



The Early Years Professional

A New Partner in Safeguarding Children?

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Key Themes

- Early Years Professional
- Social Work
- European Social Pedagogy
- Safeguarding

Scene Setting

- Professional Background
- Current Role
- Early Years Professional Status
- Research

Policy Context

Until the late 1990s, early years and childcare in the UK had been characterised by:

- *the separation of education and care*
- *minimal government intervention*
- *conflicting attitudes to working parents*
- *provision of variable quality*
- *staffing largely by low paid and poorly qualified women.*



However the relationships between the early years and later life achievements have been documented over the centuries.

For example early nursery provision in the late 19th Century grew from the need to improve the health and welfare outcomes of children and...

Pringle and Naidoo in 1975 argued that:

Though much remains to be learned about how to lay necessary foundations during the pre-school years, which will enable children to achieve eventually the fullest measure of their potential, yet enough is known to take some action now...promoting optimal emotional, social and intellectual development; preventing neglect and deprivation; and, most difficult of all, for breaking into the vicious circle of the emotional or intellectually deprived children of today becoming tomorrow's parents of yet another generation of deprived children.

Pringle and Naidoo (1975:169).



Since the Labour Government was elected in 1997 a raft of policies and legislation have been introduced aimed at improving services for children and families...





- National Childcare Strategy, 1998;
- Protection of Children Act, 1999;
- Adoption and Children Act 2002;
- Every Child Matters Agenda, 2003;
- The Children Act, 2004;
- Ten Year Strategy, 2004;
- The Childcare Act, 2006;
- Children and Adoption Act 2006;
- The Children Plan.....

(Department for Children Schools and Families, 2010)

The Direction of Travel

Impacted on by:

1. Research: e.g.

The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project

2. Social Inclusion:

Goal to eradicate poverty by 2020

3. Serious case incidents: e.g.

Victoria Climbié, Soham Murders, Baby P

The Children Act 2004

Provides the legal framework for the *Every Child Matters* outcomes, and underpins the drive to improve services through:

- *Multi-agency working*
- *An integrated approach to provision of care and education services*

*Policy
Drivers*

Education

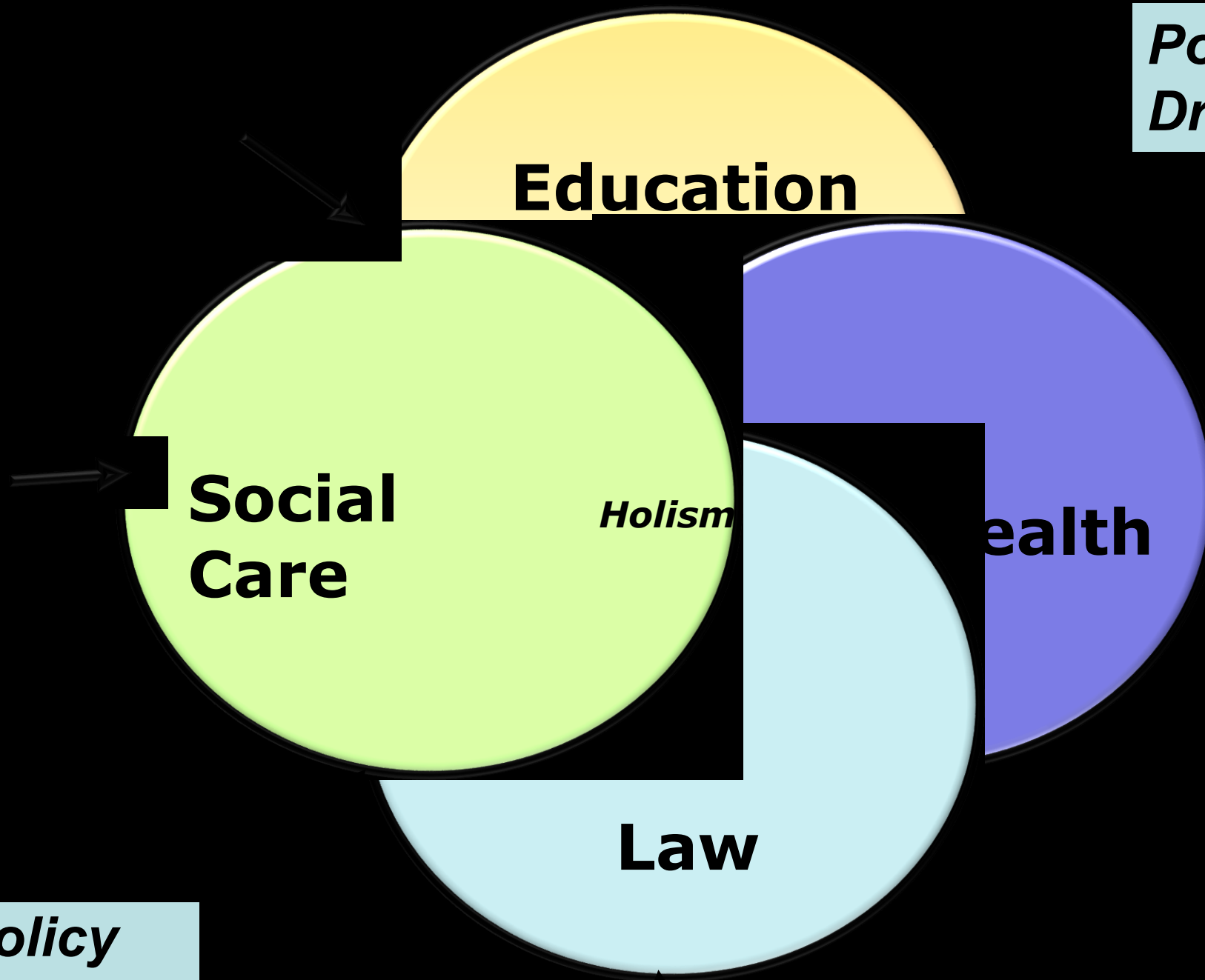
**Social
Care**

Holism

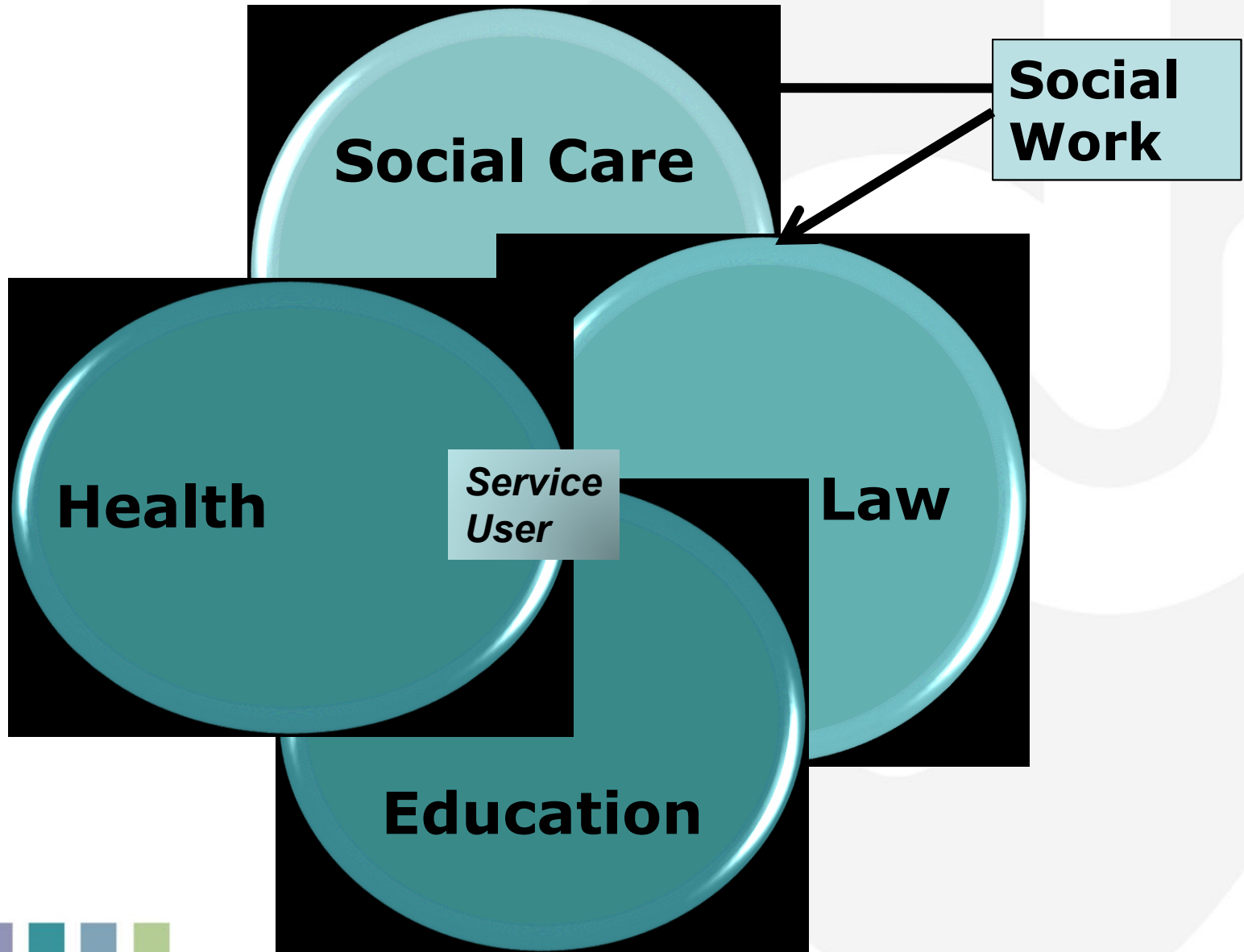
Health

Law

*Policy
Drivers*



Social Work and Working Together



The Childcare Act 2006

Provides the legal framework for:

Statutory Early Years
Foundation Stage, 0-5

*no distinction between
education and care*

and....





A new multi-disciplinary
professional role in early years
in the form of an:

Early Years Professional

for work with the 0-5 age
range....

and, I would suggest, beyond.



Early Years Professional status (EYPS) is central to British government childcare policy in England and is an unprecedented development for those who work with children from birth to five.



The overarching aim is to raise standards in the early years, particularly in the private, voluntary and independent (PVI) sectors.



The Early Years Professional is presented as being broadly equivalent to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS).

This initial visualisation is problematic.



➤ Early Years Professional in every children centre by 2010.

➤ Early Years Professional in every PVI by 2015.

These are ambitious targets.



Therefore....

Massive financial investment to 'up skill' the early years workforce:

- *£250 million Transformation Fund*
- *£305 million Graduate Leadership Fund*





Why is this important for Safeguarding ?

Government involvement in the protection of children is well documented.

(Buckley, 2003; Corby, 2006, Parton, 2007)



The current government agenda in England and Wales purports to advocate a proactive rather than reactive response to issues concerning the safety of children.



The term '*safeguarding children*' has become the mantra of the 21st Century with multi-professional working at the core.



There is also a growing interest in European Social Pedagogy ...



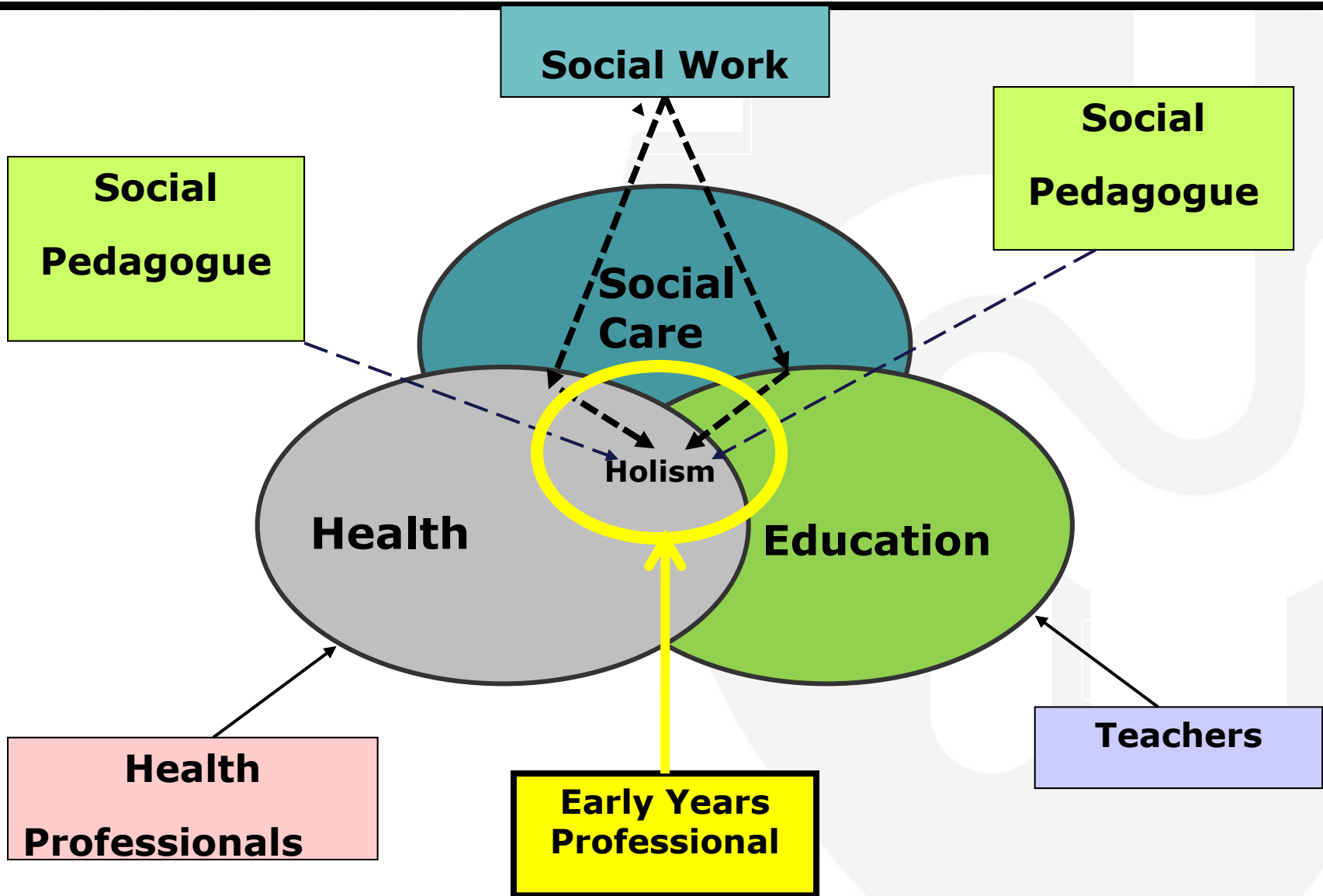


Important to note...

Some of those involved in the delivery of the early childhood degrees have been advocating for a professional more akin to a *European Social Pedagogue* and felt the EYP could have been opportunity for this to be taken forward in the early years.



The Intersection of Service Delivery and the Locus of Social Pedagogy and the Early Years Professional



Eunice Lumsden 2020



Research

- ❖ Mixed Methods (Feminist Perspective)
- ❖ Survey Data
- ❖ In-depth semi-structured interviews through a case study approach.



Sample

Questionnaires

EYP Candidates: 113

Stakeholders: 62

Case Studies

EYP Candidates: 23

Stakeholders: 11





Preliminary Findings

- Safeguarding policies
- Named person for safeguarding
- Mixed understanding about Looked-after children
- Role and understanding of the importance of multi-professional working



- Difference in EYP knowledge and understanding depending on degree pathway
- Excellent understanding of the 'holistic' child
- Future specialist role for some in safeguarding
- Role in Common Assessment Framework and Lead Professional



The Future

The new Early Years Professional is in its embryonic stage however I would argue that there is potential for synergy with the social work profession to improve how we deliver services and meet the needs of children and their families.





*So what could the future role of
the Early Years Professional be
in safeguarding and promoting
the welfare of 'Looked-after'
Children ?*





- Leading practice
- Challenging practice
- Raising awareness
- Liaison with other agencies



- Lead practice in relation to the Common Assessment Framework
- Become or support the Lead Professional
- To work with or be the Designated Person for safeguarding and 'Looked After' children



Any ...





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