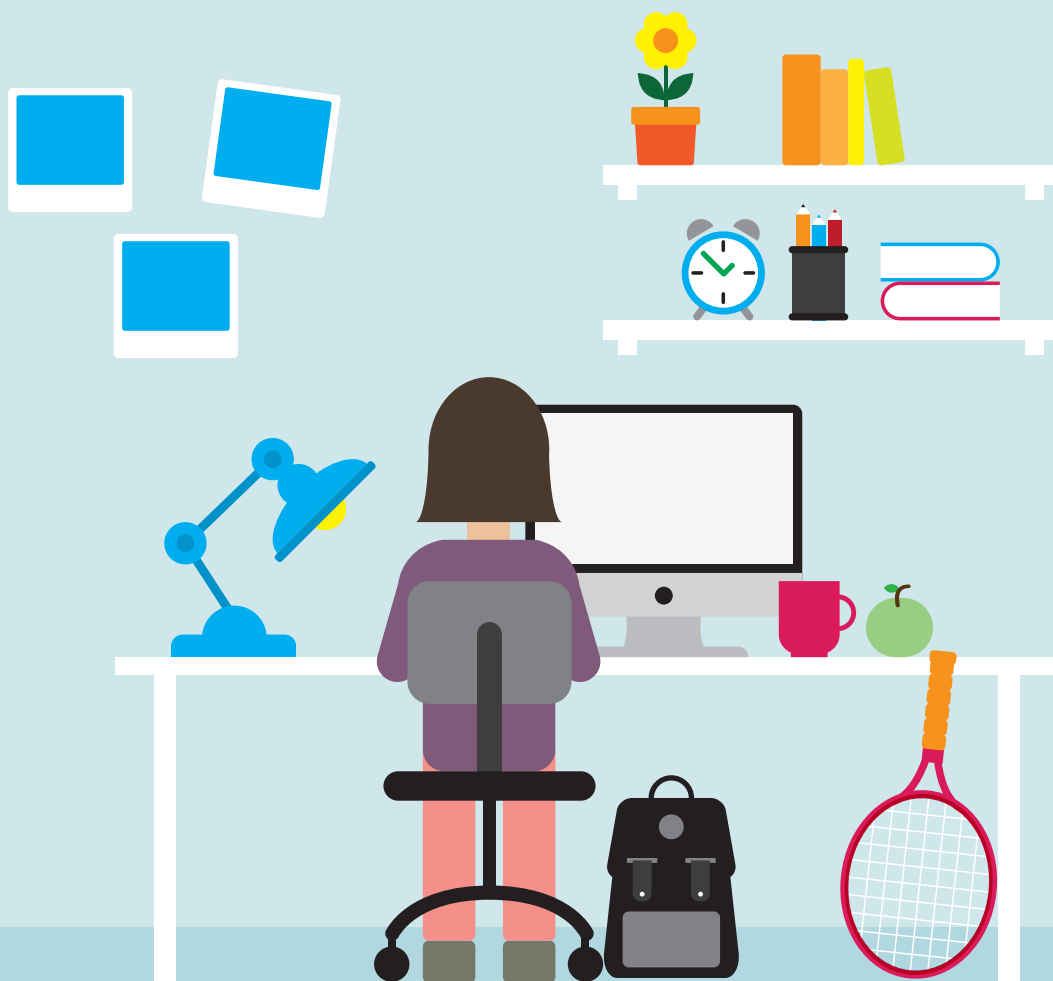


Partnership approaches to improving health outcomes for young people



Foreword

It goes without saying, adolescence is a crucial period in anyone's life. Habits and behaviours which develop between the ages of 10 to 25 can help determine what sort of life you have and the person you become.

In terms of health, we know physical activity levels can start declining rapidly during these years, while many teenagers find it difficult to stick to a healthy diet. Mental health problems also start to develop. By the age of 14, half of all lifetime cases of psychiatric disorders will have started and by 24 three quarters will.

But what can be done? There are of course plenty of examples of good practice in encouraging good behaviours. However, your health is not just determined by what you eat or drink, whether you smoke or don't or how much you exercise.

Social, economic and environmental factors play an important role too. These are known as the social determinants of health. They cover everything from education and employment through to housing, deprivation and involvement in the criminal justice system. It is now well established that social inequalities can lead to health inequalities and that disadvantage in childhood is a predictor of poor health outcomes in adolescence and adulthood.

Whilst this is the case, addressing and supporting young people with the social determinants of health cannot be done by health partners alone. The wide ranging scope and complexity of these factors requires the involvement of many different partners, working together collaboratively with each other, but importantly also children and young people.

Local government is a key local partner in this work and in many cases is leading the way.

For example, in the London Borough of Lambeth, the council has helped set up a cooperative which runs youth services. Not only is it engaging young people and teaching them new skills, it is also helping to unlock alternative sources of funding.

In Nottingham the council, working with local partners, including businesses, is doing fantastic work in creating work opportunities for the young. So much so, that it is now able to guarantee all those aged 18 to 25 a job.

However, we still need to do more. Despite living in one of the world's wealthiest economies, stark inequalities still exist. This means we have to re-double our efforts to help the most vulnerable. This requires working with young people who struggle with mental illness, substance abuse, homelessness and unemployment. We need to ensure they stay in school and support them when they get caught up in the criminal justice system.

The case studies in this report showcase different approaches to supporting the health of young people in the broadest sense – taking into consideration the social determinants of health. Whilst the approach and focus of the work in local areas varies, each case study provides an opportunity to reflect on what made the initiative a success and how we might use this learning in our own areas.

Cllr Izzi Seccombe OBE

Chair LGA Community Wellbeing Board

Cllr Richard Watts

Chair Children and Young People Board

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Key statistics



Numbers

There are **10 million children and young people** aged 10 to 24 in England – about a fifth of the population¹

Adolescence is generally a healthy life stage but those aged **10-24 do die (2,349 in 2014)**, often from preventable causes²



Deprivation

One in three under 18s are at risk of poverty or social exclusion³

One in 10 under 18s are experiencing severe material deprivation⁴

One fifth of young people aged 11-15 live in families with the lowest levels of income⁵

1 Office of National Statistics

2 Association for Young People's Health, Key Data on Adolescence 2015

3 Social Inclusion Monitor Europe

4 Social Inclusion Monitor Europe

5 Association for Young People's Health, Key Data on Adolescence 2015



At school

14.6% of secondary school children are eligible for free school meals⁶

In schools with the most disadvantaged pupils in 2014, **only 43% achieve the level of five A*-C grades at GCSE (including English and maths), compared with 81%** of those in schools with few disadvantaged pupils⁷

22% of young people have reported not having enough sleep to feel awake and concentrate on school work during the day⁸

6 Association for Young People's Health, Key Data on Adolescence 2015

7 Association for Young People's Health, Key Data on Adolescence 2015

8 Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children 2015: World Health Organisation

16%

LOW INCOME HOUSEHOLDS

5%

MOST AFFLUENT HOUSEHOLDS

Health and wellbeing

16% of children and young people in low income households have mental health problems, compared to 5% in the most affluent ones⁹

Over half of mental health problems that start in adult life (excluding dementia) start by the age of 14 and 75% by the age of 18¹⁰

Just over one fifth (22%) of 15 year olds reported in 2014 that they had self-harmed, with nearly three times as many girls as boys reporting that they had self-harmed¹¹

9 Association for Young People's Health, Key Data on Adolescence 2015

10 Future in Mind 2015

11 Association for Young People's Health, Key Data on Adolescence 2015

Key statistics



Health and wellbeing (cont)

Around one in five school pupils aged 11-15 are obese¹²

Living in an area of multiple deprivation is associated with higher levels of obesity for Year 6 (age 11) children

¹² Association for Young People's Health, Key Data on Adolescence 2015



Risky Behaviours

Smoking prevalence is highest among **15 year old girls (8%)**¹³

Whilst rates of both smoking and drinking alcohol have decreased among 11-15 year olds over the last decade, England still has a high incidence of regular drinking, drunkenness and cannabis use among 15 year olds compared to other European countries.¹⁴

The incidence of **teenage pregnancy has fallen substantially** in England over the last couple of decades, but is still one of the highest in Europe¹⁵

¹³ Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children 2015: World Health Organisation

¹⁴ Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children 2015: World Health Organisation

¹⁵ Behaviour in School-Aged Children 2015: World Health Organisation



Housing

There are about **100,000 children** in temporary accommodation at any one time and an estimated **3.6 million live in poor or overcrowded housing**¹⁶

Adolescence aged 20-24 are still living at home with parents.¹⁷

¹⁶

¹⁷ Association for Young People's Health, Key Data on Adolescence 2015



Education, employment and training

In May 2017, the unemployment rate for 16-24 year olds not in full-time education was 10.7%, compared to 11.8% a year ago

The overall proportion of 16-18 year olds not in education, employment or training (NEET) fell by 0.5% in 2016 to 6.0%, the lowest rate since consistent records began in 1994¹⁸

Only one in eight children from low-income backgrounds are likely to become a higher earner as an adult¹⁹

¹⁸ Youth Unemployment Statistics Briefing, House of Commons Library, Paper Andrew Powell July 2017

¹⁹ Association for Young People's Health, Key Data on Adolescence 2015

The context

Adolescence and social determinants of health

“Adolescence is a key period for establishing life-long health behaviours and these develop in the context of the family, school and community. These contexts can be structural, such as national wealth, income inequality and educational opportunities, or proximal, including family factors, availability of social support, and quality of the neighbourhood and school environment. Without equal access to resources and support across all these contexts, some young people are put at a disadvantage”.²⁰

Successive governments have shown an interest in tackling health and social inequalities.

Shortly after becoming prime minister, Theresa May made a speech in which she talked about the “burning inequality” that exists and promised a future in which anybody, “whatever your background”, can go as far as their talents take them.

The Social Mobility Commission (previously called the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission) is an independent statutory body set up by the government to promote and advise on achieving social mobility in England.

Research published by the commission in its 2016 State of the Nation Report shows that progress has been made – absolute rates of child poverty have halved since 1997 and employment is at record levels. Educational inequalities, though wide, are slowly narrowing.

We also know that trends in drinking, smoking and teenage pregnancy rates for young people are very encouraging. Figures show pregnancy in under-18s is at its lowest rate for 40 years and the numbers of young people drinking and smoking are also falling.

Whilst social progress can be measured in all these steps, there are still children and young people who face economic and social difficulties that inhibit their life chances and, ultimately, their health.

The commission's report highlights that one in 10 under 18s are growing up in households classed as low income and materially deprived. This in turn leads to an increased risk of poorer outcomes at school, in work and socially.

Combined with the economic downturn post 2008, the effect has been profound. The 20th century expectation that each generation would be better off than the preceding one is now no longer being met. People born in the 1980s are the first post-war cohort not to start their working years with higher incomes than their immediate predecessors.

And it is those who come from the most disadvantaged backgrounds who lose out the most. Whether you look at GCSE qualifications, teenage pregnancy rates, the number of NEETs (not in education, employment or training) or the long-term unemployed, those from deprived backgrounds are all at greater risk.

²⁰ Association for Young People's Health, Key Data on Adolescence 2015

What are councils doing?

In the UK, area deprivation is measured at the local level through the Index of Multiple Deprivation. It considers factors such as income, health, education, crime and availability of local resources. Whilst governments have attempted to tackle some of these factors, it is perhaps local authorities working with other local partners that can have the most direct impact on the place in which people live and the lives of people in their local communities.

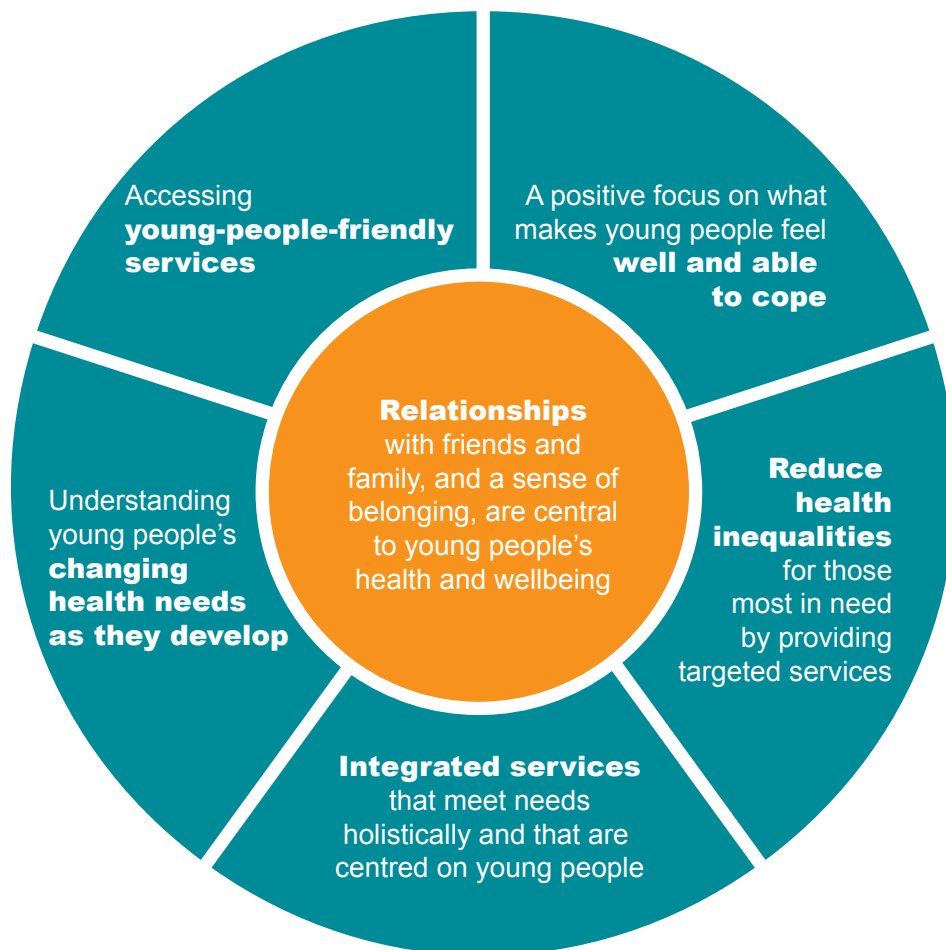
Councils commission and provide a broad scope of services for young people, including many which impact on the social determinants of health:

- Councils are responsible for making sure that all young people in their area get a good education.
- Councils also have responsibilities around the provision of suitable housing; young people (under 35) are only able to get the lower Local Housing Allowance rate, which increases the risk of them living in overcrowded accommodation, or poor quality housing.
- Council's youth offending teams (in partnership with police and probation services), aim to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour, and reduce reoffending.
- Many councils provide leisure centres and other sports facilities, often working in partnership with community sports clubs to provide free or discounted sports for young people and those with disabilities.
- Councils develop local transport plans working with public transport companies – this is particularly key in rural areas where some young people can be completely cut off from work and leisure opportunities.

In recognition of the complexity of social problems facing young people, councils across the country are working with partners in the public, voluntary and private sectors to help support vulnerable young people in their local communities. In some places they are leading the work, while in others they are acting as enablers to allow their partners to make the difference.



Six principles to shape thinking about young people's health



Public Health England and the Association for Young People's Health have identified six core principles which together provide a useful framework for local service providers and commissioners to consider, when providing support to young people in their local communities.

"The evidence tells us that treating different, specific health issues separately will not tackle the overall wellbeing of this generation of young people. Young people's mental and physical health are intertwined, and at the heart of health and wellbeing are their relationships with others. Young people think about their health holistically. They want an integrated, youth friendly approach that recognises their particular needs, makes them feel supported, emphasises the positives and helps them to cope."²²

21 Improving Young People's Health and Wellbeing, PHE and AYPH, January 2015.

22 Improving Young People's Health and Wellbeing, PHE and AYPH, January 2015

Top tips for councils

Working with partners

- Establish or use existing multi-agency partnerships such as the health and wellbeing board to bring together health, social care, police, education, businesses and the voluntary and community sector.
- Develop a shared set out outcomes across partners so that you are clear about what you are trying to achieve for children and young people. Take time to understand how each organisation can contribute to these outcomes, aligning and co-ordinating existing activities where possible to maximise impact and reduce duplication.
- Ensure up-front that you have identified resource to co-ordinate and communicate the work of the partnership recognising that responsibilities can be shared across partners organisations.
- Help ensure local employers are engaged with young people and schools through work experience, careers advice and mentoring.
- Support schools in their duty to provide careers education, information, advice and guidance.
- Work with schools to spot the early signs of who the most vulnerable and at risk of becoming NEETs.
- Consider appointing champions for young people to help drive forward programmes.
- Explore alternative streams of funding – lottery money, government grants and (for voluntary sector partners) fundraising can all be important sources of income.

Engaging with young people

- Involve young people in the shaping and commissioning of services, ensuring that you maximise opportunities to build on their skills and improve their confidence through supporting involvement with training and development opportunities.
- Deploy an assets-based approach when providing support, which uses and builds on the skills of young people.
- Personalise the support provided to the most disengaged young people – consider their support needs holistically taking into account the wider determinants of health so that support is coordinated across all relevant agencies.
- Ensure that the way in which support is provided allows the young person to jointly develop their plans and goals.

Data and evidence

- Use data to help you understand where to target efforts and evaluate how your work makes a difference to outcomes for young people.
- Data alone is not enough – use the knowledge and practice wisdom of staff working with young people to help determine how and what support is provided.
- Ensure the recording and tracking of young people's post-16 participation in education and training is kept up to the minute so you have the data you need to target support to young people who need it most.

Case studies





West London Zone: a collective impact initiative for safe, happy and healthy children and young people

- The one-year pilot evaluation showed a third of children exhibited fewer indicators of risk of poor future outcomes.
- Over the next 10 years they have a plan to work with 13,000 children and young people across three square miles of inner West London, and change the life chances of the children and young people in the area for good.

The West London Zone only works across a small area – three square miles around the Harrow Road – but it is achieving big things. It emerged from the work being done by the criminal justice charity, Only Connect, which has a youth centre in the area.

Only Connect found that young people who turned to crime typically lacked long-term support and were exposed at a young age to a culture of the streets, which disrespected learning, work and family life. The programme was inspired by a visit to Harlem in New York in 2011 where a charity provides support from “cradle to college”.

The approach: collective impact

The WLZ is based on a ‘collective impact’ approach, which brings in a range of partners from schools, the local council, voluntary sector and private sector. A WLZ chief development officer Nigel Ball explains.

“Our approach is founded on the belief that the challenges facing many children and young people in our area are too numerous and complex for any one institution – including their families – to manage alone.

“The whole community from schools to public services to charities, neighbourhood groups and private funders – needs to get around the child or young person. Only by working together can we make sure our children and young people grow up safe, healthy and

happy. This is what we mean by collective impact.”

The support model - link workers

WLZ was launched with a one-year pilot in the summer of 2015 with the support of philanthropic financial backing in one neighbourhood and by the end had provided support to 118 children and young people.

The model is based on three principles:

- identifying children and young people aged 0-25 most at risk of negative outcomes later in life through effective data gathering and using link workers to work closely with the child or young person, identifying their strengths and needs
- supporting them through a tailored package
- monitoring progress with a rigorous measurement system, to quickly see what is and isn't working.

The ‘anchor’ organisations – schools and children’s centres – identify those at risk through a combination of analysing existing data held as well as the knowledge of staff.

They tend to be children and young people who live in disadvantaged postcodes, have poor school attendance, special educational needs or English not as a first language. Each child or young person is then assigned a link worker, employed by WLZ, who works in and around their anchor.

The link worker coordinates any social sector support and helps the child or young person and their family with day-to-day issues. The support provided depends on individual needs. There is a ‘light touch’ approach, which involves informal check-ins once the initial goals have been set.

Medium level support involves meetings every three to four weeks and close tracking of targets and goals, while for those who need intense support, one-to-one meetings are held each week. Link workers use motivational interviewing techniques to engage the young people and positive reinforcement to encourage good behaviour, such as school attendance.

Michele Barrett, head of Randolph Beresford Early Years Centre, which was one of the anchor organisations last year, says the support provided filled an important gap. “WLZ can do the strategic piece we cannot do and can find and engage the social sector support that we simply do not have the resources to spend the time on.”

Transforming lives

This kind of work is clearly about long-term results, but even in the short-time period covered by the pilot good results were achieved. A third of children exhibited fewer indicators of risk of poor future outcomes, according to a review carried out by the Dartington Social Research Unit.

The impact of the work can also be seen from the individual stories of those whom have been helped. A typical beneficiary was a year 7 boy, A, who comes from a large Albanian family. The father is away on construction projects for much of the time and the mother felt “overwhelmed at home”.

There was little parental engagement in his education and he was suffering from “very low” self-esteem.

His academic scores were low and he had behaviour problems at school, but with the support of his link worker he began to flourish. He began attending an academic support group, playing new sports and became more confident in school. Nine months later, he was above average in his school attainment.

Another child that has benefited was a year two girl, B, who had just moved to the area when she was given help. She had come from the Democratic Republic of Congo and while she did not display lots of risk factors – she was quiet and reserved – the link worker was concerned she could start to regress because of her level of English. The link worker engaged the mother at school drop off and arranged for her to be helped with housing and immigration issues. She also introduced the family to the local Catholic church, put them in touch with a local refugee centre and arranged for the family to get library cards. By the end B was playing an active part in school and community life.

The results convinced local agencies, including the council, to pool their resources and tender for an extended three-year programme, which is now under way.

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The five conditions of Collective Impact

1. Common agenda	All participants have a shared vision for change including a common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving it through agreed actions.
2. Shared measurement	Collecting data and measuring results consistently across all participants ensures efforts remain aligned and participants hold each other accountable.
3. Mutually reinforcing activities	Participant activities must be differentiated while still being coordinated through a mutually reinforcing plan of action.
4. Continuous communication	Consistent and open communication is needed across the many players to build trust, assure mutual objectives, and create shared motivation.
5. Backbone support	Creating and managing collective impact requires a separate organisation(s) with staff with a specific set of skills to serve as the backbone for the entire initiative and coordinate participating organisations and agencies.

John Kania and Mark Kramer Stanford Social Innovation Review 2011

The Winch: providing support from cradle to career

- The Winch's mission is to help each child succeed, regardless of their circumstances, by giving them the opportunities and support they need.
- It works with young people in the London Borough of Camden through its network of youth clubs, outreach work, parenting groups and mentoring schemes.
- It has extended this support to the 18 to 25 age group with the creation of 'The Company' to help young people get their own businesses up-and-running. The charity's 'promise workers' integrate all this through providing a cradle to career service by delivering one-to-one support to the most troubled young people.

The Winch has a long history. It was founded in the early 1970s after a group of young squatters moved into to a derelict pub building to rehouse their youth club. Since then many thousands of young people in the London Borough of Camden have benefited as the charity has extended its services.

It now provides help to over 1,000 children and young people a year via youth clubs, after-school clubs, outreach work, parenting groups and mentoring and coaching schemes. But in recent years it has also begun to change its approach. The catalyst was the death in 2011 of one of the people who had used The Winch's services – Milad Golkamani. He was stabbed to death by a group of young people who had also used local youth services.

"It really made us think about our role," says Paul Perkins, the chief executive officer of The Winch. "We started to question what we were trying to achieve – and we came to the realisation that we needed to do a lot more to join up our services. We know that if we withdraw services from a young person all the benefits that have been gained can be lost within a few years. So instead of having just lots of different, fragmented services we have tried to build a more integrated approach through the ages. We call it cradle to career."

Creating a person-centred approach

The key development for this was the creation of a team of promise workers. These are highly trained youth workers who provide intensive mentoring and support to between eight and 10 vulnerable young people at any one time. They are given one-on-one help with everything from school life to housing and immigration depending on the age of the clients, creating a truly person-centred approach. The support lasts for months, often years.

The promise workers model

The Promise

We make a promise to each child to help them navigate their way through life as they grow.

The Pipeline

We have a cradle to career pipeline, ensuring that a child's experience of support is a continuous and seamless one.

Promise Partnership

We work closely with partners to create a shared approach and language to tackling child poverty and to provide additional support beyond our capacity and fields of expertise.

Promise Research

We invest in measuring impact to increase our success, tracking around 100 metrics for children and young people.

Mr Perkins says: “The idea is to work together to develop a personal plan and goals and gradually work towards them. At first it may be simply about reducing reoffending or avoiding getting kicked out of school. We have even attended court with them.”

“It helped me get back on my feet when I thought I had nobody.”

Adam, 24

At any given time there will be between 50 and 60 young people being given support by the team of promise workers at an average cost of £2,500 per individual per year. Those who have been given help are full of praise.

Marissa, aged 12, has been getting help from a promise worker for the past four years. She was referred on to the scheme after she started struggling with anger issues and school. She regularly attends the youth club and has close contact with her promise worker.

“The best thing is that my worker always makes time for me and I can tell her everything. I think I am calmer now and I try not to always say the first thing that comes to my mind without thinking first. If I wasn’t given this help I can imagine things would have gone badly.”

Marissa, 12

Adam, who is 24, has also received help in the past few years after being made homeless. “I was very depressed and frequently taking drugs and alcohol. I was not in a good place.” With the help of his promise worker he has been able to resolve his housing situation, apply for benefits and get help from doctors. He says without the support he could have ended up dead. “It helped me get back on my feet when I thought I had nobody.”

Creating entrepreneurs

As well as introducing promise workers, The Winch has also extended what it offers at both ends of the age scale. It is now providing more services for younger children and has set up a project called The Company which aims to help young people aged 18 to 25 get their own business up-and-running.

Those taking part – about 10 people are accepted on to the scheme at a time – are provided with training and mentoring for three months and then get the opportunity to apply for funding to get their business off the ground. This can pay for anything from stock and equipment to design costs. As they embark on their new ventures ongoing support is provided.

“The aim is to give them the support to start realising their dreams,” says Mr Perkins. “About half of people who go through it opt against starting their own business, but that is not a failure. They have picked up valuable skills that they can then take into the jobs market.”

The work of The Winch, which receives funding from Camden Council as well as relying on fundraising, income generation and grants, has also been praised in an evaluation carried out by James Baddeley Consulting. Researchers talked to partners, parents and young people who had been helped and concluded the work was “highly-effective, ambitious and focused”. Economist and author Michael Green agrees. He says: “The Winch is doing what every organisation in this sector should be doing – being bold and taking risks.”

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Lambeth: co-producing services with young people

- A cooperative involving young people has taken over the running of 75 different youth services in Lambeth.
- They run an online magazine, arts and music groups and organise sports, helping to develop their skills and ensuring young people are having a say in local services.
- More than 7,000 people are involved – a third of whom are under the age of 19.

The approach: co-production

Engaging with young people is always a challenge for local government. But in the south London borough of Lambeth ‘co-production’ of local services has been embraced through the Young Lambeth Coop (YLC).

YLC is a membership organisation that runs a range of targeted youth and play services for five to 19-year-olds, and up to 25 for young people with special educational needs and disabilities. The group was created in 2014 and given an annual commissioning budget of over £800,000 – in the belief it would help get young people more involved and open the door to alternative avenues of funding at a time when council budgets are being cut. Its members help decide how the budget is spent with 55 different organisations currently contracted to provide 75 services.

The support model: getting young people to run services

Funded activities include an online magazine produced by young people, arts and music groups, sports events and employability services including homework support, IT skills training and career advice. YLC also manages contracts with a network of adventure playgrounds and youth clubs,

offering further services within the community.

But what really makes the work of YLC stand out is how it has got young people involved. The group now has over 7,000 members – 35 per cent of whom are under 19.

These include more than 300 “gold” members. They are instrumental in YLC’s work.

They work as champions (promoting local services to peers) young commissioners (deciding which contracts to award) and young assessors (evaluating the funded services). There are also 12 young people on the steering group and one on the board. Meanwhile, another 1,200 people have become ‘silver’ members, getting involved in face-to-face consultations, e-surveys, media opportunities and events.

Increasing aspirations

YLC managing director Richard Parkes says: “What we have found is that given the opportunity young people really embrace the responsibility. And, of course, that helps them develop – it increases aspirations, educational attainment and confidence. It helps them develop emotional resilience, self-esteem and employability. Since we have started 1,500 have been supported in this way.”

Proof of this can also be seen from the impact it has had on individuals. Sam is one of the young people who has got involved in commissioning. He says: “Learning to become a young commissioner made me realise that it doesn’t matter where I’m from. My opinions are important.” Alisha agrees, saying getting involved has really helped her too. “Before I was a young assessor I didn’t really feel confident meeting different people. But I don’t feel shy anymore. It has broadened my horizons.”

“The change is wonderful to see,” says Mr Parkes. “But, of course, the work we do also involves helping those who are feeling disenfranchised and are perhaps on the edge of the criminal justice system, getting into gangs, caught up in drugs and struggling with mental health problems and so on. There has been a real move towards helping young people with these since we started.

“The idea is to be proactive and intervene early. We fund outreach youth workers who visit estates and work with young people in the services we provide. They know them and keep an eye out for early signs of potential problems. If we can get them engaged and challenge them we can maybe stop problems happening.”

Richard Parkes, YLC

The experience of Zane (not his real name) demonstrates this. He had a violent father and was struggling with emotional issues when he started going to one of the youth clubs and became close to Ann, one of the youth workers. They started to talk about his life and set goals for the future. Zane got career advice, conflict-resolution help and leadership training. Ann encouraged him to speak to his mum and made sure he made appointments by texting him reminders. Zane says the support has made all the difference. “I’ve got a great network around me and I feel like I can cope with any setbacks that come by way. I think I’ve got a great future ahead of me. I’m really pleased I grew up in Lambeth.”

“I’ve got a great future ahead of me”

YLC can also point to the success it had taking on a range of activities following the closure of the Kids Company. It was invited by the Cabinet Office to run services including outreach work with young people at risk of crime, after school activities and a counselling service. Targets were set and exceeded – by over 200 per cent.

What’s next?

But YLC sees this as just the start. By 2020 it is aiming to have 20,000 members and has been set the challenge of becoming financially self-sustainable. To date it has secured over £160,000 of further funding and nearly £50,000 in pro-bono support, including marketing and communications services. And it is now awaiting decisions on more than £1 million of grant applications.

Councillor Jane Pickard, Lambeth’s cabinet member for families and young people, says she is delighted with how YLC is working out. “Since it has started there has been a noticeable increase in the involvement of young people in the shaping of services. This is great for democracy and also of enormous help to those young people who get involved, boosting their confidence and giving them valuable insights into policy-making.”

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Romsey Mill: 40 years of helping the young

- Romsey Mill builds relationships with disadvantaged young people by setting up community based youth activities such as football and bike projects.
- The Christian charity also supports children struggling with school through alternative education programmes.
- Teenage parents are referred to the charity for support before and after childbirth.

Romsey Mill has been working with disadvantaged young people and their families in and around Cambridge for nearly 40 years.

The Christian charity is commissioned by schools and both the city council and county council to run a variety of services in the city and the south of the county, although it also relies on other funding streams including donations, fundraising and grants. It has a team of 10 youth workers who support young people aged 10 to 21 who need extra support to overcome challenges in their lives.

Many of the young people are exposed to difficult home situations and may be on the radar of social services or struggle with mental health issues including self-harm, anxiety and depression. Others have issues with drugs and alcohol, have been involved in the criminal justice system or are at risk of exclusion from school.

The support model

Getting Out and About

Community based youth work often involves members of the team going out into the community to build relationships with young people.

Romsey Mill children's and youth work programme manager James Bennett says: "We literally get out and about. We go to where the young people are hanging out – on estates, in parks – and talk to them about what they want. It may be some organised football, a youth club or skating and biking. We set up community based groups and get them involved. We really react to what young people say they want to do. Once a group is up and running we may get referrals in from schools or social workers and we do our best to support the young people."

A perfect example of this is a bikes project Romsey Mill ran in partnership with Cambridgeshire police at the turn of the year. Bikes that were found abandoned and unclaimed in Cambridge were handed over to Romsey Mill and were then renovated by the youth workers and young people. Once finished, they were sold with the proceeds reinvested in the charity.

Ollie O'Meakin, the youth development worker who ran the project, says the work helped build the confidence and aid the personal development of those that took part. "It worked really well. There are a number of young people demonstrating real skills in maintenance and restoration," he says.

Alternative education

Alongside these groups, the youth team runs alternative education. This includes Step-Up, a weekly personal and social development course that involves teamwork, adventure activities, life skills and careers advice. It normally takes two years to complete. Accredited arts, home cooking and sports leadership courses are also offered as well as English and Maths support.

“Young people are usually referred by schools into this aspect of our work,” says Mr Bennett. “For some young people, mainstream education and formal learning does not work, but we believe it is important to engage those young people in activities that they can get some kind of qualification in so they can use it to develop and pursue opportunities that interest them.”

One of those who has been helped is David. He was referred to Romsey Mill by the youth offending service after his mother died. He was 10 years old. As he got older he completed a variety of courses and gained his level one qualification in sports leadership and uniformed services. “It was better than school,” David says. “It was wicked to be honest. The attitude of the course leaders is key. They’re so respectful and if you show respect you get it back.”

But he is not the only one who has been helped. Last year Romsey Mill’s youth workers worked with over 700 young people, running 11 youth groups, five football groups, a girls group and two regular studio sessions. Some 99 per cent expressed an improvement in confidence and 91 per cent improved self-esteem. Of those that took part in alternative education, half got some kind of accreditation and one in five gained work experience.

Helping with autism and teenage pregnancy

Meanwhile, the charity runs a programme for nine to 18-year-olds with autism. Called Aspire, it involves weekly youth clubs during which young people with the condition who are at mainstream schools get a chance to socialise and relax with other people with autism.

Romsey Mill also has responsibility for coordinating support for teenage parents within Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire as well as running two children’s centres and pre-school provision.

Referrals into the Young Parent Programme are made by midwives and the young people are provided with ante and postnatal support. It starts with home visits, which are followed by an eight-week antenatal course and a bumps and babies group after birth. Support is provided to help the new mothers carry on their studies or get training to help them. There is also a dedicated fathers programme.

Laura Ficarra is one of the young women who has been helped.

“The great thing is that they are always there for you. You can call in or pick up the phone and they will give you advice or help you with what you need. I don’t know where I would be without the support.”

Laura

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Gateshead: helping girls and young women

- The Young Women's Outreach Project works with 150 disadvantaged girls and young women each year.
- Its aim is to keep them in education and training – and achieves that in nine in 10 cases.
- The project runs a range of bespoke programmes, including one for girls just starting secondary school and one for teenage parents.

Gateshead's Young Women's Outreach Project has been running since the early 1990s. It was originally set up as part of the area's drive to combat teenage pregnancy, but over the years has ended up focusing its attention on helping all disadvantaged young women turn their lives around.

Its team of 11 workers support young women aged 11 to 19. They are referred in for a variety of reasons – teenage pregnancy, mental illness, sexual abuse or, simply, because they are struggling at school. The referrals – about 150 a year – come from a range of different sources, including family services and social care to teachers and midwives.

Chief executive Joanne Jopling says: "Once we receive a referral we visit the young woman to assess needs and to ensure we are the right people to support the young woman. We are often involved with safeguarding and we ensure our role is about supporting that young woman through the process with open and an honest approach no matter how difficult.

The project, which used to receive council funding but now relies on Lottery money, grants and donations, also runs a variety of alternative education programmes. About two-thirds of those they help take part in these.

"We offer one-to-one support and hand-hold young women to other services. That can be NHS services or benefits help. We find a lot of young people are not getting the benefits they are entitled to. They get turned away and don't have the confidence to question their rights."

Joanne Jopling, Young Women's Outreach Project

The support model – a focus on personal and social development

"The focus is mainly on personal and social development," says Ms Jopling. "Once in the groups many young women say they feel less alone, more listened to and better supported in the issue that is affecting their lives at the time. They develop positive relationships, gain support from other young women and learn coping mechanisms and strategies. We support these young women until they feel that they are ready to take the next steps in life."

The support offered varies depending on the age of the girls. Pebbles is aimed at 12 and 13-year-old girls who are struggling with the transition to secondary schools. Girls referred on to the programme tend to have erratic school attendance and low self-esteem. The help normally involves one day a week group work for two to three months. The emphasis is on confidence building and teamwork with lots of opportunity for exploring the issues that cause poor attendance and low self-esteem.

For older girls, aged 15 and 16, there is Young Stepping Stones, which is aimed at those who are completely out of the mainstream schools system with no plans to return. It normally involves one day a week with the project with the aim to get them involved with other opportunities, including training and volunteering. There is a supportive education programme for school-aged mothers which gives them support to stay in school, while post-16 there is a learning programme that lasts close to a year and offers participants support in deciding their next steps.

Getting results

The support has certainly proved effective. Nine in 10 girls the project works with manage to stay in education or training. Tara is a perfect illustration of this. She started attending programmes at the project during her early years of secondary school. She had poor school attendance and was living in a troubled family with a history of domestic violence and mental health issues. She says she had low self-esteem and confidence issues. But attending classes at the project, she gained qualifications in food safety, community first aid, adult literacy and numeracy. She is now at a local sixth form college and is pursuing a career in hairdressing and beauty.

But even those who do not stay in education benefit hugely from the support. Rachel was referred to the project when she became pregnant at the age of 15. She had been sexually abused by her father during her childhood. She was shy, anxious and depressed, but with the support she was given she has managed to turn her life around. She now works as a volunteer for the project.

“I am now in a new relationship with someone who treats me right and carrying on being a good mam to my daughter and volunteering at the young woman’s project learning something different every time I come. The staff are my role models and I hope to be as good a youth worker as they all are.”

Rachel

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Nottingham: guaranteeing young people a job

- Partnership working in Nottingham has enabled the council to guarantee every 18 to 25-year-old a job, training or education.
- Young people are provided with a variety of support, particularly those struggling to find opportunities.
- Over 5,000 people have been helped into employment in the past year with the city seeing low rates of NEETs.

Nottingham City Council provides so much support to young people looking for work that it is able to pledge a guarantee of a “job, training or further education place for every 18 to 25-year-old”. The help is provided under the Nottingham Jobs banner, a partnership between the council, Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and a local social enterprise called Futures Advice, Skills and Employment. The latter underpins the whole programme by being at the forefront of providing jobs and skills advice and training.

The support model – building skills, creating opportunities

The programme includes a variety of strands. Nottingham Works is a £6.9 million European Social Fund-backed initiative which supports young people aged 16 to 29 who are at risk of social exclusion because they have little or no prospect of getting a job. It includes a package of intensive careers support, traineeships and grants to encourage employers to create vacancies for those who might otherwise struggle to get into work.

Under this project there are different schemes including Step Into Work, which has six centres across Nottingham where people can access skills training, advice and guidance, work-related qualifications, support with job searching, work experience and voluntary work. There is also a traineeship programme where young people can receive a weekly allowance to participate in a pre-traineeship programme to ensure they are able to commit to and succeed on a full programme.

Nottingham Jobs Fund Plus is designed to support employers to create year-long jobs for people aged 18 to 24 who are considered to be at risk or involved in gang activity, ex-offenders or those who have been unemployed for at least 26 weeks.

This year the work is being extended even further. A team from Futures Advice, Skills and Employment will start carrying out visits to the homes of young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEETs) to have doorstep conversations about the opportunities available in the city.

Changing Lives

One of those to have benefited from Nottingham Jobs support is Ryan, 24, from Bulwell, who found work at a local building firm. “I was unemployed with a baby to provide for. My employment advisor helped me get an interview for a construction role at R&J Projects and I had an interview the next day. The people I met at Nottingham Jobs were very friendly and helpful and gave me all the support I needed.”

Meanwhile, the council runs an apprenticeship programme. Fifty 12-month placements have been created this year across all areas of the council, including business administration, highways and HGV mechanics.

“When I left school I decided to join the army, but my mum suggested looking at apprenticeships in the meantime. I went to see Nottingham Jobs advisers and they matched me up with an apprenticeship at the council. I had my interview and found out what kind of things I’d be working on. I love my job – I am always learning new skills.”

Leon, 20, apprentice web support officer, Bilborough

Getting results

But he is just one of many people who have been helped. Nearly 5,000 people have been helped to find jobs in the past year, including over 900 people who have started apprenticeships and over 800 unemployed people who are now in work. Nottingham is also ranked first out of the eight English core cities for the percentage of 16 to 17-year-olds who are NEETs. Of the 2,728 16-year-olds who completed school year 11 last summer just 77 – less than 3 per cent – are NEETs. All in all, it means unemployment has fallen by 6 per cent in the past year.

Helping the young flourish

Councillor Sam Webster, the portfolio holder for education, employment and skills, says the aim is to give all young people the “best life chance to flourish”. “We recognise that many young people, especially those not in education, employment or training, face significant challenges finding suitable and rewarding opportunities.”

But he also says the success of the programme is down to the many partners and businesses – there are over 30 involved – who have played a role. With the help of local provider DBC Training, taster days and work trials for NEETs are arranged in the building, IT, hospitality and beauty industries, opportunities which has been made possible through their engagement with the apprenticeship programme. Meanwhile, Sustrans has helped provide travel advice and financial support to get people to jobs and consultants NBV has provided help to those looking to set up their own business.

Councillor Webster adds: “As funding for council services is cut back it’s important for the council to work with other organisations based in the city to offer residents access to the services which will help them overcome barriers and achieve their full potential.”

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Young Foundation: reducing inequalities

- The Young Foundation is a research and action based institute focused on tackling inequalities.
- Through its youth and education workstream it works to reduce the inequalities faced by young people, working alongside governments, schools, universities, funders, charities, social enterprises and businesses.
- The Young Academy is its flagship programme tackling inequalities in education for young people from early years through to employment.
- Schemes include helping improve resilience, improving mental wellbeing and support young people in their career development.
- The institute helped set up a scheme called UpRising, which is aimed at opening the 'path to power' for disadvantaged young people.

The UK is one of the most unequal countries in the world. The richest 10 per cent of people own about half the wealth in the country with the worlds of politics and business dominated by those from private school. The result is that young people from less privileged backgrounds struggle to make an impact.

The approach: a focus on inequalities

The Young Foundation works with local authorities – as well as national government, charities and health commissioners – to address just that. Founded in the 1950s as The Institute for Community Studies, over the years it has been involved in the creation of several well-known organisations including Which? and the Open University.

Today its work is focused on helping local communities break down the barriers that cause inequality. It does this by working across a number of areas, including place and community health and wellbeing and youth and education.

“Inequality undermines the economy and corrodes our wellbeing, leaving its mark on communities, relationships, aspirations and self-worth. It inhibits the life chances of young people and by working together we can break that down”.

Nat Defriend, Young foundation

Working with councils

Councils are often key partners. For example, the institute has been commissioned by Newham Council in London to run Bounce Back, a programme designed to improve the resilience of secondary school-age children. Delivered as a short course for school children with challenging behaviour or at risk of developing mental health issues, the programme addresses 'basics, belonging, learning, coping and core self' to explore what it means to be resilient and encourages pupils to plan and reflect on resilience 'moves' over a couple of months.

It has also worked with Leeds City Council and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation on Amplify Leeds, a bid to create a social movement to challenge inequalities from the bottom up. The project has involved a public listening exercise and support for local people to develop innovative answers to inequalities.

Nat Defriend, director of place and communities at the Young Foundation, says: “There are lots of ways we work with local authorities. I suppose our main function is to research and support local communities to develop insight and ways of working to combat inequality. I think what we have had particular success with is developing ideas, incubating them and then allowing them to flourish.”

Educational inequalities

The Young Foundation runs its own schemes too. These include the Young Academy, which supports early-stage ventures working to improve the educational outcomes for disadvantaged young people. There is up to £150,000 of funding available to get social ventures off the ground.

Realising potential: tomorrow's leaders

In 2008, the Young Foundation launched UpRising, a UK-wide youth leadership development programme aimed at opening pathways to power for talented young people from diverse and under-represented backgrounds.

The programme spent three years under the control of the Young Foundation before being set up as a separate organisation.

The programme responds to research which shows that the people who lead our institutions do not always reflect the population of UK today. The majority of those with power often come from a narrow range of backgrounds.

The programme seeks to identify and inspire young talent from across the country to be tomorrow's leaders, so that communities can have leaders who truly reflect and represent the communities they serve.

There are several different strands to programme, which is aimed at 16 to 25-year-olds. The flagship programme is a nine-month leadership programme providing ‘behind the scenes’ training sessions with some of the UK's most senior leaders across the political, private, public and not-for-profit sectors. Each participant is individually matched with a coach and a mentor who supports them on a one-to-one basis throughout their time on the programme. They also work with other ‘UpRisers’ to design and deliver a social action campaign on a local issue they are passionate about. There is also an alumni network to provide ongoing support to graduates as they proceed in their careers.

Programmes are run in London, Bedford, Luton, Cardiff, Birmingham, Stoke-on-Trent, Manchester and Liverpool and help over 2,000 young people each year. The programme receives Lottery funding and is supported in varying degrees by the local authorities in each area.

Researchers at the Demos think-tank have evaluated the work, following the progress of 133 people who have taken part. The report, published last summer, concluded it had significantly “improved the leadership, networking and advocacy skills” of young people. Two-thirds reported they had gained employment from it. One of those interviewed summed up the impact: “It's great at creating the environment that people from more well-off backgrounds have, for people from less well-off backgrounds.”

Ian Wybron, who led the research, says he was impressed with what he found. “Programmes such as this have the potential to rapidly improve young people's life chances, unravelling years with the odds stacked against them.”

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Surrey: keeping children out of the criminal justice system

- In Surrey youngsters who commit crimes are offered an alternative to prosecution – restorative justice.
- They meet their victims and complete work in the community, learning new skills in the process.
- The scheme has helped reduce reoffending rates by 18 per cent.

The support model – restorative justice

Surrey's Youth Support Service uses an innovative scheme called the Youth Restorative Intervention to help troubled young people. The programme is targeted at those aged 10 to 18 who have committed a crime. Instead of being prosecuted or given a caution for crimes such as theft or intimidation, the service works with the police and victim to see if restorative justice is a better option.

Through the scheme, the young person meets with the victim and then works with local organisations to put something back into the community while at the same time learning new skills. It has been running for six years and about 800 young people a year go through it.

Making amends for their crimes

A hundred local organisations are involved, offering a variety of work placements. These include charities, a horse riding stables that works with disabled children, the local highways contractor and a carpentry workshop. Those who have taken part in the latter have then used these skills to make activity equipment for the Ashford and St Peter's Hospital Trust to improve dexterity for patients who have had a stroke or suffer

from dementia.

They have also made handcrafted wooden memory boxes for parents whose babies have died. Meanwhile, at Brooklands Museum in Weybridge the skills have been put to use in helping create exhibits.

It certainly seems to be working. An evaluation has shown the scheme reduces reoffending rates by 18 per cent. Ben Byrne, who runs the youth support service, says: "In Surrey we believe children who get into trouble should be treated as children first and foremost, because of that we have developed this intervention which enables young people to make amends for the trouble they have got into, repair harm to victims and become constructive participants in their communities.

"The first step is to work with the victim and young person. Often the victim may want an apology or explanation of why they were targeted. We then look at what is appropriate. It is working really well. Our evaluation shows for every £1 spent on restorative justice, we save £3.40."

Ben Byrne, Surrey Youth Support Service

The scheme has also been praised by Lord McNally, the chair of the Youth Justice Board. He visited the project last year and said he was "delighted" with the way it was working. "Surrey's innovative approach to youth offending is clearly helping to divert young people away from crime."

A multi-agency youth service

But the restorative justice scheme is just one element of what is done by the service and the county as a whole. The Youth Support Service is a multi-agency partnership between Surrey County Council, Surrey Police, the local probation service, the NHS and Catch 22, the county's substance misuse service. It sits within the services for young people and works across the whole of Surrey with a team in each of the 11 districts. The staff employed have been drawn from a variety of different teams, including Connexions, youth justice work and youth development work, who were pooled together five years ago in the face of local government cuts.

Many of the teams are based at local youth centres and focus on helping vulnerable young people to participate in education, training and employment, reduce offending and antisocial behaviour, support homeless people and deal with other issues such as alcohol and drug misuse.

The staff work with partners including health professionals, schools, colleges, using a case management approach to support vulnerable young people. Once a young person is identified or referred to the youth support service they will assess them and develop an action plan.

Youth support workers provide one-to-one support to their clients visiting them at community locations and in their own home to help them with everything from substance misuse and mental health problems to housing and family issues. It also runs a community skills programme, which incorporates schemes such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award and the local work placement scheme called Ready for Work. Over 2,000 young people are helped by the service every year.

Creating job opportunities

Surrey County Council also coordinates a range of other help for young people. It launched an apprenticeship scheme in 2011, encouraging its contractors and local firms to follow the lead of the council in creating apprenticeship places. Opportunities have been created in accounting, banking, horticulture and IT with the number of jobs created passing the 2,000 mark last summer.

An online career information system and a time-banking scheme whereby young people receive mentoring, advice and tuition from retired people and then give back their time by providing care have been set up as well. The initiatives seem to have had an impact. There has been a 60 per cent reduction in the number of NEETs over the past four years with Surrey now having one of the lowest rates in the country.

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- St Basil's provides support to young people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.
- The charity's network of supported accommodation, emergency centres and skills and training services help 5,000 young people each year.
- It is also training staff from other organisations in how to help homeless young people.

St Basil's works with young people aged 16 to 25 who are homeless or at risk of homelessness across the West Midlands, helping over 5,000 each year. Its services include everything from supported and emergency accommodation to skills training.

It provides help in Birmingham, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall, Warwickshire, Worcestershire and Coventry with funding provided from councils, central government and via fundraising.

St Basil's chief executive Jean Templeton says the aim is to "break the cycle of homelessness". "These young people are extremely vulnerable. Most have been made homeless because of family conflict or breakdown. That can involve anything from domestic violence and child sexual exploitation to simply falling out with parents. We also get young people who have been in care or involved in the criminal justice system. The causes are complex and often require the help of multiple agencies."

The support model

co-ordinating efforts across agencies

The first step is to assess their needs and work out what support is required. Each person gets a support worker who liaises closely with anyone from GPs, mental health and children's services, to drug and alcohol support, police and probation staff.

The charity runs 30 supported accommodation schemes, which provide housing for up to a year to 1,200 people a year. There are also four short-stay emergency centres in Birmingham and three 'nightstop' schemes.

Those who are given support are then provided with access to a variety of skills training and courses. This can include anything from basic literacy and numeracy support through to sitting exams and gaining qualifications.

Promoting mental resilience

St Basil's has also developed its own programme with the help of Birmingham University to promote resilience called mental skills training for life (MST). The 10-week course uses similar techniques to those used by sports coaches to establish aspirations, set goals, develop problem-solving skills and utilise support networks. All this is aimed at building the mental resilience needed to cope with everyday life, such as job rejections.

Those who have taken part are full of praise. Lena (not her real name), who moved into supported accommodation when she was six months pregnant.

"The support I've received helped me to look after myself and my daughter, budget my money, cook healthy meals and get myself set up for the future."

Lena

She is typical of the people who get help in this way. The majority of young people St Basil's supports are NEETs, but following the help they receive, three quarters end up back in education, training or employment.

There is also a long-term course for the hardest-to-reach individuals called Rewriting Futures, part of the national programme Fair Chance. It's aimed at the over 18s who have particularly complex and challenging behaviour. Mentors and coaches work one-to-one with participants.

Taking it step by step

Once the young person is ready, St Basil's then looks to support them in their next step. That can include Home2Home, where people provide a spare room to young people to help the transition away from supported accommodation.

St Basil's also provides support to help its clients find employment. There is an apprenticeships scheme that is run with Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust. The trust provides 32 apprenticeship places in posts such as HR, catering, administration and health care assistants and St Basil's provides subsidised accommodation which enables the young apprentices to live and work benefit free.

Providing training in psychology

The charity also has a close working relationship with a number of other local employers, who offer job opportunities to the young people St Basil's works with. Many of these are businesses that have signed up to Birmingham's business charter for social responsibility. When jobs are offered, the St Basil's team then provide ongoing support, including regular catch-ups.

"We make sure we help both the young person and employer," says Ms Templeton. "Things can start well, but it does not mean the young person is not going to struggle at points. We've had cases where young people have become homeless again, but by being there we have managed to help them keep their job and get back on track."

This help includes providing psychological training and reflective practice. St Basil's invested in becoming a Psychologically Informed Environment in 2011 – an approach which supports people to provide compassionate and therapeutic-like support to young people with complex needs, including empathic listening, how to ask open questions and motivational interviewing techniques.

This is training St Basil's has provided to all staff since then and is now delivering to hundreds of staff from across 20 different organisations.

Preventing homelessness

Another strand of St Basil's work involves preventing homelessness. The Schools Training and Mentoring Project (Stamp) raises awareness among school pupils about what causes homelessness and where to go for early help. Young people whom St Basil's have helped visit local secondary schools as part of the programme to tell their stories, along with staff members. Peer mentoring is also offered to any student in need of extra support.

St Basil's also runs youth hubs and a phone line in some areas for young people to reach out to and a family mediation service for parents and young people.

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Resources

Children and young people (Government policy pages)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/topics/children-and-young-people>

Raising the participation age: Guidance for local authorities (Department for Education)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/participation-of-young-people-education-employment-and-training>

Place-based approaches for children and young people (Evidence Digest, 2016)

http://project-oracle.com/uploads/files/Evidence_Digest_02_Place-based_approaches.pdf

House of Commons Library briefing on NEETs (2016)

<http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN06705>

House of Commons Library briefing on apprenticeships (2016)

<http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN03052>

Recession: The impact on young people and social mobility (research programme)

<https://www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/case-studies/recession-the-impact-on-young-people-and-social-mobility>

State of nation report on social mobility (Social Mobility Commission, 2016)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/state-of-the-nation-report-on-social-mobility-in-great-britain>

Young people at risk: Challenges and policy options for the UK (Social Inclusion Monitor Europe, 2016)

<https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/en/publications/publication/did/sim-europe-policy-brief-201601-young-people-at-risk-challenges-and-policy-options-for-the-uk/>

Improving Young People's Health and Wellbeing (Public Health England and Association of Young People's Health 2015)

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/399391/20150128_YP_HW_Framework_FINAL_WP__3_.pdf

Key Data on Adolescence

(Association of Young People 2015)

www.youngpeopleshealth.org.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2015/09/KeyData2015.pdf



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REF 15.3