

**NSPCC Summary of Recommendations in response to *Staying Safe*  
(Department for Children, Schools and Families 2007)**

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We welcome the government's statement that keeping children and young people safe is a top priority to make the most of their talents and new opportunities to fulfil their potential. This challenge is enormous.

Given the will, all cruelty can be prevented. In order to achieve this, it is vital that all children, whatever their needs, have a range of services that are flexible and offer them support and protection.

Although significant steps have been made to improve the safety and protection of children, many children are not respected and treated as equal citizens with rights of their own, but as adjuncts of their parents.

The Every Child Matters (ECM) programme and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) should provide the basis for the development of the Children's Plan and the *Staying Safe* strategy.

An effective safeguarding strategy is one that understands the management of risk to be part of child development, and enables children to contribute to the development of the services they receive, and the management of the spaces they occupy or share with adults, in ways that are both age-appropriate, and attentive to children's own views about their safety.

Developing a more coherent and long term strategy to keep children safe will take more in depth discussions and development. Six things the government could set in motion today to keep children safe are:

1. Equal protection for all children
2. Recognition that maltreatment and abuse is a complex phenomenon which will require intensive and multi-agency responses
3. Statutory provision of Personal, Social, Health and Education
4. Improved training for health visitors and universal service providers
5. National Self Harm and Suicide Prevention Plan for Children and Young People
6. Ensure all community groups receive the support they need from Government to make sure children using their services are safe.

## **Summary of recommendations**

### **1. Making 'safeguarding children is everyone's responsibility' a reality**

1a. A new debate is needed nationally, and within communities, based on evidence of: what constitutes abuse, whose responsibility it is to tackle it, how people can protect children, the role of the community and the role of public services.

1b. National and local awareness-raising programmes should challenge false beliefs, and convince people they personally can both prevent abuse and protect children. Mass media must be engaged to change attitudes and behaviour, using social marketing techniques rather than straightforward information-giving.

1c. To help adults take responsibility, mechanisms will be needed to encourage those who need help or advice to find a route to obtain it.

1d. Confidential spaces for children and adults should be developed to enable them to talk through their concerns and to understand the consequences of taking action to stop the abuse.

1e. Adults involved in sports and hobby clubs need to have training so that they understand the nature and prevalence of abuse including physical abuse and neglect and have the knowledge about what action to take.

1f. Government must ensure that all organisations providing activities for children and young people had satisfactory safeguarding policies in place in order to qualify for funding.

1g. The Government must update *Safe from Harm*.

## 2. Safeguarding children in minority communities

2a. Better family support services are needed for Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) families to share concerns, teach self-help skills in order to improve parenting skills and address change family structure.

2b. Good community relations with BME communities are vital to ending cruelty to children.

2c. Information materials which are accessible in culturally appropriate languages and images should be developed to improve uptake of services in BME communities.

2d. Sustainable funding needs to be given to BME organisations in the voluntary sector, to allow them to develop, invest and plan for the future.

2e. Government must run awareness campaigns targeted at specific communities about the risks of abuse and cruelty to their children.

2f. Government should review the current child protection system and the extent to which it protects disabled children and develop a coherent national strategy to safeguard deaf and disabled children.

2g. Relevant Government departments, and other funders of research, should seek to develop a body of research to better protect disabled children.

2h. The new Child Death Overview Panels must ensure that they report thoroughly on the deaths of disabled children.

2i. Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) should develop local multi-agency safeguarding strategies for disabled children.

2j. Children and young people should who are deaf or disabled should also have access to interpreters including sign language interpreters.

### 3. Local Safeguarding Children Boards

3a. The Government should make a proportionate contribution to the running costs of LSCBs.

3b. There is a need to refocus on core child protection work and to ensure that children at risk are properly protected before LSCBs seek to take on a wider safeguarding agenda.

3c. There should be a requirement for adult mental health representatives to attend LSCBs.

3d. LSCBs must include within their business plan and working procedures the needs of children and families affected by parental issues such as domestic violence, parental substance misuse, parental mental illness or parental learning or physical disability.

### 4. Support for parents

4a. Adults need to be better equipped about the risks of the internet and new technologies.

4b. Parents need information about risks of harm faced by their children and how to manage them.

4c. Government should make resources available for the provision of parenting education programmes that are accessible to all parents and carers of babies and toddlers.

4d. Parents should be routinely invited to these programmes in the same way that they are invited to attend ante-natal classes. These programmes should be delivered by the NHS through existing structures and Sure Start schemes.

4e. The Government must develop a national information strategy for parents. This should be similar to NHS Direct where information is delivered through a national helpline and signposts users to other resources.

### 5. Protecting children and young people from harm

5a. The Government and professionals need to recognise the serious implications of poor adult mental health for the safety and protection of children.

5b. A review should be undertaken of the impact of Section 120 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002, which extended the definition of significant harm (Section 31 Children Act 1989) to include seeing or hearing violence against another.

5c. Mental health workers should also be physically located in child protection (CP) teams and there should be a requirement on mental health services to share information with CP teams to prevent harm and ensure the needs of the child are assessed.

5d. The Government must better identify and protect trafficked children and ensure they are provided with care within a clear child protection framework regardless of their immigration status.

5e. More training and resources are need for professionals to ensure better understanding of the meaning of significant harm.

5f. The Government must develop a plan on sexual exploitation to reduce the risk of children being sexually exploited.

5g. The Government must recognise that children can also be victims of sexual violence and need specific services, including therapeutic support, to help them overcome their experience.

5h. Mediation services should also be developed to mediate between children and families who are engaging in bullying outside school. The mediation service should be linked to the local safety groups and youth offending teams and be available to all services provided to children and young people where bullying is prevalent to mediate and provide reconciliation services.

5i. There must be greater provision of perpetrator programmes for men who are violent towards women need to learn new, appropriate responses to feelings of jealousy and aggression.

5j. Although there are criminal sanctions currently in place that can be used to prevent forced marriages taking place, we urge the government to consider a criminal offence to force someone into marriage.

5k. The best interests principle as set out in the UNCRC must be the starting point in protecting and safeguarding children who are crossing UK borders.

5l. The Government must remove its reservation to Article 22 of the UNCRC which effectively legitimises unequal treatment of vulnerable children by both central government and local service providers.

5m. The government must commit to collating data to properly determine the nature and extent of child trafficking in the UK.

5n. Immigration service staff must have training covering the specific issues faced by children seeking asylum in the UK.

5o. The government should develop clear guidance for staff when they are interviewing asylum-seeking children.

## 6. Universal services

6a. The Government must examine evidence relating to infant mental health and early brain development, and make it available to local PCT commissioners to persuade them to invest in parenting and health visiting services.

6b. Every child in the UK should have access to comprehensive school counselling services.

## 7. Professionals

7a. Social practice educators must keep up to date with current social work practice through, for example, periodic secondments into practice.

7b. Consideration should be given to a common foundation year for those considering gaining a degree to enter the children's workforce.

7c. A reward strategy for social workers backed up with sufficient resources is needed. Such a strategy must include greater harmonisation of pay and reward across the children's workforce and transferability of pensions across professions and between the statutory, private and voluntary sectors.

7d. Consideration should also be given to the use of one-off joining payments, such as those used in teaching to attract people to unpopular subject areas.

7e. The Government must address the working conditions of frontline staff in the children's workforce.

7f. Fast track routes to social work for graduates with relevant experience should be introduced. These could follow a similar model to that used in teaching, provided sufficient measures are in place to ensure competent practice and to maintain quality.

7g. The Government should develop a beacon award specifically for child safeguarding.

## 8. Multi-agency working

8a. The Government should commit to collating information from Serious Case Reviews and producing an annual report about the key issues and findings to disseminate to LSCBs to help ensure repeated mistakes are avoided and the learning from cases guides practice.

8b. Greater priority needs to be given to collaboration and inter-agency working between organisations providing services to meet adult needs, such as domestic violence, substance misuse, mental illness, learning disability and housing and those working primarily with children.

8c. Joint multi-agency training for all staff should be promoted to ensure better understanding of the roles and responsibilities of professionals working in different organisations, their different thresholds for services, the legal frameworks within which they work, and issues surrounding confidentiality and information sharing.

8d. Agreed protocols between adult and children services should be developed to guide practitioners in making professional judgements about what to share, in what circumstances, and for what purposes.

#### 9. Therapeutic services

9a. Every child who has been abused should have access to therapeutic services.

9b. Specialist therapeutic services for parents who are adult survivors of abuse should be provided.