Early Childhood Intervention in the UK: Family, needs, standards and challenges

Abstract

Early intervention for vulnerable children is acknowledged as a critical factor in ensuring the best outcomes for children and their families. This paper outlines policies and processes in the United Kingdom which facilitate appropriate early intervention, including inter-agency working and communication. It explores how theory is translated into practice through a short case study exemplifying how intervention works in reality. This case study is set in a context of the early 21st century in the UK when the then labour government invested in a policy which set to address the needs of every child through inter- and trans-agency working. This was located in a policy white paper entitled ‘Every Child Matters (DfES 2004). However, a recent general election leading to a change of government in May 2010, has created an unpredictable future for existing policies and practices which has been compounded by a worsening economic situation in the UK. Thus, the paper discusses both existing policy and practices but also hypothesizes on what the future might hold in terms of the early identification of vulnerable children and the provision of appropriate services and strategies to meet effectively these needs of both children and their families.

Key words: Early intervention, policy, practice, UK, children, families.

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