

## The rise of the safeguarding industry

Those who offer support to families with social services involvement are often met with incredulity at the extent to which the safeguarding industry has extended and consolidated its reach. Few understand the basis for that extension. Of course, a full explanation of the sociocultural basis for that rise in the safeguarding industry, would take considerably more than a short article could cover, but we can at least examine one primary cause.

The first social work training course was in 1918 in a deprived inner city area. The purpose was to provide training for charity workers aiding the very poor and deprived in society. After training those workers became housing managers, probation officers and even rent collectors. Following the depression in the 1920s through to the 30s, social work was about providing urgent aid in times of extreme distress. This approach continued through to the second world war.

And then we saw the birth of the welfare state with:

- The education Act 1944: Free education.
- The Family Allowance Act (1945): Provided weekly amount of benefit for each child, after the first, up until the age of 16
- National Health Service Act (1946): Free health care for all and a system of hospitals and GPs Nationally.
- National Insurance Act (1946): Entitlement to financial provision on the basis of contributions paid whilst working. Sickness, unemployment and old age benefits, maternity and death grants (not for married women)
- Industrial Injuries Act (1946): Compensation for the injured, disabled or relatives of those killed at work, plus people suffering from industrial diseases.
- National Assistance Act (1948): Provided financial entitlements for those below the minimum subsistence level and those not entitled to social insurance in times of need.
- The Children Act (1948): Local authorities to establish Children's Departments; and employ Child Care Officers
- Then new children and young person's legislation (1960 and 1963) was introduced to prevent children from suffering disadvantage.

In the 1970s a political move away from free welfare and toward formal contact with social work users was developed, based on concerns over child abuse and aspirational reaching of Governmental targets for dealing with welfare issues.

The cruelty man really had his foot through the door.

Then in 1984 we saw the introduction of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) to protect the rights of suspects under questioning, including the right of children to have a responsible adult present.

1985 saw the introduction of 'Gillick competence' as a concept to allow decision making for minors on matters which they did not wish to share with their parents.

Then 1989 saw the Children Act, which established the principle that 'the best interests of the child are pre-eminent', whilst incorporating the basic tenets of the UNCCR into National law.

Further protection for children was provided by the Protection of Children Act 1999, which introduced a list of people unsuitable to work with children.

The rise of the concept of children's rights was gathering apace and in 2001 (in Wales) 2003 (in NI), 2004 (in Scotland) and 2005 (in England) we saw the introduction of Children's rights commissioners: Individuals tasked with responsibility for promoting and protecting the rights of children as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The public wanted welfare rights, protection against the vagaries of life and the public wanted children to be safe. Consequently, increasing protection was provided by the State for those children.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, the NHS was not very old and people had very low expectations of the service in terms of what they would go to a doctor for. Attendance was for illness which could not be dealt with at home, by a chemist or with natural rest.

As the welfare state developed so too did expectations of that welfare state. The public expected to be kept well and happy and the state to provide the basics of subsistence. As time moved on, so public expectations grew to wanting not only the basics, but also health care, social care and housing.

The more the public expected, the more the public invited the State into their homes. Benefits came with the necessity of proving entitlement to those benefits, in many cases by intrusive home checks and checks of private information, such as income and outgoings. A person wanting state benefits, even as late as the 1970s, expected to have a home check to make sure that they qualified. A deserted mother would expect to have her cupboards checked to ensure that she was not hiding evidence of a man able to support her.

This increasing invasion of privacy in order to safeguard basic welfare rights, was not generally within the public conscience, given that those subject to the intrusion were still perceived as part of an 'underclass', who ought to expect such intrusion in order to justify the services received.

The 1950s generation expected the state to pick up the pieces in the most extreme cases of childhood deprivation.

The 1970s generation expected out of work benefits, good health care, the school nurse and for the state to pick up the pieces not only in the most extreme cases, not just in the pretty awful cases, but also in the bad cases.

The 1990s generation expected the state to be there to help, to pick up the pieces and provide in the face of any problem. Not serious problems, not even bad problems, but any problem.

The public bought into the state because the state gave and that giving was welcomed with open hands. Initially the giving reflected dire need, which no decent society should leave unmet, but over time, the 'need' has become 'want' and the safeguarding industry has answered the clarion call with gusto.

Social work as a profession started as being about helping charity and aid workers to do a better job. Proponents were unpaid and charity work was about Christian duty to help the deserving poor. That charity work became a paid profession to the minority and others soon recognised that it was a means to earn a living as a professional. Women particularly who had limited access to the traditional professions, even as recently as the 1970s.

Social work developed because a need, became a desire and the profession fed another desire to join the ranks of the professions as a decent earner. The public asked, the public got and the price is extracted by the development and promotion of the voracious safeguarding industry.

The cries from local authorities and others promoting the safeguarding industry, to demand rights for local authority staff to enter the homes of law abiding families, with no evidence that there are any concerns over the children of those families, based solely on the legal choice to home educate, is a pail of frozen water strewn on the slippery slope of State control of children.

The Cruelty man has his foot firmly through the door and those wishing to maintain their rights to privacy, are weeping.