

Social Work with Children

1948-1991

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Social work and history

- Historians and social work
- Social work academics and the history of social work
- Lorenz suggests that social workers have shown limited interest in their history (International SW, 2007, 5, p.599)
- Social Work History Network

- Sources – e.g. Lancashire County Council as a case study, National Archives, archives of voluntary child care organisations at the University of Liverpool, NSPCC library

The review of social problems in the 1940s and 1950s

- CA 1948; Co-ordinating Committees Circular 1950; CYP(A)Act) 1952; Ingleby Committee 1956; CA 1958; Adoption Act 1958
- Wider review of social problems not addressed in post war legislation carried out during the 1950s
- Responsibilities taken by child care officers from education and public health departments with social and emotional needs being addressed, influence of psychology
- The development of preventive work took place in some Children's Departments (CDs), including work with 'problem families'
- CDs preferred that the NSPCC investigate cases of cruelty and neglect

The expansion of social work during the 1960s

- MHA 1959; Ingleby Report 1960; CYPA 1963; Seebohm Report 1968
- Important association of social work with study of social administration which emphasised social equality
- Development of preventive work changed the focus of casework of child care officers from individuals to family
- Foster care preferred to residential care, although breakdowns were relatively high
- The 'battered-child syndrome' identified by Kempe (1962) and the establishment of the NSPCC research unit
- CDs became more involved in the investigation of cruelty and neglect although it was not a priority activity, cases also referred to the NSPCC, doctors and the police

The development of formal systems in the 1970s

- CYPA 1969; LASSA 1970 created SSDs; Maria Colwell Report 1974; CA 1975; Adoption Act 1976
- Initial significant increase in expenditure on SSDs followed by economic crisis from 1974
- End of the 'post-war consensus' about welfare and influence of the 'new right' political theory. Coincides with a shift towards 'permanence' thinking in social work for children and a concern with individual children's rights
- Intake teams developed to respond to increase in referrals
- Investigation of child abuse became a priority activity for SSDs from 1974, introduction of procedures and co-ordinating role
- Children's cases were a priority for qualified social workers

The consolidation of social work during the 1980s

- HoC Social Services Committee Report 1984; Inquiries into child deaths in the mid-1980s; Cleveland Report 1987; CA 1989
- Acceleration of policy of community care, significant reduction in the number of children in residential care, increase in the number of social workers employed
- Scrutiny by surveys by the Social Services Inspectorate
- Provisions of the CA 1989 (and NHSCCA 90) gave local authorities a lead role in making assessments
- Limited development of social work as a profession with restricted training opportunities and impact of the 'new public management' on adherence to procedures and management control

Other significant trends

- The relationship between local authorities and the voluntary and private sector
- The limited development of qualifying and post qualifying training for social workers
- Tension between specialised and generic caseloads
- The difficulty which social work experienced in clarifying purpose and objectives
- The media criticism of social work
- The emergence of social work as a new profession in the context of expectations of inter-disciplinary working

References

- Brill, K. *The Curtis Experiment*, Unpublished PhD, University of Birmingham 1991.
- Ferguson, H. (2004), *Protecting Children in Time*, Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Packman, J. (1975), *The Child's Generation: From Curtis to Houghton*, Oxford: Blackwell.
- Parton, N. (1985), *The Politics of Child Abuse*, Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Parton, N. (1991), *Governing the Family*, Basingstoke; Macmillan.
- Pierson, J. (2011), *Understanding Social Work: History and Context* Maidenhead: OU Press.
- The academic journal *Child and Family Social Work* 1998, 3, comprises articles which review the 50 years following the Children Act 1948.
- The academic journal *British Journal of Social Work* 2008, 4, comprises articles which review the history of social work.