



From Maria to Munro

Safeguarding Children: Procedures, Regulation or Nurturing Relationships?

**Thursday 25 July 2013
10.30am – 4.45pm**

PROGRAMME

- | | |
|-------|---|
| 10.30 | Arrival, registration and refreshments |
| 11.00 | Welcome and introduction to morning session: David Lane |
| 11.15 | Professor Ray Jones: Child protection and safeguarding |
| 12.00 | Sir Roger Singleton: Protection systems: where next? |
| 12.45 | Discussion |
| 13.00 | <i>Lunch</i> |
| 14.00 | Introduction to afternoon session: Charles Sharpe |
| 14.15 | Mark Smith: Bringing up children: a pedagogical perspective |
| 15.00 | Discussion |
| 15.15 | <i>Refreshments</i> |
| 15.45 | Panel and discussion: Where next? |
| 16.30 | Charles Sharpe: In conclusion |
| 16.45 | End of conference |



From Maria to Munro

Safeguarding Children: Procedures, Regulation or Nurturing Relationships?

Thursday 25 July 2013

Conference Notes

Safeguarding Children : achievement or rhetoric?

Safeguarding children is officially defined as:

'The process of protecting children from abuse or neglect, preventing impairment of their health and development, and ensuring they are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care that enables children to have optimum life chances and enter adulthood successfully.' **Ofsted (2005)**

The claim made for the concept of "safeguarding children" is that it is comprehensive and goes beyond what its proponents describe as "basic child protection". The new view is that "safeguarding children" deals with a wider spectrum of issues than what we have come to know as child protection. Safeguarding children, it is suggested, provides effective child protection though the latter is only a part of wider work to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Safeguarding children also demands that all agencies and individuals should aim to be proactive in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children so that the need to protect children from harm is reduced. (*Department of Education, 2013*).

In our conference we will trace the narrative of the history of what has come to be known as "safeguarding children" and we will also hope to examine the claim that "safeguarding children" really does represent a paradigm shift from what was termed "child protection" to the extent that it will help all children and make all children safer.

From the Maria Colwell Report of 1974 through to the Munro Review of Child Protection in 2011 there is a sense in which "child protection" has grown into a huge empire in the social work school of professional thought. Certainly, it has engendered a continuous production line of different policies and procedures. This process is still alive and working among us without, it seems, ever creating a situation with which we can rest more easily. More importantly, there are still many children who live in poverty, who suffer neglect, who fail to flourish, who do not enjoy good health; and there are still children who are the victims of emotional, physical and sexual abuse.

It has been suggested that the problem with child protection is that, in a way, it has become an institution with some of the flaws characteristic of big institutions. It was born out of professional failure and the tragic death of a child, and it sustains itself in the aftermath of further tragedies by producing literature and teaching which speaks of “imperatives”, which in turn cultivates a blame culture when things go wrong. It is a system which says, after the event, “Why didn’t we do a risk assessment?” rather than saying a priori “Now, have we made sure our children have what they need to see them happily through today?”

There are those who would argue that the formal safeguarding risk assessment procedures we have in place to safeguard children are too impersonal and inorganic. Too often they disregard the views of children and parents alike. These people would suggest that it might be better to approach “child protection “ in a fundamentally different way, by providing unhappy children with the kind of natural nurturing relationships they need with adults: relationships uncluttered by the requirements of regulation and procedure. This, of course, might necessitate not only the provision of means to train people to develop their already naturally-held nurturing capabilities in order to extend these to the care of other people’s children. For this scenario to flourish there may be a need to cultivate a more nurturing social climate within our wider community if children are to be safeguarded.

On the surface, safeguarding children appears to be straightforward: something that should just happen; yet it evokes contentious and complex issues as well as many ideas about how these would be best approached. Our hope for the conference is that it will stimulate us to pursue, discuss and debate these ideas as well as the many others that will arise during the day.