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Introduction: Safeguarding Children?

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The true measure of a nation's standing is how well it attends to its children – their health and safety, their material security, their education and socialization, and their sense of being loved, valued, and included in the families and societies into which they are born. (United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 2007, p. 1)

There can be little doubt that statements from recent New Labour governments accord with the above extract from UNICEF's 2007 *Report Card* – that the lives and well-being of children and young people provide an important measure of a nation's standing. Children and young people, at least at a policy level, are central to what Giddens (1998) has described as New Labour's Social Investment State. Yet when we examine the findings of the UNICEF report, the condition of children in the United Kingdom (UK) is found to be wanting in many respects. Of the 21 countries detailed in the report, the UK performed poorly across a range of indicators of child well-being. Of the six dimensions examined in the report, the UK was in the bottom third in five of them (behaviour and risks, educational well-being, family and peer relationships, material well-being and subjective well-being) and achieved an overall bottom position against the 21-comparator countries.

The government's response to the claims of UNICEF was to deny that much was wrong with the lot of children in the late modern UK. According to a letter from the Minister for Children, Young People and Families, Beverley Hughes MP (The *Guardian*, 16 February 2007), UNICEF's data was out of date and that the government's successes in terms of reducing child poverty and bettering educational achievement were more recent than the data allowed for. Even if such arguments were accepted, and as several chapters in this book suggest they should not be, further concerns about the position of children in the UK were highlighted the following year in a report from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 2008).

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The 2008 UNCRC report criticized the UK for not adhering to the UNCRC in several areas of policy, most notably criminal justice and education. In particular, concerns with Anti-social Behaviour Orders were raised, and questions were asked about whether such orders could be reconciled with those aspects of the Convention that relate to the best interests of the child and the development of their personality (UNCRC, 2008). In addition, the dispersal of young people, especially using police powers and ultrasound devices (such as the Mosquito 'Anti-social' Device), were thought to undermine the right to free association and there was concern with the lack of input children had in decisions that led to the restriction of their liberty (UNCRC, 2008). In brief, children were held to be poorly served in the UK because of a lack of commitment to the UNCRC, with it being noted that 'certain regulations were in direct conflict with the Convention' (UNCRC, 2008, para. 7).

These damning reports from extra-national organizations are to some extent surprising, because, as noted, it would appear that recent UK governments have been genuinely concerned with the well-being of children. Yet, these findings, and indeed, many organizations representing children and young people in the UK (Howard League for Penal Reform, 2008; UK Children's Commissioners, 2008) clearly raise questions about a seeming incongruence between discursive commitments to children and young people and the realities of their lives, particularly those who are most vulnerable. It is with this seeming incongruence that this volume is concerned.

Critical Perspectives on Safeguarding Children brings together contributors from different disciplinary backgrounds who share in common a concern regarding the direction of social policy with respect to safeguarding children in the UK and who seek to investigate both the coherence and effectiveness of New Labour's policies for *all* children. Drawing contributing authors from criminology, education, geography, health, philosophy, social policy and social work, this volume offers a multi-disciplinary analysis of the New Labour safeguarding project and identifies a number of key limitations which, contributors argue, undermine aspirations to improve the well-being of all children. While much of the critique centres on England and Wales, the book will appeal to a wide readership, given New Labour's reach across the devolved contexts of the UK and the commonalities that the Anglophone countries of Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the United States of America (USA) share in cognate systems of child welfare and protection.

Safeguarding children: a multi-disciplinary analysis

This book has arisen from conversations that took place between members of staff in the Department of Applied Social Science at Lancaster University who came together to discuss discontents about New Labour's social policies for children and families and the prospects for the ambitious *Every Child Matters*:

Change for Children Programme (Department for Education and Skills [DfES], 2004). Catalysed by the 2007 UNICEF report, our intention was to produce a critical text that would draw on our diverse disciplinary backgrounds and bring together some of our growing apprehensions about the safeguarding agenda. As the book took shape, the constituency of the Lancaster group evolved; Janet Jamieson left to take up a post at Liverpool John Moores University and Peter Hopkins migrated to the University of Newcastle. We also called on the assistance of Malcolm Hill based at the University of Glasgow, Andy Pithouse based at the University of Cardiff and Sue Peckover from the University of Huddersfield, to consolidate our project.

In order to appraise New Labour's safeguarding agenda, which is in itself increasingly multi-disciplinary, *Critical Perspectives on Safeguarding Children* considers how child welfare and protection are conceptualized and enacted across diverse fields of policy and provision. In the spirit of 'joined-up government', successive Labour governments have, through a series of incremental steps, culminating in the Green Paper, *Every Child Matters* (Chief Secretary to the Treasury, 2003), enlisted the Home Office (HO), the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), the Department of Health (DoH) and the now Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) in the project of safeguarding children. This volume aims to elucidate some of the tensions and inconsistencies both *between* and *within* the various policy areas that these ministries have responsibility for and which 'safeguarding' encompasses.

Safeguarding children: key themes

Early in office, New Labour made a number of confident pledges to children and families, most notably a desire to end child poverty by 2020. A broader safeguarding agenda emerged as concerns about social exclusion coalesced with the more traditional concerns of child protection. The language of safeguarding appeared with the advent of the Children Act 1989, but it was through the New Labour project that, arguably, the family support aspects of this act and a broader notion of 'safeguarding' became central to policy discourses through the introduction of *Working Together to Safeguard Children: A Guide to Inter-agency Working to Safeguard and Promote the Welfare of Children* (DoH, 1999) and the *Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families* (DoH *et al.*, 2000).

These developments were taken further with the publication of the Green Paper, *Every Child Matters* (Chief Secretary to the Treasury, 2003) and the passage of the Children Act 2004. While ostensibly responding to the tragic death of Victoria Climbié, the Every Child Matters (ECM) agenda provided the thinking and legislative framework that would further broaden the scope for prevention and early intervention, with the central aim of ensuring the well-being of all children. Nowhere is this more evident than in the priority outcome statements for

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children, outlined in the *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* programme (DfES, 2004). These statements are that children should achieve economic well-being, be healthy, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and stay safe. They are clearly a far cry from the narrow categories of child protection that dominated practice during the 1980s and 1990s. Thus, we see bold attempts by New Labour to very significantly transform preventative and protective services for children and families.

Given what appears a very positive agenda for children, which seeks to prevent, support and ameliorate childhood harms and disadvantage, how can it be the case this agenda has faltered, such that influential extra-national organizations can give the UK a very poor ranking in their comparative analyses? Of course, the government points to 'local implementation failures' – as the recent case of Baby P demonstrates – rather than failures of policy *per se*. However, chapters in our volume offer alternative explanations. In critiquing New Labour's approach to safeguarding children, this volume aims to shift thinking beyond the persuasive mantras of New Labour, towards detailed examination of the conceptual, ideological and political commitments that underpin New Labour's approach to safeguarding children, commitments that, at best, appear to hinder progress and, at worst, are fatally flawed. In addition, and bound up with these concerns, contributors to this volume also critically examine New Labour's particular approach to policy-making and organizational change. While each contributor brings their own particular interests and understandings to this volume, the following concerns have motivated our contributors:

- There is a serious mismatch between the inclusive rubric of New Labour's safeguarding agenda and the reality of the lives of many of the most vulnerable children and young people.
- New Labour's hegemonic interest in children as future citizen-workers has led to an increasingly narrow and regulated approach to both childhood and parenting.
- New Labour's favoured concept of active citizenship, which places primacy on economic rather than social rights underpinned by a strong moral ethic of self-governance and civic duty, has legitimated a more punitive approach to welfare delivery for those unable to 'play by the rules'.
- Early intervention may be neither positive nor benign, and this is most notable in the field of criminal justice.
- A preoccupation with identifying, assessing and intervening on the basis of 'risk' serves to individualize social problems and to mask the structural, political and individual inequalities which often characterize the lives of vulnerable children and their families.
- The pace of policy-making and rolling out of initiatives has created a confusing and fragmented landscape of welfare provision which, while aiming to produce 'joined-up' solutions for children and families, may have had the contrary effect.

- The size of investment in changes to the infrastructure of safeguarding has been at the expense of investment in areas of policy, notably housing, the tackling of wage inequality and further investment in childcare provision, that might have had a more direct bearing on the lives of children and families.

We briefly introduce these themes here, but they are developed in the analyses of the following chapters.

Safeguarding: a ‘Third Way’?

Safeguarding children is a practical, ethical, but also profoundly political activity. In order to understand social policies with respect to children and families, we need to understand something of the broader welfare commitments of particular governments. A great deal has been written about the ‘Third Way’ (see, for example, Blair, 1998; Giddens, 1998, 2000), but here we briefly consider some of the basic tenets of this approach and how they relate to safeguarding. The ‘Third Way’, for many analysts, represents a compromise between the ‘old’ Left and the New Right, the social justice of the former delivered through the ‘free’ markets of the latter (see Blair, 1998; Giddens, 1998, 2000). In this sense, state interventions are argued to have a dual role; to strengthen the operation of ‘free’ markets while affording individuals protection, albeit at a low level, from market failures and inefficiencies. As contributors to this volume identify, the main problem of the union of social justice with ‘free’ markets in the ‘Third Way’ is that in the UK, this union has been rather one-sided; the emphasis has been upon buttressing ‘free’ markets at the expense of social justice concerns. It is this ‘bias’ in welfare policy that has led to key analysts claiming that New Labour’s so-called Social Investment State continues many of the neo-liberal commitments of the former Conservative administration, leading to inevitable inequalities (Perkins *et al.*, 2004).

As discussed in a number of chapters in this volume, New Labour’s primary commitment to the free market impacts significantly on those who are most vulnerable (or who fall into vulnerability) because, as Jessop (1994, p. 24) has argued, the re-ordering of social policy in a neo-liberal economic context involves subordinating ‘social policy to the needs of labour market flexibility and/or to the constraints of international competition’. This subordination has resulted in UK governments tolerating high levels of economic inequality, out-of-work benefit levels that are below the government’s own measure of poverty and conditionality attached to benefits that has, over the past decade, become increasingly punitive and wider in coverage (Grover, 2008).

When we draw on political-economic analyses we can begin to understand some of the mismatch between the rhetoric and the reality of the ‘Third Way’ in delivering inclusive policies that will secure the well-being of all children.

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While New Labour's social policies clearly acknowledge the links between socio-economic circumstances and outcomes for children, 'Third Way' policies are seemingly ineffective in challenging structural inequalities and the poverty that ensues. To understand why this is so, it is important to consider Labour's changing policy position with respect to explanations of poverty and inequality.

The 'Third Way' is not concerned with inequality of outcome. In contrast, it is concerned with inequality of opportunity, a meritocratic notion that is premised upon the idea that, beyond the very minimum, the distribution of material resources is not important, providing that individuals have an *equal* chance of securing them through legitimate means. In a number of chapters in this volume, the contributors make reference to the concept of 'active citizenship' that underpins New Labour's approach to tackling inequality. Contributors argue that notions of active citizenship assume a level playing field and give little credence to the limits for social mobility in the UK. In addition, issues of disability, mental ill health, neighbourhood disadvantage, gender and ethnicity all structure life chances. Narrowly focused on civic duty and an ethic of self-governance, New Labour is rather stunted in viewing life chances as simply a matter of individuals choosing the 'right' path out of disadvantage, primarily through education and paid work.

Responsibilization, remoralization and adulteration

The idea of the 'Third Way', however, is not just structured by economic concerns. It also has a very strong moral dimension (cf. Rose, 2000) that, although not necessarily discreet from economic concerns, we have separated for analytical purposes. The moral aspects of the 'Third Way' have involved what is described as 'responsibilization' and 'remoralization'. While it would be wrong to suggest that concerns with responsibilities and morals only emerged with the election of New Labour in 1997, it is the case that since 1997 responsibilities and morality have become increasingly important to policy-related discourses and policy interventions. In this sense, New Labour have gone further than previous Conservative administrations in structuring social welfare interventions through concerns with moral standards and the responsibilities of individuals and families.

Of relevance to New Labour's safeguarding agenda is the resultant, and increasing, transfer of responsibilities from the state to children, young people and families. As we have noted, the Social Investment State places great store on the capacity of individuals to avail themselves of the opportunities available to them to secure their own well-being. It is argued (Jamieson, 2008) that the focus upon responsibilities in the 'Third Way' has been informed by the American moral philosopher, Amitai Etzioni (1993, 1995) who calls for a rebalancing of rights and responsibilities. For Etzioni, any rights that are conferred upon individuals and/or their dependent children, bring a set of responsibilities that must be

fulfilled in order to access those rights. This is where the New Labour mantra, 'no rights without responsibilities' comes from. As contributors to this volume demonstrate, this mantra has created a set of problems for the safeguarding agenda because (a) it legitimates a more coercive approach to welfare – welfare-related services are seen to have a key role in shaping the values and moral character of its recipients – and (b) it detracts from the social-structural antecedents of disadvantage/need that have a direct bearing on children's welfare (Deacon, 2002). The more corrosive aspects of the rights and responsibilities agenda are discussed in a number of chapters in this volume that draw attention to the iatrogenic effect of New Labour's risk management influenced 'early intervention agenda' that, for example, has resulted in the increasing criminalization of children and young people.

The concept of remoralization is linked to that of responsabilization and refers to the belief that the economic and social dilemmas of late modern society are the consequence of a decline in moral standards, a decline in the moral fibre of individuals and neighbourhoods. In the UK such ideas have been most clearly expressed in concerns about illegitimacy, single parenthood, teenage pregnancy and welfare 'dependency', which, it is argued, have demoralized large numbers of the UK's population (Muncie, 2008a). In order to address these issues and the social and economic dilemmas that are held to be a consequent of them, it is remoralization that is needed. Such arguments, for instance, can be used to explain the increasing number of policies and Acts of Parliament that are aimed at bettering parenting. Indeed, the idea of a 'parenting deficit' (Etzioni, 1993) has, in many ways, come to define the remoralization agenda (Muncie, 2008a).

Responsibilization and remoralization come together in relation to issues that acutely affect the children of economically poor parents, for increasingly they frame access to a range of universal (for instance, education) and more selective (for example, social housing and various social security benefits) welfare benefits and services. The most important implication of the 'rights and responsibilities' agenda for 'safeguarding' children is that it introduces tensions into the 'safeguarding' agenda, because its concern with the well-being of children becomes contingent upon the behaviour and actions of children themselves or that of their parents.

Linked to both responsabilization and remoralization is the concept of 'adulteration'. This concept is mainly used in the youth justice literature to refer to the ways in which over recent years children have been treated in a manner that is increasingly similar to the ways in which adults are treated in the criminal justice system (Muncie, 2008b). In England and Wales, for example, the abolition of *doli incapax*, the possibility of imprisoning children from the age of 12 years and the application of the 'grave crime' provisions point to adulteration (Muncie, 2008b). Adulteration is linked to the concepts of remoralization and responsabilization because it is premised upon the idea that, like adult offenders, child and young offenders, are fully responsible for their actions; that 'child offending is a product of free will and volition and that all offenders should be

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made fully accountable for their actions' (Muncie, 2008b, p. 10). This view of the moral culpability of children who offend is problematic because it divorces such actions from their material and emotional circumstances that, as we shall see, are often acutely deprived.

The risk paradigm

New Labour is preoccupied not only with the morals and responsibilities of individuals and families but also with 'risks'. The acceptance of 'risk' within New Labour's approach to policy-making is clearly signalled in Blair's acknowledgement that 'risk management ... is now central to the business of good government' (Blair, 2002, p. 2). Thus, social problems are being increasingly conceptualized in terms of individuals, families, communities and populations deemed to be 'at risk', with interventions targeted to prevent and or ameliorate these risks. Ultimately the management of risk aims to limit the potential for children and young people to develop persistent and intractable patterns of problem behaviour.

While ostensibly concerned with managing uncertainty, given changing social and economic conditions that are perceived to increase risks, the growth and acceptance of the actuarial influenced risk management paradigm within approaches to safeguarding children when examined in detail, finds close links to the responsibilization elements of the 'Third Way' agenda as outlined above. A focus on risk serves to individualize and personalize the problems and vulnerabilities faced by young people and to cut these off from the social, material and cultural context in which they should be situated. This individualization of social problems also serves to mask the responsibilities that the government owes to those children, and their families, whose lived reality is such that they often lack the means and willingness to become the active, economically contributing and law-abiding citizens envisaged in the Every Child Matters policy documents.

As various chapters within this volume highlight, the risk management agenda also has important repercussions for the interactions and interventions that professionals are able to pursue with children and their families. Risk management is premised on structured assessment tools which identify and assess 'risk' as a means to determine the level and specificities of the intervention deemed necessary. A focus on risk is seen to increase the consistency and rigour of assessment and to enable practitioners to adopt a more focused approach to intervention; however, this focus can also conflate and indeed, obscure 'needs'. The risk imperative may also serve to constrain and undermine professional practice and discretion. For example, with specific regard to youth justice, Muncie (1999, p. 150) argues that the prioritization of risk removes such 'transformative' concerns as individual need, diagnosis, rehabilitation and reformation which in effect 'shifts the entire terrain of law and order from one of understanding criminal motivation to one of simply making crime tolerable through systemic co-ordination'.

The contested nature of childhood in late modern society: New Labour's policy response

The observations we have made about New Labour's 'Third Way' are important in understanding the social meaning(s) that it attaches to childhood. The meaning of childhood is increasingly contested in late modern Britain. On the one hand, children are deemed to be in need of protection from economic and social practices and structures, and from other people who threaten various aspects of their well-being, yet, at the same time, children's agency and their right to self-determination is emphasized (Prout, 2006). In addition, discourses of globalization and a belief that global economic competition requires a highly skilled and flexible workforce has given further priority to childhood as a period of 'investment' – with increasing attention paid to the risks to skill and social capital accumulation arising from 'anti-social' or offending behaviour. Arguably, and faced with these irrefutable tensions, any government will struggle to produce a coherent policy and legislative framework for 'safeguarding' children. However, for New Labour the most pressing concern is that 'support for today's disadvantaged children' will 'help to ensure a more flexible economy tomorrow' (HM Treasury, 2003, para. 5.4).

Social meanings are always contingent, with different societies at various periods in history prioritizing different risks or needs. New Labour's Social Investment State draws children into concerns with the longer-term reproduction of the neo-liberal economic order. As Piper (2008, p. 19) notes:

The notion of investment is rooted in a particular set of ideas about childhood which construct it as a period of preparation for an economically active and useful working life and for a life-time of law-abiding and making positive contributions to the society.

A close reading of the ECM agenda finds that this theme runs throughout policy documents. It can be argued that ECM is concerned with the child as 'citizen-worker-of-the future' (Williams, 2004, p. 408). Drawing upon Fawcett *et al.* (2004), Lister (2006) argues that this means *Every Child Matters* is more concerned with children as 'becomings', rather than 'beings' and this is problematic because it ignores the views of children that were expressed in the ECM consultation process that clearly emphasized the importance of recreational activities and spaces for children (DfES, 2005). Unfortunately, this is common in the social policy-making process and relates to the ways in which children are constructed in policy-making. Rather than being seen as people with particular needs and voices, children are often seen as a threat to social and economic order or as a 'form of human capital, to be protected and developed' (Ridge, 2002, p. 6).

As many of the contributions to this volume attest, an analysis of New Labour's social policies finds initiatives weighted towards early intervention. They are pre-emptive. This focus is legitimated through an associated rhetoric

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of economic concerns that foreground costs to the state of children's failure to secure the necessary skills, qualifications and moral dispositions for their future as citizen-workers. Of course, for New Labour concern with children's failure to accumulate social capital in childhood not only reflects anxieties about problems of employability or contribution in adulthood, but also criminality. What we see under New Labour are increasing incursions into the lives of children and their families. Childhood is increasingly regulated. For example, the introduction of the *Birth to Three Matters* framework (DfES, 2002) now means that no part of childhood is exempt from developmental prescription. In addition, further incursions into the lives of families during the early years are legitimated on account of the need to identify not only children, but also infants 'at-risk' of future failings.

It is with respect to the primacy placed on children's contribution to the future economic good that we can understand differential commitment to diverse groups of children, *despite* the language of ECM. New Labour's safeguarding policies are inconsistent with respect to the less 'popular' social groups of children and young people. In particular, children whose residence may be seen as transitory hold a weak place, as they are not easily conceptualized as citizen-workers of the future. Likewise children in conflict with the law are deemed to be threatening and as such forfeit any right they may have had to be 'safeguarded'. Yet, it is often just such children who require most protection.

Children's services: unremitting change in pursuit of the 'joined-up' solution?

An analysis of New Labour's safeguarding project would be incomplete without consideration of New Labour's very significant investment in the re-engineering of organizational and bureaucratic structures that are seen as central to the delivery of its vision. Early in office, New Labour announced an intention to 'modernize' public services (Cabinet Office, 1999). This essentially amounted to a reform of public services in keeping with the 'Third Way's' commitment to a mixed market of welfare services, but with a new approach to dispersed government founded on a belief in the effectiveness of local networks and partnerships. As a number of our contributors highlight, New Labour's commitment to dispersed government signified a significant shift away from hierarchical bureaucracy, with what was seen as a shift in the balance of power and decision-making to stakeholders, most notably local authorities. 'Modernized' services would deliver centrally driven government ambitions, but through locally negotiated plans, systems and protocols. Of course, this vision required effective collaboration at a local level and, thus, emerged New Labour's mantras of 'joined-up services' and 'seamless solutions'. However, the promise of the seamless delivery of services based on careful local analysis of need and collaborative planning has resulted in an unremitting stream of inter- and intra-organizational changes that, while seeking to remove perceived financial, regulatory and structural obstacles to effective collaboration, may have created further obstacles to good practice.

Since New Labour's arrival in government in 1997 problems in collaboration between agencies, identified in numerous reports of failures to safeguard children, have become a central plank for the safeguarding project. In particular, this line of attribution, which is central in the analyses of the Victoria Climbié inquiry, has served to legitimate the ECM reforms that have required far more radical and far-reaching bureaucratic and organizational change (Laming, 2003). An ever-expanding set of initiatives aims to compel agencies to work more closely together in the name of providing more effective services for children. Children's Trusts, the Common Assessment Framework, ContactPoint, the co-location of workers, joint education and social services appointments, protocols for joint care planning and complaints procedures, as well as pooled budgets and joint commissioning, are all attempts to build a truly integrated service as outlined under ECM (Chief Secretary to the Treasury, 2003).

As the Integrated Children's System (ICS) falters and Children's Trusts receive a pessimistic report from the Audit Commission (Audit Commission, 2008), the observations of critics such as Dowling *et al.* (2004), that New Labour's reforms are complex, costly and possibly dysfunctional, are prescient. During the three New Labour governments, jaundiced organizations and practitioners have been subject to ever more complex and ambitious reforms that in terms of the vision of organizational reform to promote joined up working, may actually have had the contrary effect. As a number of contributions to this volume attest, relentless change in organizational roles and responsibilities can damage, rather than improve, the inter-organizational communication channels, decision processes and shared understandings required for effective collaborative working. Moreover, critics argue that it is only through the day-to-day micro activities and relationship building processes that the shared project of collaborative working can be achieved (McMurray, 2007; Reder and Duncan, 2003). Technical fixes and formal governmental structures are deterministic in their vision, placing great store in compliance through New Performance Management, but they ignore the social context of collaboration that has more to do with 'unwritten and largely non-verbalized sets of congruent expectations held by the transacting parties about each other's prerogatives and obligations' (Ring and Van de Ven, 1994, p. 100).

The problem with New Labour's vision for integrated services is that there is little analysis of their effectiveness or practicability. This is a very important point, because limited public funds mean that money invested in the infrastructure of safeguarding is at the expense of alternative forms of social investment.

Outline of the book

In chapter 2, Carolyn Taylor traces a recent history of child welfare in the UK by looking back over four decades of state intervention that have seen significant changes in government approaches to safeguarding children. This chapter serves to remind readers of the important antecedents of New Labour's safeguarding

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agenda. Carolyn's chapter expands on the themes that we have begun to chart in this introduction and provides both a detailed description and analysis of safeguarding within New Labour's 'Social Investment State'.

Further context setting material is provided in chapter 3 and 4 from David Archard and Chris Grover. In chapter 3, and focusing on the central issue of children's rights, David Archard debates the extent to which the commitments of the UNCRC are reflected in the ECM agenda. This chapter is followed by a detailed analysis of the issue of child poverty in chapter 4, with Chris Grover providing a damning critique of New Labour's failure to tackle growing social inequalities, of which the most unacceptable is poverty. The chapter argues that judging by the fact that the government has been unable to meet its own interim targets for tackling child poverty, this policy is likely to fail mainly because of the narrowness of an approach that focuses almost exclusively upon paid work. The chapter argues that governments' lack of success in tackling child poverty is problematic for the safeguarding agenda because it means that the 'economic well-being' outcome of *Every Child Matters* is likely to remain unfulfilled. In this case, children who live in financially poor families appear to be on the margins of the safeguarding agenda.

Chapters 5 and 6 then consider issues of communication and collaboration that are central concerns for New Labour. Chapter 5 provides an analysis of the evidence of the Common Assessment Framework's (CAF's) implementation, clearly illustrating that it is naïve to think that government can simply legislate for 'partnership'. As Andy Pithouse and Karen Broadhurst describe, practitioners bring their own 'qualitative test' to bear on so-called policy goods, and where discretion has not been entirely squeezed out through workflow systems such as ICS, they will choose to take or leave new policy initiatives depending on their fitness for purpose. In chapter 6, Sue White argues that the Laming reforms that have sought to address the communication failures evident in the case of Victoria Climbié inquiry, are based on a number of erroneous assumptions. Drawing on extensive ethnographic observations of practitioners' sense-making activities she argues that 'case formulations frequently emerge from interactions' and 'the facts are rarely simply out there as "information"'. Sue White sees effective communication as deriving from 'professional agility rather than from prescription and standardization'.

The remaining chapters focus on the principal policy areas. Chapters 7 and 8 provide complementary analyses of parenting policy. In chapter 7, and from a social work perspective, Karen Broadhurst argues that support for parenting is increasingly narrow and prescriptive, with initiatives having little impact on the socio-economic factors that undermine parenting capacity. The chapter draws attention to the plight of parents at the sharp edge of New Labour's support and draws links between a less tolerant approach to parents and the sharp rise in care proceedings witnessed over the last decade. In chapter 8, Jo Warin's focus is on parents within education. She is concerned with the ways in which through educational settings, parents are engaged in a manner

that privileges ‘expert’ knowledge about children over parents’ own knowledge of their children. In this process, the chapter demonstrates how those parents unable to engage in ‘expert’ discourse often become pathologized as ‘hard to reach’ and are seen as perpetuating what are deemed to be patterns of ‘poor parenting’.

In chapter 9, Sue Peckover discusses in detail the expansion of safeguarding into the health sector. She makes reference to the size and complexity of the health service and raises questions about the re-engineering of this area of public service in line with new safeguarding demands. At a more practical level, she also draws attention to possible tensions for health professionals, for example health visitors, who on the one hand might consider themselves ‘mother’s friend’, but, on the other hand, are increasingly tasked with monitoring parenting skills. In chapter 10, and continuing the theme of health, Ian Paylor debates problem drug and alcohol use in young people. He draws attention to tensions and contradictions in policy, given that problematic drug and alcohol use are both safeguarding and criminal justice concerns.

Chapters 11 and 12 focus on criminal justice issues for children and young people and the place of safeguarding within youth justice. The title of Janet Jamieson’s chapter (chapter 11) hints at the social justice concerns that are central to her analysis, in which, among other issues, she highlights the plight of children in custody who appear left out of any safeguarding agenda. Similarly, in chapter 12, Claire Fitzpatrick addresses the limitations inherent to the safeguarding children agenda with regard to ‘looked after’ children. She documents the increased risks of criminalization that children in the looked after system, particularly those in residential care, can face and how criminal justice involvement can often negatively impact upon their future well-being.

Finally, and continuing the theme of marginalized children, in chapter 13 Malcolm Hill and Peter Hopkins examine the tensions that exist in the safeguarding agenda with reference to the children of asylum seekers. The authors draw attention to the tensions that arise between humanitarian impulses towards immigrant populations that are more consistent with safeguarding and the desire to control or restrict the number and types of individuals entering the UK or becoming citizens in the case of the asylum and immigration policy. The chapter argues that these tensions are further complicated by the ways in which legislation and policy at various scales – the international, European, British and devolved levels – influences the ways in which practitioners work to maximize the well-being of the children they encounter.

The concluding chapter draws material from across the chapters, and provides a cross-disciplinary analysis of the shortcomings of the New Labour safeguarding project. Drawing attention to the ideological shortcomings of the New Labour project that arise from a creeping welfare conditionality, a preoccupation with risks and responsibilities and over-interference in structures and organizations, the chapter urges caution for those who are optimistic about the inclusive rhetoric of the ECM project. A number of speculative observations

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are made with respect to a possible change of government and an alternative neo-liberal future for safeguarding.

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