Contents

Young people deserve a better future 5
The Children’s Society in 2018/19 6
Our work across England 9
Headline data 11
How we create change 13
What we do 14
How we measure change 16
Our new outcomes 17
Resilience 19
Risk 35
Resources 48
Lessons learned 60
Our supporters 62
Young people deserve a better future

The children we work with are truly incredible. Despite the challenges and risks they face, we see so many children who refuse to let negative experiences define their future and who are embracing hope and optimism. Our role at The Children’s Society is to support this future as best we can.

Children we meet have often undergone terrible trauma. They may have been exploited, abused or neglected. Alongside physical harm, many may be suffering from mental health issues, facing poverty or living in fear of their safety. That’s why our talented project workers are so important: they ensure children are supported and empowered, and that their voices are being heard.

Equally important are our efforts in campaigning, policy and systems change where we are bringing about improvements for tens of thousands of young people. Whether changing laws that are placing children at risk, improving aspects of support for young people, or working with professionals to improve awareness of issues, we’re making a real difference to children’s futures.

This year’s Impact Report shows how our services and campaigning are continuing to bring incredible change to the lives of young people across the country. We could not achieve this without the inspirational support of our partners, from individuals donating to our work through to funders commissioning and supporting our activities.

Like us, our partners are driven by a desire for change and a belief that every young person in this country should be able to fulfil their unbounded potential. We look forward to continuing our vital work together.

Thank you for your support

Peter Grigg,  
Director of External Affairs

Dara De Burca,  
Children and Young People Director
The Children’s Society in 2018/19

Our goals for 2018/19 were centred around the three key pillars of our Impact Plan:

1. Focus intensively on multiple disadvantage as experienced by the most marginalised groups of young people.

2. Transform our ability to innovate and be disruptive to enhance the lives of young people.

3. Focus explicitly on partnership and inspiring a social movement to achieve change for children and young people.

- Reach at least 10,000 young people through direct support, youth action and youth insight work.

We worked with 9,872 young people through direct practice and youth engagement. We carried out intensive case work with 4,502 and offered advice and guidance to 5,370.

We reached a further 16,553 young people through our preventative work, which includes awareness raising work in schools, events and youth engagement outside of direct practice.

1,764 young people we worked with or reached participated in our insight and youth action work. This involved listening and talking to young people, then using what they told us to inform our work. By engaging young people and putting them at the very heart of our work, we are able achieve better outcomes for them.

- Deliver over 400,000 positive impacts for young people through policy and campaigning work.

We delivered 621,000 positive impacts for young people through our policy and campaigning work.

This year, we have continued to achieve significant change for care leavers, with over 30 councils signing up to a council tax exemption, bringing the total number of councils who have introduced this policy to 101. We also established a new bursary of £1,000 for care leavers undertaking apprenticeships to improve their financial stability as they move into work.

After a five-year legal challenge by The Children’s Society and partners, this year the Ministry of Justice conceded that all unaccompanied and separated children should be eligible for legal aid with their immigration cases. We estimate that at least 15,000 vulnerable young people will benefit from this very welcome change.

Over the last year we have mobilised nine new innovation prototypes and pilots including:

- Providing systemic support for young people in crisis in Nottingham.
- Using virtual reality scenarios to tackle anxiety at school in Birmingham.
- Creating safe spaces in Manchester, Birmingham, and London to disrupt child criminal labour and sexual exploitation.
- Redefining the meaning of ‘practitioner’ by putting local people in the lead of systems change.

We have collaborated with start-ups and new enterprises to use technology to improve housing situation for families in crisis, empower young people to manage their well-being at school, and help young people to understand how their brain works as a route to better mental health.

- Pilot three innovative models of support for young people.

We have inspired 313,593 individual direct supporter actions with or for The Children’s Society. These actions span donations given, events held, volunteering sessions delivered, campaign actions taken and social media engagement on our behalf. We doubled our target of 10,000 new supporters taking action for the first time this year – this was particularly thanks to our integrated Christmas Appeal and Christingle 50th anniversary.

Our growing network of campaign champions took 60 offline high value campaign actions for us, including meeting with local decision makers, attending local council meetings and parliamentary events, writing blogs, and raising awareness of our campaigns in their community.

- Transform our ability to innovate and be disruptive to enhance the lives of young people.

- Inspire 300,000 individual supporter actions that contribute to the positive change for children.

- Focus explicitly on partnership and inspiring a social movement to achieve change for children and young people.
We reached 16,330 young people through preventative activity and systems change work.

We led 2 national programmes, spanning multiple geographies.

Our work across England

North
- 33
- 2,118

Midlands
- 16
- 4,812

South
- 44
- 2,955

Total number of services in the region
Young people worked with in the region
Of the children and young people we worked with last year:

- **82%** said their lives improved after working with us.\(^1\)
- **98%** felt listened to by their worker.\(^2\)
- **97%** felt they could trust their worker.\(^2\)
- **87%** said they would come to the service again if they needed help.\(^2\)
- **93%** of our service users said they were happy or very happy with our services this year.\(^2\)
- **99%** of the parents and carers we worked with were satisfied with the service they received.\(^3\)

\(^1\) Based on outcomes tools for 6,629 young people; \(^2\) User satisfaction is based on surveys from 561 young people; \(^3\) Based on surveys from 196 parents and carers.
Our vision is of a country where children are free from disadvantage. In order to achieve this, our strategy for 2017 to 2022 is focused on breaking the cycles of multiple disadvantage that young people face. We recognise that children and young people rarely face difficulties in just one area of their lives – the problems they face are multiple and complex. To capture this complexity across the various areas in which we work, we refer to three ‘domains’ of multiple disadvantage – Risk, Resilience and Resources. These three domains are where we aim to contribute to positive improvement through our work.

Our interventions can occur at several different stages of a journey for children and their families:

- Preventing an issue from occurring or escalating.
- Supporting those experiencing disadvantage and in crisis.
- Helping young people recover beyond these experiences.

In order to create change at all these stages, we:

- **Work directly** – providing support to individuals and groups of young people.
- **Work in communities** – with young people, their peers, families, the public and other professionals.
- **Seek to have an impact on the systems around a young person** – working to make change locally and nationally so that more young people can be free from disadvantage.
What we do

We reduce the RISK of exploitation, neglect and abuse

Vulnerable children and young people in this country are at risk from exploitation, neglect and abuse. Children are at their most vulnerable as they transition to adulthood. We want to do all we can to tackle and disrupt exploitation, ensuring the right systems are in place to protect young people.

The issues we work on include:
- Child sexual and criminal exploitation, including county lines.
- Family support services for those at risk of neglect.
- Supporting children at risk of trafficking.
- Influencing policy on missing children and the public narrative on 16 and 17 year olds.

We build the RESILIENCE and emotional well-being of young people

One child in nine is living with a serious mental health problem, yet only a third of these children are getting the help they need. Mental illness hits vulnerable children the hardest, and if we don’t help them find the strength to cope, their problems will get worse as they get older.

The issues we work on include:
- Counselling, mental health and emotional well-being.
- Young people who have faced trauma and adverse childhood experiences.
- Young people experiencing substance and alcohol misuse directly or in their families.
- Influencing the NHS Long Term Plan for young people’s mental health provision and the way well-being is measured.
- Finding digital solutions to young people’s mental health issues.

We strengthen the RESOURCES available to children and young people

We want to make sure children have the security, stability and love they need to give them a better chance in life. Without these, their health, well-being and futures are in jeopardy.

We support:
- Children on the edge of care, in the care system and leaving care.
- Children with caring responsibilities (young carers).
- Refugees and migrant families and unaccompanied children.
- Children by improving the funding the Government gives to Children’s Services.
- Families and young people facing financial crisis, destitution or the effects of austerity.

Children and young people rarely face difficulties in just one area of their lives. We know the challenges they face are multiple and their ability to respond to the risks and the resources they have available will vary. If we are going to break the cycles of disadvantage we need to see the whole picture and tackle the issues together.
How we measure change

Our impact is the sustainable change that young people see as a result of our work. Change in themselves, in their families and their communities, and in the systems with which they interact. Ultimately, the impact we seek is that young people have safe, stable, healthy, and positive lives, where they have less exposure to harmful risk, are resilient, and have the resources they need.

We use a range of approaches to track the progress young people experience, and also seek to gather their opinions on what’s worked well and what needs to be improved about our services. We draw insight from in-house and external evaluations of our activity, and reflect on what we can do to continue to improve.

To capture impact we use a range of measurement and evaluation approaches, both quantitative and qualitative, which are supported by our in-house Evidence and Impact team. These measures include:

- Surveys we have developed ourselves, such as My Wheel™, and before-and-after questionnaires for interventions, including independent advocacy and befriending.
- Methods supplied to us by partners, such as Young People’s Outcome Reporting (Substance Misuse).
- Validated external surveys, such as the Revised Children’s Anxiety and Depression Scale (RCADs) and the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ).
- Process tracing and attributed influence – techniques to measure the impact of policy initiatives and campaigning.
- Service-user satisfaction surveys offered to all young people and families with whom we have worked.
- Qualitative research in the form of focus groups and interviews with staff, partners and young people.

As a charity that puts children and young people at our heart, our measurement approaches are guided by core values of participation and inclusivity. Throughout our monitoring and evaluation work we seek a proportionate approach to measuring the contribution of our efforts to achieve change, with the results informing our direct work with young people.

We believe that the experiences and voices of young people should shape everything that we do, and our monitoring and evaluation set-up strives to achieve that in every interaction that we have.

The Children’s Society Social Impact Framework sets out the aspirations we hold for all young people facing multiple disadvantage, as well as the families and communities in which they live, and the systems that should support them. Ultimately, the impact that we seek is that young people have safe, stable, healthy, and positive lives, where they have less exposure to harmful risk, are resilient, and have the resources they need.

**Priority outcomes:**

- Young people:
  - Are safer
  - Have improved mental health and emotional well-being
  - Have access to the resources and services they need
  - Have positive relationships with family, carers and friends
  - Have aspirations and are engaged in education, employment, and training and their community
  - Feel listened to

- Families and communities:
  - Create safe spaces for young people to be and where they can seek support
  - Have increased understanding of the issues young people face and are better able to support them
  - Challenge multiple disadvantage, inequality and discrimination against young people
  - Trust and listen to young people

- Systems:
  - Influencers and decision-makers are more knowledgeable about young people’s issues
  - Ensure services, legislation and policy are shaped by young people’s voices and experiences
  - Services, legislation, and policies work better for young people facing multiple disadvantage
  - Tackle multiple disadvantage holistically, assign sufficient financial resources, and embrace social innovation
We define resilience as a young person’s capacity to respond to adversity in their life. A young person may have experienced significant trauma or have an underlying mental health issue that can compromise their capacity to respond. Our work with young people includes providing open access services, support for those in crisis, counselling for survivors of abuse, drug treatment programmes for those misusing substances, and mediation for families who have experienced trauma. We also lobby decision makers to ensure that young people can have access to the right mental health support in the right place at the right time.

“It made me realise that I shouldn’t give up just yet.”
Spotlight on: 
Pause, Birmingham

Pause is The Children’s Society’s mental health and well-being hub for children and young people in central Birmingham. It is part of Forward Thinking Birmingham, the city’s mental health partnership for 0 to 25 year olds. Open seven days a week over extended hours, Pause provides an open access service staffed by counsellors, youth workers and volunteers (including young volunteers), who can provide immediate help and advice. The service is designed to increase the availability of help for young people and to reduce demand on specialist services through early engagement. Children and young people are supported to access supportive information, self-assessment and self-help tools, and support groups – and to access formal counselling where needed.

Last year 2,478 children and young people came to Pause, with a total of 6,311 visits. When they came to Pause:
- 48% were feeling anxious.
- 27% described depression or low mood.
- 21% told us they were experiencing anger issues.
- 12% felt difficulties within the family were affecting their mental health.
- 6% were being bullied.

After working with us
88% said they now felt more able to deal with their presenting issue¹, and
78% said the skills they learnt with us had better helped them to manage it.²

98% of young people we worked with in Pause said that they would recommend us to a friend or family member.³

¹Data based on 1,236 young people (50%);
²Data based on 1,221 young people (49%);
³Data based on 1,041 young people (42%).
Spotlight on: BEAM, Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin

Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin
BEAM, funded by South Staffordshire and Shropshire NHS Foundation Trust, supports children and young people aged 0 to 25 who are experiencing difficulties with their emotional well-being. Young people can use these drop-in services whenever they need to – there are no appointments, no waiting lists and no need for a referral. By providing young people with therapeutic support, educational resources and access to online learning, advice and guidance, Beam enables children and young adults to access the mental health services they need. And if a child is recognised as needing more specialist mental health support, Beam will work to help them access the appropriate services.

In 2018/19, there were 1,107 children and young people who came to Beam Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin, with a total 2,872 visits. Of these young people:

- 41% were feeling anxious.
- 34% told us they were experiencing anger issues.
- 27% felt difficulties within the family were affecting their mental health.
- 17% described depression or low mood.
- 8% were being bullied.

After working with us

84% said they now felt more able to deal with their presenting issue¹, and

82% said the skills they learnt with us had better helped them to manage it.²

98% of young people we worked with in Shropshire said that they would recommend us to a friend or family member.³

¹ Data from 1,414 young people; ² Data from 1,339 young people; ³ Data from 1,362 young people.
In 2018, the NHS published a new Long Term Plan in response to a five year funding settlement from central government which will see NHS spending increase by £20.5 billion a year.

During the formulation of this plan, former Chief Executive Matthew Reed – alongside the Children’s Commissioner, the President of RCPCH, and the Chief Executives of NCB and CLIC Sargent – met with NHS England Chief Executive Simon Stevens a number of times. They were asked to join an informal working group to support NHS England in ensuring that the needs of children and young people were at the very heart of the plan. This placed The Children’s Society in an influential position to achieve far reaching change for children’s mental health and well-being over the next decade.

In our view, the NHS Long Term Plan should see children’s mental health care improve significantly, with commitments to:

- Ensure that children and young people’s mental health services grow faster than both overall NHS funding and the total NHS spend.
- Provide mental health care for children and young people aged 0 to 25.
- Provide comprehensive care for children in mental health crisis.

Together, these should result in a step change in the way that children’s mental health is approached in England. As part of the changes, NHS England has established a Children and Young People’s Transformation Programme to drive change. We have been asked to remain involved as part of an external advisory group.

Alongside influencing NHS plans at the highest level, The Children’s Society stands ready to do our bit on the ground through our growing portfolio of services. New crisis services such as the Safe Zones service we are mobilising in Greater Manchester, and better access through drop-ins like our Beam and Pause models, mean that over the next 10 years The Children’s Society has an important role to play in making the plan’s commitments a reality.
Spotlight on:
The Community Hidden Harm Awareness Team, Essex

The Community Hidden Harm Awareness Team (CHHAT) is a service funded by The National Lottery Community Fund that works with young carers in Essex (excluding Southend and Thurrock) aged 8 to 19 years who are affected by parental substance misuse, otherwise known as ‘Hidden Harm’.

The main focus of CHHAT’s work is providing direct support to young people, through one-to-one support, group sessions and activity days. We help young people talk about their experiences and give them a chance to understand and express their feelings. We’re there to support the children we work with to build their resilience and improving their emotional well-being, and we help them to stay safe.

The Children’s Society works with children and young people, adults and families across Essex and offers a range of services – including drug and alcohol services – and support to children at risk of exploitation, children in care, and young carers. We also offer young people the opportunity to join a participation group.

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"I used to feel very much at fault for what my mum did and [the CHHAT worker] helped me realise that it isn’t my fault, that she is a completely different person to me. That really did make a big difference, and that wasn’t immediate, it took a lot of time to get that through to me but [the CHHAT worker] never gave up..."
I was treated with such kindness and respect and felt completely comfortable with who I was talking to, it allowed me to be completely honest which I think helped with the process.

I feel like if I’m in a situation in the future, I have a better understanding what’s right from wrong and now have the tools I need to be able to deal with those situations – I can look back on the work we did and use it.

Resolve in Manchester works with children and young people aged 4 to 19 who have experienced, or are currently exposed to, domestic violence, sexual abuse or emotional turmoil. Through one-to-one counselling with qualified and experienced counsellors, young people and their families are supported to develop personal safety plans, which include identifying where they can get help, mapping their personal support networks, focusing on their strengths and building their self-esteem.

The service supported 52 young people last year. Of these:

- 100% of the young people said their lives improved overall.¹
- 98% said their mental health improved.¹
- 98% said they felt safer.¹
- 100% felt they could trust their worker.²
- 100% were satisfied with the service.²
- 96% were satisfied with the issues discussed in the sessions.²
- 78% said they would definitely come to the service again if they needed help.²
- 100% felt listened to by their worker.²

¹ Data obtained from 94% of service users; ² 45% of young people in the service responded to our satisfaction survey.
Spotlight on: Pacific Waves, Weymouth

Set up in Weymouth in 2013, Pacific Waves was funded by the National Lottery Community Fund. It focused on supporting children and young people aged 10 to 17, and parents with experience of domestic violence.

Services for children and young people included one-to-one counselling, mentoring and group work to help them to stay safe and recover from their experiences. The project’s workers supported young people’s mental well-being while also offering guidance and counselling to help them through their issues.

Parents were supported through guidance sessions that included the ‘You and Me Mum’ parenting course and the ACE (Adverse Childhood Experiences) Recovery Toolkit course.

An evaluation of the service was conducted by an external independent evaluator, Claire Arnott, covering the three year period March 2016 to March 2019.

Last year we worked with 80 young people:

- 67% of the young people we interviewed thought that Waves had had a positive impact on their feelings of safety.¹
- 63% had improvements in their self-esteem.²
- 59% saw an improvement in their emotional health and well-being.¹
- Young people were asked how much they trusted their support worker out of 10, and the average rating across the CYP was 9.5. When asked whether they felt they were listened to at Waves the average score was 9.8 out of 10.

Community and families impact:

- 100% of the mothers said that they thought their children were benefitting from what they had learnt through the programme.³
- 100% of parents interviewed said that what they had learnt had helped their parenting skills/strategies.⁴

These outcomes were a result of the service’s holistic approach, where staff built strong, long-term connections with children and their families, and with the systems that surround them.

91% of the young people we interviewed thought that the programme had had a positive impact on their family relationships.⁵

73% said that their lives had improved after working with us, indicating an increase in their resilience.¹

“I listen to [my children] more than I did before. I am calmer, more in control and able to maintain boundaries. This means they are happier and feel safer in their home and know they are very loved.”

“I just got so much confidence from being here, especially talking to everybody, it helped me so much with feeling more comfortable and developing myself.”

¹ Data obtained from 82% of service users; ² Data obtained from 28% of service users; ³ Sample size of 84% ⁴ 6 parents interviewed; ⁵ 12 YP interviewed
How we are designing for the future

Inside Out

Inside Out is a project working across Essex, Hertfordshire, and Norfolk. It is funded through the Department for Education's Innovation Programme, and is being evaluated by the Tavistock Institute. It tests a new approach of providing intensive coaching for looked after children, with the aim of enabling them to either 'step down' to less intensive care, or return home wherever appropriate and possible. Coaches work intensively with a young person for up to 18 months, to help them improve, develop, learn new skills, find personal success, achieve aims and manage life changes and personal challenges through the process of questioning and reflection. This is complemented by ongoing Social Worker input, and support from placement providers.

The project has been running for the past year in Essex, and is currently rolling out into Norfolk and Hertfordshire. Early successes include reductions in missing incidents, step downs from placement providers, and enabling young people to achieve their goals.

Virtual Reality With You

Virtual Reality With You is a set of technology products that help young people to overcome anxiety with different parts of their lives. Our first prototype was funded by Comic Relief and Paul Hamlyn Foundation. It focused on anxiety at school and has been tested with 38 young people as part of a pilot in Birmingham. The prototype used virtual reality to allow young people to experience school-based scenarios where they would ordinarily feel stressed or anxious. They could use the technology to acclimatise to and 'normalise' these stressful situations, so that when they faced them in real life they would be less anxious.

After promising early signs that the prototype is feasible and desirable, we are developing it further – looking at how it can help children in care in Salford, and young people with learning disabilities across multiple sites in the West Midlands. Working with Clinical Commissioning Groups, local authorities, the NHS and businesses, we are currently exploring the effectiveness and commercial viability of this product before making decisions about its future beyond 2019.

Alongside our product and service design and piloting, we have been investing in capabilities to change services and systems in order to improve the lives of young people facing multiple disadvantage.

Our investment in the brightest people and ideas in social technology continues through our Youth Tech Partnership with Bethnal Green Ventures. Over the past year we have worked with ventures who are now testing their products in schools and hospitals, and who are seeking to grow further and faster this year. New ventures will be invested in during 2019 as this Youth Tech portfolio continues to grow and to make an impact.

We have also co-designed and run a unique people programme, Systems Changers. Working in partnership with Lankelly Chase and The Point People, the programme involved 11 frontline professionals working in the youth sector coming together to learn about how to change systems. They then took those ideas and methods into their frontline practice with young people.

Our staff progressed through this intensive and thought/practice changing programme – learning the theory of systems change and understanding how it can be applied in practice. They were encouraged and supported to test and learn new ways of doing things, and to disrupt existing systems that they work in for the benefit of the young people we support.

The programme put power into the hands of frontline professionals, who have been innovating in their local areas around the country. We plan to scale up this offer within our organisations and through partners over the next couple of years.

Angela’s story

Angela used to look forward to spending time with her family, especially her dad. Then when she was eight years old, her dad started to touch her. He threatened to kill her mum and brother if she told anyone what he was doing. Angela was too scared to say what was happening. She stayed silent for three years. But one day it got too much – she broke down and told her mum what was going on, and her dad was arrested.

But Angela blamed herself for what happened. She was tormented by feelings of shame and guilt, and would stay in her bed for hours on end, feeling completely alone. Things got so bad she considered suicide.

Angela’s mum was so worried she contacted one of our services, and Angela met Karen, one of our specialist counsellors. Karen built up a trusting relationship with Angela, meeting with her every week and providing the support and advice Angela needed to recover from her trauma. Angela also joined in with group work sessions where she talked with other children who had been through similar experiences.

For the first time in years, Angela had a safe space where she could talk about her trauma and begin to heal. Slowly she made friends, gained confidence and rebuilt her life. Angela is now 16, doing well in school and looking forward to the future.
Risk

Our work around risk is focused on young people experiencing or at risk of threats to their safety and well-being. This includes children running away from home, those suffering neglect, or young people being sexually exploited, criminally exploited and trafficked. When a child faces significant risk, we understand the need to address presenting issues immediately and to respond to the underlying causes to create sustainable improvements in a young person’s life.

“I’m happy that I did it. If I didn’t [go to Footsteps] I’d probably still be doing what I used to do, like going missing.”
Spotlight on: Footsteps, Greater Manchester

Footsteps was a two-year project funded by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority and running in Greater Manchester from 2017 to 2019. It worked with young people who had been missing approximately 2 to 5 times, and focused on providing support to address the factors that were causing young people to go missing. Its aim was to prevent future missing episodes, keep young people safe, and prevent exploitation.

The service worked with 149 young people who had a range of needs and experiences, and had experienced multiple disadvantages in their lives. The Greater Manchester Combined Authority Research Team completed an independent evaluation of the project, and found that:
- 0 young people presented with 'just' going missing from home, and 35% were facing 3 or 4 issues.
- 50% were being exploited, either sexually or criminally.
- 41% experienced substance misuse.
- 17% were displaying behavioural issues at school – 17% of all children had low school attendance, 13% had been excluded, and 5% were refusing to attend school.
- 12% had attempted suicide or were having suicidal thoughts, and 17% were self-harming.
- 13% lived with parental substance misuse, 10% lived with parents experiencing domestic violence, and 7% lived with parents experiencing mental health difficulties.

The evaluation of Footsteps by the GMCA research team looked at data from Greater Manchester Police, and found that:
- Children and young people engaged in Footsteps were less likely to go missing again than those who had not received support. Following engagement with Footsteps, 32% of a cohort tracked for a further six months went missing again, compared to 60% in the general population of children who have repeatedly gone missing in Greater Manchester.
- Children and young people engaged in Footsteps went missing less frequently: As a result of fewer children going missing, the number of missing incidents per person, per year associated with the Footsteps cohort reduced to 5.8 in the period following support. This is compared to 10.4 in a comparison group. Therefore, the programme is modelled to have reduced the total number of missing incidents for the cohort by a substantial margin of 44%.

After working with us, our outcomes data found that:
- 90% of young people reported that they were going missing less, or not at all.\(^1\)
- 77% reported an increase in safety.\(^2\)
- 89% reported an increase in resilience.\(^2\)
- 68% reported an increase in emotional health and well-being.\(^2\)

\(^1\) Data obtained from 30% of service users; \(^2\) Data obtained from 40% of service users.

This significant reduction in missing incidents resulted in a saving of up to £1.39 for every £1 invested in the model.
Mark’s story

Mark was referred to The Children’s Society after he was reported missing on two occasions. He was adamant that he knew how to keep himself safe and would never get hurt. But with his mother’s encouragement, he agreed to start doing one-to-one work with a project worker from The Children’s Society when he was at school.

During his first session, Mark shared that he had been working at a takeaway, cleaning the space after school for half an hour for £3, and had also been working at a cash and carry. Mark also spoke of occasions where he had been approached by strangers offering him money. From this visit, it was clear there were many concerns regarding Mark’s vulnerability, and concerns that he could be exploited at his ‘work’.

Our project worker spoke to school and Mark’s mother about Mark ‘working’, and by meeting with Mark on a weekly basis in school she was able to get to know Mark’s interests and his way of thinking. The sessions looked at what encouraged Mark to go missing and what other strategies he could use instead to avoid this happening in the future. He was able to identify safe people he could talk to if he had a problem, and the importance of sharing how he feels. Mark learnt about the dangers of going missing, ways to keep safe whilst considering his safety when he is out in the community, stranger danger, and risk management.

When the one-to-one work was finished, Mark was carefully matched with a volunteer mentor who is committed to meeting with him every other week to do positive activities. This support has been ongoing for nine months and has been going really well.

Mark has had no further missing incidents since working with The Children’s Society.

Spotlight on:
Hand in Hand, Yorkshire

The Children’s Society’s Hand in Hand Project covers the county of North Yorkshire and the City of York and is funded by North Yorkshire PFCC. The service provides support to children and young people who are at risk of or involved in sexual or criminal exploitation.

We offer one-to-one intensive support, targeted group work, preventative/awareness raising sessions in schools, and we give professionals training to achieve systems change. The one-to-one support we offer is long-term, and works to combat CSE and CCE and help children affected by it to recover. We also focus on the areas of a young person’s life which are exposing them to vulnerability, and provide support to reduce the risks they may face.

Last year 47 young people came to our Hand in Hand service. Of these:

- 88% said they felt safer.¹
- 91% said their mental health improved.¹
- 94% of the young people we worked with said that their lives improved after working with us.¹
- 100% were satisfied with the service.²
- 100% felt listened to by their worker.²
- 95% felt they could trust their worker.²
- 89% were satisfied with the range of issues they discussed in the service.²
- 72% said they would definitely come to the service again if they needed help.²

¹ Data obtained from 83% of service users; ² 36% of young people in the service responded to our satisfaction survey; ³ Police, Fire, and Crime Commissioner.
Spotlight on: Streetwise Coventry

Streetwise Coventry was a specialist service for young people at high risk of CSE in Coventry. It was funded by the National Lottery Community Fund and Coventry City Council. The service delivered preventative work and support to young people aged 9 to 18 years old who were at risk of being sexually exploited.

The service was confidential and:

- Provided one-to-one support to young people at risk of being sexually exploited.
- Delivered sessions in schools and community locations to raise awareness and report any concerns.
- Supported parents/carers whose children are at risk of sexual exploitation.
- Matched young people to a volunteer befriender.

92% of the young people we worked with said that their lives improved after working with us.¹

519 parents, carers and professionals received awareness training on CSE.

68 young boys received intensive support last year, and

2,974 children and young people received awareness training.

92% of the young people we worked with said that their lives improved after working with us.¹

¹Data obtained from 75% of service users.
Spotlight on:
Essex FIF Parenting

Essex Family Innovation Fund
Parenting delivered evidence-based programmes that improved parenting capacity and the behaviours and life chances of children and young people. The service succeeded by creating awareness, sharing knowledge, building resilience and enhancing skills within local communities. We worked in partnership with the Ministry of Parenting to provide:

- The Incredible Years: A universal 12 week programme for parents whose children may be at risk of behavioural or emotional problems.
- The STOP programme: For parents of teens and pre-teens, this is a universal 12 week programme based on social learning theory.
- We also worked closely with schools and colleges, youth groups, GPs, children’s centres, Choices and local voluntary sector organisations.

Specifically, this included:

- Assessing each family’s needs to tailor appropriate support.
- One-to-one and group work support.
- Keyworker support for the whole family.
- Creating action plans to reflect individual and family’s needs.
- Realistic, achievable and reviewable goals.
- Solution focused approaches.
- Pre and post programme support.
- Access to self-sustaining support groups.

We worked with 471 parents and carers through direct one-to-one work, and a further 316 parents and carers in group work – a total of 787.

“I have the confidence to make changes and follow them through, which in turn should create a more stable home life.”

“I got so much out of this course. I almost want it to carry on for longer as I feel what I have learnt is just the tip of the iceberg.”

“The course has been the exact help that I was looking for. It helped us massively as a family.”

Of those who received one-to-one support:

- 49% said they felt safer.
- 84% of the parents we worked with said that their lives improved after working with us.
- 71% said their mental health improved.
- 100% felt they could trust their worker.
- 100% felt the service had met their families’ needs.
- 100% satisfied with the service.
- 100% felt listened to by their worker.
- 71% said their mental health improved.

1 Data obtained from 67% of service users; 2 34% of young people/families in the service responded to our satisfaction survey.
Spotlight on: Our Seriously Awkward Campaign

Our Seriously Awkward campaign is calling on the Government to give 16 and 17 year olds more support as they move into adulthood. In March 2018 we published our ‘Crumbling Futures’ report and launched the next stage of the Seriously Awkward campaign. This report identified that there are 58,000 vulnerable teenagers aged 16 and 17 who struggle to get the support they need to navigate complex issues like domestic violence, mental health problems and poverty. What’s more, any support they do receive can disappear overnight when they turn 18. In the last year we’ve been taking a range of actions to try to improve life for 16 and 17 year olds, including:

- Hosting a parliamentary event attended by over 20 MPs and peers. A group of young performers from Chickenshed Theatre Company brought the issues facing vulnerable 16 and 17 year olds to life in a moving performance. We asked hundreds of our supporters who have experience working with young people why they think this age group needs more support, and turned their insightful responses into a booklet which we launched at the event.
- Securing a debate in Parliament where MPs from across the political spectrum spoke out in support of vulnerable 16 and 17 year olds.
- Hand delivering a letter signed by 10,323 supporters to the Children’s Minister. The letter was delivered by a group of young people who are supporting the Seriously Awkward campaign. The young people also took part in a workshop with officials from the Department of Education, sharing their views on the support available to this age group and how it can be improved.
- Bringing together 12 organisations who work with 16 and 17 year olds in different contexts to produce the essay collection ‘Transitions into Adulthood’. We recognise that no single Government department or agency can take on the challenge of supporting 16 and 17 year olds by working alone, so these essays outlined steps that different Government departments and other agencies should take to improve transitions. Together, we are calling for a Government cross-departmental taskforce to look into this issue.

As a result of the Seriously Awkward campaign the Government is updating its guidance. Councils, police and healthcare workers must now plan for what happens to vulnerable young people when they turn 18. However, there’s still more to be done to ensure that vulnerable 16 and 17 year olds get the support they need as they move into adulthood, and we will continue to work with partners to push for more action.
Disrupting Exploitation Programme

The programme is for children and young people who are at risk of exploitation, with a focus on child criminal exploitation, including county lines. We also encourage the partners and professionals in the services to raise issues and have the freedom to approach new ideas and themes to help create system change.

The programme is working on initiatives such as:

- Systems change in custody to ensure that point of arrest better safeguards victims of exploitation.
- Working to disrupt school exclusions, and investigate the link between exclusions and exploitation.
- Producing resources to support high quality, multi-agency referrals to the National Referral Mechanism to identify and support children who are victims of trafficking.

Next Generation Nottingham

Next Generation Nottingham is a local systems change pilot that responds to ‘more going off in young people’s lives than adults realise’ (a phrase developed by young people in the city). In collaboration with Nottingham City Council we have tested an intensive support and systems change service which works with young people who are unsupported or let-down by the current systems that are meant to help them. The service then uses that learning to work with partners and generate a city-wide response. Our team focuses on stability for young people in need, and then on connecting them to positive opportunities so they can thrive both now and in the future. The pilot has been running for almost a year, with a further year planned, and due to promising progress we are already looking to expand in the city and beyond from 2020.
A young person’s resources are the social, physical or financial assets they can draw on in their life. While these can too easily be taken for granted by many, we work to address the acute need caused by the lack of resources facing children, families and young people in the most vulnerable situations.

“It’s been a safe place to talk about difficult parenting issues and I also feel I have useful tools to help me.”

“It was reassuring to know that I wasn’t the only parent experiencing challenges and I felt I wasn’t judged.”

In 2013, the Government stopped separated and unaccompanied young people from being able to access legal aid to support them with immigration issues.

This left around 2,500 cases involving child claimants each year in an impossible situation, where claimants could not get the advice and representation they desperately needed to resolve their immigration issues. Getting support with complex immigration issues, such as securing their status or citizenship, and being represented in court, is fundamental to children’s well-being and life chances.

Through our research we found that without legal aid, children were being left with a precarious immigration status and subjected to the ‘hostile environment’ policies which left some of them homeless and destitute, while others were unable to access ongoing education and secondary healthcare. In some cases we found that young people were forced to raise thousands of pounds to pay for legal fees, leaving them exposed to exploitation by unscrupulous adults and criminal networks. Without legal aid, young people that had grown up in this country were being left without a secure status and hounded by enforcement agencies, and threatened with removal from the only country they had any support in the only home they know.

So for the first time in its history, The Children’s Society became a claimant in a judicial review against the Ministry of Justice, supported by a brilliant legal team from Islington Law Centre, Doughty Street Chambers and Brick Court Chambers. After a five-year long legal challenge, which was supported by extensive evidence from other NGOs and independent research produced by the University of Bedfordshire, in July 2018 the Government agreed to reinstate legal aid for separated and unaccompanied children in all non-asylum immigration cases. This is the only cohort so far that the Government has agreed to bring back into scope for civil legal aid.

Once implemented, this monumental change will go a long way to protecting some of the most marginalised and vulnerable young people in our communities. We are working closely with the Government to implement this policy change.
Spotlight on:
Safer Families Lancashire

Safer Families Lancashire works with asylum seeking and refugee children and their families in the Lancashire area. It is funded by the National Lottery Community Fund and offers support individually and in groups to help families integrate within their new community. The service helps them improve their parenting skills, cope with stress and trauma, and prevent family breakdown.

The aim of the service is help reduce social isolation, increase emotional well-being and build resilience by empowering our families to have their say and advocate for themselves. Drop in sessions allow families to get advice and information, socialise, and access group activities such as conversation classes, additional ESOL and crafts.

An employability course for asylum seeking and refugee parents prepares them for employment and helps them to plan where they want their employment journey to go and how they can get there.

The service runs youth groups and holiday activities for the children and young people, and has established a partnership with a local The Children’s Society shop that enables families to go into the shop and pick out essential items for themselves and their children.

Volunteers who help the service – some of whom are former service users – have fed back that they love the opportunity to give back to their community, while some current service users are also undertaking volunteer placements in The Children’s Society’s shops.

Last year 96 parents/carers came to the service. Of these:
- 93% said that their lives improved after working with us
- 84% felt more able to have their say
- 81% said their social isolation had reduced
- 78% said their mental health had improved

When asked if they were satisfied with the service, young people told us:
- 100% were satisfied with the service.
- 93% said they would definitely come to the service again if they needed help.
- 93% felt they could trust their worker.
- 92% felt they were listened to by their worker.

Last year 30 young people used the Safer Families service. Of these:
- 100% of the young people said that their lives improved after working with us.
- 100% felt more able to have their say.
- 100% said their mental health had improved.
- 75% said their social isolation had reduced.

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1 Data obtained from 73% of parents/carers. 2 Data obtained from 47% of young people in the service who responded to our satisfaction survey. 3 Data obtained from 30% of service users.
Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Advocacy Service delivers an independent and confidential advocacy service for all looked after children under social care. The service promotes children’s rights and provides advocacy in line with the local authority’s statutory duty. It aims to empower children and young people, ensuring their rights are respected and their views and wishes are heard in decision making processes.

The service provides independent:
- Information.
- Advice.
- Advocacy.
- Representation.
- Support.

An advocate helps children and young people to have their say if they don’t agree with a decision that affects their life. An advocate can:
- Help a child sort out a worry or problem.
- Listen to a child and help them to understand your rights.
- Help make sure a child is treated fairly.
- Help a child to say what they think about things.
- Help make sure other people are listening to what children have to say.

Last year the service worked with 132 young people on issue based work. We visited 383 young people in the city’s residential units, and 461 in the county’s residential units.

91% of the young people we worked with said that their lives improved after working with us.¹

74% said they felt more listened to.¹

56% said they felt they had more of a say in decision making.¹

¹Data obtained from 33% of service users.
Spotlight on:
Stand by Me, London

Stand by Me worked with young refugees and unaccompanied asylum seekers in London. It was funded by the National Lottery Community Fund. The service started in 2015, and supported young asylum seekers and refugees through one-to-one casework, a drop-in provision, and rights and entitlements sessions. The service also used workshops to raise professionals’ awareness of the issues facing young asylum seekers and refugees.

An independent consultant, Lizzie Trotter, completed a Social Return on Investment (SROI) evaluation of the project. The evaluation found that for every £1 invested in the model, £6.58 is generated in return. This figure is mostly made up of social value produced for the young people as a result of taking part in the project, and also includes some estimations on financial savings and economic value produced.

For every £1 invested
£6.58
is created in economic, social, and financial value in return.

I was lonely and suicidal... [but] I got involved and started to feel good about myself.

Young person

Rami’s story

When he was 16, Rami was forced to leave his home in Afghanistan as his life was in danger. Hungry, scared and isolated, after months on his own Rami finally made contact with an uncle in the UK, who contacted the Home Office.

In England Rami was finally reunited with his uncle and his family in the UK. But he was unable to recover from his traumatic experiences. He was isolated and worried about his asylum status, and his mental health began to suffer. Recognising that the family needed help, a friend introduced Rami to The Children’s Society, where he met project worker Helen.

Helen began working with Rami and made referrals to solicitors to find help with housing. She sought legal advice and pushed the local authority to carry out a multi-agency assessment. When Rami told Helen about the mental health issues he was facing, she referred him to a therapist from The Children’s Society, who began seeing Rami for weekly one-to-one counselling sessions to help him begin to process and recover from his traumatic experiences.

Rami was also offered a Children’s Society befriender, who took him out to various places including museums and parks, helping him to settle in and get to know the city he was living in. Rami also joined The Children’s Society youth group for young refugees and migrants, where he was able to begin making new friends and take trips out to give him a break from home and college.

Today, Rami is no longer burdened by his case for asylum and thanks to The Children’s Society he now has a home and friends. He is also now able to focus on his future and his studying at college and one day he hopes to become an electrician or an engineer.
Spotlight on:
Fairer Start for Care Leavers

Young people leaving care are particularly vulnerable to getting into council tax debt. Since 2017, we have been asking councils to make young people leaving the care system exempt from paying council tax until they turn 25.

We took action because care-experienced young people deserve a fairer start to adulthood. They are a group who’ve overcome a difficult start in life, but still unfortunately can be more likely to struggle with housing, employment and mental health problems.

When young people leave the care system – sometimes as young as 16 or 17 – it can be really tough adjusting to adult life alone. And we know from our work with care leavers that managing finances can be one of the biggest challenges they face – often they haven’t had support or training in paying bills or managing money, and might not have the same support from family as other young people.

Council tax debt can be particularly frightening and stressful. It can quickly escalate to fines, and even court. Giving these young people a few valuable years to learn how to manage their finances can help them avoid falling into a spiral of problem debt in the future.

Our supporters have played a key role in raising this issue and building the momentum that has seen this campaign be so successful. From writing to their local councillors and local media, arranging meetings locally, attending council meetings and submitting public questions, our supporters have ensured that this campaign has reached every area of the country.

Young people have been involved in this too. Children in Care Councils (CICCs) in several councils have campaigned for this independently, and some individual care leavers who have been excluded from council tax exemption due to living outside their home borough have met with councillors to ensure that this policy reaches all care-experienced people, no matter where they live.

So far, in total 101 councils in England have now made this important change, along with all of Wales and Scotland.
How we are designing for the future

Crisis Support
Crisis Support is a new programme, scheduled to launch in late 2019, which will experiment with new ways to coordinate the provision of support to families facing financial crisis. It is supported with funding by Lloyds Bank Foundation, Children in Need, and the Legal Education Foundation & Trusts for London. Responding to higher rates of child poverty and reductions in public sector budgets, The Children’s Society and a set of partners have spent the past year consulting with young people and families. We intend to use the insight we have gained to redesign a new method of coordinating support provided across public, voluntary, and private agencies. After an in-depth design phase this programme will soon begin its work across six sites in England and Wales.

Care Leavers Apprenticeships Plus
Care Leavers Apprenticeships Plus is a new programme funded by Clothworkers Foundation and scheduled to launch in late 2019. The programme was designed alongside business, education providers, public agencies, and voluntary agencies. The pilot will be delivered in London in partnership with Catch 22 and will test a new offer for care-experienced young people who often struggle to locate, access, and sustain places in apprenticeships which can help them develop skills to thrive in the future.

“I have the confidence to make changes and follow them through which in turn should create a more stable home life.”
Lessons learned

We’re incredibly proud of what we’re helping young people to achieve, and we have a number of ways to capture evidence that what we’re doing helps young people. However, we also know that things are never perfect, and we don’t always get things right for young people. We know that for some young people, our services don’t always have the impact that we want them to. As an organisation, we are continually looking to improve what we do, so that we can best support as many young people as possible.

We think it’s important that the sector learns from mistakes, understands how to improve, and hears directly from young people when making these decisions. That’s why, this year, we decided to run a study to understand why young people might disengage with our services, and what we can do to prevent this from happening in future. We spoke to young people between 6 to 12 months after they had disengaged early from our services, to understand what made this happen and how we could improve things for them. From the service we sampled, we found that disengagement from our services by young people was around 10%, with fluctuations across geography and service type.

We found that:

■ **There are gaps in our data collection,** meaning that our data doesn’t always record when, or why, a young person disengages from our services.

■ **One of the biggest reasons for disengagement appears to be a breakdown in communication.** This included the young person not being aware of why they had been referred to us, who referred them, what the work involved, and how to access support. It appears that this miscommunication most commonly occurs before we begin working with a young person.

■ **A young person feeling like they didn’t need the service was another key reason for disengagement.** In some instances, we have to trust that this may be true. However, we also know that denial of a situation is a key feature involved in exploitation. Working with young people to overcome this denial is crucial to enabling them to break free of exploitation.

■ **Young people not feeling in control,** or as if they had the ability to make an active decision to participate in support, also led to disengagement. Where young people felt that a decision had been made for them, or that services around them had not taken their views into account when making a referral, they were left feeling annoyed and out of control.

■ Despite disengaging from services, most of the young people interviewed had positive feedback about their workers. Of course, this could be due to bias in the research (ie they felt they had to give positive feedback), but many gave non-positive feedback about other aspects, and the interviews were all conducted by someone from a different service. This finding is interesting for us, as young people disengaged despite the fact that many spoke about trusting their worker and feeling listened to.

■ **Even though they disengaged, some young people spoke about retaining the information that their workers had given them and finding it useful,** and even sharing it with their friends. This indicates that even if young people disengage, our impact on that young person (and in some case a wider group) can still be positive.

As a result of these findings:

■ **We are improving the way we record young people’s disengagement on our case management system, by collecting this data more accurately.** This will allow us to have a better understanding of how many young people disengage, to gather data on trends in this area, and to understand why this is happening. Having this information will enable us to respond better to the issue of disengagement in future.

■ **Our services are looking at the way they communicate what they offer, how they work, and what support they provide.** This includes looking at information shared with partners and other providers, and direct communication with young people. It means ensuring partners, young people, and families all know what we can offer, and what this involves. We hope that improved communication with partners will ensure that they know what we do. We also hope that improved and more direct communication with young people – from the earliest possible point of contact – will enable them to make informed and independent decisions about what they would like to do.

■ **We have expanded our services that directly work with young people experiencing all forms of exploitation,** and we are committed to highlighting and opening up dialogue about exploitation across the sector. Raising awareness of exploitation is vital to tackling it.

We are committed to continuously improving what we do, and this type of research helps us to better support to young people. We published these learnings in the interests of transparency, and so that the sector as a whole can continue to learn, improve, and better serve disadvantaged young people who need our help.
Our supporters

They took **29,135 actions** to support our campaigns last year.

7,818 churches supported our work.

3,458 supporters assisted in our charity shops, raising funds for our vital work.

9,033 volunteers gave us their time and skills over the course of the year contributing over **477,793 volunteering hours** to our work.

Our 4,189 volunteer box coordinators helped us **raise £1.6m** from our Box Networks.

Our volunteer speakers delivered over **285 talks** to thousands of active and potential supporters nationwide.

9,033 volunteers gave us their time and skills over the course of the year contributing over **477,793 volunteering hours** to our work.

1,185 volunteers took part in our 138 volunteer committees or fundraising groups, and held over 552 events for The Children’s Society in their communities.

**750 people** directly supported thousands of young people in our services, whether as mentors or befrienders, providing support in our drop in services, delivering group work activity, or doing outreach in the local community.

"I think it’s been fantastic, it’s nice to have a place to talk about things and this helped my understanding and tolerance lots."
The Children’s Society and our supporters have been there for vulnerable children and young people for more than 130 years.

We believe that every young person should have the support they need in order to enjoy a safe, happy childhood.

That’s why we run services and campaigns to make children’s lives better and change the systems that are placing them in danger.

Together with our supporters, we’re improving the lives of children today and long into the future.