

A Bad Week for Child Protection

The following news stories speak for themselves. Do you believe that the government will really provide the resources which Social Services, CAFCASS, the Police and even the Child Support Agency, actually need?

24th January 2003

Times report of R (R (Children)) v Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service; R (P (A Child)) v Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service, the High Court case brought against CAFCASS, the severely under-resourced and badly run child welfare service. The judge holds that there is no duty to provide a Children's Guardian immediately a court case starts.

27th January 2003

"Operation Ore" which has disclosed evidence of child abuse via the internet on a huge scale is said to be causing harm to children. The Police complain that they cannot cope and that they fear that more children are being put at risk because of the diversion of specially trained police away from normal day-to-day child protection.

28th January 2003

The long delayed new Child Support Agency computer systems are said to be ready to begin assessing new cases on the new formula from early March 2003. This was delayed from April 2002. A fine indication of the ability of government to meet challenges and provide adequate resources.

29th January 2003

The Climbié Report is published. It contains radical proposals for improvements to child protection services. The last in a long line of inquiries into the death of children, it demands the provision of new resources on a huge scale within a very short timescale. The government is to publish a Green Paper (Green for consultation, not White with concrete proposals) in spring to address the issues and seek views. Read the Report Recommendations [here](#).

As someone who has represented children, parents and

social services in care proceedings and other court cases about children, and juveniles in the Youth Court, I can say that the main problem with the child care system is that the people working in it are overwhelmed. And they have been for years. This means that the quality of the work done with children by all services is not as good as it should be because less time is spent for each case than is actually needed.

Without adequate resources being provided, both short term and long term, the problems are not going to go away.

Operation Ore is indeed going to make the problem worse because the longterm implications of punishing and then supervising the thousands of offenders who will be dealt with by the courts are horrendous. As Donald Findlater (the former manager of the Wolvercote Clinic in Surrey - the only residential treatment centre in England for paedophiles - which closed last year - there goes another of the resources we needed) has said this week: "I doubt the system will be able to deal competently, and in a way that protects children, as these people go through the system."

So the Climbié Report has come at a time when the situation which caused Victoria's death is about to deteriorate whether we like it or not. If the government could not provide the resources we needed before Operation Ore was so effective, how ever will it manage to do so now?

Steve Butler

Source: LawZONE

Date: 29th January 2003