

Children & Young People Now

For decision makers and senior practitioners working with children, young people and families

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November 2018



Nutrition in the early years

How childcare settings are providing healthy meals to tackle rising rates of childhood obesity p22

**Social workers
to decide on
practical support
for families p8**

**Blueprint to
give children's
services early
help focus p12**



**Special report
on new ways to
reduce youth
reoffending p27**

**How youth
groups can access
grants to boost
income p47**

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- Consider whether impact measurement contributes towards a narrowing of what counts as good practice
- Gain an overview of the CRM choices for children's and youth services, and top tips to avoid common pitfalls



Children & Young People Now

EDITORIAL
 020 7501 + direct extensions below;
 fax is 020 7733 2325
 cypnow@markallengroup.com
Editor-in-chief and Publisher
 Ravi Chandiramani (6795)
Editor Derren Hayes (6799)
News Editor Neil Puffett (6793)
Production Editor Colin Hamilton (6794)
Online Manager Gemma Spence (6792)
Designer Jenny Watson

ADVERTISING
 020 7501 + direct extensions below
 fax 020 7733 2325
 sales@cypnowjobs.co.uk
Sales Executive George Hogg (6699)
Group Classified Sales Manager
 Lauren York (6767)
Event Manager Sam Dewey (6782)

Commercial Director Tom Curtiss
Production Director Richard Hamshere
Group Production Manager Jon Redmayne
Chief Executive Officer Ben Allen
Chairman Mark Allen

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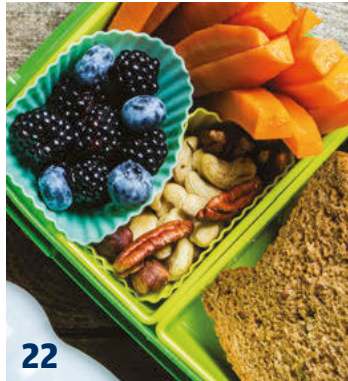
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22



27



48

4 NEWS ROUNDUP

All the news that matters from the past month

8 ANALYSIS

Social care Councils are to trial giving social workers money to spend on practical help for families, targeting children most at risk of care proceedings **8**

Social care Cafcass chief outlines steps for councils to tackle recent rise in duration of care proceedings **10**

Youth work Questions youth groups should consider when developing transgender policies **11**

Children's services EIF blueprint for early help recommends innovative approach to funding **12**

Early years Why more must be done to ensure childcare apprenticeship works for employers **14**

Education Tips on how to overcome some teachers' negative perceptions of children in care **15**

Health Review of children's social media use must include technical issues and awareness education **16**

18 INTERVIEW

Joseph Howes, chief executive, Buttle UK

19 VIEWPOINT

Feedback Safe house addresses perils of child trafficking; Film helps young carers and professionals

Editorial Derren Hayes on why the sector needs to prove the effectiveness of early intervention services

Opinion Remake the welfare state for children; Funding and fairness key to schools debate

22 FEATURE

Early years food The role childcare settings can play in establishing healthy eating habits from an early age

27 SPECIAL REPORT Reducing Youth Reoffending

Policy Youth justice services have developed a range of innovative approaches to engage repeat offenders but experts say more needs to be done

Research Understanding repeat offending; desistance approaches in youth justice; trauma and grief component therapy; girls in secure care

Practice Supporting siblings; Zorb football; diverting young people from custody; boosting work skills

COMING UP... Narrowing the Attainment Gap (Dec), Apprenticeships (Jan), Residential Care (Feb)

40 PROFESSIONAL

Leadership Rethinking care relationships **40**

Commissioning Commissioning for social value **41**

Inspections Inspecting stability **42**

Legal Update Immigration status and schools' access to funding; County lines and child victims of crime **44**

Research Mental Health and Wellbeing Trends Among Children and Young People in the UK **46**

Funding Enterprise Development Fund **47**

48 PRACTICE

International Focus Social work, Australia **48**

Case Studies Young Carers in Schools Award; Protected Work Experience **50**

Evidence and Impact Domestic abuse programmes **52**

Participation in Action Inclusive Spaces **54**

Local Spotlight Hampshire County Council **55**

57 DIARY

The Ferret on local authorities under global scrutiny

Children & Young People Now is a magazine and website for professionals working at all levels with children, young people and families. The magazine provides in-depth analysis, opinion and articles on best practice, targeting managers and senior practitioners involved in the commissioning and delivery of services. The website provides a breaking news service throughout the day for all practitioners and a host of resources, including information on careers and funding.

All the news that matters...

cypnow.co.uk/
earlyyears

Drop in 30 hours take-up 'expected' – Zahawi



A fall in the number of children having their application for 30 hours funded childcare approved was “expected”, children’s minister Nadhim Zahawi (above) has said.

Statistics published last month show there was a significant drop in the number of childcare codes being issued in September this year, compared with three months ago.

Scrap rates ‘to help struggling nurseries’

The requirement for nurseries to pay business rates should be scrapped in order to help them cope with the financial impact of delivering the government’s 30 hours childcare offer.

National Day Nurseries Association has written to the Chancellor Philip Hammond and Education Secretary Damian Hinds calling for them to take the step following the announcement that the Welsh government will give business rates relief to nurseries, similar to arrangements in Scotland.

Council to close half of children’s centres

A council has announced plans to cut the number of children’s centres it runs from 35 to 14, as part of efforts to save money.

Buckinghamshire County Council said it is not possible to continue meeting the needs of local families and children through its current network of 35 children’s centres due to budget cuts.

Access to childcare in deprived areas worsens

Children’s centres closures have been blamed for a fall in the number of children in deprived areas who can access childcare places.

A report into the state of childcare by research company Ceeda shows that childcare places on non-domestic premises were available to just a quarter of children living in the 20 per cent most deprived local authority areas, compared with 33 per cent in 2016.

Rise in 30-hour applications approved

The proportion of parents to have their offer of 30 hours funded childcare approved has risen markedly over the past year.

Statistics published by the Department for Education reveal that 88 per cent of funded childcare codes have been “validated” for the autumn term, compared with 71 per cent in September 2017.

Training standards group future in doubt

The future of an employee-led group established by government to develop early years training standards is in doubt after its lead member Busy Bees, the UK’s largest nursery chain, quit.

The training academy arm of the Busy Bees chain had led the 11-strong provider group, which was set up last year to ensure employers took the lead on developing training standards.

● See Analysis, p14

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education

Funding to improve SEN careers guidance

A social enterprise responsible for children’s services across three local authority areas has received funding to develop new approaches to careers advice for children with special educational needs (SEN).

Achieving for Children, which provides children’s services across Kingston, Richmond, and Windsor and Maidenhead, will receive £105,000 to work across 13 mainstream and special schools, providing “next steps” personal guidance interviews to students with SEN in years 10 and 13.

Council pays for failures in SEND support

A council has agreed to pay compensation after it was judged to have failed to provide adequate support to a boy with special educational needs and disabilities.

Kirklees Metropolitan Borough Council has admitted it failed to act upon three complaints from the boy’s mother to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman between 2016 and 2018.

DfE announces youth employment initiative



The government will invest £24m in improving education and career opportunities for young people in north east England, Education Secretary Damian Hinds has said.

Announcing the Opportunity North East scheme at a school in Gateshead, he said children in the region need more support from education and business leaders, because it is listed bottom in England for a number of measures.

School sports drive to ‘develop character’

A cross-government school sport and activity action plan will be developed as part of efforts to boost young people’s “character, resilience and grit”, Education Secretary Damian Hinds has said.

Hinds said that often what makes the difference for people who left school with “nothing or next to nothing in terms of qualifications, but went on to do something quite amazing in life” is “character”.

Derogatory comments about children in care

Negative views of looked-after children are commonplace among teachers, with many labelling them “problem children”, a survey has found.

Of 400 teachers surveyed, 87 per cent said they had heard at least one colleague express a negative view about looked-after children in their schools, with a third saying they heard such views often.

● See Analysis, p15

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health

National child death database set to launch

A new national database recording all child deaths is to launch in April 2019 in a bid to improve information sharing which will help prevent future deaths.

Details of the National Child Mortality Database were unveiled in joint statutory guidance released by the Department of Health and Social Care and the Department for Education for clinical commissioning groups and local authorities as child death review partners.

Extend mandatory role of health visitors

The role of health visitors should be extended so that struggling families receive more than the current statutory minimum of five health checks, children’s commissioner for England Anne Longfield has said.

A report by the Office of the Children’s Commissioner found that there are 15,800 babies under the age of one considered by local authorities to be vulnerable or highly vulnerable and at risk of harm, but still living at home.



Mental health checks for children in care

Children will start receiving mental health assessments when they enter the care system from June 2019 as part of a delayed pilot project.

Up to 10 pilot areas were set to start testing mental health assessments for looked-after children last year, but these were delayed as a result of the general election, and are still yet to launch.

Coastal areas 'less able to access support'

Children with mental health problems in many coastal areas across Britain are less able to access support despite having greater need, says evidence submitted to a parliamentary inquiry.

The Association of Child Psychotherapists says that lack of access to mental health services is particularly acute in coastal areas outside of the south of England.

Child health outcomes to decline in a decade

Child health outcomes in England are set to get worse over the next 10 years unless a robust health strategy is implemented.

A study published by the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health predicts that if current trends continue, England will fall even further behind its European counterparts.

Annual mental health review announced

An annual government review of children's mental health in England is among a set of measures announced by Prime Minister

Movers and shakers



The National Children's Bureau has announced the appointment of **Alison O'Sullivan** as its new chair of the board of trustees. O'Sullivan currently serves as a member of the advisory board for the children's commissioner for England, and previously served as president of the Association of Directors of Children's Services in 2015/16. She will take up the role in January 2019.

Robert Henderson, current deputy chief executive for Achieving for Children, has been appointed as director of children services at Croydon Council. Henderson, who joined Richmond Council more than 10 years ago, will take up post on 14 December.

An educational charity has appointed a 22-year-old to become its chair of trustees. Woodcraft Folk said the appointment of **Pip Sayers** has reduced the average age of board members to 27, with ages of trustees ranging from 16 to 52.

The Consortium of Voluntary Adoption Agencies has announced **Maggie Jones** as its new chief executive. Jones joins the organisation from Foundation, a social care and housing

charity operating across the North of England.

Sue McAllister has been appointed as the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman for the next three years. McAllister was previously prison service director General in Northern Ireland - the first woman to hold the post.

A total of 10 people have been appointed to the board of the National Citizen Service Trust. **Paul Cleal, Dame Sally Coates, Flick Drummond, Ian Livingstone, John Maltby, Tristram Mayhew, Lord Iain McNicol, Ndidi Okezie, Ashley Summerfield** and **Dame Julia Cleverdon** have all been appointed. In addition, **Brett Wigdortz** had previously been named chair of the NCS Trust in July.

Theresa May to tackle poor mental wellbeing among young people.

The government hopes schools and other bodies will use the "state of the nation" report to inform their policies and management of children's mental health from October 2019.

Stigma deters children from discussing issues

Children remain reluctant to discuss their mental health with teachers, even after school staff receive training on how best to provide support, a study has found.

An evaluation of the first year of the Youth Mental Health First Aid in Schools programme found that students in all six schools visited by researchers said the stigma around mental health remained a barrier to speaking openly.

One in four children turned away by services

Children's mental health services are struggling to cope with a rise in

demand and are turning away as many as one in four young people referred for support.

A report by the Education Policy Institute found that the number of referrals to specialist children's mental health services has risen by 26 per cent over the past five years.

Review of social media impact is ordered



A review of the impact that excessive social media can have on children's mental health is to be conducted, Health Secretary Matt Hancock has announced.

The review, to be conducted by chief medical officer Dame Sally Davies, will cover cyberbullying,

online gaming where there is a social media aspect, sleep problems, and problematic internet use, also known as "internet addiction".

● See Analysis, p16

cypnow.co.uk/socialcare

Ofsted praises resilience of council's services

A council has been praised by Ofsted for establishing resilient and sustainable services for vulnerable children despite the pressure of growing demand.

Inspectors visiting Portsmouth Council last month rated children's social care provision at the council as "good" overall, marking progress on 2014 when it was rated "requires improvement".

Access to community spaces improved

Young people could benefit from improved access to community spaces after the government pledged up to £1.8m as part of its loneliness strategy to develop under-utilised areas.

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport said it would enable the creation of more sustainable community spaces and hubs with a particular focus on improving access for young people.

Care applications for newborn babies rise

The number of applications for newborn babies to be taken into care has more than doubled in the past nine years, research has found.

A study by the Nuffield Foundation, *Born into Care*, found that in 2007/08, 1,039 babies were subject to care proceedings within one week of birth. By 2016/17, this number had more than doubled at 2,447, an increase of 136 per cent. Between 2007/08 and 2016/17, a total of 16,849 newborns were subject to care proceedings.

News roundup continues overleaf >>>



The number of CSE-linked offences in London has almost doubled in three years

Supportive children’s services praised

Ofsted has praised a supportive environment and high morale among children’s social workers following a check on provision in Manchester.

A focused visit to the local authority found that children’s social workers had manageable caseloads ranging from 22 to 24 children, and they felt positive about working for the authority.

Expansion of child trafficking initiative

An initiative designed to support vulnerable child trafficking victims is set to be expanded, more than three years after legislation to pave the way for it was passed.

Legislation requiring local authorities to provide independent child trafficking advocates to all children who need them was among provisions in the Modern Slavery Act 2015.

Police launch CSE awareness drive

Efforts are being made by police to raise awareness of the issue of child sexual exploitation (CSE) with a series of spot checks being conducted on hotels in London.

Ensuring hotel staff know what action to take when they suspect perpetrators of CSE are using their premises to commit offences has been the focus of an operation by the Metropolitan Police to raise awareness and safeguard children.

Inspectors praise care leaver support at council

Ofsted has praised the quality of support for care leavers at a London borough that acrimoniously split from children’s services partnership arrangements with two other councils earlier this year.

The tri-borough agreement between Hammersmith and Fulham, Kensington and Chelsea, and Westminster councils had been

set up in 2012 to share resources in response to funding constraints.

Slow progress at ‘inadequate’ council

Inspectors have raised concerns about the lack of progress at a children’s services department that was rated “inadequate” by Ofsted earlier this year, warning that support for vulnerable children is being removed too quickly.

Surrey County Council’s children’s services was handed the inspectorate’s lowest grade in May, for the second time in four years, after inspectors found vulnerable children were being left exposed to harm for long periods of time.

Concerns remain at trust-run services

A trust that took over the running of a council’s “inadequate” children’s services is still struggling to reduce caseloads, attract social workers and tackle delays, according to Ofsted.

Sandwell Children’s Trust, which is chaired by former Home Secretary Jacqui Smith, took charge of Sandwell Council’s children’s services in April, three months after the department was handed Ofsted’s lowest rating.

Fall in missing children linked to ‘county lines’

The number of children going missing as a result of their involvement in so-called “county lines” drug networks has fallen dramatically thanks to specialist support offered by a youth charity, an evaluation shows.

A Home Office-funded pilot project to tackle “county lines” crime in Kent resulted in the number of missing episodes in Dover falling from 123 to 49 just four months after the interventions began. Meanwhile in Thanet, numbers fell from 16 a month to just five.

Spending on children in care exceeds £4bn

The amount spent by councils supporting children who have been taken into care is set to rise by more than £370m this year, breaking the £4bn barrier for the first time.

Figures published by the Department for Education show that total spend by local authorities across England on children in care will increase to £4.16bn for 2018/19, a rise of £370.1m on the 2017/18 figure of £3.79bn.

Care proceedings duration increases



BECKY NIXTON

The average time it takes for children in care proceedings to be completed in family courts is at its highest level for four years, government figures have revealed.

Ministry of Justice family court data shows it took 30 weeks to dispose of a care or supervision case during April to June this year. This is two weeks longer than the same quarter in 2017 and the highest average since 2014.

● See Analysis, p10

‘Family holidays’ plan to cut children in care

Councils will be able to use government money to send struggling families on holiday as part of efforts to reduce record

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1

Health visitors ‘quitting over fears they are unable to protect children’

2

Extend mandatory role of health visitors, urges children’s commissioner

3

Councils plan £900m of cuts including children’s services and early years

4

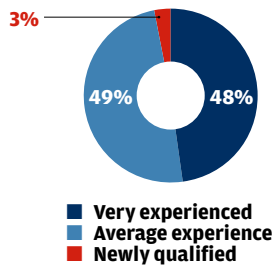
DfE to fund ‘family holidays’ in bid to reduce numbers of children in care

5

Mental health checks for looked-after children to begin in June 2019

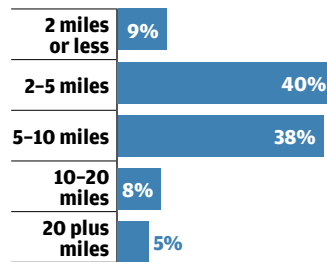
Financial pressures on rural schools

Experience level of teachers



Source: The Key

Distance travelled by pupils



Rural schools are facing a range of additional cost pressures due to the unique challenges of their locations, a study has found.

A survey by The Key, which provides leadership and management support to schools, found that rural schools have a high proportion of experienced and older, but expensive, teachers among their staff, due to staff turnover in rural schools being lower.

Nearly half (48 per cent) of the 542 head teachers that responded described their staff body as “very experienced” with in excess of 10 years teaching experience. While valuing their experience, head teachers said the higher salary costs seriously affect their budgets.

Another pressure comes from pupils travelling long distances, which has an impact on the school’s transportation costs and logistics.

allegations of abuse emerged following an undercover investigation, it has been announced.

Justice Secretary David Gauke said £5m has been set aside to create the first secure school in Medway, Kent. It is expected to open in late 2020.

£200m youth fund to tackle violent crime

Projects that support vulnerable children will be given the opportunity to access a new £200m fund as part of efforts to tackle serious youth violence, Home Secretary Sajid Javid has announced.

At the Conservative Party conference in Birmingham, he outlined details of a youth endowment fund to tackle violent crime “hotspots” over the next decade – equivalent to £20m a year.

High caseloads affecting quality of offender work

Inspectors have warned that standards at a youth offending service are slipping due to low staffing levels and high caseloads, threatening to put children’s safety at risk.

HM Inspectorate of Probation has rated Bristol City Council’s Youth Offending Team as “requires improvement” overall after inspectors raised concerns that risk assessments and planning are rushed and not being completed properly in some cases, inspectors found.

Research just out

Born into care: Newborns in care proceedings in England, Nuffield Foundation, October 2018

Implementation of Opportunity Areas: An independent evaluation, Department for Education, October 2018

Child health in England in 2030: comparisons with other wealthy countries, Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, October 2018

An Evaluation of Phase One of the Youth Mental Health First Aid in Schools programme, Institute of Education, October 2018

Improving children and young people’s mental health services, National Audit Office, October 2018

A Connected Society – A strategy for tackling loneliness, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, October 2018

numbers of children going into care, it has emerged.

In a bid to identify the best ways to prevent children being removed from their families, social workers will be handed “significant funds” to spend in “creative ways” as part of a Department for Education initiative.

● See Analysis, p8

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youthjustice](http://cypnow.co.uk/youthjustice)

First suicide for 20 years in secure home

A teenage girl is the first young person to have taken their own life in a secure children’s home for more than 20 years, it has emerged.

The Prisons and Probation Ombudsman annual report has revealed that during 2017/18, it investigated two deaths of young people accommodated in secure children’s homes.

System ‘anchoring children to their past’

The criminal records system is preventing children from moving

on from their mistakes and should be changed, a Conservative MP has warned.

Theresa Villiers said the current system is acting as a barrier to employment, education and housing. “It is therefore working against rehabilitation, undermining a core purpose of the youth justice system,” she said.

‘County lines’ child trafficker convicted

A drug dealer has been jailed for 14 years in the first successful prosecution under legislation to tackle “county lines” crime, in which gangs exploit vulnerable children to establish drug networks.

The conviction of Birmingham man Zakaria Mohammed is the first time a conviction has been secured for child trafficking offences related to county lines under the Modern Slavery Act (2015).

Custody centre to be first ‘secure school’

The first secure school for young offenders will be opened on the site of a secure training centre where

[cypnow.co.uk/
youthwork](http://cypnow.co.uk/youthwork)

Study tests how project improves attainment

More than 2,000 Year 9 pupils are to take part in a study to test how a military-based character education programme improves behaviour and attainment at school.

The Adventure Learning Trial, funded by the Education Endowment Foundation, will see

2,300 13- and 14-year-olds engage in one of two adventure learning programmes run by character education organisation Commando Joe’s and charity Outward Bound.

Call to boost after-school youth work

Improving the availability of after-school youth work programmes could protect young people from serious violence, according to a Labour MP leading an inquiry into youth violence.

Vicky Foxcroft, Labour MP for Lewisham Deptford, said that evidence given to the Youth Violence Commission shows that knife attacks are most common on weekdays in the period after school finishes and before parents come home from work.

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email-bulletins](http://www.cypnow.co.uk/email-bulletins)

Councils are to trial giving social workers money to spend on practical help for families, such as a new fridge,

Frontline funds: social workers to

SOCIAL CARE

By Neil Puffett

As part of efforts to reduce record numbers of children going into care, the What Works Centre for Children's Social Care is set to hand a number of councils money that frontline social workers can spend in "creative ways" with struggling families.

Councils will be able to bid for between £400,000 and £600,000 to test the idea – with suggestions for how the money could be used including family respite breaks, redecorating the home, or covering the cost of childcare.

The centre has said it wants to start working with successful sites as soon as possible – potentially as early as December – with evaluation due to take place by March 2020.

Under the initiative social workers will be allocated a budget to spend flexibly on care prevention with families, with an emphasis on being "creative".

Professional support

In addition to paying for practical help, the money could be used to pay for bringing in professional support swiftly, perhaps in the form of specialist counselling or psychological therapy.

The number of looked-after children is rising at its fastest rate in five years, with 72,670 children in care at the end of March 2017, compared with 70,440 the year before and 69,480 in 2015.

This is placing increasing pressure on cash-strapped local authorities, with the amount spent by councils supporting children who have been taken into care set to rise by more than £370m in 2018/19, breaking the £4bn barrier for the first time.

The centre says social workers and the families they are working with "are best placed to know what might be needed to create

real change and keep children safely at home".

Social workers will be expected to work with families to develop ways of keeping children safely at home that are designed for the specific context of each family. This could include the use of family group conferences to identify the best use of resources, or other collaborative ways of involving families in developing plans to keep children safe.

Another stipulation is that the money needs to be effectively targeted at children who are genuinely at risk of entering care, and for who it could realistically prevent them coming in.

Under section 17 of the Children Act 1989 local authorities already have a general duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children within their area who are in need; and promote the upbringing of such children by their families.

To this end, it is possible for social workers to access funds to assist families they are working with, either through a specific pot of money set aside by their local authority, or an application to a resources panel.

Budget pressures

However, Professor Donald Forrester, director of research for the What Works Centre, says that in practice, the ability to access funds varies greatly across the

“Less money ends up being spent as social workers feel a sense of responsibility to spend wisely”

Andy Elvin, chief executive, The Adolescent and Children's Trust



Social workers could pay for extra support for struggling families such as short breaks if

country and it can be difficult to get more expensive requests signed off.

"It is hard, for example, to get a new cooker, but easy to get a bus fare," he says.

"We completely understand that with children's services budgets there is often pressure against using budgets like that. We are trying to push in a different direction and see whether if we give them the resources, can we improve children's outcomes and stop children going into care."

The practice of devolving budgets to practitioners is not particularly new nor without controversy. It has been used in adult social care for a number of years, and in 2010 it was claimed that it had funded exotic holidays, subscriptions to internet dating sites and adventure breaks. Visits to sex workers and lap dancing

clubs had all been permitted under the system.

However, the concept has got support within the sector, and the idea has already been utilised by social enterprise Achieving for Children which provides children's services across the three local authority areas of Kingston upon Thames, Richmond, and Windsor and Maidenhead.

Achieving for Children's strengthening families team, which delivers the government-funded Troubled Families programme, already provides small budgets to help the lead professional support specific needs of the families; for example, providing school uniforms or home maintenance. This may be delegated to the family so they can commission support directly. The family may also access a devolved budget of up to £250 to support the outcomes.

short break or childcare. Experts say the funding will be targeted at children most at risk of care proceedings

get budgets to support families



IN NUMBERS

£4.16bn

the total projected spend by local authorities across England on children in care in 2018/19, a rise of £370.1m on the 2017/18 figure of £3.79bn

72,670

children were living in care at the end of March 2017, compared with 70,440 the year before

14,599

applications for children to be taken into care were made in 2016/17, a record amount

Source: Department for Education; Cafcass

GUIDE TO WHAT WORKS CENTRE FOR CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE

Plans for the What Works Centre for Children's Social Care were first announced by then Education Secretary Nicky Morgan in January 2016 with funding of up to £20m. It had been due to open later that year, but is still in the process of being set up and is not expected to officially launch until 2020, with the centre's funding only guaranteed up to March 2020.

Alan Wood, former president of the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) was appointed as founding chair of the centre in July.

Giving social workers budgets to work with families is one of two "Change Programme" projects to be trialled over the coming months.

The centre will also be providing funding to a number of councils to test out placing social workers in schools to work with children and families.

A total of £2m has been made available to pilot the idea with councils invited to bid for funding

of between £400,000 and £600,000 to test it out.

Under the social workers in schools pilot, social workers will be based in schools and work closely alongside them, dealing with the full range of work of children's social care – from referrals of need through to care proceedings. They will be encouraged to creatively explore ways of preventing the need for children's social care involvement.

The centre said it envisages social workers practicing in small units or teams across a few schools identified as generating high levels of referrals to children's social care. Local authorities will decide whether to focus on primary schools, secondary schools or both.

A total of 10 What Works Centres have already been established spanning education, early intervention, crime reduction, local economic growth, health and social care, and wellbeing and ageing.

such help could prevent care proceedings

Andy Elvin, chief executive of The Adolescent and Children's Trust, believes frontline staff are well placed to decide how to best use resources to help struggling families.

"My experience is that less money actually ends up being spent as social workers feel a deep sense of responsibility to spend wisely," he says.

"It also saves a lot of time in accessing resources panels if social workers can make quick decisions rather than waste time with bureaucracy.

"They know the family best. It can also help in building a positive working relationship between the social worker and the family if the social worker can solve a problem quickly by spending a relatively small amount of money."

He says the money could be used to cover childcare costs, a

new fridge or washing machine, some couple counselling sessions, school uniform for the children or sports equipment.

"Just general household expenditure really but [it could be] something that will promote stability and reduce family stress," he explains.

"With austerity hitting hard, grinding poverty is more of an issue than ever with some families social workers are supporting."

Forrester says one of the reasons for establishing the pilot is research consistently linking deprivation with a greater likelihood of a child being taken into care.

"It is clear there is a strong correlation between deprivation and children coming into care," he says.

"Children from poor areas are much more likely to come into care. We also looked at the

psychological factors, but there is not a strong evidence base for that.

"If social factors are important for some families, can we address them? Could that be enough to make the difference?

Undoubtedly each family is unique, so we maybe need to think of different ways to help different families."

Number of families

It is not clear how much children's social workers could potentially be handed under the initiative. It will be left to local authorities bidding for the money to propose how many families they intend to work with and how much is handed to social workers. However, the What Works Centre has indicated it expects "significant" amounts to be made available – it could be a case of councils working with a small

number of families – so could feasibly run into five figures.

"The budget is being provided to prevent children going into care – small amounts may not achieve that," Forrester says.

Researchers will also be alert to seeing how the idea works in practice and any potential for perverse incentives – for example, if families emphasise problems in order to receive financial support, or if social workers instigate care proceedings in order to access budgets for families they are working with.

"Being aware of potential issues is important, but that shouldn't prevent us from doing something potentially helpful for the way we work with families," Forrester says.

The centre says successful bidders to take part in the project are due to be announced this month.

The time it takes care proceedings to be completed is rising and Cafcass chief Anthony Douglas says it is

Duration of care proceedings off

SOCIAL CARE

By Derren Hayes

The average time it takes for care proceedings to be completed in the family courts is at its highest level in four years, according to Ministry of Justice (MoJ) figures published in October.

The MoJ family court data shows it took 30 weeks to dispose of a care or supervision case during April to June 2018 – two weeks longer than the same quarter in 2017 and the highest average since 2014.

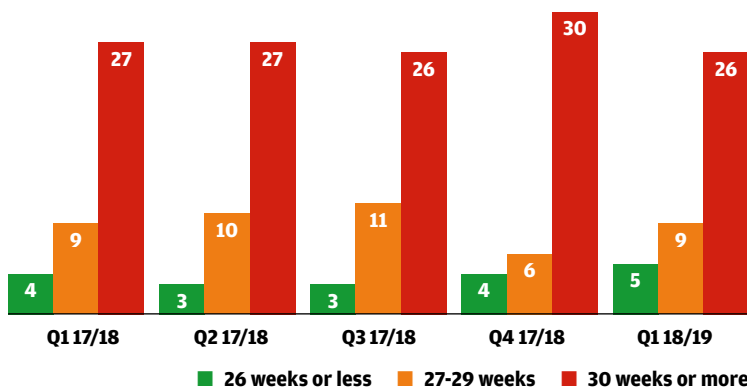
Just 48 per cent of cases were completed within the 26-week target set under the Public Law Outline (PLO) arrangements.

Extension requests

Social workers can legitimately apply for an extension to the 26-week timescales for complex cases that require additional work.

DURATION OF CARE PROCEEDINGS

Average care proceedings duration by designated family judge areas



Source: Care and supervision duration data, Cafcass

Quarterly data published by the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass) suggests, however, that the average duration of care proceedings over the past year has been between 31 and 32 weeks.

The Cafcass figures show in April to June 2018, the national average was 31 weeks, a slight improvement on the 32 weeks recorded for January to March.

The data also gives average durations for each of the 40

designated family judge areas in England. In the first three months of 2018/19, just five achieved the 26 weeks target, although again this was an improvement from the last quarter of 2017/18 when it was achieved by four areas.

The number of areas with average proceedings duration over 30 weeks also fell from 30 to 26 over the first six months of 2018 (see graphic).

Increasing demand

Campaigners say the rise in the number of care applications over the past two years has created increasing demand in the family justice system, and warn that delays in cases can compound trauma for children.

Steve Reddy, director of children's and young people's services at Liverpool City Council, says increased demand has been a factor in the recent rise in case duration. However, there are also

EXPERT VIEW RISING CASE DURATION IS BEING FUELLED BY INCREASE IN EMERGENCY CASES AND SHORTAGE OF COURT TIME



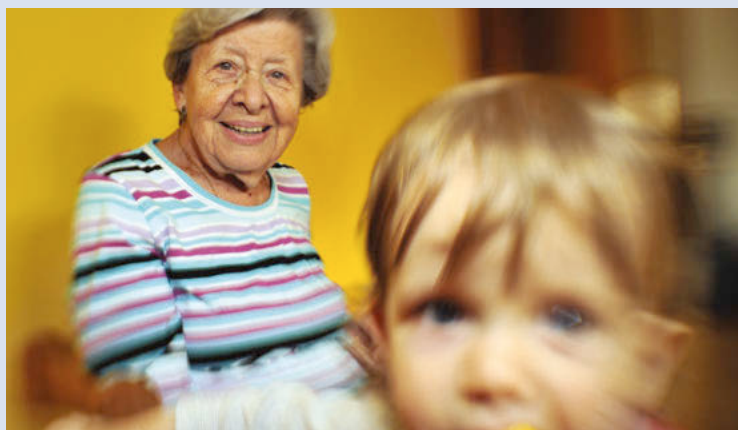
Anthony Douglas,
chief executive,
Cafcass

The headline figures mask some underlying trends for different subgroups of care cases. There are more supervision orders, more special guardianship orders with a supervision order and more children at home on care orders (placement with parents).

Adoptions continue to reduce in number and more children are either staying at home, returning home or staying in their kinship care network.

However, these shifts are small compared to historic shifts in the care population and in the context of variation in duration and performance in both local authorities and local courts.

The 26-week limit is one explanation for why there are more care orders as well as supervision orders. Courts may



GORDON GRAND/ADOBE STOCK

The number of "live" Cafcass cases has increased by 12 per cent on last year

be reluctant to extend the case beyond 26 weeks, and this may not leave enough time to finalise the detail of a care plan, so they make a care order and the local authority has to go back to court again for a final "permanence order" of one legal status or another. It is likely the upward trend in case

duration will continue. Reversal is highly unlikely. The most important statistic is not the number of new care applications, but the number of cases live in the courts at a single point in time.

The number of "live" Cafcass cases is up by 12 per cent on last year, with an associated increase of around 20 per

cent of children in care proceedings.

As with the reasons behind new applications, set out in the recent *Care Crisis Review*, there are multiple and chronic drivers of the rising stock of cases which have stimulated the need for a co-ordinated system response.

One driver is listing delays caused by pressure on court space and time. Another is the number of short notice or emergency cases – defined as those in which we receive the application less than a week before the first case management hearing – which in the last 12 months has comprised 43 per cent of all new public law cases.

This means that pre-proceedings work ends up being done during the court process, which tends to take more time. What matters most for children is not the duration of their case in court, but the change in their daily lived experience as a result.

True, some court cases can compound a problem, especially if a

likely to continue target

more complex cases where it is necessary to take longer than 26 weeks.

“We would also reference the type of demand,” he says. “So for those longer term neglect cases – which seem to be an increasing proportion of our cases – the additional work and assessments required, including reference to independent social worker assessments and multiple viability assessments of connected relatives, can extend the timescales.”

Children’s services leaders say the levels seen now are still well below those experienced before the PLO was introduced – in 2012, average duration was 55 weeks.

Cafcass chief executive Anthony Douglas says pressures in the system mean average duration is likely to continue to rise, but that there is “no sign” it will be “anywhere near” pre-PLO levels (see expert view).

child is in a placement limbo as well as a legal limbo.

Many children whose cases last a long time in court for legal reasons are quite settled where they are living and are being well looked after.

The child’s experience of care proceedings may well be sandwiched between long periods of uncertainty before court, and then the period after the court case is over.

It is important to avoid delay and to promote the child’s wellbeing in all three phases of the process.

Reducing care case duration does not count for much if there is a major delay in finding a suitable long-term placement after court.

Being subject to care proceedings is dramatic, can be traumatic, and has lifelong consequences. The main timescale to concern ourselves about is the rest of the child’s life and how we can maximise their prospects across all measures of wellbeing.

Developing transgender policies for youth groups – key questions

YOUTH WORK

By Derren Hayes

Girlguiding UK was forced to defend its policy of admitting transgender people after expelling two volunteers who publicly objected to the stance.

In a statement, the youth organisation said its decision to admit children and adults who identify as women does not put other female members at risk.

It follows concerns raised by a campaign group that young people are at risk of sexual abuse or getting pregnant if it continues to admit transgender people.

The case highlights the challenges youth groups face when developing transgender inclusive policies and explaining changes to staff and volunteers.

Here are some key issues youth groups should consider.

What is the scale of the issue?

Girlguiding UK changed its rules in January 2017 so that any child or young person aged from five to 25 who self-identifies as female can become a member regardless of the sex they were assigned at birth.

The Gender Identity Research and Education Society (GIRES) says this is a sensible approach as gender diversity is affecting an increasing number of people.

“The medical director for NHS England stated in June that we need to be prepared that one to three per cent of the population may wish to explore their gender, although that does not necessarily mean a medical intervention,” a GIRES spokesperson explains. “Three per cent of the UK population would amount to nearly two million people, of whom about 400,000 would be under 18.”

In addition, GIRES points out that the number of under-18s being referred to specialist gender identity services has risen by 50 per cent a year for the past five years.



NITTO/ADOBESTOCK

Gender diversity affects many young people

What legislation is it governed by?

An individual’s expression of their gender identity should be respected in accordance with the Equality Act 2010. This requires organisations to consider how to provide gender-specific facilities such as toilets, showers and sleeping accommodation.

The act requires organisations to ensure the privacy of a transgender person is respected.

When a person is 18 or over, it is unlawful to tell other people that they are transgender unless the person has given permission, and it is good practice to maintain confidentiality for under-18s.

Advice on the Girlguiding UK website states that if a person feels that telling others would help support the transgender young person, they should be consulted.

A campaign group supporting the two ex-volunteers has called on Girlguiding UK to review the policy and be more transparent. The group says parents should be told if a transgender young person is sharing bedrooms and bathrooms with their children.

What practical steps can be taken?

There are measures youth groups should consider taking to ensure activities and trips are inclusive for transgender young people,

according to Joey McKillop, who has published advice for youth groups on the GIRES website.

Swimming is potentially problematic, because the use of gendered changing rooms leaves a transgender person feeling uncomfortable and vulnerable to assault, McKillop writes.

Girlguiding UK’s advice is that groups should plan activities carefully and for transgender young people to know in advance so they can make an informed decision whether to participate.

“If the young person is unsure, discuss with them what they would like to do as an alternative,” it says.

McKillop says residential trips need careful planning so that the transgender young person is accommodated alongside the most suitable individuals and in a way that protects the dignity and privacy of everyone.

Where a transgender young person feels uncomfortable sharing accommodation, alternative options should be provided in a discreet way, says Girlguiding UK.

How can staff be supported?

GIRES says that in addition to developing transgender-inclusive policies, youth groups should consider the training needs of staff and volunteers.

It has developed a free three-part e-learning course that includes an introduction to gender identities and addresses misconceptions. It also outlines how to create supportive environments for young gender variant people, including in education settings, and the treatment options available and mental health issues that can arise.

GIRES advises youth groups to display posters that promote respect for gender diversity and other characteristics protected by equality law and arrange events during LGBT history month in February, the transgender day of visibility on 31 March and transpride Brighton in June.

EIF blueprint for the future of early help recommends better co-ordination of support for vulnerable families

Restructuring children's services

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

By Derren Hayes

A report by the Early Intervention Foundation (EIF) puts forward a long-term plan to reimagine prevention work with children and families so that early intervention becomes an established service across all local and national government.

Realising the Potential of Early Intervention sets out a series of measures to build the evidence base for effective early intervention programmes, redesign the family support system around early intervention approaches, and create a cross-government taskforce to co-ordinate policy and spending decisions across Whitehall.

It comes at a time of dire warnings from children's services leaders about imminent closures and reductions to early help services following deep cuts to budgets and rising demand for crisis intervention services.

Early intervention barriers

The report identifies funding pressures as one of the key challenges to delivering the potential of early intervention. It cites research by Action for Children, the National Children's Bureau and The Children's Society that shows the early intervention allocation from the government to local authorities will reduce 72 per cent between 2010 and 2020. Meanwhile, 2016 research by EIF shows £17bn is spent on late interventions (see graphic).

Short-term political cycles – in local and national government – make it hard for policymakers to invest in long-term programmes. “The reality is that these [short term] approaches are unlikely to deliver sustainable improvement or to make the best use of available resources,” it states.

The silo nature of government policy and funding streams mean

it is difficult to get backing for an early help programme when “the decision to invest will often rest in the hands of a single agency or council department that, because the benefits of early intervention tend to be long-term and widely shared, may not themselves benefit from the investment”.

Small, short-term funding pots from the government that address single issues are particularly unhelpful, EIF says, because they “absorb significant local resources in the process of developing bids and setting up new services which may then need to be withdrawn when the funding ends”.

Another barrier highlighted is how policy responsibility for children's issues is dispersed across a number of government departments. While EIF acknowledges this is “arguably inevitable” given the breadth of the agenda, “it works against the careful application of the evidence in forming policy”.

Short-termism also hinders the gathering of sufficiently robust evidence on what early interventions or practices have most impact. The strongest evidence is of specific programmes, although gaps in knowledge exist even there, EIF admits.

It says this will only be overcome when local areas get better at gathering good data on the impact of interventions and using this information to influence service commissioning and delivery decisions more quickly.

“In these uncertain times, it is vital that future policies are rooted in expert advice”

Alison Michalska, past president, ADCS

LIGHTFIELD STUDIOS/ADOBE STOCK



The foundation has come up with a long-term plan to redesign the family support system

Structural change

The report concludes that the current system is not designed to fully enable early intervention, and that existing structural barriers need to be overcome. To do this, it calls for “clear leadership” at national and local level to improve the design and delivery of early help services and expand the evidence base of what works.

The EIF says “small, time-limited pots” of money are unlikely to make a “meaningful dent” in complex social problems, and instead calls for a new approach to funding that supports the development of whole-system approaches.

This view is shared by Sam Royston, director of policy and research at the Children's Society.

“The nature of the challenges that families experience often require long-term complex interventions, which recognise the whole system and the different agencies they interact with.” He adds that where new approaches are effectively trialled, there needs to be an improved response to scale-up these interventions.

This is echoed by Daniel

Breslin, senior policy adviser at Action for Children. He says: “If you look at the example of the Department for Education's Children's Social Care Innovation Programme, there is good emerging evidence of projects reducing need, but the sharing and scaling up of that does not seem to have been sufficiently captured.”

Olly Swann, children's services director at consultancy Impower, says investment funds – such as the innovation programme – are the right way of testing approaches, but agrees “scaling them up quickly for the benefit of the whole sector remains a challenge”.

“An effective and sustainable model for children's services requires a system-wide approach – the emphasis must be on prevention and early intervention to move away from high-cost, and often poor impact statutory provision, to earlier impactful prevention that builds resilience in families.”

New funding streams

The EIF calls for the creation of a long-term investment fund to test

including long-term funding, a cross-government taskforce and commitment to evidence-based practice

on early intervention approach



around early intervention approaches

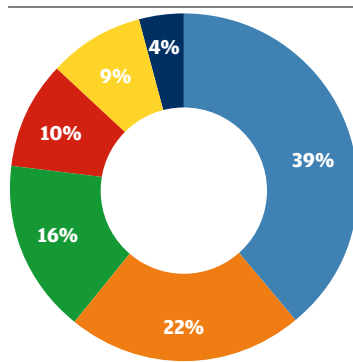
in a handful of areas the impact that implementing a whole-system approach would have. EIF says the investment would help improve co-ordination of provision across childhood and adolescence and “enable us to understand for the first time what effective early intervention can achieve when the necessary conditions are in place in an area”.

Royston welcomes the recommendation but says it would require a “huge amount of political will and interest”, something that is currently lacking.

“The principle of trying to develop an evidence base for a system-wide approach is certainly something we could support.” But he warns that piloting such an approach “cannot come in place of urgently needed investment in children’s services to stem the flow of spending from early to late interventions”.

To help local areas to tackle specific social issues, EIF recommends the creation of a separate “acceleration fund” to implement evidence-based early

INTERVENING LATE COSTS THE PUBLIC SECTOR £17BN A YEAR



Local government	£6.43bn
NHS	£3.69bn
Welfare	£2.66bn
Police	£1.62bn
Justice	£1.51bn
Education	£655m

Source: Early Intervention Foundation

help programmes. This would enable local areas to bid for resources and support to deliver interventions that improved key outcomes such as school attainment, mental wellbeing and desistance from crime.

Expert panel

An independent panel of early intervention experts should be established to advise national government and other research funders on a long-term research strategy, including how to fill the gaps in knowledge as well as the development and piloting of new interventions where needed and understanding more about effectiveness in areas such as workforce practice and the systems needed to deliver early intervention services.

“This would include new evidence on what constitutes effective workforce practice, what systems are most effective in delivering early intervention services and the development and piloting of new interventions,” EIF states.

The panel would underpin a system-wide commitment to

evidence-based decision making and practice.

The Association of Directors of Children’s Services (ADCS) agrees that more evidence of what works is needed. “In these uncertain times, it is vital that future policies are rooted in expert advice and that commissioning is smarter to ensure scarce public funds are maximised,” says ADCS immediate past president Alison Michalska.

Swann backs the need to improve the early intervention evidence base including having better understanding of the impact of current spending.

He says: “Can it [currently] be demonstrated that early help and edge of care services are focused on evidenced needs within local families and communities, and that partner behaviours are understood and influenced by constant feedback? The answer is probably not.

“The sector needs to strengthen its argument for more funding by demonstrating a much deeper understanding of how money is currently spent and what difference it makes.”

Cross-government taskforce

Under the EIF blueprint, a taskforce led by a senior cabinet minister would be established to co-ordinate policy and decision making on early intervention across government.

The taskforce, which would have input from government departments with an interest in improving vulnerable children’s outcomes, would oversee effective use of the investment fund and acceleration fund, and respond to recommendations from the panel.

“The benefits of effective early intervention are shared by a number of government departments in the future and it is right that a taskforce be set up to recognise this,” says Royston.

“The recognition that the existing machinery of government isn’t working to effectively prioritise early intervention is apt and the call for a senior cabinet minister to take responsibility for the agenda is the right one.

“The challenge would be to ensure that not all responsibility for this ends up resting with the Department for Education, as the recognised benefits of early intervention go way beyond [their] remit. As far as possible, local government and civil society should be involved in shaping the group’s terms of reference and it should report to parliament regularly on progress.”

Articulating a clear vision

EIF says the viability of early intervention locally partly rests on the need for local leaders to articulate a vision and strategy that is achievable. It is clear, however, that this should not be founded on the promise of short-term savings and be “realistic” about the impact it can have on reducing pressure in children’s social care.

“There needs to be a shift away from the narrative that spending on early intervention delivers short-term savings for children’s services,” says Royston. “This needs to be replaced with a whole-life approach recognising that early intervention in childhood will deliver a number of positive outcomes that have the potential to impact how children go on to interact with adult services, housing, contribute to the economy and communities.”

Michalska agrees that investment should not be solely seen through the prism of reducing social care pressures. She says: “The longer term benefits of offering parents a helping hand so they in turn can better support children’s development are huge – clearly the individuals benefit from this investment, but so too does society at large.”

Providers' groups say more must be done to ensure childcare apprenticeship works for employers

Resolving childcare apprenticeship

EARLY YEARS

By Derren Hayes

The number of early years practitioners qualified to Level 3 status has fallen almost 20 per cent since 2015, according to the National Day Nurseries Association's (NDNA) latest workforce survey.

The fall – initiated by the coalition government's aborted attempt to introduce tougher academic requirements to obtain Level 3 qualification – is fuelling a shortage of early years practitioners and high turnover of nursery staff.

In an attempt to arrest the decline, a group of 11 childcare providers, led

by the training arm of the Busy Bees chain, was set up last year to develop a Level 3 apprenticeship alongside the Institute for Apprenticeships to broaden the pool of potential workers.

However, its future is in doubt after Busy Bees announced in September that it had ended its involvement after 18 months, with the apprenticeship standard still not published.

With the NDNA survey showing that Brexit is likely to reduce the pool of practitioners further, three experts outline what needs to happen to ensure a childcare apprenticeship arrests the recruitment crisis.



AUREMAR/ADOBE STOCK

Some nurseries say they will struggle to cover the cost of off-the-job training

Give employers equal status



Michael Freeston, director of quality improvement, Pre-school Learning Alliance

There's no doubt that many in the sector will share Busy Bees' sense of frustration at a process which was advertised as employer-led, but in reality has left the views and requirements of the sector subordinate to those of the Institute for Apprenticeships (IFP).

This was exactly the experience of the first group to take on the early years standard setting role in 2015, of which the alliance was a member. At that time, the final stumbling block was the acceptability for functional skills qualifications as equivalent to GCSEs in English and maths – something that was subsequently changed.

It's not enough to call something "employer-led", especially if you are not prepared to spend time trying to understand the terminology employers use, let alone how their sector is regulated or the financial restraints they are under.

We are still waiting for a Level 3 apprenticeship standard to be introduced after four years. This has meant employers and training providers continue to struggle to deliver the existing apprenticeship framework on a funding level that in no way covers the costs involved and risks undermining the quality of training received.

Sadly, with the resignation of Busy Bees, the goal of developing further standards at Levels 2 and 5 seems further out of reach. The IFP must reaffirm its commitment to an employer-led approach or we risk the whole framework failing.

Listen to employers' views



Stella Ziolkowski, director of quality and training, NDNA

I fail to understand how it has taken so long to gain approval of the Level 3 apprenticeship

standard, especially when the qualification elements are defined by policy. The sector is passionate about the development of their staff. However, qualifications need to ensure that students exiting have the skills, knowledge and attributes to be exemplary practitioners.

We were delighted that government took the bold step of enabling employers to develop apprenticeships. The Nutbrown Review highlighted the quality of training was poor – students were not work-ready when exiting and employers had to "start from scratch".

Now the second trailblazer group appears to have stepped down, I am sure there will be another ready to pick up the pieces. But will this new group be reflective of the sector? It must be driven by a representative group of employers that understand the skills, knowledge and attributes practitioners must demonstrate to be competent, high-quality Level 3 practitioners.

There have been many consultations with employers via the trailblazer groups to seek their views to ensure the standards were fit for purpose. However, their views seem to be disregarded, with a government influence on what they perceive employers need. We need clarity on the trailblazer role and I urge the Institute for Apprenticeships to listen to the sector.

Time to change levy rules



Mark Dawe, chief executive, Association of Employment and Learning Providers

The latest woes of the early years apprenticeship trailblazer are not surprising when you read the education select committee's report on the apprenticeship levy reforms. The committee's MPs want less "vainglorious" pronouncements on the new apprenticeship standards process and better evidence of real progress being made.

There have been disastrous falls in the number of apprenticeship starts. A major cause is the new co-investment requirement for smaller employers to pay a 10 per cent financial contribution towards the cost of the training and assessment of apprentices. Childcare training providers say many nurseries are finding this difficult to afford when faced with the costs of introducing 30 hours funded childcare.

A second factor is the requirement that at least 20 per cent of all apprenticeship training should take place off the job. Nurseries say they cannot afford the cost of staff backfill to cover the absence of the apprentice doing this training.

The committee has recommended that a more flexible sector-by-sector approach be adopted towards the amount of prescribed off-the-job training and that the government should extend the existing co-investment waiver for smaller employers to cover all 16- to 18-year-olds, and more disadvantaged 19- to 24-year-olds, employed by non-levy-paying employers.

Changing teacher views on care

Expert gives five key steps on how to overcome some teachers' negative perceptions of children in care

EDUCATION



Amy Woodworth,
policy and
campaigns officer,
Become

In October, Become and Voices from Care Cymru published *Teachers Who Care*, a report looking at teachers' experiences of working with looked-after children in their classrooms.

In our previous report, *Perceptions of Care*, we asked children in care about their teachers. Only 48 per cent thought that teachers expected children in care to do well at school, and only 24 per cent thought that teachers knew what it was like to be in care.

In *Teachers Who Care*, 87 per cent of respondents had heard at least one colleague express a negative generalisation about children in care, and 31 per cent of respondents had heard such views often.

Here are five key measures teachers and schools can take to support looked-after children and challenge these attitudes.

1. Get on board with the basics

The teachers we spoke to described finding themselves under-prepared to support the needs of the looked-after children in their classrooms.

There is a lot of statutory support in place to support the education of looked-after children, but it will only benefit these children if teachers understand what these processes are and how best to use them.

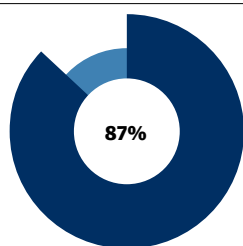
Concepts like pupil premium plus funding, virtual schools and personal education plans need to be part of a teacher's toolbox before they go into the classroom.

Too often this information is used only by a few key members of staff, but by including the care system within teacher training and

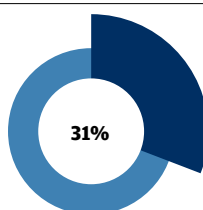


Teachers are being encouraged to better understand and support children in care

TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF CARE



of teachers surveyed had heard at least one colleague express a negative generalisation about children in care



of survey respondents had heard negative views often expressed by colleagues

Source: *Teachers Who Care, Become and Care Cymru, October 2018*

CPD, we can give all teachers the information that they need to teach the looked-after children in their class.

2. Understand care and trauma

Training should also go beyond the basics of terminology and reporting requirements. Teachers need to understand what being in care is like and how it impacts students' behaviour, mental health, and ability to learn.

Looked-after children experience a lot of disruption at home and at school. We know that instability can have a huge impact on any child's ability to learn, and looked-after children are more affected than most of their peers.

Supporting teachers to develop behaviour management techniques that take into account children's experiences of trauma

or attachment difficulties can be of huge benefit to the whole student body, with evidence suggesting that these approaches can reduce exclusions and increase attainment, benefitting not just looked-after children, but all students.

3. Be ambitious for children

Many looked-after children do not receive the same support and encouragement from stable, trusted adults that their peers do.

Teachers may well be the most consistent adult presence in their lives, and the ones best placed to help see and nurture their talents and ambitions.

There may not be anyone else who will talk to them about the possibility of going to university or taking up opportunities while they are at school.

4. Listen to young people

Hearing from young people themselves can be one of the most powerful ways to correct these systemic assumptions.

This could be through bringing the looked-after children in your school together to get their advice and input, inviting care-experienced school alumni back to deliver training, or working across several schools.

You could also reach out to your local Children in Care Council, local authority leaving care team, charities and other organisations.

5. Change the narrative

There is more data collected about children in care than almost any other group of children.

We know the statistics can be stark. Care leavers are less likely to attend university than other young people, and more likely to have contact with the youth justice system or become homeless.

We have to address these systemic problems, but we should also remember that these children and young people are full of potential. Sometimes each individual child's experiences and their personal journey can get lost behind the data tables.

In *Perceptions of Care*, young people told us they wanted to be treated the same way as their classmates, but that they were often subject to lower expectations, discouraged from pursuing ambitions like attending university, and seen as destined for homelessness or prison.

These attitudes are not only wrong and discriminatory, but can have a huge personal impact on any child.

Looked-after children need their schools to be on their side. That's why we're calling on the education system to do more to support and equip teachers with the skills and knowledge they need to do their best for every student in their classes, including those in care.

Experts say review of children’s social media use must include technical issues and access to education

Social media and mental health

HEALTH

By Derren Hayes

The government has announced it is to hold a review into the impact that excessive social media use can have on children’s mental health.

Making the announcement recently, Health Secretary Matt Hancock warned that social media has the potential to be as harmful to children’s mental health as sugar is to their physical health.

“Overwhelmingly, technology is a force for good, but we are seeing more and more evidence that children using social media for hours on end each day is having a detrimental impact on their mental health,” Hancock said.

The review, to be undertaken by chief medical officer for England Dame Sally Davies, will publish interim findings by the end of the year (see box) in advance of the government launching an online awareness-raising campaign for parents in 2019.

The Department of Health and Social Care cites evidence that children who spend more than three hours a day using social media are twice as likely to report high scores for mental ill health.

Here, a market research agency that recently undertook a study on young people’s use of social media analyses the key messages from its research, while the children’s commissioner for England outlines the changes that policymakers need to make.



Rebecca Evans, director of research and impact, Revealing Reality

Is social media a public health issue? Yes, but our qualitative research into children’s use of social media highlights that efforts to address its harms need to go beyond “health” guidance on screen-time limits to include



Evidence shows a link between the use of social media and mental health issues

effective communication of digital literacy by teachers and parents.

Our Life in Likes research for the children’s commissioner for England found that while eight- to 10-year-olds generally use social media to have fun, once they start secondary school, their use changes dramatically. Many Year 7 children find social media hard to manage, seeking validation through “likes” and becoming anxious about their online image.

Similarly, annual research for Ofcom has found that while some social media trends are passing fads – for example, the widespread enthusiasm for ‘Snapchat streaks’ last year – there are also longer-term changes in behaviour.

A narrow focus on social media is unlikely to address all the problems people are concerned about. Policymakers need to consider children’s engagement with content more widely, and the ways in which the device they are using shapes their behaviour.

The way smartphones are designed influences the way they are used and dictates the interface with services accessed through them – and this point is often lost in the wider debate about who is to “blame” for social media’s ills, or what should be “done” about it.

Big screens make viewing content on your smartphone a

dream, but limited keyboard functionality makes it difficult to “input”, so passive consumption is easier than productive activity. Because it is hard to write or edit, we fall back on “easy” but simplified communication using emojis or pressing a “like” button.

Treating social media as a public health issue must not eclipse the need for effective teaching of digital literacy – including an appreciation of the limits of and alternatives to smartphones.



Anne Longfield, children’s commissioner for England

Mental health is the top issue raised with us by children. Some of the stories I hear about lack of access to treatment and the acute levels of anxiety are heartbreaking.

Many children see social media as one of the triggers. The focus on body image and the craving for social validation through “likes” are all amplified by the addictive algorithms and 24/7 nature of online life.

We need to help children build resilience. Social media companies should be working on age-verification technology to stop under-13s signing up, but schools, parents and the government can do more.

GUIDE TO SOCIAL MEDIA REVIEW

- Led by Dame Sally Davies, England chief medical officer
- Assess the impact that social media use has on children’s mental health
- Issues it will cover include cyberbullying, online gaming, sleep problems and addiction
- It will develop guidance on safe use, including advice on age and access issues
- An interim report will be published in December

Source: Department of Health and Social Care

It is good that online literacy will become part of relationships and sex education from 2020 and that it will start at primary school. We need to see lessons move beyond messages on safety to learning about the emotional side of social media. We need to teach children how to be responsible online, including how to disengage.

Schools should also toughen up their policies. Head teachers have told me of the benefits of banning all but non-smart phones.

Parents need to take difficult decisions too: do children really need their own smartphone and can parents set an example with their own phone use?

We also need to champion outdoor play. Let’s use the “sugar tax” to improve sports and activity provision outside of school as well school sports facilities, and make sure councils make parks safe spaces for children to play.

Finally, government needs to provide funding for a mental health professional in every secondary now – not in five years’ time – and give primary schools access to proper counselling.

The internet was not created with children in mind, but millions of young people are growing up in a digital world. It is our job to make sure they can embrace the benefits and avoid the pitfalls.



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Derren Hayes talks to Joseph Howes, chief executive of Buttle UK

Fundraiser with a formula

Joseph Howes, who replaced Gerri McAndrew as chief executive of Buttle UK in September, joins the charity as it prepares to mark its 65th anniversary. The milestone coincides with a significant shift in Buttle’s approach to grant giving – it has moved from providing a large number of small grants to fewer but larger sums for disadvantaged children and young people. He joins from homelessness charity Depaul where he headed its income generation operations, and finding new sources of income will be a key task.

Buttle has recently changed its grant-giving strategy. What has that meant?

In 2017/18, we awarded 11,500 small grants worth a total of £4.6m. That programme has now ended and we have introduced the Chances for Children grants worth £3.4m in 2018/19. We expect to award around 1,600 children and young people in crisis grants of up to £2,000. We support families and young people in poverty, and our focus has to be on helping those with the highest needs.

This was based on research that showed what is needed is larger grants to deliver greater impact. This might include items like a fridge, equipment or furniture initially, but also therapy and support with after-school activities later on. This will deliver more impact at a critical moment in crisis. I want to know it is making a difference and to show that we will follow up some of our grants at six, 12 and 18 months after allocation.

How do you plan to raise fundraising income?

Being a trust that also fundraises, we have had to change our culture. We raised £1.2m from fundraising last year and want to raise more funds for Chances for Children grants going forward. At Depaul, we raised £1.3m [from fundraising] when I joined. But by the time I left, that had grown to £6m. I think we can raise much more money at Buttle.

It’s about what the product is that you take to the market. We have something special here – we can get to any corner of the UK with our support. Our endowment pays for our administration so we can focus supporters’ money on children in a specific geographical area. We are starting to build our work with trusts, foundations and companies as they want to support areas where they are based and operate.

Has Buttle got successful corporate partnerships?

Since 2012, Buttle has worked with Dreams to provide beds to disadvantaged children. In the



Joseph Howes joined Buttle UK in September

past year, 2,500 have been donated by Dreams through the scheme and we will provide 3,000 in total.

It has got national coverage and helped push the issue of three or four children sleeping in the same bed and what it says about the reality of poverty.

How concerned are you about rising child poverty?

I’ve seen it rise in recent years, but it’s also important to understand that the nature of poverty is changing too. It is now about being in a working family. The figures we have show that two-thirds of the children we help live in families where one person works.

We have an incredible amount of data that has been submitted to us through 136,000 applications made in the past 10 years. It tells us a lot about the circumstances in which children and families are living and what their needs are. The big thing for me is that as this [poverty] rises, we have to be focused on providing support where we can make the biggest difference with our finite resources.

Buttle has also provided support for vulnerable children to attend boarding school. Do you hope to expand this?

We have only supported children on the edge of care whose families have approached us to say they are interested in boarding.

We are part of the Boarding Schools Partnership which worked with Norfolk Council to place 55 vulnerable children in boarding schools and produced positive outcomes.

For me, it comes down to impact. If we can help children on the edge of care get better results and achieve, it is money well spent. It could also reduce the amount spent on care placements – it is about saying to the council this could prevent you having to spend more money in the future.

How would this be funded?

There are possibilities here for social investment, with donors paying a contribution to full fees up front – which are around £9,000 a year – and the council then paying a fee when they see the end results.

At Depaul, I helped introduce social impact bonds to our work. We need to think differently about prevention and how we use the little money we have to play with.

If we can work with 10 young people in a local authority, we can see a difference and prove the point.

What attributes other than fundraising do you bring to the role?

I have bundles of passion for the sector. I’ve been in it for 18 years and think I can make a difference for Buttle by building a high-performing team in which everyone wants to succeed. I believe in offering high levels of trust in staff as they have great expertise. People don’t have to earn your trust – you empower them with their expertise and in return have high expectations. That can only be done by working together as a team that has each others’ backs.”



JOSEPH HOWES

- September 2018: chief executive, Buttle UK
- 2013-Aug 2018: Executive director of fundraising development and communications, Depaul UK
- 2011: Head of partnership fundraising, Action for Children
- 2007: Corporate fundraising positions, Action for Children
- 2002: Business development roles, The Princes Trust
- 2000: Graduated from Leeds University



Professionals lack the expertise to recognise victims

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Email cypnow@markallengroup.com or write to The editor, CYP Now, St Jude's Church, Dulwich Road, London SE24 0PB

Safe house addresses perils of child trafficking

As pointed out in the special report on exploitation and vulnerability (*CYP Now*, August), child criminal and sexual exploitation have strong links to trafficking, and are indeed recognised under UK law as forms of modern slavery. Child trafficking is on the rise (there was a 66 per cent increase in numbers of children identified in 2017 compared to the year before), yet these numbers are still probably a gross underestimate, and the systems for recognising and supporting child victims are woefully inadequate.

Child trafficking can be viewed as an overlooked problem for several reasons. First, situations of sexual and criminal abuse, although trafficking offences under the law, are not always treated as such, due to lack of awareness of the Modern Slavery Act. When minors are forced to commit crimes on behalf of their exploiter, too often they are not recognised as victims, but prosecuted as perpetrators.

Second, professionals such as social workers, teachers, doctors and indeed the police lack specialist training in how to recognise the signs of child trafficking. While organisations such as Unseen offer modern slavery training that many councils, NHS providers, police forces and others send staff to on an ad hoc basis, until this is standard and rolled out nationally, children will continue to slip through the net.

Third, even once identified and placed in care, up to two-thirds of trafficked children go missing within 72 hours. Many of them return to the traffickers and are re-exploited. The new Unseen Children's House aims to tackle this. The specialised safe house for foreign trafficked children combines the family environment of foster care with special security features to stop

children going missing, and is the first of its kind in the UK. It works alongside councils and police, and aims to become a model that can be integrated into mainstream provision across the UK.

Kate Garbers, managing director, Unseen

Film helps young carers and professionals

Having read your article *Generation of young carers 'neglected by society'* (cypnow.co.uk, 14 September), your readers might like to view and share a new film, made by Community Advance Project, *Supporting Young Carers – Creating better life chances and wellbeing*. It is available free on YouTube and can be used as a resource to support young carers and as a training and awareness-raising resource for professionals.

The film includes interviews with young people about being a young carer, including the challenges they experience. Experienced young carer workers from Family Action and Barnardo's also talk about the issues affecting young carers and give practical advice about how best to support them and their families.

The film will give any young carer the opportunity to hear from peers talking about how they cope with caring and gives advice to help them look after their own mental wellbeing and to seek the support they need from family and professionals. It can be used by teachers, social care and health professionals, and other service providers to train staff to help them identify and support young carers.

View the film at www.youtube.com/watch?v=GDOp0hni8cA.

David Holmes, chief executive, Family Action

OPINION POLL

The question Should the government take stronger action to tackle "drill" music videos amid concerns they glamorise drug dealing and violent crime? (287 votes)

THE RESULT

No 33%

Yes 67%

Next question Should the number of mandatory health visitor checks be increased for children deemed "at risk", as recommended by the children's commissioner for England?

Vote in the poll @ www.cypnow.co.uk

YOUR VIEWS ON...

James Moore on 'Spending on children in care exceeds £4bn for first time'

"Let me do the math... £50,000 minimum to keep a child in care, per year. According to ONS, there are 72,000+ children in care as at March 2017, other sources say upwards of 97,000, some say more than 130,000. Let's take the low number, to be generous. The total cost to keep those 72,000 children in care runs at minimum, £3.6bn. That's not including extraordinary healthcare, transport, ongoing litigation, that's just paying people to look after them. Double that cost to pay for social workers and CAMHS services. That's £7.2bn per year and that is being extremely conservative."

Brim on 'Girlguiding defends controversial transgender policy'

"Please do not use the Trans Rights Activist term 'assigned at birth', which is part of their gaslighting. Sex is observed at birth by a doctor and not 'assigned' or 'coercively assigned' as they are claiming."

Alanis on 'Criminal records system 'anchoring children to their past''

"Canada is but one country that has achieved such a system. There, someone is deemed rehabilitated after a set number of years, so as long as there have been no recorded editions. The rehabilitation period is variable and dependant on the crime and punishment. The justice system is there to punish and rehabilitate. If we truly believe in this, we must look at the broader picture. The UK remains one of the few countries that continue to use criminal records to the detriment of people long after the period of rehabilitation is over."

Peter Reynolds on 'Children's mental health services 'turning away cannabis-related cases''

"And a very good thing too. There's at least as much risk that they will be harmed by the faux specialty of psychiatry than by cannabis. And most referrals of young people amount to coercive treatment. According to PHE, only 11 per cent of referrals are by self or family, most are by courts or educational institutions. In terms of FACTS as opposed to hysterical statistical predictions, the instances of problematic cannabis use are very, very few."

email cypnow@markallengroup.com

telephone 020 7501 6796

The editor, Children & Young People Now, St Jude's Church, Dulwich Road, London SE24 0PB

Letters should include an address and phone number. All letters may be edited for publication.

Early help must prove it cuts care demand

Derren Hayes editor, *Children & Young People Now* derren.hayes@markallengroup.com



Graham Allen's 2011 report *Early Intervention: The Next Steps* makes clear that the real savings from early help lay in its ability to reduce the numbers coming into care to such an extent that fewer high-cost residential facilities would be needed.

When Allen published his report seven years ago, the amount spent on care was £2.9bn. Last month, the bill topped £4bn for the first time (News, p6). The reasons for this rise are well documented

– looked-after children numbers are at record levels, care applications have been high for three years and the number of “live” cases being dealt with by the family courts has also risen 12 per cent in the past year, according to Cafcass chief executive Anthony Douglas (Analysis, p10).

Amid the rise in demand, the amount spent on children's services has fallen by £1bn in real terms according to analysis by Labour (News, p6). Council spending on early help has taken the brunt of this cut with children's charities predicting a 72 per cent fall by 2020.

It is against this backdrop that the Early Intervention Foundation has published its blueprint for the future of early help (Analysis, p12). It includes recommendations to

overcome the structural barriers that hinder investment in early help – particularly how short-term political cycles encourage money to be spent on untested quick-fix solutions. These include creating a cross-government taskforce to better co-ordinate policy, an expert group to improve the evidence base on what interventions work best, and a new fund to test early help programmes in a handful of councils.

A political commitment on the scale envisaged by the foundation would be a much-needed shot in the arm for early intervention. However, with the Budget unlikely to provide significant additional money for children's services, council chiefs and children's services leaders are going to need to be creative and brave if they are to continue investing in early help.

The foundation's report says the question of how much impact early intervention can have on reducing children's social care demand is one that urgently needs an answer. Children's services leaders already know that the support provided through children's centres or troubled families teams is crucial to preventing problems deteriorating. The sector now has to rise to the challenge of producing the evidence to back this up. Failure to do so will see early help services further decimated and care demand continue to rise.

“A political commitment on the scale envisaged by the foundation would be a much-needed shot in the arm for early intervention”

BLOGS

“Daniel Kahneman in ‘Thinking, Fast and Slow’ shows that almost all of the time, we ‘think fast’ using limited data, without thinking about how we are thinking – working unconsciously, on autopilot – and then drawing rapid conclusions before taking action. Fast thinking follows what Kahneman calls ‘heuristics’ – learned responses or simple rules of thumb – like ‘bigger is better’ or ‘if some of X is good, more of X is better’. Often this is fine, but where there are many complex variables or complex situations, we very often make mistakes unless we deliberately ‘think slow’ – working things out so that we don’t miss the trees for the wood.”

John Freeman asks whether practitioners should be concerned about the increased use of algorithms

“Over the past 10 years, we’ve seen the need for children’s services grow as funding has reduced, and while local authorities have done everything they can to mitigate the impact of these cuts, there’s now nowhere left to turn. Instead, we’re forced to make counter-intuitive decisions, like targeting early help services, which only adds to pressures further down the line. The money has to come from somewhere which means that other vital, preventative services are cut even further, not to mention the wider services that communities value, like parks and libraries.”

ADCS president Stuart Gallimore on the impact that growing safeguarding pressures is having on early help spending

“We are calling on everyone to sign our petition and show the UK government – notably the Home Secretary Sajid Javid and Digital Secretary Jeremy Wright – that regulation of the online world is as important as in those areas of the everyday world where children’s safety is at stake. We want the creation of a tough, independent regulator to hold social networks to account when they fall short of their responsibilities to protect their young users; social media giants to publish reports stating the scale of risk on their sites and to take proactive steps to tackle grooming on their platforms.”

NSPCC’s Des Mannion on the need for greater protection for children from social media

“Increasing diversity is a good thing. But do our children and young people see themselves reflected in the professionals who impact so profoundly on their lives? Quite often the staff in the ‘people’ services in a council are more diverse in background than those in other departments, and may be as diverse (or more diverse) than their local community, but it’s fair to say that as we move up the organisational hierarchies the picture changes.”

Rachael Wardell, DCS in Merton, on diversity in children’s services

Remake the welfare state for children

Kathy Evans is chief executive at Children England



By the time you read this column, Budget Day will have come and gone. A huge part of me hopes that the unprecedented coalition of sector bodies that came together to call for

children to be at the heart of government's spending plans has had an impact. As we look forward to this year's National Children and Adult Services conference, wouldn't it be great if it was consumed with the "problem" of deciding how best to spend newly announced money for children and families, rather than another year of wondering what more can possibly be done with even less?

My inner cynic tells me not to count any chickens before they are hatched. But in this time window of imagining that austerity policies *might* be over soon, thoughts turn to an entirely different set of questions: is re-injecting public money enough to solve all

the problems in our welfare state for children and families? If the financial tide finally turns, would the new money reach the people who need it the most? Does the welfare state still care well enough?

These are the kind of questions we've been asking in the beginning of our ChildFair State Inquiry. Money matters, of course, but it's not just the loss of benefits that hurts parents. It's the way they're being treated as human beings; scorned and distrusted by a system that neither knows nor cares that they're a parent with children at home.

Children told us it is growing class sizes in super-sized schools that leave them feeling unsafe, lost or unimportant. Or a zero-tolerance school discipline policy that damages their mental wellbeing – under which wearing the wrong trousers can get them in trouble for rule-breaking, without caring that it is their spirit or family that's really breaking. With or without more money, we need systemic reform if people are to feel like the welfare state really cares about them.

We've been inspired by Leeds as a "child-friendly city" and Love Barrow Families, who are fundamentally rethinking what all their services should be like by listening to how it feels to be a child or a parent in their communities. We've been learning from co-operatives like Buurtzorg UK, which are subverting the managerial "market" model in health and social care. We have been blown away by "Healthy New Towns" like Ebbsfleet, and work by Arup showing what urban spaces and neighbourhoods can become if you view children as their primary citizens. We've built allegiances with youth leadership organisations with whom we hope to build the next phase of the ChildFair State Inquiry, in which children and young people will design the welfare state as they want to run it – when they become the teachers, medics, social workers and politicians of our future.

It's not too late to join our ChildFair State journey – and the investment in creating a new, better welfare state for children really can't come soon enough.

Funding and fairness key to schools debate

John Freeman is a children's services consultant and former DCS



The speech by shadow education secretary Angela Rayner to the Labour party conference was strong on principle – whatever your view of academies, she has come out strongly in support of a particular vision of education.

Let's call it the co-operative model. She has, though, the luxury of being in opposition, and could be as radical and free-spending as the party faithful would like. I haven't costed her proposals, but improving teacher pay, reversing the cuts to budgets, a new pre-school entitlement, and changes to governance and management would not be cheap.

At the Conservative party conference, Secretary of State Damian Hinds had a much harder job, as he has to manage within the budget allocated by the Treasury. He is also saddled with the structural reforms of the Gove era, and he isn't going to go back on those.

Perhaps it's not surprising that he has been reprimanded by the UK's statistics watchdog for giving too rosy a view of funding and school achievements – it must be tempting to present the best possible interpretation of data, however questionable the analysis.

The reality is that whoever is in charge over the next few years will have to start from a position of falling budgets – by eight per cent per school pupil over the past eight years, and 20 per cent for post-16 education. The Prime Minister announced "the end of austerity", but that should be taken as a rhetorical flourish. It has taken eight years for austerity to feed through, and there are more cuts already in the pipeline. Even if the Budget is unexpectedly generous, it will take many years for schools and the wider education service to recover. Austerity is not over yet.

Which brings me back to the co-operative model espoused by Rayner. Even without proper funding, the notion of a public service working to the common good appeals. It's easy to see why, when cash is really tight and

accountability measures bite, individual schools and head teachers behave in their own interests rather than the interests of all local children. Do you provide that disturbed 16-year-old with extra support to keep them in school until their GCSEs, and if you do, what else will you cut? That's the sort of dilemma which leads to off-rolling and other misbehaviour on exclusions and admissions. The children who lose out are, inevitably, those who need education the most – the poorest, with special needs or behavioural difficulties. The long-term impact for society and individuals will be very serious.

Ofsted is now looking at off-rolling in secondary schools, and Damian Hinds has used the phrase in a speech. We might see off-rolling diminish. I fear, though, that the incentives to hit accountability targets within ever-tighter budgets will simply mean that schools will adopt different tactics to achieve the same ends. Whether it is Angela Rayner or Damian Hinds in charge, what we need are schools that truly serve all pupils, even if they are underfunded.



NOURISHING GROWING

Childhood obesity continues to be a major problem across the UK. *Charlotte Goddard* explores the role nurseries and childcare settings can play in establishing healthy eating habits from an early age

One in five children starting school in England is classed as overweight or obese. It is clear measures to tackle obesity need to reach children and their parents earlier.

Early years settings such as nurseries, pre-schools and childminders are well-placed to encourage healthy eating at an early stage, embedding knowledge and understanding that will help a child make healthy choices throughout their life, explains Jo Baranek, lead early years adviser at the National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA).

“Educating children and encouraging healthy eating as a habit from early on is crucial,” she says. “Nurseries have that close contact with families and can work together on giving children the best nutritional start.”

How well settings do this does vary, according to Diana Hawdon, nutrition and care setting adviser at the Soil Association, which extended

its Food for Life accreditation scheme to early years settings in 2016. “But generally early years practitioners are more clued up than schools are,” she adds.

In May this year a health select committee report called for more training for the early years workforce around healthy eating. The committee also noted that many initiatives put forward in the government’s obesity plan, published in 2016, have not yet seen the light of day, including a healthy rating scheme for primary schools.

One initiative that did take place was the development of revised menus for early years settings, which were incorporated into voluntary guidelines put together by charity The Children’s Food Trust in 2016. But in 2017 the charity closed due to lack of funding. Action for Children has taken on leadership of its Eat Better, Start Better programme, which includes training and resources designed to help improve children’s food in early years settings. The charity is also now guardian of the food and

drink guidelines, which are currently still hosted on the Children’s Food Trust website.

In June this year the government published the second part of its obesity plan. The report acknowledges the importance of tackling habits and behaviours that result in obesity before they become entrenched. It also commits Ofsted to undertaking research into what a curriculum that supports good physical development in the early years looks like, including how children are taught about the importance of sleep and healthy eating.

However, the regulator’s approach has come under fire. Ofsted’s recently-published report on how schools should encourage healthy eating was criticised by the Soil Association, which was so opposed to its findings it insisted its name be removed from the final document. The report suggested schools should focus their efforts on building up knowledge and skills through the curriculum, rather than taking the whole-school, community-led approach advocated by the Soil Association.



ANDREY KUZMIN/ANAMENKO/ADOBE STOCK

MINDS AND BODIES

“Our obesity study provided no evidence of a relationship between a school’s approach to healthy living and the levels of obesity in the school,” says an Ofsted spokesperson. “What it did find is that where schools were teaching their pupils effectively about healthy eating and exercise, many of those children and their parents were making positive changes as a result.”

Ofsted looks at issues relating to healthy eating in its early years inspections, both as part of the curriculum and in terms of the food children are given. Inspectors look at the personal development, behaviour and welfare of young children, which includes checking the extent to which settings are promoting and supporting young children’s knowledge of how to keep themselves healthy. The statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage includes requirements about food and drink, such as “where children are provided with meals, snacks and drinks, they must be healthy, balanced and nutritious”.

However, many settings feel their efforts are not recognised. “There isn’t enough recognition of the lengths you have to go to serve really good food,” says Kimberly Munro, owner of Cheshire nursery Blue Grass Purple Cow – see box. »

ASSESSING IMPACT CHILD MEASUREMENT SCHEME

Understanding the impact of work to promote healthy eating and exercise at an early age is an important part of the equation when it comes to tackling childhood obesity.

In May this year the health select committee recommended the development of a national system along the lines of the Child Health and Monitoring Programme (Champ) scheme developed in Manchester, which gathers data on school-age children and is now being tested in early years settings.

Six per cent of children in Manchester are severely obese. In 2016 Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust – then Central Manchester University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust – committed to measure every primary-aged child every year as part of efforts to tackle the problem.

Around 46,000 measurements a year are carried out by school nurses. Parents are invited by text, email or letter to keep abreast of their child’s growth via an online portal, where they can access a digital growth chart, communicate with health professionals and

learn more about healthy growth through childhood. Being able to access this data at a time and place of their choosing can alleviate the anxiety and anger some parents feel when told their child is over or underweight.

The scheme also helps health and other partners monitor overall trends and take action and there is evidence it is making a difference to individual families.

“Through annual measurements, Manchester has unprecedented intelligence regarding the growth patterns of the primary school population,” explains a Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust spokesperson. “Children of families who receive online growth feedback are more likely to follow healthy growth trajectories than those whose families are not engaged with the system.”

The scheme is currently being tested in nurseries, with a pilot scheme offering parents feedback on their child’s growth from an earlier age.

www.champ.mft.nhs.uk



Ofsted early years inspections cover healthy eating, looking at the curriculum and the food children are given

“There isn’t enough recognition of the lengths you have to go to serve really good food”

Kimberly Munro, owner, Blue Grass Purple Cow

Emma Comer, managing director of Tall Trees Kindergarten in Somerset agrees that Ofsted appears not to prioritise the issue. Her setting holds a gold Food for Life award, a Soil Association programme that centres on four areas of development: food quality and where food comes from; food leadership and food culture; food education; and community, partnerships and parent engagement. Settings must sign up to commitments including ensuring at least 75 per cent of dishes are freshly prepared from unprocessed ingredients and growing food with the children using safe organic methods.

Sound nutrition facts

The menu at Tall Trees is 95 per cent organic in line with the setting’s natural ethos. Comer’s interest in early years nutrition arose when her son was born weighing only a pound. “I wanted to give him the best nutrition in his first five years,” she says. “Everything is based on sound nutritional facts: we don’t use salt or refined sugars, we provide lots of high-calorie foods which include good fats such as local butter or organic olive oil. We always use slow-release carbs, so children don’t experience that crash.”

Most day nurseries either prepare their own food or buy it in from a nearby school or catering company. “Having an on-site kitchen and chef is great until they are off work for whatever reason,” says the NDNA’s Baranek. “It does depend on the size of the nursery as some employ a team of chefs. You also have to make sure you comply with all regulations and have visits from the environmental health officer.”

However, cooking in-house means a nursery can control what’s going into the food including the amount of salt and what allergens are present. Buying in meals from school caterers can be inappropriate for early years settings, since very young children have different dietary requirements. Funding pressures on school caterers over the last 12 months have also resulted in a fall in quality in some cases, with healthier items replaced by cheaper products.

Some nurseries say providing healthy food does not have to cost more. “If we are making a beef casserole we get organic meat from Abel and Cole, but we will mix with organic haricot beans which makes the meat go further,” says Comer, who believes the cost of a full-time chef is the real challenge. Tall Trees’ approach is very

CHESHIRE: CHILDREN HELP PREPARE HEALTHY MEALS



Forget fairy cakes – the children at Blue Grass Purple Cow are more likely to be preparing a pesto with home-grown basil and rocket, or creating a crumble with apples harvested from the nursery garden.

“Every week the pre-school children make something the rest of the nursery will enjoy,” says owner Kimberly Munro. “They learn where ingredients come from, plus all that learning that comes from measuring, reading a recipe, writing a label, turn-taking, developing fine motor skills. It’s all relevant to the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum.”

Munro oversees two cooks, drawing on her own experience and her additional training in catering for specialist groups. “It is important to me that we serve freshly prepared food every day, with no added salt or sugar but lots of herbs to make it flavoursome,” she says. “We provide a huge variety of colour, taste, and texture, and that gives children a strong foundation for healthy eating for the rest of their lives.”

Home-grown produce forms the basis of recipes

Afternoon tea consists of bread fresh from the oven with a topping and fruit or vegetable, such as cream cheese and olives or apricot jam and dried apricots. “Some people say dried apricots are a no-no because they are so full of sugar, but I am teaching children they can reach for a natural sugar treat not a processed one, and that fruit comes in all forms,” says Munro.

Babies are also well catered for, with purees freshly made on site. The nursery supports baby-led weaning in consultation with parents and health visitors, par-boiling vegetables so they are soft enough for babies to feed themselves.

Munro adapts meals to fit with topics the children are exploring, hence “cowboy casserole”, or “caveman pie”. “If we are reading *The Rainbow Fish*, for example, we might have salmon, tuna and cod on the menu but the next week we might not have fish at all,” she says.

ESSEX: CHILDREN REWARDED FOR TRYING NEW FOODS

At lunchtime children at New Beginnings' three Essex day nurseries might be munching homemade Thai fishcakes served with mixed vegetables, while teatime might see them tucking into sweet potato and butternut squash soup. The menus, which are revised every term and rotate on a monthly basis, have been put together with support from the Soil Association. At the beginning of the year the group obtained a Food for Life Early Years Award from the association.

Trainee quality assurance manager Ellie Wiggins plans the menus, alongside the group's cooks. "We message parents to get suggestions and feedback, and look at the menu to ensure we include five fruit and vegetables a day, as well as a vegetarian alternative," she explains. "We pay particular attention to teas and try to make them varied for the children as often that is something nurseries struggle with."

At New Beginnings the cooks are part of the everyday life of the nursery. "We encourage them to cook with the children," says Wiggins.



Menus at New Beginnings Day Nurseries are planned with support from the Soil Association

"We also have a growing area. Children plant fruit and vegetables and when they are ready to be picked take them to the cook and they are used in dishes."

The cooks are also involved with the nursery's Eater of the Day award. "Every day a child from each room gets a sticker," says Wiggins. "It's not just rewarding children who eat everything on their plate – maybe a child tried something they didn't really want to. The cook comes in with the sticker and asks who it will be for, and we promote it on social media for those who are allowed to be identified."

Learning about healthy eating is not confined to the dinner table. "At circle time we might ask the children to identify what is healthy and what isn't from a box of foods," says Wiggins. "We use flashcards so the children can try identifying fruit and vegetables, we run food tasting activities, so children can try different textures and flavours, especially if they are fussy eaters not keen on certain foods."

CHILDHOOD OBESITY IN ENGLAND

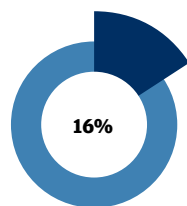
1 in 10 reception children classed as obese



2 in 10 year 6 children classed as obese

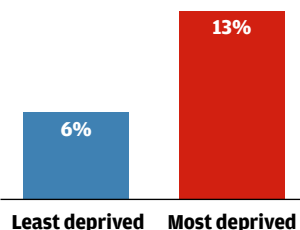


Healthy eating



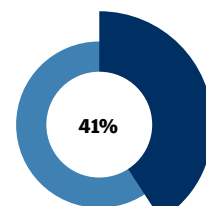
16%
of children consumed five or more portions of fruit and vegetables a day

Obesity levels and deprivation – % of children classed as obese



6% Least deprived
13% Most deprived

Misconceptions



41%
of mothers of obese children said their child was about the right weight or too light

Source: Statistics on Obesity, Physical Activity and Diet England: 2018, NHS Digital, April 2018

popular with parents, who are willing to pay extra for the reassurance it provides.

However, not all nurseries can pass costs on to parents, even when they are charging for meals. "Some nurseries charge parents of funded children for meals, but that money doesn't tend to cover everything such as the cost of a chef and running a kitchen, so it's a challenge on current funding rates," says Baranek.

There are a number of schemes that aim to help nurseries with the cost of providing healthy food. For example, some 200 nurseries use the

FareShare FoodCloud scheme, which enables charities and community groups to collect surplus good-quality food from participating Tesco or Waitrose stores for free. Meanwhile more than 400 children in six nurseries are part of a pilot programme run by the NDNA and global charity Vitamin Angels. Each nursery receives free weekly deliveries of fresh fruit and vegetables, along with protein-rich foods like beans, eggs and yoghurt. Staff can select food from a list of options to complement the snacks or meals they already offer.

Little Rascals Pre-school in Lincolnshire is one of the nurseries taking part. Manager Corrina Wells says the setting is able to provide a wider range of food than before. "One boy who is a bit of a fussy eater had never had hummus before; he took it home with some carrot and cucumber and mum has started to buy him that sort of thing now." Since taking part in the programme Little Rascals has been improving the quality of the food it offers such as filling jacket potato skins with a mix of potato and veg.

Young children learn from watching adults, so early years practitioners have to make sure they practice what they preach when it comes to healthy eating. "This is tricky because you can't tell staff what they can and can't eat, but you can insist on what they eat in front of the children," says the NDNA's Baranek. "In high-quality nurseries, staff sit and eat with the children but must never eat anything inappropriate like crisps."

Training and support is available for nurseries that want to improve the way they approach healthy eating. The NDNA recommends Henry, a charity set up to help young children get a healthy start in life, while its own publications include *Healthy Snacks*, *Happy Children* and *Let's Bake and Create*. With obesity in children starting school rising for the second year in a row, it has never been more important to promote healthy eating in the first years of life, stresses Baranek.

"Encouraging eating healthily in nursery sets the children up with the knowledge and understanding for life," she concludes. ■

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REDUCING YOUTH REOFFENDING

Youth justice services have developed a range of innovative approaches to engage repeat offenders, but experts say more needs to be done to support young people with the most entrenched problems

WAVEBRAIN/MEDIA/MICRO/ADOBE STOCK



Over the past decade, the number of young people convicted of offences and getting involved in the youth justice system has fallen substantially. This is partly due to changes in how low-level crime is responded to, but also a testament to the increased focus placed on early intervention and prevention by youth justice services.

However, as youth offending has fallen overall, a higher proportion of young people who come into the system are repeat offenders

and those with the most entrenched behaviour problems. Statistics shows the proportion of young people who reoffend within 12 months of being convicted of a crime has risen in the past 10 years, with more than two-thirds of those who receive a custodial sentence going on to reoffend.

For this reason, recent government policy has focused on ways to support repeat offenders to change their behaviour, with improving access to education and training seen as a key factor in expanding the range of opportunities open to young people.

While youth justice services have developed a range of innovative approaches to engage repeat

offenders, many experts highlight how more needs to be done to improve access to housing and mental health support for those leaving youth custody. In addition, there is growing support for young people to be involved in designing interventions and for youth justice professionals to be trained in evidence-based trauma-informed practice.

CYP Now's special report on reducing youth reoffending summarises four recent studies on working with young offenders, profiles the work of four innovative models of practice aimed at tackling reoffending, and youth justice experts explain key emerging policy trends. »

Policy context

The proportion of young people reoffending has risen in the past decade. Latest data from the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) shows that 42.2 per cent of young people convicted of an offence in the year to March 2016 went on to reoffend within the next 12 months. Although 0.4 per cent down on the previous 12 months, the reoffending rate is four percentage points higher than in March 2006.

The MoJ figures also show that those young people convicted of reoffending are committing more offences – 3.79 on average in 2016 compared with 3.61 reoffences in 2015.

The most prolific young offenders – those convicted of 11 or more crimes – are most likely to reoffend, with a reoffence rate of 76 per cent. Young people sentenced to a period of youth custody have a reoffending rate of 68 per cent.

However, the data also reveals that the overall number of young people who reoffend has fallen in line with a significant drop in the number convicted of offences in the past decade. The number of reoffenders fell 79 per cent and reoffences fell 75 per cent between March 2006 and March 2016. However, the MoJ report points out that while sizeable, these drops have not kept pace with the overall fall in offender levels, meaning the reoffending rate has risen.

Experts say the rise in the reoffending rate can be explained by the fact that those young people

coming into the youth justice system are committing more serious offences as a result of efforts in the past decade to find alternative ways of dealing with problem behaviour.

Meanwhile, some experts believe policymakers should shift their attention from reoffending because it can entrench an offender identity in young people – instead they argue that the system should find alternative ways of measuring a young person’s progress.

Government policy to tackle reoffending has focused on improving young people’s access to diversion services – such as support to access education, training and employment – and undertaking reparation, largely through doing community service. However, a significant driver for the creation of secure schools is to improve the opportunity for young offenders to learn new skills than is currently available in custody. The first secure school is due to be set up at Medway secure training centre in 2020.

Other measures being developed include improving links between youth offending teams and custody settings, creating more trauma-informed practice and developing more accommodation options after custody.

Here, five experts discuss key topics linked to youth reoffending and what can be done to reduce the number of young people involved in the system who go on to commit further crimes.

YOT partnerships approach delivers results



Andy Peaden, chair, Association of Youth Offending Team Managers

Preventing and addressing offending is the statutory purpose of YOTs. This is made clear in the Crime and Disorder Act, and drives everything we do in our work with young people.

The success of the youth justice system in recent years stems from this focus and is due to the commitment of staff to improve the lives of young people, but also because YOTs operate locally in multi-agency partnerships with critical local players around the table.

YOTs have led on many initiatives to reduce offending, by looking at issues holistically and with a focus on the needs of the individual. There is a high level of innovation in YOT practices, a strong focus on prevention work, on diversion from the criminal justice system, and on restorative justice to create lasting solutions for victims, communities and young people.

Our work in courts has focused on public protection in the most serious cases, while encouraging initiatives such as problem-solving courts. We can point to many local and regional successes such as resettlement consortia, provision of girls groups, summer activity and sports programmes, volunteer engagement, trauma-informed practice and employment projects such as the Skill Mill (see practice example).

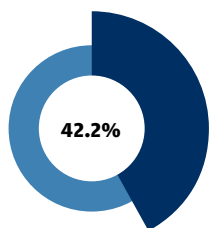
There are many factors that impact on work to reduce offending. In an ideal world, we need policy makers to encourage innovation locally which can be rolled out more widely. We need more secure long-term funding for YOTs and all their partners, so more time and effort can be spent on frontline delivery. The over-representation of looked-after children and ethnic minorities in the system is of considerable concern. Action is required to address these systematic issues, and we need to ensure children and young people are valued, resources follow needs, and that their voices can be heard.

YOTs would like to see resettlement as core from the outset, with improved access to young people. The system needs to meet the individual needs of children if we are to prevent reoffending. We would also welcome more appropriate ways to measure reoffending. The number of young people in the system has reduced considerably, yet the reoffending rate focuses on those who are left, suggesting rates are broadly static, which is clearly inaccurate.

Reductions in first-time entrants and use of custody means fewer children are offending and so more are achieving successful, law-abiding lives.

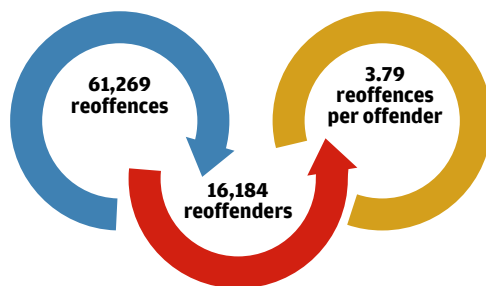
REOFFENDING BY CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN 2015/16

Reoffending rate

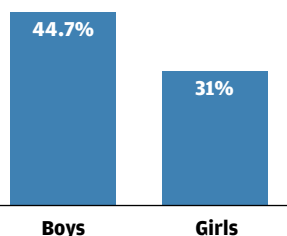


of young people reoffended for year ending March 2016

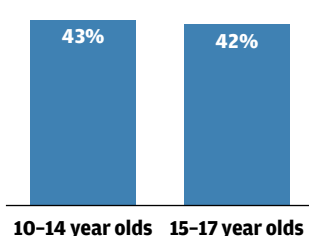
Reoffending in numbers



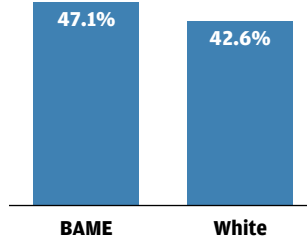
Reoffending rate by gender



Reoffending rate by age

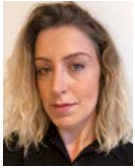


Reoffending rate by ethnicity



Source: Youth justice annual statistics 2016/17, Ministry of Justice, January 2018

Resettlement crucial to reducing reoffending



Pippa Goodfellow, senior lecturer in youth justice, Nottingham Trent University

The narrow focus on reducing reoffending on release from custody has long been the blunt measure of success or failure, with two thirds of young people proven to reoffend within 12 months.

The disruptive nature of incarceration poses significant challenges to resettlement services in mitigating against the effects of custody itself. Young people find it hard to cope and feel disorientated when adjusting to life in the community. There are often substantial structural challenges to contend with upon release, including lack of accommodation, deficiency in support for mental health and substance misuse issues and an absence of education, training and employment. The impact of imprisonment on relationships, both personal and with professionals, including breakdown of placements for looked-after children, often compound these challenges.

Research from the Beyond Youth Custody programme found that for resettlement to be effective and sustainable, we need to look beyond the short-term aim of preventing reoffending. There needs to be an understanding of resettlement as a constructive process promoting desistance, wellbeing and social inclusion. For a young person, the development of self-belief, confidence and resilience are crucial. Professionals can provide personal support, helping to keep them on track. Resettlement work has to identify and respond to needs including pre-existing trauma, mental ill-health and emotional difficulties. It is also vital to consider the impediments to effective resettlement, reframing interventions beyond a focus on individualised risk, recognising barriers and limited life chances, developing social capital and promoting inclusion.

Charlie Taylor's 2016 review of the youth justice system recommended that the development of secure schools would play a principal role in offering future solutions, including greater ties to education and other services in the community, a vision to which the government is now committed. As the programme develops, the issue of how to address the necessary changes to resettlement remains, at least in the more immediate term, largely unaddressed. It is crucial to underline that future reform of resettlement services and potential reductions in reoffending must not

ADCS VIEW ADDRESS TRAUMA TO TACKLE REOFFENDING



Alison Michalska, corporate director children and adults, Nottingham City Council

Early in my career, I worked in a semi-secure children's home, many of the young people I supported found themselves on the wrong side of the law and, despite their misdemeanours, were scared, traumatised or frankly unwell. At times, I felt like a lone voice advocating for us to do more to help them come to terms with the harm they had suffered in their young lives, rather than punishing them.

I'm pleased to say in many ways policy and practice has moved on in children's services, but, sadly, our model of youth justice is still predicated on retribution rather than rehabilitation, with the child being seen first and foremost as an offender. This binary position ignores the reality that young people who offend are disproportionately more likely to be a victim of crime thanks to manipulation or exploitation by adults.

A growing body of evidence clearly links childhood trauma with offending behaviours. One study analysed the caseloads of youth offending teams in London and found that around half of the children they were working with had experienced or witnessed crime, abuse or violence, over a third had emotional and

mental health needs, but fewer than one in five were receiving the support they required.

The vulnerability of children and young people in custody has again been highlighted in the Chief Inspector of Prison's 2017/18 report in which he noted that bullying, self-harm and violence remain ongoing concerns, as does the use of restraint and segregation.

Inspectors also found unacceptable levels of hostility towards the most vulnerable groups, including gay and bisexual boys, and those with disabilities. Shorter custodial sentences are clearly not an effective intervention as demonstrated by the high rate of reoffending – instead, community resolutions are a better alternative for persistent offenders committing relatively minor crimes. As part of the government's ongoing youth justice reforms, I suggest we grasp this opportunity to adopt more child-centred, trauma-informed approaches.

We should have the freedom to work with those who have offended, or who are on the cusp of doing so, to support them to understand the impact of their behaviour.

I believe using restorative approaches better helps children and young people confront the consequences of their actions to bring about change. Let us also keep in mind the vulnerability of this group, particularly as we get to grips with county lines and other forms of criminal exploitation.

provide the justification for increased levels of incarceration. A renewed commitment to custody as a last resort is vital, as is a recognition that those young people at risk of custody will also have complex needs necessitating constructive solutions.

Change how to measure progress to desistance



Tim Bateman, deputy chair, National Association of Youth Justice

Any youth justice system will aspire to have a positive impact on the offending behaviour of children with whom it works. It does not follow however that reducing the rate of proven reconviction is a useful measure of effectiveness.

The current binary target, which records whether or not a child has received a further formal sanction for offending over a 12-month period, tells us little of value. Most unlawful behaviour is not detected and the measure is, at best, a partial indicator of reoffending. More

problematically, a child who persistently robs at knifepoint becomes statistically equivalent to one who scrawls his name on a wall on one occasion if they both offend during the relevant timeframe. The target ignores the fact that desistance is a developmental, incremental, process, often involving relapse. It fails to capture progress (or lack of it). There are, accordingly, no grounds for believing that the percentages in which the measure is expressed have any bearing on the quality or effectiveness of work undertaken.

The blinkered focus on recidivism also serves to obscure more important factors. Desistance becomes more likely where children form strong, stable relationships with supportive adults who provide guidance to overcome structural obstacles in the transition to adulthood – a key function of practitioners. It manifests where the child sees a constructive future for themselves. That positive self-image and sense of agency will go hand in hand with an interest in education and training and a desire to associate with peers with similar objectives. »

EXPERT VIEW UNIVERSITY AND SERVICE PARTNERSHIPS CAN IMPROVE REOFFENDING



Hannah Smithson, professor of criminology and youth justice, Manchester Metropolitan University

The Greater Manchester Youth Justice University Partnership (GMYJUP) is a collaboration between youth justice academics at Man Met University, each of the 10 Greater Manchester youth justice services and the Youth Justice Board. We established the partnership in 2014 to support Greater Manchester to become a beacon region for innovation and excellence in youth justice practice. As a co-convenor, it is gratifying to see this type of partnership become increasingly valued – it is a great example of the live integration of theory and practice. These types of partnership take the time and dedication of those involved to make them work.

A year after establishing the partnership, we successfully applied for government and research council funding for a knowledge transfer partnership (KTP) – it is the first of its kind in the field of youth justice and was designed to help bring down the high re-offending rates in Greater Manchester. This represents a significant challenge for Greater Manchester youth justice services, where re-offending rates range from 32.3 to 46.1 per cent.

The purpose of the KTP is to improve service delivery through the co-creation of service design with young people.

Our new framework, Participatory Youth Practice Framework, has been developed by working collaboratively with young people themselves, and bringing their experiences into the development of the model. We also developed a new out-of-court framework to enable the application of the Participatory Youth Practice Framework to pre-court cases, ensuring young people across the spectrum of the justice system benefit from this approach.

We have embedded the framework in practice across the area. It will be supported on an ongoing basis through GMYJUP, via training, sharing of resources and the development of bespoke local ways of working in conjunction with nominated participation champions in each region.

There are many lessons that can be learned. Services need to be dynamic to respond to the changing needs of young people. New trends in criminal activity are a constant and the opportunity for practitioners to discuss these challenges with academics means our joint approach to practice and research is informed and provides an evidence-based perspective.



Positive self-image goes hand in hand with training

A child-friendly youth justice practice will have such considerations at heart. Conversely, interventions that dwell on the child's criminal behaviour have the potential to undermine the natural maturational processes which, most commonly, culminate in young people growing out of crime. A preoccupation with whether or not the child breaks the law again over the next 365 days emphasises their status as an offender and risks fostering a criminal identity rather than promoting alternative forms of self.

An emphasis on recidivism has the advantage of being amenable to measurement in simple statistical terms. It also indicates an air of toughness by suggesting that effective youth justice practitioners can put an end to a child's lawbreaking and that a child's success or failure is predicated on a single act, or lack thereof, during the coming year. Social problems are rarely so readily resolved. The development of meaningful, softer indicators would encourage a more child-focused and effective system.

Involving young people to find solutions



Sean Creaney (pictured) and Anne-Marie Douglas, Peer Power

Promoting the voices of children and young people who offend has not been a central feature of youth justice policy. This is in part related to an underlying culture of punishment and a system apparently geared towards confronting young people with the consequences of their actions. Sections of society continue to believe that young people in conflict with the law are not deserving of a voice.

However, treating children as assets not problems and valuing their input into their care and supervision can result in positive outcomes, including reductions in reoffending.

Children's participation was promoted as good practice through the Youth Justice Board's (YJB) participation strategy in 2016. It reinforced the need to elicit the child's viewpoint on matters that affect them. It also detailed the benefits of their active participation and meaningful involvement in the planning, design,

delivery and evaluation of youth justice services.

The YJB participation strategy noted how children's participation can improve compliance, engagement, contribute to crime reduction – including reductions in severity and frequency of offending – and increase a child's self-esteem and confidence, encouraging motivation to change. The YJB document addressed a persistent lack of strategic direction on how participation can become widespread.

Participation is also an integral component of positive youth justice, a new approach developed by Stephen Case and Kevin Haines, which challenges disempowering deficit-based, risk and offender-focused systems. Its creators promote positive behaviour and outcomes, shared decision-making, and meaningful participation of children (and their families) to facilitate engagement and feelings of fairness (see Derby practice example). Advocates of this approach assert that young people who offend must be viewed as children first, and practice should be child-friendly not adult-led and imposed.

Policies and practices should be grounded in children's perspectives with participation seen as an ongoing process, not a bolt-on initiative. Young people must be given opportunities to have their say and be empowered throughout all stages of a youth justice experience. Crucially, they can provide insights into what does and does not work for them and their circumstances.

The work of Peer Power has shown that when meaningfully engaged over a substantial period of time and when offered wellbeing, relational and resilience support, children and young people can be experts by experience. Young people who have lived experiences of contact with the system, and who are remunerated for their participation, can provide unique insights, share knowledge and experience of justice and health services, and contribute to the full cycle of delivering services including design, commissioning and evaluation.

FURTHER READING

Positive Youth Justice: Children First, Offenders Second, K Haines and S Case, Policy Press, 2015

Getting it Right Young People's Vision For Liaison and Diversion Services, Peer Power and Young Minds, 2018

Youth Justice Board Participation Strategy: Giving Young People a Voice in Youth Justice, Youth Justice Board, 2016

Review of the Youth Justice System in England and Wales, Charlie Taylor, Ministry of Justice, February 2016

Understanding and Improving Reoffending Performance, Youth Justice Board, 2016

Research evidence

research in practice

The research section for this special report is based on a selection of academic studies which have been explored and summarised by Research in Practice (www.rip.org.uk), part of the Dartington Hall Trust.

Young people involved in the youth justice system may have suffered high rates of trauma in their lives. Despite this, a risk-based approach is typically used when working with these young people. This month's articles consider alternative approaches to working with young people involved in the youth justice system or placed in a local authority secure unit.

The first paper by Johns et al highlights the importance of establishing and maintaining meaningful relationships when working with young offenders and outlines the social-ecological approach needed to achieve this. These themes are also explored in the second paper by Hampson, which examines how well the strengths-based desistance approach in youth justice has been rolled out in practice across three YOT areas in Wales.

The third paper by Olafson et al investigates the impact of implementing trauma-informed interventions in juvenile justice settings in the USA. It proposes

that trauma-informed practice can have a positive impact for young people involved with the youth justice system.

The final study by Ellis explores concepts of vulnerability among girls in a secure unit in England. It argues that open discussions around vulnerability would help the girls realise that, as well as being vulnerable, they are also astute and resilient and that this understanding would help them to reframe their past experiences and plan different pathways for their future.

STUDY 1

Ecological Youth Justice: Understanding the Social Ecology of Young People's Prolific Offending

Diana F Johns, Kate Williams and Kevin Haines, *Youth Justice*, (2017)

This study considers the work of youth offending teams (YOT) with

repeat offenders. It advocates using a strengths-based, rather than a risk-based, approach to enable young people's positive development and reduce offending.

The authors explore literature around the importance of establishing and maintaining meaningful relationships in working with young offenders and outline the social-ecological approach needed to achieve this.

The usual approach taken to working with repeat youth offenders tends to focus attention and resources too narrowly on the "problem" areas in children's lives that are seen as directly related to offending. This negative narrative and framing of risk and deficit is "discouraging", focuses and reinforces young people's shortcomings and creates an ethos of suspicion and blame.

An alternative approach is to use the same principles that apply to working with young children when working with young people who are offenders. Such an approach involves building an effective practitioner/young person relationship and using it to support positive development, which is key to effective ways of working with this group.

Relationships allow professionals to engage young people and open the door to foster and support motivation to change.

The study examines the function, role and impact of the relationships and interactions between YOT workers and young people involved in prolific offending. It explores the views of professionals and young people on ways of working which see young people in terms of their relationships with their immediate environment of family, friends, school and neighbourhood, as well as the wider socio-cultural, political-economic context. More specifically, the study:

- Examined young people's prolific offending in Wales in two separate time periods. In 2012, researchers identified 303 young people who were "prolific" offenders – defined as being convicted of 25+ offences – and profiled 117 of those. A follow-up study in 2016 examined contextual factors and reoffending among that sample. The analysis included interviews with professionals and young people, exploring the support and services that helped them move away from offending.
- Reports the experiences of 11 young men and one young woman from this original cohort in greater depth. Information was collected through interviews and case file data. These 12 young people, now aged 21–24, were representative of their peer group in gender, ethnic background and offending-related issues.

Study findings

The young people lived in a semi-rural, deindustrialised community in Wales. The information on the young people and their social, cultural and community setting revealed a series of common factors, which were also typical of the larger cohort in relation to:

- The development and perpetuation of negative perceptions of the young people ➤



Research found that developing an effective practitioner/young person relationship was key to supporting positive outcomes

in the settings of school, agencies and community

- The lack of supportive family relationships, negative childhood experiences and drug abuse
- Relationships with the offending peer group which, though “problematic”, offer a sense of belonging.

Despite the negative interactions experienced by these young offenders within the wider community, young people perceive their relationships with the YOT as supportive, with professionals willing to engage, providing encouragement, recognising success, and setting clear and tight boundaries and expectations. All of these were reported as positive and desirable by the young people interviewed.

Contact with the YOT was close and frequent, over a long period of time and often focused on practical work and activities.

A key focus of YOT workers was building young people’s independence. To facilitate this, YOT workers strove to build relationships with the community and parents, including through the provision of advocacy services.

The ways in which young people described YOT supporting change included:

- Opening up access to opportunities
- Helping to (re)build social relationships
- Supporting positive connections with agencies and community resources
- Generating alternative (pro-social) activities to fill time otherwise spent offending
- Fostering interests and strengths.

Implications for practice

- There is a need to move away from practice that conceives young people involved with the youth justice system in terms of their problems, deficits and pathologies. Such an approach is too focused on assessing and addressing risks individually in order to interrupt persistent offending patterns, such as offering substance misuse programmes.



ZINKEVICH/ADOBE STOCK

Desistance-focused practice is a strengths-based approach that seeks to address the barriers to ceasing offending behaviour

- Instead, effective work should be strengths-based and:
 - Grounded in a trusted and meaningful relationship with young people, built over time
 - Allow sufficient time to understand the interplay of a young person’s relationships and interactions that define and influence their everyday lives and experiences and what is important to them
 - Offer strategies to counteract negativity in young people’s lives
 - Model and convey respect, empathy, acceptance, honesty and authenticity.
- Relationships underpin young people’s engagement, compliance and, ultimately, leaving offending behind. This was the case for some of the young people interviewed in this study. However, change requires time.

STUDY 2

Desistance Approaches in Youth Justice – the Next Passing Fad or a Sea-change for the Positive?

Kathy S Hampson, *Youth Justice, Volume 18, Issue 1*, (2017)

This research examines how well the strengths-based desistance

approach in youth justice has been rolled out in practice and makes suggestions for areas of improvement.

A risk-oriented youth justice model has dominated the system in England and Wales, resulting in a massive influx of young people entering the youth justice system. Research by McAra and McVie (2010) suggests that entering the system can lead to further offending. These concerns have led to changes, which have reduced the numbers of young people accessing the system; however rates of reoffending are still rising, according to Youth Justice Board (YJB) and Ministry of Justice figures published in 2016.

An alternative to the risk-oriented approach is the desistance approach. Desistance can be measured from different points in someone’s change journey, but most meaningfully when they no longer conceive of themselves as a criminal and maintain ceasing offending (secondary desistance). A desistance-led approach was established first in the adult criminal justice sector and has also been rolled out in youth justice through the YJB’s AssetPlus framework since 2014.

Pathways to ceasing offending may be different for adults and children and the majority of young people who have offended do not

necessarily continue to offend into adulthood (Loeber and Farrington, 2014). Developing maturity and holding less-fixed identities than adults may influence this.

Desistance-focused practice is strengths-based and seeks to address the barriers to ceasing offending (Nugent and Barnes, 2013) by supporting the young person to change by:

- Developing self-esteem and hope through relationships between young people and practitioners.
- Cognitive transformation, which aims to reduce opportunities for people to self-identify as an offender.
- Societal inclusion and social capital, with access to opportunities that are available to non-offending young people.
- Action plans towards personal and long-term goals.

The study conducted a desistance-focused examination of AssetPlus in practice, which included analysing assessments and intervention plans across three youth offending team (YOT) areas in Wales and evaluated training in desistance, which was attended by 185 practitioners in varied roles.

Study findings:

AssetPlus assessments and plans showed that:

- Youth justice practitioners were not able to successfully apply desistance theory:
 - Strengths were mentioned but were lost at an early stage in the assessment narrative and were not identified in the “factors for desistance section”.
 - Barriers were persistently presented in sections which only required positives.
 - Nearly twice as many “factors against desistance” were listed than those “for”.
- Risk-focused assessments resulted in deficit-focused intervention plans which:
 - Centred on doing work about offending.
 - Lacked meaningful work towards reaching personal goals or accessing community opportunities/resources.
 - No mention of building the worker-young person relationship.

Although many staff had received AssetPlus training before, they ranked their pre-training knowledge as quite poor. Post-training knowledge increased and the training was evaluated as useful, particularly in relation to the importance of using positive strengths and goals, and also relationship-building. Participants reported that this would be useful in helping them to complete better assessments in future.

Implications for practice

- There is a need to move away from a risk-focused youth justice structure to one that is strengths-based. This applies not only to YOT workers, but also other youth justice professionals (magistrates, managers at all levels and referral order panellists). All staff need to receive long-term support to better understand and implement this approach.
- The YJB could better align AssetPlus intervention plans with desistance values through using a strengths-based perspective and including the importance of building good worker/young person relationships. For example, two areas for goal creation are “not

offending” and “not hurting others”, and these could be reframed.

- All YJB inspection reports should reflect the desistance approach in order to avoid mixed messages and ensure YOTs can develop a desistance-based agenda.
- Statistical returns for YOTs need to model that relapse is part of the desistance process.

STUDY 3

Implementing Trauma and Grief Component Therapy for Adolescents and Think Trauma for Traumatized Youth in Secure Juvenile Justice Settings

E Olafson et al, *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, Vol. 33 (2018)

This study investigates the impact of implementing trauma informed interventions in juvenile justice settings in the USA.

Ford (2012) demonstrated that young people in the juvenile justice system have high rates of trauma. Estimates suggest that trauma exposure for incarcerated adolescents is at least three-times higher than that for other children and adolescents (Finkelhor et al, 2009).

Despite evidence of these links, trauma-specific interventions are not routinely available for young people involved in the juvenile justice system. Instead the focus is on reducing criminogenic

attitudes and behaviours, aggression, and subsequent recidivism in young people.

Trauma-focused interventions

Trauma and Grief Component Therapy for Adolescents is a four-module intervention that was adapted for use with young people in the youth justice system. It uses group dynamics to promote emotional, cognitive, and behavioural self-regulation. The aim is to reduce “trauma-triggered reactions”, aggression, high-risk behaviours, and maladaptive coping strategies, for example substance misuse.

All four modules of the intervention were completed by 30 young people, and 39 who were in a facility for up to 90 days completed Module 1.

Think Trauma is a trauma-informed training programme for professionals. It covers the impact of trauma on youth development and behaviour, the management of post-traumatic reactions and behaviours among young people, and strategies to cope with secondary trauma and compassion fatigue among staff.

The study was conducted in four youth justice sites that completed both interventions. It investigated the impact of the interventions on the young people through analysis of the following pre- and post-group measures:

- The Trauma Symptom Checklist for Children (TSCC)
- The UCLA Post-traumatic Stress

Disorder Reaction Index (UCLA PTSD RI)

- The Adolescent Dissociative Experiences Scale (ADES).

Study findings

The young people had experienced an average of 10 potentially traumatic or adverse events. The two most frequently cited experiences were having an imprisoned family member and witnessing someone in the neighbourhood being beaten up, shot, or killed. Other adverse experiences reported by over 50 per cent of the young people included parental emotional abuse; lengthy separation from parents; exposure to substance abuse in the home; unexpected deaths of someone close; exposure to domestic violence; and having been robbed with a weapon.

Pre- and post group scores dropped significantly, indicating improvements in the young people’s mental health. In particular, there were improvements in relation to young people’s symptoms of depression, anger, posttraumatic stress, and dissociation. This improvement was most notable for the young people who received all four modules compared to those who received only one module.

Incident Reports are routinely collected in youth justice facilities as a means of reporting any interaction where young people are out of control or where staff need to “put hands on” a young person for behavioural control. Two of the sites reported a reduction in the number of reports received following implementation of the interventions.

Professionals and young people reported that they had learned to recognise trauma triggers and work collaboratively to find methods to respond to these.

Staff and senior leaders described how the “culture” of their facilities had changed as a result of their training and becoming trauma informed.

Implications for practice

- There are a number of limitations to this study including:
 - The study was conducted in



TOM/ADOBE STOCK

Trauma exposure for young people in custody is higher than that of their peers

the USA, which has different youth justice policy to the UK

- There is no matched control group for comparison of the findings
- Young people were not randomly selected to participate in the intervention
- The study did not control for other variables such as length of time spent in custody.
- Despite these limitations, the evidence from this study suggests that trauma-informed practice can have a positive impact for young people in the youth justice system. This mirrors findings from the Enhanced Case Management (ECM) approach used by the Youth Justice Board Cymru.

STUDY 4

Contested Vulnerability: A Case Study of Girls in Secure Care

Katie Ellis, *Children and Youth Services Review 88*, (2018)

This ethnographic study in a secure unit in England explored girls' concepts of vulnerability. It argues that by conflating childhood and vulnerability, the unit disenfranchises girls from services that are designed to help them.

Children in the youth justice system generally have similar characteristics and needs as children who are the subject of welfare services. A child who suffers abuse at home receives support from social services. However, if the same child is caught stealing, they are likely to become the responsibility of the youth justice system.

This qualitative study was conducted in one secure unit (LASCH) to explore girls' perspectives of their pathways into secure care. It included: participant observations; semi-structured interviews with 15 female residents aged between 12 and 16; case note analysis; and interviews with five members of staff.

Study findings

Seven girls were placed in the unit on welfare orders and eight were serving criminal sentences.



FIZIKES/ADOBE STOCK

Discussions can help young people realise they are resilient as well as vulnerable

Although separated by legal sentences and definitions, there was a crossover between the two. For example, 13 girls had lived in local authority care at some point and 14 had been arrested at least once. In addition, the legal status of some girls changed while they were in the unit. For example, two girls on welfare placements were sentenced for crimes committed before their placement.

The dual purpose of the unit was a source of frustration for the girls, particularly those who were the subject of welfare orders. They frequently commented on the injustice of being “locked up” with children sentenced for committing a serious crime. In addition, they felt that it was unfair that girls with a criminal sentence had a fixed end date for leaving the unit, whereas they did not know if or when they would leave.

The girls were provided with a range of enrichment activities, which were designed to occupy them and divert them from “less productive” behaviour. Some felt that the unit was trying to “erase” their previous experiences because they had been inappropriate for a child their age. They felt that the unit's classification of them as children did not fit well as their lives had been filled with adult activities. Thus, they found the enrichment activities infantilising. Others, however, embraced the opportunities provided by the unit to feel like a child.

The term “vulnerable” was frequently used by staff and in case files to describe the girls. The girls themselves strongly disagreed with this description. Rather than their difficult experiences making them vulnerable, they felt that they had demonstrated strength and independence by surviving these experiences. In particular, they felt that there was a contradiction between them taking responsibility for criminal actions and being too vulnerable to manage everyday decisions.

To avoid further trouble in the unit, the girls tended to play the part of a compliant resident without necessarily accepting staff's messages and ideals. Staff felt that discussions of adult topics with the girls were inappropriate, which meant that opportunities to empower the girls to be independent and to learn new coping strategies were lost.

Implications for practice

This is small-scale study in one girls' secure unit, which limits the ability to generalise about the findings. However, the following implications for practice are suggested.

- It is important that all staff have an understanding of young people's complex and often traumatic life experiences. This requires specialised training and support to ensure they are able to work with them on a case by-case basis.
- Professionals also require skills

to encourage young people to engage with one another where relationships would be helpful for recovery and rehabilitation.

- Discussions of vulnerability in its wider sense – emotional vulnerability, financial vulnerability – would enable young people to identify how and where they have been taken advantage of. Such discussions would also help them realise that, as well as being vulnerable, they are also astute and resilient. Instead of blaming themselves, for past choices it would help them to reframe their experiences and plan different pathways for their future.

FURTHER READING

Related resources

[Exploration of the Challenges and Opportunities for Trauma Informed Practice for Females in Custodial Settings](#), Lisa Thomson, July 2018

[Child-friendly Youth Justice](#), National Association for Youth Justice, September 2017

[Tangible Trauma Informed Care](#), *Scottish Journal of Residential Childcare*, 2017

[Evaluation of the Enhanced Case Management Approach](#), Welsh government, March 2017

[Review of Youth Justice System in England and Wales](#), Charlie Taylor, December 2016

Related resources by Research in Practice

[Trauma Informed Approaches with Young People: Frontline Briefing](#), Danny Taggart, August 2018

[Developing and Leading Trauma-informed Practice: Leaders' Briefing](#), Julie Wilkinson, August 2018

[Research in Practice blog: AssetPlus – a Vehicle for Desistance Thinking?](#), Kathy Hampson, August 2016

[Time for Positive Youth Justice?: Blog](#), January 2016

[That Difficult Age: Developing a More Effective Response to Risks in Adolescence: Evidence Scope](#), Hanson and Holmes, November 2014

Practice examples

Supporting siblings of young offenders in Derby

- “Good”-rated youth offending service in Derby works with siblings of young offenders
- Academic studies show having a sibling who offends is a key factor in a younger child going on to offend
- Four out of five young people the service works with have not reoffended a year later

ACTION

Derby Youth Offending Service (YOS) was recently praised by inspectors for taking an innovative approach to tackling reoffending.

Inspectors from HM Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) who visited the service in June flagged up an “impressive range” of support and services offered not only to young offenders but also their siblings.

“Unusually, their siblings can also access support to prevent them getting involved in antisocial behaviour or crime,” inspectors said.

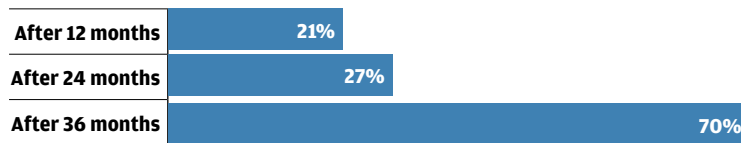
Initiatives such as these take on greater significance in light of research from the US that shows having an imprisoned family member is one of the most frequently-cited traumatic experiences for young offenders.

Andrew Kaiser, head of specialist services at Derby City Council, said the HMIP inspection team was “particularly enthusiastic” about the sibling work being carried out by the YOS.

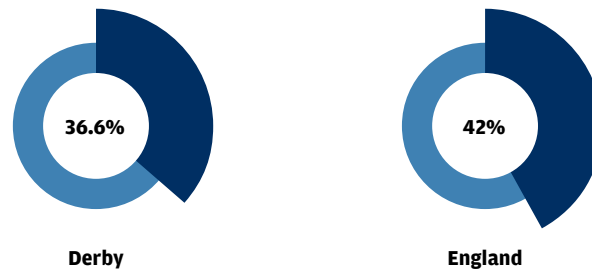
“It’s difficult to talk about what other local authorities are providing, but HMIP thought our work around siblings was a little different,” he says.

Kaiser says inspectors praised the service’s innovative approach to using existing resources within its prevention offer to extend the

REOFFENDING RATES FOR THOSE IN PREVENTION PROGRAMME



Reoffending rates in Derby



Source: Derby YOS, April 2018; Ministry of Justice, June 2016

support available for siblings of young offenders.

He explains that the service employs workers whose role it is to identify those children in need of support because of their sibling’s offending behaviour.

“They will come along to meetings or clinics and pick up work with siblings as part of their prevention role. So that can be a range of young people who are in custody, or on community orders or referral orders,” he says.

Kaiser describes how inspectors were “taken aback” by the level of resources available to the YOS, which include a mental health nurse and youth wellbeing officer.

The latter post, Kaiser says, is

“There’s really good collaboration across the youth justice partnership in Derby”

Andrew Kaiser, head of specialist services, Derby City Council

innovative as it is funded by a grant from NHS England.

“The officer works with those at risk of poor mental health outcomes later on, so it’s very much an early targeted service around mental health,” he says.

Together with these professionals, the multi-agency service also comprises a seconded police officer, a parenting officer as well as staff who have undergone systemic family practice training.

“We have our service level agreements in place about what will be delivered and how it will be measured, so there’s really good collaboration across the youth justice partnership in Derby,” adds Kaiser.

Inspectors also praised the location of the YOS – housed within the city’s Connexions office in the town centre, alongside a number of other agencies.

Kaiser describes the set up as a “one-stop shop” that is very much “young person friendly” and unlike a traditional YOS office.

“The physical environment is part of the main criteria to make

sure young people engage in work to reduce offending behaviour,” he says.

The service has also been recognised for contributing to the funding of a prison officer at HMP Nottingham who attends key meetings, concerning risk, release and planning, and co-ordinates with YOS staff.

Historically, Derby has had a reputation for being a “high sentencing court”, but custody figures have reduced significantly in recent times despite this challenge, says Kaiser.

“In the last quarter, our results were the best in a long time,” he adds.

IMPACT

Statistics from the Ministry of Justice for July 2015 to June 2016 show a 36.6 per cent reoffending rate for Derby compared to an average rate of 41.9 per cent for England and Wales. These figures continue to improve, says Kaiser, and the siblings work has been “influential” in this.

Kaiser says of those young people who have received prevention interventions, a high proportion will not reoffend.

Figures for April 2017 to April 2018 showed within 12 months, 79 per cent of young people did not go on to reoffend.

After 24 months, the figure was 73 per cent and over 36 months, it was 70 per cent.

He says while the number of young people who reoffend in Derby is higher than a number of comparator areas, the number of “reoffences” they commit is significantly lower.

“We have a challenge still with the number of those who do reoffend, but the volume of what they do is less than others, so it’s about trying to reduce the actual numbers of those who do something again,” he says.

By Nina Jacobs

Using Zorb football to engage Doncaster communities

- Zorb football is used to engage young people and reduce high numbers of first-time offenders
- Dialectical behaviour approach treats the underlying issues of repeat offenders
- Youth offending service has gone from failing to one of the best performers for reducing reoffending

ACTION

A two-pronged approach focused on prevention and therapeutic intervention has seen criminal entrance and reoffending rates reduce since Doncaster Children's Services Trust took control of the Youth Offending Service (YOS) in 2015. Three years ago, Doncaster had the second highest rate of young people entering the criminal justice system in England.

Head of service Andy Hood explains how the strategy came

about: "More children than necessary were entering the system. The majority were not going on to lead consistently offence-free lifestyles and the judiciary in the area was heavily custody focused, partly because of the high numbers of young people in the system.

"Our first approach was to get the first-time entrants' rate down so we had fewer children in the system, and then we restructured the offer so those who were got the therapeutic interventions they needed."

The trust entered into a county-wide triage process with South Yorkshire Police. At the point of being charged, first-time offenders are assessed by a triage panel for their suitability for the EPIC (Encouraging Potential, Inspiring Change) prevention service.

Hood says: "Prevention, as it's quite often delivered in the UK, is about exposing young people to offending behaviour programmes or taking them to prisons. For us, it

was to get young people involved and engaged in their communities, to be aspirational, and to brand this as an opportunity not a punishment."

Street-based teams were deployed into areas with high levels of antisocial behaviour and youth crime to tackle the problem at source. While this approach of community-based intervention is not new, the tactics employed were.

Hood says: "The trust chief executive asked us how we could have an impact in communities before young people got into the

criminal justice system. We knew we needed something totally different and we came up with the idea of Zorb football. We went into these communities and started playing games inside the areas where young people were congregating and they came to us.

"We stay in these areas for six months, working with businesses and schools. We try to ensure that young people feel part of their community again when we leave, because that's key in addressing first-time entrants."

Tackling the problem at source has not only led to a reduction in the number of first-time offenders, it has also enabled the trust to restructure its offer for those young people in the system. The YOS is now a dialectical behaviour informed service. A multi-disciplinary team, led by a forensic psychologist, reviews a young person's history to try to understand the underlying issues. These, says Hood, "almost uniformly involve trauma". The

"We knew we needed something different and we came up with Zorb football"

Andy Hood, head of service, Doncaster Children's Services Trust

Diverting young people from custody in London

- Diversion scheme engages young people when they enter custody
- It links them to education, employment and training opportunities
- Pilot of the scheme shows a four-fold reduction in reoffending rate

ACTION

An initiative that engages young people in the "teachable moment" when they are detained by police, is achieving success in preventing reoffending.

Created by the Metropolitan Police and run in conjunction with the New Era Foundation, formerly the Milestone Foundation, the Divert scheme aims to help 18- to 25-year-olds into sustainable employment, training and education opportunities, and

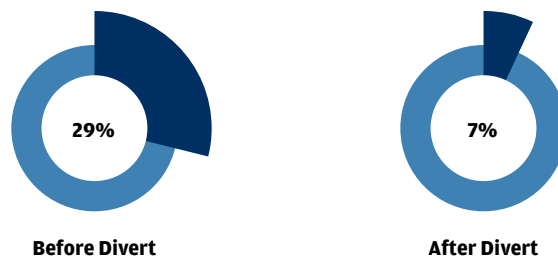
reduce victims of crime.

Now in its third year, the programme was piloted in Brixton and has subsequently been rolled out to six custody suits in the capital. The sites in Brixton, Tower Hamlets, Lewisham, Croydon, Wood Green and Hackney have trained custody intervention coaches (CIC) who can approach suitable detainees in custody.

The Football Association is backing the scheme and clubs such as Crystal Palace, Millwall and Tottenham have joined the partnership to provide staff from their charitable foundations to act as CIC. The Prince's Trust has also committed two part-time co-ordinators to Divert to support young people into its programmes.

Ann-Marie Willison, New Era Foundation's programme manager, says that if the detainee is willing to engage, the CIC will

REOFFENDING RATES IN BRIXTON



Source: New Era Foundation

have a one-to-one consultation of 45 minutes in a private room.

"CIC will tailor their approach to the individual's needs, assisting them in a variety of ways to facilitate access to training, education or employment opportunities," she says.

CIC are also able to help young people with housing issues or arrange support for mental health

or addiction problems, she adds.

Willison says the programme is open to all detainees aged 18 to 25, and CIC consider each young person on a case-by-case basis.

The gender breakdown for young people engaging with Divert shows 95 per cent are male, with 62 per cent aged 18 to 21.

Drug-related criminal activity was the most common offence (54



Zorb football has helped to engage young people in Doncaster and drive down the number of first-time offenders in the area

team treats these issues, not the behaviour itself.

Hood adds: “In a traditional YOS, if someone’s stolen a car, you put them on a car crime programme – we don’t do any of that. We try to treat that young person to ensure they get the therapeutic help they need to stop them offending in future.”

The trust has developed partnerships – for example, trainee forensic psychologists at Nottingham Trent University have trained staff in dialectical behaviour therapy and trauma-informed practices while on placement with the service as part of their doctorate.

Being a “lean” organisation,

focused on improving outcomes, enables the trust to react quickly to issues, which encourages innovation, explains Hood.

“We have a lot more access to the board, to senior management, to pitch new ideas,” he says. “They are very supportive about allowing us to undertake these new ways of working and staff are then invested

because they see an opportunity to get those ideas into practice.”

IMPACT

The rate of 10- to 17-year-olds entering the system fell from 634 per 100,000 in 2014/15 to 321 in 2016/17 and continues to fall – the latest figure is 221 per 100,000. In one area, the deployment of street-based teams saw youth-led anti-social behaviour reduce by 38 per cent and offences of criminal damage by 34 per cent.

According to Youth Justice Board reoffending data, Doncaster was the 10th best performer in the UK in 2017.

Hood says: “When the first-time entrants’ rate goes down, you expect the reoffending rate to go up and we bucked that trend. Because the strategy worked, custody levels have gone down as well.”

The YOS has gone from being rated “inadequate” in 2015 to “good” now.

By Joanne Horne

per cent), followed by violent crime (22 per cent) and other offences such as burglary and theft (24 per cent).

Willison says the CIC remain in contact with individuals they encounter for as long as necessary, ranging from three months to a year, or sometimes even longer.

Willison first met Kevin Luke when he was in custody at Brixton police station where he was being questioned about a domestic dispute. Kevin, who had previously been stabbed by a gang during a robbery at a drug house in Brixton, was already trying to keep out of trouble.

He was booked out of custody to have a meeting with Willison who talked to him about his future.

“Something inside said ‘listen to what she has to say’,” he says. “I got an opportunity to meet someone in an office in Liverpool

Street. There were nice people and it was a good environment. It was somewhere I would like to see myself,” he says.

Now 24, Kevin is on a business administration apprenticeship at a hospital and is hoping to secure a permanent job at the end of his training.

“The environment I was in was literally a click away from getting into trouble – the Divert scheme has changed my life completely,” he adds.

Met Police inspector Jack Rowlands, who founded and leads Divert, believes engaging with young people at the point of police detention is critical to its success.

“Divert has already proven over the past three years that using police custody as a teachable moment diverts young people away from crime.”

He says Divert continues to

work collaboratively with organisations and communities such as the FA and the Prince’s Trust to make Divert available throughout the UK.

IMPACT

Of the 116 young people who engaged with Divert’s pilot scheme in Brixton, 87 per cent are now in training or employment.

“It costs £65,000 to imprison an

offender and by helping these young people to break the reoffending cycle, the pilot potentially saved the taxpayer £115m,” says the charity.

The programme also saw the reoffending rate among young people in Brixton drop from 29 per cent to seven per cent during the year-long pilot.

The Met has also published figures from Divert’s activity in Lambeth, Tower Hamlets and Hackney for the period November 2016 to July 2018, which shows 342 young people engaged with the programme. Of these, 40 per cent are now either employed or enrolled on a training or development course.

It says the reoffending rate among this cohort is eight per cent – 21 per cent less than the average rate for adults in Lambeth.

By Nina Jacobs

“CIC assist them to facilitate access to training, education or employment opportunities”

Ann-Marie Willison, programme manager, New Era Foundation

Boosting the work skills of prolific young offenders

- The Skill Mill provides employment in environmental work for young ex-offenders aged between 16 and 18

- Idea initially came about after the Environment Agency approached Newcastle Youth Offending Team about “cleaning up” local waterways

- Young people taking part display far lower rates of reoffending

ACTION

The Skill Mill is a not-for-profit social enterprise that provides employment for young ex-offenders aged 16 to 18 in environmental maintenance work.

It aims to bring social and environmental benefits to local communities by helping to reduce flood risks and improve the local environment at the same time as helping young people gain skills and experience in the delivery of services.

Young employees acquire knowledge and skills by working alongside local private contractors and partners, while undertaking accredited training to achieve a nationally recognised qualification. Follow-on employment opportunities with partner organisations and the wider labour market are sought for each young person taking part.

The idea initially came about after the Environment Agency approached Newcastle Youth Offending Team (YOT) about “cleaning-up” local waterways. In 2013, the YOT organised sessions whereby young offenders would work for three hours in the morning and two hours in the afternoon on watercourse tasks for between 12 and 20 weeks. It became evident that reoffending rates for young people taking part were lower than the national average.

The Skill Mill was launched to provide young people taking part in the sessions with progression routes into employment. The first site was set up in Newcastle in



The Environment Agency approached Newcastle YOT about “cleaning-up” waterways

2014, but others have since been established in Liverpool, Leeds, Durham, North Yorkshire and even in the Estonian capital, Tallinn.

Each of the English sites takes on four young people for six months at a time, during which they are paid minimum wage rates, receive practical work experience, get a nationally recognised qualification, and further opportunities for

“Young people appreciate the opportunity and enjoy the fact it is meaningful work”

Davie Parks, founder, the Skill Mill

progression with local companies at the end of their time with the programme.

They are selected on the basis of a combination of attitude, skills, punctuality and vulnerability. Those who are “work ready” are not selected, but those who need extra assistance to find work are.

“The young people we choose are all young people who have been serious and or prolific in their offending, preferably with experience of custody,” says Davie Parks, founder of the Skill Mill.

“It is not for low-level offenders at the bottom end of the system. The idea is that the young people progress into a job with one of our partner organisations, or in the wider job market.”

A further six sites are due to launch in the next year – in Manchester, Birmingham, Sheffield, Nottingham, Surrey and

Croydon – funded through a social impact bond from the government’s Life Chances Fund, an £80m fund to provide payment-by-results contracts for locally developed projects.

IMPACT

Parks says the initiative has become popular, due to the positive experiences of those who have taken part. “It works because young people really appreciate the opportunity and enjoy the fact it is meaningful work and they are getting paid up to £170 a week,” he says.

“They don’t really care too much about getting a qualification, but we do, so they get that as well.

The young people talk about being in touch with nature. They say it is something they get a lot out of and many have reported improved relationships with their families. But the most important thing is that they stop offending.”

So far across the five English Skill Mill teams, a total of 96 young people have taken part, with just 11 going on to reoffend within 12 months – a reoffending rate of 11.5 per cent. Only one of the young people who reoffended committed a more serious offence than the one they were originally convicted for.

This compares with a national reoffending rate of 42.2 per cent for young people convicted of an offence. The reoffending rate for those released from custody is even higher at 68.1 per cent.

“Most young people have been [in youth custody] on a detention and training order at some point. We target the top 10 per cent of young people coming through youth offending teams. They are in the cohort where reoffending rates are over 50 per cent.”

Parks says the initiative is focusing on full-time employment opportunities once the six-month placement ends, and that, across the five sites in England, the last cohort of 20 young people all went on to find employment.

By Neil Puffett

● The Skill Mill won the Youth Justice Award at the CYP Now Awards 2014

The 5th NurseryWorld

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LEADERSHIP

Rethinking care relationships

New families of looked-after children may experience varying levels of support depending on the legal order the child is under. It is time to end these discrepancies to ensure all get the right support



Andy Elvin
Chief executive, TACT

Children's social care and the family courts are responsible for creating tens of thousands of new families every year. These families take a variety of guises. They may be foster families, adoptive families, kinship families or residential families, but it is beholden on us to give all of these new families the best possible chance of being safe and stable.

Currently we are not doing well enough. Some families, depending on the legal order the child is under, get more support than others. Some we have to visit more often, not owing to need but owing to the rules and regulations of the system.

TACT, in partnership with Peterborough City Council and with support from the Department for Education's Innovation Fund, is embracing a new way of supporting all families. These are some of the key leadership lessons we have learned.

1 Forget different types of care order and treat all children in the system equally. One cohort of children comes through child protection procedures. The family they then grow up in

depends on the particular circumstances of their life. Some will have relatives who step forward, some will be adopted, and the majority will become part of foster families. However, the depth of preparation and ongoing support these families receive can depend on the legal order more than the needs that they might have. This must end. Leaders of care services must recognise that all these families will face the same general issues and all should be able to access the same kinds of support in an effective and non-judgmental way.

2 Empower carers to shape and make decisions. Whoever the child's family are they should be respected by all professionals and must be central to all decisions made about the child. Adopters, relatives and foster carers know more about their children than social workers, independent reviewing officers, teachers and health professionals. All meetings and all decisions should have the family at their centre, be led by them and involve them fully.

3 Create a skills development culture among carers. We have historically put a lot of time, expertise and effort into recruiting, assessing and preparing foster and adoptive families before placing vulnerable children with them.

A fundamental part of this preparation is helping them understand it is not going to be an easy ride. They will be challenged and tested, sometimes quite profoundly. For that reason, help should be at hand and developing a positive and willing attitude towards ongoing training and asking for support when needed is a key part of adoption and fostering preparation.

We need to do the same with kinship families taking on special guardianship or other orders. They face the added challenge that their experience of social services is the intervention with their relative which will have been a bruising and difficult process for extended family members. We need to engage them with permanence services and help them understand that asking for help is not a sign of

weakness or failure. On the contrary, we expect them to require support and help and must commit to providing this for all.

4 Ensure all decisions promote stability. The fundamental underpinning of a good childhood is stability. Whichever family type the child moves into, our overriding aim has to be that it lasts for their whole childhood and beyond.

Sometimes this is not possible and we have to explore other options but the overwhelming majority of families can provide this stability if they are properly supported, valued, trusted and listened to. Everything we do must be done with and through the family. No meeting must be held or decisions made without them. Advice, guidance, support and training must be available on tap when required.

A functional and supportive out-of-hours service is vital. Too many local authorities rely on their emergency duty team. This simply doesn't work as they are not set up to have a 45-minute reflective and supportive discussion about a situation the family are facing on a Sunday evening. In Peterborough, all social work staff from the permanence team are on an out-of-hours duty rota. Our families are there 24/7 – the least we can do is be there with them.

5 Stay in touch with care leavers for as long as they need. Legal orders and services' structures don't reflect the reality of family life. Any decent parent knows what their children are doing at 25, 35, 45 and so on. The state does not. Support is delineated to 18, 21 or 25 depending on circumstance. This needs to stop – we are all in this for life.

TACT is instating an "In Touch" project across our charity to contact and then stay in touch with as many of the children we have cared for over the past 25 years as we can. Through this we aim to celebrate their achievements, lend a helping hand where needed and also to offer them the opportunity to act as mentors to the children currently in our care and get involved as staff, panel members, trustees and volunteers. Permanence must mean permanence.

COMMISSIONING

Commissioning for social value

Toni Badnall-Neill explains how children's services commissioners can incorporate social value into their decision making



“Social value” describes the additional value created in the delivery of a commissioned service, beyond the value delivered as part of the core contract.

Recognising that contract costs do not always reflect value for money, the Public Services (Social Value)

Act was introduced at the end of 2012. It places a duty on commissioners to consider the economic, social and environmental benefits of their approach to procurement before this process starts, and whether they need to consult on these issues.

A shift in recent years towards outcome-based commissioning means that this is something those in children's services are familiar doing in relation to the specific contract activities. However, the act also requires commissioners to think about how to develop services, and how providers will deliver them to achieve maximum impact for the wider community.

Benefits and barriers

The benefits of this approach range from engaging with providers to develop stronger relationships that lead to improved understanding of service users and outcomes,

to improving outcomes in such a way as to reduce demand on services. Social value has the potential to achieve short-term savings through better-designed services, and longer-term gains by addressing local social, economic and health needs and contributing to better lifetime outcomes.

Case studies conducted since the introduction of this legislation have identified barriers to its implementation. Lord Young's 2015 report on the progress of the act highlighted three key challenges to achieving social value:

- Awareness and take-up of the act;
- Inconsistent practice as a result of varying understanding of how to apply the act; and
- Under-developed frameworks for the measurement of social value.

The act itself is also limited in scope – it applies only to the pre-procurement stage of commissioning for contracts and framework agreements covered by the Public Procurement Regulations 2015, and does not cover the procurement of individual goods or services within frameworks. However, commissioners have discretion to apply the principles of the act to any procurement process, and at any stage of the commissioning cycle, to achieve best value.

Good practice

For social value to be realised, it needs to be at the heart of local commissioning strategies

and reflect the priorities and needs of the relevant area, and commissioners need to be clear on what the social value 'ask' is and how this differs from the core contract activities.

For example, if the commissioning organisation has a focus on stimulating the local economy, then providers – no matter what goods or services are being procured – can contribute to this outcome by creating local job opportunities, work placements and investing in local supply chains. Similarly, a commissioning organisation with a strategic priority around preventing domestic abuse may favour providers who can demonstrate well-developed policies to raise awareness, support victims and challenge perpetrators within their own organisation.

A recent case study by Salford City Council recommends setting specific and measurable social value targets for providers, and a number of organisations are now implementing a TOMS (themes, outcomes and measurements) model in order to measure and benchmark the impact of social value.

Tools such as the new National TOMS Framework can offer commissioners a set of standards for assessing and awarding tenders, and consistently measuring social value, enabling better and transparent contract management.

● *Toni Badnall-Neill is strategic commissioning officer for children's services at Central Bedfordshire Council*

KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING SOCIAL VALUE

- Strong leadership has been identified as a success factor in prioritising and implementing social value. Ensuring senior management support the approach enables added value to be embedded within wider organisational strategies, and can drive forward initiatives and break down barriers.
- Providers, especially the voluntary and community sector, have a crucial role to play in shaping an area's social value priorities. By engaging with commissioners as delivery partners, they can influence service design and use their distinctive and trusted role to involve service users in this process. The social value requirements for contracts can then be tailored more effectively to the community's needs.
- Although the act requires commissioners to consider whether they need to consult on social value issues, it is good practice to engage with service users anyway. Most areas subscribe to a local compact agreement, meaning providers and interested groups should be engaged at an early stage to help shape policies, programmes and services.
- Consideration should be given to how social value will be included in service specifications. Added value outcomes should contribute to service impact, but should not be prioritised at the expense of the core delivery model.

FURTHER READING

[National TOMS Framework for Social Value Measurement](#), Social Value Taskforce, 2018

[Social Value in Commissioning and Procurement](#), NCVO Knowhow Nonprofit, 2017

[Measuring the benefits and impact of social value](#), The Prince's Trust & Salford City Council, 2016

[Using the Social Value Act to reduce health inequalities in England through action on the social determinants of health](#), Public Health England, 2015

[Social Value Act Review](#), Cabinet Office, 2015

INSPECTIONS CLINIC

Inspecting stability

Ensuring looked-after children have a stable care placement, social worker and school place is vital to good outcomes, so Ofsted places great emphasis on stability when it inspects children’s services, writes *Jo Stephenson*

Stability is key when it comes to ensuring looked-after children are able to flourish, yet it is clear councils and partners are struggling to get this right.

Findings from the children’s commissioner for England’s second annual *Stability Index*, published earlier this year, show nearly three-quarters of children in care experienced a change of home, school or social worker in the course of a year. More than one in 20 had experienced all three kinds of change during 2016/17.

In response to calls for a more joined-up approach across the care system, this summer the Department for Education announced it would be establishing a National Stability Forum for children’s social care (see box).

Stability is something Ofsted looks at closely when inspecting councils under the Inspection of Local Authority Children’s Services framework, as well as during inspections of fostering and adoption agencies and children’s homes, according to national director for social care Yvette Stanley.

“All children need to feel a sense of belonging and security, but this is especially important for the children in our care who are likely to have experienced significant trauma, upheaval and distress,” she says.

However, she acknowledges many local authorities are finding it increasingly difficult to achieve the kind of stability they want for all the children in their care, with shortages of foster carers and high staff turnover partly to blame.

National data on the stability of placements shows there has been little change in the past few years.

“Where we see local authorities with high variance above or below the national level, we’ll discuss that with the local authority,” says Stanley. “It’s the quality of the social work we find on inspection that enables us to see how well they are doing.

“We also look at whether leaders and managers are creating the environment to achieve a more stable workforce and if that makes a real difference for the children.”

The kind of information Ofsted looks at includes data on number of placement moves, changes of social worker and children placed a long way from home.

Important factors

Inspectors also consider a wide range of other factors that may help children feel settled and secure, says Stanley. This could be the information children are given about carers before they start living with them, whether or not they have a meaningful say in what happens in their lives, contact with relatives and friends, and whether they have been able to stay living with siblings.

“Our inspections take a broad view of children’s experiences. We do that partly by looking at data and case records, but mostly by speaking to children, carers and professionals,” says Stanley.

For her, perhaps the most crucial issue is the quality of relationships children have with the adults responsible for their care.

“This is fundamental; if children don’t feel valued and loved, and have no one they feel they can turn to, all the best systems and procedures won’t make up for that,” she says.

Other key factors that contribute to good stability for children include success in recruiting and supporting foster carers, good decisions about where children should live, and ensuring they get support at the right time, especially when it comes to education and emotional wellbeing.

“The best local authorities have really good, co-operative relationships with all agencies that support children, such as health, the police and schools,” says Stanley.

Having a stable workforce and ensuring children’s social workers have manageable caseloads is also key, she adds.

“If social workers are to build lasting and trusting relationships with children, they need the time and space to do good quality direct work,” says Stanley. “The best local authorities have been able to do this, and we have seen the benefits for children in several ‘good’ and ‘outstanding’ local authorities.”

Common trends in those performing less

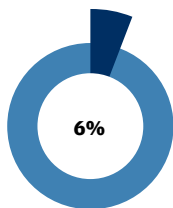
STABILITY FOR LOOKED-AFTER CHILDREN



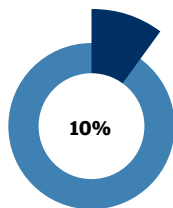
children experienced a care placement, school or social worker move in a year



children experienced a change in social worker in 2016/17



of children experienced a care placement, school and social worker move in 2016/17



of children experienced multiple care placement moves in 2016/17

Source: *Stability Index*, Children’s Commissioner for England, June 2018

NATIONAL FORUM WILL PROMOTE STABILITY FOR CHILDREN IN CARE



MONKEY BUSINESS/ADOBE STOCK

The DfE's new National Stability Forum will focus on improving outcomes for looked-after children

The Department for Education committed to establishing a National Stability Forum for children's social care in *Fostering Better Outcomes*, its response to the 2018 fostering stocktake and an inquiry into foster care by the education select committee.

According to the DfE, the new forum, which will be chaired by the department's director general, will enable a "national policy approach to improving looked-after children's outcomes", including looking at different approaches to permanence and care planning, and how these could be best used.

The move has been welcomed by organisations such as adoption and fostering charity The Adolescent and Children's Trust (TACT), which has long pushed for the establishment of such a body. "We know how important stability is, so this is a very welcome development," says TACT chief executive Andy Elvin. "It is great that the DfE has taken ownership of this by having such a high ranking civil servant chairing the forum."

He hopes the forum will "show leadership and promote practice and systems that focus on all children

in care", and adopt a stability index approach to monitor progress. "The one the children's commissioner has put forward is a good starting point," he says.

Key issues it needs to address include the "dysfunctional care market" and foster carer recruitment and retention, says Elvin, who would like to see the creation of wider permanence teams in all areas.

Ofsted's national director for social care Yvette Stanley is also pleased the forum will span "all available routes to permanence" and is keen to play an active role. "Try stopping me," she says.

She wants to see the forum provide "firm strategic leadership" and be a platform for sharing good practice and successful innovations.

It also needs to provide "constructive challenge as necessary where standards and performance needs raising or policy needs reviewing", she stresses.

"We have to make sure that children's voices are heard on this forum," she adds "Care-experienced children and young people really are the experts. It's so important we listen to them."

Local authorities should seek to learn from best practice elsewhere, she advises. "Above all, listen to children's views and, wherever possible, act on them."

FURTHER READING

Revised ILACS framework, Ofsted, September 2018

Fostering Better Outcomes, DfE, July 2018

The Children's Commissioner's Stability Index 2018, Office of the Children's Commissioner for England, June 2018

well include leadership instability, high staff turnover, a shortage of suitable carers and an overall "lack of ambition" for children in care and care leavers.

Corporate parents need to act more like "a pushy parent" by keeping a very close eye on children's progress and having high aspirations for them, stresses Stanley. They also need to work closely with schools and "challenge them where necessary".

"We know many children in care experience delays in finding places at the right school, despite statutory guidance," she says.

INSPECTIONS SHORTS



SCHOOLS Schools will receive a judgment for "quality of education" under plans for a new education inspection framework.

Proposals unveiled by Ofsted's chief inspector Amanda Spielman would see the category replace separate ratings for "outcomes for pupils" and "teaching, learning and assessment". Schools would be judged on "personal development", "behaviour and attitudes" and "leadership and management". Spielman said one goal of the framework was to reduce the emphasis on performance data such as test and exam results. A consultation on the draft proposals is due in January.



SOCIAL CARE Councils where children's services are deemed "inadequate" will receive shorter, less intensive re-inspections,

Ofsted has announced. The change to the Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) system means inadequate councils will no longer receive a three-week single inspection framework (SIF) visit when re-inspected, but instead get a standard two-week ILACS inspection. Ofsted's national director for social care Yvette Stanley said this new streamlined approach made sense "both for inspection and for the sector".



YOUTH JUSTICE Low staffing levels and heavy caseloads are affecting the quality of services provided by Bristol City Council's

Youth Offending Team (YOT), according to inspectors. HM Inspectorate of Probation rated the YOT "requires improvement" overall amid concerns the efforts of committed managers and frontline workers were being "severely hampered" by staffing shortages. The YOT was rated good in five areas, including leadership and governance, but "requires improvement" for seven areas including staffing. A full review of the service was launched in the summer.



EARLY YEARS Ofsted has published new guidance on the information and checks it requires for people connected with

registered childcare including childminder assistants, committee members and trustees. The guidance also sets out the requirements for people who live with current or prospective childminders and employees, such as cleaners who regularly work in a setting when children are present.



GENERAL All Ofsted inspection reports can now be accessed from a new website designed to be quicker and easier to use. The site at

www.reports.ofsted.gov.uk is mobile-friendly and has had a good response so far, says the regulator. "By making our reports easier and simpler to find, we hope that parents and learners will find it even more helpful to make informed choices," said Ofsted. "In the same way, providers will be able to access information about themselves or other providers more easily."

LEGAL UPDATE

Immigration status and schools' access to funding

Immigration status can have profound implications for schools' ability to access additional funds for children in need of support

In May 2018, the Department for Education published an article on access to free school meals. The article contained the statement: "free school meals are provided to all disadvantaged pupils who need them regardless of their nationality or immigration status".

However, this is not true. Undocumented children are children who require leave to remain in the UK but do not have it – it is possible to be undocumented even if you are born in the UK. These children are not entitled to free school meals, financial support for uniforms or help with transport to and from school. This lack of support can have serious ramifications for children's academic performance and integration, and negative consequences for the schools they attend.

Who is eligible?

All children in reception, year 1 and year 2 in England can receive free school meals.

Beyond that, any child whose parents receive one of the following "qualifying benefits" is eligible for free school meals:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Asylum support (under section 95)
- The guaranteed element of Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (provided you're not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190)
- Working Tax Credit run-on – paid for four weeks after a claimant stops qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit – if a claimant applies on or after 1 April 2018 your household income must be less than £7,400 a year (after tax and not including any benefits you get)

Who is not eligible?

In practice, children of parents with leave to remain but with "no recourse to public funds" (NRPF) conditions attached are not entitled to free school meals because their parents are

unable to claim any "qualifying benefits". In these cases, even where their child is a British citizen, that child will not be entitled to free school meals.

Parents who do not have leave to remain are also unable to claim qualifying benefits, meaning that their children, even where their child is a British citizen, are also not entitled to free school meals and other support.

What is the effect on local authorities?

Under section 17 Children Act 1989, local authorities must support children considered to be "in need", including those in families. Families often receive support because they are destitute and cannot access public funds, either because the parents are undocumented or because they have leave to remain with an NRPF condition. Each local authority has its own policy on free school meals, and some may make internal provision for free school meals for children receiving support under section 17. However, receipt of local authority support does not entitle a child to receive free school meals.

What is the effect on schools?

The pupil premium is additional funding designed to help disadvantaged pupils of all abilities perform better, and to close the gap between them and their peers. The pupil premium plus is enhanced needs-based funding provided to schools for the education, and education planning, of children in care.

Where a child is not entitled to free school meals, they are also not entitled to additional needs-based funding such as financial support for uniforms or transport costs, and the school is not paid the pupil premium on their behalf. Children in need supported under section 17 do not attract the pupil premium plus.

Although some local authorities or schools choose to fund meals for destitute migrant children without state funding to do so, such workarounds still leave schools deprived of access to vital additional support, without which children will continue to struggle with disadvantages that may have life-long impacts.

Challenge to consultation of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children

Help Refugees Ltd, R (on the application of) v Secretary of State for the Home Secretary [2018] EWCA Civ 2098

This case, brought by the charity Help Refugees Ltd, looked at the processes followed regarding the relocation of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children under section 67 of the Immigration Act 2016.

Lobbied for in response to the migration crisis of 2015-16, section 67 of the Immigration Act (also called the "Dubs amendment") established a scheme whereby the secretary of state was required to arrange for the relocation of "specified number" of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. That number was to be determined by the Secretary of State in consultation with local authorities. In September 2016, the Home Office asked each local authority to specify the number of these children they could accommodate.

By October, when the refugee camps in Calais were being cleared, children in France were assessed for transfer under section 67 against published criteria, such as age, length of time in Europe, and country of origin (with older Sudanese and Syrian children being allowed in). Those who satisfied the criteria were transferred; and those who did not were not. The latter were told simply that they had not met the eligibility criteria.

The charity challenged both the lawfulness of the consultation process and the adequacy of the reasons given to the rejected children. The charity argued that the Secretary Of State had (1) failed properly to discharge her duty to consult; (2) breached her common law duty of procedural fairness by failing to give adequate reasons to the rejected children.

The court found that the consultation and therefore the number of places allocated, by which the government arrived at the 480 figure, was lawful. However, the failure to provide sufficient information to children who were refused transfer under section 67 was found to be unlawful. It was not sufficient to tell rejected children that they were ineligible: they needed to know why this was the case in order to have a proper opportunity to challenge that decision.

A different outcome for the children who received these unlawful refusal decisions in these cases is now unlikely. The Home Office has said that it "will continue to work closely with participating states, local authorities and other partners to relocate eligible children here quickly and safely."

County lines: child victims of crime

Kamena Dorling, head of policy and public affairs at Coram Children's Legal Centre, examines new measures intended to improve the response to county lines and child criminal exploitation



Child victims of exploitation are often wrongly assumed to have made a choice to engage in criminal behaviour

The children's commissioner for England has estimated there are nearly 50,000 children in England involved in gang activity, with around 4,000 teenagers in London alone being exploited through "county lines". County lines is a police term used to describe urban gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs to suburban areas and market and coastal towns using dedicated mobile phone lines or "deal lines". More than 1,000 county line gangs are believed to operate in Britain making an estimated £1.8bn annual profit between them. These gangs exploit children and vulnerable adults, using coercion, intimidation and violence, to move and store drugs and money.

When interviewed recently the commissioner highlighted that "if we go back even a year ago we would have looked for county lines activity in urban areas and in some of the seaside towns. But now what we have got is every police force, including places like Cumbria and Northumberland, reporting county lines activity". One significant change has been that where previously children from the "export" urban areas were sent outside those areas to sell drugs, now more children are recruited locally.

Exploitation of children

Gangs use children because they are cheaper, more easily controlled and less likely to get picked up by the police. They specifically target

vulnerable children and those without support networks, including children with special educational needs, mental health problems or disabilities and children experiencing problems at home. They often target looked-after children, particularly those in residential children's homes. Children are groomed, threatened or tricked into trafficking drugs. They might be threatened physically, or their family members might be threatened. Gangs might also offer money, food, alcohol, clothes or improved status in return for the child's co-operation, and then

POINTS FOR PRACTICE

- Like other forms of abuse and exploitation, county lines exploitation can still be exploitation even if the activity appears consensual.
- Any practitioner working with a vulnerable person who they think may be at risk of county lines exploitation should follow their local safeguarding guidance and share this information with local authority social services. If they believe a person is in immediate risk of harm, you should contact the police.
- If they are a designated first responder for the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), they should also consider referring any young person or adult they suspect of being a potential victim of trafficking or modern slavery to the NRM.

manipulate them so that they feel they have a "debt" to pay off. Some vulnerable individuals are trafficked into remote markets to work while others are falsely imprisoned in their own homes, which have been taken over (cuckooed) using force or coercion.

New guidance

Tackling county lines requires engagement from a wide range of organisations and practitioners and in September revised government guidance for frontline staff who work with children, young people and potentially vulnerable adults was published. The guidance was produced by the Home Office in co-operation with other government departments, National Crime Agency, Local Government Association, National Police Chiefs' Council, Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, and the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime in London.

A recently launched County Lines Co-ordination Centre, based in Birmingham national police unit has also started working on county lines, aiming to help develop a "multi-agency approach" to identify and safeguard vulnerable young people caught up in the drugs trade, confiscate profits from dealers, and understand what drives demand for drugs.

County lines is a major, cross-cutting issue involving drugs, violence, gangs, safeguarding, criminal and sexual exploitation, modern slavery, and missing persons, and it can have a devastating impact on both children and communities. There is currently poor awareness and understanding of child criminal exploitation and victims are often mistakenly viewed as having made a "choice" to engage in criminal behaviour. This can be exacerbated by the child's refusal to recognise themselves as a victim. The fact that children are sent to different locations within the UK to carry out tasks for the gangs mean that this type of exploitation falls within the legal definition of trafficking in the Modern Slavery Act 2015, yet not all these vulnerable children are afforded the protection that victims of trafficking and exploitation should be given. Increased understanding on the part of a range of professionals is a key step to tackling child criminal exploitation.

For more information on county lines and child trafficking visit www.childrenslegalcentre.com/trafficking-children-county-lines/

RESEARCH

Report: Mental Health and Wellbeing Trends Among Children and Young People in the UK

Authors Jacqueline Pitchforth, Katie Fahy, Tamsin Ford, Miranda Wolpert, Russell Viner, Dougal Hargreaves

Published by Psychological Medicine, September 2018

SUMMARY

Demand for counselling services, hospital admissions for self-harm, and referrals to child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) have all increased significantly among children and young people in recent years. As there have been no detailed national studies into trends in the mental health of children and young people since 2007, academics at University College London, Imperial College London, the University of Exeter, and the Nuffield Trust decided to analyse trends in mental health outcomes among children and young people over the last two decades.

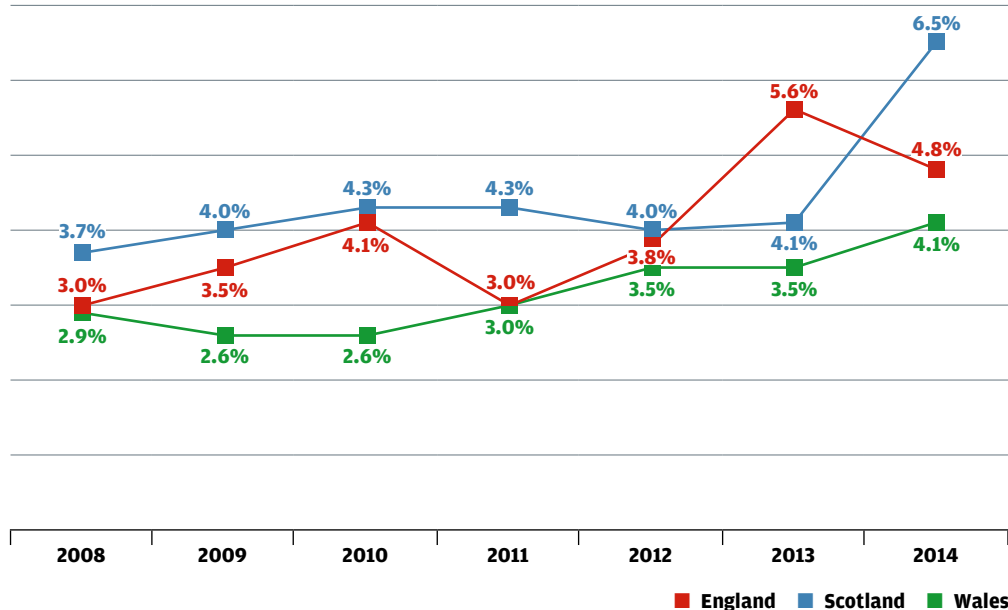
The researchers analysed data from 140,830 four- to 24-year-olds, gathered in 36 national surveys in England, Scotland and Wales between 1995 and 2014. They found significant increases in the proportion of children and young people reporting long-standing mental health conditions – or “currently-treated mental health conditions” in Wales – in each country over time. In 2008 – when there is comparable data for all three nations – three per cent of four- to 24-year-olds in England said they had a long-standing mental health condition, compared with 3.7 per cent in Scotland and 2.9 per cent in Wales. By 2014 these figures had grown to 4.8 per cent in England, 6.5 per cent in Scotland and 4.1 per cent in Wales. In England, available survey data shows reports of mental health conditions in children and young people increased six-fold over the study period from 1995. Available data in Scotland shows prevalence more than doubled over 11 years from 2003 and increased by more than half in Wales over seven years from 2008.

Young people aged 16 to 24 were the age group that saw the biggest increases in mental health issues, with those in England almost 10 times more likely to report a long-standing mental health condition in 2014 than in 1995 – 5.9 per cent in 2014 compared with 0.6 per cent in 1995. In older age groups boys and girls were just as likely to report a mental health condition, whereas boys aged four to 12 were more likely to report mental health issue than girls.

Although all three countries saw an increase in reported long-standing mental health

INCREASE IN MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE

Prevalence of mental health conditions in children and young people aged four to 24 – reported by young people or parents (rounded to nearest 0.1%)



Source: Health Survey for England; Scottish Health Survey; Welsh Health Survey

conditions, scales measuring psychological distress showed inconsistent trends. There were improvements for some age groups in England and Scotland, but deterioration in scores for 13- to 15-year-olds in Wales. In England results suggested wellbeing and psychological distress may have initially improved for 16- to 24-year-olds between 2010 and 2012 before deteriorating from 2012 to 2014.

The authors say it is possible that much of the reported increase in mental health conditions may reflect a narrowing of the gap between problems that exist and problems that are reported, perhaps due to increased awareness of mental health problems, or reduced stigma.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Most UK clinicians have responsibility for some patients aged 24 or below and should be aware of the increasing need to consider mental health diagnoses in this age group, say the researchers.

The differing trends between reported long-standing mental health conditions and questionnaire scores measuring emotional distress and wellbeing suggest an increasing

range of mental health issues may not be adequately captured by existing questionnaires. The report's findings reinforce the need to consider what constitutes a mental health problem for young people.

As many of the factors driving poor mental health lie beyond healthcare the researchers call for multi-agency working to address wider issues such as poverty, the impact of cuts to benefits and youth services, cyberbullying and early sexualisation.

FURTHER READING

Mental ill-health and Wellbeing at Age 14: Initial Findings from the Millennium Cohort Study Age 14 Survey, Praveetha Patalay and Emla Fitzsimons, May 2018, Centre for Longitudinal Studies

Youth Mental Health: New Economic Evidence, Martin Knapp and others, January 2016, London School of Economics and Political Science

Children and Young People's Mental Health: State of the Nation, Emily Frith, CentreForum, April 2016

FUNDING FOCUS

Enterprise Development Fund

The Enterprise Development Programme provides funding and training to charities operating in the youth and homelessness sectors in an attempt to make them more financially resilient.

The programme is run by Access – The Foundation for Social Investment and backed by £40m up to 2023. The youth and homelessness parts of the initiative are being managed by the Centre for Youth Impact and UK Youth.

The programme hopes to support organisations to think more creatively about using their people, skills and assets to generate additional income. It is particularly keen to support youth organisations get innovative ideas off the ground.

What are the different elements of the fund?

The programme has two major strands:

- **Enterprise Learning** will be run by the School for Social Entrepreneurs. This will run for six months and will help build organisations' capacity to understand social enterprise and develop business ideas. At the end of the programme, there is a £10,000 "match trading grant" available to kick start an idea.
- **Enterprise Grants** will be provided by the Social Investment Business – £1.85m for the youth and homeless sectors. There are two grants available: small grants of up to £10,000 to help test the feasibility of an idea or to design an action plan; and larger grants of up to £50,000, for organisations who have a specific enterprise in mind, or have already started work on it.

This programme is open to organisations that:

- Are charities or social enterprises
- Are based and work in England
- Have a desire to generate income through enterprise



- Can demonstrate clear social impact
- Work in either the homelessness or youth services sector.

What does the Enterprise Learning strand entail?

It will support the leaders of established charities and social enterprises, working in the youth or homelessness sectors, to develop their enterprise skills. Particular areas it will support include:

- Developing an income from trading (earned income)
- Leading a team for diversification and growth
- Overcoming strategic challenges
- Building a support network of peers and experts

Organisations accepted onto the free programme receive at least eight days of training for chief executives and directors, peer learning and expert support, and a grant of up to £10,000 from Access.

The deadline to apply is 1pm, Wednesday 31 October 2018.

What about the grants?

Available to youth and homelessness charities and social enterprises in England, Enterprise Grants will be used to develop or grow their enterprising activity and earned income. There are two different types of grants.

Feasibility grants of between £5-10,000 will enable organisations to investigate and develop an

enterprise proposition from the very earliest stage into a proposed delivery plan.

For organisations that already have an enterprise proposition, development grants of around £50,000 will be available to further develop the idea or scale it up to reach its potential.

The grants programme will be open on a rolling basis with Access expecting to receive applications until June 2019 but the exact date will depend on levels of demand for grants. Applications are made through an initial online expression of interest form: www.sibgroup.org.uk/enterprise-development-programme

What is the Enterprise Development Programme?

The Enterprise Development Programme is a five-year, £40m programme funded by Access and managed by a coalition of partners. Founding partners of Access include Big Lottery Fund, Big Society Capital and the Cabinet Office.

The initiative will provide a broad range of support for charities and social enterprises in England helping them make a transition to new enterprise models, or grow existing ones.

The programme will begin with grant and learning pilots in September 2018.

It is for organisations that are thinking of exploring new enterprise models and social investment but require financial or business support to make the transition.

Applicants are advised that enterprise models must have a clear and specific link to homelessness or youth services.

The programme is not looking to support general activities that could generate income, even if the profit from this could be put towards working with either homeless or young people.

Funding roundup

The **Jack Petchey Foundation** has supplied £180,000 worth of grants for projects supporting financial education for young people, young people in care, young carers and young people with mental health or housing problems. A panel of young people interviewed all the charities that applied for the open grants.

West London Zone is to expand thanks to funding from the **Life Chances Fund**. The community-based enterprise aims to expand its work to cover Hammersmith and Fulham, Kensington and Chelsea, Westminster, and Brent by September 2019. It is one of 22 projects to benefit from up to £48m from the fund.

A £1.27m fund run by the **London Evening Standard** newspaper will help young people affected by the Grenfell Tower disaster. The organisations seeking to improve the lives of young people affected by the blaze will have their grants assessed by a panel dominated by young people and local community members. Applicants will have to demonstrate that young people are directly involved in their governance and decision-making.

Local authorities will be able to bid for funding from a £5m government fund to boost the work their Troubled Families teams do with young people involved with gangs and serious youth violence. The **Supporting Families Against Youth Crime Fund**, launched by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government will allow keyworkers, community groups, teachers and other professionals to intervene earlier to help children and young people make positive life choices.

INTERNATIONAL FOCUS

Strength-based social work, Australia

Like the UK, Australia has seen rising demand for child protection and care services over the past five years. In response, the latest iteration of the federal government's 10-year child protection strategy focuses on early intervention to keep children and young people out of state care.

The South Australia state government has developed its own strategy to implementing the federal plan, one that takes a public health approach to tackling the causes of vulnerability and that aims to support families before crisis intervention is needed.

An innovative initiative developed in South Australia is helping families on the edge of care. Family by Family is a peer-to-peer programme that sees a troubled family receive support from a mentor family they are "matched" with. It has received state funding and is now expanding across the country.

REGULATION AND POLICY

In Australia, state and territory governments are responsible for the administration and operation of child protection services. Legislative acts in each state and territory govern the way such services are provided. The federal government's Department for Education largely oversees national policy on childcare, schools and skills development.

While child protection legislation is the jurisdiction of the six states and two territory governments, the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020 is a co-operative document that aims to provide a shared, national agenda for change in the way Australia manages child protection issues.

The National Framework outlines a long-term national



South Australia contains some of the most rural and arid parts of the country

approach to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of Australia's children. It aims to deliver a substantial and sustained reduction in levels of child abuse and neglect over time. It is being implemented through a series of three-year action plans, the third version of which covers the period from 2015 to 2018.

The plan includes three key strategies: early intervention, with a focus on the first 1,000 days of a child's life; helping young people in out-of-home care to thrive in adulthood; and organisations responding better to child safety concerns. Two cross-cutting areas of focus are: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families; and research and reporting.

Under the early intervention strategy, the federal government aims to improve awareness of child development and parenting and "normalise families asking for

help". It also aims to improve access to evidence-based family support services, particularly for new and vulnerable parents affected by mental health, substance misuse or domestic abuse.

In 2016, the South Australia government published *A Fresh Start*, a detailed plan for reforming child protection services in the state. This was updated in June 2018.

It establishes a broader child development system, which aims to avoid protection measures altogether by changing parent behaviour and addressing the social factors that lead to abuse and neglect. It will focus on working with families affected by mental health, substance misuse, poverty, violence, trauma and social isolation. New referral networks have been established to co-ordinate local services and connect children and families with support.

SOCIETY AND CULTURE

Children from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities are seven-times more likely as non-indigenous children to receive child protection services, according to data published by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIWH).

Around two-thirds of the 780,000 Australians of indigenous heritage live in remote areas. In comparison, just a quarter of the country's population of 24 million live in remote areas.

The institute's data also shows that children from rural and remote areas are four-times more likely to be subject to a substantiated child protection investigation than those from major cities.

A 2013 AIWH report details how early life outcomes for indigenous children are substantially worse than for their non-indigenous peers. They have higher mortality rates under five, higher prevalence of clinical, behavioural and emotional disorders, and poorer literacy and numeracy scores at school.

Indigenous children are also exposed to more risk factors that affect child development including smoking and drinking during pregnancy, poor parental health, poverty and lack of access to early childhood support.

The overall number of children involved in the care system in Australia has risen significantly over the past five years. Between 2012/13 and 2016/17, substantiated child protection investigations rose from 7.8 to 9.0 per 1,000 children; care and protection orders rose from 8.2 to 9.9 per 1,000; and out-of-home care rates rose from 7.7 to 8.7 per 1,000.

South Australia covers an area of nearly one million square kilometres containing some of the most rural and arid parts of the country. It has a population of 1.7



million citizens, three-quarters of whom live in the state capital Adelaide.

Safeguarding assessments in South Australia are undertaken by the Department for Child protection. A number of voluntary agencies provide family support services for those subject to child protection assessments.

Since 2013, the number of children subject to out-of-home care in South Australia has risen 38 per cent to 3,680, according to official data.

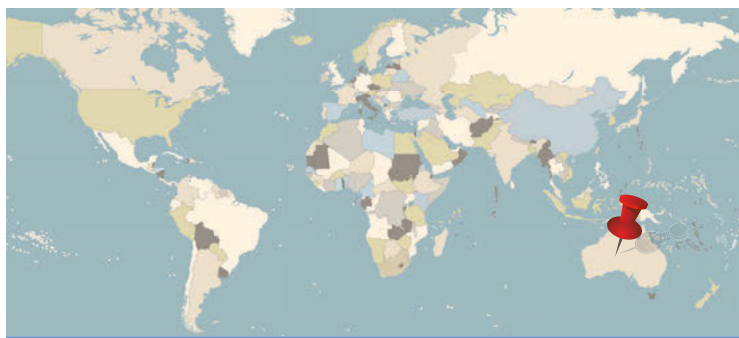
PRACTICE

Family by Family links families that have been through tough times – “sharing families” – with struggling families that want to change something in their life – “seeking families”.

The intervention can be used as a universal, targeted or statutory early intervention. Seeking families are provided with support for between 10 and 30 weeks depending on the issues being addressed.

Sharing families work with one to three seeking families at a time and receive support from trained professionals. They are on hand to provide advice and support round the clock.

The approach is strengths-focused, encouraging families to set behaviour-change goals to tackle issues from money management, substance misuse



FACTFILE

- Across Australia, the number of children being taken into care has risen over the past five years
- Proven child protection investigations are higher in rural areas where the majority of the indigenous population live
- The federal government has developed a national child protection strategy focused on early intervention which state governments are implementing
- In South Australia, a strength-based approach to supporting families has been developed
- Family by Family matches struggling families with mentor families to offer 24-hour support

and social isolation.

It was developed by The Australian Centre for Social Innovation (TACSI) and has been piloted in Adelaide since 2010. The ethos underpinning it is that families have fewer opportunities than in the past to acquire “internal family assets” such as motivation, communication and problem solving, while “external assets” – informal support, information and services – are also harder to access due to societal changes.

A shortage of social capital to draw on results in resilience dropping and stress building.

The main issues seeking families have reported include social isolation, single parenthood and psycho-social health challenges.

Family by Family uses a range of different evidence-based theories to help participants engage and change their behaviour. These include systems theory, Siegel’s interpersonal neurobiological theory, trans theoretical behaviour change and normalisation theory.

Family by Family has supported more than 1,500 families in northern, western and inner southern areas of Adelaide over the past eight years.

The only eligibility for Family by Family is that families have a child or children under 18 years living in the home, they want something to change and they live in a community where Family by Family is operating.

Family coaches support up to 15

sharing families to coach, and provide mentoring to up to 40 seeking families – who may never have experienced positive parenting themselves. Sharing Families can provide this through role modelling, peer-to-peer learning, celebrating successes and having tough talks while challenging behaviours by providing a new norm or way of being a family through building trusting relationships.

IMPACT

Family by Family says analysis of seeking families shows participation in the programme boosts confidence and self-agency, parenting skills and family health and wellbeing. It also reports a reduction in social isolation and stress levels due to improved coping skills.

In addition, child protection notifications reduced for participating families at six- and 12-month intervals post engagement.

Organisers claim that with coaches having contact with up to 100 vulnerable children at any one time, it has a cost-benefit ratio of 1:7.

Meanwhile, sharing families reported that their job and training opportunities improved as a result of taking part in the programme.

Family by Family is now being delivered in Sydney’s western suburbs.

By Derren Hayes

EXPERT VIEW: WORKING WITH FAMILIES TO FIND AND DELIVER SOLUTIONS

Ewan King, director of business development and delivery, the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE)

Australia and New Zealand have a long history of pioneering strengths-based approaches to social care. Local area co-ordination, which involves local co-ordinators supporting people to live

good lives, and family group conferencing, a process of working with families to develop solutions, were all started by Antipodeans.

At the heart of their approach is a strengths-based philosophy which believes that we can create positive change in families by working with them to find and deliver solutions that

work for them rather than try to fix problems by imposition. It looks at what people can bring to the table rather than relying solely on structured assessments linked to pre-defined packages of services.

Such strengths-based approaches are successfully transforming social care for families in many parts of the

UK. In Leeds, a restorative approach that emphasises the importance of working with families to find solutions; in Stockport, multidisciplinary teams in local communities work with families to provide tailored and holistic help.

Family by Family, although different from what we are used to, has potential to be developed successfully in the UK.

CASE STUDY 1 | Nationwide | Education

Schools address needs of young

Young carers face challenges in fully accessing education, so schools are being given the tools to better identify

PROJECT

Young Carers in Schools Award

PURPOSE

To equip schools to support young carers and recognise good practice

FUNDING

The award scheme is part of the wider Young Carers in Schools programme, which was kickstarted by the Queen’s Trust and the Big Lottery Fund. It is now funded by a range of businesses, charities and trusts

BACKGROUND

Being a young carer can be associated with challenges such as educational difficulties and bullying. The Children’s Society and the Carers Trust developed the Young Carers in Schools (YCiS) Award as a way of encouraging schools to support young carers.

ACTION

Schools are asked to complete a baseline review to help them reflect on current practice and identify steps that can be taken to improve identification and support of young carers. The YCiS Award consists of five standards designed to ensure there are assigned members of staff with responsibility for understanding and addressing young carers’ needs and awareness is raised throughout the school. The standards also require young carers to be identified, listened to, supported within the school and signposted to other services.

At bronze level, the focus is on developing support within school while silver sees schools begin to take a more multi-agency approach. A school at gold level will be taking a whole-family approach, ensuring young carers and their families have the support they need to reduce levels of



MONKEY BUSINESS/ADOBE STOCK

Assigned members of staff at the school have responsibility for understanding and addressing the needs of young carers

inappropriate caring and allow the young person to fully access education and leisure activities. Each level has a number of criteria which must be met, such as running and promoting drop-in sessions.

Schools have access to tools to

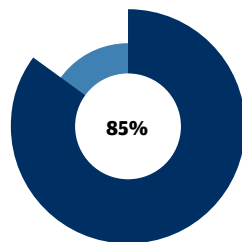
help them develop their provision to meet the criteria, such as an online step-by-step guide, a range of 30-minute webinars, an interactive map showing local services, and an e-newsletter listing training events and new resources.

The Carers Trust is working with local partners to design and roll out Parent and Young Carer Ambassador programmes in five areas, to promote the award. “Working with young carers services, we will recruit and train parents and young carers to be YCiS ambassadors,” says Anna Morris, England policy and development lead at the trust. Training could cover confidence-building sessions to speak to school staff, running assemblies to highlight young carers’ experiences or setting up peer support groups for young carers. The programme will include a “train-the-trainer” element.

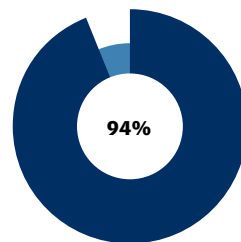
“Our programme shows identification and support of young carers in schools is important, and it works,” says Giles Meyer, chief executive of the Carers Trust. “In

POSITIVE OUTCOMES FOR YOUNG CARERS

Results from schools achieving a Young Carers in Schools Award



reported improvement in young carers' wellbeing



said staff were better able to identify support needs

Source: Coram Centre for Impact

carers

those in need of support

one case the number of young carers a school identified rose from two to 54. The main way young carers can come forward is through schools. A teacher might be the first professional a young carer feels they can approach and trust.”

OUTCOME

Currently 211 schools have achieved a Young Carers in Schools Award. The Coram Centre for Impact was funded by The Queen’s Trust to evaluate the programme, and published its findings in September this year. Almost three quarters – 73 per cent – of schools taking part in the programme thought young carers were now more engaged in the classroom, while 72 per cent thought they were more motivated to learn and 63 per cent said achievement had improved. In all, 63 per cent of schools said young carers were now less likely to have high absence rates, and 54 per cent said they were more likely to attend all lessons. Most schools – 85 per cent – said young carers’ wellbeing had improved, 83 per cent felt they were happier and 78 per cent thought they had better mental health.

The evaluation found 68 per cent of schools said they had identified more than half of their young carers as a result of the programme. On average participating schools identified 59 per cent of their young carers. In 94 per cent of schools staff said they now had a better understanding of the types of support young carers may need while 92 per cent reported staff were better able to spot the signs a pupil was a young carer.

If you think your project is worthy of inclusion, email supporting data to derren.hayes@markallengroup.com



CONTRASTWIKISTAT/ADOBE STOCK

Participants not in education, employment or training are supported by local employers to overcome barriers

CASE STUDY 2 | Surrey | Youth work

Service helps bridge work gap

PROJECT

Protected Work Experience

PURPOSE

To support disadvantaged young people who are not in education, employment or training (Neet) into further education, work or training

FUNDING

The programme was funded by a community grant from Walton on Thames Charity. The three-year project cost £10,816, with just under £5,000 paid to trainees and just over £6,000 to employers

BACKGROUND

Feedback from vulnerable young people engaged with Elmbridge Youth Support Service identified a need for more flexible work experience opportunities to bridge the gap between traditional two-week stints with fairly minimal input and lengthier traineeships and apprenticeships which come with more support but have entry requirements. The service went

on to develop its Protected Work Experience scheme with 14 young people taking part in the project between 2014 and 2017.

ACTION

Participants had a range of needs including major mental health difficulties and self-harm, and included young offenders and victims of sexual abuse. “Almost all had a severe lack of self-confidence and self-esteem, communications issues and fears about using public transport,” explains Brian Creese, community projects manager at Walton on Thames Charity, which funded the scheme.

The youth support service matched young people with local employers willing to offer 12-week work placements with a lot of support. Employers could receive up to £1,000 over the three months to cover expenses. Young people were also offered remuneration and paid expenses such as transport costs. Where appropriate, placements were

kept below a certain number of hours per week to avoid a reduction in benefits. An interview process was seen as important as it gave both parties a chance to meet and validated the placement as being a “job”.

Placement costs varied but the average was about £770 per young person. Some trainees did not stay for the whole 12 weeks while others spent more time on the project due to false starts.

OUTCOME

Ten of the 14 trainees – 70 per cent – completed their placements. In 10 cases employers were satisfied with their work and conduct. In 11 cases there was clear evidence of progression. Four trainees moved into education or training and at least eight progressed to employment. Participants gained vocational skills such as baking, graphics and video editing as well as increased confidence, responsibility, time management and sociability.

EVIDENCE AND IMPACT

Moving on from domestic abuse

The latest in a series about emerging safeguarding practice looks at how an NSPCC programme supports mothers and their children who have been victims of domestic abuse to move on together

The NSPCC works with children, young people and families who need help across the UK. Its services aim to protect children today, prevent abuse tomorrow and support wider efforts to make child cruelty a thing of the past. To improve understanding of best safeguarding practice, the NSPCC publishes evaluations of its services and interventions, and undertakes research and literature reviews. These are published on the NSPCC website (www.nspcc.org.uk/evidence) to contribute to the evidence on what works to protect children and families.

Around one in five children have been exposed to domestic abuse (Radford et al, 2011). Abuse can happen in any relationship and both males and females can be abused or be abusers. However, there is a strong body of evidence demonstrating that females are more likely to be affected by the most extreme forms of domestic abuse than males.

The lives of those recovering from domestic abuse can sometimes be chaotic or complicated. The impact of a child witnessing domestic abuse can be forgotten and the resulting behaviours a child might display can be misidentified. Research shows that mothers are not always in the right place to support their child due to the effects of abuse, which can also damage the mother-child relationship, and they may both struggle to talk about the abuse they experienced as they are worried about upsetting one another by revisiting these experiences.

Once a child is in a safe and stable environment, and crucially

with the right support, they are likely to be able to move on and live a life that isn't defined by their past. However, given the complexity of these cases, families often need extremely focused and time-intensive support to achieve sustainable positive outcomes. Too often specialist support services face resourcing issues that prevent them from being able to provide the level of support that children need to recover.

Impact on children

Children who have lived with domestic abuse are at risk of a range of negative outcomes and are more likely to be abused themselves. Even if this does not happen directly, witnessing domestic abuse has been found to be equally damaging psychologically. Research over the past 20 years shows that such children are more likely to have post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety and depression.

The NSPCC has developed a programme for mothers and children who have experienced domestic abuse called Domestic Abuse, Recovering Together

(DART). The NSPCC evaluated the effectiveness of DART between 2011 and 2016. The evaluation by Smith (2016) found that of the children that attended the DART programme, many were experiencing a range of difficulties.

The majority had “some” or “high” levels of emotional and behavioural difficulties on the strengths and difficulties questionnaire before they received the service. In interviews, mothers said they had struggled to manage their child’s behaviour before DART, with some children mirroring the perpetrators by being aggressive and intimidating towards their mother. Other children were suffering from anxiety. Some mothers were also concerned that their children had “normalised” the abusive behaviours they had witnessed.

DART support programme

DART is delivered over 10 weeks and takes a group work approach, with mothers and children meeting weekly for a two-hour group session, working together and in separate groups.

An evaluation of DART by the

NSPCC showed that the programme can have positive results. They found that as a result of completing the programme, substantially lower levels of need were reported by 51 per cent of children originally assessed with “high” or “moderate” behavioural and emotional difficulties.

Almost two thirds of mothers with low self-esteem also showed substantial improvements. Improved relationships were also reported by 88 per cent of children who originally said that their mothers struggled to show them affection.

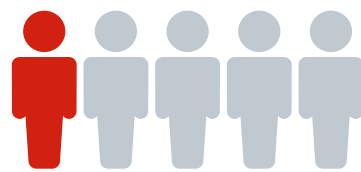
Learning from DART

Time and resource intensive
Research shows that child outcomes are better if the non-abusive parent is involved in their recovery (Humphreys et al 2006). The evaluation of DART showed how beneficial this can be too. However, this approach can be time and resource intensive. Four DART practitioners are needed to run the programme; two to work with the mother, and two to work with the child. As well as group work sessions, support is also offered to families in between sessions, over the phone or through home visits. This focused and intensive work means those delivering DART are able to achieve sustainable results for families. However, managing this requires a high ratio of staff to family members. That’s why the NSPCC made changes to DART so volunteers can now deliver the programme alongside trained practitioners.

Managing risk

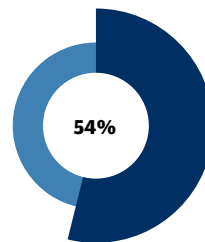
In cases that involve domestic abuse, identifying and managing

SCALE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



children in the UK have been exposed to domestic violence

Source: *Child abuse and neglect in the UK today*, Radford et al, 2011; Based on NSPCC research with 11-17 year olds.



of serious case reviews involve domestic abuse as a factor

Source: *Pathways to harm, pathways to protection: a triennial analysis of SCRs 2011-14*, Sidebotham et al, 2016



WAVEBREAK3/ADOBESTOCK

Focused and intensive work using DART has had sustainable results for families that have been victims of domestic abuse

risk is a priority; professionals must always ensure that children are safeguarded. Sometimes this can be hard as children may have ongoing contact with the perpetrator of abuse. Any risks associated with continued contact with the perpetrator must be carefully managed between the organisation delivering DART and children's services.

Overcoming logistical issues

Sometimes it can be difficult to foresee additional costs associated with delivering a programme like DART, such as paying for taxis for mothers and children to travel to and from the venue, particularly in geographically dispersed areas. Initial set-up costs for items like paints and paper and finding a suitable venue that has two rooms and good transport links can also be costly. The NSPCC has developed an implementation support package that provides guidance for organisations taking on DART, to help them to manage some of the logistical issues associated with setting up the service.

Implementing DART

The NSPCC's Scale-up Unit is supporting others to take on DART

through an implementation support package that combines training and consultancy. The package they developed was informed by their own experiences of delivering DART in their service centres, and of supporting others to implement and deliver the programme themselves.

What have they learned?

1. Groundwork is essential.

Organisations must be sure they're ready to take on and deliver the programme. A pre-implementation assessment looks at strategic and operational issues, literature and operational experience, to avoid stumbling blocks and lay the foundations for success.

2. Training is important. DART licence-holders have consistently reported how they value training from facilitators who have a wealth of experience in delivering the model. Learning from others about real-world issues and practical ways of overcoming them helps them to move past challenging elements.

3. Training may be important, but it isn't enough. Training is just one part of a blended support package. Opportunities

to share learning and troubleshoot problems with other adopting organisations are invaluable for ensuring implementation is successful and delivery is sustained.

4. Post-training support cultivates success.

There can be a gap between receiving training and delivering an intervention, and at times it is only at the point of "doing" that implementation queries arise. To counter this, the NSPCC works with partner agencies to provide telephone consultation until the end of their first DART group. This can tackle practical queries such as sourcing resources, or more contextual challenges such as how to tailor a session to a specific group's needs.

5. It is an ongoing relationship.

The NSPCC want as many children and families as possible to benefit from DART. This means that they are in a relationship with their partners for the long-term; true implementation isn't a quick process. To help with this they conduct visits annually with their partner agencies, because they want to understand how the model is working in their context.

Helping shape future policy

As well as working at a local level to support others to take on DART, the NSPCC recently responded to a Home Office consultation that sought views on the government's proposals to improve protection and support for the victims of domestic abuse nationally. The consultation will inform a draft Domestic Abuse Bill and the creation of a package of practical action.

To inform their contribution to the consultation, the NSPCC drew on the research and evidence they have amassed, which included the experiences of staff working on service delivery and working with children living with, or at risk of, domestic abuse.

The NSPCC also ran a consultation event in May for the Home Office that brought together organisations from the domestic abuse and children's sectors, research and government officials, to share their experience of supporting children and families experiencing domestic abuse. Importantly, young people were also given a voice. A steering group of young people came together to help the NSPCC identify the most important aspects of living with domestic abuse, bringing first-hand experience and challenge into the conversation. This fed directly into the consultation to help ensure that children remain a focus in any changes to legislation.

● *DART is a programme trademarked by the NSPCC*

FURTHER READING

Implementation evaluation of DART, NSPCC, 2017

Evaluation of DART, NSPCC, 2016

Child abuse and neglect in the UK today, NSPCC, 2011



PARTICIPATION IN ACTION

Young ambassadors use green spaces to bring their communities together

Name Inclusive Spaces

Provider Groundwork

Summary The national community charity's Young Green Ambassadors network developed an awareness week that promoted equal access to green spaces

Earlier this year, young people across the UK took part in a national week of action to celebrate and raise awareness of the value of local parks and green spaces in communities.

This week of action was the culmination of 18 months of planning through the "Groundwork Youth" project to mobilise 100 young people aged 16 to 24 to take environmental action in their communities by providing them with opportunities and experiences to develop their leadership skills.

Ideas for the week of action first emerged during a national youth summit in 2017, which brought delegates together in Birmingham to look at the biggest issues facing young people and develop plans to raise awareness of them.

It was at this event that a Groundwork Youth Advisory Board and the first cohort of "young green ambassadors" – young advocates of positive youth-led environmental action – came together to share ideas, experiences and kick-start a campaign.

Groundwork facilitated focus groups and workshops with both young people and community groups both on and offline. Research commissioned by the youth advisory board found that young people felt there were "far too many barriers" to engaging with their local community and making the most of their local outdoor spaces.

The Inclusive Spaces week of action was born as a result. Taking place from 23 to 29 July, it saw more than 50 events take place UK-wide. Centred around various themes – Mindful Monday, Trashy Tuesday, Feel Good Friday, to

"The events gave young people the opportunity to collaborate with their peers, and the wider community"



More than 100,000 young people were reached over the course of the UK-wide Inclusive Spaces week of events

name a few – the events gave young people the opportunity to collaborate with their peers, and the wider community and prove that taking an intergenerational approach to community action can work, if communities are given the right support.

The project was enhanced by working in partnership with organisations who have access to networks of community groups and young people – it reached more than 100,000 young people as a result.

The campaign showed that there is an appetite among young people for social justice and they do want to make their voices heard on the issues that matter to them. Those who responded to Groundwork's call to become an ambassador said they did so because they "wanted to make a difference" and many came with a sense of purpose and a clear plan on how they wanted to do so.

For example, participant Ross curated a Feel Good Friday Community Festival, led a number of intergenerational walks in Nottingham and gave interviews on the campaign to local media.

When reflecting on the week of action, it was clear that real and perceived barriers to different generations are still common – but there is also real talent and experience to be channelled from each generation to ensure green and open community spaces remain available to all.

By Stacey Aplin, Groundwork

My View

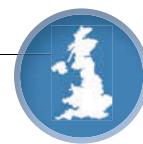
Mica, 18, Grimsby

"Groundwork's Inclusive Spaces campaign has been a unique experience which has allowed me to broaden my horizons in a number of ways from learning how to network professionally, how to run campaigns and advertise and how to write newspaper articles. It has also gently pushed me out of my comfort zone by allowing me to travel around the country independently to campaign meetings and make and work with new friends.

"For my events, I decided to go all out and put on an event each day. From a picnic in a local park where I gave a presentation on mental health and wellbeing to litter picks, community planting days and a festival – each day brought a new challenge.

"The skill I have developed the most would be my ability to speak in public and start conversations with new people, which I'm extremely proud of as one of the main reasons I took part was to meet people from around the country and to put some of my passions into practice.

"Personally I think it's a great experience to do community work as it counters stereotypes of young people. It has also helped me to value my efforts within the community."



LOCAL SPOTLIGHT

Hampshire County Council

Hampshire County Council has invested in innovation and the workforce to tackle growing pressures in children's services

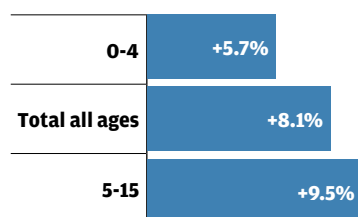
Hampshire County Council was one of the first children's services departments to gain Partners in Practice status. The "outstanding"-rated authority has gained a reputation for doing things differently – in recent years, it has rebuilt its children's homes, taken on the running of children's services for Isle of Wight Council, and developed its own strengths-based approach to social work.

Hampshire is one of the least deprived councils in the country, but its large geographical size means it has pockets of poverty. The department has 400 social workers and 1,000 staff split into eight districts with up to eight teams in each.

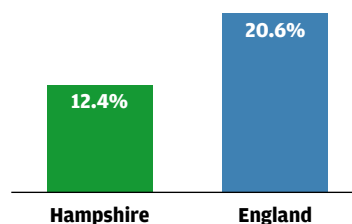
Increased funding and remodeling the early help offer has helped to meet rising costs, but director of children's services Steve Crocker says more needs to be done to reduce demand.

SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN HAMPSHIRE

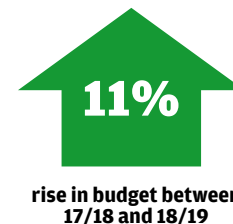
Population growth by 2024



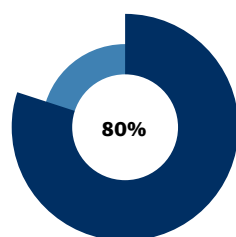
Under-16s living in poverty



Children's services spending

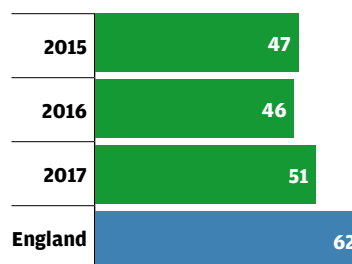


Children's centre closures

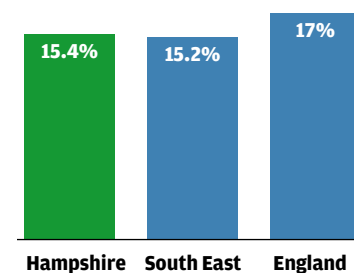


fall in number of children's centres since 2016

Looked-after children rate (per 10k)



Social work vacancies



Source: Hampshire County Council; Department for Education, Department for Work & Pensions

DCS VIEW: 'WE NEED AN URGENT DEBATE ON WHAT WE WANT FROM EARLY HELP'



Steve Crocker,
director of
children's services,
Hampshire
County Council

In Hampshire access to childcare is good and 91 per cent of schools are "good" or "outstanding", but for us to maintain standards we will need to work differently. Being part of the Partners in Practice programme helped us look at how we do children's social work, from early help through to residential care.

We've secured an additional £6.5m for social work as we believe investing in good-quality social work is the best way to drive down demand for high-level services. This will be used to recruit more staff, most of whom will come from our graduate entry scheme.

This will help us to further reduce caseloads by an average of six per worker – they are currently at an average of 20.

The rise in the number of children in care has largely been driven by the council deciding to take nearly 100 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children through the national transfer protocol. We're also now seeing a rise in children on care orders placed at home possibly linked to meeting the 26-week public law outline target. If you take these two factors out, the rise in care numbers would be unexceptional.

We took the decision to maintain an in-house model of residential child care.

"We've identified the most effective aspects of social work models to create a Hampshire approach"

This ensures we are in control of the quality of care, and have a good handle on costs and how we commission.

We've also introduced a system called Pillars of Parenting across all our homes, six of which are newly built while the other has been refurbished. The children have worked closely with the architects to decide on the location of doors and windows, and type of bathrooms. It is a fantastic environment to grow up in and staff are positive about them.

The next phase of our development starts in the autumn when we roll out our new model of social work practice. Historically we've not had a single model of practice we've hung our hat on, but being involved in Partners in Practice changed that. I wasn't sure at first but the more work we've done the more enthusiastic I've become.

We've worked with academics to

identify the most effective aspects of social work models to create a Hampshire approach. It is a strengths-based approach to building relationships and includes restorative practice. We've learned a lot from how our youth offending team (YOT) works in partnership across agencies, and we've been looking at how mental health, police and health visiting services can work more closely with social care.

Applying the model of multi-agency working has to be the way ahead. However, nationally we also need a wide-ranging conversation about what we want from early help and what that looks like. The value of targeted early help is not in doubt, but the bigger ambition of how we support struggling families needs to be debated quickly before the cuts councils are being forced to make sweep it away altogether.

Promoting core British Values

Promoting fundamental British Values in the Early Years helps early education professionals, leaders and managers understand their responsibility to fulfil the Prevent duty, prevent children from the risk of radicalisation and foster British values.

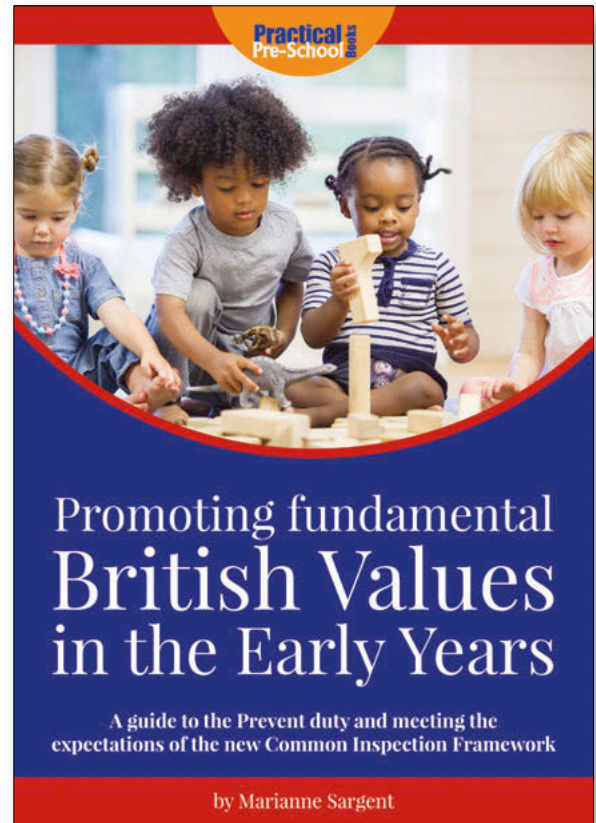
The book includes a clear overview of legislation and policy documents, with a detailed explanation of the *Prevent duty* and its implications on **safeguarding**, **child protection** and **curriculum delivery**.

With practical and effective ways to promote core British values in the early years, it also offers guidance on how educators can produce evidence that they are meeting the Prevent duty.

It explains what the Government means by 'fundamental British values' and gives detailed advice on incorporating these into your daily teaching session.

With focused sections on the four core values, namely:

- ✓ **Democracy**
- ✓ **The rule of law**
- ✓ **Individual liberty**
- ✓ **Mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs.**



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The Ferret

Sniffing out stories that have gone to ground



English authorities under global scrutiny

On 18 August, the *New York Times* ran a story on its front page about the funding woes of Northampton council. That's not Northampton in Massachusetts, nor the one in Pennsylvania. The area in question is our very own Northamptonshire County Council in the East Midlands. Rarely can an English local authority have been the subject of a front page story in the *New York Times*.

The article was highlighting the situation in Northamptonshire to illustrate the wider funding crisis affecting local government in England. The in-depth analysis of the council's funding crisis – since February, it has been run by government-appointed officials and a moratorium imposed on spending other than statutory duties – assesses the role played by austerity in public sector finances and the impact it has had on local people. Despite years of cuts and closures to children's centres, youth clubs and playground facilities, one Tory councillor told the paper it was the prospect of all the council's libraries being closed that tipped him over the edge.

The situation has been portrayed by commentators as either gross mismanagement or a bellwether for the travails of councils across the land. The truth is probably a bit of both. It would seem that the world is now watching to see if other English councils suffer the same fate as Northamptonshire.



Three cheers for children's champion Kemmis

A big round of applause for children's services stalwart John Kemmis, who has been recognised for a lifetime dedicated to supporting children and young people. During a career that included 16 years at Voice, 12 of them as chief executive, he successfully lobbied for a legal right to advocacy for young people, helped establish the National Children's Advocacy Consortium and played an instrumental role in the development of national standards for children's advocacy services. He becomes the inaugural winner of the Stand Out Children's Advocacy Award at the annual National Advocacy Awards. John – the Ferret salutes you!

School ad pushing posh cars withdrawn

Flick through most glossy magazines at this time of year and you'll find an array of adverts for independent schools, keen to appeal to parents who can afford to pay for their child to get a private education. Most will talk up their outstanding academic results, world-class sports facilities and a learning culture that encourages deep thinking and leadership skills. All high-brow stuff that will justify fees of £23,000 a year.

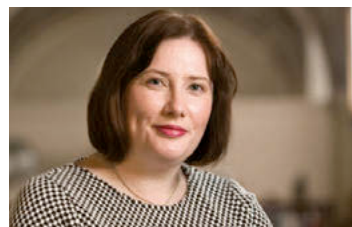
However, Vinehall School in East Sussex took a more pragmatic approach to its marketing campaign – rather than selling the idea of developing a future Prime Minister or Nobel Prize winner, going to the school will mean a child can afford a better car than their parents!

The advert recounts the sad tale of a child rocking up to Vinehall's open day in his dad's Volvo and looking wistfully at the head's Jaguar. After graduating and doing

“very well in business”, the boy buys his dad a Jag as a retirement gift. Aspirational stuff!

Ferret can report that the advert was withdrawn.

Labour educates Tories on children's issues



Despite the furore over anti-Semitism and uncertainty surrounding Brexit, there was plenty of camaraderie on show at the Labour Party conference in Liverpool. The shadow education team were certainly singing from the same hymn sheet, taking it in turns to have a dig at government ministers.

Emma Lewell-Buck (pictured) recounted a recent Commons debate with opposite number Nadhim

Zahawi. “Like most days, I left angry and confused – he didn't understand what children in need actually meant,” she told a fringe meeting on children's services funding.

She passed the baton to shadow childcare minister Tracy Brabin who criticised the government's early years policies and described Zahawi as “hopeless”. “We're holding the government's feet to the fire – but we're losing children's ministers hand over fist,” she added in reference to there being three children's ministers in 18 months.

Finally, ex-shadow education secretary Lucy Powell questioned how out of touch ministers are when it comes to the plight of children's centres, hundreds of which have closed.

She recounted taking Education Secretary Damian Hinds on a visit of a children's centre in her Manchester Central constituency. “He asked, ‘who pays for all this?’, to which I replied ‘the council’. It was like it was news to him.”

Ferret thinks the Secretary of State needs to get out more!

Plug the gap – ‘because the kids are worth it’

Anntionette Bramble, the new chair of the Local Government Association children and young people board, was kept busy in Liverpool. The lead member for children's services at Hackney Council, spoke at numerous fringe events and showed she has a few gags in her locker too.

She channelled the spirit of L'Oréal when discussing why the government needs to address the £3bn funding gap for children's services – “because the kids are worth it”. And when discussing the difficulties young people face in accessing support, she asked a delegate at the back obscured by a pillar to move so she could see her. “That's you having to navigate a structural problem – that's what young people are having to navigate,” she added.

APPOINTMENTS

Booking deadline: Wednesday 4pm

Copy to set: Thursday 10am

Complete artwork: Thursday 4pm

Contacts: Monica Ogola Tel: 020 7501 6784 Fax: 020 7733 2325

email: monica.ogola@markallengroup.com

Production: Jamie Hodgskin Tel: 020 7501 6677,
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