



The  
Children's  
Society

# The Difference We Made

Impact Report 2015/16

August 2016

# Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	
Welcome	<b>3</b>
Our impact in 2015/16	<b>4</b>
Our achievements against last year's goals	<b>8</b>
Our work	<b>10</b>
Our methodology	<b>12</b>
<b>Our work on child sexual exploitation</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Our work with children in care</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Our work on children's mental health and well-being</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Our work with children who go missing</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Our work with substance misuse</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Our additional achievements</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Our strategic focus for 2016/17</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>Evaluation: Our journey</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>50</b>

NOTE: Data in this report has been supplied by the Evidence and Impact team or the Policy and Communications teams.

The Evidence and Impact team use data records gathered by The Children's Society in Mosaic.

The Policy and Communications team's statistics have either come from existing reports already published by The Children's Society or are commonly used in regular organisational messaging or communications.

# Welcome

**At The Children's Society we work towards a country where children are free from disadvantage.**



We believe we can have the highest impact on the lives of children and young people by focussing our work on supporting the most vulnerable 10–18 year olds, a group of young people so often overlooked and left behind.

In this year's Impact Report we have focussed the evaluation of our work on our five core thematic areas: young people affected by child sexual exploitation, mental and emotional health, going missing, substance misuse, and young people who are affected by issues related to being in care or transitioning out of care.

Many of our services are now working with young people who are experiencing some of the most complex problems we see in society; despite the challenges of this work I am encouraged that we are consistently delivering positive outcomes, which is good news for these young people and for wider society. The case studies in this report show that our work changes lives, and it is these real life stories and successes that inspire my colleagues and me to want to do more.

So often the issues faced by young people are exacerbated by wider issues in society, and so we also work with young people indirectly through our acclaimed public policy and campaigning work. This year our campaigns to tackle problem debt, to extend the Warm Home Discount, and to put statutory guidance in place for the cost of school uniforms have all helped change the lives of millions

of young people. And this year for the first time, we campaigned locally, when our Handle with Care campaign successfully targeted local authorities in Greater Manchester to improve the support they give young people in the care system who get placed out of their local area.

We would not have been able to do all we have for young people without our dedicated supporters, the thousands of people who we rely on to work with us through our campaigning, fundraising and volunteering to help change children's lives. I would like to thank each one of our supporters, along with our many funding and implementation partners across the country, for working so hard to be part of everything we have achieved for young people this year. I am very proud of you, our work and the organisation we are building together.

Finally, I'd like to thank the children and young people it is our privilege to work both with and for. Their stories of resilience and tenacity continue to inspire me, and remind everyone at The Children's Society how important it is that we do all that we can to ensure children and young people are given the opportunity for a brighter future.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matthew". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Matthew Reed  
Chief Executive

## Our impact in 2015/16

**Our  
overall  
outcomes**

**73%**

the percentage of young people who experienced positive changes across key areas of their lives including safety, relationships and mental health\*

**69%**

the percentage of families we worked with who experienced positive improvements across key areas of their lives including education, setting boundaries and finances\*\*

**34**

the number of  
local authorities  
we worked with

**18,164**

the number of children  
and young people we  
worked with across  
children's centres and  
youth at risk services

**Our  
overall  
outputs**

**27**

the number of  
national and regional  
policy changes we  
brought about

**7,480**

the number of children  
and young people we  
worked with specifically  
in our youth at  
risk services

**49,541**

the number  
of campaign  
actions taken

**102**

the number of  
youth at risk  
services we ran

**7,727**

the number of  
churches who  
supported our work

**Total regional contract value:**

**£31,146,348**

**Total number of regional contracts:**

**135**

**Midlands**



**1,296**



**15**



**22**

**South and South West**



**6,380**



**20**



**20**

## The North



## London and the East



Total number of young people supported in the region



Total number of services in the region



Total number of policy changes affecting children and young people in the region

For further information about our impact in each of our four regions, please visit [childrenssociety.org.uk/impact](http://childrenssociety.org.uk/impact)

# Our achievements against last year's goals

Last year we set ourselves six key targets for 2015/16:

**1. Work with more than 8,000 young people living with one or more of our five priority themes.**

In 2015/16 we worked with 5,055\* children and young people in our priority themes. This figure falls slightly short of our intended goal and we are strengthening our efforts to reach those most vulnerable. We are aiming to reach 10,000 children and young people next year as a result of continued refocussing of our services.

**2. Deliver more than 1 million positive changes to children's lives through our campaigning and policy work.**

In 2015/16 our campaigning and policy work brought about 27 national and local policy changes, and these contributed to over 5.6 million positive changes to children's lives.

**3. Maintain the high proportion of our service users who experience positive change through our services.**

In 2014/15, 73% of the families and children and young people we assessed experienced positive change. In 2015/16 we continued our planned exit from children's centres to focus on vulnerable young people. During this period of transition we maintained our 73% of service users who experienced positive change.

**4. Increase the number of donation and new supporter actions to 80,000.**

The total number of our new financial supporters and number of supporter actions increased to 70,000. We fell short of our target for new financial supporters mainly due to the changes in the external fundraising environment and the adverse media publicity and scrutiny which affected the whole sector during the year. Despite the tough fundraising environment, we recruited more financial supporters than we did in the previous year.

**5. Increase the number of volunteers mobilised in our communities to 9,500.**

In 2015/16 we had 9,817 volunteers supporting us in communities across the UK. This is a 9% increase on the 9,000 people who supported us last year and shows strong growth in our volunteer base.

**6. Grow our net unrestricted income from fundraising activities.**

Despite the challenging external fundraising environment and the increased regulatory demands, net income from donations and legacies increased slightly from £16.5m to £16.7m in the year.

2015/16 has been a challenging year within the sector, but The Children's Society have continued our mission to support the most vulnerable young people, with key achievements including:



\*this figure includes all closed won opportunities related to projected notification date within the financial year. It includes both new and extended contracts.

# Our work

**At The Children's Society, we fight for change, supporting disadvantaged children to have better lives. Since our founding by Sunday school teacher Edward Rudolf in 1881, we have worked tirelessly to improve the lives of children in this country. Rudolf observed children suffering from neglect and poverty and demanded a better system of protection and care to see children safely through to adulthood.**

In the past few years we have closely analysed our work with vulnerable young people and the challenges they face in today's society, with a view to understanding the most effective ways to help them. Following extensive consultation and reflection, it became clear to us that 10 to 18 year olds were a demographic whose needs were consistently being ignored and underrepresented. Research tells us consistently that young people within this age bracket have the most complex needs and are at their most vulnerable, and this also happens to be the age group that The Children's Society has a long history of working with successfully.

As a result of our findings, and our desire to support young people in the most effective way possible, we have shifted our work from a 0–19 year old offer to focus on 10 to 18 year olds. This refreshed focus allows us to provide increased levels of support to this country's most disadvantaged young people, as we have been trusted to do throughout our history.

This means working with 10 to 18 year olds who have been made especially vulnerable by society, such as children who are refugees, asylum seekers or migrants, children who are young carers, and children affected by poverty and problem debt.

In our direct services we focus our work on five specific themes that have been identified as the most pressing areas of need for the vulnerable young people we work with:

- child sexual exploitation and abuse
- being in care or leaving care
- mental health and emotional well-being
- going missing from care or home
- being affected by substance misuse.

This year in our services:

- We worked with 18,164 children and young people. Of these 7,480 were in our youth at risk services.
- 73% of the young people we worked with experienced positive change
- 78% of the young people we worked with in our youth at risk services were 10–18, reflecting our shift in strategic focus
- 95% of our service users were happy with their experience with us.

Through our direct services we learn more about the complexity of the issues that affect children and young people. This learning influences our campaigning and policy work nationally and locally. We run campaigns to tackle the deeply engrained issues children face, influence Government policy and change prevailing attitudes to the most vulnerable in our society.

This year our campaigning and policy work contributed to:

- Five of the country's leading energy companies changing their practices to improve life for children in families with problem debt.
- The Government reconsidering plans to cut tax credits which would have been a huge blow to low income families already struggling to make ends meet.
- An extension of the Warm Home Discount on energy bills through to 2020, which will benefit up to 1.6 million children.
- Guidance on school uniform costs being made legally binding, which could affect up to 1.2 million children.

In total people took 49,541 campaign actions for us this year. 38,434 actions were online and 11,107 were offline actions. Our campaigning and policy work contributed to **5.6 million** positive impacts to children and young people's lives.

# Our methodology

## Our evaluation approach

We measure impact in ways that put the child at the centre of understanding their journey of change. Our monitoring and evaluation strategy is rooted in three guiding values: participatory, ethical and anti-oppressive. We use a combination of outcomes mapping and transformative learning techniques that guide us from planning all the way to feeding learning back into action.

## How we measure impact

To understand how our services are performing overall, and how they are performing on a deeper level, we use a combination of evaluation tools that have been developed in-house and can be aggregated across our services, and bespoke validated tools that vary from service to service. In this report, we are measuring our impact against outcomes and outputs that were set for each thematic area. These outcomes and outputs were decided upon through a yearlong participatory outcomes-mapping process that we undertook across our services from 2014 to 2015.

**In-house tools:** Our Evidence and Impact team work with young people and practitioners to develop monitoring tools that are trauma-sensitive and easy for young people to engage with. In our intensive one-to-one support, practitioners use **My Wheel™** to capture the changes in young people's lives. We also run a bi-annual in-house User Satisfaction Survey that tells us whether young people are happy with

the support they've received. This year, we launched **Barry**, our in-house stakeholder engagement tracker for monitoring policy and campaigning actions. In next year's Impact Report you will see data from new national tools that we are currently testing in group work, work with professionals, campaigning, and advocacy work.

**Bespoke tools:** Because each of our services responds to local context and needs, some tools work better for some services than for others. In addition to My Wheel, we use bespoke validated tools that are fit for purpose for specific interventions. Some of these tools include the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire which measures changes in behaviour, and the Revised Children's Anxiety and Depression Scale which shows us how symptoms of anxiety and depression have changed over time.

**Evaluations:** We measure our impact to understand whether we're making a positive difference in young people's lives, and learn how we can do even better. We review our data on a quarterly basis in each of our thematic areas. We also conduct and commission evaluations of services, pilots and campaigns to learn what approaches work well. Whenever possible, we incorporate young people's voices by conducting interviews and focus groups. Last year, we conducted five in-depth evaluations of specific services.

**A note on attribution:** Young people don't live in isolation. A number of factors such as school, relationships, other services and friends have an impact on their well-being. We believe that contribution is more important than attribution, and the qualitative interviews we do with young people help us better understand the part we play in these changes.

### **Understanding change**

When we talk about 'positive change' in this report, it reflects a snapshot based on first and most recent assessments from My Wheel. The assessments represent a sample of children we have worked with throughout the year; some will have exited our services, while others continue to use our services.

During our work with them, young people experience ups and downs, as well as periods where nothing changes. We aim for our service users to experience overall positive change as a result of our work, but it is important we understand that this is not a straightforward journey. We know that circumstances change for young people that can have a negative impact eg moving placements, loss and other disruption.

What might look like negative or no change on a chart is often an important period of reflection and growth in day-to-day life. For example, a young person might feel isolated, lonely and even angry for a period of time when they begin to distance themselves from unhealthy relationships. Also, many

of the young people we work with are facing multiple interlocking struggles that are out of their control, including immigration status, incarceration, trauma and institutional racism.

To tackle some of these deep-rooted issues, our policy and campaigning teams work hard to lobby for political and social change. Change within this context can be a slow and intense process that takes a long time to materialise, but every instance of positive stakeholder engagement along the way is crucial. Our policy and campaigning wins can include anything from petitions being signed to holding parliamentary debates, to Government and large corporations actively changing policies in support of children and families.

When we contextualise a young person's journey in these realities, it becomes clear that young people are navigating a very challenging path rather than a simple ascent into improved well-being. We track all of it, ups and downs, as honestly as we can because this is how we learn the most about what needs to change for young people and the societies they live in. The following sections of this report will illustrate the impact of our three-pronged approach of direct practice, policy and campaigning, which we feel is essential to holistically tackling the hardest issues facing young people today.

**The following sections of the report show our impact in the five key thematic areas we work in.**



# Marnie

When Marnie was 16 she was struggling to make friends and was falling behind with her school work. Her mental health was suffering, her confidence was low and she felt lonely, so she turned to the internet. She talked to older men online which made her feel 'accepted'.

Worried by her behaviour, a teacher referred Marnie to The Children's Society. Through one-to-one sessions and group work, Marnie's project worker educated her about sexual exploitation and grooming, and slowly Marnie's self-confidence improved. Now, Marnie no longer uses social media and is doing much better with her work. In the future she wants to travel overseas to help others.

'Before I started with The Children's Society I was sad and had low confidence. By coming here, it's built more confidence and made my social circle bigger. They're really welcoming.'

# Our work on: Child sexual exploitation

**Government figures estimate that 16,000 young people in the UK are at high risk of sexual exploitation<sup>1</sup> – in reality, the number is likely to be much higher. Our analysis<sup>2</sup> showed that 1 in 10 teenage girls aged 16 or 17 experienced a sexual offence against them in the last 12 months – yet 8 out of 10 recorded crimes of a sexual nature against 16 and 17 year olds are closed without further police action.**

**Direct practice:** We offer one-to-one counselling, intensive support and group work for children who have been sexually exploited or who are at high risk of being exploited. We also hold assemblies and events to educate young people on the signs and dangers of child sexual exploitation (CSE) and grooming.

**Policy and campaigns:** We published the report *Old Enough to Know Better*, which examined the issue of exploitation as experienced by older teenagers. We made a range of recommendations that would ensure 16 and 17 year olds who are being sexually exploited are protected from harm and get the help they need and the justice they deserve. In partnership with Barnardo's and other charities, we produced the *Unprotected, Overprotected* report on the sexual exploitation of children with learning disabilities. This important report raised concerns about the protections provided to this exceptionally vulnerable group.

In June 2015 we launched our groundbreaking *Seriously Awkward* campaign, which calls for the Government to make changes in the law that would improve protections of 16 and 17 year olds who are vulnerable to sexual exploitation. Campaigners helped us secure a two hour cross-party debate in parliament on protecting vulnerable 16 and 17 year olds from sexual exploitation, and we continue to work hard to influence the Policing and Crime Bill as it passes through parliament.

# 96%

**of children and young people we assessed were happy or very happy with their experience of our CSE services.**

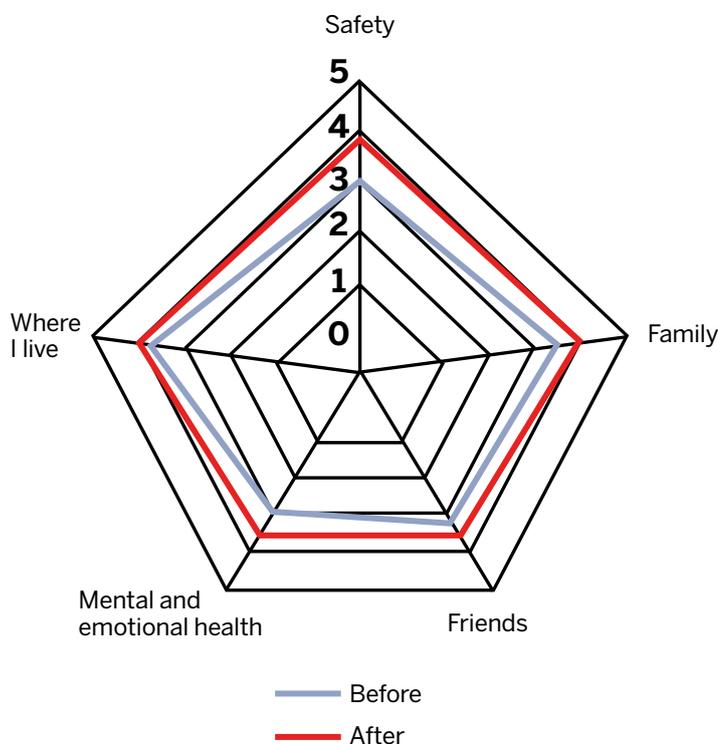
## Our outcomes

We assessed a sample of young people we worked with in our child sexual exploitation services against our outcomes for that area of work, and we found that:

- **44%** experienced improvements in safety
- **35%** experienced improvements in relationships with families and carers
- **41%** experienced improvements in mental health and emotional well-being
- **31%** experienced safer and healthier environments to live in.

### How much did things change?

The chart below represents an aggregate average of before and after scores.<sup>3</sup> This chart demonstrates how much things changed on average in each of the outcomes for this area of our work.



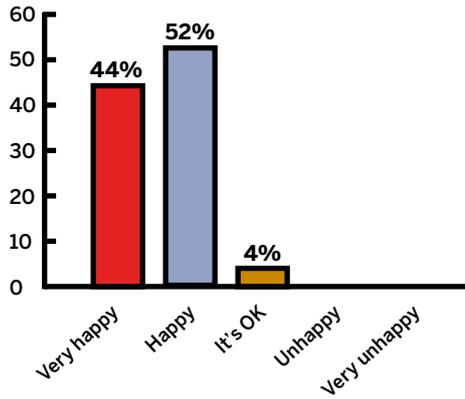
### Our key outputs

- We worked intensively with **838 children and young people** who were at a high risk of or experiencing CSE, and influenced many more through assembly and awareness-raising work.
- **20,000 people signed the petition** supporting our Seriously Awkward campaign.
- We secured a **two-hour cross-party debate in parliament** on protecting vulnerable 16 and 17 year olds from sexual exploitation.

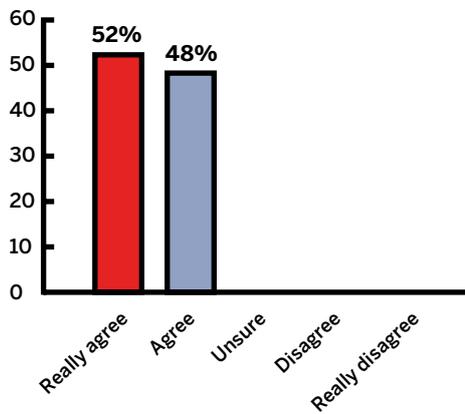
**57%**  
of children and young people we assessed who used our CSE services showed overall positive change.

## The feedback our services received

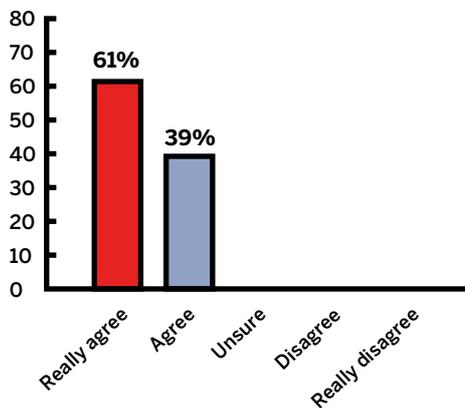
How happy overall?



I can trust my worker

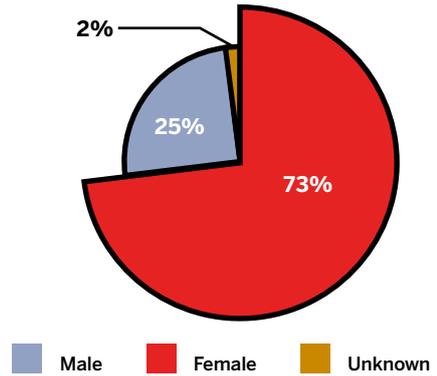


My worker supports me

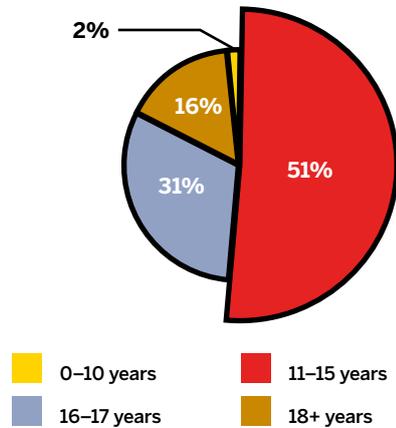


## Our demographics

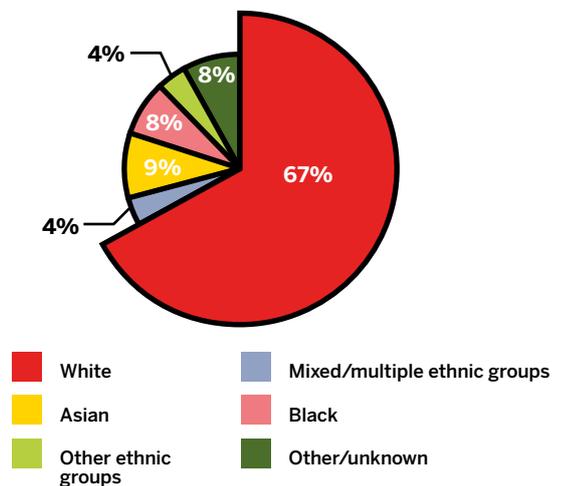
Gender breakdown of all young people accessing CSE services



Age breakdown of all young people accessing CSE services



Ethnicity breakdown of all young people accessing CSE services



## Spotlight on: Rise Project

In 2013, The Children's Society launched Rise, a pilot service aimed at working with young men who had been trafficked into the UK and were being exploited. The pilot involved a research component that looked at evidence of the prevalence of sexual exploitation of trafficked young men nationally and the experiences of those working in this field, through a review of literature, interviews with professional stakeholders and case studies. Findings highlighted the complexity and range of barriers that trafficked young men face in disclosing sexual exploitation and offered recommendations for improving policy and practice:

'In several of the case studies which were analysed for this report, boys and young men initially presented as having experienced labour exploitation or forced criminality and it was not until months later – once they had established a trusting relationship with a worker and had their initial basic needs met in terms of housing, subsistence and safety – that they disclosed the sexual exploitation element of their experiences. Practitioners need to bear in mind the length of time that it can take, and that the initial information that the young person gives may be incomplete and that their disclosure may be piecemeal.'<sup>4</sup>

### What worked?\*

- Project workers who were interviewed unanimously said that having the time to build trusting relationships was key to creating a platform for young men to disclose sexual exploitation.
- The consistency and stability of all professionals involved in supporting the young person was seen to make a difference in their ability to make disclosures.
- Interviewees highlighted that the safe and flexible spaces facilitated by the Rise Project help in allowing young men to make disclosures. Having a variety of options like individual therapy and group activities was seen as important.

### What needs work?\*

- Local authorities, the police, the Home Office, health workers and schools need to invest in training for frontline staff and managers to improve their understanding of the situations faced by trafficked boys and young men, including the likelihood of sexual exploitation.
- Practitioners supporting young people who have been trafficked – as well as other young refugees and migrants – should ensure they are trained in recognising the indicators of sexual exploitation, and that they are aware that boys as well as girls may have experienced this form of exploitation.
- Access to specialist mental health provision for children who have experienced trauma should be guaranteed. This may be particularly important in helping boys and young men to overcome feelings of shame associated with their exploitation.



# Sarah

Sarah was put in care when she was 10. She kept being moved around different foster parents, and she started running away. Then Sarah met Nick, who was 10 years older than her – their relationship became physically abusive and Nick got Sarah into drugs. When Sarah ran away again, the police referred her to The Children’s Society.

Sarah eventually built up a relationship of trust with her project worker, who has really helped her move forward with her life. Sarah is now 15 and has been placed with a new foster carer who has been really supportive; and she’s rebuilding her relationship with her mum and other family members.

‘If I knew someone in need of help I would say: “Give The Children’s Society a chance; it will get so much better.” They never gave up...and I really needed that.’

# Our work with: Children in care

**Around 70,000 children in the UK live in care<sup>5</sup>, and each year 10,000 leave care.<sup>6</sup> Nearly 4,000 young people who left local authority care in the last year didn't get the advice they needed to help them cope.<sup>6</sup>**

**Direct practice:** We support children in care and children making the transition from care to independent living. We do this by providing one-to-one support and group work, as well as matching young people to independent visitors and advocates who ensure that children have a say in the decisions made about their lives.

**Policy and campaigns:** In 2015 we launched a locally-targeted campaign Handle with Care, informed by young people and practitioners working with young people in care. We called on the 10 local authorities across Greater Manchester to ensure that when a young person in care is placed out of their local area, they get the best possible support and are able to settle and thrive.

The recommendations have now been agreed by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority – made up of the 10 city region council leaders and the Interim Greater Manchester Mayor – and include an agreement: to ensure young people can contact family and friends; to make sure young people have luggage needed to move; to avoid arranging any move out of area at a time which could disrupt a young person's education; to explore the creation of a 'welcome pack' for young people that includes details about their new area.

# 95%

**of children and young people who used our children in care services were happy or very happy with their experience.**

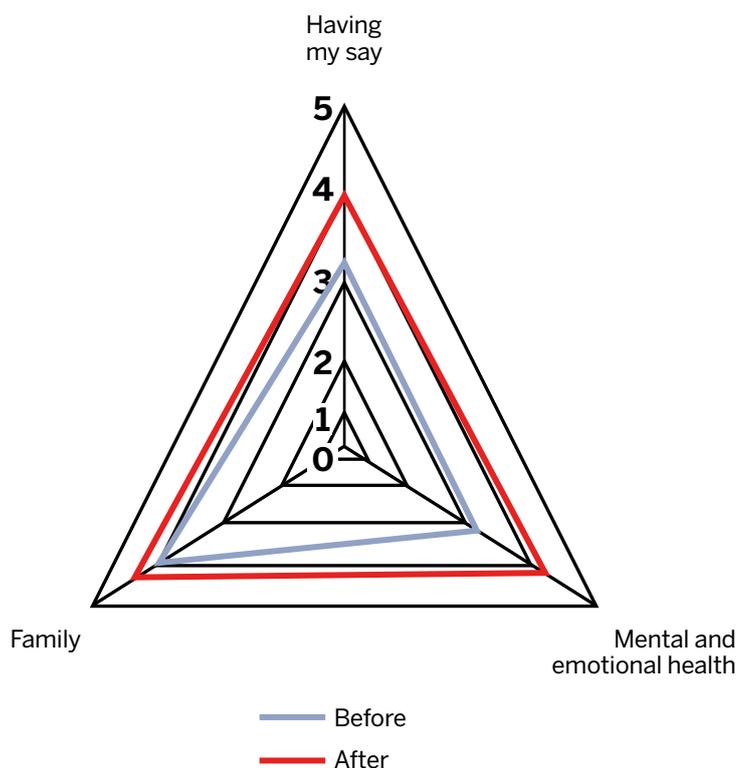
## Our outcomes

We assessed a sample of young people we worked with in our children in care services against our outcomes for that area of work, and we found that:

- **55%** experienced improvements in having their say
- **58%** experienced improvements in mental and emotional health
- **51%** experienced improvements in relationships with family or carers.

### How much did things change?

The chart below represents an aggregate average of before and after scores.<sup>3</sup> This chart demonstrates how much things changed on average in each of the outcomes for this area of our work.



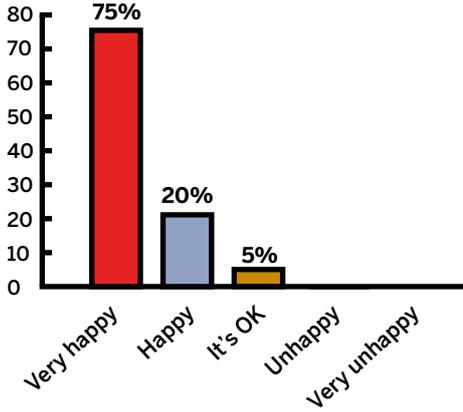
### Our key outputs

- 1,435 children and young people accessed our children in care services.
- We addressed 3,193 distinct advocacy issues.
- 223 young people were matched with an independent visitor.
- The Greater Manchester Combined Authority agreed to implement the recommendations of our Handle with Care campaign.

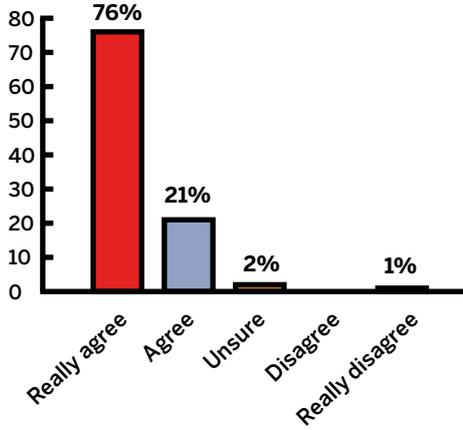
**70%**  
of the young people  
we assessed who  
used our children  
in care services  
experienced positive  
change in at least one  
area of their lives.

## The feedback our services received

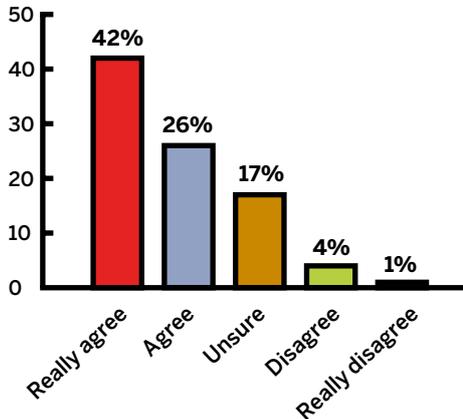
How happy overall?



My worker listens to me

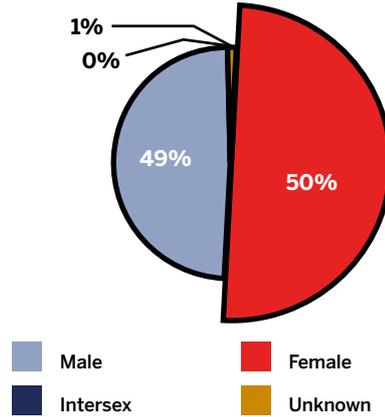


I would know how to make a complaint if I needed to

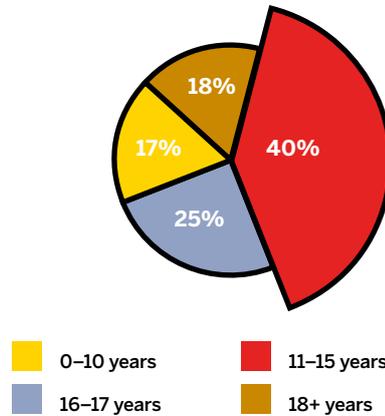


## Our demographics

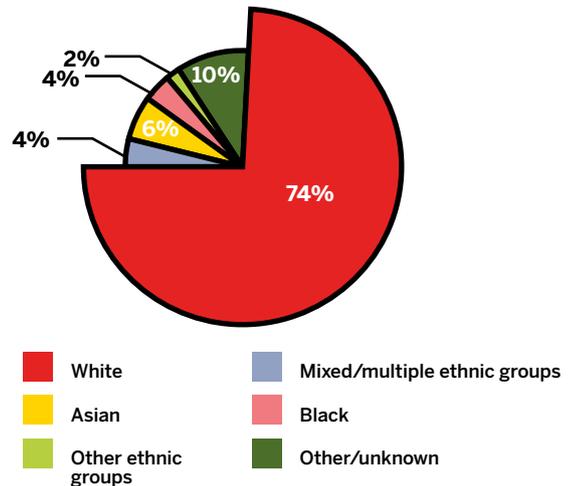
Gender breakdown of all young people accessing children in care services



Age breakdown of all young people accessing children in care services



Ethnicity breakdown of all young people accessing children in care services



## Spotlight on: Care to be Different

The Care to be Different programme is funded by the Department for Education and operates across different locations. The programme aims to enable children in care and care leavers to have more of a say in issues that affect their lives. The programme does this by providing personalised therapeutic and practical support based on listening to what young people say they need, and providing opportunities for work placements. This approach aims to empower the young people themselves to affect change, build positive transitions and lead successful lives. This year the service worked with 238 young people.

An independent evaluation of this service conducted by Research in Practice found that:

'Care to be Different is a highly valued service that successfully meets its aims and the needs of the children looked after and young people leaving care, by filling a gap in service provision. The professional, flexible, young person led approach enables highly tailored support to be given at the point when the young person needs it. Though the service took a while to establish itself in both pilot areas it has become recognised as a valuable partner filling a service gap.'<sup>7</sup>

### What worked?\*

- A strong commitment to a young person-centred approach.
- The simplicity of the referral process and rapid contact from the Care to be Different team following referral.
- The flexible approach to the length of programme involvement, based on each young person's needs.

### What needs work?\*

- The life story and relationship-based approaches that were used in this service take lots of time and planning to establish.
- As a new service, it was difficult to build trust with referring agencies. It's important the service emphasises a clear message about partnership working.
- Funding and resources were a significant challenge to the service. In order for the service to be sustainable it needs significantly more resources, and stakeholders need to know it will be running for a longer period of time.



## John

John and his mum had experienced some really tough times together since he was very young. He loves being close to his mum, but found it hard to make friends at school and his behaviour got him into a lot of trouble.

John and his mum approached The Children's Society for help, and John started attending group work where he made new friends and used his creative talents to produce some fantastic pieces of artwork. John made amazing improvements both in and out of school. The need for school meetings has decreased and John's friendship groups are now much wider. With The Children's Society's help, John no longer gets angry like he used to, and things are on the up for him and his mum.

'Mum says that things are going our way for once and The Children's Society can take a lot of credit for that.'

# Our work on: Children's mental health and emotional well-being

**1 in 10 children in the UK have a mental health problem<sup>8</sup>, yet each year around 30,000 children are turned away from specialist mental health services without further support.<sup>9</sup> Children living in poverty are more likely to experience issues with their mental health, yet only 1 in 10 mental health trusts see them as a priority.<sup>10</sup>**

**Direct practice:** We provide young people with one-to-one and group counselling with qualified, experienced counsellors. For example, this year we launched Pause in Birmingham city centre, as part of the Forward Thinking Birmingham 0–25 mental health service commissioned by the Clinical Commissioning Group. Pause allows any young person to access immediate support – including group work and face-to-face therapeutic support – on a walk-in basis.

**Policy and campaigns:** In March 2016 The Children's Society released the report Poor Mental Health, which looked at the links between child poverty and the development of mental health problems. The report's main recommendation was that mental health trusts recognise the link between child poverty and mental health problems, and take action to support these children by including children living in poverty as a vulnerable group.

We also produced the Access Denied report. This report showed how children with serious mental health problems are being forced to wait up to five months to get help as services struggle to cope with rising demand. We ensured that, for the first time ever, 16 and 17 year olds are included in the mental health prevalence study conducted by the Office for National Statistics and the Department of Health.

# 92%

**of the children and young people surveyed who used our mental health and emotional well-being services were happy or very happy with their experience.**

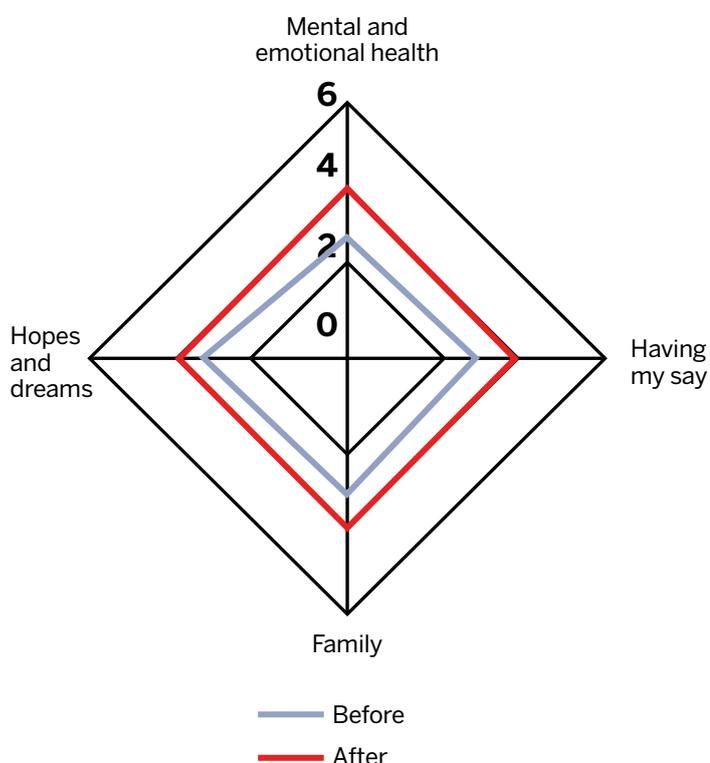
## Our outcomes

We assessed a sample of young people we worked with in our mental health services against our outcomes for that area of work, and we found that:

- **75%** experienced improvements to their mental and emotional health
- **61%** experienced improvements in having their say
- **46%** experienced improvements in relationships with family and carers
- **50%** felt more positive about the future.

### How much did things change?

The chart below represents an aggregate average of before and after scores.<sup>3</sup> This chart demonstrates how much things changed on average in each of the outcomes for this area of our work.



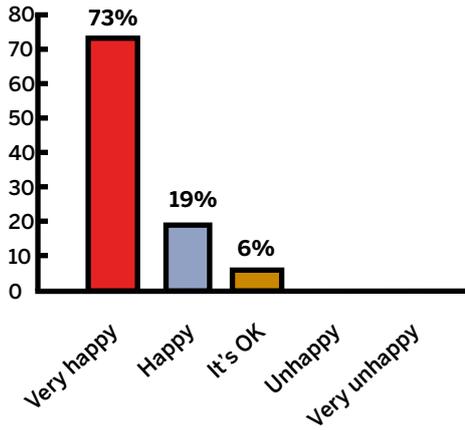
### Our key outputs

- **577 children and young people** received one-to-one support through our therapeutic mental health services.
- **20 MPs, peers, civil servants and local government officials** were contacted about the Poor Mental Health report.

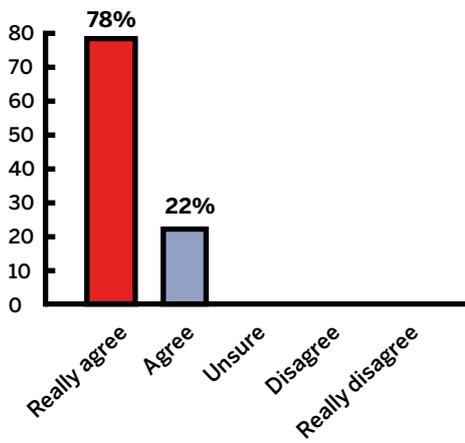
**86%**  
of the young  
people assessed  
who used our  
mental health and  
well-being services  
experienced a  
positive improvement  
in at least one area.

## The feedback our services received

How happy overall?

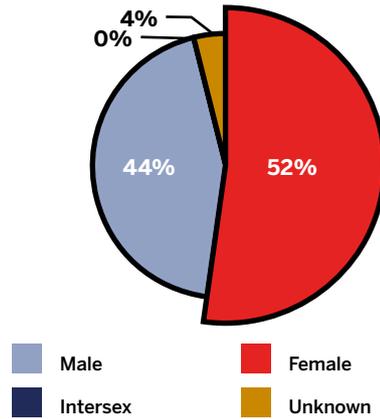


I can trust my worker(s)

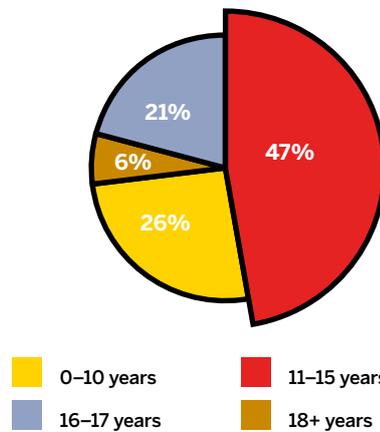


## Our demographics

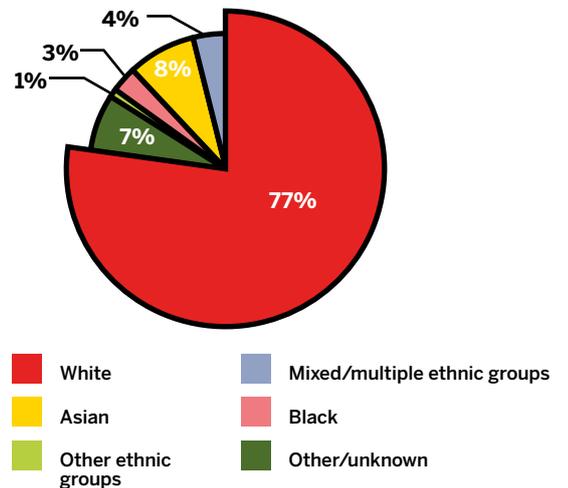
Gender breakdown of all young people accessing mental health services



Age breakdown of all young people accessing mental health services



Ethnicity breakdown of all young people accessing mental health services



## Spotlight on: Inclusion Matters

Inclusion Matters was a service that worked with young people who are refugees, migrants and separated asylum seekers through therapy, group work, practical advice and academic support. One component of this was a Girls' Well-being Group. The group worked holistically using art and roleplay to engage in a combination of therapy, group work and advocacy. Trained therapists and advocates worked closely with the group with an overall aim to break down barriers to learning, decrease social isolation and install a sense of belonging and hope for the future.

An independent evaluation was conducted by the Personal Social Services Unit at the London School of Economics. In the final evaluation of the Girls' Well-being Group, the evaluator found the following:

'...when asked how they felt in comparison to when the group started, all chose the "better than before" response...furthermore, 40% said that they had seen an improvement in their emotional well-being. Two thirds (70%) reported improved sleep, with 30% saying they had no sleep problems at baseline. Half (50%) noted an improvement in their energy levels; 90% said that their friendships were maintained or improved since the group had begun; 50% had seen an improvement in their family relationships.'<sup>11</sup>

### What worked?\*

- The overall service was found to reduce barriers for accessing support by establishing trusting relationships and locating support in education institutions.
- In interviews, young people expressed that the holistic nature of the program was something that worked well for them because they could get help for many different issues in one place.
- Interviews also revealed that both young people and teachers felt the support of specialist therapists was an important component to what worked. Young people felt listened to and teachers felt reassured knowing that young people had access to this kind of specialist support.

### What needs work?\*

- There were differences of opinion on best structure for therapy sessions. Overwhelmingly, young people preferred one-to-one therapy where they felt they could express themselves more freely. However, parents preferred to meet as a family.
- There was a high demand for this service, but workers were not able to see all the children who could have benefited from it due to limits on their capacity.
- It was found that young refugees and migrants in particular need continued support from 17 years old onward into early adulthood because of the statutory implications on their immigration status. However, current funding structures do not always allow for this kind of continued support.



# Sophie

Just after her 16th birthday and with difficulties at home, Sophie started going missing and rarely went to school. She met a gang who got her to steal for them, and after police found Sophie with a man they were arresting on suspicion of sexually assaulting women, she was referred to The Children's Society. Sophie worked with a project worker who helped her to understand the risks and dangers of going missing. Soon Sophie started going back to school and achieved good grades in her GCSEs. She is now attending sixth-form college and has stopped going missing from home. Sophie's project worker remains in contact with her in case she ever needs further support.

'I was extremely lucky to find The Children's Society at the time I did. I hate to think of it, but I'd be dead. I was just on the brink of becoming someone who no one could have saved me from.'

# Our work with: Children who go missing

In the UK, a young person goes missing from home or care every five minutes.<sup>12</sup> Going missing is a sign that something is wrong in a child's life and that they may be at risk of harm, especially from CSE.<sup>13</sup>

**Direct practice:** We help children who have gone missing, offering intensive one-to-one support and advice, drop-in services and advocacy. We give independent, confidential help and run group work, training and consultancy services for young people and professionals. We also deliver return home interviews (RHI), which are vital for understanding the reasons children go missing and determining what help they need.

**Policy and campaigns:** We worked with the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on an important new report looking at how the police and children's social services respond to children who are categorised as 'absent'. The report, *It is Good When Someone Cares*, revealed that under the current two-tier system children are classed as either 'missing' or 'absent' – but only a child classed as missing receives an active police response. The APPG concluded that the 'absent' category must be abandoned.

# 98%

of children and young people who used our missing and return home interview services were happy or very happy with their experience.

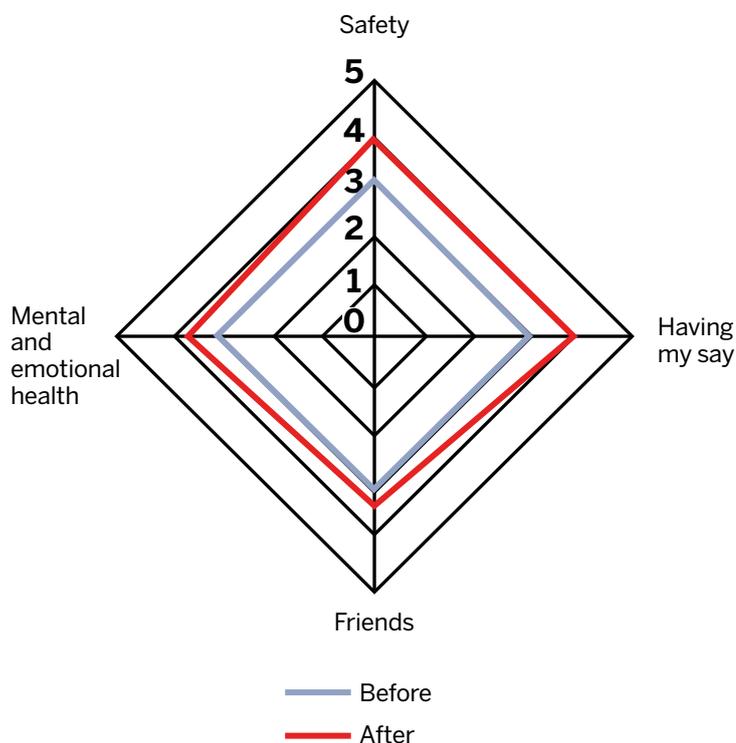
## Our outcomes

We assessed a sample of young people we worked with in our missing services against our outcomes for that area of work, and we found that:

- **56%** experienced improvements in safety
- **48%** experienced improvements in having their say
- **47%** experienced improved peer relationships
- **51%** experienced improvements in mental and emotional health.

### How much did things change?

The chart below represents an aggregate average of before and after scores.<sup>3</sup> This chart demonstrates how much things changed on average in each of the outcomes for this area of our work.



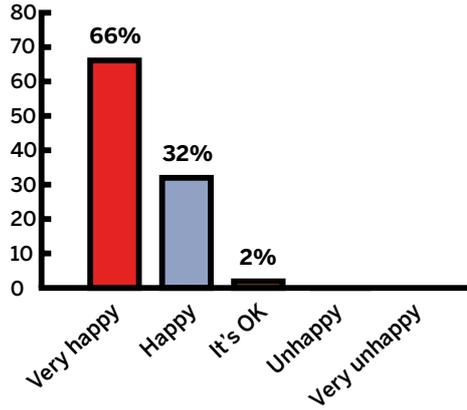
### Our key outputs

- 1,607 children and young people were supported by our missing and return home interview services.
- 624 children and young people who had gone missing received one-to-one support from our services.
- The Lead for Missing Persons at the National Police Chiefs' Council has commissioned a review of all police forces on the issues raised in our It is Good When Someone Cares report.
- The College of Policing is launching a consultation on repositioning the 'absent' category and clarifying the guidance on when this should be used.

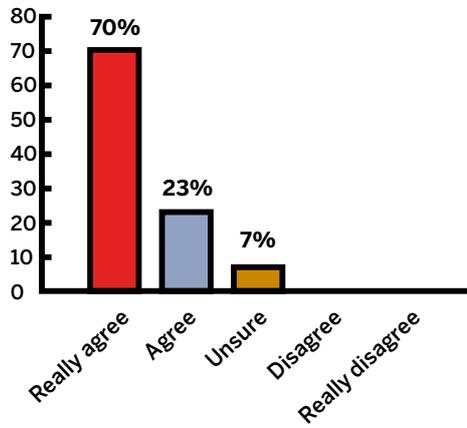
**64%**  
of young people  
we assessed in  
our missing  
services experienced  
positive change in  
one or more areas  
of their lives.

## The feedback we had

How happy overall?

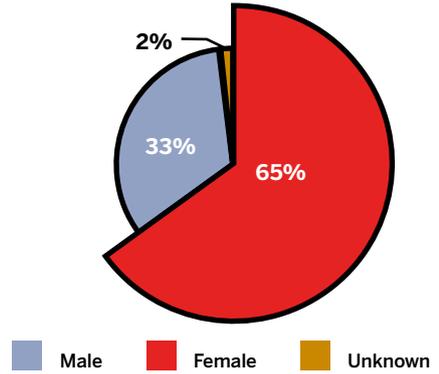


My worker listens to me

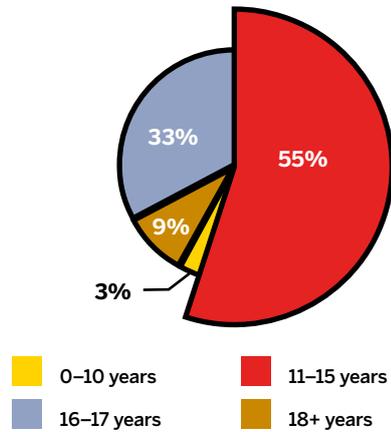


## Our demographics

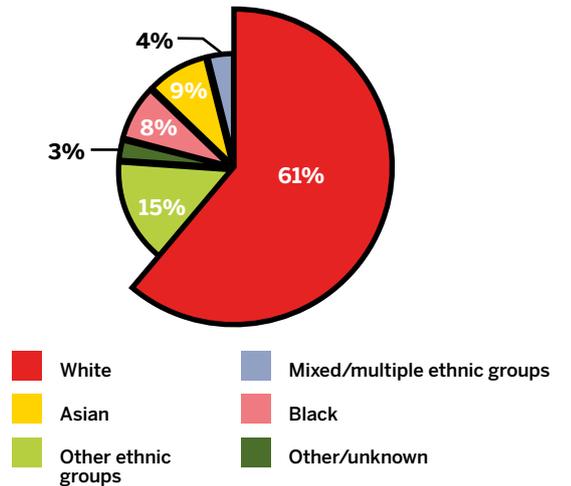
Gender breakdown of all young people accessing missing and RHI services



Age breakdown of all young people accessing missing and RHI services



Ethnicity breakdown of all young people accessing missing and RHI services



## Spotlight on: A project worker

**Sian runs a service for The Children's Society that works with young people who go missing from home or care:**

'We're an independent, non-judgemental, compassionate voice and we give the young person a chance to tell their side of the story, to talk about what's going on in their lives and why they went missing.

'Most of the young people we speak to don't have a good relationship with their social worker, and it's often reported to us that when police go out to see someone after a missing episode, they ask really interrogative questions. The young person doesn't feel they can disclose anything that has happened when they were missing, like CSE or abuse, because of the way the police have spoken to them.

'We don't go in with that approach at all. We are there to give the young person a chance to get their voice heard. They're not often asked about their feelings, so we get a lot of first time disclosures in our interviews, where it's the first time a young person has ever spoken about what exactly they're running away from. It's important to give them the space and opportunity to do that with someone who is non-judgemental.

'Going missing is a symptom of other issues, and the more times a child goes missing the more risk there is.'



# Jenny

Jenny was physically and emotionally abused by her stepmum for over five years – she was regularly physically beaten, had cigarettes thrown in her face and bleach flung in her eyes. Eventually Jenny was put under a Child Protection Plan, and she was referred to The Children's Society because she was feeling very angry, misusing drink and drugs and arguing with her dad and new stepmum.

Our staff supported Jenny to reduce her drug taking and drinking. She also saw a counsellor who helped her cope with her emotions better. The Children's Society helped Jenny find emergency accommodation, and she is now at college studying to be hairdresser.

'My friends see a difference in me since I started coming to The Children's Society and I know my dad's proud of me. I'm not the same Jenny I was a year ago.'

# Our work on: Substance misuse

Over 18,000 children in England used specialist substance misuse services in the past year.<sup>14</sup> Children and families struggling with substance misuse issues are often affected by domestic violence, poverty, low self-esteem and mental health issues, and suffer an increased risk of becoming victims of sexual exploitation.

**Direct practice:** We offer children one-to-one counselling, advice and targeted group work to enhance their knowledge about the dangers of drugs and alcohol and the impact they can have. We also work with children affected by a family member who is misusing substances. We offer a structured intervention service, drop-in appointments and a telephone helpline for young people and their families to use to help get their lives back on track.

**Policy and campaigns:** Last year, we lobbied to raise concerns about the sale of drugs outside residential children's homes and supported accommodation such as hostels, foyers or night stops. The use of psychoactive substances is particularly acute in these environments, where we estimate that some 8,400 children aged 16 and 17 are accommodated every year. The Government's Psychoactive Substances Bill already makes the sale of psychoactive substances outside school an aggravating factor, meaning courts must take this into consideration when sentencing. We argued that this should be extended to include supply outside residential children's homes and supported accommodation.

# 100%

of the children and young people who used our substance misuse services were happy or very happy with their experience.

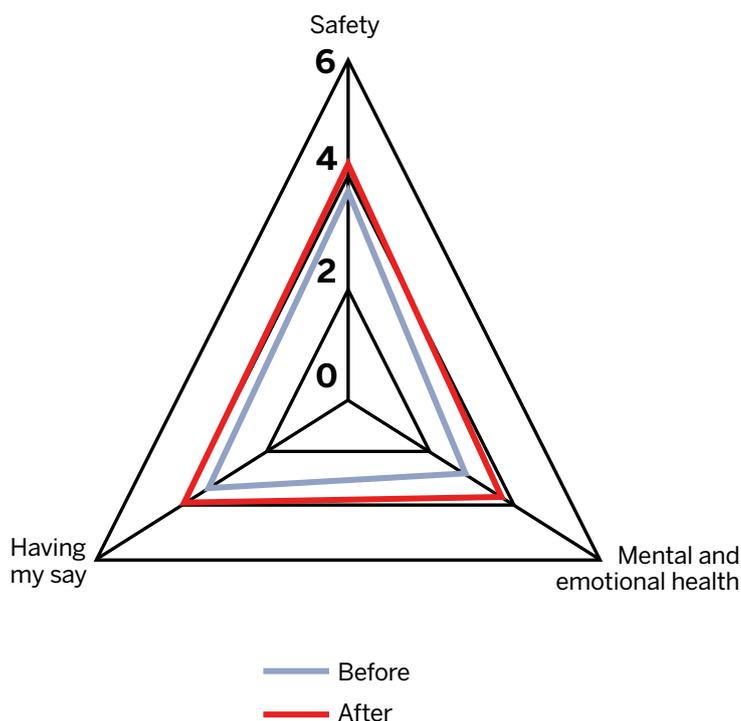
## Our outcomes

We assessed a sample of young people we worked with in our substance misuse services against our outcomes for that area of work, and we found that:

- **47%** experienced improvements in safety
- **41%** experienced improvements in mental and emotional health
- **41%** experienced improvements in having their say.

### How much did things change?

The chart below represents an aggregate average of before and after scores.<sup>3</sup> This chart demonstrates how much things changed on average in each of the outcomes for this area of our work.



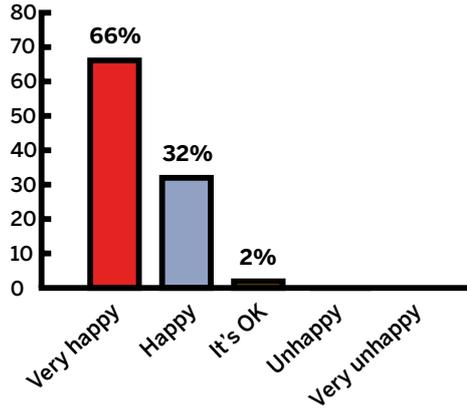
### Our key outputs

- 723 children and young people used our substance misuse services.
- 8,400 children aged 16 or 17 could be protected by our lobbying on the Government's Psychoactive Substances Bill.
- Our Essex Young People's Drug and Alcohol Services saw a 91% average of planned exits from treatment; this is significantly higher than the national average of 78%.

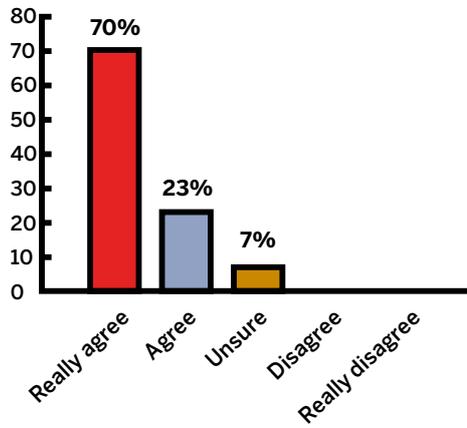
**47%**  
of the young people  
we assessed who  
used our substance  
misuse services  
experienced a  
positive improvement  
in at least one area of  
their lives.

## The feedback we had

How happy overall?

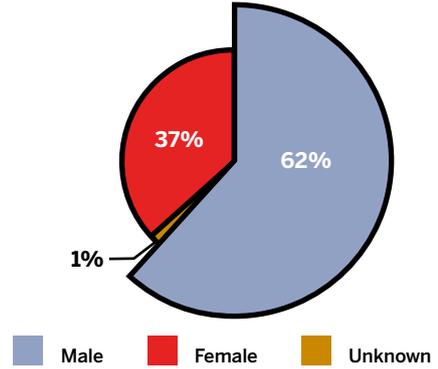


My worker listens to me

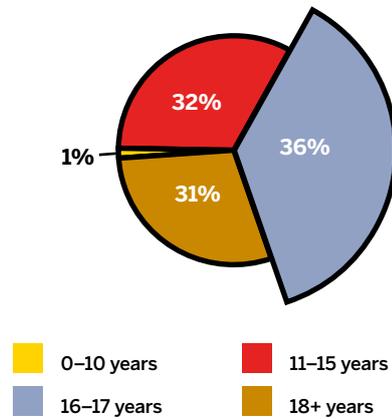


## Our demographics

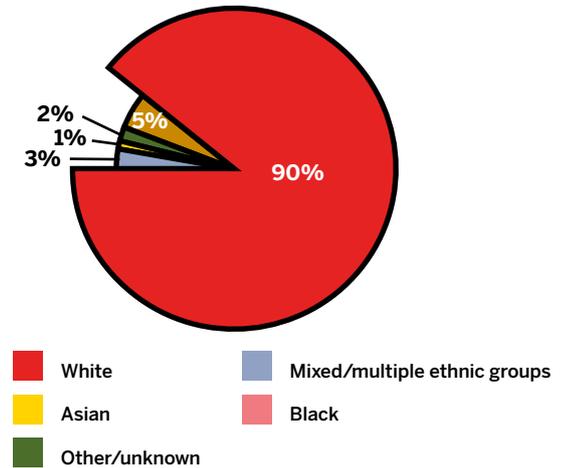
Gender breakdown of all young people accessing substance misuse services



Age breakdown of all young people accessing substance misuse services



Ethnicity breakdown of all young people accessing substance misuse services



## Spotlight on: Explore Family

Explore Family is a joint initiative delivered by Lifeline and The Children's Society. It aims to support children, adults and families who are affected by someone else's substance misuse using a whole family model.

In 2015, an evaluation of the service was conducted based on an analysis of 44 cases. It was co-produced by an independent consultant, Katherine Hagerman, and the Head of Evaluation and Applied Research at The Children's Society, Julie Xuan Ouellet. The objective was to identify outcomes achieved and areas for further investigation. The analysis found that:

'Explore Family is effective in supporting children and families affected by someone else's substance misuse. Case files show practitioners working effectively with clients to cope with everyday stressors that are linked to self-harming, eating disorders and risky relationships. Explore Family also works effectively with clients to change root perceptions and behaviours including low self-esteem, inability to set boundaries and aggressive behaviour.'<sup>15</sup>

### What worked?\*

- Family activities were cited many times as being important for the young people we worked with. Some young people told their workers that they wanted to do more of this, but their ability to do so depended on the well-being of the family member who was misusing substances.
- Creative activities worked well for both adults and young people. Several comments were made in case notes about creative outlets being used as a positive coping mechanism both within and outside our services.
- Access to support, especially housing, benefits and financial support, was important to adults. Case notes reflected several instances where facilitating access made a big difference in the well-being of the client.

### What needs work?\*

- Partnership working and referrals presented challenges to Explore Family workers. There was often a need for more specialist support, especially for mental illness, which was not always available.
- Young people often suffered setbacks and returned to unhealthy behaviours and coping mechanisms if the substance misusing family member relapsed after being in recovery, or returned home after a period of being away as a result of separation or incarceration.
- The majority of clients seen in this service were dealing with complex intersecting issues, especially: domestic violence, sexual exploitation, self-harm, bereavement and mental illness. This sometimes posed additional challenges.



# Mujibullah

Mujibullah came to the UK from Afghanistan after his father was killed by Taliban, who wanted to kill him too. When he first arrived in the UK, Mujibullah couldn't speak English and didn't know anyone. Even though Mujibullah was only 16, the police assessed his age as over 18, so he was moved to a new city and placed in a shared house with men much older than him.

The Children's Society visited the house and spoke with Mujibullah, then assigned him a project worker who supported him into education and took him to solicitors' meetings to challenge his age assessment and work on his asylum case. Mujibullah was also introduced to a mentor to help him acclimatise to UK life.

'One day a worker from The Children's Society came to the house. He could speak my language. He told me that The Children's Society help unaccompanied youths who don't know how to live here.'

# Additional achievements

**It is well established that young people who are coping with multiple intersecting levels of vulnerability face even more barriers to accessing the support they need. Some of the most vulnerable groups we work with in our key five thematic areas are separated asylum seekers, young carers and young people living in poverty and/or debt. For this reason, we operate additional direct services and policy and campaigning work that focuses on issues specific to the needs of these groups. Here are just some of our achievements:**

- We worked intensively with 674 children and young people who were refugees or asylum seekers.
- We conducted 777 group work sessions on issues related to seeking asylum, including discrimination, housing and benefits.
- We published the report *Not Just a Temporary Fix* which made the case for better long-term support for separated migrant children. The report calls for these children to have a 'durable solution' – a lasting outcome which addresses all of their needs, considers their own view and leads to the child successfully transitioning into adulthood, whether they remain in England or return to their country of origin.
- We campaigned against Government proposals to remove support from families whose application for asylum has been denied. Our campaigners responded to the Government's proposals, achieving an impressive 80% of all consultation responses. In the initial plans, the Government gave families 30 days to leave before withdrawing support, but thanks to our campaigning the Government has increased this to 90 days.
- Our campaigning on tax credits contributed to the abandonment of proposed Government reforms which would have seriously harmed the lives of 2.4 million children. We worked with members of the House of Lords to urge the Government to rethink its damaging approach to tax credit changes. The reversal was a welcome victory for children.

- Last autumn the Chancellor decided to put the current school uniform guidance on a statutory footing. Our report *The Wrong Blazer* showed that high and unfair uniform costs lead to children going to school in incorrect, unclean or poorly fitting uniforms. Through sustained engagement with the Department for Education and the Competition and Markets Authority we made the case for stronger guidance so that school uniform policies do not unfairly penalise families in poverty.
- Thanks to our contribution, the Government was convinced to abandon plans to stop using income as a definition of poverty. We came together with other members of the End Child Poverty Coalition to lobby Lords, email MPs and we even coordinated a stunt with a magician outside the Houses of Parliament. The Government has now reintroduced a legal requirement to publish annual data on the number of children living in low-income households.
- The Warm Home Discount is designed to help low income families struggling with their fuel bills by providing a £140 discount – enough to warm the average family’s home for more than a month. Encouraged by our evidence and campaigning, the Government has guaranteed funding for the Warm Home Discount for the rest of this parliament until 2020.
- Our *The Wolf at the Door* report revealed how children and teenagers feel scared and worried after coming face-to-face with bailiffs sent by the council to demand sudden and unrealistic debt repayments. We called on councils to stop sending bailiffs to homes with children and teenagers and to use less damaging debt collection methods. Our campaigners wrote to over 2,000 councillors and already six councils are in the process of making important changes.

# 674

**the number of children and young people we worked with intensively who were refugees or asylum seekers.**

# Our strategic focus for 2016/17

**For over 130 years, The Children's Society has been there to help, support and listen to this country's children and young people. All of our services and campaigns are committed to having the greatest possible positive impact on the lives of the UK's most vulnerable children and young people. The needs of these children shape the focus of everything we do.**

In line with our renewed organisational strategy of working with 10 to 18 year olds who are suffering from poverty, abuse and neglect, we have set ourselves the following five goals for the forthcoming year:

- 1.** Work with more than 10,000 young people within our youth at risk services.
- 2.** Deliver one million positive changes to children's lives through our campaigning and policy work.
- 3.** Put in place a new Fundraising and Supporter Engagement Strategy to increase the lifetime contribution our valued supporters make to the lives of young people.
- 4.** Maintain our current level of net unrestricted income from fundraising activities and increase our net unrestricted income from retail and trading activities.
- 5.** Achieve £8 million worth of new commissioned work in our five priority themed areas to support children and young people.

# Evaluation: our journey

**In 2013/14, The Children's Society formed its first Monitoring and Evaluation team, driven by an external and internal commitment to honesty and accountability when reporting our impact. This small four-person team created My Wheel, our national monitoring tool. Within three months our entire practice base was trained in using the new tool, which considerably improved our ability to report consistently on our outcomes. We also published our very first Impact Report, which highlighted the outputs of who we worked with and how.**

In 2014/15 we really felt the benefits of the hard work that went into creating My Wheel. For the first time, our Impact Report included the percentage of positive change experienced by our service users, as well as regional pull-outs illustrating our work in different areas. We expanded our team, adding 10 more analysts, researchers and evaluators who enabled us to develop outcomes frameworks for each service, conduct needs assessments, launch our User Satisfaction Survey, test innovative new pilots and embed local systems and processes for reporting on our funding contracts.

In 2015/16 we launched new national tools including our Advocacy Tool and Traffic Light Trackers that will allow us to aggregate impact data across more services in next year's report. We developed a clear Evaluation Approach that embeds learning and reflexivity into our day-to-day work; this includes EDDI, our approach to Exploring Data and Discovering Insight through conversation, communication

and dissemination. We completed several commissioned and in-house evaluations of specific services, and started several more. Our Impact Report this year has enabled us to share far more insight into specific themes of work and conduct service-specific evaluations.

In 2016/17 our focus is on feeding learning into action. We will complete a qualitative arts-based evaluation of our young people's participation panel, an interim social return on investment in one of our refugee and migrant services, and improve the ways we collect and report on ethnicity and gender across our practice. We will continue to revitalise the way people engage with applied research and evaluation through accessible external-facing literature, workshops and what we call 'EDTalks' which are short, informal presentations on specific evaluations. We will be doing all of this with an intention to drive practice improvement and innovation through strong evidence.

# References

- <sup>1</sup> Berelowitz S, et al. If only someone had listened. Office of the Children's Commissioner's Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in groups and gangs. 2013. Final report.
- <sup>2</sup> Ponya I and Baillie D. Old Enough to Know Better. 2015. The Children's Society.
- <sup>3</sup> We measure change using a 1–5 point scale. The scale measures how able a young person is to make change in a specific area of their life at that given moment. 1 = Not Ready to talk about the issue or not realising there is an issue; 2= Accepting that something's wrong but not sure what to do; 3 = Attempting to make changes but finding this difficult; 4= the Doing stage, which represents a time when positive actions or changes are much more established and embedded into a young person's life; 5 = Achieving their goals in this area of their life and knowing where to get support in the future if they need it.
- <sup>4</sup> Leon L and Raws P. Boys Don't Cry. 2016. The Children's Society.
- <sup>5</sup> Coraam BAFF report, 31st March 2015  
<http://corambaaf.org.uk/res/statengland>
- <sup>6</sup> Ayre D, et al. The Cost of Being Care Free. 2016. The Children's Society.
- <sup>7</sup> Gutherson P, Giles V and Wilkinson K. Evaluation of 'Care to be Different' in Torbay and North West England. 2016. Research in Practice.
- <sup>8</sup> <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/a-to-z/c/children-and-young-people>
- <sup>9</sup> Abdinasir K and Ponya I. Access Denied. 2015. The Children's Society.
- <sup>10</sup> Ayre D. Poor Mental Health. 2016. The Children's Society.
- <sup>11</sup> Brimblecombe, Nicola. Inclusion Matters. 2016. Personal Social Services Research Unit (PSSRU), at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE)
- <sup>12</sup> Rees G. Still Running 3. 2011. The Children's Society.
- <sup>13</sup> Ponya I. Safeguarding Children and Young People who Go Missing in London. 2016. The Children's Society.
- <sup>14</sup> National Drug Treatment Monitoring System (NDTMS) Annual Reports on Substance Misuse among adults and young people. 2015. Public Health England and Department of Health.
- <sup>15</sup> Ouellet, J.X. and Hagerman, K. Skills to Cope. 2015. Evidence and Impact Team at The Children's Society.

## **We're tremendously proud of our achievements over the past year.**

As this report clearly shows, we're continuing to make a difference to millions of children in the UK who would otherwise have nowhere else to turn.

## **Next year we will continue our important work.**

We will reach even more children and young people who need help and give them the opportunity of the safe, secure future that we believe every child should enjoy.

# It is a painful fact that many children and young people in Britain today are still suffering extreme hardship, abuse and neglect.

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



The  
Children's  
Society

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

You can download a PDF or read an online version of this report at [childrenssociety.org.uk/impact](https://childrenssociety.org.uk/impact)

If you would like to make a donation to The Children's Society, please visit [childrenssociety.org.uk/donate](https://childrenssociety.org.uk/donate)