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# Child Protection and Safeguarding in England: Changing and Competing Conceptions of Risk and their Implications for Social Work

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The British Journal of Social Work, Volume 41, Issue 5, 1 July 2011, Pages 854–875, https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcq119

Published: 10 December 2010 Article history ▼





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# **Abstract**

This paper critically reflects on policy developments and debates in England in relation to child protection and safeguarding over the past twenty years. It argues that the period from the early 1990s to late 2008 saw policy change in significant ways. The state developed a much broader focus of concern about what constituted risk to children and what the role of professionals should be in relation to this; increasingly, the emphasis was upon 'safeguarding' rather than 'child protection'. However, the period since late 2008 has not only seen the focus shift more centrally to child protection, but there has been a renewed official priority given to social work. These developments have been given an added impetus with the election of the Conservative/Liberal Democrat Coalition government in May 2010. The paper concludes by considering the current state and possible future directions for child protection and safeguarding in England and the role of social work in this.

Keywords: Child protection, safeguarding, risk, social work

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Print ISSN 0045-3102

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