

# **Who advocates for parents in child protection processes and why? Perspectives from Australia, England, Ireland and Norway**

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A Norwegian perspective The paper presentation is based on research on parent's experiences with the child protection services (Slettebø, 2011, Seim & Slettebø, 2010), but also advocacy work in supporting parents in Norway to organize an interest and support group for these group of parents. The majority of families involved in child protection experience multiple chronic stressors. Research has demonstrated the intense emotions parents feel when a child is placed in care. The parents experience powerlessness, neglect and a lack of information, especially after the child has been removed. The local authorities have unsatisfactory follow up services to the parents, and they are often left to themselves. A variety of factors may contribute to the difficulties in advocating for the parents in child protection. One of the most obvious reasons is that parents, in the proceedings up to the placement, do have a greater voice in the decision-making processes than their children. Supporting the parents may therefore be regarded as ethically incorrect since the voice of children is often overlooked. Another explanation is that this group of parents is often difficult to work with in practice. Due to lack of resources social workers need to make priorities, and they pay more attention to the children's needs than their parents after the placement. Much of the literature in child protection is based on traditional psychodynamic theories where parents are regarded as the causes of the children's problems. Parents who are not capable of looking after their children are also often exposed to stigma because they challenge a central value in our society, that children should be brought up with their parents. Finally, to advocate for parents could be seen as counteractive to the ideology of a child centered welfare state.

Seim, S. and T. Slettebø (2011) Collective Participation in Child Protection Services: Partnership or Tokenism? *European Journal of Social Work*. Nr.1, s.1-16. Slettebø, T. (2011), Partnership with parents without custody. *British Journal of Social Work*. p 1-17, doi:10.1093/bjsw/bcr188.