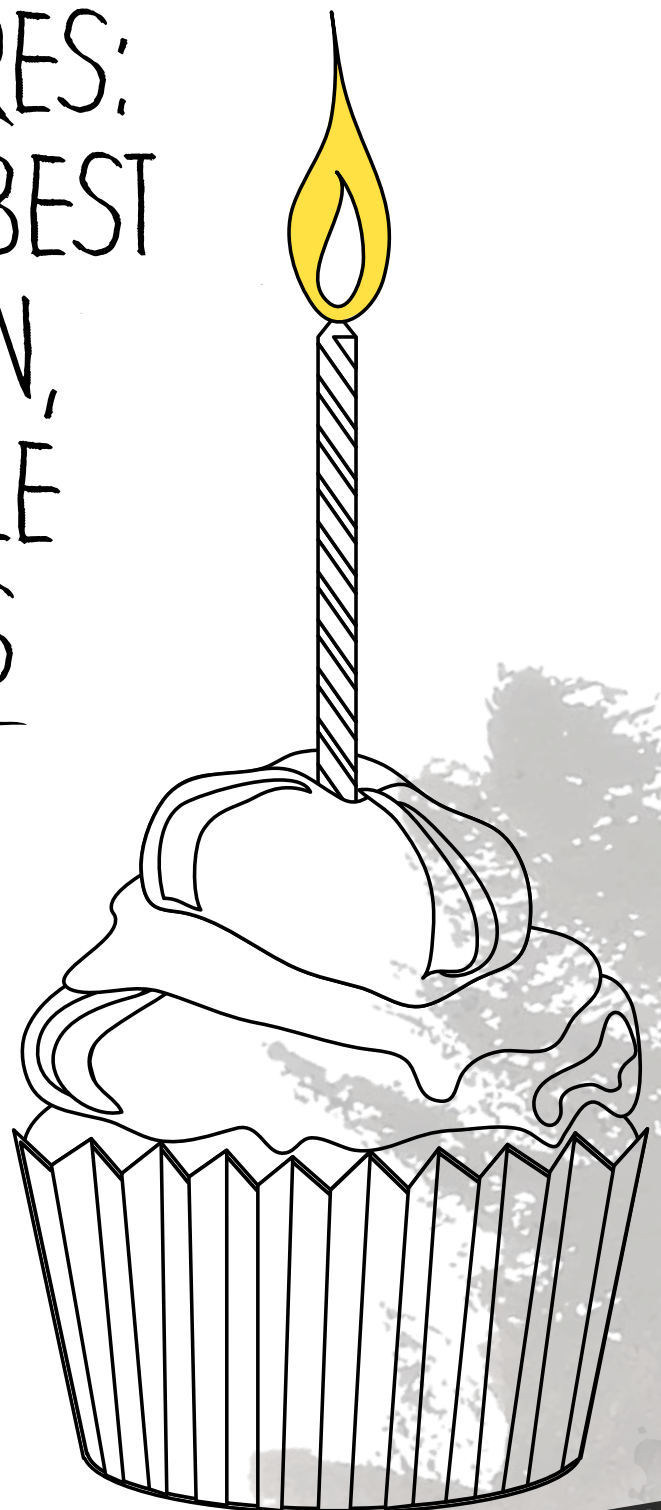


BRIGHT FUTURES:  
GETTING THE BEST  
FOR CHILDREN,  
YOUNG PEOPLE  
AND FAMILIES

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ONE YEAR ON





Helping children and young people to fulfil their potential is a key ambition of all councils, but our children's services are under increasing pressure.

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## WE ARE CALLING ON GOVERNMENT TO:

**1. Plug the growing £3 billion funding gap for children's services by 2025**

Children's services are absolutely vital for many families, and must be fully funded to ensure vulnerable children get the appropriate support and protection they need.

**2. Reverse the cuts to early intervention funding to local councils**

Without this funding, councils have found it increasingly difficult to invest in the early help services, such as children's centres and family support, that can prevent children entering the social care system, and help to manage needs within families to avoid them escalating.

**3. Urgently review high needs funding for SEND**

Many children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities could miss out on the high quality education they need if councils aren't given adequate funding to manage the unprecedented rise in demand.

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Join our call to government for fully funded children's services.

[www.local.gov.uk/bright-futures](http://www.local.gov.uk/bright-futures) | [#gettingthebest](https://twitter.com/gettingthebest)

# FOREWORD

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It is now a year since we launched Bright Futures, our vision for the future of children's social care. Alongside a national campaign calling for the services that change children's lives to be properly funded, Bright Futures set out seven key areas for reform designed to support the sector and demonstrate how councils, our multi-agency partners and national government could work together to get the best for children and families.

We want Bright Futures to be a real catalyst for meaningful change, not just another report left to gather dust on a shelf. With that in mind, and with a host of other organisations uniting behind our campaign, this update highlights what we have achieved over the past year but also, importantly, looks at where there is still more work to do.

The continued absence of sustainable funding for children's social care remains a grave concern. With record numbers of children in the care system and councils now starting more than 500 child protection enquiries every day, we believe that the case for action has never been more compelling.

Councils across the country are struggling to provide the support that children and families need with the resources available to them, leaving many unable to access help until they reach crisis point. Councils had to spend in excess of £800 million more than they had budgeted for children's social care in the last year alone. This cannot carry on.

There are signs that the Government has started to listen, with our campaigning contributing to the inclusion of new money in October's Budget. The announcement of £84 million over five years to expand children's social care programmes in 20 areas is a small step in the right direction, and the flexibility to use £410 million of additional funding for social care in 2019/20 on adult and children's services is a further acknowledgement of the pressures facing councils.


However, while any additional investment is welcome, we are clear that this will do little to alleviate the immediate and future pressures on services for some of the most vulnerable children and families in the vast majority of council areas, and will continue to campaign for a long-term sustainable funding solution in next year's spending review.

It is also encouraging that our call for greater investment in a sector-led approach to improvement has been heeded, helping to secure an additional £20 million for a range of sector-led initiatives including an enhanced LGA peer support offer. While this is no replacement for the funding solution that councils need, it is positive that the Government has recognised the value of a collaborative approach, with councils learning from each other.

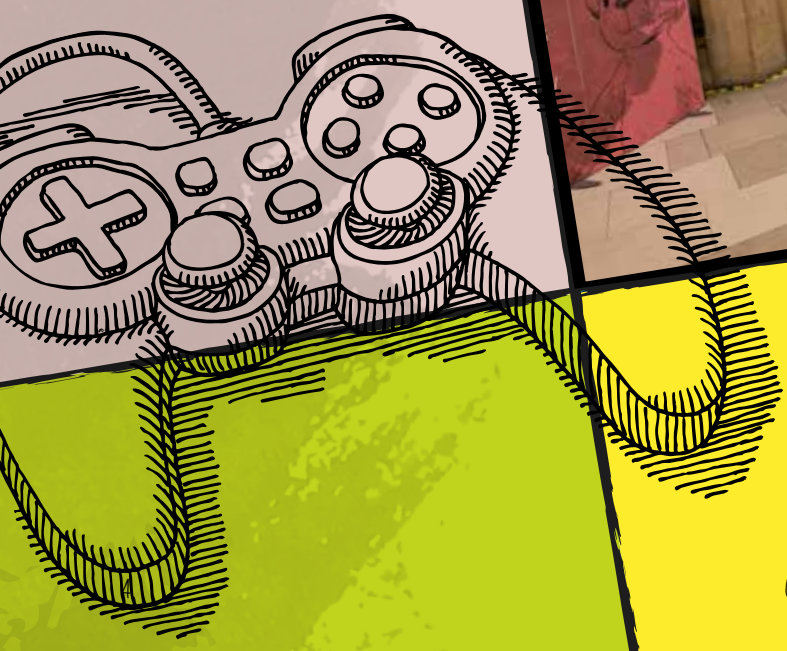
Despite being under increasing pressure, the recent improvement in Ofsted inspection results shows that children's services teams are still finding innovative ways to deliver the high quality services that children and families rely on. But as councils face the prospect of further funding reductions and a £3 billion funding gap for children's services by 2025, difficult decisions will have to be made that will have a real and lasting impact. We cannot ignore the consistent warnings that children's services are at a tipping point. Much more needs to be done if we really want to make sure every child and young person can look forward to the bright future they deserve.

**Councillor Anntoinette Bramble**  
Chair, LGA Children and Young People Board

**Councillor Dick Madden**  
Chair, LGA Children's Social Care Task Group



Following our calls the Government has told us they will invest £84 million over five years to expand children's social care programmes in 20 areas and give councils the flexibility to use £410 million of additional funding for social care in 2019/20 on adult and children's services. Our campaigning has also helped secure £20 million for sector-led improvement, including £2 million for an enhanced LGA peer review offer.



# SINCE BRIGHT FUTURES LAUNCHED AT THE NATIONAL CHILDREN AND ADULT SERVICES CONFERENCE IN OCTOBER 2017, WE HAVE:

- **published** six children's services resource packs for councillors
- collated more than **70 good practice** case studies
- held a week long **exhibition** and launch reception in **Parliament** to promote the important role that councils play in prevention and early intervention, hosted by **Wera Hobhouse MP**; speakers included **Nadhim Zahawi MP**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families
- **commissioned new research** looking at the factors leading to variable spend on children's services, current and emerging practice in the delivery of early help services, budget pressures for special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and funding for new burdens on council children's services
- engaged with politicians on our key concerns by submitting evidence to **9 Select Committees** and **All Party Parliamentary Group enquiries**, briefed for **10 Parliamentary debates**, sent a summary of our key asks to every English MP, highlighted children's services prominently in our Budget submission, tabled written parliamentary questions, and arranged meetings and briefings with key stakeholders
- built a **broad coalition of support** behind our funding ask to government; published a **joint letter** to government co-signed by the chief executives of the **Children's Society**, **Barnardo's**, **Action for Children** and the **National Children's Bureau**
- issued **43** media releases generating **107** national newspaper, online and broadcast mentions
- had more than **50,000** visits to the Bright Futures web pages, and published **133** tweets reaching nearly **700,000** people.

Newton Europe's forensic analysis challenges and disproves the notion that variation in spend between different councils is primarily an indication of inefficiency. Rather, Newton demonstrated that variable spend is an inevitable consequence of economic and geographic factors largely outside of council control.

Separate LGA analysis of council spending patterns has highlighted the sheer scale of the challenge facing children's services departments across the country, with spend on children's social care increasing by more than £750 million over the past four years.

In a report by the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Children (APPG)<sup>1</sup>, MPs backed our call for government to address the the funding gap facing children's services. This call was also supported by the multi-agency Care Crisis Review<sup>2</sup>, through a joint letter to government from more than 120 children's organisations, and has been echoed by several reports from major children's charities and pressure groups.

1 [www.ncb.org.uk/storinguptrouble](http://www.ncb.org.uk/storinguptrouble)

2 <https://frg.org.uk/involving-families/reforming-law-and-practice/care-crisis-review>

# SEVEN CLEAR PRIORITIES FOR COORDINATED ACTION

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## A STRONGER FOCUS ON OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN

All partners at a local and national level must keep a strong focus on the needs of children, young people and families.

### OUR OFFER

#### WE SAID

Many areas are already modelling a whole-council approach to children's services. We will gather case studies and hold events to help share this practice more widely across the country, including amongst partner agencies.

We will produce guidance for all local councillors, including backbench members, to help them act effectively as corporate parents. We will continue to encourage scrutiny chairs to attend our children's leadership essentials course to develop skills in the effective oversight of children's services.

We will revise the existing peer review offer for local safeguarding children boards, taking into account the changing landscape of multi-agency safeguarding. We will recruit additional peer reviewers to enable a wider reach for these reviews and ensure that all partnerships are able to access an expert 'health check' on a regular basis.

We will develop and publish guidance for health and wellbeing boards and scrutiny members to strengthen local leadership and accountability for the quality, delivery and spend on children's mental health and wellbeing services through local transformation plans.

#### WE DID

We have published more than 70 new children's social care case studies at [www.local.gov.uk](http://www.local.gov.uk), including examples specifically focussed on a whole-council approach to children's services.

We continue to share this practice through our Leadership Essentials course, and have also held specific events on issues such as County Lines, child obesity, special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), youth services, safeguarding in education and children's services finance.

We published a corporate parenting resource pack in October 2017, strongly focussed on the role that all councillors can play. We continue to have good engagement from scrutiny chairs at Leadership Essentials, with around 20 per cent of attendees in 2017/18 holding a scrutiny post.

We are currently considering how best to develop our current local safeguarding children board peer review offer. This work will develop further once new multi-agency arrangements begin to emerge in 2019.

We published 'Local leadership and accountability for children and young people's mental health and wellbeing services' in October 2018, providing guidance and exploring how ten local areas have improved their services through better leadership and accountability and by putting young people centre stage.

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

## WE SAID

The Government should consider developing a new 'children and young people impact assessment' for public bodies to use alongside existing equalities impact assessments, to ensure that the needs of children are central to all policy and legislative changes.

The Department for Education (DfE) must ensure that schools of all type are adequately represented and actively participate in local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.

When considering new arrangements for multi-agency safeguarding partnerships, the Government must ensure that all relevant agencies are appropriately represented and engaged, and that funding does not fall disproportionately on one agency.

The Government must ensure that the promised £250 million a year for children's mental health and wellbeing services is released in full and extends beyond this Parliament, with greater transparency in how mental health funding is spent. All local transformation plans should include expenditure relating to CAMHS services, signed off by local health and wellbeing boards.

## WE DID

Support has been building for a children and young people impact assessment. Our recommendation has been echoed in other influential reports, such as the cross-disciplinary Care Crisis Review (July 2018). We will continue to press for the introduction of such an assessment.

Following our campaigning, the role of schools in multi-agency safeguarding arrangements was given greater prominence in the DfE's 2018 revision of 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' guidance. We will continue to monitor the role of schools as the new arrangements are rolled out in 2019, including through our revised local safeguarding children boards peer review offer.

These points were also addressed in 'Working Together to Safeguard Children', and we will continue to monitor the impact of this guidance once the new arrangements are rolled out in 2019.

Our Bright Futures campaign continues to call strongly for this to be resolved and also featured strongly in our recent 'Transforming children and young people's mental health provision' Green Paper response.

In October's Budget, the Government announced £250 million a year for new mental health crisis support; part of the broader £20.5 billion NHS funding deal. The support will include children and young people's crisis teams in every part of the country. The announcement also referred to the new mental health support teams.

We support the provision of additional funding to help adults, young people and children who experience mental health issues. To reach those in need the NHS should work closely with councils and local partners to ensure that crisis care funding is joined-up with wider mental health community support and locally-led suicide prevention strategies. New mental health support teams need to help more children rather than just creating new structures.

# CONSISTENTLY STRONG LOCAL LEADERSHIP

National and local bodies must do more to nurture consistently strong local leadership for children's services at all levels.

## OUR OFFER

### WE SAID

Together with the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers (Solace), we have well-established mechanisms to support new leaders, including training and development, networking opportunities, mentoring and buddying processes. We will continue to develop and enhance this offer to ensure that all senior leaders and other key individuals such as scrutiny chairs have regular opportunities to offer and receive support at a regional and national level on an ongoing basis.

### WE DID

We successfully bid for £2 million of DfE funding to enhance our current range of support for councils, with a particular focus on improving leadership in children's social care services, and are currently working up a new support offer for full rollout in 2019. We have already expanded our existing Leadership Essentials programme, with 65 members already booked on for 2018/19, two additional courses added to the programme to accommodate demand, and targeted marketing underway to ensure that those councils who have not sent a member in recent years are encouraged to do so.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

### WE SAID

The Government should support the LGA and Solace to develop a training and support offer focused specifically on the role of council leaders and chief executives, including advice on providing effective support to lead members and directors of children's services. This could be offered to all councils across the country, making use of existing political and senior officer structures to ensure widespread engagement.

The DfE should work with the Department of Health and Social Care and Home Office to consider how a similar offer could be developed for senior officers in the police and across the health service. This should also clarify responsibilities at senior level, particularly within health.

### WE DID

Our successful £2 million funding bid, outlined above, includes a specific focus on leadership at both service and corporate level.

We are currently developing a new support offer for councils, and will further consider how this could be developed for other partners in the coming year.



# A CULTURE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Local and national government must work together to ensure that improved outcomes for children remain an ongoing priority, with improvement led by local government and subject to independent scrutiny.

## OUR OFFER

### WE SAID

We will work with ADCS, Solace and others to develop an enhanced programme of sector-led support for children's services, coordinating national, regional and local elements into a coherent whole sector approach. This will offer everything from regular 'health checks' and benchmarking information to a range of diagnostics and support on specific areas of concern, made available to all councils regardless of Ofsted rating.

### WE DID

As highlighted above, an enhanced LGA support offer is currently under development following a £2 million grant from the DfE and we are working closely with ADCS and other sector partners on the development of regional improvement alliances for children's services.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

### WE SAID

The DfE should devolve a proportion of its £300 million budget for improvement and innovation to support this new sector-led offer, enabling a stronger focus on delivering service-wide improvement in addition to the specific innovations currently funded through the Children's Social Care Innovation Programme.

Ofsted must work with local authorities to monitor the impact of the new ILACS inspection process following rollout, to ensure that it remains proportionate and better able to identify good practice and facilitate improvement.

Ofsted must ensure that inspections consider the wider corporate context around children's services. The lead member for children's services, with statutory duties that complement those of their directors, must play a key role in these conversations.

### WE DID

The DfE announced a £20 million investment in sector-led improvement following publication of 'Bright Futures: Getting the best for children, young people and families' at the 2017 National Children and Adult Services Conference. The Government has since supported the sector in rolling out regional improvement alliances across the country, brought more councils into the Partners in Practice programme and provided £2 million for the LGA to expand our existing peer review offer.

Ofsted have engaged closely with the sector during the rollout of the ILACS framework and appear receptive to any concerns that are raised. Following our lobbying, for example, Ofsted recently announced that they will stop re-inspecting inadequate authorities under the overly burdensome Single Inspection Framework and use the more proportionate ILACS instead.

Early feedback on the new ILACS framework has been broadly positive, particularly with relation to engagement with the lead member for children's services. We will continue to monitor the situation as the new framework becomes embedded.

# PROVIDING THE RIGHT SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN AT THE RIGHT TIME

Stronger investment in early help is vital to ensure that children and families can access the support they need when they need it.

## OUR OFFER

### WE SAID

We will work with partners across the statutory and voluntary sector to develop a clearer picture of the factors driving increased demand for child protection services.

We will work with the Early Intervention Foundation to identify and disseminate any available evidence about which approaches have been shown to be effective for different groups of children and families.

We will commission new research to establish and disseminate the factors that facilitate an effective early help offer, including how best to engage partner agencies and the community and voluntary sector in developing a joined up early help offer.

### WE DID

We have developed a strong coalition of support for our Bright Futures campaign and are currently working with a consortium of major children's charities to coordinate our messages ahead of the 2019 Spending Review. Recent reports from the APPG for Children, the Children's Commissioner and the Care Crisis Review have echoed many of our core asks of government, while adding to the evidence on the factors behind this increased demand for services.

We are currently working with the Early Intervention Foundation (EIF) on a new early help resource pack, for publication in early 2019. We are also working with the EIF to deliver an early years peer review programme. This collaboration will deliver a self-assessment tool for councils and the collation and dissemination of effective practice.

The ISOS Partnership have been commissioned to undertake this project, for publication in early 2019.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

### WE SAID

The Government must commit to sustainable investment in preventative services by reversing the cuts to early intervention funding for local councils.

### WE DID

This remains central to our Bright Futures campaign. We are working closely with the Early Intervention Foundation and others to further build and share the evidence base for early intervention. We held a week long Parliamentary exhibition and reception to raise awareness amongst parliamentarians and stakeholders in May. Our call for greater investment in these services has been backed by influential bodies such as the Office of the Children's Commissioner, the APPG for Children and many of the country's largest children's charities. This work will continue to develop in the build up to the 2019 Spending Review, and beyond.

# SUSTAINABLE FUNDING TO HELP CHILDREN THRIVE

Local and national government must ensure that sustainable funding is available and used effectively to provide the vital services that children, young people and their families rely on.

## OUR OFFER

### WE SAID

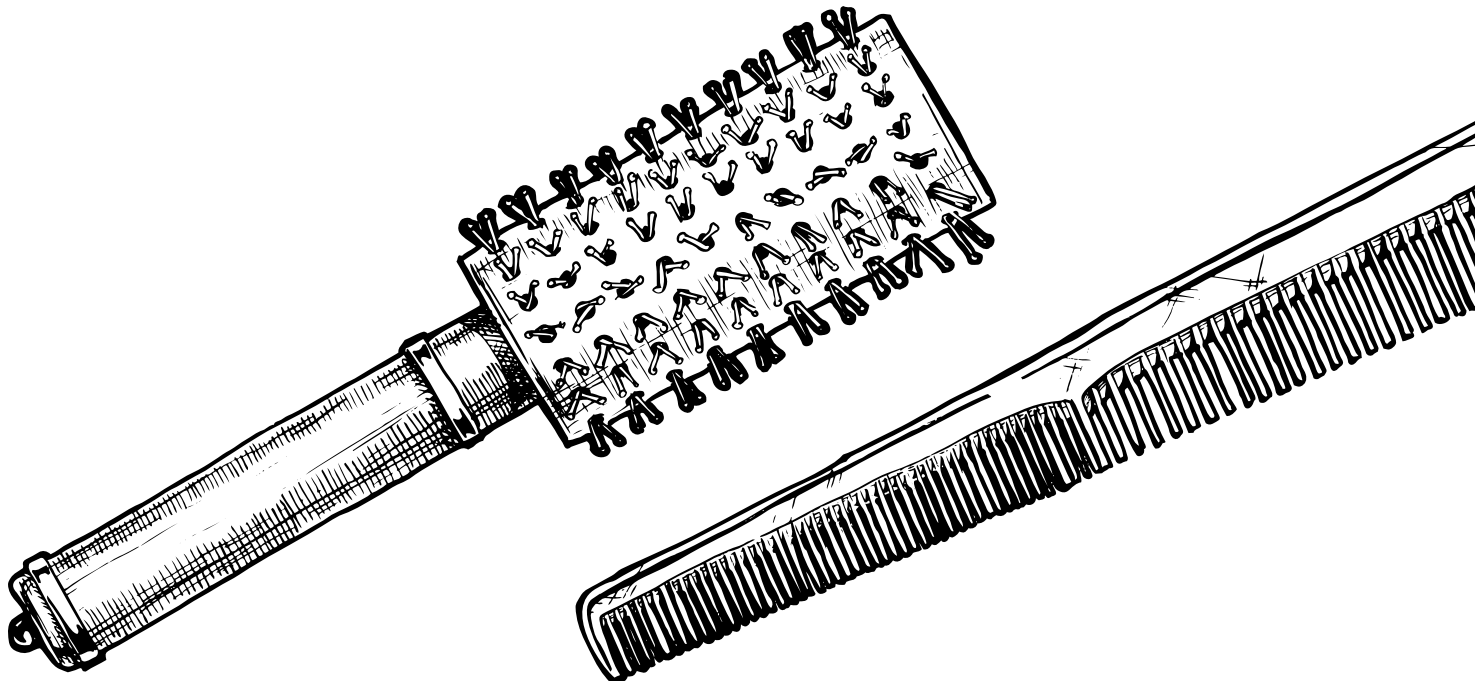
We will commission new research to better understand local variations in spending, working with a sample of councils to develop a more complete picture while identifying areas of good practice and 'top tips' for the benefit of the wider sector.

We will work with ADCS, Solace and others to develop a diagnostic support offer with a specific focus on children's services finances, helping councils to understand how to manage their budgets in a way that allows savings to be made safely and without a detrimental impact on vulnerable children and young people.

### WE DID

On behalf of the LGA, Newton Europe published 'Making Sense' in June 2018. This research comprehensively disproved the argument that differences in spend between councils are simply due to inefficiency. The report concluded that differing levels of spend are inevitable, and demonstrated that the majority of variation is due to five economic or geographic factors largely outside the control of councils.

This finance diagnostic offer is currently in development, and will be piloted in several council areas in late 2018, ahead of full rollout in 2019.



# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

## WE SAID

The Government must act quickly to ensure councils can continue to provide essential services for vulnerable children and families by closing the £2 billion funding gap for children's services by 2020.

The Government must address longstanding problems with financial returns in children's services by implementing the recommendations of the 2014 joint CIPFA/LGA review of section 251 returns.

## WE DID

The Government announced in October's Budget £84 million over five years to expand children's social care programmes in 20 areas and the flexibility to use £410 million of additional funding for social care in 2019/20 on adult and children's services. This is a small step in the right direction, but we will continue to campaign for a long-term sustainable funding solution in next year's spending review.

We continue to highlight the unsustainable pressure on children's services budgets, and we have worked over the past year to further develop the evidence base while building a broader coalition of support around our key messages. We have issued a large number of high profile press releases on children's services, achieving extensive national newspaper, TV and radio coverage on outlets including the BBC, BBC radio, Channel 4, the Times, Telegraph and Guardian. Our funding gap analysis (since updated to £3 billion by 2025) is now regularly quoted by key stakeholders including MPs from all parties, and our social media activity has reached more than 700,000 people. We intend to continue and intensify this activity over the coming year.

These problems were further highlighted by Newton Europe's 'Making Sense' report. We remain in discussion with government on the most effective way to support councils to accurately assess and benchmark their spend on children's services.



# A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT WORKS FOR CHILDREN

Local and national government must develop a better understanding of 'what works' and 'what good looks like' for children's services.

## OUR OFFER

### WE SAID

We will work with partners to explore a new framework for assessing outcomes in council children's services, making greater use of comparable data alongside Ofsted inspection results.

We will produce and disseminate a series of resource packs for councils, highlighting current practice and research evidence on a range of topics including corporate parenting, achieving permanence for children, support for care leavers, youth justice and supporting unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

### WE DID

The Nuffield Centre has funded NatCen Social Research to develop a new outcomes framework for children's social care services. The work is due to conclude in 2019.

We have published resource packs on corporate parenting, support for care leavers, youth justice, permanence, early education and children's centres. Our proposed resource pack on unaccompanied asylum seeking children has been put on hold due to national policy developments, but we hope to publish in 2019.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

### WE SAID

The Government should commission robust evaluations of some of the 'innovative but not yet evidenced' multi-disciplinary approaches to assessment and delivery of early help and child protection services which are widely used, such as multi-agency safeguarding hubs (MASH).

The Government must ensure that the What Works Centre for Children's Social Care provides capacity to boost local learning and evaluation, and delivers clear, practical information to councils in a timely fashion.

### WE DID

The What Works Centre for Children's Social Care is at an early stage of development, but it is encouraging that initial themes for study include safely reducing the need for children to come into care and 'front door' arrangements for responding to safeguarding concerns. We will continue to work with the centre as it develops.

As above, it is early days for the What Works Centre but we will remain in close contact with the leadership team as their work develops.

# STRENGTHENED MORALE AND SUPPORT FOR SOCIAL WORKERS

Local and national government must do more to showcase the excellent work of social work teams across the country, and support councils to recruit and retain high quality social workers.

## OUR OFFER

### WE SAID

We will build on our 'Come Back to Social Work' campaign to develop a clearer public understanding of the role of social workers, and the wider support provided to children and families under the umbrella of council children's services.

We will build on our existing online resources around good practice in recruitment and retention of social workers, highlighting positive work and providing a valuable learning resource for councils.

### WE DID

We are in discussions with Social Work England regarding the requirements for returners and hope to launch the next programme in spring 2019.

Our Workforce Strategy is due to be launched in November 2018, aiming to support the recruitment and retention of social workers and other hard to fill roles. We have also launched a new resilience offer for council employees.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

### WE SAID

The Government should work with local government on a major national recruitment campaign to improve the image of social work.

The Government should work with the LGA, ADCS, Solace and others to ensure that Social Work England takes full account of the needs of employers as it develops its remit.

### WE DID

This is an ongoing ask of government, which we will continue to press over the coming year.

The LGA is part of the advisory group to Social Work England. We are hopeful that the proposed regional structure of Social Work England will allow for close liaison with employers so that their needs can be taken into account, and we will discuss this further with Social Work England as it takes shape.



# SUPPORT US

If you feel strongly that we should properly fund the services that change children's lives there are a number of ways you can help.

## RAISE YOUR VOICE

It's important that we send a clear message to government that urgent action is required. Each time the issue is raised with your local MP or minuted in a Full Council or cabinet meeting, you can help to amplify our call for change.

## SHARE OUR CAMPAIGN WITH YOUR RESIDENTS

Spread the message far and wide that children's services are under pressure – print and distribute our summary and use social networks to share our campaign and the hashtag #gettingthebest with your followers.

## TELL US YOUR STORY

We want to show the effects of the funding pressures, but also how councils are still working to get the best for children, young people and their families.

If your local area is improving outcomes for children and young people, from providing support to catch issues early to supporting families in the system already, then please send a brief description to [marketing@local.gov.uk](mailto:marketing@local.gov.uk).





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