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SOCIAL SERVICES PROVISION FOR CHILDREN IN BRITAIN: POLICY LESSONS FOR KAZAKHSTAN?

Summary

Currently, the Government of Kazakhstan is directing major efforts to improve the public system of child protection within the framework of the reforming of the social services provision system. The British experience in providing social services to various categories of vulnerable children, its strengths and weaknesses will be as an important example for our country.

This essay presents the analysis of some examples of best practice in England in delivering social care services for children and families. It is worth noting that these will not necessarily apply in the current context to the Republic of Kazakhstan, but are nonetheless useful to take into consideration.

The keywords: *Social services, vulnerable groups, integration, the social worker.*

Аннотация

В настоящее время, социальная политика в Казахстане в отношении детей направлена на улучшение общественной системы предоставления социальных услуг. Опыт Великобритании в оказании услуг различным категориям уязвимых детей, со своими сильными и слабыми сторонами будет как важный пример для нашей страны. В данной статье рассматриваются некоторые примеры и уроки лучшей британской практики в оказании социальных услуг для детей и семей. Несомненно, они не обязательны к принятию к действию в настоящее время в нашей стране, но тем не менее полезно будет взять на вооружение их опыт.

Ключевые слова: *Социальные услуги, уязвимые группы, интеграция, социальный работник*

Аңдатпа

Бүгінгі таңда Қазақстандағы әлеуметтік саясат балаларға әлеуметтік көмек көрсетудің қоғамдық жүйесін жетілдіруге бағытталған. Өртүрлі категориядағы балаларға көмек көрсету саласын дамытуда әлсіз және күшті жақтары бар Ұлыбритания тәжірибесінен үйренетін тұстар да бар. Ұсынылып отырған мақалада британдық тәжірибенің озық үлгілері талқыланып, балалар мен отбасыларына көмек көрсету мәселелері нақты мысалдармен дәлелденген. Қазіргі жағдайда әрекетке итермелеу мақсатын көздеме де, бұл ақпараттың ескеріліп, пайдалы болатынына күмән келтірмейміз.

Тірек сөздер: *Әлеуметтік қызмет көрсету, интеграция немесе бірігу, осал топтар, әлеуметтік қызметкер*

Introduction

The term “social care” encompasses a wide range of services to local authorities and independent organizations; social services play an important role in resolving the problems of a social nature and protect people in vulnerable situation and manage complex relationships. Up to 1.8 million of the most vulnerable members of society, including 300000 children receive some aspect of social care through social workers and their assistants (Humphries: 2010).

Many of the reforms that have increased prescription and bureaucratic processes in child and family social work were intended to improve the quality of practice in Britain. In Kazakhstan, since 2008 when the Law “About special social services” was adopted (Bredihina: 2009), the system of social services provision also started to reform: the status of social workers was elevated, specific functions and responsibilities were identified, and the national standards across the department were regulated. The purpose is to offer help to vulnerable groups in society (children, youth, adults) such as those with special needs, low income, unemployment, homeless, and so on.

However, it is yet to prove itself as being a child-centered system. There is a lack of coordination among the fragmented provision of some of the services for social orphans, children with special needs, with deviance behavior, children of large families or of single parents. Social services provision

is one of the fundamental aspects of State policy of the British Government (Munro, 2011). Therefore, we can take some lessons from the well established British system in this regard.

Policy lessons for Kazakhstan

Lesson 1: A Voice for Children and Young People

Giving children a national voice on matters that affect them is key point in shaping social services to meet the needs of children and young people. Various platforms can be used to voice their opinions, including national forums, Internet sites and surveys. The views of children and young people are then fed into Government to ensure that they help shape national policy on areas directly affecting them.

The structure and regulation of children's services have undergone significant reform in England in recent years. In 2000, following the high-profile death of a London girl who suffered severe abuse and neglect, which went undetected by several agencies, Lord Lamming (Alcock: 2008) published a report on the inquiry into the girl's death. This report highlighted the need to improve cross-sectoral communication and joint working, as well as the need to listen to children and respond to their needs. In response to this case and the findings of subsequent investigations, the Government published the green paper 'Every Child Matters'. The paper outlines plans to strengthen preventative services and amongst other things, to address weak accountability and poor integration. Following further consultation, the Children Act 2004 was passed, providing the legislative backbone for developing more effective and accessible services, focused around the needs of children, young people and families (ibid.).

Finally, in order to grant children and young people a voice in Government and public life, the first Children's Commissioner for England was appointed in March 2005. The Office of the Children's Commissioner is an independent organisation set up by parliament under the Children Act 2004. The Children's Commissioner is responsible for gathering and representing the views of the most vulnerable children and young people in society, as well as promoting their involvement in the work of organisations whose decisions and activities affect them. This is achieved by:

- exposing issues informed by children and young people themselves;
- provoking and facilitating quality discussion and debate;
- influencing the public, parents, carers and politicians through effective advocacy, particularly through the media;
- informing and scrutinising government policy;
- holding organisations to account;
- celebrating and promoting the participation of children and young people (Office of Children's Commissioner website).

National Commission on women and socio-demographic policy under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan could oversee this aspect, coordinating work centers, clubs and committees established to collect and integrate the views and voices of children and adolescents.

Lesson 2: Integrated Working

Government programs such as Every Child Matters and Sure Start aim to promote joined up working in order to deliver a more holistic, integrated service to children and families. In recognising that a child's well being is dependent on support delivered not solely through social services, but also through sectors such as education and health, better outcomes for children and young people can be achieved. Inter-agency working also encourages information sharing and helps to avoid cases of undetected abuse and neglect. This approach requires statutory, voluntary and private sectors to work in partnership effectively and to maintain open lines of communication, in order that the most appropriate provider in the area delivers the necessary services. It also relies on an effective single system of assessing and monitoring children and families in need or at risk. A common assessment framework ensures that service users do not have to tell and re-tell their story to several professionals and provides a common language across sectors for all practitioners working with children and families.

In November 2004, the Government launched the national program 'Every Child Matters: Change for Children', to implement the reforms set out in the green paper. This program involves all professionals who work with children and young people from birth to age 19, including teachers,

doctors and nurses, social workers and youth workers. It encourages an integrated approach to working, to enable children and young people to achieve the following five outcomes:

- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well-being (Every Child Matters Outcomes Framework)

The Childcare Act 2006 contains a duty requiring local authorities to provide information to parents on childcare and other local support services for children and young people up to the age of 20. All local authorities produce a service directory, providing comprehensive information on local providers, eligibility criteria, geographical locations and referral procedures. All councils also maintain informative websites, produce leaflets and information packs and provide links to local and national statutory and voluntary services.

Currently, Kazakhstan is moving to the second stage of reform of the system of social services. The second stage of reform in 2012–2014, involves significant changes in this direction, involving activation acts of ministries and agencies of social orientation this way: optimization of medico-social institutions, expansion of the ungraded institutions, and introduction of partial monetization of services expanding the range of additional social services provided on a fee basis, development of social workers (Ministry of Labor and social protection of the RK: 2012).

Kazakhstan holds various social projects with the support of the UN Children's Fund UNICEF (Ministry of education and science of the RK: 2011), but there is still the question of the availability of a single system of evaluation and monitoring of children and families in need of services, remains unresolved.

The year 2017, completion of the third phase, it is planned to create a market for the provision of social services with the developed infrastructure.

Lesson 3: Kinship Care

The current system of social care services in England aims to keep children and young people in the home and with family members as far as possible. Care Orders to take a child into custody are only issued where absolutely necessary, such as when the child is considered to be at risk in the home. Residential accommodation such as a children's home is likewise only considered in extreme circumstances, where no other option is viable. Kinship care, where the child is the legal responsibility of social services but is looked after on a temporary basis by extended family members or family friends is a favourable option in cases where the child can no longer remain with its birth parents.

Children and families who are eligible for social service support have a wide range of needs. However, very often families referred to social services are generally coping, but require help with specific problems, for example, a family may need assistance finding appropriate childcare. In such cases, social services offer advice and information and/or direct families to other services (Fleckenstein: 2010).

Families experiencing more complex problems, for example, where the child's health or development is suffering significantly, will undergo a more comprehensive needs assessment. A decision is then made on the basis of this assessment about which services are needed, who will provide them and within what timeframe. Finally, in some cases, social services may be given information raising concerns that a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm. In this instance, there is an immediate response from social services along with other key agencies (Munro: 2011).

The Government has also recently introduced the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) for children and young people. The CAF is a shared assessment tool used by all practitioners working with children, young people and families and is designed to identify at an early stage any additional needs that children and young people have that are not being met (Tutt: 2007). For example, a nursery would use the CAF to refer a child to social services if they considered him/her to be in need or at risk. The CAF provides a language that is common to children and their family members as well as to professionals and other staff. It also provides a standardised approach to conducting an assessment of a child's needs, deciding how those needs should be met and avoids children and families having to tell and re-tell their story.

According to statistics, the lion's share among the pupils of the boarding schools is so-called social orphans, fatherless, with living parents. And it is also important that when relatives and Associates

informed about issues in education, and provide all possible support from the inside, without waiting for government intervention. The establishment of family and children's centers with regional Akimats (local authorities) is effective opportunity to provide timely social work (Ministry of Education and Science of the RK: 2011).

Lesson 4: Support for Carers

The Government recognises the contribution unpaid carers make to supporting vulnerable and needy people. Carers and young carers are offered financial support and social services provide respite and support groups for the carer. For young people, this support ensures that their education does not suffer, family relationships are backed up and the young person is allowed to thrive. Legislation prevents carers being penalised for out of work caring responsibilities and flexible working hours further protect carers in their responsibilities.

Social workers are professionally qualified staff who assess the needs of service users and plan care packages and support tailored to services users' individual needs. Social workers must hold an honours degree in social work (although previous qualifications including the Diploma in Social Work continue to be recognised as a valid social work qualification). The degree in social work is practically weighted, requiring a minimum of 200 days spent in practice settings. Once qualified, social workers must register with the General Social Care Council (GSCC website).

The GSCC was established in October 2001 under the Care Standards Act 2000 and is the workforce regulator and guardian of standards for the social care workforce in England. Applicants for registration are required to demonstrate that they have completed the compulsory social work training and have met requirements around conduct, health and competence. The GSCC has the right to rule that a newly qualified person should undertake further experience in practice before granting full registration as a worker. Registered social workers are also required to complete post-registration training and learning activities before renewing their registration every three years. The GSCC accredits universities who offer social work qualifications at both undergraduate and post-qualifying levels. It also quality-approves social work courses and dictates statutory codes of practice for social workers and their employers (*ibid.*, Codes of practice).

The GSCC works to raise standards in social care and maintain a high level of protection to service users. All social workers in England must be registered on the GSCC's Social Care Register and act in accordance with the codes of practice. Service users and carers can check the registration of a social worker and establish whether they meet GSCC standards. They can also raise concerns about the conduct of a registered social worker and request the GSCC to investigate (*ibid*, Conduct Rules, 2003).

In 2001 the Government established the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) to improve social care services for adults and children in the UK. The SCIE is governed by an independent board of trustees, which includes representatives from across the social care sector and seeks to identify good practice and help to embed it in everyday social care provision. SCIE's work on children and families' services focuses on family support, safeguarding children and looked-after children. It looks at effective interventions, managing the boundaries between children and families' and adults' services, organisational learning and risk management and seeks to address these barriers through the provision of materials to support good practice (Social Care online).

In Kazakhstan, with the support of the Ministry of education and science in Astana city established the Institute of family upbringing for realization of the State policy on family education. Collaboration and inter-agency cooperation of State structures with non-governmental and international organizations are in improving the quality of life of children. A Council of NGOs with the Committee on the protection of the rights of children. In fact, sociological studies, forums, conferences, roundtables, seminars, trainings, meetings to address child care with the involvement of international and national experts. A number of social projects for children in conjunction with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) were a lot. However, a comprehensive approach to the formation of a clear social services system has not been achieved.

Conclusion

The improvement of the social protection of vulnerable groups of children in Kazakhstan, occurs in connection with parallel processes.

Firstly, reform of social welfare, where a great deal of effort has been taken to improve the system of social protection of vulnerable groups such as children and the family.

Secondly, administrative reform of the public service of Kazakhstan, where better planning and standardization of government services to be serialized.

Finally, better interaction of State and non-governmental sector in the area of protection of the interests of vulnerable groups of children and their families, development of these relations works as an equal partnership.

In 2012, the President of Republic of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev has commissioned Government to consider compensating for part of expenses incurred by parents sending their children to child care facilities, with compensation packages depending on the number of children in each family, according to President Nazarbayev's article "Social Modernization of Kazakhstan: 20 steps towards Universal Labor Society and Employment" (President's article on social modernization published).

In accordance with article 44 of the Convention on the children rights prepared by the fourth periodic report of the Republic of Kazakhstan (Ministry of education and science of RK: 2011) on realization of the Convention on the children rights.

There can be no doubt that despite on indicators and indicators for the protection of children's rights are included in the strategic plans of ministries and agencies and the program for the development of territories of local executive bodies, it is too early to claim about child-centered system.

Thus, the positive experience of foreign countries, including the article lessons from Britain, will help to build and further strengthen the social services to Kazakhstani children and families in the period of its reform.

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