

Social exclusion of vulnerable children and families is a serious concern for policy-makers and practitioners alike. This doctoral thesis explores the social construction of exclusion in the UK. The thesis explores both historical and current processes of interactions between the socially excluded populations and policy agents. The empirical findings suggest that the neglect of the children's rights value perspective in social policy, and the resultant practice thereof, may be counter-productive to combating social exclusion.

*"... institutions perpetuate exclusion unofficially. Public Sector workers who reflect the prejudices of their society may institutionalise some kinds of discrimination"*

The Department for International Development (DfID), UK

*"it just kills you in the end.. especially because you don't know if you are doing more good than harm.. the worst decision for me is when I see the child should be removed from home but I know if I do that, he will never get the kind of therapeutic attention that he needs.. instead he will probably be in multiple placements and at the end of the day, it boils down to the choice whether you let him be abused by his natural family or let the Government do it.. the abuse does not stop with intervention.. it's just the System that does it then.."*

*"Practice is about watching your back not about what can I do for this child"*

Excerpts from interviews with child protection social workers, UK

*"Decisions were made for us, we were tossed here and there like a worthless piece of scum"*

Excerpts from interviews with care-leavers, UK

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