

# Causes of childcare policies, initiatives and laws



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

## 1. Introduction

Childhood, the ten memorable years that fall between infancy and the onset of adolescence probably constitutes the most exciting period of a normal human life. Most men and women have the fondest memories of their childhood years, replete with a million discoveries, of new smells, sights, sounds, touches, and other delightful experiences, of times of safety, comfort, and security. While this is possibly true of most children, in rich and poor societies alike, for many others the world is different; it is unfriendly, hostile, unwelcoming and extremely difficult. The worst affected are those who grow up in poverty and deprivation, or in environments of parental conflict, substance abuse, homelessness, and domestic violence. Very distressingly, childhood problems exist not only in underdeveloped and chronically poor societies, but also in ample measure in richer and advanced countries, like the UK, the USA, and other West European nations.

Childhood is a time of phenomenal growth, in all areas of human development, physical, social, emotional, and intellectual. Growth and development of children involves the meeting of many diverse needs, in areas like nutrition, accommodation, regulated activity, health and medical care, cleanliness, hygiene, and sanitation, as well as in areas that involve emotional, social and intellectual growth. Thousands of children in the UK grow up in environments and surroundings that are inadequate, in greater or lesser degree, for proper development; inadequacies that are caused by factors like broken homes, divorced parents, single parenting, poverty, deprivation, domestic violence, substance abuse and child abuse.

British society has always been concerned about the proper upbringing of its children and its role in the building of national character. The centuries old saying about the battle of Waterloo being won on the playing fields of Eton is a reminder of the preoccupation of the British with proper upbringing of their young. Recent years have seen increasing concern about improving conditions for the development of children, and have led to a number of governmental initiatives that aim to change the scope and ambit of public services committed to helping and improving this area. This essay aims to examine the origin and status of these initiatives, as well as their likely impact, both positive and negative in meeting the developmental needs of children.

## 2. Commentary

Recent times have been ones of intense social change. The period that commenced after the closing of the Second World War has seen widespread social restructuring, caused by a multitude of factors like the splintering of families, the practice of children moving out of parental homes at relatively early ages, increasing divorce rates, sharp boosts in the numbers of working women, the greater incidence of single parenting, and the absence of grandparents in normal family life. These various reasons have quite often led to parents being inadequately informed, or even otherwise, being unable to satisfy the developmental needs of children. While inadequacies like these are common in normal families, they become far more complicated and result in great inequities upon children in environments involving poverty, deprivation, homelessness, substance abuse, domestic violence and child abuse. Increased immigration and the quiet and gradual formation of a

<https://assignbuster.com/causes-of-childcare-policies-initiatives-and-laws/>

multicultural, multiethnic, and multireligious society have also led to the development of a number of social segments with different levels of affluence, education and ability. All these factors contribute to the challenges faced by society and government in providing all children with a level playing field and in satisfying their developmental needs.

The British social structure has possessed, for many years, public infrastructure responsible for providing financial, physical, medical and scholastic support to children, more so for children from disturbed and difficult backgrounds, living in their natural domestic backgrounds, as well as in places like foster homes and institutions. Various governmental agencies like the department of health, the NHS, and local authorities, work with the help of paid and voluntary social workers to ensure assessment of needs and appropriate action. While the level and efficacy of the support provided to children had always been a source of concern in the past for most citizens, disturbed by occasional media reports of the unsatisfactory state of affairs, matters came to a head with the occurrence of two deaths, 13 year old Aliyah Ismail, in 1989, and 8 year old Victoria Climbié in 2000. Both Aliyah and Victoria, children of immigrants met horrific deaths, despite the full knowledge and involvement of social workers in their cases. Aliyah, in and out of several foster homes and institutions, died of a methadone overdose in a decrepit building in Camden Town, whereas Victoria Climbié died after receiving severe physical injuries from her aunt, who was then her carer, and her male companion. At the time of death, her body bore marks of more than 120 separate injuries.

The resultant media uproar and several inquiries, commissioned by local bodies and the government, and conducted by eminent and qualified experts, laid the blame for the episodes upon the inadequate working of the social care infrastructure. Aliyah moved more than 60 times, between relatives, homes, and institutions, in the few years she was in care. (Brindle, 1999) The Blackburn report, commissioned by the Harrow local council, focussed on her distressing life, under the country's programme for children in care, and largely indicted the functioning of the social care system.

Victoria Climbié's death caused even greater anguish and led to a number of investigations by Lord Laming at the specific instance of the government.

The investigations and the ensuing report, which laid bare the functioning of the agencies involved in Victoria's care, revealed that social workers were fully aware of Victoria's condition and ignored twelve separate occasions to give her protection and relief, led to widespread anguish, a national resolve to take better care of the country's young, and finally to a number of initiatives aimed to ensure better care and development of children living in the UK.

The key message running through the report is that individual failings, poor standards and ineffective systems are the consequence of a failure in leadership. Senior managers in all agencies, and elected members, are responsible, and thus accountable for this failure. Lord Laming refers to the principle failure to protect Victoria was as a result of widespread organisational malaise. (The Victoria Climbié Enquiry, 2003)

While Lord Laming's report catalysed governmental and public action in the last three years, the issue of addressing children's needs adequately had

<https://assignbuster.com/causes-of-childcare-policies-initiatives-and-laws/>

first engaged lawmakers nearly twenty years back, when deliberations on the issue led to the enactment of The Children Act, 1989. The legislation, which came into effect in 1993 aimed to radically change the existing approach to meet the needs of children by (a) making children's welfare a priority, (b) recognising that children grow up best in their families, whenever possible, (c) ensuring the duty of local authorities to provide services for children and families in need, (d) promoting partnership between children, parents, and local authorities, improving the way courts deal with children, and (e) protecting the rights of children. (Children Act 1989)

Various child support initiatives owe their origins to the 1989 legislation. A further flurry of activity occurred after the publication of the Kennedy Report in 1989, and the Laming Report in 2003, on the deficiencies that existed in areas of health, education, and social support for all children, especially for those who live in difficult circumstances, either in their domestic environments, or with others. The publication of these reports, discussions in the media and various public forums, and governmental initiatives led to the preparation and publication of the Green Paper "Every Child Matters" in 2003, which outlined a new approach to the well being of children from birth to 19 and aimed to achieve 5 desired outcomes, namely (a) be healthy, (b) stay safe, (c) enjoy and achieve, (d) make a positive contribution and (e) achieve economic well being. (Every child matters: change for children, 2007)

The enactment of The Children Act 2004 and initiatives in various areas aim to transform children's services by increasing opportunities and reducing risk, as far as possible. The department of health, the department of

<https://assignbuster.com/causes-of-childcare-policies-initiatives-and-laws/>

education, the NHS, and local authorities will work in tandem to achieve this objective. All local authorities now need to work with partners, especially schools, and the NHS, to locate the needs of children and take appropriate action. A number of successive documents detail the approach required by these authorities. Three important initiatives expected to play important roles in the furtherance of child welfare objectives are the Children and Young People's Plan (CYP), the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and the National Services Framework (NSF)

The NSF for children, published in September 2004, the first such effort in the world, determines standards for children's health and social services for children, young people and pregnant women, as well as the coordination of these services with education. It is a key delivery mechanism of the "be healthy" outcome of the "Every Child Matters" programme and aims to bring about a fundamental change in these services by attempting to ensure that their design and delivery focus on the ascertained needs of children and their families. The programme, scheduled to run for ten years, expects to achieve targeted standards for ensuring fair, high quality and integrated health and social care from pregnancy, right through to adulthood. (National Service Framework Documents, 2006) The standards are divided into three parts, part one focussing on services for children and young people, part two dealing with particular groups of children, and part three with maternity services. While full implementation could take up to ten years for implementation, the framework plans to increasingly assess the NHS and local authorities on the quality of their services and the progress achieved in meeting the standards. (National Service Framework Documents, 2006)

Criticism of the National Service Framework has ranged from the use of exhaustive recording for surveillance purposes, to issues like over insitutionalisation and consequent dilution of medical care, and the impracticality of cooperative working on such large scales.

The conceptualisation and implementation of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is one of the distinguishing elements of the overarching “Every Child Matters” initiative. Truly ambitious in its scope, the CAF aims to enable all people working with children, young people and their families, to evaluate distinct needs of different children and families. Once the CAF is fully in use, children’s centres or schools will arrange for most assessments, and will thereby help in identifying children with additional needs before they become serious concerns. Situations that could possibly need the use of CAF include poor nutrition or ill health, substance misuse, anxiety or depression, problematic housing, poor attendance or exclusion from school, overt parental conflict, lack of parental support, disruptive or anti social behaviour, and involvement, or the risk of involvement, in offences. The CAF will obviously not be suitable for the majority of children who make normal progress through the universally available services. However, it could really help in identifying the needs of many troubled children at stages where corrective action and appropriate support could change future outcomes very positively. (Common Assessment Framework, 2007)

The Children and Young People programme aims to reduce underachievement and improve life chances of children through a set of measures that include taking measures for extended schools, extended early years, looked after children and vulnerable young adults, youth, child

<https://assignbuster.com/causes-of-childcare-policies-initiatives-and-laws/>



protection and children with special needs and disabilities. The programme plans to further educational development and improve health, well being and social inclusion through integrated delivery of support and services. The extended schools concept forms the core of the CYP package by providing activities that essentially look after children for greater hours and effectively reduce the load on parents.

Extended Schools will provide activities based on their particular circumstances and needs, but taken from a ' menu' which will include breakfast clubs, after-school study support and after-school youth, sport and leisure activities; programmes for parents and community use of schools. The focus will be on supporting learning, creativity and healthy lifestyles, including tackling obesity in children. (Children and Young People Funding Package, 2006)

The chief criticisms of the CYP programme focus on the excessive local planning and decision-making, as well as political initiatives that revolve around doing things to young people rather than giving them, and when they are too young, their parents " the freedom, responsibility and tools to do things for themselves." (Warpole, 2004) The importance of engaging young people more effectively to participate in all activities is thought to be important by many researchers.

### 3. Conclusion

The UK is going through an epochal change in the development of its young. The planned changes, if successfully implemented, could well result in the creation of a much more competent, tolerant and well adjusted society. The <https://assignbuster.com/causes-of-childcare-policies-initiatives-and-laws/>

enactment of the Children Bill of 2004, and the slew of initiatives, which apart from the discussed issues, also include the formation of Children's Trusts, and the Sure Start programme, aim to take the benefits of health, housing, education, social and emotional support, to every child in the nation. Delivered through cooperative inter agency working and focussed on the needs of children and their families, the initiatives include precautionary measures to locate children with problematic needs that need to be addressed early enough in life. While the advantages of the initiatives are enormous, and painstakingly designed to help millions of children, the aim of delivering all these services, through state and local agencies, raises concerns that could well turn out to be important. State agencies are notorious for evolving into bureaucratic, system driven, and uncaring, irrespective institutions, of country, society or work ethic of the people.

The UK has had its own unhappy experiences with state controlled corporations, as well as with the NHS. The idea of the state, albeit with a certain extent of private participation, taking over a major portion of the responsibility of bringing up children could be fraught with dangers that may arise out of improper and inadequate implementation. It needs remembering that the Aliyah Ismail and Victoria Climbié incidents happened not because of the absence of state support, but despite it. Excessive state control also leads to unnecessary documentation, possibilities of surveillance, and the need for a control and audit mechanism, all of which work against the main objectives of programmes under implementation. Now that the programmes are under way, the challenge will come in their implementation, and in ensuring that they meet their objectives.

## Bibliography

Brindle, D, 1999, Drug death girl shuttled among carers, *the Guardian* , Retrieved April 30, 2007 from [www. guardian. co. uk/drugs/Story/0,, 201042, 00. html](http://www.guardian.co.uk/drugs/Story/0,,201042,00.html)

Children Act, 1989, Retrieved April 30, 2007 from [www. yjb. gov. uk/en-gb/practitioners/Accommodation/LegislationandResponsibilities/ ChildrenAct1989/-](http://www.yjb.gov.uk/en-gb/practitioners/Accommodation/LegislationandResponsibilities/ChildrenAct1989/)

Children in Care: now and then, 2000, BBC News, Retrieved April 30, 2007 from [news. bbc. co. uk/1/hi/uk/642288. stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/642288.stm)

Child Development Chart book, 2004, *The Commonwealth Fund* , retrieved April 30, 2007 from [www. cmwf. org/publications/publications\\_show. htm? doc\\_id= 237483](http://www.cmfw.org/publications/publications_show.htm?doc_id=237483)

Children are unbeatable: alliance, 2007, Retrieved April 30, 2007 from [www. childrenareunbeatable. org. uk/pdfs/actionsheetedm606jan07. pdf-](http://www.childrenareunbeatable.org.uk/pdfs/actionsheetedm606jan07.pdf)

Children and young people funding package, 2006, Department of education, Retrieved April 30, 2007 from [www. deni. gov. uk/index/21-pupils\\_parents- pg/children-and-young-people-funding-package. htm](http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/21-pupils_parents_pg/children-and-young-people-funding-package.htm)

Common assessment Framework, 2007, *Every child matters* , Retrieved April 30, 2007 from [www. everychildmatters. gov. uk/deliveringservices/caf/](http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/deliveringservices/caf/)

Christensen, P. & O'Brien, M. (Eds.), 2002, *Children in the City: Home, Neighborhood, and Community* . London: Routledge.

<https://assignbuster.com/causes-of-childcare-policies-initiatives-and-laws/>

Every child matters: Change for children, 2007, *National literacy trust* ,  
retrieved April 30, 2007 from [www.literacytrust.org.uk/socialinclusion/youngpeople/greenpaper.html](http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/socialinclusion/youngpeople/greenpaper.html)

Hallett, C. & Prout, A. (Eds.). (2003). *Hearing the Voices of Children: Social Policy for a New Century* . New York: Routledge.

Hocutt, A. M., Mckinney, J. D., & Montague, M., 2002, The Impact of Managed Care on Efforts to Prevent Development of Serious Emotional Disburbance in Young Children. *Journal of Disability Policy Studies*, 13 (1), 51+.

Jacobs, J. E. & Klaczynski, P. A. (Eds.)., 2005, *The Development of Judgment and Decision Making in Children and Adolescents* . Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

National Service Framework for children, young people and maternity services, 2007, *Department for health* , Retrieved April 30, 2007 from [www.dh.gov.uk/prod\\_consum\\_dh/idcplg?IdcService=SS\\_GET\\_PAGE&siteId=en&ssTargetNodeId=566&ssDoc...](http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/idcplg?IdcService=SS_GET_PAGE&siteId=en&ssTargetNodeId=566&ssDoc...)

Reeves, R., 2003, The Battle for Childhood: We All Love Children; Even Politicians Do. Yet We Are in Danger of Taking from Them Everything That Is Most Precious Freedom, Health and Happiness. *New Statesman* , 132 , 18+.

*The Victoria Climbié Enquiry* , 2003, Retrieved April 30, 2007 from [www.victoria-climbié-inquiry.org.uk](http://www.victoria-climbié-inquiry.org.uk)

Warpole, K, 2005, play, participation and potential, groundwork, Retrieved April 30, 2007 from [www.groundwork.org.uk/upload/publications/publication11.pdf](http://www.groundwork.org.uk/upload/publications/publication11.pdf)