

The Israeli Approach to Protecting Vulnerable Children: Integrating Judicial and Social Work Perspectives

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Introduction

This Paper is presented in the context of a panel discussion entitled "Effective Child Protection", in which the participants are asked to describe judicial processes and government social services for the protection of children.

The assumption is that, because of their age and immaturity, all children are vulnerable, and that society has a responsibility to prevent abuse and neglect; this is primary prevention. The role of the Courts at the stage of primary prevention is limited to publishing its decisions which reflect the standards and mores of society, and societal abhorrence of abuse and neglect.

The social services, on the other hand, can play an important role in cutting down the incidence of abuse and neglect, although the principal agencies for developing awareness of the phenomenon and teaching the public about its effects are those concerned with educating the public, including the press and other media of communication as well as the schools and informal education organisations.

But if there has been neglect or abuse, then society has a duty to act, to protect the child from further harm, and to repair, by treatment and rehabilitation, the harm done, to the extent that this is possible.

Where there is an allegation, the judiciary is empowered to determine if there has been abuse or neglect; to punish those responsible; and to make orders for the protection of the child. In such a case, the social services and the judicial system have to work together, since while the effects of abuse and neglect are serious and far-reaching, a false allegation can bring in its train suffering and changes in the life of the child which may be no less serious and amount to indirect abuse or neglect.

It is important to stress that children are also liable to suffer long term damage even without conscious abuse or neglect of the child's needs by a parent or other caregiver. In particular, violence in the family, even where the child is not the victim, or separation of the parents, may have devastating effects on the child. The Courts and social services need to provide help in these cases too.

Primary prevention

Expenditure on prevention is far less than expenditure on treatment; this is true in the field of medicine and in other fields. Inoculation is accepted and encouraged by governments as being far cheaper than secondary and tertiary care; medication, hospitalization, disablement and death are far more costly, by orders of magnitude. As an example of primary prevention, Israeli medical professionals are teaching their counterparts in Africa how to perform circumcision on males as an effective way of reducing the incidence of AIDS.

In the same way, prevention of abuse and neglect will save huge expenses in the future, since an abused or neglected child is far more likely to suffer from mental illness, personality disorders or social difficulties, and his educational achievements are often affected. These children, as they become adults, will use resources – social work, psychiatric, psychological, educational, corrective and rehabilitative – to a much higher degree than the average, and are more likely themselves to have disrupted relationships, and to have children who will need to utilize these resources¹.

So society has a clear financial interest, as well as a moral and social interest, in promoting prevention programmes.

It should be axiomatic that no child should be abused or neglected; but every society must set its own standards, based on its norms. While account must be taken of cultural diversity, the setting of clear standards is one of the tasks of governance, and the state must not countenance any suggestion that because some group in society has different standards, children may be exposed to abuse or neglect if they belong to that group. This is especially the case where countries have immigrant populations, where the host country is entitled to demand of those who wish to live in it that they comply with its norms and laws.

Primary prevention requires, therefore, clear articulation of what behaviour is acceptable and what is not. This must be publicized among the adult population. Children must also be taught, in a way that they can understand according to their maturity, that certain behaviours are unacceptable.

As stated, the role of the judiciary in this area is to stand behind those whose task it is to publicise these matters; the social worker services should play an active role in encouraging educators and the media to play their role.

Allegations must be investigated; the duty to report.

A young child cannot be expected to complain to the authorities about abuse or neglect; particularly in cases of sexual abuse, the victim may not know that the behaviour

¹ See **The Unexpected Legacy of Divorce**, Judith Wallerstein, Julia Lewis, Sandra Blakeslee. New York, Hyperion, 2000, especially the notes to chapters 5, 11, 14, 15, &18.

is wrong or damaging, and the child has not the capacity to know what is acceptable, normative behavior and what is not.

Police, welfare authorities and the Courts can only get involved if they are informed about allegations of abuse or neglect. And not all reports of abuse are found to be valid. The complainant may be completely honest in his suspicions, but there may be some reasonable explanation for the matter about which he complained; but there are also cases where the complaint is without basis in fact, and is motivated by a desire to damage the person against whom the complaint is made.

The Penal Law 5737-1977, which is the main legislation defining criminal offences and setting the punishment for a person found to have committed a crime, was amended in 1989 to define a new series of offences, of abuse against defenceless persons, including children, and increasing, and in some cases doubling, the maximum prison sentence for offenders.

In addition, for the first time it was made an offence for any person to fail to report suspected child abuse or neglect, with doubled penalties for professionals involved with the child who fail to report.

The relevant Section of the Law, in rough translation of the relevant parts², provides as follows:

368D (a) Any person who has reasonable grounds to think that an offence has recently been committed against a child or defenceless person shall report it as soon as possible to a social worker designated by law or to the police; a person who fails to do so shall be liable to three months imprisonment.

(b) A physician, nurse, educator, social worker, welfare services worker, policeman, psychologist, criminologist or paramedical worker, and also the manager or staff member of any institution or home in which the child or defenceless person is placed - who, arising out of his professional activities or task has reasonable grounds to think that an offence has been committed against a child or defenceless person for whom he is responsible – shall report it as soon as possible to a social worker designated by law or to the police; such person who fails to do so shall be liable to six months imprisonment.

(c) A person who is responsible for a child or defenceless person who has reasonable grounds to think that another person who is responsible for a child or defenceless person has committed an offence against him, shall report it as soon as possible to a social worker designated by law or to the police; a person who fails to do so shall be liable to six months imprisonment.

² The translations are my own, and are intended to demonstrate the principal provisions of what is quite complicated legislation,

(c1) Any person who has reasonable grounds to think that a sexual offence has recently been committed against a child or defenceless person by a family member who is below the age of 18 years shall report it as soon as possible to a Social worker designated by law; a person who fails to do so shall be liable to three months imprisonment.

The psychology and medical and social work representatives to the debates in the Knesset Constitution, Law and Legislation Committee (which I attended as the representative of the Israel Bar Association) in 1989 objected to the application of the reporting requirement to those professionals who have a duty of confidentiality to their patients and clients. The committee heard extensive evidence, including about comparable legislation in other countries, and came to the conclusion that the protection of children was so important that even such professionals are required to report, on pain of criminal penalties, if they fail to do so.

There are detailed provisions as to who is considered a family member; about specific offences of abuse and neglect, as well as sexual offences, which require reporting; that while a report of an offence in general can be made to a designated social worker or to the police, where the alleged offender is a minor, the requirement is to report only to a designated social worker; and that a minor is not required to report.

But for our purposes, it is important to note that under subsections (f) and (g):

(f) A social worker designated by law who receives a report under this Section shall pass it on to the police with a recommendation to act upon the report or to refrain from doing so, unless he receives a permit not to pass on the report to the police from one of the committees set up by the Minister of Justice; the members of such a committee shall be a representative of the District Attorney, who shall be the chairman, a police officer of the rank of Chief Inspector or higher and a social worker designated by Law for that district.

(g) Where information under this Section comes to the attention of the police, the police shall pass it on to a social worker designated by law, and shall not proceed before consultation with him unless some immediate step, which cannot be delayed, needs to be taken; the taking of such urgent steps shall not negate the obligation to pass on the information to a social worker designated by law and to consult with him, afterwards.

The scheme of the Law provides, therefore, for the following

- The responsibility of any adult, who thinks that abuse has been perpetrated, to report, and criminal sanctions for failure to report;
- The enhanced responsibility of any adult who is in a professional or supervisory relationship with a child, including, for example, child care workers and kindergarten teachers and attendants, to report, and increased criminal sanction for failure to do so;
- Mandatory reporting to a designated social worker or to the police, except where the alleged perpetrator is a minor, in which case the report is to a social worker only;
- Passing on of the report, if made to a social worker, to the police, with a recommendation, based on the social worker's assessment of the reliability of the report as well as its content, as to the advisability of a police investigation;
- Exemption from passing on of the report to the police, only with the permission of a committee headed by a senior prosecutor.

In this way the legislation takes account of the perception that reports of abuse may be incomplete or motivated by interests other than the welfare of the child, and that a police investigation may itself cause damage to the child victim. Furthermore, the Law makes it clear that both law enforcement services and the social services must be involved at a very early stage in dealing with a report, so as to take account of the need of society to ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice, along with the realization that in some cases, the child can properly be protected by social work interventions without the need for criminal investigation and proceedings. This is especially the case where the alleged perpetrator is a minor, who needs therapeutic intervention which may be compromised by criminal proceedings.

What happens next?

Criminal investigation and proceedings

In addition to their role in making arrangements for the physical safety of the child, which will be discussed below, the social services remain involved in the investigation of an alleged offence against a child, so as to afford protection from harm which may be done by the interrogation process and any court proceedings which may follow.

As early as 1955 the Knesset, the Israel legislature, recognized that insensitive interrogation of a child by an inexperienced policeman and exposure to cross-examination by defence counsel in the presence of the accused, could cause additional

damage to the child, and the fear of these things might cause him to refuse to report an offence or to refuse to testify in court.

The Evidence Amendment (Protection of Children) Law 5715-1955 provides that where a child (defined as a person under the age of 14) is the victim of, or a witness to, or accused of, certain crimes, including crimes of violence, sexual offences and neglect:

...shall not give testimony, and a statement made by him shall not be admissible, except with the permission of a Youth Investigator. (Section 2(a)).

Youth Investigators are Social workers appointed by the Minister of Justice in consultation with an advisory committee, which consists of a Judge, a senior police officer, a mental health expert appointed by the Health Ministry, an expert in child therapy appointed by the Welfare Ministry, and an educator appointed by the Education Ministry. They receive intensive training in the techniques of speaking to children, and they are called in by a Social worker or the police in any case where the child's version will be needed. The interview sessions are recorded on video; and after the completion of the sessions the investigator writes a report, which includes his assessment of the veracity and reliability of the child's version, and his opinion as to whether, and if so, under what conditions, the child may testify.

Under Section 2 of the Law:

(b) Where the Youth Investigator allows the child to testify, at the time of giving his testimony no person shall be present except prosecution counsel, the defendant and his counsel, the Youth Investigator and any other person permitted by the Court.

(c) The Court may at any time order a halt to the giving of testimony by the child or the admission of his statement under subsection (a) if it is of the opinion, after hearing the Youth Investigator, that continuing to do so would cause mental damage to the child.

(d) The Youth Investigator may make the giving of testimony by a child, in relation to offences set out in the first schedule, subject to all or any of the following conditions:

(1) The testimony shall be given in the absence of the defendant, but in the presence of his counsel....;

(2) The testimony shall be given within a certain time, or after the lapse of a certain time, as he shall determine;

(3) The testimony shall not be given from the witness stand;

(4) The testimony shall be given when the Judge and counsel are not wearing robes;

- (5) The testimony shall be given in the Judge's chambers;**
- (6) The testimony shall not be heard in the courthouse; the place where testimony shall be heard shall be determined by the Court, after hearing the views of the Youth Investigator;**
- (7) The testimony shall be heard in the presence of a person chosen by the child to accompany him for the duration of the trial...**

However, under Section 9 of the Law, the report of the interview is admissible even where the child does not testify, and it will be apparent that this Law affects several due process issues. The legislature was well aware of the problematic nature of some of its provisions and provided in Section 11:

"No person shall be convicted on the basis of evidence admitted under Section 9, unless there is corroboration from other evidence."

This is not the place for a discussion of the issues, procedural or evidentiary, arising from this Law; the emphasis here is that social workers, and social work issues relating to the protection of children, are built in to the Israeli concept of criminal justice. Here also, we see that the Israeli system recognizes that the interests of the children, not to be further damaged, are more important than other considerations.

Civil Proceedings – The State as Applicant (Public Law)

The Youth (Care and Supervision) Law 5720-1960, as subsequently amended, is the legislation under which the State, by means of Social workers designated by this Law, may act on behalf of a child (defined here as a minor, that is, under the age of 18) who is in need. The definition of a child in need includes not only the victim of abuse or neglect; a child who is a vagrant, or is found begging or in a house of ill repute, or who has committed a crime but is below the age of criminal responsibility, may also be declared to be in need.

The question whether a child is in need is determined by a Judge of the Juvenile Court, except where there are already proceedings between the parents or other family members before the Family Court, in which case the Family Court Judge dealing with the family will also handle the State's application under the Youth Law. (In Israel the Family Courts operate under the principle of One Family – One Judge; thus all civil cases relating to a specific family are dealt with by the same Judge, regardless of the subject matter or relief requested.)

Of course, the question whether a specific child is in need may be disputed, and all those involved will be entitled to be heard, but in the nature of things there are situations where, in the opinion of a designated social worker, there is a need for immediate action.

Therefore under Section 11

11 (a) If a social worker designated under this Law is of the opinion that a child is in need, and is in immediate danger or is in need of medical or other treatment which cannot be delayed, he may take such steps as are in his opinion necessary so as to prevent the danger or for the provision of that treatment, even without the consent of the person responsible for the child [*the parent or guardian – P.M.*], provided that the child shall not be held away from the custody of the person responsible for more than seven days except with the consent of the court.

This is, of course, a wide ranging power, but there are cases where waiting for the Court to hold a hearing, even *ex parte*, would be damaging to the child.

And if the issue as to whether the child is in need is disputed, then, according to Section 12:

The Court may, even before hearing the child and receiving a report [*from the social worker, setting out in full all the facts of the case, including the findings from investigations carried out by him, P.M.*], order that temporary steps be taken in the matter of the child and confirm such emergency steps as have been taken by the social worker; such an interim order shall expire at the end of thirty days from the date it is made, unless it has been extended as set out in Section 14.

There is a network of Emergency Centres, staffed by social workers, psychologists and other professionals, where a child may be placed at short notice where there is a need to remove him immediately from a place where he is endangered.

Where a designated social worker is of the opinion that a child is in need, and the person responsible does not agree to proposed steps for treatment and supervision, or he agrees but the child does not comply, the Social worker may apply to the Court, which, after determining that the child is in need, has under Section 3, the following powers:

- (1) To give the child or to the responsible person such instructions as may, in the Court's opinion, be necessary for the child's treatment and supervision, including his education, training and psychological rehabilitation;**
- (2) To appoint a next friend for the child, who shall also serve as counselor for the person responsible, and fix his powers and responsibilities;**
- (3) To place the child under the supervision of the social worker;**
- (4) To remove the child from the custody of the person responsible for him, if the Court finds that there is no other way to ensure his treatment and supervision, and to render him into the custody of the welfare authority which shall decide where he is to be held, or to order that he be held in a secure facility.....;**

The places where a child can be placed include children's homes, foster parents, and other institutions, and arrangements are made for contact, if appropriate, between the child and the parents, under such supervision as may be required for the child's protection.

The Court may also order that the child be examined by a psychiatrist; that he be examined to establish if he has antibodies for AIDS; and, under Section 3A, to apply for a banning order against the alleged perpetrator, excluding him from the child's home, under the Prevention of Violence in the Family Law 5751-1991 or a non-molestation order under the Prevention of Stalking Law 5762-2001.

There are provisions for confidentiality of all information and proceedings under the Youth (Care and Supervision) Law, with a punishment of imprisonment for any person who publicizes details of such investigations or treatment without permission of the Court; or who publicizes identifying details of any child who is involved in such proceedings, or who has attempted or committed suicide, or has been the victim of, or is alleged to have committed, certain offences, etc.

Where the welfare authorities are of the opinion that the parents are not capable, because of their own disabilities or actions, of bringing the child up, and there is no reasonable prospect of them being able to do so in the foreseeable future despite receiving treatment and assistance by the welfare authorities, they may apply to the Family Court for an order freeing the child for adoption.

The Process Itself May Cause Damage

It is clear that once a report is found not to be entirely unfounded, the child needs to be interviewed. Unless the process is properly managed, the child may be questioned by

numerous people, all with slightly different interests, who may include the school counselor, a social worker from the local social services unit, a policeman, a Youth Investigator, and a prosecutor, as well as family members who may or may not be well-intentioned. As a result the child's account may change or become contaminated, particularly if those speaking to the child are inadequately trained; the process may take days or longer; and the child suffers from secondary victimization by having to repeat his story. In addition, the child will not usually be referred for treatment until after the investigation is complete, since the treatment itself might cause contamination of the child's evidence.

In order to minimize this damage, a multidisciplinary Child Protection Centre has been opened in Jerusalem. It is staffed by social workers, including those designated under the Youth (Care and Supervision) Law, a police officer from the Youth Division, a Youth Investigator, physicians (a forensic pediatrician and a gynecologist), and a house mother; a senior prosecutor from the District Attorney's office is also on call. Similar centres are being opened in other parts of the country.

The centre is equipped with appropriate toys and materials for a child under stress and facilities for his parents (who of course will be excluded if they are suspects, and the child will be accompanied by another trusted person). The child is questioned at the centre only by the Youth Investigator, after consultation with all the relevant staff members as to the questions to be put to the child. If a medical examination is needed, it will be carried out at the Centre. This is all done on the same day. After the child's version has been taken, each of the staff members will decide, in consultation with the others and the prosecutor, what action needs to be taken – if to proceed with the criminal investigation, if to institute proceedings and take emergency action under the Youth Law, if to deal with the matter only at the level of the local social services office; and in all cases, what are the child's needs. The presumption is that the child needs help, whether the report of abuse or neglect is true or false, since he has been involved in the investigation, which by its nature is unpleasant and invasive.

Family (Private Law) Proceedings

The effects of family strife

As already stated, when there is strife in the family, even (and possibly more so) before the parents separate, the children are under stress and liable to suffer temporary or permanent harm even if they are not the direct victims of abuse or neglect; parents who are locked in a struggle with each other will have less time and emotional resources to deal with their children, and this is without doubt a form of neglect.

The parents are often unaware that they are causing damage, so that these damaging

phenomena may not be brought to the attention of the social services at all.

For this reason, once proceedings, of any kind, are instituted in a Court by one of the parents against the other, it is of critical importance that the Court should be aware of the difficulties undergone by the children.

Support Units

One of the important innovations of the Family Courts Law 5755-1995 was the creation of Support Units, staffed by experienced social workers, with access to psychologists and psychiatrists. These units are attached to every Family Court and have their offices in or near to the courthouse, and their task is to assist the litigants, by providing advice and short-term treatment alternatives and dispute resolution services free of charge, and to give assistance to the Court on matters which need attention alongside the normal processes of litigation.

In almost all new cases which came before me, whether because a person applied for a banning order against the alleged perpetrator, excluding him from the applicant's home, under the Prevention of Violence in the Family Law 5751-1991, or a claim for custody or child or spousal support, or even a property claim, I made a referral to the Support Unit. The referral included the following instructions to the Unit:

- To determine whether the father is interested in divorce/separation or reconciliation, and whether the mother is interested in divorce/separation or reconciliation;
- To determine whether the parties and the disputes are amenable to mediation (For more about mediation in the Support Units, see my Paper for Panel 2A on Children's Dispute Resolution: The Israeli Experience);
- To determine if it is possible to reach agreement, partial or complete, in the matters before the Court and any other matters requiring resolution;
- To advise if it is necessary to obtain a full report from a designated social worker.

The value of such referrals is not restricted to the answers to the specific instructions given; the social workers of the Unit may be able to find out if there has been abuse or neglect, even where the parties have not seen fit to make allegations one against the other, and advise the Court, and, where reporting is mandated, the social services, of any matter requiring attention. In addition, the Unit may draw the attention of the parties and the Court to medical problems, including psychiatric disorders, or to personality traits or disorders, addictions and other problems, and where necessary will inform the parties about the availability of help from the social services and voluntary and other organisations – shelters for abused women, treatment centres for alcohol or drug addiction, anger management classes, mental health clinics, and so forth.

Although participation in the meetings in the Support Unit is voluntary, almost all litigants referred take part in the meetings, where they are exposed, many of them for the first time, to an impartial professional with wide experience in the field. These

professionals show them that litigation is not the only way to resolve their disputes. The litigants also are informed about the damage that their children may suffer or have already suffered, and are invited to take part in workshops to help them with their new tasks in relation to their children – explaining about the breakup of the family, about the new arrangements if one of the parents leaves the home, etc.

Proceedings where there Allegations of Abuse or Neglect

In the nature of things, many cases are not appropriate for mediation or ADR, and the litigation takes its course. This is costly for the parties, financially (although Israel has a Legal Aid system which gives free representation to the poorest litigants, and the Bar association has a *pro bono* programme, which helps those who have income and assets slightly above the levels which would entitle them to free Legal Aid) but particularly in terms of time.

The time factor is damaging for children in two principal areas. Parents who are litigating are spending time, and particularly their emotional energies, on the fight, and this depletes the parental resources needed by the children to help them in their development through childhood and adolescence to adulthood. But in addition, the uncertainty as to the outcome – where the child will live, how much time will the child spend with each parent, will the child have to move to a new location and lose his friends, school, youth movement ties and even the opportunities to attend the matches of the sports team he supports – all these take a toll, distracting the child from his own tasks. These include growing up, getting an education, observing normative positive peer and couple relationships, and learning how to resolve disputes peaceably.

Other factors damage children, particularly where they feel themselves compelled to take sides in the dispute, and many treatment professionals are reluctant to start treatment of a child so long as the parents are still conducting litigation³.

In other sessions of this conference, in Panel A and elsewhere, we will be discussing the shift in many countries from Custody and Visitation to Parental Responsibility. In addition to the conceptual shift, which I will argue is welcome and overdue, there is another more subtle but no less important shift. Disputes between parents over custody are seen by them as a battle between the parents, where the "victor" is the party who can score the most points by proving what a terrible parent the other is. Those engaged in such combat ignore the fact that, except in cases of the most heinous abuse, the child

³ Treatment professionals explain that there is no point in starting therapy where the parents, whose involvement is usually essential, cannot be relied upon to attend joint meetings or to bring the child for treatment sessions, or may attempt to drag the professional into taking sides or report to the Court. While these are important concerns, it seems to me that treatment, limited to giving the child techniques to survive until the litigation is over, on the basis of a strict contract with the parents or under a Court order, should be possible. Litigation may go on for months or even years, and the conflictual relationship between the parents may not end with the judgment of the Court; litigation over the child may flare up at any time, even after a final judgment.

will continue to spend time with the parent who is "vanquished", and will need a good relationship with that parent. Worst of all, they forget that both parents will have to remain in contact, and positive communication between them will be essential for making decisions for the child's welfare.

In these high conflict cases, the Court and social workers have a central role in trying to minimise the damage to children. I say "trying", because experience shows that it is often impossible to persuade parents that, by their combative attitudes, they are acting against the interests of their children. Unfortunately some lawyers are unable or unwilling to persuade their clients to understand the probable consequences of their actions.

There are, however, cases where all the allegations have to be determined by the Court. This is particularly the case where one of the parties genuinely believes that the other has abused the child, or neglected him in such a way as to endanger him, and in cases where one parent wants to emigrate or move to a place far away from the other parent's home.

In these cases, social workers can help the Court by providing full background information, in a report that is prepared at no cost to the parties.

Social workers designated under the Welfare (Procedure in Matters of Minors, Mentally Ill Persons and Absentees) 5716-1955 have wide investigative powers. Under Section 3 of the Law:

Where a social worker designated under this Law has been ordered under Section 2 [by the Court to prepare a report P.M.] he may, for the purpose of preparing his report, enter into any place where the minor or mentally ill person may be, and may interrogate any person who he believes may have information relating to the minor or mentally ill person, and a person interrogated must give true and full answers to the questions of the social worker...

These wide investigatory powers provide the Court with invaluable information, which in many cases both of the parents would prefer not to give the Court, or of which they are unaware. For example, a kindergarten teacher may give information about acting out by the child, hitting other children or the teacher, or reclusive behaviour, or sexually toned behaviour, which may point to severe distress, where the child may not exhibit these behaviours at home and the teacher's warnings have been ignored.

In addition, social workers may be asked to supervise visitation of a parent, against whom there are allegations of abuse, in a Visitation Centre. This gives the Court a much clearer picture of the relationship, where the mother may say that the child is afraid of the father and does not want contact, and the father says that the child loves him and there is no reluctance except in the mother's mind.

In these cases, the social worker is involved more in providing information to the Court and less in treating the children and their parents; however, this part of their work is also invaluable for the children, since the Court's decision will more likely to serve the interests and needs of the child if it based on full and accurate information.

Conclusions

The above is by its very nature a brief summary of some of the salient provisions of Israeli law and procedure and rules of evidence relating to children.

It should be clear that, so far as children are concerned, there is full understanding by the Courts of the necessity of social work involvement at all stages of the different types of process, and that social workers have direct access to courts where they feel this is necessary.

Of course, the integration of social work with judicial processes is not a panacea; child abuse and neglect will not disappear as a result of this close collaboration. But once an incident of abuse, or a situation of neglect, or the breakup between parents, comes to the attention of a social worker or a Court, there are arrangements which provide for collaboration between the two disciplines. The result is that the Courts become more aware of the extra-legal issues involved, and social workers can ask the Court for assistance, backed by the authority and powers of the Court, in the interests of children.

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