

Staying Safe

Consultation Response Form

The closing date for this consultation is: 31
October 2007

Your comments must reach us by that date.

department for
children, schools and families

THIS FORM IS NOT INTERACTIVE. If you wish to respond electronically please use the online or offline response facility available on the Department for Children, Schools and Families e-consultation website (<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/consultations>).

The information you provide in your response will be subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Environmental Information Regulations, which allow public access to information held by the Department. This does not necessarily mean that your response can be made available to the public as there are exemptions relating to information provided in confidence and information to which the Data Protection Act 1998 applies. You may request confidentiality by ticking the box provided, but you should note that neither this, nor an automatically-generated e-mail confidentiality statement, will necessarily exclude the public right of access.

Please tick if you want us to keep your response confidential.

Name John Simmonds
Organisation (if applicable) British Association for Adoption and Fostering
Address: Saffron House, 6-10 Kirby Street, London EC1N 8TS

If your enquiry is related to the policy content of the consultation you can contact the Staying Safe Consultation Team by e-mail: staying.safe@dcsf.gsi.gov.uk.

If you have a query relating to the consultation process you can contact the Consultation Unit on:

Telephone: 01928 794888

Fax: 01928 794 113

e-mail: consultation.unit@dcsf.gsi.gov.uk

Which of the following best describes you:

<input type="checkbox"/> Child (Under 13)	<input type="checkbox"/> Young Person (Under 18)	<input type="checkbox"/> Parent
<input type="checkbox"/> Professional working with children and young people	<input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer working with children and young people	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please specify)

Please Specify: Director of Policy, Research and Development

If you work with children or young people, which best describes the organisation you work in:

<input type="checkbox"/> Local Authority	<input type="checkbox"/> School	<input type="checkbox"/> Further or Higher Education Institution
<input type="checkbox"/> Private Sector Organisation	<input type="checkbox"/> Voluntary and / Community Sector Organisation	<input type="checkbox"/> Health Organisation
<input type="checkbox"/> Youth Justice Organisation	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please specify)	

Please Specify:
Voluntary Organisation -membership
The British Association for Adoption & Fostering (BAAF) is pleased to respond to this consultation. BAAF is the leading charity and membership organisation in fostering and adoption in the UK. We:

- promote the highest standards of child-centred policies and services
- speak out on behalf of looked-after children
- influence UK-wide policy and legislation
- provide much-needed information and advice
- promote greater public understanding of adoption and fostering

- support our members in their work

BAAF's main activities are the development, promotion and advocacy of best policy and practice; the provision of advice and information to our members and to the general public; training, consultancy and seminars; child placement services including the publication of our flagship monthly newspaper, Be My Parent. We also publish a quarterly professional journal, Adoption and Fostering, books and guides for professionals, academics, parents and carers and research studies. The main users of our services are our members comprising local authorities across the UK, voluntary adoption agencies, independent fostering agencies and also individual social work, legal and medical professionals and carers.

General Questions

1 a) How safe do you think children are?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Very safe	<input type="checkbox"/>	Safe	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not very safe
<input type="checkbox"/>	Not sure				

Comments: It is difficult to answer this question in a meaningful way because 'safe' and 'children' both need clearer definitions. Most children do live in circumstances where they are safe although a significant number live in adverse circumstances because of family and community adversity. It is not helpful to group all children together because there is an enormous divergence in the circumstance in which children live. It is also unhelpful to bring together such a wide range of issues under safety. Accidents in the home and road traffic accidents are not the same as bullying at school. Safety for small children is not the same as safety for adolescents. And none of these are the same as active or passive maltreatment. There must be an important question here about whether policy that focuses broadly on child safety really should also include child protection when resources are inevitably limited and what resources there are should be focussed on those most at risk in relation to child maltreatment. Preventative and support services are critical but it is very unclear for instance about whether services provided by 'Sure Start' really impact on those families and children most at risk.

1 b) How good are we at giving children and young people the opportunity to explore, understand risks for themselves and to learn the skills vital for their development?

Comments: Most children have these opportunities but there is general sense that children are over protected and this results in them not having these opportunities. It is difficult to know how significant this is in the absence of research. However, the question hides the fact that some children are overly exposed to serious risk because they live in family and community circumstances where their physical, emotional, cognitive and social survival is too much the child's responsibility. Some of these children enter care but many do not.

2 If you are a parent, what concerns do you have about your children's safety and how do you address these?

Comments:

3 If you are a child or young person yourself, are the views of children and young people included here the same as yours and those of your friends?

Comments:

4 a) As a member of the public, do you feel a sense of responsibility for protecting children?

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

4 b) How can we build this sense of responsibility in local communities?

Comments:

5 If you work with children and young people, do you know what your role is in keeping children safe?

/ Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments: The system for child protection is well established in the U.K. and is constantly being up-dated. It is difficult to believe that any professional involved with children would not be very familiar with that system although where frequent changes take place in that system, there are difficulties in keeping up to date.

There may be a more general problem associated with these systems where the cost and time associated with administering them prevent professionals from undertaking direct work with children and their families. The huge investment in Contact Point and the Integrated Children's System may perversely put more children at risk as efforts focus on keeping these systems up to date without selectively identifying where most effort needs to be focussed. The lack of time and resources available to social workers to undertake pro-longed direct work has been identified in relation to social work in a number of recent reports. Similarly the problems in inter-agency working can be significant where different agencies have different perspectives, different goals and priorities and a different culture. It is yet to be seen whether the re-organisation resulting from the Children Act 2004 improve this.

6 Have we got the right balance between keeping children safe and also allowing them the freedom to develop?

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

7 a) Are the roles and responsibilities set out in Chapter 2 correct?

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

7 b) What should the role of central Government be, and what is the responsibility of local organisations and communities?

Comments:

8 How can local and central Government do more to protect all children by reaching out to minority communities and those speaking minority languages?

Comments: The recent work undertaken in London on 'faith based abuse of children has demonstrated the importance of working with local communities and community leaders in providing information, providing routes for access to service and engaging marginalised groups in active discussion about the expectations and requirements of U.K. society about the care and development of children.

9 Are the areas we have identified for new action right? What other areas could be considered and what more could we do?

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

Chapter 3 – Helping all children and young people to stay safe

10 Would parents welcome a communications campaign and information on play and positive activities in their local area?

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

11 What more should be done to enable children and young people to play safely and explore the outside world?

Comments:

12 Are children and young people taught enough in school about how to manage risks and stay safe?

Yes No Not Sure

Comments:

13 Is teaching safety education in Personal, Social and Health Education a good way to increase children and young people's resilience to harm? Are there other ways we could do this?

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

14 How can e-safety be promoted to all professionals who are responsible for children's safety?

Comments:

15 What information would parents welcome about risks of harm faced by their children and how to manage them? What areas mentioned here would parents like more specific information about?

Comments:

16 What more could be done to help Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) to make a difference?

Comments:

Chapter 4 – Protecting vulnerable children and young people

17 How could training and development for social workers be improved?

Comments: By ensuring that the roles and responsibilities of social workers are clearly identified including the importance of knowledge and experience of child development, the skills in engaging hard to reach people and sustaining meaningful relationships with them despite their suspicion and sometimes hostility, the skills and knowledge in working directly with children and young people and maintaining these relationships over time, having access to an assessment framework that reflects the complexities of many of the situations that social workers come into contact with, resources that enable social workers to deliver what their professional perspective requires of them and support, consultation and on-going training that reflects their complex role including high levels of anxiety and uncertainty that frequently are a part of that role. What is not helpful are increasingly complex bureaucratic systems that have become a goal in themselves but where there is little evidence of what they contribute to effective professional practice.

18 Would a national safeguarding awards scheme help to raise the profile of work to improve children's safety?

Yes

/ No

Not Sure

Comments:

19 Will the beacon council scheme help to promote learning from good local practice?

Yes

/ No

Not Sure

Comments:

20 How can we tackle inequalities in prevention of accidents? What role could national or local organisations play?

Comments:

21 What problems do professional face in trying to address the needs of both the adults and children in the family?

Comments: That their needs are not the same and services for adults are organised differently to those of children. For social workers to negotiate around the whole family's needs can be challenging when the child's needs should take priority but as long as the child lives with their adult parent's, they are dependant on the adults needs being met.

22 Do some parents need help to access support available to them?

/ Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments: yes absolutely and this can be a difficult thing to do. This is often very dependant on highly skilled work by a professional who comes to know the family and where they have developed some degree of trust in the intentions and actions of that professional. It cannot be stressed highly enough the importance of the professional being supported in that role.

23 How can local areas ensure that children's and adults' services work collaboratively to safeguard and promote the well-being of children and young people affected by substance misuse, domestic violence or mental illness problems within their families?

Comments: By ensuring that services are joined up at the level of management and those that directly deliver services. This means regular meetings to discuss cases, including a recognition of the different perspectives that these professionals bring because of differing organisational priorities and imperatives, levels of understanding and organisational processes. Secondments can help and well resourced multi-agency teams have proved to be beneficial. But the impact of resource constraints cannot be underestimated given the complexity of delivering effective services. It also must be acknowledged that the evidence base for effective practice is often poor and many of the problems professionals are faced with are chronic and not susceptible to short term interventions.

24 What is the best way to reach parents who might need help with problems that are affecting their children's welfare? Would national or local communications help?

Comments: For the most hard to reach families, it is individual approaches by professionals who come to know the family well and where there is some degree of trust and understanding about the purpose of the intervention. National and local communication strategies seem irrelevant for these families.

25 Whose responsibility should it be to address bullying that happens outside school? How could local agencies work together to address this problem?

Comments: It depends on the bullying. Children need access to a trusted adult to discuss their experiences and this is usually their parent/s or another family member. It is important that agencies make themselves available to discuss children and adult concerns and devise effective strategies for dealing with individual cases. But much depends on the nature of the bullying encountered.

26 What role could LSCBs play in tackling gun and knife crime? Are there examples of good local or international practice which could be considered in more detail?

Comments:

Chapter 5 – Responding when children and young people have been harmed

27 How can we make sure children have somewhere to turn to if they are being harmed?

Comments: It is important that children feel if they turn to somebody that they will be treated sensitively and with respect and that they are believed. The routes that children take for this are wide ranging whether this is family members, friends, teachers, health professionals or telephone helplines. There may be no shortage of available routes other than for children in the most difficult of circumstances and identifying fool proof access points for these children is very difficult indeed.

28 a) Does the Government need to communicate with the public to improve people's ability to identify and know how to act on concerns about children's safety?

Yes

No

/ Not Sure

Comments:

28 b) What effect would this have on local services, such as children's social care and the police?

Comments:

29 How can we protect children crossing our borders from harm? How can immigration officers work best with others in their local area?

Comments: By ensuring their responsibilities under the Children Act 2004 are the same as for other statutory bodies. By training immigration officers in child protection and basic child development perspectives and ensuring they have the capacity to interview children alongside others in a sensitive and appropriate way.

30 Would professionals working with children and young people welcome clear information about cross-border issues to help with potential concerns?

/ Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

Thank you for taking the time to let us have your views. We do not intend to acknowledge individual responses unless you place an 'X' in the box below.

**Please acknowledge this reply **

Here at the Department for Children, Schools and Families we carry out our research on many different topics and consultations. As your views are valuable to us, would it be alright if we were to contact you again from time to time either for research or to send through consultation documents?

\Yes No

All UK national public consultations are required to conform to the following standards:

1. Consult widely throughout the process, allowing a minimum of 12 weeks for written consultation at least once during the development of the policy.
2. Be clear about what your proposals are, who may be affected, what questions are being asked and the timescale for responses.
3. Ensure that your consultation is clear, concise and widely accessible.
4. Give feedback regarding the responses received and how the consultation process influenced the policy.
5. Monitor your department's effectiveness at consultation, including through the use of a designated consultation co-ordinator.
6. Ensure your consultation follows better regulation best practice, including carrying out a Regulatory Impact Assessment if appropriate.

Further information on the Code of Practice can be accessed through the Cabinet Office Website: <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/regulation/consultation-guidance/content/introduction/index.asp>

Thank you for taking time to respond to this consultation.

Completed questionnaires and other responses should be sent to the address shown below by 31 October 2007

Send by post to:

Consultation Unit
Area 1A
Castle View House
East lane
Runcorn
Cheshire
CW8 4LZ

Send by e-mail to: staying.safe@dcsf.gsi.gov.uk.