



Impact Report

2014/15



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1. About us

**The Children's
Society helps change
children's lives,
working towards a
country where all
children are free
from disadvantage.**



Welcome

At The Children's Society, we have had the honour of working with many inspiring children and young people over the past year. I'm delighted to report that the positive impact we've had on these young lives and thousands more has far exceeded even our own ambitious expectations.

Last year, we set out to work with more vulnerable children and young people through our programmes and centres, and planned for those children and their families to experience even greater benefits as a result of our services. In this report you will be able to see how we surpassed those commitments and made a significant difference to the lives of thousands of young people.

We are now using new, robust monitoring tools to help us measure our impact and gauge effectively how and where we can help more vulnerable children. One analysis measured the impact of our youth at risk work – our essential work with young people who are affected by

sexual exploitation, mental health issues, running away, or substance misuse. We found that a reassuring 80% of these children experienced positive change as a result of our services.

Our achievements also included significant campaign and policy wins. Through our campaigning, millions of vulnerable children and their families will now have access to local welfare provision – a crucial lifeline for struggling families facing a financial emergency. And as a result of our Debt Trap campaign, energy companies are now adapting their approaches to families living with energy debt, protecting almost a million children who currently live in these families. These

'We simply could not have achieved this substantial impact for children without our hugely generous donors, supporters and volunteers, the dedication of our highly skilled colleagues, and the support and collaboration of all our partners and stakeholders'

and many more legislative and policy changes that we influenced positively impacted over 1.8 million children and young people across England – reaching far beyond the million we committed to last year.

We can – and should – be proud of all that we have achieved with and for young people this year. But we simply could not have achieved this substantial impact for children without our hugely generous donors, supporters and volunteers, the dedication of our highly skilled colleagues, and the support and collaboration of all our partners and stakeholders.

Thank you so much to everyone who has enabled and supported us to achieve this impact in the lives of young people experiencing such substantial challenges and disadvantage. And of course, I'd like to thank the young people themselves who we have the privilege of working with and serving; their stories of courage and determination continue to inspire us and drive all that we do.



Matthew Reed
Chief Executive



Percentage of most vulnerable young people who experienced positive change as a result of our services



Number of children and young people positively impacted as a result of the policy changes we influenced



Our strategy

Since the day we were founded by Sunday school teacher Edward Rudolf in 1881, we've been at the forefront of pioneering change for children. We opened the UK's first residential children's care home and first safe house for runaways and were instrumental in securing free school meals for all infant school children living in poverty.

Every year, through our extensive network of frontline services and army of volunteers, we work directly with thousands of this country's most disadvantaged children – from helping families trapped in debt, child runaways and young carers, to stopping child sexual exploitation. Through our ambitious campaigns and determination to put children at the centre, we challenge misconceptions, change attitudes and influence government policy.

Today, as always, we are ambitious for all disadvantaged children and are determined, through our campaigning, commitment and care, to give every vulnerable child the greatest possible chance in life.

How we measure impact

We are committed to measuring the impact we have on children's lives, and have an expert in-house team that supports our staff and volunteers to understand, monitor, and analyse the difference we make through our direct practice and our campaigning.

We use a range of sector-approved tools and techniques for monitoring and evaluation, and – where the needs of the young people we support necessitates – design our own bespoke in-house tools. Feedback from the young people we support and our stakeholders is essential to understanding our impact, so in 2014/15, we enabled over 3,000 settings where young people could tell us about their experience of our services and the issues that are affecting their lives right now.

This impact report is built from the statistics and analysis that these tools and techniques enable. We will continue to push further on our impact measurement and in 2015/16, will have completed an outcomes pilot across our advocacy programmes, commissioned an independent assessment of our Debt Trap campaign activity, and embedded a new technique for capturing the difference made through return home interviews for children who have run away from home or care.

Understanding and measuring impact is central to our strategy, and critical to ensuring we achieve our mission of changing the stories of this country's most disadvantaged children.

Our achievements against last year's commitments

In our 2013/14 annual report we set out four key objectives for the 2014/15 financial year which focused on the difference we were aiming to make to children's lives. This impact report breaks down last year's activity, and the impact we made, into much more detail, demonstrating the depth and breadth of our work supporting the most disadvantaged children.

In 2013/14, we committed to:

- increase the number of children and young people we work with most intensively to 15,000
- increase the proportion of children and young people experiencing positive change through our support to 65%
- increase the proportion of parents and carers who feel that our children's centres make a lot of difference to them to 65%
- have a positive impact on the lives of at least one million disadvantaged children by influencing changes in national policy.

In 2014/15 we exceeded each of these four objectives:

- ✓ we increased the number of children and young people we worked with most intensively to 15,820, an increase of 7% on our intensive support reach in 2013/14, and 5% above our 2014/15 target
- ✓ we increased the proportion of children and young people who experienced positive change through our services to 73%. This was 13% higher than in 2013/14, and 8% above our 2014/15 target
- ✓ in a recent survey of our children's centres in Oldham, 87% of parents reported that they felt the service they received met their children's needs, and 91% said they were satisfied or very satisfied with the service they received¹
- ✓ the aggregated impacts of the 41 national and local legislative and policy changes that we influenced, positively impacted over 1.8 million children and young people across England.

We achieved this positive impact in the face of significant challenges and changes across the sector. In 2014/15 we were also able to:

- ✓ involve more young people – 350 – directly in decisions affecting national and local policy, as well as in organisational decision-making
- ✓ sustain a media reach of over £25 million (media value equivalent)
- ✓ mobilise an additional 30,000 supporters to take action online or offline
- ✓ provide over 3,000 opportunities for our service users to feed back directly on the changes to their lives that we were supporting them to achieve
- ✓ engage senior church leaders to undertake 84 actions that supported our influencing work.

We could not have achieved these changes for children without our incredible **275,000 supporters, 9,000 volunteers, and 850 staff** working across over 100 services and centres, as well as the support and collaboration of all our donors, partners and other stakeholders.

2. Our direct work with children and young people

Through our network of targeted programmes and children's centres, we worked with over 34,000 children and young people last year, bringing positive changes to vulnerable children up and down the country.

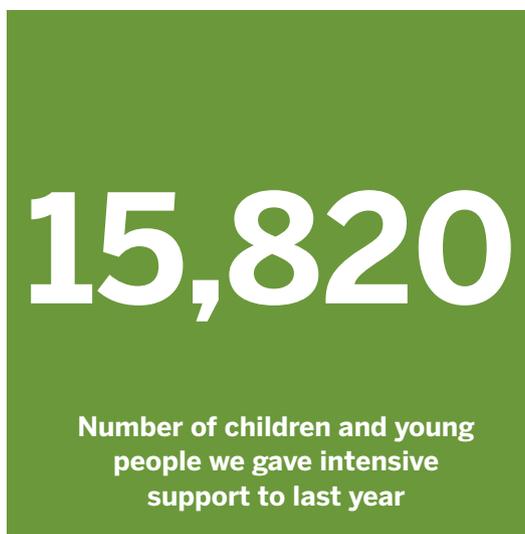
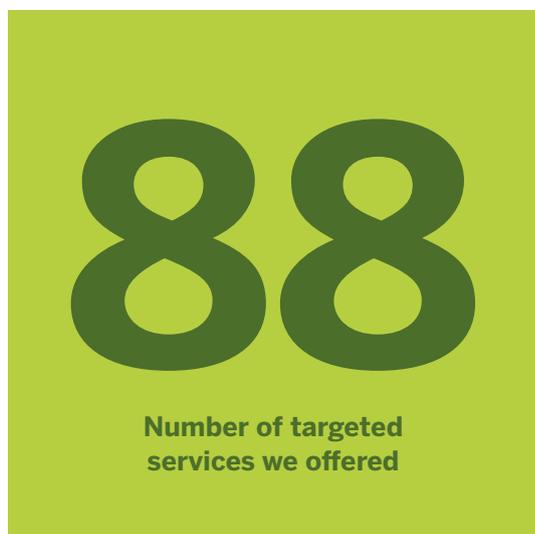
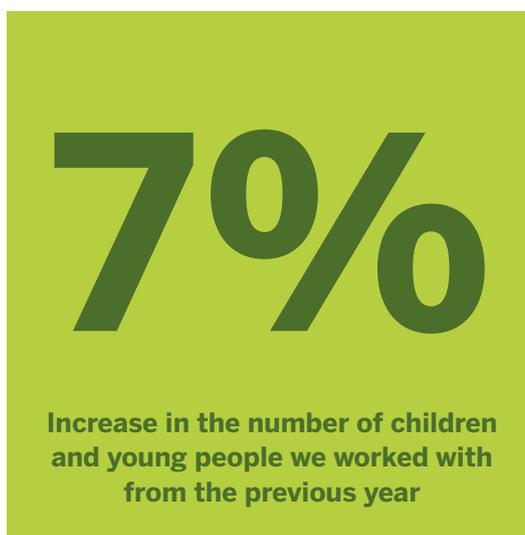
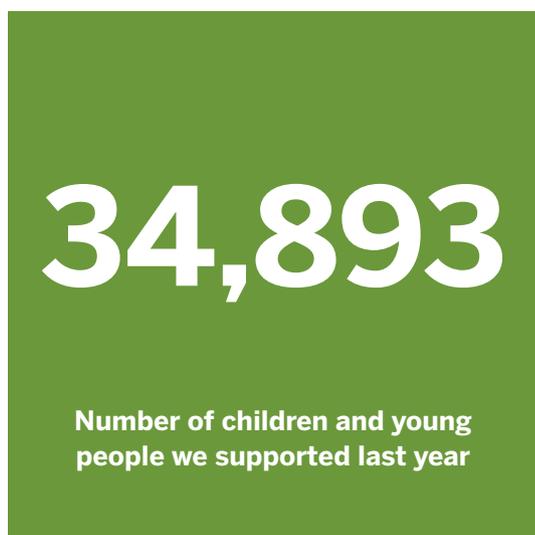


2. Our direct work with children and young people

How many children did we reach?

In total, we worked with 34,893 children and young people, providing intensive support to 15,820 in 2014/15, an increase of 7% from the previous year.

We ran a total of 127 services across England in 2014/15. This includes 88 targeted services through which we had sustained contact with 5,658 young people aged between five and 24. In addition, we saw 29,235 under-fives and gave intensive support to 10,162 through our network of 39 children's centres.





Lauren's story

Groomed child.
Understanding listener.
Growing trust.

Like lots of the young people we work with, Lauren had a difficult home life, and spent much of her time outside on the streets to get away from it all. So when a group of men approached her and her friends, offering them gifts and nights out, Lauren, who was just 13 at the time, copied her older friends and accepted.

The men slowly gained the girls' trust, buying them clothes and complimenting them, and, for the first time in her life, Lauren felt protected and loved. But before long, the men had introduced the girls to drugs and alcohol and would drive them to hotel rooms to sexually exploit them. Lauren's life quickly spiralled out of control.

Thankfully Lauren's school noticed a change in her behaviour and referred her to our Hand in Hand project in Keighley, which supports young people at risk of being sexually exploited. Through regular one-to-ones, group workshops and videos, her project worker carefully educated Lauren about the dangers of grooming and sexual exploitation, and gave her the tools and protection she needed to stay safe. 'Hand in Hand helped me the most to understand what CSE (child sexual exploitation) is', Lauren says, 'They gave me the confidence to walk away from it.'

Lauren is hopeful about her future now and would like to go to college and work in health and social care. 'I'm getting help to find jobs here too,' she says. 'At first, I didn't want to be here. I didn't trust for ages. But now I'm always here. It's where a child would want to be.'

How we support children

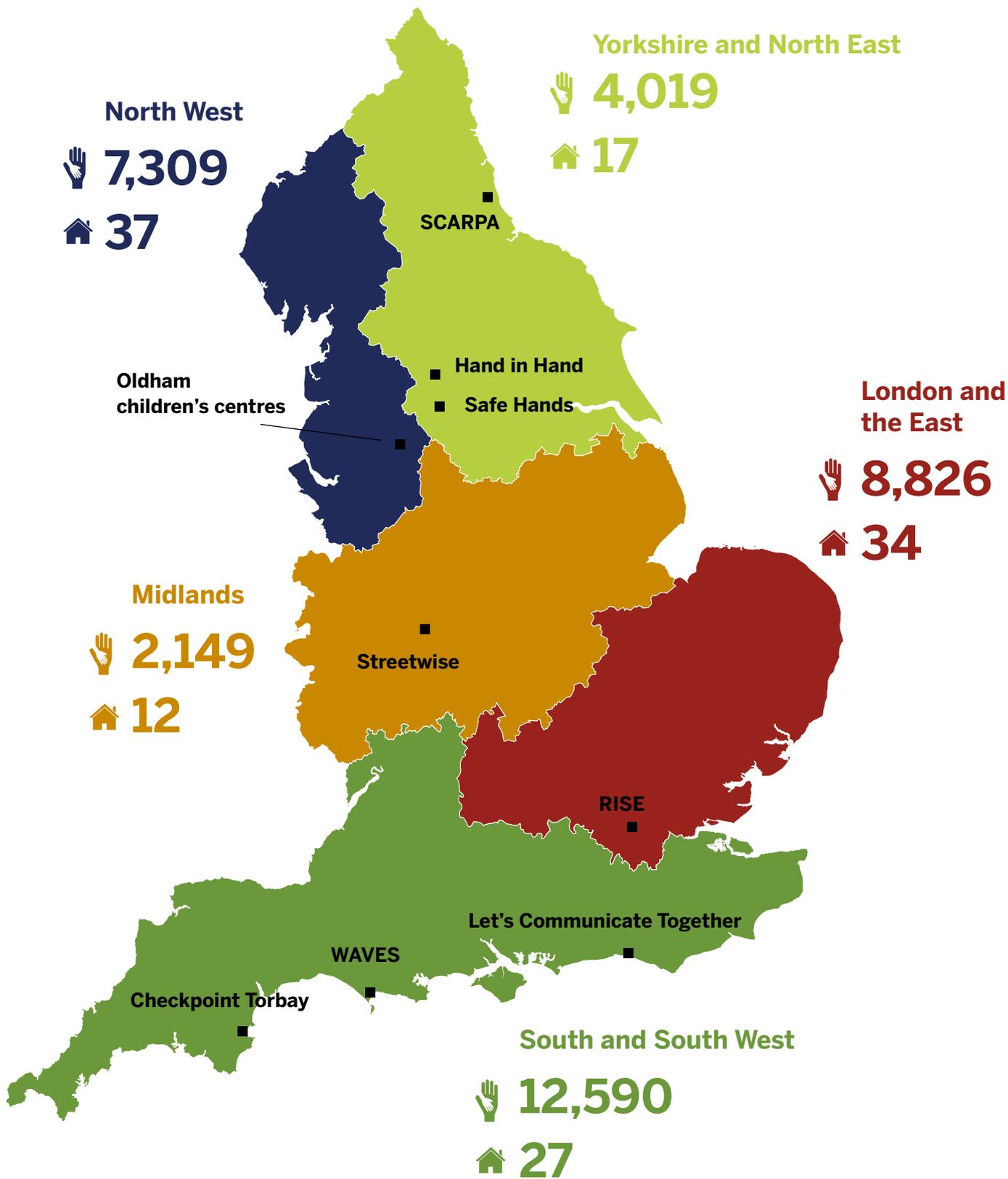
Last year, our services provided tailored, local support for children and young people on a diverse range of issues. The following is a snapshot of our work across the country:

- Through our national network of 12 services, we supported 648 young people experiencing, or at risk of sexual exploitation, an increase of 44% from the previous year. Of these, 59% reported significant improvements following our support.
- In Birmingham and Coventry, our **Streetwise** project continued its life-changing work, supporting 355 10 to 18 year olds who went missing and/or were at risk of child sexual exploitation.
- In Weymouth, **WAVES** saw 261 young people at risk from harm, offering them advice and guidance around issues such as bullying, problems at home and finding safe accommodation. 81% saw a reduction in their mental and emotional distress, and progress was also seen in their safety, their ability to have a say in decisions that affect their lives, and in their interaction with learning opportunities.
- In Torbay, our **Checkpoint** project, which offers drop-in advice, guidance and intensive support to young people who have run away from home or care, or who are suffering from substance misuse, supported 729 young people last year.
- Our **children's centres in Oldham**, one of the most deprived areas in the country, had sustained contact with 1,825 children. Over 91% of users said they were either satisfied or very satisfied with the service they received, and 99% would recommend the centres to their family or friends. These centres particularly reached the most vulnerable families, with 53% of families from Oldham's most deprived areas accessing one of our centres at least once.
- In Newcastle, **SCARPA** provided support to 304 young people who go missing or are at risk of sexual exploitation, helping them stay safe from harm, while **Safe Hands** in Calderdale and **Hand in Hand** in Keighley provided a safe and accessible service for 226 children and young people involved in, or vulnerable to, sexual exploitation.
- In London, **RISE** supported 14 boys and young men aged 11 to 25 who had been trafficked into the UK from abroad for exploitation. This specialist project was set up in April 2013 to reach out to the increasing numbers of boys and young men who are now being trafficked into the UK, often for forced criminality, and the huge gap in service provision for young male victims. An external evaluation of the service² revealed that it is hugely respected and valued for its expertise and ability to support young people effectively.
- In Brighton & Hove, **Let's Communicate Together** supported 46 pre-school disabled children with an identified significant speech and language need. An external evaluation of the project at the end of year one³ found that it had progressed very well and grown into a well-respected service.

'I'm delighted to hear that inequalities are being reduced among children attending these centres [in Oldham] because we all want all of our children to flourish, no matter what their background or family circumstances.'

Cllr Amanda Chadderton
Oldham Council's Cabinet
Member for Education

2. Our direct work with children and young people



For further information about our impact in each of our five regions, please visit childrenssociety.org.uk/impact

	Total number of young people supported
	Total number of services



What was our impact?

73%⁴ of the young people, and 71%⁵ of families we worked with in the last year experienced positive change.

73

Percentage of all young people we worked with who experienced positive change in the past year

71

Percentage of all families we worked with who experienced positive change in the past year

‘With children, the solutions are rarely simple or straightforward. The Children’s Society works tirelessly in Greater Manchester’s communities in ways that make a difference for young people.’

Mr Warren J Smith JP

Her Majesty’s Lord-Lieutenant of Greater Manchester

Jenny’s story

Abused child.
Now supported.
New hope.

For over five years, Jenny’s step mum abused her in an awful way. Lit cigarettes and bleach were thrown in her face and she was even beaten so badly that she ended up in hospital.

Feeling unwanted and depressed, Jenny, who’s 16, started to cut herself a lot, and take drugs and alcohol to numb the pain. But the pain didn’t go away, and Jenny became suicidal.

Thankfully, Jenny found out about our CheckPoint project in Torbay and her life finally started to change for the better. We gave her emergency accommodation and put her in touch with Juliet, someone Jenny describes as ‘the best counsellor ever’.

Jenny says: ‘Juliet told me I had a lot of stress and my past is really hard for me to get out of my head. She gave me a squidgy telephone and said “If I’m angry, squeeze it”. She helped me a lot.’

Juliet spoke up for Jenny’s needs and supported her to reduce her drug taking and drinking. She gave her the direct, one to one support she needed to work through her difficult past and start to take control of her life.

Jenny is now at college studying to be a hairdresser. ‘They’re good people at The Children’s Society’, says Jenny. ‘It’s like a family here. This is my family.’

The impact of our youth at risk programmes

To measure the impact of our youth at risk work, we analysed in detail a sample of 442 children and young people⁶ who received support from our services last year in relation to one or more of the following issues:

- Child sexual exploitation
- Mental and emotional health
- Missing and running away from home
- Domestic violence
- Substance misuse
- Violence and youth offending

During their engagement with our services, 80% of these young people experienced positive change, with the greatest improvements felt in their safety, mental and emotional health, their ability to have their say, and their hopes for the future.

At their initial assessment, the young people said that their mental and emotional health was the area of life about which they felt least positive. In later assessments, 52% (compared to just 20% at the outset of our working with them) felt they were making positive progress, and although they may still face obstacles at times, they now know how to reach out for support when they need it.

In relation to their feelings of safety, only 35% of young people felt at their initial assessment that they were moving in the right direction towards feeling safe in their everyday lives, whilst approximately two thirds (68%) of these young people felt safer and positive in this way at their latest assessments.

‘Quite simply, the best participation work I have ever seen anywhere’

Ian Rush

Local Safeguarding Children’s Board Chair,
Cheshire East



Percentage of young people who experienced positive change as a result of our youth at risk work



Percentage of young people who felt safer following our support



3. Our campaigns and policy work

Our ambitious campaigning is grounded in strong practice. Last year we saw 41 significant national and local policy changes that will give life-changing support to 1.8 million vulnerable children and young people.



Local welfare assistance: Saving the safety net for vulnerable children and families

When, in December 2013, the Government attempted to abolish dedicated funding for local welfare assistance schemes, we launched a successful campaign to reinstate this vital safety net, ensuring the future well-being of millions of children and their families.

What's wrong

Local welfare assistance schemes are often the last line of defence for families facing an emergency. Without them, vulnerable families would have to choose between going without basic essentials such as food or heating, or turning to high cost credit or pay day loans, plunging them into a debt trap.

At a time of increasing child poverty, high levels of problem debts, and cuts to support for families, it is now more important than ever that local authorities have dedicated funding to help get struggling families back on their feet and prevent a temporary financial emergency from spiralling into debt and outright destitution.

Making it right

Our campaign led to over 1,000 of our supporters responding to the Government consultation, demanding that the provision be reinstated, with hundreds also contacting their MPs and raising the issue on social media.

To get MPs' attention we provided them with local statistics on the numbers of children in their constituency likely to be affected by the cuts. We then followed up with 57 MPs, getting them to table 25 questions in Parliament and to write to the Local Government Minister, asking him to save the safety net. We also worked closely with the Local Government Association and charity sector partners in order to take forward our call to reinstate the funding.



**Percentage of parents
who borrow money to pay
for essentials like food or
heating⁷**



**Number of children who
will now be supported
thanks to this campaign**

3. Our campaigns and policy work

As a final push, we initiated and led on a cross-sector action online, getting 13 organisations to come together to amplify our voice on the issue and keep up the public pressure.

The impact for young people

Following our lobbying and campaigning work, the Government reallocated £130 million of funding to local welfare provision, including an additional £74 million to enable local authorities to put effective schemes in place. We estimate this will allow councils to provide support for over 1 million children.

Thanks to our staff and supporters' rapid response to the Government's consultation, many of the most vulnerable families will still have access to this vital lifeline. We'll continue to lobby Government to ensure this funding is protected for future years.

'We welcome the Government's recognition that local welfare assistance is an essential lifeline to families in crisis. Retaining funding for these schemes will provide relief for families who were on the verge of losing their last line of defence.'

Matthew Reed

Chief Executive,
The Children's Society

Anna's story

Frightened family.
Vital lifeline.
Safety restored.

After suffering extreme domestic violence at the hands of her partner, which left her with a broken nose and shattered eye socket, Anna fled her family home with her two children (Amy, seven, and Jack, five) and moved in with her mum. But her ex-partner wouldn't leave Anna alone, verbally abusing her online and threatening to kill her. She went through a family court to get an injunction to keep him away, but he breached this within 10 minutes of it taking effect.

Thankfully, Anna was placed in safe accommodation, and her support worker put her in touch with her local welfare assistance scheme. The scheme gave her the household essentials she needed to start her life again, and security locks on her doors and windows to help the family finally feel safe.

Anna says, 'Thanks to local welfare assistance schemes, my kids and I are now in a secure home and able to live independently, without abuse from my ex-partner. I don't know how I'd have made it through the last six months without this support – it was a lifeline for my kids and me when we needed it most.'

The Children's Commission on Poverty: An inquiry into the impact of poverty on school life

Over the past two years, we supported The Children's Commission on Poverty to lead an inquiry into the true costs of school life for children living in poverty, and draw up a series of recommendations to mitigate the worst effects of poverty on the school lives of children.

What's wrong

There are over three and half million children in poverty in the UK today,⁸ yet their voices have been largely missing from the debate. Until we can see what poverty feels and looks like through the eyes of children themselves, we will lack the urgency needed to tackle the issue in the best way possible.

Making it right

The Children's Commission on Poverty⁹ enabled children in this country to speak out about the realities of child poverty, and discovering what needs to change to deliver brighter futures for children in England.

In July 2014, we supported 16 young people aged 10 to 19 to lead an inquiry into the true costs of school life – the costs of school meals, uniforms and other materials – and the emotional impact on children if a family cannot afford these things. The young commissioners put out a written call for evidence, organised three days of oral evidence sessions in the House of Commons, and surveyed over 2,000 families and children.

After their extensive investigations, they identified the recommendations they wished to put forward, and we worked closely with them to co-produce *At What Cost?* which was launched at an event at the House of Commons. The report made it clear that urgent change is needed to make sure that all children living in poorer families are not isolated, stigmatised or excluded from opportunities at school.



Number of children living in poverty in the UK⁸



Media value equivalent of our inquiry, raising awareness of the issue of poverty in schools

3. Our campaigns and policy work

Throughout this period, we also supported the young commissioners as they took part in events to disseminate their findings to a wider audience. The media coverage was positive and generated a media value equivalent of £1,265,187, while the Children's Commission on Poverty website attracted 7,774 unique views, with 2,500 views on YouTube, and 6,500 people reached through Facebook.

The impact for young people

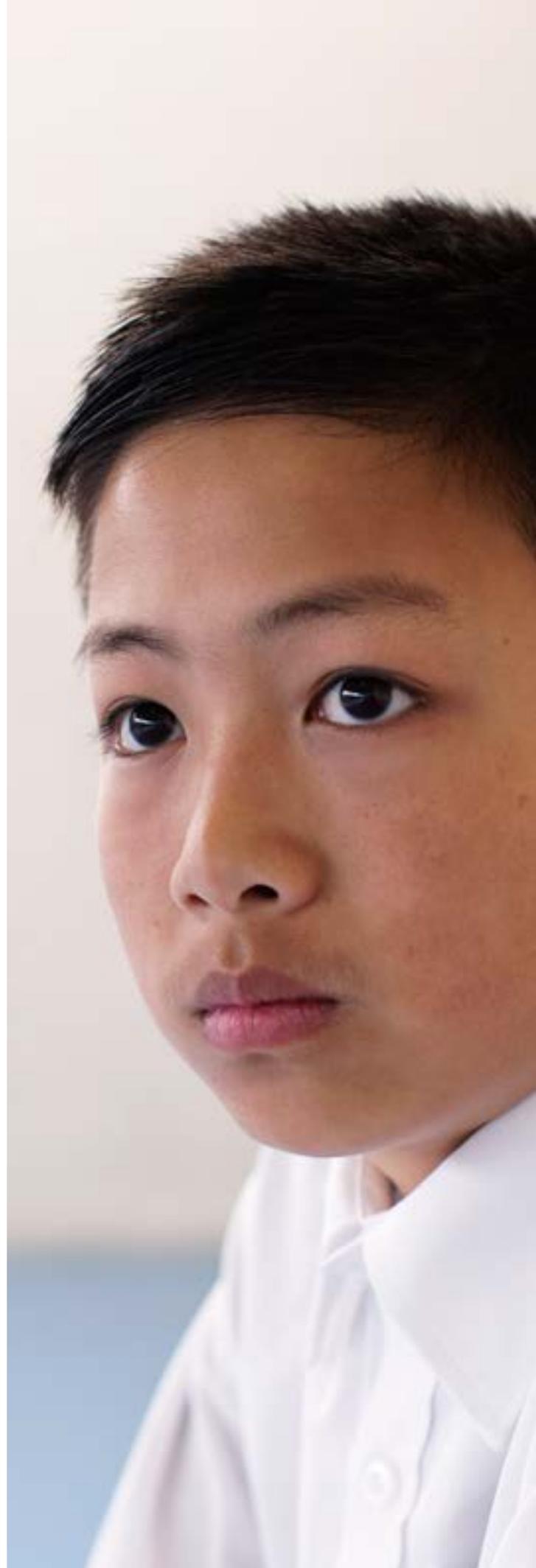
A significant new evidence base on the impact of child poverty has now been developed that will have clear relevance to the continuing debate on the subject. Following the launch of the At What Cost? report in Parliament, two local authorities offered to trial parts of the recommendations and David Laws, the Minister of State for Schools (who spoke at the launch), set up a ministerial round-table to examine government guidance on the costs of school uniforms.

The National Council of the Church of England (which oversees the 4,700 Church of England schools) responded very enthusiastically to the report and discussions are taking place that could bring about very significant changes to the way Church of England schools operate, and avoid inadvertently excluding children in poverty from many aspects of school life and learning.

In addition, all the young commissioners involved in this ground-breaking project recorded a significant enhancement of their skills and capabilities, and in February 2015 the Children's Commission on Poverty won the Diana Award for their work on child poverty.

'I hope that the voices of young people within policy can be heard more and more. I believe we should be listened to more when tackling the big issues – like child poverty – facing our society today.'

Yousif, age 19
young commissioner



The Debt Trap campaign: Ending the damage debt causes to children

In May 2014 we exposed the devastating damage debt causes to children, and called for a curb on exploitative payday loan adverts and an end to energy companies' damaging debt practices.

What's wrong

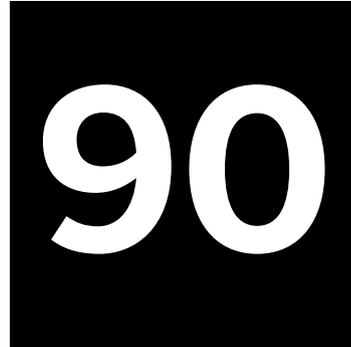
A staggering 2.5 million children are living in families with problem debt in the UK, behind on £4.8 billion of payments on household bills and loan repayments.¹⁰ Debt has a negative impact on a child's mental and physical health, undermines their relationships with their peers and their school experiences, and can cause long-term harm.

Our research uncovered that energy companies are failing to follow the rules by using damaging debt practices, leaving family homes cold and harming children's and parents' health, while exploitative payday loan adverts undermine children's financial education and put even more pressure on families struggling to make ends meet.

Making it right

Our report, *The Debt Trap*, lifted the lid on the shocking scale of problem debt for children, and we engaged with MPs, Peers, Bishops, civil servants and the financial sector to support our campaign. The campaign launch, reinforced by an online animation and game showing the damage debt causes children, attracted significant media coverage, endorsements from the Church of England and Parliamentarians, and backing from thousands of our supporters.

We then focused on areas where debt most acutely impacts on children. In the autumn we tackled payday loan advertising, revealing in our report *Playday not Payday* how children are routinely being exposed to a barrage of advertising that makes high-risk, high-cost loans seem fun. We toured a spoof payday loan company, Ready Teddy Loans, to party conferences to highlight companies' use of cuddly adverts and jingles, and campaigned to amend the Consumer Rights Bill to ban exploitative payday loan adverts before the watershed. Over 17,000 emails were sent by our supporters to Lords debating the amendment and we proactively engaged with key Lords in government and opposition.



Percentage of parents in problem debt who have cut back on essential items for their children to keep up repayments¹¹



Number of children living in families in energy debt who will now be protected thanks to our campaigning¹²

3. Our campaigns and policy work

We know families face a daily battle to pay the bills, meet housing costs, and find money for food and other basics. So in January 2015, we produced a new policy report **Show Some Warmth** – which exposed the impact of energy debt on children – and developed individual recommendations for each energy company to encourage them to improve their practice. An amazing 6,500 campaigners signed our petition which we presented in the form of a giant ‘final demand’ notice to each of the big six energy companies. We ran an event in Parliament, sent local statistics to MPs to secure their support for the campaign, and proactively engaged with each energy company and Ofgem to improve their policies.

The impact for young people

In November 2014 we achieved a considerable step forward in our campaign, with the Government telling the watchdog to immediately investigate curbing payday loan advertising. This will help reduce ‘pester power’ from children to take out a loan and ensure children learn about money management from parents and schools rather than exploitative adverts.

Thanks to our campaign, energy companies and Ofgem are now looking to include families with children in their ‘vulnerable groups’ criteria. This would mean that if families are in debt on their bills, energy companies will show some warmth and adapt their approach to help them, protecting 800,000 children who are currently living in families in energy debt.¹²

Our engagement with the Archbishop of Canterbury’s task group on responsible credit and savings has resulted in the piloting of a ‘LifeSavers’ scheme¹³, allowing school pupils to learn financial management skills while saving with credit unions. This has been funded by HM Treasury. We are also piloting a new peer-to-peer support scheme for families in debt to help alleviate the impact on children. Results from this pilot will be available in autumn 2015.

‘I’d like to thank The Children’s Society for bringing this issue to our inboxes and to our attention’

Baroness Jolly
Government Whip

Eve’s story

Impossible bills.
Deprived children.
Troubled adults.

Eve, a survivor of domestic violence, walked out on her husband when her youngest child was just two years old.

After a period in a refuge Eve and her three children moved into a flat of their own. But Eve’s job never covered all her bills and she soon fell into arrears on council tax, quickly receiving a court summons.

Eve attended a court hearing so she could explain her situation and it was agreed she would pay £10 a month. But despite keeping up with her agreed payments, the council applied for an attachment of earnings, and confiscated a fifth of her income without anything more than a letter – that Eve didn’t receive until after the money had started coming out of her wages.

For a while, Eve could not afford food, and relied on food parcels for her and the children, but still, they often went hungry. George, Eve’s eldest son, aged 11, described how he was often hungry at night but knew his mum could not do anything to help their situation because they did not have enough money.

Eve was visited twice by bailiffs, but living in a furnished rented flat, the only thing they could have taken would have been clothes off her and the children. Eve eventually moved out of her flat and in with a friend as she couldn’t afford the rent any longer. She is now slowly repaying her debts, but she thinks it will take another year before they are cleared.

Create a Change: Empowering young people to affect social change

In July 2014, we launched a youth activism pilot in London and Manchester, to empower young people to affect change and tackle social problems in their communities.

What's wrong

Many young people in Manchester feel unsafe in the city centre, with half¹⁴ feeling under pressure to share personal information, such as their address or private photographs, either online or in person. There is a clear need for more safe places young people can go, where they can seek advice and information.

Meanwhile in London, far too many young people feel unsupported in their school, with over 50% of students¹⁵ saying they don't feel they have enough support to help them with their relationships, solve their problems or deal with emotional issues – and many don't even know who to turn to for support in the first place.

Making it right

In July 2014 we launched Create a Change, a programme which taught two groups of young people aged between 14 and 18 how to tackle a particular social problem in their communities. The project kicked off with a three-day residential where we ran workshops on fundraising, influencing, media and digital campaigning and the groups met every fortnight in London and Manchester to plan their actions and make the changes they wanted to see.

Research by the Manchester group found that many young people feel unsafe in the city centre, so they looked at what risks they face, both online and in person, and what the best ways are of protecting them. They identified that while there were 'Student Safe Zones' in place around the university campus, these didn't cater to all young people, so they approached the Community Safety Team in Manchester, requesting that the scheme be extended.



Percentage of young people in Manchester who feel unsafe¹⁴



Number of young people empowered to affect social change thanks to Create a Change

3. Our campaigns and policy work

Our London group focused on the lack of support available to young people aged 14–18 in schools. After surveying other young people in their schools and discovering many students not only feel unsupported, but don't even know who to approach for support, they called for schools to have clear signposts so students know where to go if they are experiencing problems. They designed and made signs which they sent along with a letter to council leaders, school headteachers and chairs of governors in their areas, drawing attention to what students could and should be able to access.

The impact for young people

Following proposals made by our Create a Change group, the Student Safe Zone group in Manchester agreed to extend the scheme and rebrand them as 'Safe Zones', where city centre shops sign up to be 'safe havens', and take young people in if they feel unsafe. The Safe Zones scheme will now be operating in Greater Manchester, beginning in the city centre and eventually spreading across the region, creating a safe haven for thousands of young people in the city.

Kent County Council have responded to our call for clear signposting in schools by outlining the support they currently offer and promising to continue to promote and develop their services in consultation with young people.

The young people involved in Create a Change showed a significant increase in their identified areas for development, including confidence, choice and commitment.¹⁶

'Before Create a Change I used to hide behind others' ideas because it was easier than giving my own opinion. Create a Change has helped me to have the confidence to put my own ideas out there.'

Sasha

Create a Change participant



4. Our strategic focus for 2015/16

We are committed, through all of our services and campaigning, to making sure we have the greatest possible impact on the lives of this country's most disadvantaged children, young people and their families.

We therefore made the strategic choice last year, grounded in strong evidence and extensive consultation, to focus our work on the most disadvantaged 10 to 18 year olds, who have the most complex needs and suffer poverty and neglect.

We have a long and proud history of providing support to teenagers at their most vulnerable – from runaways and those in the care system, to asylum-seekers and young carers. This is a group all too often let down or, at worst, abandoned by society. We are dedicated to being there when they have nowhere else to turn – to protect them, to help them grow and to listen when things go wrong.

'I wish to thank The Children's Society for the work they have already conducted and I hope that we can continue to work together'

Andy Waldie

Detective Inspector, Serious and Organised Crime Unit, Essex Police



5. References

¹ We are repeating a full service user satisfaction study in summer 2015 and will report the results in next year's impact report.

² O'Higgins, A and Godoy, M. Rise Project Evaluation. 2014. *Available on request*.

³ Let's Communicate Together Project Evaluation. 2014. *Available on request*.

⁴ Based on a sample of 960 young people from across our programmes, using the My Wheel survey.

⁵ Based on a sample of 506 families from across our centres and programmes, using the Family Star Plus survey.

⁶ An in-depth comparative and trend analysis was conducted using data relating to 442 cases from our youth at risk programmes.

⁷ Royston, S and Surtees, J. The Debt Trap: Exposing the impact of problem debt on children. 2014. The Children's Society and StepChange Debt Charity, London.

⁸ Households Below Average Income: An analysis of the income distribution 1994/95 – 2012/13. 2014. Department for Work & Pensions, London.

⁹ www.childrenscommission.org.uk

¹⁰ Royston, S and Surtees, J. The Debt Trap: Exposing the impact of problem debt on children. 2014. The Children's Society and StepChange Debt Charity, London.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Williams, N et al. Show Some Warmth: Exposing the damaging impact of energy debt on children. 2015. The Children's Society, London.

¹³ www.gov.uk/government/news/government-boost-to-get-kids-saving-at-christmas

¹⁴ Based on a survey of 100 young people, using SurveyMonkey.

¹⁵ Based on a survey of 40 young people in five schools, using SurveyMonkey.

¹⁶ Using the Rickter Scale, a multi-sensory assessment and action planning process, designed specifically to measure soft outcomes and distance travelled. At the beginning and end of the scheme each young person measured where they felt they were on a scale on 1 to 10. On average, the young people's scores had increased by 1.5 to 2 points in five out of 10 areas, by 0.5 in three, and the remaining two stayed the same.