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# Making young minds matter: Reshaping support services for young people in the new Parliament

*A Report by ResPublica for Barnardo's  
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## About the Author

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## Foreword *by Javed Khan, Chief Executive, Barnardo's*

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I sincerely welcome this policy paper from ResPublica, which astutely and incisively draws attention to the crucial role of support services for young people, and the organisations like Barnardo's which deliver them, in building a country which can offer all our children a real prospect of happiness, health, and prosperity.

As we begin a new Parliament, there is an opportunity to reflect on the sort of society we hope to deliver for our young people as they enter adulthood. Despite the enormous bureaucratic and legislative challenges posed by Brexit and a hung Parliament, the new Government

must not lose sight of nor lower its ambitions for its domestic programme.

This is particularly important for those vulnerable children and young people who are most in need of help from the state. It is they who will either flourish or falter as a result of the support we offer them now. Barnardo's has long recognised this, having consistently championed the interests and protected the welfare of children for over 150 years. Today, we support over 270,000 children, young people, parents and carers every year – a figure we expect to see increase considerably in the years ahead.

In January 2017, I heard the Prime Minister outline her assessment of the divisions and injustices in British society in a speech to the Charity Commission. Barnardo's welcomes not just the ambition of this speech but also its choice of venue. Charities and government have a responsibility to work together to address important social challenges.

This paper is clear that without using the knowledge and resources of the voluntary sector, and especially at-scale organisations like Barnardo's, Government will struggle to deliver on its vision. In particular, I strongly welcome the paper's call for a new way of working between service commissioners and the voluntary sector, where we begin to co-produce the response to societal injustices.

The young people and their families supported by Barnardo's know first-hand the "burning injustices" that government wants to address. Last year we launched our Corporate Strategy to 2025, outlining a blueprint for the long-term approach needed to transform the lives of the UK's most vulnerable children. I am delighted that this paper echoes many themes found in our Strategy, and its recommendations offer valuable thoughts on how these themes might be put into practice.

This paper also sets out a clear-sighted picture of how the help we provide as a country to our most vulnerable children and young people will need

to change in the coming years. I call on the institutions of national and local government to seize this opportunity and accompany us as we undertake the task of converting its ambitions into reality.



# 1. Introduction

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The theme of social divisions and inequality of opportunity within the UK has taken on greater political significance in recent years, in large part as a result of last year's vote to leave the European Union as well as the lasting effects of the Great Recession of 2008. This has been reflected in the policy programmes and language of both major national political parties.

The Conservative Party manifesto at the recent General Election for example promised to "make Britain the world's Great Meritocracy", arguing that "government can and should be a force

for good" in helping people to overcome the obstacles they must confront in achieving their full potential.<sup>1</sup> It stressed the "obligations" held by members of a society towards one another, claiming that "social division, injustice, [and] unfairness" are signs of a state and citizenry failing to meet those obligations.

The Labour Party's manifesto meanwhile argued for "a fairer Britain where no one is held back" and pledged to build a country where everybody is able "to live their lives with the dignity they deserve".<sup>2</sup> It placed great emphasis on the social responsibilities of the powerful

and well-off, and by extension, their duty to support the state in its efforts to secure opportunity for every citizen.

The rhetoric of both Government and Opposition is therefore founded on a shared belief in the potential for societal solidarity (and public policy which can express this) to provide a platform which can help every individual member of that society to succeed, regardless of the difficulties they face. This is a shift in our politics which, despite the uncertainty caused by the recent General Election result, looks set to stay.

This belief must necessarily lead to a vision of society where young people confronting disadvantage of any kind – be it poverty, experience of trauma, mental illness, or any other factor – are no less able to prosper and flourish than their more fortunate peers; indeed, where the state considers itself to have a responsibility to take action to ensure this is the case.

The Government should therefore take the opportunity presented by the election of a new Parliament to renew its focus on supporting young people facing difficulty and disadvantage, providing them with the right support early in their lives so that they have the best possible chance of growing up to become active and valued contributors to society.

But we also make the case that it is not enough just to help those children in need of support now. Too many young people in Britain today will see their life chances harmed as a result of factors beyond their control such as their parents' mental ill health, the long-term effects of abusive or neglectful parenting, or an unexpected emotional crisis which is allowed to persist or intensify. Yet the needs of these children may not be immediately apparent, or their situation may not have yet developed to the point where formal support is appropriate, allowing the pernicious deterioration of their circumstances and future prospects to continue and their needs to remain unaddressed.

Designing and providing the services which can help to avert this state of affairs should be seen as integral to the attempt to tackle social injustice and build a country so that every young person entering adulthood has a chance to succeed. Government must look to address these factors at their root causes, building a system of service provision which prevents these problems wherever possible, provides early support to prevent their escalation to a critical level, and which draws directly on the experience of young people who are facing this crucial tipping point in their lives.

We call on the Government to make an ambitious pledge to children and young people, spanning the current Parliament and beyond: that it will provide, at the

earliest opportunity, the help they need to allow them to make their fullest possible contribution to society, so that they can in turn share in the rewards. Despite the complexities presented by the task of withdrawal from the European Union, as well as the further complication of a hung Parliament, this agenda is too important to be left on the shelf.

Yet this is not a task government can undertake without support. We therefore welcome the Prime Minister's ambition for the state to "harness the full potential of charities and social enterprises ... to tackle some of the biggest social challenges in our country".<sup>3</sup> Children's charities already play a major role in delivering the frontline support which many young people and their families rely on; their knowledge and experience represents an invaluable asset in efforts to improve the lives of vulnerable young people.

Local government too must be seen as a critical actor in this process. The regional devolution agenda of the past three years has already fundamentally altered the relationship between national and local government in many parts of England. The potential for instability at Westminster under a hung Parliament, and the resource demands imposed on national government by Brexit, reducing its capacity to act purposefully to achieve its social reform goals, require this relationship to be examined again, and for additional

power and autonomy to be placed in the hands of local authorities (working in partnership with service providers).

We propose three themes to underpin the support offered to young people in this Parliament and beyond: support built around early, proactive intervention; service providers as equal partners in service design and delivery; and young people shaping the support they receive.

We believe these principles represent the correct framework through which to approach the task of implementing the pledge to vulnerable children and young people described above. Our proposals in this paper reflect these three principles, and are rooted in the politics of social solidarity and practical communitarianism now advanced, in their different ways, by both Government and Opposition.

We illustrate the need and rationale for the reforms we advocate with reference to two areas of policy focus in particular: children in or leaving care; and young people's mental and emotional health and wellbeing.

The Prime Minister herself has named mental health as one of the "burning injustices" she has pledged her government will fight, while the Health Secretary has referred to young people's mental health services as "possibly the biggest single area of weakness in NHS provision at the moment".<sup>4</sup> A green

paper on children's mental health is expected to be published later this year, yet concerns remain about out-of-date official data on the incidence of mental health problems among young people<sup>5</sup> and systemic under-funding.

It is estimated that three quarters of adult mental health problems begin before the age of 18. However, in the face of rising caseloads and budget cuts, it is estimated that over a quarter of young people referred to Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) across England in 2015 were not allocated treatment,<sup>6</sup> while a third of secondary schools are planning to reduce mental health support this year.<sup>7</sup> We believe that the increasing acknowledgement of the prevalence and severity of mental health difficulties among young people across all parties makes this a critical moment for the Government to take decisive action on this front.

The recent case of an unnamed 17 year old girl draws attention to the state of mental health provision in the UK. 'Girl X', despite posing a risk to her own life, was about to be released from the custody of a secure unit with no guaranteed place with a specialist children and adolescent mental health services inpatient unit, until the extraordinary judicial intervention of Sir James Munby, President of the High Court's family division, a development which according to Lord Justice Munby demonstrated the "disgraceful and

utterly shaming lack of proper provision in this country of clinical, residential and other support services". Although this case is extreme in both its severity and the corresponding level of support required, Lord Justice Munby's comments are a further indication of the need for greater and immediate priority to be given to mental health provision for young people in the UK.

The number of children who have been taken in to care meanwhile has risen by 7% in recent years. The evidence on the difficulties faced by children in care shows that they face a range of social difficulties, including poorer educational outcomes, above-average occurrence of mental health issues (which are around four times more likely), and increased difficulty in transitioning into employment (34% of care leavers are not in education, employment or training at the age of 19 compared to 15.5% of 18 year-olds among the population as a whole).<sup>8</sup>

This diminution of life prospects remains a persistent barrier to a society where opportunity is genuinely open to all, despite long-standing recognition of the gap between looked-after children and their peers. Government must consider how to improve outcomes for children already in care, but also what it can do to prevent children being taken into care in the first place.

This report offers a vision of what a support system built around the three themes we articulate might look like. The measures we recommend should be considered as a vision of how these principles can inform the work of national and local government, in partnership with charities and other institutions of civil society, to secure a better future for young people in care, confronting mental health problems, or facing any other obstacle to their future wellbeing and success.

*Note: almost all issues affecting the support services provided to children covered in this report are matters for the devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Unless otherwise stated, this paper's recommendations are therefore designed to extend only to England – though we also consider what lessons might be learned from the experience of the devolved nations.*



## 2. Support for Children and Families in the 2017 Parliament – Three Themes

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We outline below three key themes, which we argue should be at the heart of any reform of the support services provided by the state to young people and their families over the course of the new Parliament. These are:

- Support built around early, proactive intervention;
- Service providers as equal partners in service design and delivery;
- Young people shaping the support they receive.

### *Why these themes matter*

#### *Early intervention*

When considering how, as a society, we can best support our young people, we must first recognise that preventing problems is better than solving them after they have arisen, in the interests of both financial efficiency but also – more importantly – better outcomes for young people and their families.<sup>9</sup>

For example, it is estimated that three quarters of adult mental health problems begin before the age of 18.<sup>10</sup> Key indicators of children more likely to experience mental health difficulties are clearly identifiable, and include parental experience of mental health problems, children experiencing or witnessing domestic abuse, and looked-after children.<sup>11</sup> Mental health problems during or before adolescence are in turn associated with poorer later-life outcomes including higher risk of economic inactivity and criminal activity, which also incur a cost to the public purse.<sup>12</sup>

It is not only imperative, but also achievable, to intervene as soon as or even before young people present with mental health difficulties, to ensure these difficulties are contained or prevented as far as possible. Yet in the face of rising caseloads and budget cuts, priority is being given to treating young people who have already developed a severe difficulty: it is estimated that over a quarter of young people referred to Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) across England in 2015 were not allocated treatment,<sup>13</sup> while only 16% of annual spending on children and young people's mental health is spent on community-based early intervention.<sup>14</sup>

*[See figure 1]*

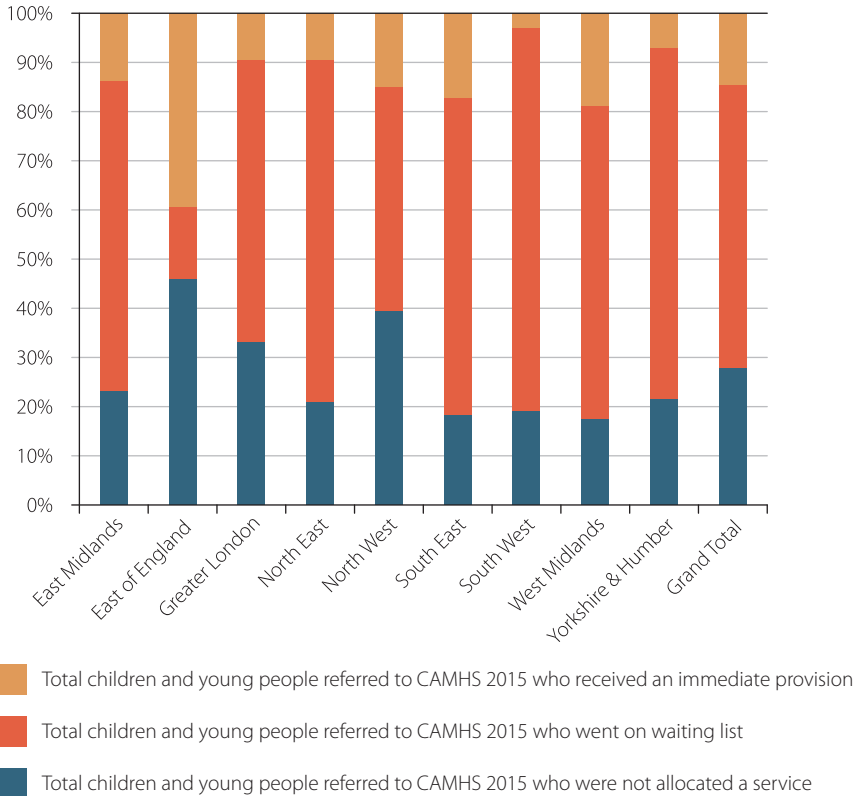
Early and proactive intervention also matters for children in care or on the edge of care. As noted in the Introduction, looked-after children face poorer expected

outcomes in a range of areas than their non-looked-after peers, and so should receive early and intensive support to help mitigate or avoid these difficulties. Where possible, the ambition should be to prevent children being taken into care in the first place,<sup>16</sup> yet this relies on signs that families are in difficulty being spotted early and the appropriate action being taken to support them.

At present, early intervention is too often thought of as an attribute of certain isolated and individual programmes, such as the Family Nurse Partnership, rather than a systemic principle underpinning how support is conceived and delivered. If instead early intervention can move from the periphery of service delivery to the core of how services are designed and implemented, there is an opportunity to address many of the issues which drive young people towards support services – before these issues can harm the next generation's life chances. Some of the barriers to achieving this, and how these might be overcome, are explored in the following chapter.

The intuitive appeal of a systemic early intervention approach of this kind is beginning to be backed up with evidence from the albeit limited number of areas where it is being put into practice. In Newport for example, where the City Council has partnered with Barnardo's on its Integrated Family Support Service model to develop "a range of family

Figure 1: Outcomes from referrals to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services by English region, 2015



Source: Children's Commissioner for England<sup>15</sup>

support services capable of ... actively preventing the need for care and support",<sup>17</sup> rates of referral to social services have been significantly reduced, and increased

numbers of children have been successfully kept out of care.<sup>18</sup> We explore this model in more detail elsewhere in this report.

### ***Service providers as equal partners***

While the ambition should always be for prevention rather than cure, it is not always possible to anticipate or catch problems in advance. Alongside early intervention activity, there must be a parallel focus on ensuring the support provided to young people in immediate need of help is as effective as it can possibly be.

One of the enduring themes of the public service reform debate, including the recent city region devolution process in England, is how to better bring together and coordinate the activity of different local authority departments and external agencies involved in providing services, overcoming the siloed nature of central government and the impact of this on how money flows to local authorities and other agencies. "Integrating" services in this way, it is claimed, will mean a more joined-up experience for the service user and improve system outcomes.<sup>19</sup>

From a young person's perspective, fragmentation (as opposed to integration) of services creates delay, and increases the chance that they will fall between the gaps in the system. For instance, the complexity of local mental health support pathways for young people (created by multiple organisations having responsibility for commissioning and delivering different tier services) contributes to the average ten-year delay between a young person's first symptoms of poor mental health and

their receiving help, as services too often fail to connect in a way which ensures follow-up and a clear next step for families if support is refused by one body.<sup>20</sup>

For looked-after children and children on the edge of care, service fragmentation poses difficulties in ensuring that overlaps between their often diverse and complex needs (including in mental health) are appropriately considered, so that the impact of the support they are offered can be maximised. An integrated approach can help by recognising these overlaps, adjusting the support offer to take account of these, and thereby delivering improved outcomes.

Partnership working between the local authority and outside bodies who are involved in critical service areas – including GPs and schools – is clearly a vital step towards avoiding fragmentation and achieving integration. Yet by the same logic, a closer relationship must also be pursued between local authorities and local civil society organisations, including charities, who are not legally or financially connected to local or national government but whose frontline role in delivering services gives them privileged insight into the on-the-ground user experience and systems functionality.

Closer collaboration between commissioners and civil society could remove inefficiencies not only in service delivery but also in the process of forming

the arrangements for that service delivery in the first place. Too often at present, voluntary sector organisations are forced to use their limited funds (often sourced through donations intended to facilitate frontline work) to formulate bids in response to briefs drawn up behind closed doors by commissioners, in competition with other potential providers, all but one of which are unsuccessful. These sunk costs represent a waste of the sector's time, effort, and money on an unjustifiable scale, since it is far from clear that this competitive process drives up the quality of final service provision.

A different way of working, drawing charities and other service providers into the commissioning process at an earlier stage through strategic partnerships or other vehicles for collaboration (explored further below), could eliminate this unproductive competition and instead free up service providers to concentrate more of their resources on providing the highest quality of support for young people and their families – as well as ensuring their knowledge and experience is reflected in the final agreement so that it delivers as fully as possible for service beneficiaries.

In looking to the future of this crucial relationship, it is important to consider the English devolution agenda of the last three years, which will allow local government to pursue new ways of working with charities and other civil society organisations in delivering public services more closely

tailored to local circumstances and the needs of local people. We explore this theme in more detail below.

### *Influence and control for young people*

Ultimately, those who can best describe the gap in young people's lives that support services should be aiming to fill are young people themselves. High-level discussions of structural administration cannot exist in a vacuum: if young people feel the support they are offered does not meet their needs, or is stigmatising or otherwise off-putting, they will fail to take up or engage fully with that support as a result. By contrast, if their experiences and expectations are properly taken into account by service commissioners and providers and fed back into practice, problems may be identified and resolved more easily.

For example, evidence suggests that young people, even with the most acute levels of need, are unwilling to engage with mental health services based in NHS buildings, and consequently may avoid seeking a referral to these services or fail to attend their appointment.<sup>21</sup> Better understanding of the reasons why this is the case, and/or a sense of what more attractive alternative provision might look like, could be gleaned from improved engagement with young people.

The charity YoungMinds has drawn attention to the importance for looked-after children in particular of meaningful

participation in decision-making over their support. They note that such participation is “essential to young people’s psychological and emotional development and significantly contributes to building the resilience they will need for the remainder of their childhood and adult lives”.<sup>22</sup>

We believe all local authorities should take steps to involve young people more fully in the service design process. Some councils have advanced further down this path than others, for example through the use of “young inspectors”; yet while this is certainly a valuable exercise (as long as their response is used to inform future practice, and does not collapse into the tokenism which characterises too many “engagement” strategies at present), it remains a mainly retrospective rather than proactive approach to engagement.

In particular, it is vital that children from ethnic minority families, who are LGBT, disabled, or who have other specific needs, are not marginalised in discussions about how services can better meet young people’s needs. In the interests of recognising the whole spectrum of needs presented by the diversity of children in need of support, it is vital that these children are given a voice, in a way that feels safe to them.

Wherever possible, services should look to go beyond simple engagement with young people and give them (a degree of) control over the support

they receive, allowing them to access it when and where they feel they need it, and allowing them choice in what form that support takes. Digital technology offers considerable opportunities in this regard, and it is imperative that local authorities are properly supported to make the best and fullest use of this. This is explored further below.

### ***How reform can deliver on these ambitions***

We believe these three themes – covering both the content of the support we offer as a society to young people and families in need, and the process by which it is designed and delivered – should underpin any changes to the support landscape over the coming Parliament. Below, we explore how each of these three themes can be incorporated into policy and practice, reviewing evidence and best practice as well as offering our own suggestions.

## *(i) Support built around early, proactive intervention*

### *Prioritising (and funding) early intervention*

Local authority spending on early intervention services for children, young people and families as a whole has fallen by 31% in real terms between 2011 and 2016.<sup>23</sup> National and local political and civil society leaders must get behind the early intervention agenda if this is to be reversed. The attitude of the newly-elected Metro Mayors could be particularly decisive, given their formal and agenda-setting power at the local level; we urge them to publicly back this approach, and make it a key part of their programmes for office.

However, leadership alone will not be enough in an environment where local government's financial resources remain as depleted as in recent years. There are deep concerns about the long-term viability of local government funding, with a projected overall funding gap of £5.8 billion by 2020,<sup>24</sup> and a projected funding gap of £2 billion specifically in children's services by the same date.<sup>25</sup>

The All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Children has found that in the past five years, rising demand for children's services combined with the fall in local authorities' spending power has resulted in an increasing concentration of resources towards children who have

already suffered abuse or neglect, and a corresponding fall in resources allocated "for early intervention and prevention, including support for families", and "a shift towards late intervention".<sup>26</sup> Without further funding being provided to avert the impending crisis in children's social care, this trend will only continue.

A second way in which the financial uncertainty of the kind local government has experienced in recent years has harmed early intervention efforts is through the shortening of the contracts awarded to service providers it has caused.<sup>27</sup> Because of the shorter contract cycle, it is in turn harder for an early intervention approach to be embedded or demonstrate its effectiveness, meaning that early intervention then is neglected in practice.

It is imperative that the Government comes together with local authorities as a matter of urgency now that the election has been held, to explore how to make new sources of revenue available to local authorities. This must allow local authorities the medium to long-term financial confidence to issue the longer contracts which will be able to foreground early intervention approaches and reduce service demand (and so realise financial savings) further down the line.

In the short-run, Government should through the Treasury's Debt Management Office signal its willingness to offer bespoke subsidised loans to local authorities seeking to borrow in order to

be able to fulfil their obligations under a contract with duration of five years or more, and exclude such borrowing from limits set under the Prudential Code. Evidence suggests councils are already borrowing from the Public Works Loan Board to invest in property and using the returns to fund children's social care and other services;<sup>28</sup> allowing authorities to instead borrow directly for this purpose would remove the unacceptable risk associated with this strategy.

Government should also identify and isolate centralised funding streams for frontline CAMHS and services for looked-after children, and ring-fence these until 2020, protecting these services from further erosion in an environment of continued fiscal restraint. This would reduce the prospect of funding for early intervention measures being siphoned off towards meeting immediate need in the manner described above.

### *A new future for children's centres*

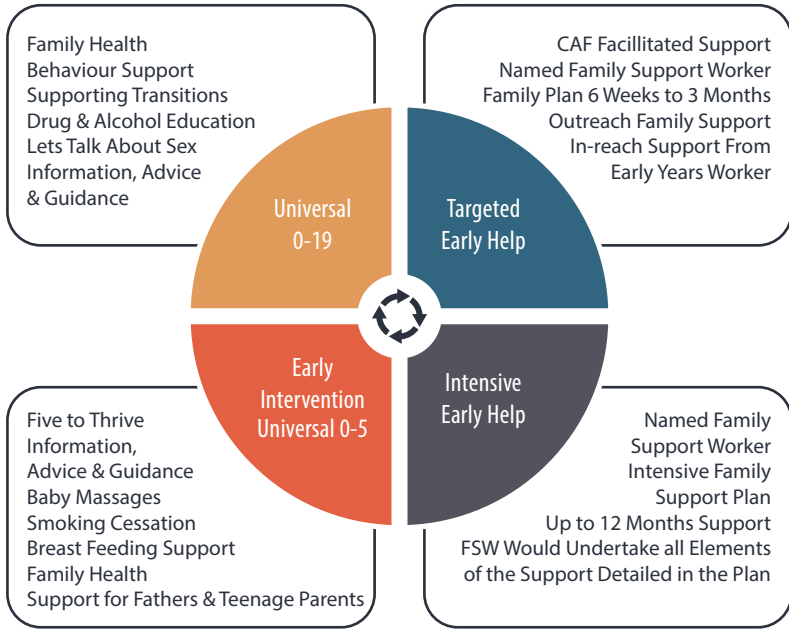
If early intervention is to genuinely become a systemic principle in the way we have outlined above, a support ecosystem capable of identifying and mitigating known "risk factors" for poorer later life outcomes in children must be constructed. To achieve this, social workers and others who come into regular contact with young people or families potentially in need of support must be able to identify and take action to mitigate these risk factors. This

is one advantage of the children's centre model – the principle of universal access upon which they were founded allows the professionals who work there contact with the widest possible range of families.

The children's centre model has been a long-standing paradigm of early intervention, bringing together multiple different services (usually for children aged 0-5) and offering support to families beyond those in contact with formal support services. As a result of their trusted and high-profile position within local communities,<sup>29</sup> they offer a vital platform for the kind of systemic early intervention approach we advocate here, helping to improve emotional wellbeing for all family members and prevent problems developing to the point where children are on the edge of care. However, children's centres have experienced significant reductions in funding of 47% (£600 million) between 2010 and 2016 with over 350 centres having closed during this time.<sup>30</sup>

Many councils have by necessity begun to merge related services and some are now looking to incorporate this model into a joined-up support framework for a wider age range by integrating it with 0-19 youth support services. Although this change has in many places been driven by the need for greater financial efficiency,<sup>31</sup> it will also allow more opportunities for early intervention in an environment the family will know and trust. This will only be the case however if these services remain

Figure 2: The Early Help Family Centre model



Source: Barnardo's, IOW Integrated 0-19 Family Centres<sup>32</sup>

open to all, rather than targeted only at families with higher-level needs; it is a key principle of effective early intervention that problems are best resolved while they are low-level, and that access should therefore be as open as possible to prevent delay.

Models such as the Isle of Wight's Early Help Family Centres, which successfully combine service provision which is

universal in scope with an expanded profile of accessible services (bringing children's centre services together with 5-19 family support as shown in Figure 2, while continuing to allow families to self-refer to these services), therefore offer a valuable example of best practice.

A review of this model by the Children's Commissioner for England found "promising" initial improvements in outcomes for families in contact with services offered through these Centres.<sup>33</sup> Government, in partnership with service providers, should review the funding required to offer an effective 0-19, universally accessible service of this kind in all local authority areas.

### ***Mental health training and workers***

Focusing specifically on mental health, training of key individuals in mental health awareness (including knowledge of normal child development patterns, familiarity with concepts such as attachment, and risk factors for poor emotional and mental health), and in strategies to promote resilience and emotional wellbeing, is critical to creating a support ecosystem of the kind described above, capable of identifying and mitigating known risk factors.

We therefore welcome the Government's intention to train teachers in all English secondary schools in mental health first aid.<sup>34</sup> However, early identification of the warning signs of poor mental wellbeing (as promoted by this training) must be accompanied by extra support for CAMHS to overcome capacity constraints – a point we hope will be addressed in the forthcoming government green paper on young people's mental health. In addition, closer integration of schools with specialist

services is required to realise the fullest possible benefit of a schools-led approach – especially in light of figures suggesting a third of secondary schools are planning to cut back mental health support this year.<sup>35</sup>

Even once these caveats are addressed however, we also urge the Government to look beyond the teaching profession. We recommend expanding training in child mental health to all professionals working with potentially vulnerable children and families (including paediatricians, social and youth workers, and school nurses), as well as foster and residential carers with responsibility for looked-after children.

This recommendation echoes calls from individual organisations that specific professionals be provided with training of this kind. The House of Commons Education Committee for example has found that such training for foster and residential carers is "patchy",<sup>36</sup> while the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health has highlighted that child health professionals feel increasingly inadequately trained to identify and manage child mental health conditions.<sup>37</sup> We believe creating a genuine network of informed support around young people by ensuring a wide range of relevant professionals receive training of this kind is a natural and logical step forward in fostering the systemic approach to early intervention we have argued for.

We also recommend counselling be made available in all primary and secondary

schools in England<sup>38</sup> Counselling represents a vital preventative and early intervention measure to ensure signs of poor mental health among children are acted upon as quickly as possible.<sup>39</sup> It can also act as a filter, preventing unnecessary referrals to specialist services for lower-level cases of mental ill health, as well as facilitating “tapering” of specialist support or delivering support in parallel with CAMHS – all of which reduces pressure on CAMHS.

We believe the success of in-school counselling in Wales (where provision is mandatory for year 6 pupils and children over the age of 11), with data suggesting 88% of 11-18 year olds who accessed it in 2015/16 did not require onward referral to specialist services, justifies its uptake in England.<sup>40</sup> For context, the cost of providing counselling in all English secondary schools along the model followed in Wales – estimated at £90 million<sup>41</sup> – would represent around one ninth of total business rates payments by schools.<sup>42</sup> We also recommend that looked-after children receive priority access to in-school counselling, given their increased propensity to suffer mental health difficulties.

The Government announced in July 2017 its intention to increase NHS mental health staffing numbers by 21,000 by 2021, at a cost of £1.3 billion. However, only 2,000 of the new staff will be dedicated to children and adolescent services. While this investment is to be welcomed, it is

only a partial step towards creating a network of informed professionals around young people to quickly identify and act upon signs of poor mental health to prevent problems escalating. Our recommendations would build on this and other recent Government actions, and we therefore believe increased provision of school counsellors should be a crucial element of this recruitment drive.

## ***(ii) Service providers as equal partners in design and delivery***

### ***Achieving an integrated service offer – the fundamentals***

This paper has already outlined the importance of integrated support service provision for young people. But achieving integration poses a number of structural challenges, including around aligning funding, data management, and governance structures across different bodies. Opportunities for individuals across different workforces to understand the different roles, responsibilities and structures associated with different organisations are therefore critical in promoting integrated working.

For example, co-location of different teams was cited by the House of Commons Education Select Committee as fundamental to the “highly effective” joint working arrangements between the local authority and health services for looked-after children in Trafford, delivering a “fully integrated” social care and health service offer which provides “a highly effective response for children and families”.<sup>43</sup>

Similarly, the Mental Health Services and Schools Link pilots conducted by NHS England and the Department for Education have sought to strengthen communication and joint working arrangements between schools and

CAMHS, through joint strategic planning and single point of contact arrangements. Results from the pilots have been positive (including improved understanding of referral routes to local specialist mental health support among schools’ lead contacts),<sup>44</sup> laying the foundation for a less fragmented local mental health support offer for young people. We welcome the expansion of the pilot announced before the General Election.<sup>45</sup>

Alongside structural changes however, integration also necessitates a significant cultural shift. Overcoming departmental or organisational boundaries means focusing on young people’s wellbeing in a holistic way, rather than seeing success through the prism of individual teams’ activities or targets. Leaders from different service areas must be willing to come together, pool accountability, and take on responsibility for system-wide outcomes – including a single vision of what constitutes positive outcomes for a young person – rather than just outcomes specifically related to their area. A systemic outcomes framework shared across all partners involved in service commissioning and delivery is therefore an important step towards more integrated service provision.

### ***Co-commissioning and the role of charities in service redesign***

These new structural and cultural working practices imply a significant role for service providers, including charities,

whose experience should crucially inform these practices. The insights provided by their work on the frontline of service delivery make their involvement critical when constructing a cross-organisational structural framework to promote integration, or a systemic outcomes framework which accurately reflects young people's needs, as set out above.

This conclusion points to the importance of involving charities and other service providers fully and from the beginning of the process, in service commissioning and contract design, as discussed above. Rather than the supplicant position the current outsourcing process imposes upon them, they should be included as equals alongside other critical stakeholders such as the NHS, CCGs, schools, and local authority leadership and directorates, in a process of "co-commissioning", to encourage the improved outcomes and efficiencies their involvement can deliver, including through facilitating a more integrated service offer as outlined here.

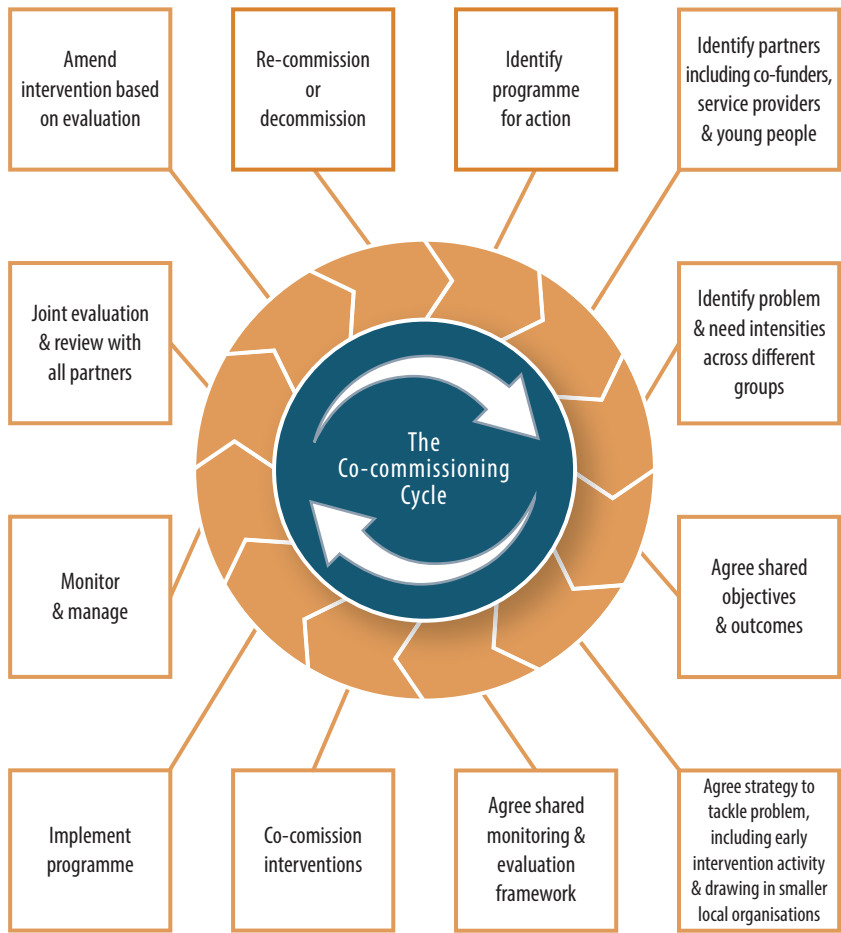
Provision for collaborations of this kind is already made in public procurement regulations through "Innovation Partnerships", while the Public Service (Social Value) Act 2012 calls for all public sector commissioning to have regard for the wider social and economic wellbeing of localities and service users. However, despite what is intended to be an enabling legislative framework, the evidence suggests that public bodies

feel safer continuing to pursue more traditional commissioning arrangements. For example, research by National Voices found that only 13% of Clinical Commissioning Groups demonstrate that they are actively committed to pursuing social value in their procurement and commissioning decisions, while only 13% of NHS Sustainability and Transformation Plans mention the idea<sup>46</sup>

Experience demonstrates that current practice will not deliver the kind of integrated support for the service user which will avoid the inefficiencies and sub-optimal outcomes too often seen at present. We urge local authorities to move away from old-fashioned procurement processes towards collaborative partnership with the voluntary sector, which we believe can contribute additional and genuine social value (i.e. improved outcomes and wellbeing for disadvantaged young people). Figure 3, below, provides a representation of how the co-commissioning approach we recommend could operate from the local authority perspective.

Effective and bold local political leadership will be crucial in achieving the shift towards integration and co-commissioning. We therefore welcome the ambition shown in areas such as Newport, where as noted in the Introduction, the City Council has partnered with Barnardo's on its Integrated Family Support Service model.

Figure 3: The Co-commissioning Cycle



This model is based on a legal framework between the local authority and Barnardo's to jointly design and deliver the full range of family support services.<sup>47</sup> An independent evaluation of this service found that:<sup>48</sup>

*"Unlike a more traditional commissioned arrangement, the Partnership Model has promoted a truly 'joint journey' in the continual development of the service to meet the needs of referred families, rather than a focus on monitoring the extent to which a provider has adhered to a fixed service specification."*

The role of Barnardo's – the service provider – in shaping service design thus played a key role in achieving the positive outcomes from this service already cited, and clearly demonstrates the benefits of the co-commissioning approach. Results from this service and other localities where co-commissioning is already taking place should continue to be closely monitored, but unless there is a dramatic downturn in outcomes, the Newport model should be held up as best practice for other areas to learn from.

The demands of involvement in the intensive co-commissioning process – together with the advantage of scale and replicability – will likely mean that it is larger charities who are predominantly involved in this process, rather than smaller organisations. However, the latter remain a crucial part of the overall drive to improve

outcomes for children through their work and the insights this allows them to bring in the same way as larger charities. They must be actively encouraged to submit their experience of the successes and failures of local service design and delivery as part of the co-commissioning process so that this can inform future changes.

### **Laying the foundations for co-commissioning**

To facilitate the move towards co-commissioning, local authorities and other stakeholders responsible for children's wellbeing should adopt the Collective Impact model of working, as set out in the box below.<sup>49</sup> As part of its regular reviews of children's services, the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) should monitor the extent to which these collaborative principles are being put into practice.

In addition, ambitious local authorities looking to draw on the support charities can offer in helping them to redesign local services, including through practicing co-commissioning, should consider formalising this arrangement by entering into strategic partnerships with them. Under this arrangement, charities would offer advice based on the experience they bring from their work on the frontline – in particular larger, at-scale charities working across the country, which have the added advantage of being able to aggregate such experience from multiple regions,

### *The Collective Impact Model*

As set out by John Kania and Mark Kramer, the Collective Impact model is a framework designed to help government, civil society and others collaborate to address complex, deeply entrenched social problems. It includes five key elements:

1. All participants have a common agenda for change including a shared understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving it through agreed upon actions.
2. Collecting data and measuring results consistently across all the participants ensures shared measurement for alignment and accountability.
3. A plan of action that outlines and coordinates mutually reinforcing activities for each participant.
4. Open and continuous communication is needed across the many players to build trust, assure mutual objectives, and create common motivation.
5. A backbone organisation(s) with staff and specific set of skills to serve the entire initiative and coordinate participating organisations and agencies.

*Source: Collaboration for Impact, "The Collective Impact Framework"*

accumulating and disseminating best practice and innovation – to improve local service design and delivery.

Local authorities should then allow that experience to inform their own service offer by identifying key themes for future service provision – which we believe should include early intervention and service integration – and working with charities through the contract design and commissioning process to consider how these themes can be incorporated into practice, including drawing on successful

examples from other parts of the country of which those charities are aware.

In response to the failure, noted above, of Innovation Partnerships to be developed within existing public procurement provisions, or for the Social Value Act to effectively drive a change in commissioning practices, as well as the loss of formal architecture for collaboration of this kind as a result of the abolition by the Coalition Government of Local Strategic Partnerships, we recommend a new duty to collaborate with local stakeholders

be placed on local authorities. This duty should be defined in a way which allows local authorities to tailor the extent and nature of collaboration based on local circumstances, and which avoids potential legal difficulties around issues such as data-sharing (explored further below).

For its part, national government should consider establishing for England a framework, similar to the Scottish Government's Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) approach, which can encourage and promote collaborative working between all stakeholders – including the voluntary sector – throughout the process of designing and delivering support for young people, in particular in the formation of a shared conception of young people's wellbeing and target outcomes for young people common across all stakeholders.

GIRFEC is an approach to providing support for young people, defined in Scottish law, designed to put children and their families at the heart of that support. It is founded on ten core components which guide its operation in practice, with which the design and delivery of all support services must be compliant.<sup>50</sup> One of these components is "a co-ordinated and unified approach to identifying concerns, assessing needs, and agreeing actions and outcomes, based on the Wellbeing Indicators" across the multiple agencies involved in delivering support (the Wellbeing Indicators are separately defined

as: Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible and Included, as set out in Figure 4 below).<sup>51</sup>

Evidence from the Pathfinder process, which trialled the approach before its roll-out into Scottish law more broadly, found that the approach was "both improving outcomes for children and providing an outcome-based rather than an outputs-led response to meeting children's needs,"<sup>53</sup> as well as effectively promoting more integrated and streamlined service delivery. However, the Scottish Government has faced considerable difficulty in formally legislating for the implementation of this approach, particularly around its intended "named person" and information-sharing provisions.<sup>54</sup>

We therefore recommend that Westminster explore the feasibility of establishing an English equivalent to GIRFEC which incorporates the move towards a more collaborative approach to defining young people's wellbeing and target outcomes across relevant agencies, and sets a clear expectation of an ongoing move towards co-commissioning of services between local authorities and frontline service providers. In acknowledgement of the controversy surrounding GIRFEC's implementation in Scotland, it should not however incorporate detailed provisions on information-sharing until a clearer picture has emerged of how such provisions are working in practice there.

Figure 4: The “Wellbeing Wheel”



Source: Scottish Government - *Getting It Right For Every Child* <sup>52</sup>

## **Devolution**

As we have already argued, devolution will be of enormous significance in the future of the relationship between local authorities and charities in England. Both through new formal powers (for those areas which have received them), but also the authority granted by a new interest in localism, devolution offers a once-in-a-generation opportunity for local areas to rethink how services are designed and delivered. The relationship between services and service users is defined by the concept of “place”, with each locality presenting a different set of needs to be met and challenges to be faced; devolution offers a chance to reflect this in practice.

A more extensive devolution settlement should in theory simplify the co-commissioning process, by providing a framework which can dissolve or override the structural (including financial) barriers preventing the local public sector ecosystem operating as a single entity.<sup>55</sup> This in turn removes impediments to effective co-working with outside organisations – including charities. The Government has already set out, in its strategy for care leavers, its desire for local authorities “to deliver services in new ways and in partnership with the voluntary sector”;<sup>56</sup> we believe this ambition must go beyond just support for this group.

Of the areas to have received new powers since 2014, Greater Manchester

has seen the most extensive devolution, notably including autonomy over a pooled £6 billion health and social care budget. This has allowed the region to consider new ways of delivering services, including how to draw in the voluntary, community, and social enterprise sectors.

This is notable for example in the region’s Start Well early years strategy, which is built on “a new approach to commissioning services that focuses on delivering outcomes for children and families, putting artificial boundaries to one side” and recognises the voluntary sector – among other stakeholders – as “essential in co-producing the models of delivery”, as we argue in this report.<sup>57</sup> Examples of this co-commissioning philosophy in practice and its impact emerging from Greater Manchester include:

- A commitment to “invest collaboratively” beyond organisational boundaries, i.e. the ability to pool funding from a range of funding streams into a single pot over which all stakeholders have shared control through joint planning and agreements on how budgets will be aligned to meet key objectives, giving flexibility to shift funds to concentrate activity where it is most needed and decommission services where duplication exists in the system; and
- “Multi-agency commitment to the shared outcomes of the strategy”, i.e. the scope to develop a shared outcomes framework

with streamlined monitoring, evaluation and reporting requirements, as well as clear shared incentives and accountability in achieving those outcomes and improved understanding of risk appetite across different stakeholders.

These innovations have in turn allowed Greater Manchester to progress the service integration and early intervention agendas further than other localities, going so far as to decommission some specialist services in order to redirect resources towards these new models of delivery.<sup>58</sup> This suggests that devolution, by facilitating co-commissioning and allowing freer rein for local leaders to pursue their ambitious vision, has led to a clearer sense of the bigger prize which reallocating resources towards the integration and early intervention agendas can achieve.

However, most of the other devolution deals agreed by Government since 2014 have been primarily economic in their focus, providing for example local investment pots and powers on skills and training, but not the kind of fundamental public service reform capacity offered by the scope of Greater Manchester's deal. As described in the introduction to this paper however, Government must acknowledge that the pressures of Brexit and a hung Parliament compel it to hand greater autonomy on services for local people – including support services for young people – to local authorities in the interests of ensuring these services continue to

receive the attention they deserve.

We recommend that Government offer devolution settlements similar to that seen in Greater Manchester to other regions, beginning with the five other combined authorities who have already elected their “Metro Mayors”, if evidence of positive impact continues to be seen in Greater Manchester early in this Parliament. Expanded provision of such settlements is in line with, and should be a key part of Government policy to implement, the Conservative manifesto pledge to “support those authorities that wish to combine to serve their communities better”.

In the meantime, given the continuing patchwork nature of devolution in England, local authorities without similarly extensive devolved competencies and budgets should, through strategic partnerships of the kind we outline above, look to draw on charities' insights and expertise to prioritise service integration (and early intervention) – recognising that co-commissioning must lie at the heart of this relationship.

### *(iii) Young people shaping the support they receive*

#### *The role of commissioning*

The ambition to effectively involve young people as stakeholders in deciding how services are designed and delivered is widely established in strategies and rhetoric. The challenge is not so much in making the theoretical argument in favour of this involvement, but instead in overcoming the time constraints and other practical barriers which hinder its realisation in practice, and which prevent it from moving from an “add-on” to the core of how services are designed and delivered.

Service commissioners can play a significant role in helping to bring about this change. For example, short contract lengths where services are commissioned out – referenced above as a key barrier to effective early intervention – can also leave providers with insufficient time to undertake meaningful consultation exercises with young people or fully integrate their findings into service practice. To address this, commissioners must build sufficient time into the initial stages of contracts to allow for such consultation.

Our recommendations above on securing greater financial certainty for local authorities and an equal role for providers in contract design will assist in overcoming this hurdle, by allowing longer

contracts to be offered and providers to draw attention to this requirement in the first place. In addition, another of the core components of Getting It Right For Every Child, discussed in the previous section, is “an integral role for children, young people and families in assessment, planning and intervention” in the support provision process; this ambition should be replicated in the equivalent framework we recommend be explored for England.

The above steps must also be accompanied by high-quality evaluation of the success of efforts to engage young people as part of the commissioning process. It is therefore vital that awareness is raised around emerging best practice frameworks for involving children and young people in service commissioning, such as the Young Commissioners model piloted in Sheffield by the City Council and local charity Chilypep, which encourages such engagement from a proactive (i.e. service design) as well as retrospective (i.e. assessment after the fact) perspective. This model is set out in Figure 5 below.

#### *Best practice*

Raising awareness of best practice in engaging young people will help to overcome perceptions that the task is too difficult or time-consuming, and as such is vitally important. We therefore welcome awards and challenges such as Hear by Right from the National Youth Agency, which recognise and raise

Figure 5: Chilypep Young Commissioners Model

Stages of Commissioning	Commissioning Standard (HbR/Quality Mark Indicator)
<b>Understanding</b> - clarifying local outcomes, needs, resources and priorities	<b>Understanding -</b> 1. There is a central commitment for the active involvement of young people in the commissioning of young people's services 2. Resources for the active involvement of young people in commissioning services have been identified including key staff roles and resources 3. Young people involved in commissioning have appropriate skills and support to allow them to participate fully in the commissioning process 4. A range of approaches are in place that encourage and enable the participation of a diverse range of young people's services in their own terms and in ways they feel comfortable with
<b>Planning</b> - considering different ways in which the desired outcomes can be achieved effectively, efficiently, equitably and in a sustained way	<b>Planning -</b> 1. Young people's views are integral to the needs analysis and planning young people's services 2. Young people are involved in procuring young people's services
<b>Doing</b> - implementing the plan using the resources available	<b>Doing -</b> 1. There is a contractual agreement with successful providers to ensure there is a central commitment to the active involvement of young people 2. Providers ensure young people are involved in the recruitment, selection and induction of staff across the organisation
<b>Reviewing</b> - monitoring delivery and its impact against outcomes	<b>Reviewing -</b> 1. Young people's feedback is used to review the quality of the commissioning process and on-going assessment of providers 2. Recording and evaluation systems are in place to identify the impact of involving young people in the commissioning process

Source: Chilypep, *Young Commissioners*<sup>59</sup>

the profile of successful innovations.<sup>60</sup> In addition, at-scale service providers including charities should make full use of their experience derived from their work across the country, ensuring insights are shared within these organisations to scale up individual examples of best practice more widely, but also sharing these insights between providers.

The sharing of information between providers in this way is critical in disseminating best practice; yet commercial competition concerns can dissuade this. In order to overcome this hurdle, we recommend that the What Works Centre for Children's Social Care due to be launched this year should make engaging young people in service design and delivery a key area of focus, to raise awareness of best practice and to allow providers to share their evidence and experience in a research-based rather than a commercial setting. In time, this should allow a culture of collective learning to be embedded across providers and commissioners nationally.

The Centre should also look to the potential for digital technology to allow young people to engage more effectively in service design and delivery, again collating evidence from existing examples of where this has been used in practice. This should be backed up by an Innovation Fund to pilot new approaches to the use of technology for this purpose, incorporated as part of the broader Children's Social Care Innovation Programme.

Better sharing of best practice, including regarding the use of digital technology, may allow service providers and commissioners to engage more effectively with young people. However, planning the engagement process and incorporating the input they receive into on-the-ground services remains a resource-intensive task. The exchange of information between children's charities and other organisations we anticipate will be facilitated through the work of the What Works Centre should therefore be used to create a template engagement framework for service commissioners and providers (including suggested methods of participation for young people, and advisory guidance on incorporating the outcomes of this participation into service practice).

### *From engagement to control*

Engagement with young people to seek their views on how services are designed and delivered, and ensuring that their feedback is incorporated into practice, is one valuable way in which young people can begin to shape the support they receive. Yet in this framework, young people remain largely passive, with defined support services prescribed to them, even if they have some influence over the shape those services take. Young people should wherever possible be supported to take active control over the help they receive, recognising the importance of this to their development and maturity.

We recommend that local authorities provide a personal fund for each child in care, to be used to pay for support or activities to assist the child's development. This could for instance include mental health counselling, tutoring for help with school work, or participation in extra-curricular activities. This would allow for early, proactive intervention, of the kind this report advocates as a key principle, to help address the particular and intense difficulties faced by looked-after children as highlighted elsewhere in this report.

However, we also recommend that this fund is managed by the young person in question, in partnership with the adults responsible for their care and the local authority's corporate parenting board (where applicable). This gives the young person a resource over which they have (a degree of) direct control and which they can spend on activities they feel are most beneficial to them. If the value of this fund were set at £1000 per looked-after child per year, this measure would cost around £70 million annually.<sup>61</sup>

Most local authorities accept looked after children should be allowed the greatest possible control over their day-to-day finances (via e.g. pocket money policies) in line with their age and capacity to do so. Government is also required to provide a Junior ISA with an initial deposit of £200 for every looked after child (where the child is in care for 12 months or more), but control over this money is not given to the young

person until they turn 16 and the funds cannot be accessed until they are 18.

The fund we propose is distinct in both the purpose it serves – it is not designed either for everyday consumption or long-term savings, but rather as a proactive investment in the child's future – and in the degree and nature of the input we see the young person having over it. It is broadly comparable to the Individual Learning Accounts introduced in the early 2000s, but with a wider remit and aimed specifically at looked-after children.

### *Control and digital technology*

For young people both in and out of care, technology offers considerable opportunities to take control of the support they receive on issues like mental health, allowing them to access help in a format and at a time and place that suits them. We therefore believe that the Government should continue and build on the existing allocation of £500,000 for the development of six digital tools with a particular focus on children and young people's mental health.<sup>62</sup>

In addition, local authorities in partnership with their mental health trusts and other relevant stakeholders should develop high-quality online counterparts to support services available on the ground, along the lines of YouthSpace in Birmingham. The YouthSpace services programme was designed in close

collaboration with local young people, and alongside its interventions in school-based settings and work to promote access to on-the-ground mental health facilities, it features a dedicated website, again designed by young people.<sup>63</sup>

This website provides advice and information, and offers basic online cognitive-behavioural therapy for children in care and young people referred to the service, who are given personalised access to the website. If combined with new platforms giving patients on-demand consultations with trained therapists via phone or tablets,<sup>64</sup> this would represent a powerful tool to improve the accessibility of mental health support for young people – but would also ensure that they were in control of that support and shaping it in line with their own needs.

Government should seek to raise a portion of the funding required to invest in technological approaches of this kind by establishing a dedicated young people's mental health and technology fund, in partnership with social media companies, into which these companies make contributions which are match-funded by Government. Research has demonstrated the negative impact of social media platforms on young people's mental health, for example through exacerbating body image concerns, facilitating online bullying, and worsening feelings of anxiety, depression and loneliness; it is therefore

right that they take on part of the cost of alleviating these problems.<sup>65</sup> Yet social media by its nature also has potential to act as an important source of peer and external support for young people facing emotional distress; Government match-funding provides an important recognition of this value, so that such a fund is not seen as an attempt simply to scapegoat social media companies.

Should these companies prove unwilling to engage in this collaborative approach however, Government should consider imposing a 1% levy on their annual UK turnover. Such a levy on the three largest social media companies in the UK<sup>66</sup> (Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn) would in 2015 have raised almost £3.5 million.<sup>67</sup> Allowing for this money to be split among the four British nations by population, this would provide around £3 million in England, which should be earmarked to help finance innovations of the kind outlined above.



### 3. Conclusion and Recommendations

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We believe that the three themes set out in the preceding sections – support built around early, proactive intervention; service providers as equal partners in service design and delivery; and young people shaping the support they receive – must be at the heart of the support offered to young people in England, to ensure that support gives young people the best possible chance of overcoming the disadvantages they face and achieving their full potential.

This is an aspiration which, we argue, fundamentally and logically follows from

the politics of social solidarity currently advocated in their different ways by both Government and Opposition. Yet we also believe that the institutional resources of the voluntary sector and wider civil society – in particular the insights they can bring from their frontline work with children and families – make them crucial partners in this change, and in the Government's ambitions for social reform more generally.

We therefore urge national and local government to adopt these themes as key pillars of reform, and to work with

the voluntary sector and wider civil society in implementing that reform, in order to secure the best possible future for all of our nation's young people.

The recommendations outlined below – three structural, six policy-based – provide practical steps the new Government can take in delivering on this vision and reflect our three key themes. We call on Ministers to implement these recommendations quickly and in full.

## **Structures**

**1) Government should introduce a 'duty' to require local authorities to promote collaborative working between all relevant stakeholders in designing and delivering support services for young people, alongside a standardised impact model to facilitate this aim.**

A national framework or impact model along the lines of the wellbeing principles and core components set out in the Scottish Government's Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) approach would provide a basis for local authorities, relevant agencies, service providers, young people themselves, and others to work together to develop a shared outcomes framework and common holistic conception of a young person's wellbeing which can guide service design and delivery. This would represent a major step towards effective co-commissioning of services between local authorities and frontline

service providers, and could help to drive progress on service integration and early intervention, as well as representing a move away from the unproductive and wasteful competitive tendering model which is commonplace at present.

At the local level, local authorities should be compelled by a 'duty' to collaborate with relevant stakeholders, and specifically, large-scale charities, in the process of service design. This would replace the formal architecture of collaboration lost in the abolition of Local Strategic Partnerships, and mitigate the apparent failure of public procurement "Innovation Partnerships" and the Social Value Act to drive such collaboration organically. Wherever possible, we encourage local authorities to formalise this collaboration through a strategic partnership model, with these partnerships again founded on the principle of co-commissioning. Ofsted should monitor the extent to which the principles underpinning the 'Collective Impact' model of collaborative working are incorporated into local practice as part of its regular inspections of local authority children's services.

**2) Government should allow further devolution deals, in line with the Greater Manchester model, to enable other regions to undertake radical public service reform at the local level.**

Greater Manchester has received the most extensive regional devolution settlement

yet agreed in England. The unique depth and scope of the agreement has allowed the region to go further than other areas in public service reform, including developing strategies to promote service integration and early intervention, with service providers and other key stakeholders as equal partners.

Against the backdrop of a hung Parliament nationally and in light of the demands Brexit will make on national government's resources, which risk sidelining reform of support for young people, local authorities have a critical role to play in driving this agenda across the country. Government should therefore explore allowing other groups of local authorities to take on similar responsibilities to those given to Greater Manchester.

**3) Government should provide long-term funding certainty to local authorities, alongside ring-fencing of central funding for frontline services for looked-after children and young people with mental health difficulties.**

Funding pressures and uncertainty have led to service providers receiving shorter and shorter contracts, with a detrimental effect on their capacity to effectively engage young people in service design or to promote early intervention. Within children's social care, resources are being diverted away from early intervention activity towards

meeting immediate need, a trend which is both damaging and unsustainable.

In the face of deep concerns about the long-term viability of local government funding, Government must in partnership with local government explore, what new sources of revenue can be made available to local authorities to provide them with long-term financial security. In the short-run, Government should signal its willingness to offer subsidised loans to local authorities borrowing to honour a contract with duration of five years or more. It should also identify and isolate centralised funding streams for frontline CAMHS and services for looked-after children, and ring-fence these until 2020, protecting these services from further erosion in an environment of continued fiscal restraint.

## *Policy*

**4) The new What Works Centre for Children's Social Care should look into best practice and innovation in engaging young people in service design and delivery.**

The Centre, currently being established, should look to provide a neutral environment in which service providers can share best practice without fear of commercial disadvantage, and prioritise the creation of a robust evidence base on the effective engagement of young people in service design and delivery. This exchange of information

should culminate in the creation of a template engagement framework for service commissioners and providers.

**5) Government should establish an Innovation Fund to explore the potential for new technology to engage young people in public services.**

Alongside and as part of this activity within the new What Works Centre, the potential of digital technology to engage young people in the design and delivery of public services should be explored further. Government should establish an Innovation Fund to pilot new approaches in this area as part of the broader Children's Social Care Innovation Programme.

**6) Government should review the funding required for local authorities and service providers to work together to offer universal 0-19 service provision in children's centres.**

The trust and familiarity of the public with the children's centre model makes it uniquely well-placed to drive forward a systemic early intervention approach. This should be recognised and the age profile of their service offer expanded, as is already the case in some localities such as the Isle of Wight, offering more and better opportunities to help families and prevent problems developing to the point where children are on the edge of care or experiencing emotional distress.

Funding cuts in recent years have however led some authorities to restrict access to services offered through centres to higher-needs families. Government, in partnership with service providers, should review the funding required to offer an effective 0-19, universally accessible service in all local authority areas. This could be undertaken as part of the consultation on the future of Children's Centres, which was announced in 2015 but has yet to take place.

**7) Government should promote early action on children's mental health through in-school counselling and relevant training for all carers and professionals working with young people to develop wider workforce capacity and help reduce pressures on the NHS.**

The Government has announced an increase of 21,000 to NHS mental health staffing numbers by 2021. In line with this and previous announcements to fund training in mental health awareness for teachers, we recommend that Government should seek to increase the capacity of the wider children's services sector to identify and act upon signs of poor mental health to prevent problems escalating.

Counselling can both serve to reduce pressure on stretched CAMHS and act as an early, preventative measure; we recommend Government expand provision of counselling services to all primary and secondary schools in England, with looked-after children able to receive priority

access. Government should also provide mental health training for prospective foster families; voluntary sector staff working with vulnerable young people; and professionals (including paediatricians, social and youth workers, and school nurses) working with children who show known high-risk indicators for poor mental health.

**8) Government should work with social media companies, and if necessary introduce a dedicated levy, to invest in technological support and help young people take control of their mental health.**

Technological innovation offers considerable opportunities to all young people to take control of the support they receive on mental health. Local authorities should be supported to develop online counterparts to physical support services, to include information as well as on-demand therapy.

In light of recent evidence about the effect of social media platforms on children and young people's mental health, Government should work with social media companies to create a fund, based on voluntary contributions from such companies match-funded by Government, to finance interventions and innovations of this kind. If this collaborative approach proves unworkable, Government should instead consider imposing a levy on the turnover of such companies, which could then be earmarked for this purpose.

**9) Government should empower looked after children to invest in their own development, through a dedicated personal fund.**

In recognition of the particular and intense difficulties faced by children in care, this fund would pay for measures which could proactively mitigate or prevent these difficulties such as mental health support, tutoring for help with school work, or participation in extra-curricular activities. The fund should be managed by the young person in question, in partnership with the adults responsible for their care and the local authority's corporate parenting board (where applicable), giving the child a resource over which they have (a degree of) direct control. We recommend the value of this fund be set at £1000 per child per year, at a total annual cost of around £70 million.

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## Society

The UK has one of the most centralised states in the developed world and one of the most disaffected and politically passive populations in Europe. We hold our leaders in contempt, but despair of doing anything for ourselves or our community. The dysfunction at the highest level of society stems from the collapse of our social and personal foundation. There is little doubt that we are becoming an increasingly fragmented and individualist society and this has deep and damaging consequences for our families, our communities and our nation state.

Starting from the bottom up, the collapse of the extended family and the ongoing break-up of its nuclear foundation impacts on all, but disproportionately so on the poor and on their offspring. Too many children at the bottom of our society are effectively un-parented as too much is carried by lone parents who are trying to do more and more with less and less. We know that the poorer you are, the less connected with your wider society you tend to be. Lacking in both bridging and bonding capital and bereft of the institutions and structures that could help them, too many poorer families and communities are facing seemingly insurmountable problems alone, unadvised and without proper aid.

Based on the principle of subsidiarity, we believe that power should be devolved to the lowest appropriate level. Public services and neighbourhoods should be governed and shaped from the 'bottom up', by families and the communities. These neighbourhoods need to be served by a range of providers that incorporate and empower communities. Moving away from a top-down siloed approach to service delivery, such activity should be driven by a holistic vision, which integrates need in order to ascertain and address the most consequent factors that limit and prevent human flourishing. Local and social value must play a central role in meeting the growing, complex and unaddressed needs of communities across the UK.

The needs of the bottom should shape provision and decision at the top. To deliver on this, we need a renewal and reform of our major governing institutions. We need acknowledgement of the fact that the state is not an end in itself, but only one means by which to achieve a greater end: a flourishing society. Civil society and intermediary institutions, such as schools, faith groups and businesses, are also crucial means to achieving this outcome. We also need new purpose and new vision to create new institutions which restore the organic and shared society that has served Britain so well over the centuries.

## About Barnardo's

This report is supported by Barnardo's. All conclusions and recommendations contained in the report are those of ResPublica alone and are independent of Barnardo's.

Barnardo's is the UK's oldest and largest children's charity. Last year, it supported 272,000 children, young people and families through more than 1,000 services.

As well as helping children, including care leavers, foster carers, adoptive parents, young carers, those who have suffered sexual abuse and exploitation and those with emotional health needs, Barnardo's represents the voice of young people through its advocacy and influencing work across local and national government.

More than 150 years after its creation, it remains dedicated to the ethos of its founder, Thomas Barnardo, that no child in need should ever be turned away.

The beginning of a new Parliament presents both a symbolic and a practical opportunity for Government to consider the changes it wishes to see in Britain's society, and the reforms it hopes to achieve, in the coming years. Whilst the bureaucratic and political hurdles presented by Brexit and a hung Parliament are considerable, the question of domestic social inequalities – thrown into sharp relief by last year's EU referendum – is too pressing to be sidelined in the face of these difficulties.

In *Making young minds matter: Reshaping support services for young people* in the new Parliament, ResPublica argues that the politics of social solidarity currently advanced in their different ways by both Government and Opposition demands a renewed political focus on the needs of young people facing disadvantage, providing them with the right support to enable them to become active and valued contributors to society. Yet we also believe Government must go further, and prioritise designing and providing support systems for young people and families which can prevent such disadvantage arising in the first place wherever possible, if it is to truly tackle social injustice.

This report proposes three themes to underpin the support offered to young people and their families in this Parliament and beyond: an emphasis on early intervention; a new relationship between local authorities and the voluntary sector which positions service providers as equal partners in service design and delivery; and a crucial role for young people in proactively shaping the support they receive. It focuses particularly on the situation of looked-after children, and young people's mental and emotional health and wellbeing, and offers suggestions as to how these themes might be put into practice in these policy areas.

**Believe in  
children**



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