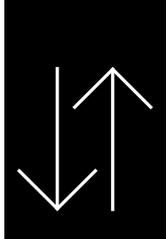


The  
**change**  
we make!



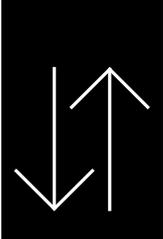


# The change we make!

**At The Children's Society, we make sure children's voices are heard. We campaign for changes to laws and policies, tackling unfairness and protecting vulnerable children from harm.**

**Our supporters help us campaign to show children and young people we are on their side. Together, we achieve a lot.**

*Community* ■ Speaking out  
■ **Voice** ■ **Together** ■ *Engaging*  
■ *Making change* ■ *Campaigns*  
■ Speakers ■ **Activism** ■ People  
power ■ **Campaign champions**  
■ **Lobbying** ■ **Stunts** ■ *Action*  
■ Mobilising ■ **Uniting**  
■ *Policy and campaigning*



# 2017 and

## The change we're making now

### The Good Childhood Report

#### The problem:

We knew there was a lack of information on how young people viewed their lives – in particular, whether they were happy, and what most affected their happiness.

#### What we're doing:

Since 2012, our ground breaking annual Good Childhood Reports have shared findings from our research, surveying over 60,000 young people about the quality of their lives using child-centred questions.

#### The change we are making:

Each year our Good Childhood Report continues to shine a light on children's lives, and it has developed a reputation for its valuable insights.

The widespread media coverage it attracts ensures discussion and debate amongst decision makers and in wider society.

### Giving breathing space to families in debt

#### The problem:

Growing up in debt has negative impacts on children and young people; our research has shown that children growing up in families affected by problem debt are five times more likely to be unhappy.

#### What we're doing:

Our Debt Trap campaign is calling for a 'Breathing Space' to help families who are in problem debt. This will give families protection from mounting debt, fees, and bailiffs, and allow them to put a sustainable repayment plan in place.

#### The change we are making:

Fifty MPs have publicly supported this change, and there has been a Westminster Hall debate on the issue.

As a result of our work, a statutory breathing space was included in both the Conservative and Labour manifestos. We will continue to campaign to ensure the Government make this change a reality for families in debt.

### A fairer start for care leavers

#### The problem:

Our Wolf at the Door report highlighted that care leavers are particularly vulnerable to council tax debt. This can be a frightening experience and lead to fines, bailiffs or even court. Many care leavers have had little or no financial education to help them as they begin independent life.

#### What we're doing:

Our supporters have sent over 2,200 letters to councillors to make care leavers exempt from council tax.

#### The change we are making:

So far, 1 in 5 councils have made this change, and we're hopeful that many more will follow.

This change has already improved the lives of over 9,000 care leavers across the country, giving them valuable time to learn the ropes of independent life without being saddled by the threat of council tax debt.

# beyond. ■

## Sex and relationships education

### The problem:

From our research and our direct work with young people, we know that a lack of education about online relationships, grooming and sexual behaviours is putting them at increasing risk.

### What we did:

Along with a network of other organisations, we have campaigned for all children to be taught about sex and healthy relationships.

### The change we made:

The Government has announced that sex and healthy relationships education will become compulsory for all children in secondary schools, and the primary curriculum will include lessons on healthy relationships.

## Protecting 16 and 17 year olds at a Seriously Awkward age

### The problem:

We know from our work that the most vulnerable 16 and 17 year olds are falling between the gaps of childhood and adulthood. Inconsistencies in legislation and inadequacies in services for this age group are leaving them without the same legal protection or support as young children.

### What we're doing:

Since we launched the Seriously Awkward campaign in 2015, we have been calling on the Government to address these inconsistencies, and have mobilised 20,000 people in support of our campaign.

### The change we are making:

We have ensured that this issue has been an ongoing discussion point in Westminster, and will continue to campaign until these inconsistencies are sufficiently addressed.

## Showing our solidarity with refugees

### The problem:

As the refugee crisis continues apace, there can be a lack of support for young refugees and migrants through media and public discourse. This can leave these young people isolated and afraid.

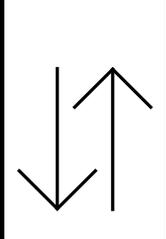
### What we're doing:

We have been showing solidarity with young refugees. In September, we took part in the Refugees Welcome Here march, alongside 30 young people from our refugee and migrant services.

We have also launched the Post Card Project, an initiative to allow our supporters to send messages of support and solidarity to the young people we support.

### The change we are making:

So far, we have received hundreds of messages of support, building a growing community of love and solidarity through our supporters and churches.



# 2016

## Stopping the Government's 'vanishing act' on child poverty

### The problem:

In 2016, the Government was set to remove the legally binding commitment to measure the number of children living in poverty each year.

### What we did:

We came together with other members of the End Child Poverty Coalition to lobby Lords and email MPs.

### The change we made:

The Government abandoned their plans, making sure that we can properly continue to hold the Government to account on child poverty reduction.

## Handle with Care

### The problem:

Young people in care in Greater Manchester told us about the difficulties of being placed outside of their home borough. They said it was difficult to settle in their new area, which put them at increased risk. We learnt that they were often given little warning of a move, would face long journeys to school or have to move school entirely. They also found it difficult to get their voices heard.

### What we did:

We launched a campaign targeting the councils in Greater Manchester. We wanted them to sign our charter, agreeing to a range of actions that would improve the support that a young person receives. These actions included giving young people more notice of moves, helping them with moving and settling in, and offering them better access to Children in Care Councils and Independent Visitors.

### The change we made:

All 10 councils in Greater Manchester agreed to our recommendations in June 2016.

This will help ensure that children in care get the support they need to settle and thrive in their placements when they have to move.

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## Saving families from energy debt

### **The problem:**

Our 'Show Some Warmth' research uncovered that there are nearly a million children living in families in energy debt, growing up in cold homes that put their health at risk.

### **What we did:**

As part of our Debt Trap campaign thousands of supporters wrote to and tweeted their energy companies, asking them to make important changes to their debt collection policies.

### **The change we made:**

Within a year, five of the 'Big Six' energy companies made changes to their policies.

These changes benefitted almost 200,000 children and young people.

We have also campaigned to end pay day loan advertising to children, and stop bailiffs visiting homes when children are present.

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## Protecting children who go missing

### **The problem:**

When children go missing, they are at very serious risk of physical abuse, or sexual or criminal exploitation.

Furthermore, there was a two-tier system where children were classed as either 'missing' or 'absent' – but only a child classed as missing would receive an active police response.

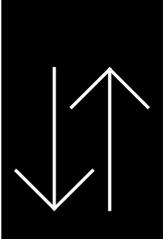
### **What we did:**

Through years of ongoing policy work and campaigns including Make Runaways Safe, Safe and Sound and Seriously Awkward, we have mobilised thousands of supporters to send a strong message to decision makers about children who go missing.

### **The change we made:**

As a result of our many years of campaigning and providing evidence the police decided that the 'absent' category will be abandoned.

The Government also announced there will be a National Missing Persons Register. These changes will help to identify and protect the estimated 100,000 young people who run away each year.



# 2015

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## Redefining 'child prostitution' as 'sexual exploitation'

### **The problem:**

For over 20 years The Children's Society had worked towards better recognition that children who are being exploited are victims of abuse, and not perpetrators of a crime.

### **What we did:**

Between 1995 and 2015, we carried out extensive work publicly and privately to address this misconception. We led numerous campaigns on child sexual exploitation and young runaways, engaging tens of thousands of supporters, and contributed to tangible policy shifts through our research and policy work.

### **The change we made:**

In 2015, the phrase 'child prostitution' was removed from legislation, helping to make sure children who are exploited are viewed as victims of abuse.

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## Asylum support

### **The problem:**

Due to alarmingly low levels of asylum support, over 10,000 children seeking safety from war and persecution were being pushed into poverty. Then, in 2015, the Government proposed changes to remove support from families when their asylum applications had been rejected. In the initial plans, the Government gave families 30 days to leave before withdrawing support.

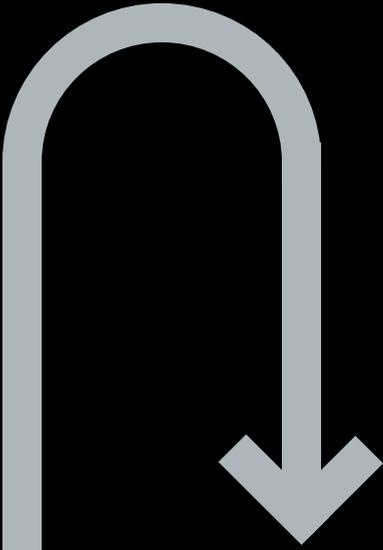
### **What we did:**

We knew that no child fleeing persecution should be forced to grow up in poverty. So we supported our campaigners to respond to the Government's proposals. They formed an impressive 80% of all consultation responses.

### **The change we made:**

The Government increased the time limit from 30 to 90 days. Since then we have secured changes in the law to ensure that fewer care leavers would lose support they vitally need.

We continue to campaign to ensure that refugee and migrant young people are kept safe and their rights protected.



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## Tax Credit U-turn

### **The problem:**

In 2015 the Government proposed cuts to support for working families which would have seriously harmed the lives of millions children living in poverty. We knew we had to take action to prevent these cuts.

### **What we did:**

We worked with members of the House of Lords to urge the Government to rethink its damaging approach to tax credit changes.

### **The change we made:**

The Government abandoned its proposed changes, helping 2.4 million children across the country.

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## Seriously Awkward

### **The problem:**

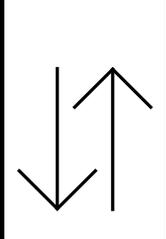
From our research, we knew that 16 and 17 year olds who experienced sexual exploitation were particularly at risk. These young people are more likely to be victims of sexual abuse, yet they are less likely than younger children to be regarded as children who need protection when they do report cases, and there is also less protection and support available when they have experienced harm.

### **What we did:**

Our report Old Enough to Know Better exposed the difficulties in supporting 16 and 17 year olds who have been sexually exploited. We mobilised thousands of supporters to take action to ensure this issue was discussed in parliament. We also entered into an award-winning partnership with the Hampstead Theatre and used their play, Firebird, to communicate these messages to a wider audience.

### **The change we made:**

Our work has already lead to the formation of a Government working group which is examining how police can better intervene to disrupt the exploitation of 16 and 17 year olds.



# 2014

## Children's Commission on Poverty

### **The problem:**

Children's health and well-being are affected by growing up in poverty or debt, so we established the Children's Commission on Poverty (CCP) to enable children in this country to speak out comprehensively about poverty for the first time.

### **What we did:**

We worked with our Young Commissioners to publish their findings, including the Wrong Blazer report, which highlighted that parents were spending hundreds of pounds on school uniform each year. Where families could not afford this, children were going to school in ill-fitting uniforms, being sent home from school or their families were cutting back on basic essentials.

### **The change we made:**

The Government promised to make guidance on the cost of uniform legally binding, which could help over 1.2 million children.

We continue to work with the Government to implement this change.

## A cut too far

### **The problem:**

In December 2014 the Government removed dedicated funding for local welfare provision. This funding provided a vital safety net for families to turn to in an emergency and was a cut too far. Local welfare assistance schemes help families get back on their feet after an emergency, and this support can be the difference between a temporary financial crisis and a spiral into debt and destitution.

### **What we did:**

We launched an urgent campaign that thousands of people signed up to support, giving this issue the proper attention of decision makers.

### **The change we made:**

The Government reinstated £130 million per year of funding for local welfare assistance.

Over 1 million children will benefit from funding support.

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## Securing better identification for young carers and their families

### **The problem:**

Our research 'Hidden from View' highlighted that many young carers were not being identified or getting the support they need. This issue had been at the forefront of work carried out by our Include programme for decades.

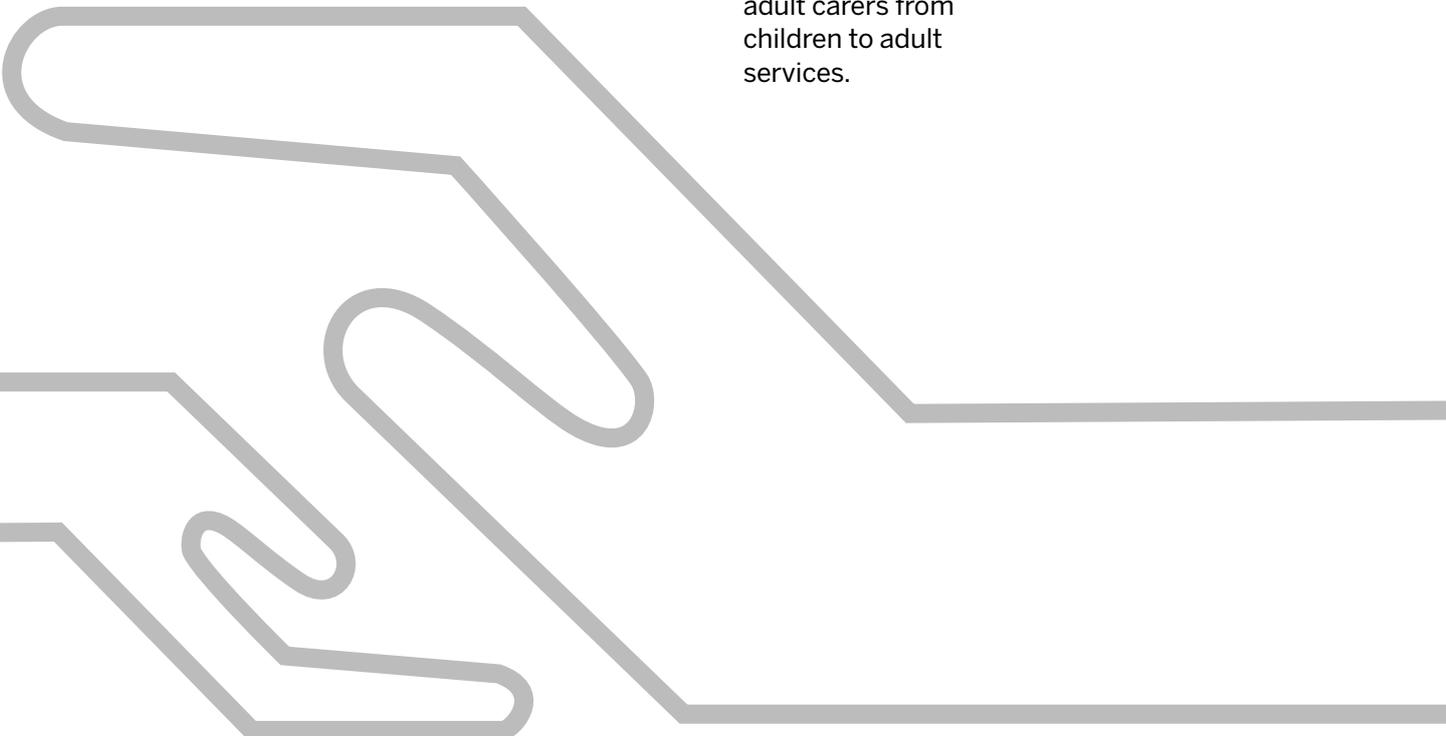
### **What we did:**

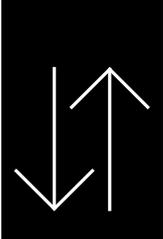
Informed by the voices of young carers attending the Young Carers Festival and other consultation activities, we advocated on their behalf and took forward their priorities for influencing change at national and local level.

We worked with decision makers to make sure that 'whole family assessments' were recognised as a key factor in identifying and supporting young carers, and to make the case for better transition for young adult carers from children to adult services.

### **The change we made:**

Two key pieces of legislation – the Care Act and the Children and Families Act – included vital safeguards to ensure better identification of young carers and the right for them to have their own needs assessed, alongside the needs of their families.





# 2013

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## Fair and Square campaign

### **The problem:**

More than a million children in poverty were missing out on free school meals. Free school meals provide vital support for low-income families, and for almost a third of children school lunch is their main meal of the day.

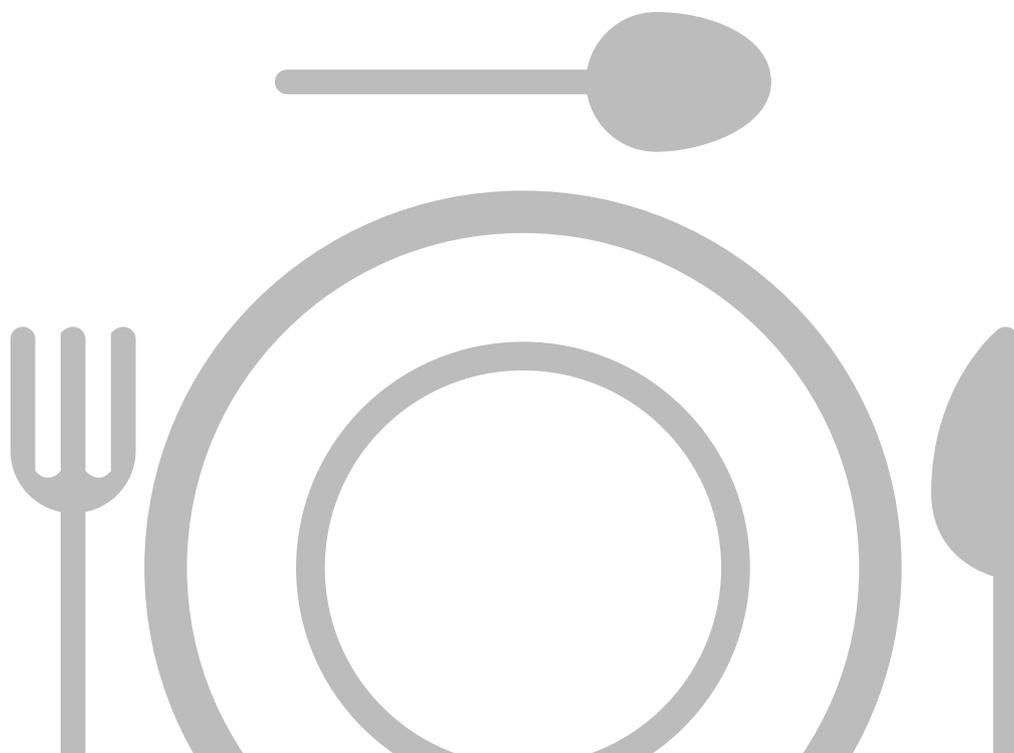
### **What we did:**

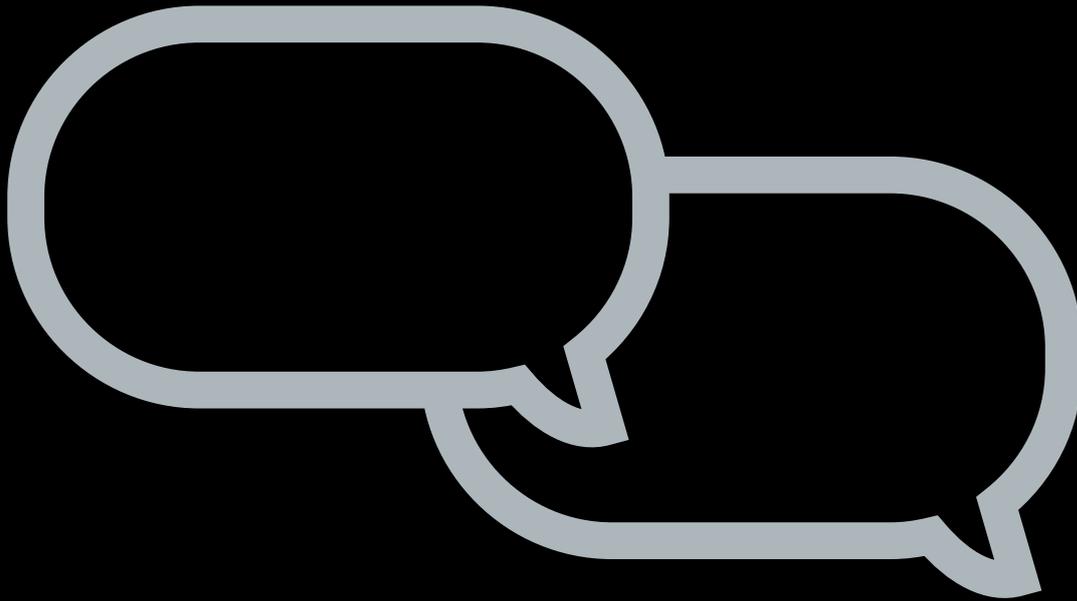
We launched the Fair and Square campaign, calling on the Government to extend free school meals to all children living in poverty.

Our campaign, backed by numerous organisations and tens of thousands of campaigners, resulted in the Government announcing that all children in reception and Years 1 and 2 would be entitled to a free school meal.

### **The change we made:**

An extra 1.4 million children can rely on at least one free, nutritious meal every school day.





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## Make Runaways Safe campaign

### **The problem:**

Every year 100,000 children and young people go missing from home or care. Going missing is a key indicator that a child might be in great danger. When children go missing, they are at very serious risk of physical abuse, or criminal or sexual exploitation.

We wanted to establish how children who go missing are supported in their local areas, and identify any improvements needed to ensure they are provided with an adequate safety net.

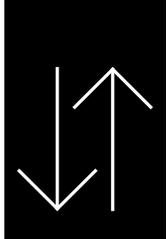
### **What we did:**

We worked with young runaways to develop a 'Runaways' Charter' that provided a clear code of practice for the agencies who work with children who go missing from home or care.

### **The change we made:**

Thanks to the support of 7,500 campaigners, 40 local authorities signed up to the charter and committed to making changes to protect young people who run away from home.

Guidance was published stating that all councils have to offer young runaways a mandatory 'return interview' to provide the support they need.



# Three ways you can support us today:

- 1. Sign up to be a campaign champion:** help us create change in your local community by visiting your MP to talk about our campaigns, help organise local events, or recruit other campaigners.
- 2. Take action on one of our campaigns:** in just a few moments you can add your voice to one of our campaigns, and help build pressure to create the changes we want to see for young people.
- 3. Donate to enable us to continue our work:** your financial contributions help us to carry out research, develop policy and bring the changes that young people in this country so desperately need to have happy, safe childhoods.

‘Thank you,  
I couldn’t be  
more grateful  
for having  
this support!’

**Young person**

# Too many children and young people in this country don't feel safe, loved or able to cope. Together we can change their lives.

The Children's Society is a national charity that runs local services and campaigns to change the law to help this country's most vulnerable young people.

Our supporters around the country fund our services and join our campaigns to show children they are on their side.

If you would like to know more about The Children's Society and our work with children and young people, please visit [childrenssociety.org.uk/impact](https://childrenssociety.org.uk/impact) or call our Supporter Care team on 0300 303 7000.

If you would like to sign up to be a campaign champion, please visit [childrenssociety.org.uk/campaign-champion](https://childrenssociety.org.uk/campaign-champion)

To join our policy newsletter please visit [childrenssociety.org.uk/policy-updates](https://childrenssociety.org.uk/policy-updates)

If you would like to make a donation to support our work, please visit [childrenssociety.org.uk/donate](https://childrenssociety.org.uk/donate)

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