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Keeping children safe:

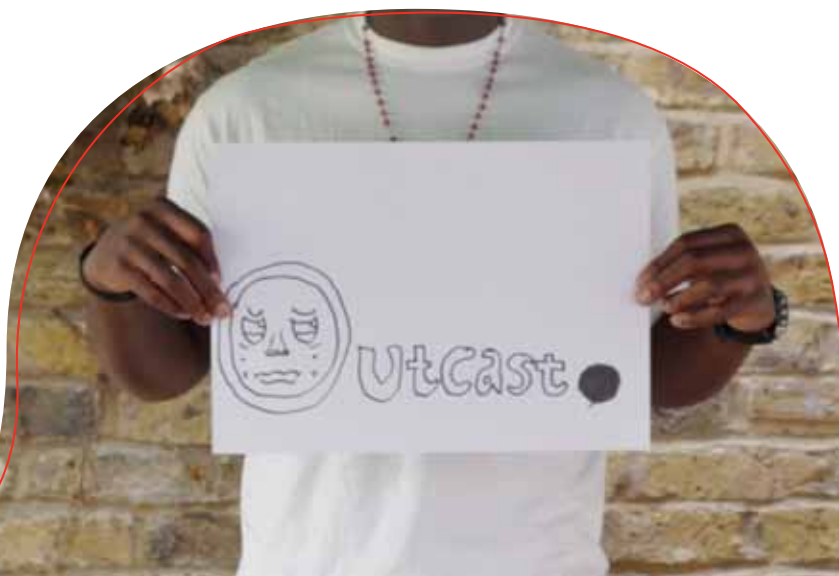
The case for reforming the law on child neglect

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Upset. unloved. invisible. ignore. forgotten.
misery. suicidal. Smelly. outcast. unheard. abw
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Sadness. misery. outsider. love. quiet. careless
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About Action for Children

Action for Children is a leading UK children's charity committed to helping the most vulnerable and neglected children and young people break through injustice, deprivation and inequality, so they can achieve their full potential. We work with around 50,000 children and young people through more than 500 services across the UK.

We have over 140 years experience of working with the most vulnerable and neglected children and young people, and campaign to achieve sustainable and long-term solutions to change their lives for the better.



Introduction

On 13 April 1933, a law was passed to prevent cruelty to children. Section 1 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 made it a criminal offence for someone who is responsible for a child's care to fail to provide adequate food, clothing, medical aid or lodging¹. It signalled the beginning of a growing commitment in the UK to protecting children from the devastating harm that results from neglect, but since it was enacted, almost 80 years ago, our understanding of parenting, child protection and neglect as a form of child abuse has evolved. The time has come for the law to catch up.

Parenting can be challenging as well as deeply rewarding. Some parents struggle to do the best for their children, particularly when they may have been badly parented themselves, and when they face difficult times without the informal support networks that most parents enjoy. The criminal law on neglect does nothing to provide families with the help they need. Instead it criminalises parents, with over 2000 cases of

criminal neglect detected every year. The most effective alternative response to neglect, is to intervene as early as possible with families in order to increase their knowledge and confidence as parents.

Parents have told us that they are confused about the current law on neglect, and would like clarity and guidance about their responsibilities². Modern day understanding of the causes and effects of child neglect has moved on from those contained within the 1933 Act. The law as it stands only seeks to protect the very basic physical needs of children. Children's emotional and developmental needs are equally essential, yet the 1933 Act does not reflect this.

The effects of neglect can be devastating, can last a lifetime, and can all too easily be passed down through generations of families. However, the way in which the criminal offence of child neglect is defined and then punished does not help. The 1933 Children and Young Persons Act is out of date, unhelpful and must be reformed.

Child neglect in the UK

Neglect is the most prevalent form of child abuse in the UK, with studies suggesting up to 1 in 10 children have experienced it in some form.³ Of all forms of abuse, neglecting a child can have some of the worst and most long-term effects on a child's brain, physical development, behaviour, educational achievement and emotional wellbeing. Neglect robs children of the childhood they deserve and leaves broken families, dashed aspirations and misery in its wake. In the most severe cases, children die – of starvation for example, or from accidents.⁴ We know from our research that too many children are still experiencing chronic neglect throughout large parts of their childhood and that they are not getting the help they need.⁵

Action for Children is committed to tackling neglect. Throughout our community-based services across the UK we work with thousands of families every year to help address the root causes of

neglect and to ensure that parents who need additional support receive it. We know that if we can intervene at an early enough stage, we can make a difference. As well as helping families now, we are committed to increasing knowledge about what works, for example we develop new services to provide relationship-based support for vulnerable families.

We are also working to improve local and national Government policies. Our recent Annual Review 'Child neglect in 2011', produced in partnership with the University of Stirling enables us to fill current gaps in the understanding and response to neglected children across the UK. Our comprehensive review found that all too often children endure a chronic lack of physical and emotional care over long periods. This is compounded by the fact that 36 per cent of police officers and 51 per cent of social workers have felt powerless to intervene when they have suspected a child is being neglected.⁶

While the public are increasingly worried about neglect they do not always report it because of concerns about a lack of evidence or uncertainty about whether neglect is actually occurring. Neither government nor local authorities know exactly how many children are being neglected. The result is that too many neglected children do not receive the help they so desperately need.

We are committed to repeating our review on an annual basis and to using the findings as a framework to recommend changes to governments across the UK.

A crucial piece of this jigsaw is the role that the criminal law should play, working in tandem with civil law and national child protection systems to prevent the damage caused by child neglect.

Why is the law important?

The law plays a vital role in protecting vulnerable children, including those at risk of, or who are experiencing neglect. The criminal law can and should empower the public, the police, social workers and others to intervene early in order that families get the help they need to address child neglect. In the small number of cases where parents are not able or willing to care for their children, the state has a duty to intervene to protect children, as well as to punish those that abuse them. Here, the law plays a crucial role and should demand swift action.

As well as this vital protective function, the law can and should have a complementary role in helping to prevent future harm. It can fulfil this function both through supporting and educating parents as well as helping to set clear boundaries about the minimum standards of care that all children can expect. In doing so it can bring about cultural and behavioural change.

Helping parents

Most parents want to do a good job. Parenting can be both deeply challenging and intensely rewarding. Some parents, though, have more knowledge and support to call upon than others and there are a small number of families who have not experienced effective parenting themselves and who may struggle with the myriad external factors that can make this role much harder, including domestic violence, substance misuse, and material deprivation.

In this context, the law will only ever be one part of a broader response to neglect that incorporates support and guidance to parents and their children. That said, it is evident that parents themselves see a clear role for the law in addressing the issue. Indeed, parents are confused and are asking for clarification and guidance.

In a recent YouGov survey of parents commissioned by Action for Children, two thirds (67 per cent) of parents felt that the

law on parenting is confusing.⁷ Additionally, almost three-quarters (72 per cent) agree that there is no common understanding of what 'good enough' parenting is.

A large proportion of parents feel that the law does not work in their favour. Half (49 per cent) agree that the law does not support parents when they want to set boundaries for their children to keep them safe or out of trouble. Additionally 42 per cent of parents feel a sense of desperation in their position within the law, agreeing that they are blamed whatever they do.

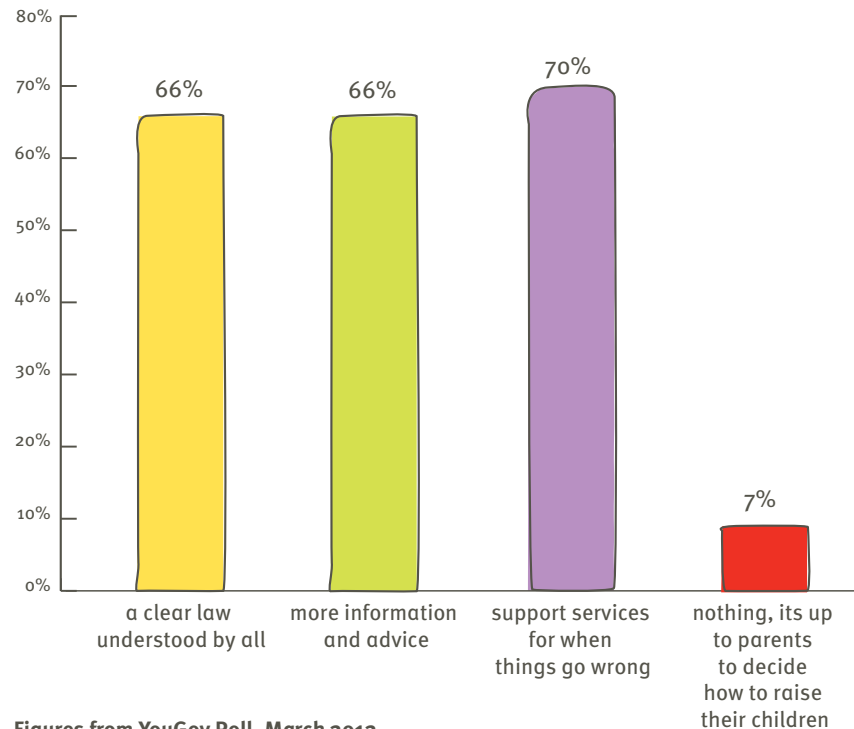
When parents were asked what would help them to better understand their responsibilities as caregivers to children, 66 per cent said that a clear law that can be understood by all would help guide the way that they care for their children. Complementing this, two thirds also wanted more information and advice and 70 per cent of parents believe that support services are helpful when things go wrong.⁸

Overall there is support for there being laws that set boundaries for parents in the raising of children, but there is a need for more clarity in such laws. By updating the law on child neglect, we can establish a clear, unambiguous framework for widespread public and parental understanding.

hurt. alone. outcast. sadness. misery. outsider. love. quiet. careless. neglect...

Figure 1:

What parents believe would help them meet their responsibilities to children



Figures from YouGov Poll, March 2012

Changing public attitudes and behaviour

People in the UK are increasingly worried about child neglect. Our recent Annual Review into child neglect found that 52 per cent of the general public we polled have been worried about the welfare and safety of a child they know.⁹ This figure has gone up by 8 per cent since 2009. The increase in public concern for children in society may indicate a greater awareness of safety issues for children, and an increased willingness to take an interest in the welfare of children outside their own immediate family. Both are to be welcomed, but the next step is to turn this willingness into useful action.

Ninety-four per cent of respondents in our Annual Review said that people should become involved if they had concerns about neglect, but, of those who had been worried about a child, only 62 per cent felt able to tell someone about their concerns, which included other family members as well as child protection professionals. It is clear that significant barriers exist to the

reporting of concerns about neglect, but it is important to note that this is not because people feel it is none of their business, or that they fear any repercussions. Instead, the main reasons for not getting involved are that people are uncertain who they should talk to, and crucially, that they are uncertain about whether neglect is actually happening or the level of proof required.¹⁰

It is clear that public information and encouragement about how to report concerns would be of great help. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, in 2008, stated that it 'remains alarmed' at the high levels of child neglect and other abuse within the home.¹¹ It recommended that there must be a better centralised strategy for enabling the public to report concerns about child safety.

A summary of messages from the recent Safeguarding Children Research initiative concluded that: 'Both parents and practitioners

need clear guidance on what constitutes societally acceptable and unacceptable standards of parenting; initiating a properly moderated public and professional conversation about this topic should be a priority.⁹¹²

Looking back to 1933 when the Children and Young Persons Act was passed children were still considered the exclusive property of parents. Today children are recognised as individuals with rights that we all have the responsibility to protect. The criminal law needs to change to reflect that.

In 1933 children were regarded as small adults who could smoke, drink, work and be sent to adult prisons. Gradually attitudes have been revolutionised, with changing legal frameworks serving as a benchmark for acceptable behaviour. This preventative function of the law already works well in many instances, including

the laws on wearing seatbelts and around the age of sexual consent. In these circumstances the primary purpose of the law was to set a benchmark for acceptable behaviour rather than to secure criminal prosecutions.

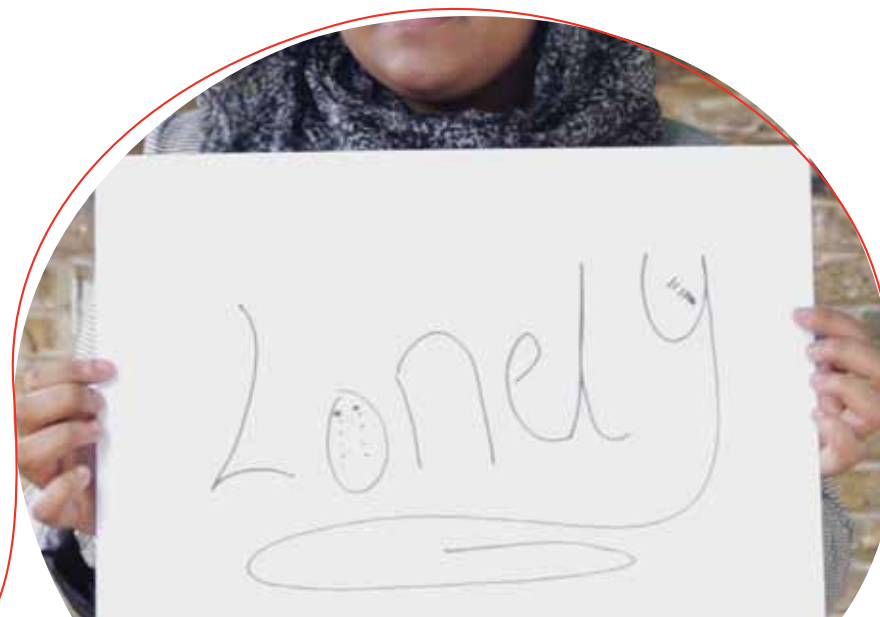
Civil and criminal law

Under the civil law the responsibility to protect children falls to local authorities and the family courts. Local authorities investigate suspected cases where a child might be suffering harm.

Authorities are required to provide services to meet the needs of these children and their families. In this way, the civil law focuses on child protection, and promotes the provision of those services that are helpful in addressing neglect.

The criminal law operates separately from the civil law, and is designed to protect the public in general. By making a clear statement of what is unacceptable behaviour, the criminal law is intended to prevent the harm that results from wrongful behaviour, and traditionally focuses on punishing offenders.

There is, however, an important role for the criminal law in protecting children, particularly by providing further entry points for early intervention and family support.



Why the law must be updated

When the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 made child cruelty a criminal offence, there were many assumptions about family life, growing up and children's rights that do not ring true today. Section 1 focused on the duties of parents or caregivers to ensure that physical injury was not caused to a child by depriving him or her of her most basic needs. In this sense, the 1933 Act displays an antiquated understanding of the safety and wellbeing of children.

Not only has our understanding of what constitutes neglect significantly changed in the last 80 years, but our approach to addressing the issue has also evolved. We now know that with the right support, we can help parents better care for their children. The 1933 Act sought only punish parents that had failed to provide the bare necessities of survival to children, through prison sentences. While it is still appropriate to punish those that abuse children, but it is possible to keep families together when it is in the child's best interest, and with the right support to the family.

In comparison to the sexual and physical abuse of children, the abuse of children by neglect is largely overlooked as a serious problem in the current framework and application of law.¹³ Because of this, our response falls short of our obligations under international children's rights law to take all measures to protect children from neglect and negligent treatment while in the care of parents, legal guardians or any other person who has their care.¹⁴ All of which has a real impact for the safety, health and wellbeing of children.

With concern about child neglect increasing amongst the general public and professionals who work with children,¹⁵ there are now a number of urgent reasons for the 1933 Act to be updated.

The 1933 Act

One of the general principles of law is that, 'the chief concern of the criminal law is to prohibit behaviour that represents a serious wrong against an individual or against

some fundamental social value or institution'.¹⁶ There are a number of out-dated features within the 1933 Act section 1 offence of 'Cruelty to persons under sixteen', that mean that this basic purpose is not met.

Section 1, Children and Young Persons Act 1933

Cruelty to persons under sixteen

(1) If any person who has attained the age of sixteen years and has responsibility for any child or young person under that age, **wilfully assaults, ill-treats, neglects, abandons, or exposes him**, or causes or procures him to be assaulted, ill-treated, neglected, abandoned, or exposed, **in a manner likely to cause him unnecessary suffering or injury to health** (including injury to or loss of sight, or hearing, or limb, or organ of the body, and any mental derangement), that person shall be guilty of a misdemeanour, and shall be liable –

(a) on conviction on indictment, to a fine... or alternatively... or in addition thereto, **to imprisonment for any term not exceeding ten years;**

(b) on summary conviction, to a fine not exceeding £400 pounds, or alternatively... or in addition thereto, to imprisonment for any term not exceeding six months.

(2) For the purposes of this section –

(a) a parent or other person legally liable to maintain a child or young person, or the legal guardian of a child or young person, shall be deemed to have neglected him in a manner likely to cause injury to his health if he has **failed to provide adequate food, clothing, medical aid or lodging for him**, or if, having been unable otherwise to provide such food, clothing, medical aid or lodging, he has failed to take steps to procure it to be provided under the enactments applicable in that behalf

‘Wilfully neglects’

The greatest difficulty in defining neglect in the criminal law, is that it is the absence of things done.

It is right that the criminal law blames and punishes those who deliberately and consciously choose not to provide a child with his or her basic needs in a way that causes harm. The term ‘wilful’ however, does not allow for the full range of circumstances and ways in which a child may be neglected. Within the ordinary principles of criminal law, a person will generally be guilty of an offence if they commit a criminal act, and intended to commit that act at the time. In this way, the criminal law establishes a standard of behaviour that is expected of all citizens. However, the law only deals with the more serious cases of neglect, where there is an intentional and malicious undercurrent to the parents’ behaviour. In less acute cases of neglect, this element might not be

present, but the damage done by persistent failure to meet a child’s needs can still have significant impact on their long term physical and cognitive development.

It is vital that this offence is reviewed, and that any review takes into account that damage can be done unintentionally to children. This will help set public standards, help parents avoid unintentionally neglecting their children’s needs, and ultimately lead to families receiving support.

‘Failing to provide adequate food, clothing, medical aid or lodging’

The meaning of ‘neglect’ within the current criminal law is limited to failing to provide for a child’s bare physical survival. This is out of step with current and accepted definitions of neglect, including those used by governments in England and Wales (see Appendix 1).

The standard required of parents by section 1 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 is only to provide enough food, clothing, medical aid or lodging to keep a child physically and mentally functioning. We believe that children have a right to much more, and that in particular, the emotional needs of children must be recognised. Failure to provide for a child’s emotional, physical, nutritional, educational and supervision and guidance needs must be incorporated into the legal definition of neglect.

The current legal definition is also unhelpful to parents, as it leaves it entirely to the personal judgment of individual parents to decide what is adequate. It is not a defence to a criminal charge of child cruelty that a parent believed that their actions were ‘adequate’. Instead, it must be judged by what any reasonable person would think is adequate for a child. If a parent can be prosecuted despite their belief that their actions were adequate, there must be clear information available about what is adequate, but current definitions are no longer acceptable or helpful to parents or professionals.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, states that ‘childhood is entitled to special care and assistance’.¹⁷ At the time that the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 was passed, there were many assumptions about what a parent or caregiver’s duty is to a child, but these only took into account adults’ perspectives. In a recent study, we

asked children aged between 8 and 16 about their views of what should be provided for them by parents. Their expectations were not limited to providing food, clothing, shelter, or medical attention, but included emotional and educational support.¹⁸

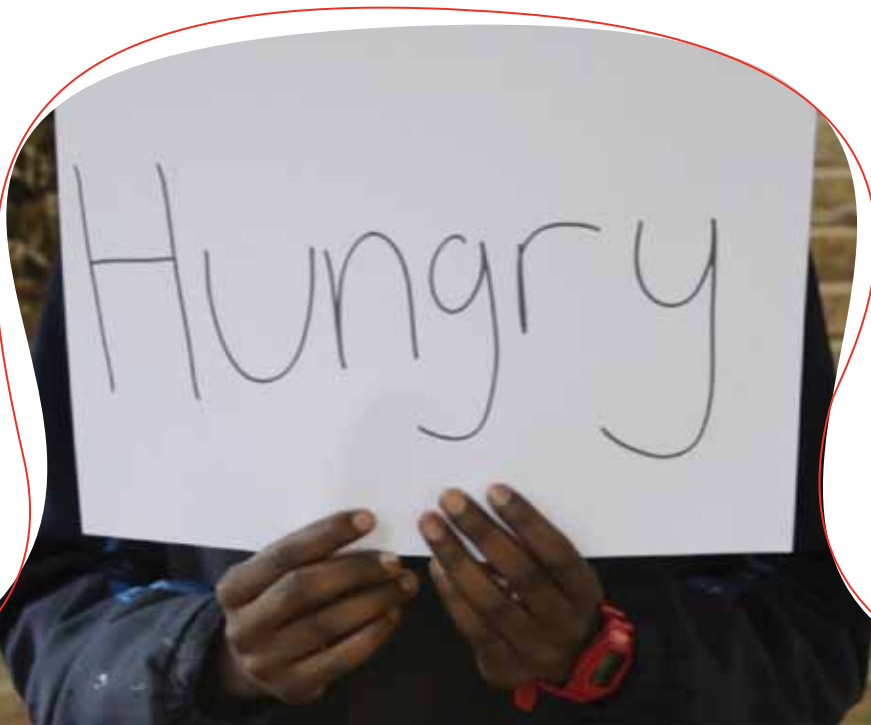
International children's rights law recognises that children, 'for a full and harmonious development of [their] personality, should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding'.¹⁹ The legal definition of neglect must clearly articulate and protect a child's right not only to be kept alive, but to develop healthily.

'Unnecessary suffering and injury to health'

The term 'unnecessary suffering' is out of date and does not fit modern attitudes toward a child's right to live free from 'all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation'.²⁰ The purpose of this phrase in section 1 is to set a threshold for police investigation and a criminal charge; but the effect is that only where the neglect is so serious that a child is likely to experience unnecessary suffering or injury to health, does the law currently say neglect is wrong. In updating the law, it is vital that there is a clear statement that no suffering, through neglectful behaviour, is acceptable.

The current definitions within criminal law do not require or assist the police to take any action until they believe a child is likely to suffer unnecessarily, or to 'lose his or her sight, hearing, limb, organ of the body, or become mentally deranged'. These things are likely to occur as a result of assault

or exposure to harm, but do not cover the more prevalent effects of neglect, particularly the emotional harm experienced by sustained periods of neglect. This has two results. The first is that we remain unclear as to what neglect is. The second is that we have to wait until we have evidence of a child suffering – often physical injuries, even when we know that a child's needs are being neglected – to do something about it. In the context of child protection it is not enough for the criminal law to identify wrongful behaviour, it must also help to protect children.



Sentencing and assistance

Between 2001 and 2010, the number of criminal cases of detected neglect almost trebled from 782 to 2,172.²¹ This is a significant number of people already within the criminal justice system, and while it will be appropriate for some people who have abused their children to be treated in this way, the current law does not allow us to respond in other ways that help to protect children by preventing further neglect.

The section 1 offence focuses on punishing rather than educating or assisting parents. A person found guilty of cruelty to a person under 16 can be imprisoned for up to 10 years.²² The official guidelines for courts when sentencing someone convicted of this offence state that the reason a prison sentence is appropriate is to show how seriously society regards child cruelty.²³ This is despite the objection that imprisoning a parent can re-victimise a child by further depriving him or her of parental care.²⁴ Our research has found that,

even though there is increasing concern about children's welfare, 73 per cent of the people we spoke to agreed that when parents or caregivers are found to have neglected a child, they should be offered support, compared with 54 per cent who said that they should be sent to prison.²⁵ It is time to challenge the assumption that the seriousness of child neglect makes imprisonment the necessary and preferred option, and to explore alternative sentencing options that are designed to challenge and support parents and help prevent further neglect.

Evidence shows that parent education and training programmes can be highly effective.²⁶ Under the civil law, a family can be offered support or assistance services,²⁷ but under the criminal law, this crucial element of child protection is overlooked.

Of course, cases where a child has been maliciously and deliberately deprived of his or her basic needs, require punishment and removal of the offender from the public, but this is only a small part of the picture. Of the 2,172 recorded cases of criminal neglect or cruelty in 2010, 67 per cent resulted in a caution and we have no figures on the number of people prosecuted but not found guilty.

Cautions are a formal warning usually given to people who commit a low level crime for the first time. This gives entirely the wrong message. Even though we identify neglectful behaviour, we do nothing about it. At no stage is support or rehabilitation made a necessary part of the criminal process.

Criminal investigations can be traumatic, time-consuming and can undo a lot of the good work that social workers and others undertake with neglected children and families. Many child protection workers object to

criminal investigations because they often amount to nothing²⁸ and can make it more difficult for parents and children to get on with their lives and overcome the problems that led to neglect in the first place. The current law does not acknowledge the vital importance of professional support and assistance when parents or caregivers have been found to neglect a child. Changes to sentencing and providing mandatory referral to social care services to accompany cautions must be explored.

A joined up legal system to protect children

Currently the civil law and the criminal law often operate in a contradictory manner in relation to child protection.²⁹ This is because, as separate systems of law, they are guided by different purposes and different principles. The civil law is most concerned with the future protection of the child. The criminal law, on the other hand, is backward looking and seeks to establish blame and punish on the basis of that blame.

The rules of both civil law and criminal law can have opposite and detrimental effects on child protection practice. In reviewing the criminal law there exists a good opportunity to unify the operation of these systems of law in relation to child protection so that principles run parallel and consistently. In practice this would mean that agencies could be better joined up and more able to support each

other, allowing for effective decision making, especially in cases of acute neglect. It is vital that wherever children come to the attention of protection agencies, those agencies are operating to common principles and shared responsibility around the seriousness of child neglect.

Getting the law right

There is a clear case for reform of the current framework of criminal law, and associated sentencing, but any changes to the way in which we protect children must be carefully considered. This will necessarily take time to develop. Action for Children is committed to seeing this process through, and to working in partnership with all relevant stakeholders in making it happen. There are however, some important principles to consider now when making the case for reform.



attention. alone. care. love. stress. invisible. smell. forgotten. hurt. neglect...

Avoiding criminalisation

As we have shown above, the criminal law currently emphasises punishment rather than support and rehabilitation, and there are already thousands of parents within the criminal justice system because of neglect. It is important that any reform of the law and sentencing does not unintentionally label or criminalise those parents that should be receiving help.

The usual question that arises before a change in the criminal law is, 'who do we think should be in the criminal justice system, who currently are not?'. In this case we should ask a different question: 'what purpose should the criminal justice system be serving, which it currently is not?'. Legal reform should be designed to ensure that when members of the public, the police or social workers are concerned that a child is being neglected, the law allows us to take a positive step towards helping children and their families, rather than labelling parents as criminals.

Public awareness

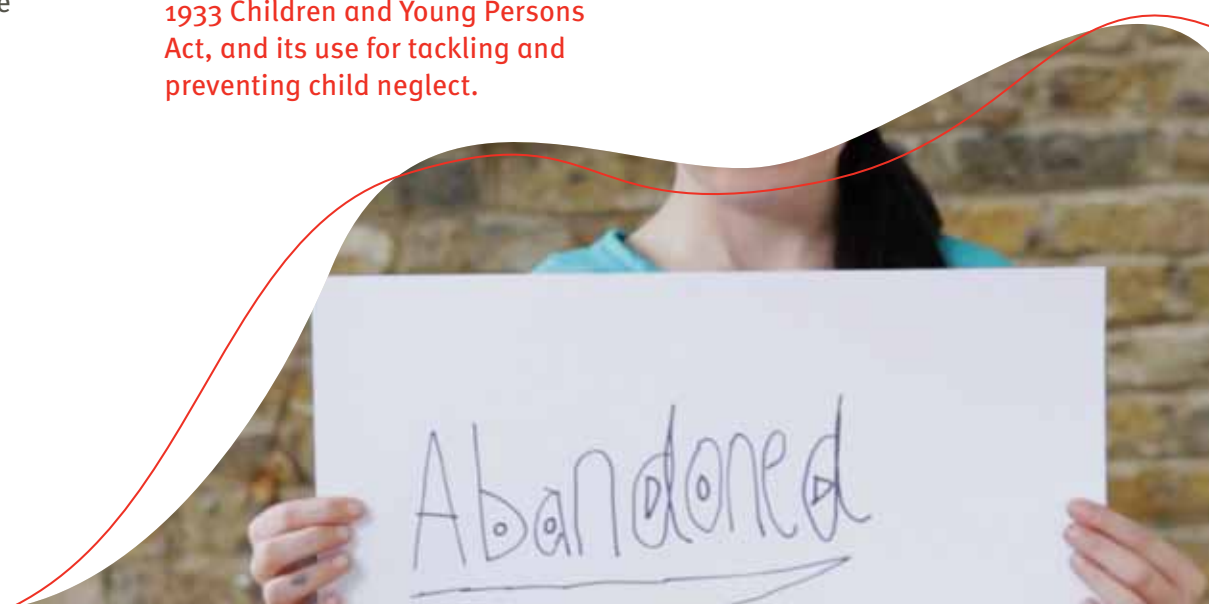
If we are to help prevent neglect we must use the different branches of the law to its full capacity. The law should not only justify interventions when things go wrong, but also provide clear standards for good parenting, which can then educate the public.

Our research has shown that often people look to the law for guidance about acceptable behaviour towards children. Only 16 per cent of parents agreed with the statement that, 'the law should not intervene with how people choose to raise their child'.³⁰ Reform of the framework of criminal law must take into account the rights of families and respect for their private lives, but there is a clear need for public information. Any changes to the definitions in law would require a complementary campaign of public education and awareness in order to change behaviour.

Government action

The process for effecting legal and social change is long and complex, and we must be careful to review the criminal law in a way that best serves the interests of children. Nonetheless the case for change and better protection of children is urgent, and the Government must act now.

There are a number of ways in which the Government can start the process of reform, including a Law Commission Review. We should not allow the current law on child neglect to remain unchallenged, and so we call upon the Government to announce a full review of Section 1 of the 1933 Children and Young Persons Act, and its use for tackling and preventing child neglect.



Appendix 1

Operational definitions of neglect in England and Wales

England³¹

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- ▶ provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment)
- ▶ protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger
- ▶ ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers)
- ▶ ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs

Wales³²

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. It may involve a parent or care-giver failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

In addition, neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance misuse.

Appendix 2

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child: a background

- ▶ The UK government ratified this Convention in 1991, showing its political commitment to the protection of a wide range of children's rights
- ▶ Although the Convention is not part of English law as such, it exerts an 'increasingly powerful influence on the developing law'³³
- ▶ As a signatory to the Convention, the UK must report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, which monitors our state activities and make recommendations as to how the UK can better protect a wide range of children's rights



Endnotes

1. It also made it illegal to assault, ill-treat, abandon or expose a child, although those terms are not further defined in the 1933 Act
2. These figures are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 1092 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 19th and 26th March 2012. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all parents in England and Wales with children aged under 18
3. R Gilbert et al, 'Burden and consequences of child maltreatment, in high income countries', (The Lancet, Child Maltreatment series, articles 1-3)
4. See Appendix 1 for full definition of neglect in England and Wales
5. Action for Children and the University of Stirling, 'Child Neglect in 2011', (Watford: Action for Children January 2012)
6. Action for Children and the University of Stirling, 'Child Neglect in 2011', (Watford: Action for Children January 2012)
7. YouGov panel field work 19-26 March 2012, figures weighted and representative of all parents in England and Wales with Children aged under 18
8. YouGov panel field work 19-26 March 2012, figures weighted and representative of all parents in England and Wales with Children aged under 18
9. Action for Children and the University of Stirling, 'Child Neglect in 2011', (Watford: Action for Children January 2012)
10. Action for Children and the University of Stirling, 'Child Neglect in 2011', (Watford: Action for Children January 2012)
11. UN Committee on the Rights of the child, concluding observations on the report submitted by the United Kingdom, 20th October 2008
12. C Davies and H Ward, 'Safeguarding Children Across Services – messages from research', (Jessica Kingsley publishers 2012)
13. L Hoyano and C Keenan, 'Child Abuse: law and policy across boundaries' (Oxford: OUP, 2007), p 121
14. Article 19(1), UN Convention on the Rights of the Child provides, "States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child."
15. Action for Children and the University of Stirling, 'Child Neglect in 2011', (Watford: Action for Children, January 2012)
16. A Ashworth, 'Principles of Criminal Law' 6th edn, (Oxford, OUP, 2009), p1
17. Preamble, UNCRC, 1989
18. YouGov Panel field work 28 March – 1 April 2012, 538 children aged 8-16 were interviewed, weighted by age, gender and religion
19. Preamble, UNCRC, 1989
20. Article 19, UNCRC, 1989
21. Ministry of Justice Tables A4.4 and A4.5. In: Conviction tables: Criminal Justice Statistics Quarterly Update to December 2010: Ministry of Justice Statistics bulletin, (London: Ministry of Justice, 2011)
22. s.1, Children and Young Persons Act 1933
23. Sentencing Guidelines Council, 'Overarching Principles: Assaults on children and Cruelty to a child', (London: SGC, 2008)
24. J Fortin, 'Children's Rights and the Developing Law', p645
25. YouGov panel field work 19-26 March 2012, figures weighted and representative of all parents in England and Wales with Children aged under 18
26. P Moran, 'Neglect: research evidence to inform practice', (London, Action for Children, 2009)
27. Under s.17 Children Act 1989
28. J Fortin, 'Children's rights and the developing law', p645
29. J Fortin, 'Children's Rights and the Developing Law', p645
30. YouGov panel field work 19-26 March 2012, figures weighted and representative of all parents in England and Wales with Children aged under 18
31. HM Government, 'Working Together to Safeguard Children', (HM Government, London 2010)
32. Office of the Children's Commissioner for Wales (2008) All Wales Child Protection Procedures
33. J. Fortin, 'Children's Rights and the Developing Law' 3rd edn, (Cambridge: CUP, 2009), p 33

Help us keep children safe

Join our campaign to change the law

- Neglect is the most common form of child abuse
- The 1933 law on neglect is basic and out of date
- It doesn't prevent neglect and leaves children at risk

actionforchildren.org.uk/neglectlawchange

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as long as it takes