# National Children's Bureau

# Definition of safeguarding

- Change in terminology from ‘child protection’ to ‘safeguarding’ – defined in Working Together 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’*
- Positive change because it ensures a holistic approach
- BUT potentially unhelpful in determining who should do what?

# NCB/YJB review of safeguarding in the secure estate

- Review examined how safe children were from
  - Self harm
  - Harm by peers
  - Harm by adults
- Didn’t look at broader welfare issues
- Visited every YOI, STC and SCH (2007)
  - Read policies, case records, complaints, minutes of meetings etc
  - Talked to staff at all levels - and children

# Findings – harm from self

- Moving towards support rather than surveillance BUT
- Suicide/self-harm not differentiated – risk averse approach to both (is this inevitable?)
- Can this lead to emotional harm? e.g. stripped out rooms, loss of privacy & dignity
- Lack of multi-agency input
- *'They stuck me on an ACCT. They didn't work with me – they kept an eye on me every now and again'.*

# Findings – harm from peers

- Biggest fear for young people – and don't always trust staff to deal with it
- Focus on 'stamping out' bullying rather than tackling causes/ prevention
- Challenging area of practice for staff
- Definition of bullying unclear – in context of adolescence
- Lack of effective interventions for bullies and victims
- *'I don't really know what it's all about. There must be some rules that I don't know about.'*

# Findings – harm from adults

- No evidence of systematic abuse
  - Young people not in fear of staff
- BUT is child protection system fit for purpose with this age group/ in this context?
  - Lack of clear definition – and thresholds e.g. fights? verbal abuse?
  - Confusion over S47/ criminal/ disciplinary processes (onus on young person to 'proceed')
  - Meaningful involvement of LA was rare in YOIs – and external scrutiny patchy
- What about emotional abuse & neglect?
- *'I got into a fight last night. The member of staff here just walked away and said, 'I don't come into work for this'.*

# A culture of safeguarding?

- More subtle indicators
  - Response to complaints
  - Feeling able to talk to staff – and be treated with respect
  - Approaches to behaviour management e.g. de-escalation
  - Way staff treat each other
  - Child-centredness – and split staff groups
- Even if no demonstrable harm …
  - What is the impact of restraint, strip searches, segregation and 'special accommodation'?
- *'Staff shouldn't be allowed to have so much power: if they don't like you, they can do something to you.'*

# Headlines – and questions

- Children saw the biggest risk to be other young people
- Didn't always trust the staff to keep them safe – especially in YOIs (smaller = safer)
- Limited input from other agencies
- Lots of monitoring but not joined up – and focus on quantitative not qualitative e.g. complaints
- Role of LSCB?? How to make it meaningful …
- How to achieve culture change?
- *'I sometimes feel unsafe but I don't show it. I don't want to be a coward.'*

# Further reading

- *A Review of Safeguarding in the Secure Estate* (YJB & NCB 2008)
- *A Review of Safeguarding in the Secure Estate 2008: Summary of findings and action plan* (YJB 2008)
- *Safeguarding Children: the third chief inspectors' report on arrangements to safeguard children* (HM Government 2008)
- *Independent Review of Restraint in Juvenile Secure Settings* (MoJ/DCSF 2008)

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