

Barns behov i centrum (BBIC): Uniformity: An unreachable goal?

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Abstract.

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Previously during the 1990s, national studies and reports made by the Swedish provincial government revealed severe deficiencies in child welfare investigation policies. In 2005, a system of inquiry developed in England was in part implemented into the Swedish child welfare system. The system in Sweden is known as BBIC or Barns behov i centrum. A direct translation of this could be Children's need in focus. The aim of the Social Services was to create a uniform system of investigation between social workers located in the whole of Sweden, make the investigative process more understandable for the child and family and to guide the social worker to primarily view the needs of the child. Using a qualitative method supported by *Lipskys* theory on street-level bureaucrats, I have attempted to determine if this is a realistic goal. Five social workers were interviewed in councils situated in Southern Sweden. I have chosen to only concentrate on how social workers that work on a daily basis with BBIC relate to the Social Services previously mentioned goals. The results of the study show that a uniform system of inquiry seems to be an unreachable goal. The problems surrounding child welfare inquiry combined with the discretion of the social worker provoke a situation that prohibits this form of social work to be moulded into a uniform system of inquiry.

Keywords: Discretion, time, resources, decision making.

Introduction

Previously in Sweden, child welfare investigations have been criticised for weaknesses, both in areas of documentation and surrounding personnel and organisational conduct (SoS-rapport 1996:16). National studies and reports made by the provincial government revealed severe deficiencies in investigation policies. Results showed that regulatory follow-up periods after inquiries were not held, the children under investigation rarely spoke to their social workers during an institutional or foster care placement and resulting care and treatment plans were scarce to non-existent (Socialstyrelsen 2006). The procedure for child investigations simply lacked any form of structure. Social services were, according to government officials, in need of strengthening and developing their methods of investigation and for follow-up policies involving children placed in foster care.

The result of this criticism led to a system similar of that in England being developed and implemented here in Sweden and is titled Barns Behov I Centrum (BBIC) [1]. A possible translation could be “Children’s needs in focus”. BBICs structure is inspired by two systems developed in England, namely *Looking after children system (LACS)* and *Framework for assessments of children in need and their families (AF)* and have been adapted to use in Sweden in accordance with Swedish law. The system now used in England is a combination of LACS and AF and is aptly known as *Integrated Children’s System (ICS)* [2]. BBIC is based not only on the English system but also influenced by the Swedish Social Services Act (Socialtjänstlagen) and the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*. (Socialstyrelsen 2006)

... The Convention's 54 articles cover everything from a child's right to be free from sexual and economic exploitation, to the right to his or her own opinion, and to the right to education, health care, and economic opportunity. (www.un.org)

The BBIC system is today comprised of roughly thirty documents, however it’s introduction was primarily run as a project that was developed over a number of years (1997-2005). Due to the previously mentioned deficiencies, the founders of BBIC intended to improve conditions for children and strengthen their position within the child welfare system.

[1] The Swedish government was first required to apply to the English Department of Health for the use of the BBIC system and the trail of the English material is governed by licensing agreement which is further discussed on page 15.

[2] The English system ICS will be further explained on page 12.

It is maintained by the Social Services that BBICs uniform system should enable social workers across the country to carry out similar child welfare investigations that favour each individual child's development (*ibid.*) Moreover, despite the extensiveness of the BBIC system, it should enable children and families readily comprehend the process of the ongoing child welfare inquiry. Despite this claim, emphasis is made by the Socialstyrelsen^[3] (2006) that BBIC is not actually developed as a standard instrument of assessment. It is determined that standard forms of assessment are instead known as having a given structure in which to work where answers are recorded in the same way, irrespective of who the client is and their problem (*ibid.*) Rasmusson (2009) instead describes BBIC as flexible in relation to structure and content. The concrete tools associated with BBIC are the social workers foundation of knowledge and the BBIC triangle, which highlights the children's, needs, parents' abilities and the children's surroundings. In order for the social worker to use the thirty plus formulae to the best of her ability, she should be able to apply different forms of knowledge and theories to aid her make decisions during inquiry (*ibid.*).

Statement of the problem.

My practical placement during term five of this course was completed at a Child Welfare Investigations Unit in Southern Sweden. I had the opportunity to observe a number of social workers under the duration of seventeen weeks. I felt that all members of staff worked from the same principle, namely from the child's perspective and from the best interests of the child, as they should. At the same time I experienced that different social workers used the BBIC system in different ways. I have heard expressions such as "I never use that part" or "I've never liked that title". I wondered how many different ways a social worker could utilise a document designed to be used homogeneously.

As discussed above BBIC is designed, not a method of working, but rather as a tool that enables the social worker to collect and organise information during an investigation and a similarity in investigation should be able to be observed over the whole of Sweden (Socialstyrelsen 2006). The social workers employment of these documents should enable him/her to collect the relevant information needed, which should later enable her, after assessment, to make a decision that favours the interests of the child. My interpretation of the difference between a method and a tool can be described as this. A method of working is the

[3] Socialstyrelsen is Sweden's equivalent of the English Social Services.

manner in which we carry out a job; a tool is seen as an implement, as in these case documents, that aids a person to carry out her work.

The word “uniform system” is used by the Social Services to describe the founder’s intention with BBIC and the objective for its implementation to child welfare investigations (Socialstyrelsen 2006). However, can one assume that the systems lack of a given structure and the dependency of the social workers individual knowledge can be an influential factor toward the BBIC reaching a uniform system of inquiry? There are other influencing factors to be taken into consideration. The BBIC system is created in accordance with the Swedish Social Services Act (Socialtjänstlagen). The Social Services Act is what is known as a skeleton act or basic law, which means that law contains only general rules or is a framework that sets principles and/or guidelines. Regulations within the Social services act are also, like BBIC, to a certain degree free for own interpretation. As we are all individuals and have to a certain degree different understands of a situation, is it realistic to implement a system in the form of BBIC in the hopes of obtaining a uniform system of inquiry the whole country?

Purpose of the study.

The purpose of this essay is to study how social workers say that they use the BBIC system during their work with Child Welfare inquiries and their reflections over the BBIC system as a uniform means of investigation.

Issues.

- ◆ How do social workers say that they document information in the BBIC formula during child welfare investigations?
- ◆ In the opinion of the social workers, can BBIC provide a uniform system of inquiry

Demarcation.

A discussion has been conducted around the rudimentary competence required by social worker in order to satisfy the needs of the child. The social worker is not according to the Social Services expected to be a specialist within the entire area of the child’s needs. Yet, they must nevertheless be able to identify areas that are lacking in sufficient care and/or development thus enabling the child to receive the proper help needed from other professionals. A discussion has also been lifted about the implementation of the Integrated Children’s System (ICS) into the Swedish child welfare system (BBIC) and it’s positive

affects that the system should have on the children and families under investigation. However, I aim only to concentrate on the so-called uniformity of BBIC and if this is in fact a reachable goal.

The definition of certain terms.

Child.

All children and adolescents up to 18 years of age will be described using the word "child".

Choice of literature.

References to Swedish literature will be translated to English only at the beginning of the essay.

The term “Uniform System”.

The term “uniform system” is used in the essay and is a direct translation taken from the preface to *Grundbok Barns behov i centrum (BBIC)* (2006) printed and released by the Social services. The BBIC system is developed to create national uniformity in social service work with the investigation, planning and monitoring where children are the focus of inquiry

... The fundamental principle is to create a national uniformity in social service work during investigation, planning and monitoring of children placed in institutional- and fostercare in which children and adolescents are placed in focus. The intention is to improve structure and the systematic way of working. BBIC is not seen as yet another administrative burden but as a tool to facilitate systematic documentation... (Socialstyrelsen 2006:3)

According to the same report written in 2009 by Bodil Rasmusson where she describes BBIC as a flexible (see above on page 5), “uniform system” can be explained and understood in two different ways. Firstly, there was an ambition to create uniformity in the processing of child welfare cases in all of the country's councils and between every individual social worker thus additionally ensuring continuity in the processing of individual cases. Through adapting the internal logic of the BBIC systems extensive documents and with the support of terms in the BBIC triangle [4] it is deemed by the social services that this form of work can be reached.

[4] The BBIC triangle will be further explained on page 16.

Method

Qualitative research method.

A qualitative approach has been used to analyse the information gathered about the impact the BBIC's model has on the social worker during child welfare inquiries. I have sought to identify different areas of reference that would fortify the claim of the Social Services that the use of BBIC leads to uniformity during child welfare inquiry. I believe that use of the BBIC system is easier established through a qualitative research method by conducting personal interviews. Although a quantitative research method may have given a wider range of results, some disadvantages involved using this method are that questions are predetermined, they are furthermore non-discussible in the same way as in a personal interview. A questionnaire may also inhibit the social workers choice of answer in the form of a tick in a box that may not actually be the right answer, but seen as been close enough. This could be overcome by including a section at the end of each question for further reflections but due to the size of the essay and the limitation of time, the form of collecting information was unrealistic.

Eliasson-Lappalainen (2008) describes qualitative research as more of an interpretation and understanding of research, texts and interviews rather than an explanation of these. A qualitative method is used to gather descriptive data in the form of an individuals own descriptions of an event, maybe in the form of a personal interview or through the observation of behaviour (Kvale, 2009)

The research interview is based on the conversations of daily life and is a professional conversation; it is an inter-view, where knowledge is constructed in the inter-action between the interviewer and the interviewee. An interview is literally an inter-view, an inter change of views between two persons conversing about at theme of mutual interest. (Kvale, 2009:2)

However, according to Kvale (2009), the function of the researcher is to define and have control over the interview. The conversation is not one of equal partners. It is instead the interviewer that introduces the theme to be discussed and also reacts and adjusts the context of the interview in accordance to the answers that are given.

Interviews.

The initial intended number of interviews to be performed with social workers was between eight and ten. After consideration, I chose instead to interview five social workers. The original number was too large and the work involved in transcribing the interviews into text and later coding would be too extensive and time consuming. Interviews with social

workers who have knowledge of working with the BBIC documents were undertaken during the writing of this essay. They were performed and transcribed in Swedish to be later translated into English. Quotations are noted using I: for the interviewer and R: for the respondent

Interview technique.

A semi-structured interview technique (Aspers 2007:137) was used to collect the information deemed necessary to fulfil the purpose of the essay. With this method, I had the opportunity to pose a number of prepared questions but also further develop issues brought up during the interview based on the responses I received. During interviews, questions should be formulated in a way that the answers received have a connection to the purpose of the essay. In this case questions were posed relating to areas such as individual working methods and personal reflections concerning the BBIC formula.

Tim May (2001) describes how an interview may be conducted and lists which aspects the interviewer should take into account in an interview. May advises that the interviewer use a clear, simple form of speech. He gives tips on the types of questions that should be asked and also gives examples of the traps into which an interviewer can fall and thus should be avoided. It is important for the interviewer to take into consideration how questions are formulated in relation to the respondent's knowledge within the given area. Furthermore, out of a sign of respect for the respondent, no personal remarks should be made or insinuated about religion, genus, age, race etc. The interviewer should avoid rhetorical questions as this could lead to rhetorical answers being given. May continues by outlining the potential consequences of the asking leading questions. The respondent may give an answer to a question, not how it actually is or is perceived but based on how the respondent believes the interviewer wishes to hear (ibid.).

Approach

Direct interviews were carried out with five social workers in three different councils in southern Sweden. The social workers had prior to our meeting access to the questions that were posed during the interview, these having been sent via e-mail along with my letter of introduction. An additional interview was conducted via e-mail, this due to lack of time on the

part of the social worker. This however has not been included in my analysis due to the lack of information where the e-mail was comprised of less than one page.

The criteria for these interviews to take place were that the social workers work with the BBIC formula during child welfare investigations. Three of the four councils involved have been chosen at random. The fourth council was the same council in which I carried out my placement. Although I am aware that interviewing former work colleagues could possibly affect my interpretation or assessment of the material collected, I was unfortunately due to lack of respondents in other councils, forced to interview two social workers of which I have prior knowledge. However, I have not worked closely with either of these two.

Swedish literature has been sought in Libris Web Search and Artikelsök, which can be located on Lunds University's library WebPages. A search on Libris on the concept of "BBIC" yielded 13 results. All were books and ranged from *Conduct of BBIC in practice* to *Evaluation of BBIC, analysis and assessment*, and *Changes in child welfare*. I also searched for "barnutredningar" (child inquiries) and got only two results. A search for *BBIC rapport* resulted also in 2 results, both of which were written by the same author. Among these, I have selected literature that mainly deals with BBIC in practice and its implementation into Swedish child welfare.

There have been a number of reports written since the implementation of BBIC system in Sweden by the Social Services and other professionals on behalf of the government in an aim to evaluate what effect the introduction BBIC has had on Child welfare investigation. A main figure in the development of BBIC in Sweden is Bodil Rasmusson, researcher and senior lecturer at the University of Lund in Sweden. I have studied three Social Services publications; *Grundbok Barns Behov I Centrum (BBIC)* (2006), *En introduktion till Barns behov i centrum (BBIC), ett system för utredning, planering och uppföljning av barn i den sociala barnvården* (2002), *Social barnavård i förändring – slutrapport från BBIC- projekt* (2007), a report based on scientific experiment and/or proven experience. Further materials that have been studied are *Barnvårdsutredningar på nya grunder* (2004:1) and *Analys, bedömning och beslut i utredningar enligt BBIC* (2009), both reports are compiled by Bodil Rasmusson.

Ethical considerations.

In accordance with the *Etikregler för humanistisk-samhällsvetenskaplig forskning* (www.stingerfonden.org) I had several rules to take into consideration during the compilation of my essay. I had an obligation to inform those individuals that I come in contact with what the purpose of my essay is. These persons were informed that they were required in advance to give their permission to (a) be recorded in connection with the interview, and (b) that the interview is documented in text and parts were to be included in the essay. Information was given to the respondents that their co-operation during my ongoing work is purely voluntary. Persons may at any point during or after the interview repent their consent that the content of the interview may be added to the essay. Persons were assured that the information given would be treated with confidentiality. The information gathered during these interviews will not be used by the writer in another context other than the purpose of this essay nor shared with other individuals for future studies.

Validity.

Kvale (2009:327) defines validity as being *the strength or soundness of a statement*. With this he means that the information portrayed should come from a reliable source and the previous research that is use is characterised by objectivity. Furthermore, the method used to gain the information needed should be compatible to the intent of the writer. In this case, the validity of the information collected may have been improved had the length of the essay, the time span and the availability of social workers been greater in amount.

Bodil Rasmusson, researcher and university lecturer writes a large percentage of the empirical data I have used. For this reason, there is a reassurance that the written material is from a reliable source and that her findings are based on credible information and analysis. A slight disadvantage of using Bodil Rasmussons empirical work may be that she has unfortunately both been partly responsible for the implementation of BBIC system and for the evaluation of the effects and use of the same system. I am confident that, due to her status, Rasmusson has held an objectivity that has not affected the findings of the survey.

Reliability.

The reliability of an essay depends upon how well the writer has understood and interpreted the information received. The writer must then portray this information in a way that does not contaminate the result. The information gained and the conclusion made must be able to be duplicated at another time by a different researcher using the same method.

In the interpretation of the interviews, I have attempted to be aware of my own understanding of the situation and have held myself neutral so as not to misinterpret what has actually been said. This is important both for the outcome of the essay and for the credibility of the social workers interviewed. The interview technique that I have used, I believe, is a reliable form of gathering information. In personal meeting one can discuss uncertainties in both questions and answers and further develop a dialogue based on the information gain.

Background.

England and Wales.

Already during the 1980s, there was an ongoing debate in England on the outcome of children placed in the foster care system (Socialstyrelsen 2006). English research in the field showed that many times children were placed in an environment that was more damaging to the child than that of the original family. Child welfare authorities and the English Social Services were requested by the British government to find a solution that would ensure the quality of child welfare. At the beginning of the 1990s, a team of researchers who worked at the Dartington institute in England was hired by the Department of Health to carry out the work involved in developing the material. The researchers successfully developed an evolutionary instrument for the evaluation of children placed in foster care that met the government's requirements. The researchers focused on different conditions that positively contribute to a child's healthy physical- and psychological development. By doing this they were able to identify seven different areas of "needs", these being; health, education, emotional- and, social development, identity, family- and social relationships and finally the ability to take care of themselves. The result was a working model called "Looking after children System" (LACS). During the course of research studies, the LACS materials were tested on families deemed not to have any social problems. The studies revealed that the seven different areas of needs identified by the researchers were actually universal, and the formula could be used in several different areas of work with children (Socialstyrelsen 2006). At around the same time as the LACS system was implemented, an additional model, this time used for child welfare investigation was developed and this was called the *Framework for assessments of children in need and their families (AF)*.

These two systems, LACS and AF, were after a short period of time combined. There was an overall confusion amongst social workers as to which document to use in which errand, this

due to the magnitude of documents that the two systems gave. The model now used in England is aptly called *Integrated Children's System (ICS)*. The Integrated children's system was introduced into the English and Welsh child welfare system in 2003 and is comprised of approximately thirty documents. The ICS material is like the previous two models, comprised of a number of assessments and intervention documents and is to be used by social workers in direct talks with children as an aid in identifying and assessing the children's individual needs. Parts of the formula are also designed as a tool to guarantee a thorough review of children placed in foster home care (Socialstyrelsen 2006).

Sweden.

The start of BBIC – The Dartington project 1995.

Due to the criticism that was aimed at the child welfare services by government officials, the Swedish Social Board decided to test a portion of a newly developed and implemented English system here in Sweden. The project was known as the *Dartingtonproject*, named after the institution in Devon, England where the original system was developed, and test groups were started at the end of 1995 beginning of 1996 (Socialstyrelsen 2007). The main aim of the project was to see if the English system could be introduced and adapted to use in Sweden. Only certain parts of the LACS system were first tried, these involving areas around assessment. However, the test groups liked the system so much, mainly due to the fact that the work was now concentrated on the welfare of the child, that a request to use the complete LACS system was made. Many of the persons in the project group also expressed a wish to work with the LACS system in suspected child abuse/neglect inquiries. The seven areas of needs that were identified in England were found to be just as relevant in the welfare of the child in Sweden (*ibid.*).

Further development of the BBIC- a continuing project 1997-2005.

Most Swedish councils today use the BBIC method in child welfare investigation (Rasmusson 2009). According to Social Services (2006), BBIC is an exhaustive system for supervising and documenting inquiries, proposals and for the reviewing of granted aid or assistance. Although the LACS system worked well in Sweden, changes had to nevertheless be made. Certain documents were substituted with others more appropriate for use here in accordance with Swedish law and reform. The production of the BBIC model was also, as in England and Wales, at first run as a project by the National Board/Social services over a period of seven years (1999-2005). In Sweden this was carried out along with seven project councils

(Socialstyrelsen 2006). The aim of the project was to continue the work of the Dartington project and was created to promote a new and more effective way of documenting child inquiries, planning of and reviewing placements of children in foster care. Again, project groups were compiled but this time whole councils were involved. Still, the councils were encouraged by the Social Services to divide them up and instead build smaller project teams within different Social Service offices. This due to the fact that there was initially a great number of different forms available and these needed to be tried and tested before the system that is used today was selected. Many different documents were borrowed from England and it was the function of these smaller teams to try out the documents in different combinations and later eliminate those documents that were considered complicated to understand and difficult to use (*ibid.*).

Process of inquiry.

In Sweden, Child welfare inquiries come about when (a) a report of suspected neglect or abuse from a member of the public or from another professional reaches the Social Services or (b) when an individual applies for aid or assistance. Professionals that come into contact with children on a daily basis through their work have an obligation to report suspected neglect or abuse to Social services (14 Kap 1§ SoL) [5]. These, unlike members of the public, cannot remain anonymous. If concerns about the child's welfare warrant, an official form of inquiry will be opened with the support of the Social Services act (11 Kap 1 § SoL) [6]. During inquiry, it is forbidden for the social worker to investigate the child's situation more than it is deemed necessary to make a decision on possible assistance. The BBIC system has supporting documents that are compiled to aid the social worker collect information required to make a decision on granted assistance. Some of these documents can be sent to day cares or schools for the child's teacher to fill in, enabling the social worker to gain a broader perspective about the Child's situation. When all the relevant information has been gathered, a decision is then made as to whether the child and the family are in need of help. When granting permission of aid/assistance to a person from the age of fifteen years, the consent of the child is needed. The period of inquiry is by law, not permitted to last longer than duration of four months. The four months are counted from the day the report/application reaches the social services to the day

[5] 14 Kap 1§ SoL is a paragraph taken from the Social Services law which states that any professional that work with children/adolescents that suspect child neglect /abuse have a legal responsibility to report this to local authorities.

[6] 11 Kap 1 § SoL is a paragraphs taken from the Social Services law which state that when a report of suspected abuse/neglect is received by the social services, an investigate must be opened and the child's need for support must be determined

that a decision of approved assistance or dismissal is decided. If it is deemed by the social worker that an extended time frame is needed, an application has to be made to an eventual granted aid of assistance is supported by 4 Kap 1§ SoL [7].

Sweden today in 2010.

In order for a council to work with BBIC a license, an application must be left to the Social Services (www.socialstyrelsen.se). A license can be at first granted by under a trial period and this provision license is valid under a period of two years. This license can be extended for the maximum of a further twelve months. This three year period should be used by individual councils to decide upon if they wish to have a continued work with the BBIC system or not. During this time or before the last three months of the trail period, an application for a permanent licence needs to be made. Certain criterion has to be reached by each council in order to work with the BBIC system (www.socialstyrelsen.se), these being:

- 1) All documentation, the process of inquiry and execution of assistance should be based on the BBIC triangle.
- 2) Permanent changes made to the BBIC formula need to be in advance approved by the Social services.
- 3) Recommendations given by the Social Services on the use of BBIC shall be complied with.
- 4) Statistics from the BBIC shall be reported to the Social Services as a system of statistics is being developed.
- 5) The staff concerned in working with the BBIC system shall attend the BBIC basic course before working with BBIC system.

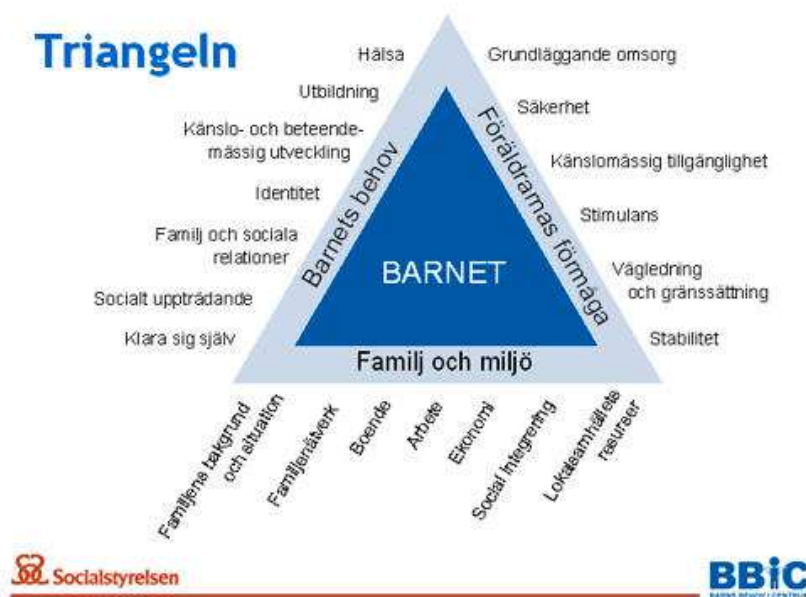
As previously mentioned BBIC system is based on seven different areas of physical and psychological health, emotional behaviour, etc. The knowledge required to ensure that children and adolescents are developing at an adequate/inadequate rate within the seven areas of needs is outside the social workers skills. The social worker in charge of the investigation must however be able to make a judgement when to get help from other agencies and professions. If she is unable to do this, a result may be in further harm coming to the child. The social worker is aided by the development of the BBIC triangle, similar to the one

[7] 4 Kap 1§ SoL is a paragraph taken from the Social Services law concerning a persons right to economical assistance and general everyday assistance when they cannot cater for their own needs themselves or receive assistance from other individuals. A decision to grant vs. not grant of form of assistance must always be taken.

used in the Integrated Children's system. Its creation enables the social worker to be attentive to all the areas of needs surrounding the child.

The BBIC triangle.

The left hand side of the triangle (see below) is concentrated to the needs of the child, these headings including *health, education, identity* and the *child's ability to take care of oneself*. Some of these areas are related to age, such as *identity*. To the right hand side of the triangle, the *headings* relate to the *ability of the child's parents* and areas such as *fundamental care, security and stability* are examined and taken into consideration. The headings at the base of the triangle are left for *family and the child's surroundings*, such as *family history, housing and economy*.



In this illustration, we can see the different headings of the BBIC triangle. [8]
(www.socialstyrelsen.se)

Further recommendations.

The Social Services Act (SOSFS 2006:14) recommends that those individuals who work with child welfare investigation are qualified persons that have at least one year working experience. The qualification deemed suitable is a Bachelor of Science degree in Social Work (socionomutbildning). If new members of staff do not have this experience, they should have supervision from another qualified member of staff during the first few months and only be

[8] All BBIC documents are located at: http://www.socialstyrelsen.se/Lists/Artikelkatalog/Attachments/8642/2008-110-8_20081108.pdf

introduced to and have responsibility for their own errands after this time. In addition to this, all social workers that work with child welfare inquiries are, in order to be able to work with the BBIC model, recommended by The Social Services to attend a two-day fundamental course in the use of BBIC (Socialstyrelsen 2006). The concept in Sweden is that on top of this, one to two representatives are appointed in every council who will go through an additional two-day course. These individuals later function as a local tutor in BBIC and are required to have an overall responsibility to relay anything new they may have learned during ongoing courses and/or train new employees who are not yet accustomed to working with BBIC template. A disadvantage of this form of training is that it is a lengthy process and it takes an extensive period of time for a social worker to learn how to interpret the formula and use it to the best of her ability for the sake of the child. Plus, the need for additional training can remain for a long time after the social worker has started working with BBIC template (Socialstyrelsen 2006).

Theoretical standpoint.

Lipsky's Street-level bureaucrats: Who is the street-level bureaucrat?

Street-level bureaucrats are the professionals that interact with members of the public on a day to day basis through their work and are the link between the government officials who determined laws and the members of the public that these laws effect. These professionals are essentially the individuals responsible for conveying a policy that has been contrived elsewhere (Lipsky, 1980). Professionals that may be listed under this category are social workers, nurses, police officers and teachers. According to Lipsky (1980:76) the street-level bureaucrat has an "alienated roll", she/he works only with "segments of the product" or are a link in the chain. They are one of maybe many professionals the client may come into contact with, often the client is referred elsewhere, this according to routine or if the individual needs other professional help.

The workload of the street-level bureaucrat, in this case the social worker, varies due to outside influence. The needs of the client fluctuate, workloads are inconsistent and it is hard to strike a balance between available resources and demand (Lipsky, 1980). The social workers are required to respond to individual need at the same time as dealing with clients on mass demand. More so and not without consequence, the social worker is never in a position

where control of this imbalance between clientele and resources is possible. Increasing need of resources tend to occur at around the same rate that as already lacking resources are added to an organisation. Decisions that are made by the social worker, based on the resources available can thus be criticised for leading to arbitrary decisions. Other influencing factors are that the work of street-level bureaucrats often involves complex and ambiguous goals that are difficult to reach. The professional also has a double role, one of an administrator of rules, the other of a possible provider of support. It is therefore impossible for street-level bureaucrats to reach the requirements of their job and keep in line with all requirements and objectives around them. The social worker instead forms the policies to fit the situation thus enabling her to implement them in every day work and it can be alleged that street-level bureaucrats are instead the real policy makers.

Discretion.

One of the key terms associated with Lipsky (1980) is the street-level bureaucrat and discretion. Due to the nature of, in this case, social work, street-level bureaucrats are permitted by the public to have the capacity to determine the assistance given the individual client. This does not eradicate the social worker from legal restraint or up-down policy, and the professional still has rules to follow. However, due to pressed time or a lack of information, the social worker adapts to individual situations, enabling her to cope with work related problems. The street-level bureaucrat not only has the chance to exercise discretion, it is essentially necessary when required to draw conclusions during the decision making process. Therefore, at the same time as discretion can be determined as a problem, it can according to Lipsky (1980), not be eliminated from this kind of work.

Previous research.

A summary of Child welfare inquiry – 1924 to modern day.

In his academic doctoral dissertation, Lundström (1993) studies the effect of legislation, profession and practice and the implications it has had on child welfare over the last century. As a result of Sweden's industrialisation, many families were forced to move from the country to the cities resulting in children becoming more visible. The 1924 Child Welfare Act (Sweden) was based on the child's own needs of protection from unfit parents and contributed to a new outlook on child rearing. The most important outcome of this law was where it was

previously deemed necessary to place children in an institution, it was now seen that children would instead benefit from close control and monitoring in their natural habitat. Moreover, through its implementation, child welfare authorities now had the right to intervene in the home when children were suspected of living with abuse or were exposed to risks in regard to life or health. Unlike the previous Act of 1902, differences in children's behaviour did not need to be observed to have the right to intervene (Lundström, 1993). Development of this Act has continued over the years. There is now a need for an active and distinct control of a child's situation. In 1960 the discussion on how child welfare inquiries should be carried out was a focal point. Administrators were requested to exercise a holistic view of the situation at hand and to take into account the needs of the whole family, not only on a short-term basis. Inquiries should be more comprehensive and reliable. It was not until 1970 that there was a major development concerning who could actually perform child welfare inquiries and the title Social worker was not a definition that could be particularly associated with child welfare inquiry until the 1980s. The definite changes that can be observed from 1960 to modern day are that children at risk are no longer associated with poverty and inquiries are lead using qualified members of staff using legal and bureaucratic management. (Lundström, 1993)

Rasmusson – modern day Child Welfare Inquiries.

In 2009, Bodil Rasmusson conducted an assignment on the behalf of the Swedish Social Services. The report was requested for two reasons. The first was to evaluate the extent to which the children themselves had been observed or heard during inquiry. The second was to evaluate the effect the implementation BBIC has had on child welfare inquiries and the social workers own perceptions and experiences to work according to BBIC and Kap 11 1§ SoL [9]. An evaluation of the working process was made and descriptions of the possible problems that can arise while making decisions when using the BBIC system are discussed. Rasmusson (2009) first highlights two different discourses of decision making that are involved when using the BBIC system. The first being technical-rational decision making, this is used to describe the process of inquiry using the BBIC system and indicates a specific logic and rationality in the collecting and documentation of information. The second being analytic-reflexive where BBICs basic principles; these being working for the best of the child, eliminating suspected areas of risk, recognising the need of protection etc which directs the

[9] Kap 11 1§ SoL is a paragraph taken from the Social Services law which states that when a report of suspected abuse/neglect is received by the social services, an investigate must be opened and the child's need for support must be determined.

social workers approach to clients and inquiry as a process. It has shown that due to the fact that these two discourses are involved, there are certain implications for a social worker goes about making assessments and decisions during child welfare inquiry.

Rasmusson has based her study on the following issues. The social workers own opinions and experiences of working with BBIC template, how the BBIC system is used and evaluated by individual social workers, to what extent have the social workers undergone training in the use of BBIC. Also the individual comprehension of a need for supervision and guidance in BBIC use and documentation and finally the social workers opinion of the BBIC system in regard to the previous form of investigation. According to Rasmusson, the interviews revealed that when concentrating on perceptions and experiences of the BBIC forms and templates, there was an initial resistance to BBIC and the social workers expressed difficulties in the understanding of the system. Analysis has shown that the social workers dealt with this in different ways and their ways of dealing with the initial difficulties can be divided into three different groups. In one group it was identified that certain social workers have discovered positive gains in the use of BBIC, they have overcome the problems associated with the system and now appear to like the system. The second group consists of social workers who again have discovered positive gains, overcome problems but despite this have a lack of enthusiasm in the continuing work with BBIC. The third group consisted of a group of social workers (5) that carried out child welfare inquiries with the use of another system yet the BBIC triangle was used as the basis of the inquiry. The problems associated with the second group could be directly related to the social workers dislike of the design of the BBIC system (2009). It was considered as being overly ambitious and detailed. One of the main issues was the fact that the process was now see as being more time-consuming, not only in respect to the length of time it takes in meetings with different participants and documentation but also in respect to the learning process in the use of BBIC.

Critical analysis.

The fundamental question in this essay is if BBIC qualifies to be called a “uniform” system of investigation. Child welfare inquiries using the BBIC system should aid in the sorting of information during investigation. By using the headings identified on the different sides of the BBIC triangle the needs of the child should be easier ascertained. When talking to individual

social workers, there appears to be inner conflicting views on whether the system contributes to this uniform system of inquiry or not.

Some of the social workers say that they like the BBIC system and the structure it gives to the sorting of information collected during inquiry. Others still had qualms about using the BBIC system. In the case of the two that still are dubious toward the system, there was both a feeling of being restricted in the work carried out and of being overwhelmed by the volume of documents available. The views of these social workers are much the same as those in Rasmussons report (2009) and the social workers in my essay can be placed in Rasmussons two previously mentioned categories or groups. It can amongst the social workers that I interviewed be determined that one group of social workers, after having tried the BBIC system, are positive towards it's use, (3 persons) on the other hand two social workers are doubtful toward the system. Rasmusson (2009) discusses that the individual social workers motivation, knowledge and the individual process of translation should be examined to try to find an explanation as to why the system works for one group and not for another. In Rasmussons (*ibid.*) group one, the social workers success in the use of the BBIC system have been hailed as pioneers who, without proper role models, managed to crack the code of the BBIC system. Of group two, social workers have been simply labelled as not being able to get used to the system. Rasmusson (*ibid.*) concludes that the failure in the use of the new system may be a result of conflicting, 1) previous working experiences, 2) the unfamiliar way of working and 3) of the social workers own values.

While Rasmusson (2009) confronts the problems associated with the use of BBIC, she apparently chooses to concentrate this part of her study merely on the ability of the social worker. I should like to venture that Rasmusson may have been bias in her examination of this problem area concerning perceptions and experiences of forms and templates. She does not seem to question the reliability or suitability of the BBIC system, of which she has helped develop and implement into Swedish child welfare, only the ability of the social worker. Maybe these "pioneers" have merely struck it lucky. When a system implemented on this scale (many councils are now trying the system), I find it reasonable to suggest that at some point someone, is going to find a way of making it work. Maybe instead group two is the realistic reflection of the system. Lipsky (1980) also questions the possibility of implementing a set formula into work that is mainly built up of unique circumstance, as in this case, child welfare inquiries using BBIC. He implies that a given formula or system would be too

complicated to adapt to different situations. Problems are different in origin and expose themselves in different ways. One more experienced social worker that I interviewed reflects this and says that the BBIC system restricts her in her work instead of benefiting it.

R: ... it may be so (that you feel restricted with the BBIC system) as a social worker, you have learned a way of working and you use your own knowledge of a situation as a tool. You develop your own method of working that you feel comfortable with, but suddenly you get a pile of forms that they believe that you should have with you, that you have to work with and then it is easy to lose yourself somewhere along the line ...

How do social workers say that they document information in the BBIC formula during child welfare investigations?

According to the Social Services Act relevant information should be recorded and provide a holistic view of the children's situation (Socialstyrelsen 2006). BBIC should give clarity to investigation, focusing on needs rather than problems, rate parenting ability in relation to the child's needs and to sort out what information is of relevance or importance. The economic situation of the family, their housing situation, etc should not escape the social worker nor the need to illuminate those areas that not only are in need of change but what actually works at home as well. The needs of the child should also be easier to define by following the headings of the BBIC triangle. Yet, the existing requirements for use of the BBIC system show no indication as to how the investigation documents should be used.

What effect if any does this lack of instruction have on how information is documented by social workers? It would seem that when the BBIC was first implemented, the trend was to always use the headings Health and Education. Due to the fact that the BBIC system was developed as a uniform means of investigation, I asked those interviewed if they had a tendency to still use these or other certain headings from the BBIC triangle during an ongoing inquiry. If an indication that this was indeed the case could be established, this would point toward a deviation in this line of thought.

R1: ... it was different in the beginning when I started working with BBIC, perhaps it was dependent upon the council in which I worked. Back then it was a working standard to always include Health and Education, but I don't think that that's the case now, no

R2: Yes, perhaps I still do. The reason I have previously been so focused on *Health* is that in 2006 the County's Administrative Board (länsstyrelsen) were here and they reviewed some of our child welfare investigations and inquiries involving acts of violence. This was before we started with BBIC, but the main criticism back then that even if we conducted good inquiries we did not have specific titles for health.

No definite pattern surfaces in what these individuals use as a profession, even if some of the headings have a somewhat more common use than others these being; *Family's background and present situation* and *Social-and emotional behaviour*. However, one pattern that can be distinguished is the individual use of BBIC headings and what the social workers say that they use on a regular basis or seldom. Some of the headings were considered relevant in relation to the child's age. *Identity* seems to be one heading that can be placed into this category, being difficult to apply to younger children, unless they have a marked demonstrative personality yet easier to apply to adolescents. An overall opinion of the social workers was that some of the headings actually collide with each other and that information collected is of relevance under more than one heading. *Emotional- and social development* and *Social behaviour* were not seen as being that different from each other. This appears to, from the results of the interviews, result in the social worker adapting the use of the formula to her own needs and using her own judgement in relation to under which heading information best fits. Yet, the information has of course stressed one social worker to be applicable to the heading under which it is placed.

R: Yes, differences may be detected. We're somewhat restricted in how much we can read each other's journals so I don't have that much experience in how my colleagues document information. I have read some investigations though ... when working with small children as *** and *** do a difference can be detected there. Due to the age of the child they need to investigate parental character more than you do with an inquiry involving a sixteen-year-old. It's different how you use the titles, if you decide to integrate the information or split it up under the different headings. Not many of us use Ability to take care of oneself or Social behaviour unless the inquiry isn't based on a complaint against the child. I personally have my favourite titles. You could say that we all document information differently.

Some headings are also seen as complex and there was in some circumstances a difficulty in understanding their definition when first working with the BBIC system. These are the same headings that the Social Services claim makes it easier for both children and parents understand what is actually being investigated (described previously on page one). I would like to argue that there are not too many children, and in some accounts parents who understand the term's *Family social integration* or *Emotional and behavioural development*

(*Social Integrering and Känslo- och beteendemässig utveckling*) and the implications of these have on the investigation. One social worker voiced that it can take time to explain the implications of the different headings to the family.

R: My personal thoughts about the BBIC triangle is that the headings in some cases are too complicated to fully understand what they mean, okay Health and Education you can understand but Emotional and Behavioural development, what is that really? It's the same with Identity and Social behaviour. Virtually all of the headings under the Ability of parents are very dependent on definition. You can define these headings in different ways and I think that it also becomes very unclear for clients what is being investigated. We social workers have learned the meanings of the different headings, but some headings involve a very wide topic. It would help if they were made a bit clearer.

One thing that prevailed amongst all the social workers was that it isn't so important under which heading the information is documented, instead it is deemed as more important that the information is actually documented somewhere. This again points to the social workers own interpretation of the scope in which the BBIC documents can be utilised.

R: The aim of course is that all social workers should document the collected information as similar as possible, but everyone has a different way of writing. To try to compel someone into writing in a certain way doesn't work; you can't control people that way. The most important thing is that the relevant information is documented somewhere.

Lipsky (1980) does not believe that programmatic formula can be introduced into the street-level bureaucrats' works and be used effectively. He says that when working with larger groups of individuals, professionals are forced to adjust to a stressful working situation by adapting how she/he acts in relation to their clients. Due to this and the complexities of the problems that street-level bureaucrats are forced to confront, a concrete system on how to deal with a given situation cannot be implemented. All situations are different and it is unreasonable to suggest that individual problems can be solved using programmed formats. Instead, the professional uses their own comprehension of the situation and makes a decision based on their own integrity.

The BBICs supporting Consultation document and its varying use.

BBIC system is built-up of thirty plus documents some of which to be used to gain supporting information about the situation of the child. The consultation document (konsultationsdokument), which is one of these documents, is required to be implemented in

certain cases and is consigned to schools and day cares where staff are then responsible for completing the form.

There are two variants of this document available, one based on the recommended development of the child in pre-school age to be sent to pre-school authorities, the other in children of school age up to adolescents. The document covers areas of development such as relationship to food, relationships with peers and other adults, condition of health, if the child has any special needs and/or the staffs contact with the childs custodian. In addition in the case of the school child, consideration is taken to student's possible absence from school, their learning abilities and performance in class.

Considerable differences can be observed to the extent in which the document is used from one social worker to another. In one council the consultation document is only sent out to day cares and schools when there is concern around the child's school situation, this coming under the heading of Education in the BBIC triangle. In another council the social worker claims that she always uses the consultation document as the information collected in this document can give a much better picture of the child and his/her situation. Another social worker, who works mainly with adolescents, says she sometimes uses the document, yet she has observed that her colleagues that work with children 0-12 tend to actively use the document.

I: How often do you use the Consultation document?

R1: Almost always. Education is an area that I almost always investigate. In some cases of course, education hasn't been relevant for the case and I therefore haven't utilised the document. But I see it as being a document that covers so much more than education. Sometimes the area of need may be Social and Emotional behaviour and the consultation document covers all areas of need. It may be that you need to talk to the school about this instead.

In a different council, I received this answer:

R2: If we have decided to investigate how the child is succeeding in school we utilise the document, otherwise, if nothing points to the fact that there are problems in school and education, then no, we don't utilise the document.

The different employment of this document during investigation may suggest that there is a lack of clear directive on when the document should be implemented. According to the Social Services the purpose of the consultation document is to increase the quality of both investigation and in the reviews of granted assistance. Social Services also determine that it is important that the school contributes with their knowledge of the child, in order to assess the

child's needs. It is clearly indicated that the social workers do not have a uniform way of working with this document. It appears that the documents use has been adapted to the needs of the social worker and what they themselves consider relevant. If it's use or lack of it has any affect on the outcome of the inquiry is hard to establish and would need to be studied at a greater extent in order to reach a conclusion. This conflicting behaviour may be linked to Lipsky's (1980) *Patterns of practice*. Given the resources available and the general direction provided by the system, street-level bureaucrats clearly *attempt to do a good job in some way*. (Lipsky 1980:81). That is, they state that they are simply are doing their job to the best of their ability under the conditions in which they work.

A question of "Time".

The one problem that almost all of the social workers brought up were the implications that BBIC system and the extensive amount of paperwork have on time. Not all the difficulties concerning time are directly related to BBIC system per say, but can nonetheless be linked in some way and BBIC can be identified as one of the starting points of the problem. There are more forms to fill in and more meetings with parents and children to fit into an already busy schedule. Due to the implementation of certain laws (11 Kap 2 § SoL) [10] the social worker has four months in which to carry out an inquiry from start to finish. This, according to the social workers interviewed, combined with a heavy workload makes it impossible to fit everything in and are in some cases forced to cut corners.

I don't think that there is much more documentation really. The problem is that certain documents like the Plan of inquiry [11] should be filled in together with the family. This means that there are more meetings to be booked into an already tight and busy schedule. Had it just been for us to complete the form by ourselves and then communicate with family on their thoughts concerning the structure of the inquiry it wouldn't prove to be so much more work. Perhaps I do this sometimes anyway, fill in the Plan of inquiry prior to meeting with the family. It happens quite often in fact, then I go through the document with the family and hear what they think about it, to save a little time, but I don't know really...

In cases where inquiries involve several siblings, each child must have their own personal document of inquiry. Naturally, a majority of the information collected within one family is the same from one child to the next. Due to dated computer systems and that fact that some of

[10] 11 Kap 2 § SoL is taken from the Social Services law that states that the social worker has a maximum of four months to complete an investigation.

[11] The Plan of inquiry is a document utilised at the start of inquiry to highlight the areas of need to be investigated for the family and the social worker.

the information collected has to be duplicated and documented for every child, several social workers say that a lot of time is spent writing the same information time and time again. A further aspect that is predominant when speaking to the social workers is the length of time it takes to learn how to use the BBIC system and it's many documents.

R: ... it is a slow system and also due to on-going development improvements are continually made that have to be learnt which takes time. Another problem is that if you have three siblings, much of the information gathered is of course applicable for all three, such as economy and housing. You waste a lot of time cutting out and pasting in small pieces of information to individual documents, you can't just copy the whole document so it's practical things like that that makes the system tiresome and frustrating.

Decision-making and available “resources”

Street-level bureaucrats work involves them on a regular basis, working closely with clients stamped with relatively high levels of discretion. Lipsky, (1980) states that there are certain characteristics that may be linked to the bureaucrats working conditions. Some of these have already been previously mentioned such as inadequacy of resources, demand for services that increase at the same time as new resources are made available to the client. Goal expectations are ambiguous, vague or conflicting, which makes goal achievement difficult for the bureaucrat. Limitations in time and information characterise beuristic decision making, which in most cases is highly likely to be lacking. Lipsky (1980) means that an infrequency of the client and bureaucrat meeting each other combined with heavy workloads has its implications on the amount of information collected. Street-level bureaucrats (Lipsky 1980:29) also work with a level of uncertainty, due to the “complexity of the subject matter”, namely people. A last factor that may impinge on the decision making is the willingness of the clients, who are not always in the “system” of their own free will.

Rasmusson (2009) argues that the outcome of the inquiry and the decisions made are dependent on the social workers view of the possibilities for her client, how and which information is collected for assessment and the manner in which her client participates in the decision-making. Decisions made in the child welfare inquiries are not easy and the decision making process is characterised by several factors (Rasmusson 2009). Problems may arise during decision making and laws and regulations may affect what aid may be given, an example of this being is the need of consent from a person over the age of fifteen when assistance is to granted and applied. Could this mean that Rasmusson could be accused of

contradiction of self? She states that from the findings of the report that social workers own frames of reference may affect what form of assistance is granted yet at the same time that BBIC should promote uniformity amongst social workers (Rasmusson 2009).

When working with child welfare inquiry, the social worker is regulated not only by time but also more importantly by law in how much information may be collected. It is stated in the Social Services Act that no more information than that deemed necessary to the case may be gathered. To estimate this, the social workers need to use their own intuition together with applied theory and make knowledge-based decisions. I asked a social worker when one knows when the information gathered is sufficient. The answer she said is not an easy one and social workers can never to one hundred percent be sure. The information available in the report of suspected neglect/abuse or in the application for help is the basis on which the social worker carries out an investigation and decisions and judgements for assistance are made. The same social worker expressed that this decision is harder to take in the cases of young children.

Decision-making can also be affected by the amount of resources available and in relation to this, the size of the council in which the social workers work. It can be assumed that a larger council has a greater and wider supply of resources available to the client. Nonetheless, according to Lipsky (1980), there is always an imbalance between need and availability. There is also always a public demand when a resource is made available to them. The social worker in some cases appears to be influenced by the resources available to her, maybe even at a subconscious level. One social worker said that by working in a small council, she did not have that many resources to work with so granting a form of assistance to the client wasn't too difficult. Moreover, it would appear that a predominantly deciding factor is that outpatient care is granted primarily and it would, according to one social worker, be difficult to justify assistance in another form without trying this first.

One way of overcoming the problem of decision-making so that all clients are treated more or less equal is to hold one member of staff responsible for the granting of aid or assistance. This is done in one of the councils where I interviewed two social workers. A social worker explained that this person, namely the primary social worker (1: e socialsekreterare) still needs to have a dialogue with the social worker who has carried out the inquiry but the primary responsibility lies in one persons hands. Through discussion with her co-workers, it should be guaranteed that this "supervisor" makes decisions that favour that of the client. At

this particular work place, the social worker says that the system is appreciated and that it promotes security for the client.

Discretion.

Throughout this essay, it can be established that the social workers use of discretion is predominant during child welfare inquiry. Personal preferences influence the social workers method of documentation and in the decisions that are made. However, to eliminate or restrict the social worker from using discretion would not necessarily have a positive effect on the outcome of inquiry. It may instead lead to a difficulty or almost impossibility in accomplishing a positive outcome for the child. Street-level bureaucrats work “in situations that often require responses to the human dimension of situations” (Lipsky 1980:15). However, one social worker believes that working with child welfare inquiries, there is a certain absence of discretion.

R: But we are already quite limited in discretion due to the amount of documentation involved. You can't get away from the fact and I don't think that you should have the opportunity to use too much discretion either involving assessment ... it is the core of social work that formulae and laws regulate us. There are so many different directives that are implemented by others around us but I think this is only a positive thing.

Despite this, the same social worker expressed that in her opinion, all social workers use the BBIC documents in their own way. This can only be understood as is a large contradiction of terms. The other social workers views reflect instead the speculations of Lipsky (1980) that she would not in fact be able to carry out her work if she were not allowed to use discretion.

BBICs Uniformity – a reachable goal?

R: No, I mean, what is it they want to achieve? It's obvious that you can't have a uniform system of assessment, we're all different, we all document in different ways. You can have a single template and an endeavour to collect information in a certain way but it is impossible to compare one assessment to another, they are obviously all different.

It would appear that combining social work with a set formula is unrealistic; evidence shows that the BBIC formulae are utilised by the social worker based on their own preferences and as previously discussed, different headings are utilised.

R1: I usually merge Identity and Emotional and behavioural development, it's not so often I utilise only the heading Identity, you can get pretty much document everything under the heading Emotional och behavioural development, it has to do with confidence and self-awareness. The heading Ability to take care of oneself, I don't like that heading, I don't believe that children or adolescents should have to take care of themselves. I don't think I've ever used that heading.

It is according to Lipsky (1980) impossible to coerce a certain method of working. As previously discussed, this would in fact inhibit the social workers ability to perform the work necessary. Social Services state that by performing inquiry, aided by the BBIC triangle and document of inquiry, a holistic view of the children's situation should be gained. The aim of BBIC is to create a uniform means of inquiry between social workers to collect this information. Yet the social worker is restricted by law to investigate more than what is deemed necessary. These two definitions, holistic view and limited child welfare investigation seem to be a contradiction of terms and there appears to be a fine line between the two. I would like to venture that this holistic view can actually be harmful to the child in some situations.

I introduced a hypothetical situation to the social workers that there is a connection between the aid or assistance granted in relation to where a child lives and to what degree the child's problem is realised. One social worker did not agree that the problems of the child are realised by the social worker or that decisions are influenced in any way by the fact that the child either lives in a small community or in the district of a city. She concluded that there are problems in every council and these problems are dealt with accordingly, regardless of the fact that the child may live in the country or in a large city. She did not believe that there could be substantial differences in this regard. Two others answered:

R: ... but there are more serious problems to be found in a larger council. We've had a case here where a family was reported to us. The mother was willing to accept our help but they moved from our small council to a larger council nearby. The problem is she won't get help now. We thought that the problem here was serious enough to warrant assistance but in the larger council it's not seen as a severe enough problem. It's a shame, we can see that she needs help and she would have got that help here...

Another social worker was also convinced that this was an influential factor.

R: I think that it can be like that [...] you can't reach the desired similarity with the help of BBIC because the problems are so different from council to council. I can imagine that in councils that have heavy work loads and more complex cases that the social worker different decisions, in those cases I can imagine that there is a difference, yes...

I found it concerning that the one social worker did not agree that where the child lives is an influencing factor on decision making. This not only due to the fact that she deviated from the rest of the group in her opinion but also due to the fact that I had in fact had this situation confirmed by another social worker. A young boy had come to the attention of the social services through a report from school. The mother eventually was willing to receive help, but then later moved to *** (large council with many districts). The young boy was no longer eligible for help in *** as the problems surrounding his situation did not credit assistance. The problem was not seen as serious enough due to surrounding influences.

It may not be so unlikely that a child moving from an area of low dependency to an area of higher dependency becomes unseen. I am not implying that this is the fault of BBIC as it goes much deeper than that. It is not the fault of the family for moving nor yet the fault of the social worker. Nevertheless, it would seem that the problem in some cases does exist. Of course, decision making cannot be linked entirely on the basis of the BBIC system. Decisions are made based on the information gathered using the BBIC as a tool of investigation and also on the social workers own frame of reference.

The majority of the evidence so far points to the fact that BBIC system does in fact not provide the ambition of a uniform system. Not only this, it would seem that the goal is unreachable. The BBIC is somewhat successful in one council that I have had contact with, yet only in a way that it is use in its entirety and the social workers are satisfied using the system. If it gives a uniform system of inquiry has not been established. As the social workers that actually use the system say that they are sceptic to the fact that BBIC provides unity, one may suggest that it does not.

Uniformity is the only area where a definite connection could be identified between the views of the social workers. None of the social workers believe that there can be a uniform system of investigation. Too many colliding factors are present in order to reach this goal. One social worker expressed:

R: I believe that every social worker has their own way of utilising the BBIC documents.

Evidence from the interviews I performed point toward that she is probably correct in her assumption. One can observe that a child welfare inquiry is much more about a written document where several social workers have stated that the inquiry is still their own investigation, even if aided by BBIC. As long as there are individuals performing the inquiries, there will be differences in documentation, decision making, discretion, perception and interpretation. No one client has the same problems as another, they do have access to similar resources within their own circle of family and friends and problems that arise are not based on the same conditions. It is not only the structure of BBIC that influences how an inquiry is carried out but also the freedom of which the social worker possesses to carry out her work. Several social workers agree that the outcome of an inquiry is dependent upon which social worker carries out the investigation. In one council however, similarities could be observed according to the two social workers interviewed. This moreover is probably more dependent on their work methods, as two social workers work closely together during inquiry and later write the inquiry together. One of the social workers said that due to the fact that it is always the same two social workers that work together, they get used to how the other works and there is a mutual understanding between them. In this case they said that they work similar to each other. Otherwise, it would seem that the social worker uses her “gut feeling” even when governed by the rules of the work place. She sees the resources available to her and in some cases uses these as a starting point instead of the client’s needs. This is shown in with one of the social workers I came into contact with who says that she due to the availability of resources; she is not in a position that gives her the ability to grant a wide range of aid or assistance.

R: ... But we don't have that many forms of assistance in our small council, we can appoint a family therapist alternatively a therapist that works primarily with the child. We also have a drug counsellor but that's about all. We are soon going to start up a parenting course and we can remit children to other specialists such as a psychologist.

Obviously, she is also steered to a certain amount by the organisation in which she works and the money available to her to utilise for treatment outside her own council. The different problem areas are so vast and so far between that it would seem impossible to reach a uniform system. This is also influenced by the fact the social workers are individuals with their own frames of reference dealing with individuals that also have their own frames of reference.

Final discussion.

From the different opinions expressed by the social workers interviewed, use of the BBIC documents is very individual, and if not working closely in pairs the difference in use can be substantial. It would appear that some headings are made favourites or at the opposite end of the scale, not liked and in turn excluded. As earlier discussed, some documents (namely consultation document) are used inconsistently and there appears to be no pattern in the understanding of the terms of use. Moreover, corners appear to be cut due to lack of time where it has been shown that social workers, in an attempt to save time will complete some forms that are intended to be filled in with the client actually before the first meeting (page 26). This however is not translated by the writer of this essay as a fault of the social worker but at the fault of a system. I, like Lipsky (1980) think that it is the position of the social worker and the surrounding conditions under which they work; these discussed during this essay are the influencing factors behind the decisions that are made.

If BBIC can be in the opinion of the social workers, provide a uniform system of inquiry is a definite no on all fronts. All the social workers are of the same opinion that there are too many influencing factors to enable this to be carried out. It is not only the social worker that influences how an inquiry is to be completed but also the children, families and problems that the social worker comes into contact with. Councils are different in size and the client has access to variations of resources, which also in most cases is considered an influential factor.

Of course, the fundamentals of a child welfare inquiry are always the same which is to determine whether or not it is deemed necessary, for the wellbeing of the child, to grant help in the form of aid or assistance. Yet the decision making process is always individual, what one social worker sees as a problem is not a problem in the opinion of another. As one social worker said; differences cannot be avoided, as it is always the individual social worker in charge of the inquiry that has the power to make decisions about her client.

One thing that has struck me as being strange is the fact that the Social Services have an ambition to have a uniform system of inquiry in the whole of Sweden, yet the introduction of the system appears to be very shabby. Even if the majority of the councils in Sweden are now trying out the BBIC system, they are not legally bound to continue its use when the trial period is over, a council may even create their own system of inquiry based on the BBIC

triangle at a later date. It is written in the rules of the use of the BBIC that social workers should attend the fundamental course to learn how to use the system effectually and yet I have overcome a number of social workers that have not attended the course at all. It would seem that each individual council is, during the trial period, free to pick and choose which documents they are comfortable using and disregard the rest. Due to this, it is my belief that a mistake has been made from the start and if the ambition to have a uniform system is to be reached then severe changes have to be made. As the BBIC system is designed to be used in its entirety and the documents are thought to follow and support each other, how can the system be seen to be effective when in some cases, only a small percentage of the documents are used. It seems unrealistic that one can use a system after the individual need when the ambition is that everyone reaches the same goal.

It seems instead that there has been a contradiction of terms. *Uniformity* is described in the *Oxford dictionary* as *not varying in form or character; the same in all cases and at all times* where as *discretion* is described as *the freedom to decide what should be done in a particular situation*. I would like to suggest that the scope of social work actually doesn't allow the social worker to perform child welfare inquiries in the uniform system that the Social Services suggest.

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Interview formula.

- 1) Hur länge har du arbetet med BBIC mallen? (How long have you worked with the BBIC formula?)
- 2) Finns det någon del av dokumentet som du brukar ha med? (Are there any headings that you use on a regular basis?)
- 3) Finns det någon rubrik som du brukar slå ihop med en annan rubrik? (Are there any headings that you usually combine with each other?)
- 4) Har du genomgått någon utbildning i användning av BBIC mallen? (Have you undertaken any courses in the use of BBIC?)
- 5) Om ja, var och hur länge varade utbildning? (If yes, how long ago was this and how long was the course?)
- 6) Hur många på arbetsplatsen uppskattats har gått på utbildning? (How many at your place of work have undertaken this course?)
- 7) Finns det några skrivna eller oskrivna regler på en organisationsnivå om hur socialsekreteraren ska använda BBIC mallen, till exempel att rubriken hälsa alltid ska vara med? (Are there any written or unwritten rules at your place of work into the use of the BBIC documents?)
- 8) I vilken mån uppskattar du att det finns skiljaktigheter mellan er i arbetssättet i användning av BBIC mallen på din arbetsplats? (In what degree do you estimate that there are differences in how individual social workers document information at your place of work?)
- 9) Har du ytterligare reflektioner kring arbetet med BBIC? (Do you have any further thoughts in association with the work surrounding BBIC?)

Några följdfrågor kan tillkomma! Further questions may be posed during the course of the interview!

Julie Bergman
tel: x

Hej,

Mitt namn är Julie Bergman och jag läser Socionomprogrammet i Lund. Jag läser på termin sex och håller nu på att skriva mitt examensarbete.

Uppsatsen kommer huvudsakligen att handla om BBIC mallens implementering i den svenska sociala barnvården. Jag vill undersöka manualens tillförlitlighet och om eventuella skillnader finns i användning av mallen, när den beskrivs av Socialstyrelsen som en enhetlig bedömnings material.

Det är min önskan om att få intervjua två-tre social sekreterare som jobbar med BBIC mallen i barn och ungdomsutredningar. Detta är för att få en inblick i hur mallen upplevs och används i praktiken. Intervjun beräknas ta cirka 45 minuter och samtliga som intervjuas samt kommun/enhet kommer att aidentifieras.

Min handledare för denna termin är Alexandru Panican, lektor vid Lunds universitets Socialhögskola och kan kontaktas via telefon på 046-222 92 34 eller via e-mail på alexandru.panican@soch.lu.se.

Med vänliga hälsningar,

Julie Bergman