Guidance’. There were no other notes or references in the document. Clearly, however, this was a much more substantial document than the DHSS circular on *Non-Accidental Injury to Children* (DHSS, 1974) which had begun the process of establishing the contemporary child protection system.

In addition it established a new element to the system and something that would grow in significance 20 years later. Part Nine of the guidance introduced a system of ‘case reviews’ to be carried out by the senior management of the relevant agencies, conducted under the auspices of the Area Child Protection Committee (ACPC) (and which would become *Serious Case Reviews* in the 2006 guidance). The case review was introduced to try and pre-empt and perhaps avert the need for time consuming, expensive and high profile public inquiries, such as the Cleveland Inquiry, in the future.

A Case Review by management in each involved agency should be instigated in all cases that involve the death of, or serious harm to, a child where child abuse is

confirmed or suspected. These cases cause distress within the family, create distress and anxiety among the staff of the agencies, and arouse public concern. Agencies need to respond quickly and positively to ensure that their services are maintained and are not undermined by the incident, that public concern is allayed and media comment is answered in a positive manner (DHSS, 1988, para.9.1).

### **From ‘The Protection of Children from Abuse’ to the ‘Safeguarding and Promotion of Children’s Welfare’**

Government guidance on *Working Together* was revised on two occasions during the 1990s. A brief comparison of the two documents clearly demonstrates how official thinking about the nature of the problem to be addressed and the best way of responding changed significantly during the decade. The 1991 *Working Together* (Home Office et al, 1991) was published to coincide with the implementation of the Children Act 1989 and very closely followed the 1988 version of *Working Together* (DHSS, 1988) and was framed in terms of responding to child abuse and improving the child protection system. This was very evident in the document’s subtitle: *A Guide to Arrangements for Inter-Agency Co-operation for the protection of Children from Abuse*. The focus was upon the need to identify ‘high risk’ cases so that these could be differentiated from the rest. Thereby children could be protected from abuse while ensuring that family privacy was not undermined and scarce resources could be directed to where, in theory, they were most needed. While working in partnership with the parents and child was seen as important, the focus was ‘children at risk of significant harm’, such that the whole document was framed in terms of when and how to carry out an ‘investigation’ in terms of Section 47 of the Children Act 1989. The key ‘threshold’ criterion

to be addressed was whether the child was ‘suffering or likely to suffer significant harm’ (s31(91)(9)). While the essential principles of the Children Act 1989 provided the legal framework, the focus of the child protection system was quite specific. For:

The starting point of the process is that any person who has knowledge of, or suspicion, that a child is *suffering significant harm, or is at risk of suffering significant harm*, should refer their concern to one or more of the agencies with statutory *duties and/or powers to investigate or intervene* – the social services departments, the policy or the NSPCC (Home Office et al, 1991, para.5.11.1, emphasis added).

There was no mention of any of the more wide-ranging preventive duties that local authorities had in terms of Section 17(1) of the Children Act 1989 ‘to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in their area who are in need’.

As the title indicated, the 1999 ‘Working Together’ guidance was very different: *Working Together to Safeguard Children: A Guide to Inter-Agency Working to Safeguard and Promote the Welfare of Children* (DH et al, 1999). Not only was this the first time that the word ‘safeguarding’ was used in official guidance about child abuse but the subtitle explicitly framed the issues in terms of s17(1) of the Children Act.

The 1999 *Working Together* was revised in the light of *Child Protection: Messages from Research* (DH, 1995), the refocusing debate (Parton, 1997), and research on the implementation of the Children Act, particularly that in relation to the difficulties that local authorities were having in developing their ‘family support’ services (DH, 2001). The

guidance underlined that local authorities had wider responsibilities than simply responding to concerns about ‘significant harm’ and was explicitly located in the wider agenda for children’s services being implemented in the early years of the New Labour government which had been elected in 1997 (see Parton , 2006, particularly chapters 5 and 6).

While the 1999 guidance continued to make it clear that if anyone believed that a child may be suffering ‘significant harm’ they should always refer these concerns to the social services department, it also stressed that these should be responded to by social services in the context of their much wider ‘responsibilities towards all children whose health or development may be impaired without the provision of support and services, or who are disabled (described by the Children Act 1989 as children ‘in need’)' (para.5.5). In order to develop such a response a more holistic approach to assessment was introduced.

The publication of the 1999 edition of *Working Together* was combined with the publication of the *Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families* (DH et al, 2000) and the two documents needed to be read and used together. The *Assessment Framework*, like *Working Together*, was issued as guidance under section 7 of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970, which meant that it ‘must be followed’ by local authority social services departments unless there were exceptional circumstances that justified a variation. It thus had the same legal status and was incorporated into *Working Together*.

The *Assessment Framework* replaced the previous guidance on *Protecting Children: A Guide for Social Workers Undertaking a Comprehensive Assessment* (DH, 1988), which had only been concerned with comprehensive assessment for long-term planning where child abuse had been confirmed or strongly suspected. In contrast, the *Assessment Framework* moved the

focus from the assessment of risk of child abuse and ‘significant harm’ to one which was concerned with the possible impairment to a child’s development. Both the safeguarding and promotion of a child’s welfare were seen as intimately connected aims for intervention, so that it was important that access to services was via a common assessment route. The critical task was to ascertain whether a child was ‘in need’ and how the child and the parents, in the context of their family and community environment, might be helped. While primarily a practice tool for social services departments, the *Assessment Framework* also aimed to provide a common language, shared values and commitment amongst a much wider range of agencies and professionals.

This comparison of the 1991 *Working Together* and the 1999 *Working Together* demonstrates that the 1990s witnessed a significant broadening of focus in government guidance. For, while the concept of ‘safeguarding’ was an important idea in the Children Act 1989, particularly the rationale for Section 17, it was only in the 1999 *Working Together* that it was made central to government guidance in relation to child protection. When considering the development of government guidance at this time it is also important to include the *Assessment Framework* (DH et al, 2000) which was incorporated in the 1999 *Working Together* (DH et al, 1999).

In addition, the *Assessment Framework* was also supported by the publication of a range of other material, which included: practice guidance (DH, 2000a); assessment record forms (DH and Cleaver, 2000); a family assessment pack of questionnaires and scales (DH et al, 2000b); a summary of studies which informed the development of the framework (DH, 2000b); and a training pack consisting of a video, guide and reader (NSPCC/University of Sheffield, 2000). While these did not carry the same statutory status and the *Assessment Framework* itself, they

did demonstrate the growing expectations being placed upon social workers and other professionals. Taken together the 1999 *Working Together* (DH et al, 1999) and the *Assessment Framework* guidances were much more substantial and complex documents than the 1991 *Working Together* (HO et al, 1991). Not only were the objects of concern broadened but the demands made of agencies and practitioners were increased.

### ***Working Together in the Context of Every Child Matters***

There was a clear attempt in the 1999 *Working Together* (DH et al, 1999) to reframe the object of concern away from a narrow forensically-driven conception of child protection towards the much broader notion of safeguarding, to the point where some commentators argued that child protection had got lost altogether (Munro and Calder, 2005; Smith, 2008). However, the document did not provide a clear definition of safeguarding and its relationship with child protection. In fact a report produced jointly by eight chief inspectors argued that while the idea of *safeguarding children* had become a major government priority the term ‘safeguarding has not been defined in law or government guidance’ (DH, 2002a, para.1.5)., This was to change with the publication of the 2006 *Working Together* (HM Government, 2006), where:

*Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children* is defined for the purposes of this guidance as:

- protecting children from maltreatment;
- preventing impairment of children’s health or development; and
- ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care;

and undertaking that role so as to enable those children to have optimum life chances and to enter adulthood successfully (para.1.18, original emphasis).

While the 2006 *Working Together* had the same title as the 1999 version (DH et al, 1999), this was the first guidance that was authored by HM Government (2006) rather than by particular government departments as previously. While it very much built on the central principles and mechanisms laid out in the 1999 guidance it was updated to take account of the public inquiry report into the death of Victoria Climbié (Laming, 2003), the major changes being introduced by the *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* programme (DfES, 2004) and the Children Act 2004 where the aim was to shift policy and practice in the direction of prevention, whilst at the same time strengthening protection (Parton, 2006).

The changes introduced under the *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* programme were the most ambitious and radical since the reorganisation of local authority social services in the early 1970s and were far more wide-ranging than anything attempted in the history of children's services in England (Frost and Parton, 2009; Garrett, 2009). In aiming to ensure that 'every child' achieved their potential and in trying to integrate universal, targeted and specialist services there were considerable implications for everyone who worked with children and young people.

A key element of the government's strategy was to strengthen the framework for single and multi-agency safeguarding practice. Under Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 a new statutory duty was placed on certain agencies (including the police, prisons and health bodies) to make arrangements to ensure that they had regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. In addition, as from April 2006, local authorities were required to replace

*Area Child Protection Committees (ACPCs)* with statutory *Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs)*. The core membership of LSCBs was set out in the Children Act 2004 and was to include senior managers from different services, including the local authority health bodies, the police, any secure training centre or prison in the area and other organisations as deemed appropriate.

The guidance (HM Government, 2006) was framed in terms of supporting *all* children and families in terms of the *Every Child Matters*' five outcomes of: being healthy; enjoying and achieving; making a positive contribution; achieving economic well-being; and, particularly, staying safe, which were seen as 'key to children and young people's well-being' (para.1.1).

The guidance was presented as part of 'an integrated approach' so that effective measures to safeguard children were seen as those which also promoted their welfare, and should not be seen in isolation from the wider range of support and services to meet the needs of all children and families. The idea safeguarding was explicitly located in the wider policy agenda on tackling social exclusion.

While protecting children from maltreatment was seen as important in order to prevent the impairment of health and development, on its own it was not seen as sufficient to ensure that children were growing up in circumstances that ensured the provision of safe and effective care and which could bring about the five outcomes for all children. The guidance was centrally concerned with trying to ensure that all agencies and professionals fulfilled their responsibilities *both* in relation to prevention *and* child protection, as well as safeguarding *and* promoting the welfare of *all* children, and where professionals and managers were held accountable for their actions.

Simply comparing the page length of the 1999 *Working Together* (DH et al, 1999) with that in 2006 (HM Government, 2006) there is an increase from 119 pages to 231 pages; the number of pages on managing individual cases increased from 15 pages to 56 pages; the number of pages on (serious) case reviews increased from four to 15 pages; the number of Footnotes increased from 12 to 43; and the number of references increased from 50 to 78. For the first time references were also in the form of Internet links/web addresses, accounting for 69 of the 78 references. The *Assessment Framework* (DH, 2000) continued to be fully incorporated into the 2006 guidance.

### ***Working Together in the Post ‘Baby Peter’ Era***

However, the period after November 2008 was one of considerable turmoil and had the potential to undermine the aims of the *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* programme and the other attempts by the New Labour government to refocus and reform child protection over the previous 10 years.

On 11 November 2008 two men were convicted of causing or allowing the death of 17-month-old ‘Baby Peter’ Connelly, including his step-father. The baby’s mother had already pleaded guilty to the charge. During the trial the court heard that Baby Peter was used as a ‘punch bag’ and that his mother had deceived and manipulated professionals with lies and on one occasion had smeared him with chocolate to hide his bruises. There had been over 60 contacts with the family from a variety of health and social care professionals and he was pronounced dead just 48 hours after a hospital doctor failed to identify that he had a broken spine. He was the subject of a child protection plan with Haringey local authority in London

– the local authority which had been at the centre of failures to protect Victoria Climbié back in 2000.

The media response was immediate and very critical of the services, particularly the local authority, Haringey, the local authority at the centre of the Victoria Climbié Inquiry. The largest selling tabloid newspaper, *The Sun*, ran a campaign aimed at getting the professionals involved in the case sacked from their jobs under the banner of ‘Beautiful Baby P: Campaign for Justice’ (*The Sun*, 15 November 2008). Two weeks later the newspaper delivered a petition to the Prime Minister containing 1.5 million signatures and claiming it was the largest and most successful campaign of its sort ever. In addition a large number of *Facebook* groups, comprising over 1.6 million members, were set up in memory of Baby Peter and seeking justice for his killers. This weight of expressed opinion put major pressure on the government minister, Ed Balls, to be seen to be acting authoritatively in order to take control of the situation. He responded by:

- Ordering the Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (Ofsted), the Healthcare Commission and the Police Inspectorate to carry out an urgent Joint Area Review (JAR) on safeguarding in Haringey;
- Ordering the preparation of a new and independent Serious Case Review following the publication of the original one on 12 November 2008, which he deemed to be inadequate and insufficiently critical;
- Establishing a *Social Work Task Force* to identify any barriers that social workers faced in doing their jobs effectively and to make recommendations for improvements and the long-term reform of social work and to report in late 2009 (Social Work Task Force, 2009).

In addition, the Secretary of State asked Lord Laming to prepare an urgent and independent report on ‘the progress being made across the country (England) to implement effective arrangements for safeguarding children’. The report was published the following March. In the introduction to the report, Lord Laming said:

The Government deserves credit for the legislation and guidance that has been put in place to safeguard children and promote the welfare of children over the last five years. *Every Child Matters* clearly has the support of professionals, across all of the services, who work with children and young people. The interagency guidance *Working Together to Safeguard Children* provides a sound framework for professionals to protect children and promote their welfare . . . However, whilst the improvements in the services for children and families, in general, are welcome it is clear that the need to protect children and young people from significant harm and neglect is ever more challenging. There now needs to be a step change in the arrangements to protect children from harm. It is essential that action is now taken so that as far as humanly possible children at risk of harm are properly protected (Laming, 2009, pp.3-4, original emphasis).

The message was clear. While Lord Laming was supportive, in general, of the recent changes more needed to be done to strengthen child protection. The government accepted all of Lord Laming’s 58 recommendations, 17 of which were to be responded to by a revision of *Working Together* (HM Government, 2009). In addition, there were to be a further six changes that related to the statutory guidance in Chapter 8 on *Serious Case Reviews* together with the government’s commitment to appoint lay members to LSCBs.

Following a public consultation, the revised *Working Together* was published on 17 March 2010 (HM Government, 2010). While the guidance had the same title as both the 1999 and 2006 documents and followed a similar chapter structure and layout, the revisions very much reflected the changing policy and organisational climate of the period after November 2008. The guidance explicitly attempted to respond to the recommendations made in the Laming Report (Laming, 2009) and the *Government Action Plan* (HM Government, 2009); however, the document was much more than this. In attempting to reflect and respond to the changes evident since the last *Working Together* published in April 2006, it becomes apparent how rapidly the field had been changing in other ways. As a result both the length and complexity of the document grew considerably. Concerns about the increased length and complexity of the document were clearly an issue commented on by numerous respondents to the consultation (HM Government, 2010a) and something which government planned to respond to in due course by: producing a navigable web-based version; producing a short practitioner guide; and identifying ways in which the statutory requirements were not obscured by non-statutory guidance.

The expansion and growing complexity of the document was not just reflected in the increased page length, from 231 to 390 pages, but in the huge increase in the number of references (from 78 to 200), internet links (from 69 to 124) and footnotes (from 43 to 273) in just a four-year period. In addition, while the chapter on ‘managing individual cases’ had only increased by one page, to 57 pages, that on ‘Serious Case Reviews’ had increased by eight pages to 23 pages.

In Chapter Six, which outlined and provided references and links to 10 other statutory *Supplementary Guidance* on ‘safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children’, we provided with further evidence of the rate of change since 2006 and that this was only in part as a result of responding to the fall-out from the death of ‘Baby Peter’ and the Laming Report (2009). Ten other pieces of *Supplementary Guidance* were referred to in relation to:

1. Sexually exploited Children (DCSF, 2009), 96 pages
2. Children affected by Gang Activity (HM Government, 2010), 52 pages
3. Fabricated or Induced Illness (F.11) (HM Government, 2008), 88 pages
4. Investigating Complex (Organised or Multiple) Abuse (DH, 2002), 94 pages
5. Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003
6. Forced Marriage and Honour-based Violence (HM Government, 2008a), 26 pages
7. Allegations of Abuse Made against a Person Who Works with Children Appendix 5,  
10 pages
8. Abuse of Disabled Children (DCSF, 2009a), 84 pages
9. Child Abuse Linked to Belief in ‘Spirit Possession’ (AM Government, 2007), 23  
pages
10. Child Victims of Trafficking (HM Government, 2007a), 55 pages.

What this demonstrated was that after the publication of the 2006 *Working Together* (HM Government, 2006) seven additional pieces of supplementary guidance had been published, in effect adding a further 424 pages to *Working Together*. There had been a huge expansion in the amount of government guidance published since 2006.

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In addition, in the 'non-statutory practice guidance' section, there was an updated Chapter Eleven on 'safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children *who may be particularly vulnerable*' (HM Government, 2010, p.292, emphasis added). Here there is additional guidance in relation to:

- children living away from home
- abuse by children and young people
- children whose behaviour indicates a lack of parental control
- race and racism
- violent extremism
- domestic violence
- child abuse and information communication technology (ICT)
- children with families whose whereabouts are unknown
- children who go missing
- children who go missing from education
- children of families living in temporary accommodation
- migrant children
- unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC)

## **Conclusions**

In the spirit of wanting to provide a wide-ranging preventative, early intervention and integrated range of services for children, young people and families which prioritises safeguarding, an increasing number of children and young people could be seen to be falling under the child protection net – a net which has been tightened and regulated in increasingly rigorous ways and where practitioners, managers and politicians were held accountable for

what they did and the decisions they made (Parton, 2006a; 2006b). We have come a long way since the circulation of the early guidance on 'non-accidental injury to children', which established the modern child protection system in 1974.

If the period from 1974-1991, as represented in government guidance, was primarily concerned with establishing systems to encourage professionals to work together primarily for the purposes of identifying child abuse and improving child protection, the period from the mid 1990s to 2006 was concerned with broadening the objects of concern towards safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. The period since 2006 can be seen as trying to ensure that child protection lies at the heart of the expanded focus of concerns and provides the key benchmark for judging the effectiveness of the systems and the performance of managers and practitioners. This has been particularly underlined by the considerable growth in the media, political and public profile of *Serious Case Reviews* since November 2008. *Case Reviews*, and *subsequently Serious Case Reviews*, which had originally been intended to try and avert and pre-empt the considerable media attention previously given to public inquiries in the 1980s now seemed to be having the opposite effect.

What I have argued in this paper is that a historical analysis of official guidance since 1974 provides important insights into the changing nature of child protection policy and practice in England, particularly in terms of its priorities, focus and organisation. Such documents also act to constitute what is meant by child protection or, as in its current incarnation, safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

What is perhaps most striking is how the guidance has grown in size and complexity. Far from emphasising an approach which tries to ensure that agencies and professionals do 'the

relatively straightforward things well' (Laming, 2003, para.1.66) the opposite seems to have been the case. At each point of revision the guidance has grown and, in recent years, this has been dramatic. For any policy maker to attempt to reverse this trend will prove a major challenge. Clearly, there is more to reducing 'unnecessary bureaucracy and regulation' in social work than trying to reduce the size and complexity of child protection guidance. However, I would suggest that the changes in child protection procedures since 1974 has played an important role in transforming the nature of practice and the organisational culture in which the work takes place and where the growth in bureaucracy, regulation and procedures have been central features.

**Table 1: The Changing Structure, Contents and Focus of Government Child Protection Guidance in England 1974-2010**

<b>Document</b>	<b>Number of Pages</b>	<b>Number of Footnotes</b>	<b>Reading Lists, References and Internet Sites</b>	<b>Other Directly Related Documents</b>	<b>Other</b>
1974 <i>Non-Accidental Injury to Children LASSL (74)(13)</i> ( DHSS Circular)	7	1	The footnote included 4 references, 3 of which were previous DHSS circulars	None	-
1988 <i>Working Together: A Guide to Arrangements for Inter-Agency Cooperation for the Protection of Children from Abuse</i> (DHSS and the Welsh Office)	72 (made up of 48 pages of Guidance and 9 Appendices of 24 pages)	None	11	None	Part Five on 'Working Together in Individual Cases' was 13 pages long. For the first time, in Part Nine, a system of Senior Management 'Case Reviews' in cases of child death or serious harm where child abuse was confirmed or suspected (4 pages long) was introduced.
1991 <i>Working Together under the Children Act 1989: A Guide to Arrangements for Inter-Agency Cooperation for the Protection of Children from Abuse</i> (Home Office, Department of Health, Department of Education and Science, the Welsh Office)	126 (made up of 60 pages of Guidance and 9 Appendices of 66 pages)	None	39, of which 35 were HMSO or a Government Department	None	Part 5 on 'Working Together in Individual Cases' was 15 pages long. Section on 'Case Reviews' (now Part 8) 4 pages long

<p>1999 <i>Working Together to Safeguard Children: A Guide to Inter-Agency Working to Safeguard and Promote the Welfare of Children</i> (Department of Health, Home Office and Department for Education and Employment)</p>	<p>119 (made up of 102 pages of Guidance and 6 Appendices of 17 pages)</p>	<p>12</p>	<p>A 'Reading List' (Appendix 6) of 50 References, of which 31 were HMSO/Stationery Office or Government Departments. There were no Internet links/web addresses.</p>	<p>Published at the same time as: Department of Health, Department of Education and Employment, and the Home Office (2000) <i>Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families</i>. Also issued under Section 7 of the LASS Act 1970 and was incorporated into <i>Working Together to Safeguard Children</i></p>	<p>The <i>Assessment Framework</i> was 109 pages long; including 7 Appendices of 20 pages; had a Bibliography of 140 references of which 83 were HMSO/Stationery Office or Government Departments. There were no Internet links/web addresses</p>
<p>2006 <i>Working Together to Safeguard Children: A Guide to Inter-Agency Working to Safeguard and Promote the Welfare of Children</i> (HM Government)</p>	<p>231 pages long, including 155 pages of Statutory Guidance, 30 pages of Non-Statutory Guidance, and 6 Appendices of 28 pages</p>	<p>43</p>	<p>78 References and Internet Links, including 69 Internet Links/Web Addresses, of which 60 were gov.uk</p>	<p><i>Assessment Framework</i> (2000) as in <i>Working Together</i> (1999) above, primarily through the <i>Integrated Children System (ICS)</i></p>	

<p>2010 <i>Working Together to Safeguard Children: A Guide to Inter-Agency Working to Safeguard and Promote the Welfare of Children</i> (HM Government)</p> <p> </p> <p> </p> <p> </p> <p> </p> <p> </p> <p> </p>	<p>399 pages which included: Executive Summary 15 pages; Statutory Guidance 228 pages; Non-Statutory Guidance 51 pages; 6 Appendices of 34 pages</p>	<p>273</p>	<p>200 'References and Internet Links' including 124 with Internet Links/Web Addresses, of which 78 are gov.uk</p>	<p><i>Assessment Framework</i> (2000) as in <i>Working Together</i> (1999) and (2006) above. Chapter 6 on Supplementary Guidance on Safeguarding and Promoting the Welfare of Children makes direct links to other supplementary statutory guidance:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. sexually exploited children (2009) 96 pages</li> <li>2. children affected by gang activity (2010) 52 pages</li> <li>3. fabricated or induced illness (FII) (2008) 88 pages</li> <li>4. investigating complex (organised or multiple) abuse (2002)</li> <li>5. female genital mutilation LA circular 2004</li> <li>6. forced marriage and honour-based violence (2009) 26 pages</li> <li>7. allegations of abuse made against a person who works with children, plus Appendix 5 10 pages</li> <li>8. abuse of disabled</li> </ol>	
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				<p>children (2009) 84 pages</p> <p><u>9.</u> child abuse linked to belief in 'spirit possession' (2007) 23 pages</p> <p><u>10.</u> child victims of trafficking (2007) 55 pages</p>	
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