

Safeguarding Children

Driver – Political

Related Drivers – Equality, Diversity & Human Rights, Neighbourhood Policing, Organised Crime, Violent Crime – Gun and Gang Violence, Violent Crime – Knife Crime, Violent Crime – Sexual Violence, Asset Recovery, Collaborative Working Between Police Forces, Border Security & Immigration, Criminal Legislation, Data Mining, Advances in Technology, Information Sharing, Crime Recording, Human Trafficking, Prostitution, 2012 Olympics, Youth Crime

Background

Safeguarding children became a major political driver in 2003 following the death Victoria Climbié¹ and introduction of the 'Every Child Matters Green Paper'² by the Government. After consultation, 'Every Child Matters: the Next Steps'³ was published and the Children Act 2004⁴ was passed providing services focused around the needs of children, young people and families. All of the agencies involved in the criminal justice system have an important role in helping young people achieve the five Every Child Matters outcomes where every child, whatever their background or their circumstances, to have the support they need to:

- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well-being

Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 places a statutory duty on key people and bodies to make arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The statutory guidance on the duty, which was first issued in 2005, has been updated with the revised version published in April 2007.

The police service has a number of key contributions to make in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. Whilst their principal role is the investigation of child abuse allegations, they also have a key role in preventing crime against or involving children and minimising the potential for children to become victims. According to statutory guidance, the police service shall make the following arrangements:

- Each police force should establish senior management commitment to safeguarding and promoting children's welfare
- Each police force should ensure that police officers and police staff at all levels are aware of their statutory requirements to protect and safeguard the welfare of children.

- In developing their local policing and departmental plans all forces and authorities should: give due consideration to the importance to local communities child protection issues
- Police forces should ensure that appropriate training, processes and procedures are in place to enable all staff to be best able to support the aims and objectives of the Children Act 2004.
- In support of effective interagency working, police forces should participate in Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) in accordance with *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (2006).
- Police forces should make best use of information exchange between agencies.
- In addition, the IMPACT IT programme is being developed to ensure access by police forces and vetting authorities to information and intelligence held by other forces⁵

In 2006, the Government formed Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Centre which is dedicated to eradicating the sexual abuse of children. The CEOP is part of UK policing and their work centres around tracking and bringing offenders to account either directly or in partnership with local and international forces. In 2008, CEOP reported that the most significant trend affecting child sexual abuse online was that of convergence such as social networking sites with instant messaging and photo and video sharing.

Key points in the CEOP Annual Review that took place in 2008/09 are that:

- Grooming is still the number one offence reported to CEOP, although whereas before this was done primarily via instant messaging, a fast growing trend is exploiting children through vast, integrated social networking sites;
- Offenders are increasingly looking to travel to avoid detection. 73% of missing and high risk offenders referred to the CEOP Centre during the past year had either travelled or were located overseas; and
- Offenders are increasingly using peer-to-peer networks and newsgroups rather than commercial pay-per-view sites in order to share images of sexual abuse.⁶

In June 2008, the Government has signed the '*Council of European Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse*'.⁷ The objective of the Convention is to protect children against any form of sexual exploitation or abuse and aims to protect child victims and prosecute perpetrators.

The Government has already responded to the principles laid down in the Convention by amending the Sexual Offences Act 2003 to remove the condition of dual criminality in relation to sexual offences committed by British nationals against children overseas.

In addition, the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008 will allow UK nationals to be prosecuted in the UK for sexual offences committed against a child anywhere in the world, if the act committed is a relevant offences in the is country.

As mentioned in the sexual violence section, the Government published a *Review of the Protection of Children from Sex Offender* for how current arrangement for managing sex offenders who target children could be improved.⁸ In response to the review, the Home Office launched a 12 month Child Sexual Offender Disclosure pilot in four forces in October 2008.⁹

Young runaways are another aspect of safeguarding children. Every year in the UK an estimated 100,000 children and young people run away from home or care, with 1 in 6 ending up on the streets. A report by the Children's Society on the Future of Runaways service, '*Stepping Up: The future of Runaways Services*', reviewed the services and responses provide by local authorities and police forces in respect of children under-16 who run away from home or care.

In respect of police forces, findings from the review showed that:

- 40% of all police forces are not able to access sufficient data to be able to provide information on levels of need
- The 2005 ACPO Guidance on missing persons had a positive impact on local police forces responses to missing children
- 10 out of 27 police forces who responded to the Children's Society state they had young people staying in police stations overnight due to a lack of alternative emergency accommodation.

The results and recommendations from *Stepping Up* include:

- ACPO to issue a national police code on data collection and reporting standards required of police forces relating to missing people
- Annual 'Missing People' conference to act as a reporting window for police to share intelligence and monitoring data from previous years to include monitoring of local authority responses.
- National Police Improvement Agency update the 2005 ACPO guidance on missing persons to address key issues, including the monitoring of social services responses and data consistency.
- Police forces to review implementation of procedures and data standards to ensure that monitoring and recording practices including recording of social services responses, in order to inform planning processes¹⁰

The findings and recommendations from the review fed into the private members bill, Safeguarding Runaway and Missing Children Bill which was planned to allow for targeted early intervention by using data to identify children at risk and involving senior-level

leadership to reduce the number of children who run away.¹¹ Unfortunately this Bill failed in the 2006/07 session.

The third joint chief inspectors' report on the arrangements to safeguard children and young people noted that there is evidence of improvements in children's services and in outcomes for children and young people since the 2007 review but notes certain groups of children still need particular attention to ensure they are safeguarded. These groups are:

- Some children who are looked after by their local authority
- Children who are asylum seekers
- Children and young people in secure settings¹²

Potential Skills Needs

Communication skills – communicate effectively with children and young people

Collaborative working skills – working effectively with colleagues within other forces and other law enforcement agencies to safeguard children both at home and abroad

Covert internet investigations – investigate cases of child sexual abuse online and stay ahead of shifting trends in online child exploitation

Data collection and analysis skills – collect data associated with the welfare of children to help minimise the potential for children to become victims

Inter-agency working skills – to work effectively with two or more governmental agencies

Information sharing skills – to provide effective information to partner agencies regarding the welfare of children

Multi-agency working skills – to work with other agencies to safeguard children

Partnership working skills – to work effectively with other agencies to a common goal and standards

Victim and witness care skills - to treat victims and witnesses appropriately and sensitively

¹ [Lamming, Lord \(2003\) *The Victoria Climbié Inquiry*. Cm 5730, London: Cabinet Office.](#)

² [HM Government \(2003\) *Every Child Matters*. Cm 5860, London: The Stationery Office Ltd.](#)

³ [Department for Education and Skills \(2004\) *Every Child Matters: Next Steps*. Nottingham: Department for Education and Skills.](#)

⁴ [Children Act 2004 \(England & Wales\)](#)

⁵ [Department for Children, Families and Schools \(2007\) *Statutory Guidance on making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children under Section 11 of the Children Act 2004*. Nottingham: Department of Education and Skills.](#)

⁶ [Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre \(2009\) *Annual Review 2008/09*. London: CEOPC](#)

⁷ [Council of Europe \(2008\) Council of European Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse.](#)

⁸ [Ministry of Justice \(2008\) Consultation – Rules for Mandatory Polygraphs for Sex Offenders. CP \(L\) 20/08, London: Ministry of Justice.](#)

⁹ [Direct Gov Press Release, 14 September 2008, 'Keeping Children Safe: the Child Sex Offender Disclosure Pilot'.](#)

¹⁰ [Children's Society \(2007\) Stepping Up: The future of Runaways Services: A review of services in England, proposing 'a national safety net for runaways'. London: Children's Society.](#)

¹¹ [Safeguarding Runaway & Missing Children Bill \(England & Wales\)](#)

¹² [Ofsted \(2008\) Safeguarding Children: The third joint chief inspectors' report on the arrangements to safeguard children. London: Ofsted.](#)