Trust in the community: case studies of children’s safeguarding in three Welsh neighbourhoods

Dr Sally Holland
Hayley Collicott, PhD candidate
Rhiannon Evans, PhD candidate
Cardiff University School of Social Sciences
Wales Institute of Social & Economic Research, Data & Methods (WISERD)
Contents of paper

• Context
• Introducing the three neighbourhoods
• Safeguarding spheres
• Community parenting
• Conclusions
Welsh Assembly Government
'promoting...greater acceptance of adult responsibilities towards all children including the shared responsibility to develop safe communities.' (p.14).

Every Child Matters – England
Emphasis on children’s safety becoming ‘everybody’s business’
Research questions and methods

How do residents of specific neighbourhoods understand, perform and experience the safeguarding of children in their locality?

- Participant observation
- Unstructured and semi-structured interviews (some mobile)
- Documentary analysis (media and official records)

Research design was been adapted to local conditions during the course of the fieldwork.
Safeguarding spheres

Informal safeguarding

Formal safeguarding

Community and preventative services
Community Parenting

Irresponsibility. Selfishness.
Behaving as if your choices
have no consequences.
Children without fathers.
Schools without discipline.
Reward without effort.
Crime without punishment.
Rights without
responsibilities. Communities
without control’

David Cameron August 2011
Community parenting

Our definition

the collective and often collaborative actions of residents, within a self-defined geographical or social community, which aim to care for and protect children who are part of that community

• Individual acts between adults and children
• Collective actions
• Formal and informal acts of care and concern
Community parenting characteristics

- Reinforcement
- Regulation
- Sharing knowledge about risk
- Exclusion
Eyes on the street

Communities that use or are enabled to use pavements and shared spaces can develop a *watchfulness*, tracking people’s comings and goings and fostering a safer neighbourhood

• Jane Jacobs: (1961)
• She [mother] knows if they are up to trouble on the estate as **people will always tell her**. Once her son was climbing scaffolding a few streets away. ‘before he had reached the top I was on my way to pull him down’. Someone had seen him, phoned her next door neighbour who had come round straight away (Interview: Claire, Caegoch)

• and you don’t know who people are in the streets anyway so it’s not like you could say to somebody ‘are they up there?’, because you don’t know ‘em. (Graeme, Bryndwr)
I think in other communities if, she could go out and if something happened, you know, someone would... come and tell you, whereas if she could go to the park and no one would know who she was... you don’t see the same children there all the time (Jenny, Newtown Common)

Well my friends would be looking out for my kids... but in general passers by who were not, uh, had kids, would not say anything, because, people don’t, you know, you don’t ever say anything to anybody about anything because they might sue you (Lisa, Newtown Common)
we’re starting to know now who lives in the street and where they live, and the children, and we look out for people (Shirley, Newtown Common)
Sharing knowledge

A friend mentions about the same boys from last Saturday, saying that they watch unsuitable violent and sexual films, and that her daughter has heard some unpleasant things from this boy, and that he keeps kissing her friend’s child. She tells me this so I can make sure (daughter) is aware of right and wrong. (Diary: Sarah, Caegoch)
A visible culture

In this street if we are sat talking outside and there is a car comes down and we know whose cars are who, and who comes in the street and who belongs in the street, and if you see a car that you don’t know – ‘well who is that?’ And everybody will say the same, ‘who’s that?’ And you watch them until they’re gone (Interview: Deborah, Caegoch).
Invisible parenting in a visible community: a paradox

- they (in Caegoch) all sit around drinking and having a barbeque and the kids are over the park playing, which, you know- but then that’s going, if they’re all drinking, who’s looking after the kids? (Interview: Lauren, Bryndwr).

- …just the chavviness, whatever you want to call it, I don’t stand around corners…and smoking and (not) do anything else and scream and swear and … yes, I have got a bit of education and I do feel I’ve got a bit of brains there so I wouldn’t class myself as a typical Caegoch (person), but saying that, I’m not embarrassed or ashamed to say that I’m from Caegoch. (Interview: Sian, Caegoch).
• I wouldn’t leave them. They are allowed to go out in the garden. If I am out in the garden they can go to the end of the street to my sister in law’s or across the road to their godmother’s or my niece’s across the road but otherwise they are not allowed to go out on the street (Interview: Melissa, Caegoch).
Residents seeing and doing safeguarding

**Active**

- Petitions for services
- Vigilantism/community justice
- Statutory service visits
- Police street patrols
- Community workers doing street and house to house work

**Public**

**Passive**

Lack of *seen* social work response to referrals

Lack of social work proactive presence on estate

**Private**

Anonymous direct referrals to social services

Passing on concerns to school/community workers

Watching out for neighbours ‘kids

Street camping trips and BBQs for children and parents

Poor experiences— why bother?

Baseline distrust in officials

Fear of reprisals

Stigma: Suspicion that some streets targeted by social workers

‘No grassing’ in our street
conclusions

- Stark contrasts in collective parenting styles and engagement with collective spaces between neighbourhoods
- Safeguarding facilitated by relationships and familiarity
- Most safeguarding of children done by semi-formal and informal spheres (enhancing wellbeing and preventative work). Probably much underestimated.
Policy implications?

- Enhancing voluntary and community sector role
- Empowering individuals and communities to look out for and engage with other people’s children
- Recognising value of informal care and support – friendships, grandparents, neighbours, clubs.
- Involve ordinary residents in planning local safeguarding strategies.
Contact details

• For a copy of the written paper that this presentation is based on, or for any further information email:

• Hollands1@cf.ac.uk