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The logo for The Centre for Social Justice, featuring the text "THE CENTRE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE" in white, uppercase letters on a dark red background. The words "SOCIAL" and "JUSTICE" are stacked vertically and are significantly larger than "THE CENTRE FOR".

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PRESS RELEASE FROM THE CENTRE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

Royal Commission needed over “abhorrent” child protection failures, says new report

Vulnerable children and young people with mental health problems not getting enough support, says the Centre for Social Justice

Many child protection and mental health services are in crisis and a large number of children and young people are slipping through the net, a new report published tomorrow will reveal.

Enough is Enough calls for a Royal Commission to be established to advise on the wholesale redesign of England’s social care and mental health services.

The Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) has uncovered alarming reports of many vulnerable children and young people not receiving the support they need.

The report says the point at which many children and young people qualify for help is often too high, and there is a group of “lone children” who are not being taken care of by their parents or State services.

Worse still, the think-tank says an absence of up-to-date data means the full extent of child protection and mental health problems is unclear.

“Child protection and mental health failures in England are like an open wound”, said CSJ Director Christian Guy.

“It’s not good enough that we have to wait until we hear the child neglect horror stories before anything is done.

“Many of the problems uncovered in this report have been building under successive governments and we urgently need a Royal Commission to fully understand the extent of these issues.”

The report highlights shocking examples of abuse and neglect of children and young people who were not receiving adequate statutory help. One teenage girl, a victim of physical and emotional abuse, lived for periods with her father who introduced her to men who sexually abused her.

It also describes how a six-year-old boy was left living with his mother who was addicted to crack-cocaine. He suffered severe neglect and was later discovered with rotting teeth and surviving off food and shelter provided by a neighbour.

The study, which included an in-depth analysis of 20 cases from the London-based charity Kids Company, says a lack of State services often leads to charities picking up the pieces.

It reveals multiple failures by some local authorities to assess and provide help. Witnesses said some social work teams remain trapped in a process-driven culture with “dangerously high” caseloads.

The report also highlights major failings by some services to support children and young people with mental health problems.

There is a high rate of mental health disorder among British children, says the report. Based on data gathered a decade ago, one in 10 children aged between five and 16 has a diagnosable mental illness. These include:

- 290,000 have an anxiety disorder;
- 80,000 suffer from severe depression;
- Over 510,000 have a conduct disorder;
- Over 132,000 have severe attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

However, the CSJ believes the numbers are now higher. *Enough is Enough* says there is an absence of comprehensive and up-to-date data available on the extent of mental health problems in children and young people in England.

The report, which heard from victims of abuse and neglect, social workers and a host of other frontline staff, says: “The campaigners of the late 19th century exposed the adversity faced by children orphaned and left destitute by slum life and cholera epidemics.

“Their efforts and campaigns led, over time, to renewed public responsibility for the vulnerable young in Britain’s burgeoning cities. The efforts and campaigns of their heirs can surely achieve the same today.”

ENDS

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NOTES TO EDITORS

About the CSJ

The Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) is an independent think tank established in 2004 to put social justice at the heart of British politics. In June last year, the CSJ was awarded UK Social Policy Think Tank of the Year 2013 at Prospect magazine's Think Tank Awards.

In 2007 the CSJ published its landmark report, Breakthrough Britain. This publication, which set out 190 evidence-based policy recommendations to tackle poverty in Britain, transformed the social policy and political landscape and was awarded Publication of the Year by Prospect Magazine in 2008.

Since Breakthrough Britain the CSJ has published more than 40 reports which have shaped government policy and influenced opposition parties. These have included the seminal papers Dying to Belong and Dynamic Benefits, which has led the Coalition Government's welfare reforms.

Further to this, the CSJ manages an Alliance of over 300 of the most effective grass roots, poverty-fighting organisations. The CSJ is able to draw upon the expertise and experience of Alliance charities for research work and media inquiries. Journalists wishing to conduct grass-roots research into social problems can be put in touch with front-line charity directors and staff.