

**Breaking
the cycle**
**Believe in
children**



Barnardo's





Foreword from Martin Narey



Last year Barnardo's launched our Believe campaign, designed to demonstrate our belief in children – their abilities, their aspirations and the need to support them to grow into healthy, happy adults.

Some might say that there are children who are difficult to believe in – those who are troublesome and engage in antisocial and criminal behaviour and who can make life difficult for their neighbourhoods and communities. But I would argue that it is these children who are most in need of our support – to prevent them becoming troublesome and to divert them from a path which could lead to increasing criminal behaviour.

The evidence shows that children who are most at risk of criminality and antisocial behaviour are also those who are the most disadvantaged – they come from the poorest families and communities, have the poorest

educational experiences and are more likely to suffer from poor health, including mental health.

Over the last decade we have seen an increasingly punitive approach to children in trouble and the demonisation of children, to a point where they are made to feel unwelcome in public spaces and where we have become fearful of them on our streets.

Of course there are a small number of children who do commit serious offences and they have to be dealt with by a robust criminal justice system. But the majority of children who start down the path of bad behaviour can be helped to change direction.

We hope that the stories in this report will demonstrate how Barnardo's work can reach out to these hard-to-reach children and young people and give them the chance to turn their lives around.

Martin Narey
Chief Executive, Barnardo's

Introduction

Most children and young people are not troublesome – they attend school, take part in activities and a significant number are volunteers. The evidence supports this: half of all 16 to 19-year-olds help informally in their communities and a third of them are formal volunteers.¹ Similarly, nine out of 10 16-year-olds are in some form of further learning² and 275,000 young people take part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme.³ But there is still a perception that children, and young people in particular, are responsible for a significant amount of antisocial behaviour and crime. *The British Crime Survey* noted that people felt that young people committed up to half of all crime and young people themselves report that they feel the media consistently portrays them as antisocial.⁴

Yet it is also true that there are children and young people who are at great risk of getting involved in criminal and antisocial behaviour. It is those same children who are at risk of other

poor outcomes – exclusion from school, substance misuse, teenage pregnancy and lack of training or employment opportunities. These are the children, young people and families that Barnardo's supports.

This report tells the stories of seven of these children and young people who could so easily have ended up as part of the prison population statistics or as a headline in their local paper.

It will show how the services we provide can prevent children and young people from becoming troublesome or from heading further down the road of antisocial or criminal behaviour. We demonstrate how Barnardo's work to support them and their families can break the cycle and have a positive impact on their lives and thereby benefit them, their communities and society as a whole. Finally, this report shows that we 'stick with' children, young people and families: there are no 'quick fixes' and helping them needs long-term investment and commitment.

Phil's story Getting on the right road

Phil is 17 years old and the youngest of eight brothers and sisters. At 10 he was regularly skipping school and was known to the local youth offending team before being permanently excluded from school at the age of 14. Phil was referred to the Barnardo's Wheels project in Stourbridge and has been a regular attendee since then. The Wheels project provides education and vocational training in motor mechanics and related subjects.

'I got kicked out of school when I was 14,' Phil says. 'I had an argument with a teacher. It wasn't the first time I had been in trouble, but that time I went too far. After that I was out of school for a year and got into trouble with the police. I think I was just bored and friends with troublemakers.'

'Now I'm mates with some of the people from here instead. Coming to Wheels keeps me out of trouble – they've really built my confidence up. I didn't really speak to people before, I was just really mouthy. The people here help you; if you're having a bad day, they take you into a room and speak to you and try and cheer you up.'



Phil has already passed his level 1 mechanics and is now studying for his level 2 and Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) awards.

'We work from 9am until 4pm – it's like a real, proper job. I was going to try and get a job after I got my level 1, but then I thought I should stay and get a few more qualifications behind me and then I'll have a better chance. I want to work in a garage – I can't wait to start.'

In addition to being trained as mechanics, boys attending the Wheels project are taught how to cook and manage money, plus other essential life skills.

'I'm really grateful to Barnardo's, because without them I don't know what I would be doing,' Phil says. 'They support me and have always got time for me.'

¹ Department for Communities and Local Government (2006) *2005 Citizenship Survey: Active Communities Topic Report*. Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), London.

² Department for Children, Schools and Families. *Participation in Education, Training and Employment by 16-18 year olds in England (2005 and 2006)*. Department for Education and Skills, London.

³ www.dofe.org/en/content/cms/About_Us/About_Us.aspx accessed 17 September 2008.

⁴ www.youthnet.org/content/1/c6/02/80/36/Respect%20report%20final.pdf accessed 24 October 2008.

Liz's story

Turning round a chaotic life

Seventeen-year-old Liz had a chaotic childhood. Her mum left the family when Liz was only a few months old, she was physically abused by her dad and taken into care. She didn't enjoy living in the children's home and was bullied by other residents. She often ran away.

Liz struggled with school, where again she often felt singled out. 'I was bullied at times,' Liz remembers, 'because I was in a children's home – that was an easy thing for them to pick on me about.' She felt that no one listened to her and became more and more angry and confused.

Eventually Liz was arrested after she hit a member of staff at the children's home. 'It made me feel bad,' she says. 'I was worried I was growing up like my dad... But I couldn't help it, I had all this anger inside me.'

Leaving care at just 16, Liz moved several times in a few months before getting supported accommodation. At the same time her worker referred her to the Barnardo's Lincs Training Service in Yorkshire and she has been a regular attendee since. 'I was really scared the first day

I went,' she reveals. 'I didn't know anyone and was the only girl, but everyone was so nice. They spent time talking to me, they're sympathetic and offer me support when I need it.'

Liz is looking forward to moving into her own flat soon. As well as helping her work towards her qualifications, the Lincs project is enabling Liz to gain the practical skills she will need for independent living.

Liz now feels very positive about the future. 'I want to join the navy and be a chef there. I can see where I'm going now, and I'm determined I will do that one day.'



Facts and figures

- There were 8,680 permanent and 363,270 fixed-term exclusions from school in 2006/7. Boys are four times more likely to be excluded than girls.⁵
- 50 per cent of children who are sentenced to custody for their offending behaviour will have been in care or had substantial social services involvement.
- Gaining a level 1 vocational qualification can increase the chances of employment for young men by four per cent, and this percentage rises for level 2 or 3 qualifications.⁶

The Barnardo's solution: Alternative education

Young people like Phil and Liz who are excluded from school or are in care are more likely to get into trouble. There is a clear and well researched link between school exclusion and the risk of becoming involved in offending behaviour. Children in care are over-represented in the criminal justice system.

Barnardo's knows that engaging young people in alternative education is effective while they are of school age and also enables them to gain skills and qualifications, which are of immense value in finding employment.

Barnardo's runs 14 services providing alternative education and training for young people aged 14 to 21 who have missed out on conventional schooling and education. They focus not only on helping young people to gain recognised vocational qualifications, but also on life skills, which are vital to gaining and holding down employment. We use £1,734,645 of our voluntary income to ensure that these services can continue to be available for those young people who have been failed by other systems. We want to make sure that Phil, Liz and others like them have a real chance in the world of work.

⁵ Department for Children, Schools and Families (2008). *Permanent and Fixed Period Exclusions from Schools in England 2006/7. CSF Statistical first release, 24 June 2008 and related data tables, July 2008*. Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), London.

⁶ McIntosh, S (2004) *The impact of vocational qualifications on the labour market outcomes of low achieving school leavers*. Discussion paper No. 621. Centre for Economic Performance, London School of Economics, London.

Danny's story

Sticking with it

Danny is 13, the youngest of four children and the only one in his family to get into trouble. He had started hanging about with a group of older teenagers and had come to the notice of the police on a number of occasions for antisocial behaviour. He also started misbehaving at school, which resulted in a permanent exclusion. Danny was referred to Barnardo's by the local youth offending team as they felt that our Family Group Meeting service in Wales could help him and his family.

The family group meetings have helped Danny and his family have some really

honest discussions about his behaviour and his parents' responses to it. One of the problems was that his parents found it difficult to set boundaries. Danny resisted their attempts to control his behaviour, using anger as a way of not facing up to things.

Danny is now getting help with managing his anger and has asked for more family group meetings. He is also now back in education. His project manager says: 'We might not have turned the corner yet, but with the support we can offer, we are optimistic he and his family will get there.'

Facts and figures

- A greater proportion of children attend family group conferences than attend child protection conferences.⁷
- There is a higher rate of attendance by fathers and father figures than at other statutory meetings such as child protection conferences.⁸
- In 2007/8 one Barnardo's family group conferencing service worked with 102 children and the service prevented 22 children going into care. The service also enabled 22 children to be taken off the Child Protection Register and helped 54 parents to develop the parenting skills to better manage their children's behaviour.

The Barnardo's solution: Family group conferencing

Changing entrenched patterns of behaviour in families and helping them work out better ways of behaving is a long-term task. Barnardo's family group conferencing services stick with families, providing expert facilitators to help families to talk honestly with each other and understand what makes them behave in certain ways. The facilitators also help them to make agreements with each other and stick to them. Research evidence indicates that children and families are more likely to engage with and respond to

family group conferences compared to other types of welfare meetings.

Sixteen projects run by Barnardo's offer family group conferencing services to parents, carers and families. We work with them to offer expert support until they are able to manage their own relationships and behaviour. We invest £447,324 a year in these services because we believe that helping families to talk to each other and find their own solutions to problems is a good way to help children thrive.



⁷ Judge et al (2000) *Family Group Conference attendance*.

⁸ *Ibid*.

Robert and Margey's story

Early intervention

Robert and Margey have six children aged from six months to 10 years, and Sammy, the oldest, has been diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). They were referred to Barnardo's Community Family Work service by the health visitor because of her concerns over the chaotic lifestyle in the family. The health visitor says: 'We were having to shout over the children... They were just running around, going wild. It was really hectic, lots of fighting and shouting.' There had also been numerous complaints from the neighbours about the children's behaviour.

Margey was unhappy when the project first sent someone to the family home. 'I didn't want anyone around,' she says. 'Because I thought, "Well, I had all my kids, I had them, [it was] my responsibility" – I just felt a bit embarrassed that someone should come round.'

But the family began to accept the help offered. The worker assisted them in setting proper boundaries for their children – helping them enforce house rules and making sure that good behaviour was recognised and



rewarded. Robert says: 'She came out with house rules and a set routine – they actually work a lot.'

Things have changed considerably in the household since this work began and this has had a real effect on the children. 'All the children seem much more happy in themselves,' Margey explains. 'There used to be lots of crying and whingeing, but we're not arguing now.'

The changes have also had a wider effect. Margey now feels more confident in taking the children out because they are better behaved, and the neighbours are much more positive. Both Margey and Robert feel more confident in handling their children, keeping to routines and setting boundaries.



Matthew's story

A better way

Matthew was aged 11 and heading towards almost certain involvement in criminality when he was referred to Barnardo's CHOSI project in Scotland. Matthew's mum was recovering from a drug addiction, which meant she struggled to provide good supervision for Matthew. He often disappeared until late at night, associating with much older boys and getting involved in very antisocial behaviour.

Both Matthew and his mum were initially reluctant to come to the project. At the time Matthew said: 'I don't want social workers or anybody else knowing my private family business'.

But the project drew him in by giving him the chance to meet and play with other children his own age. This led to Matthew agreeing to attend family sessions with his mum and his sister, looking at how they all got on together, or as his sister described it: 'time for us to do homework to get better'.

At the same time, Matthew's mum attended a 12-week parenting education programme, which helped her become much better at making Matthew do as she asked him. As a result of this combination of approaches, Matthew is getting on much better at school and his behaviour has improved. As he says: 'CHOSI has made me think about things'.

Facts and figures

- Seven out of 10 families receiving intensive support sustained the positive changes after the support finished and no significant further complaints about antisocial behaviour were received.
- In more than eight out of 10 families receiving intensive family support, complaints about antisocial behaviour either ceased or reduced.⁹

The Barnardo's solution: Supporting families

Being a good parent is an aspiration that most of us would identify with – and almost all the parents Barnardo's works with want to do a good job and want their children to be well behaved and grow into happy, healthy adults. But many of them struggle without support against the circumstances of their lives. Many have themselves not had good parenting and need help to learn how to set boundaries for their children and develop better relationships that enable them to deal with disruptive behaviour. When families are struggling, there is no one easy solution to the problems they experience. It needs a variety of approaches,

involving all the family, to make real changes.

Barnardo's knows that working with families is the key to helping children stay out of trouble. We have over 70 services across the UK providing this 'whole family' approach and providing parenting education and support. This work is at the heart of what we do to help the families who are struggling the most and we invest about £6 million a year in it. We believe it is well worth this to ensure that people like Margey, Robert and Matthew's mum can succeed in bringing up their children the way they want to.

⁹ Department of Communities and Local Government (2006) *Antisocial Behaviour Intensive Family Support Projects: An evaluation of six pioneering projects*. Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG), London.



Ms K and Steve's story

Compulsory support

Ms K has a 12-year-old son, Steve, who has a long history of educational and behavioural difficulties and antisocial behaviour. Steve has been the subject of two Acceptable Behaviour Contracts, but struggled to keep to the requirements. He is known to the youth offending team and they felt that Ms K would benefit from some help with managing his behaviour, so they referred her, on a voluntary basis, to the Barnardo's Liverpool Parenting Matters service. Ms K was suspicious of those she saw as authority. She did not take up the offer of voluntary support and her son ended up in court. At this point Ms K received a compulsory 12-month Parenting Order and had to work with Parenting Matters.

Despite this inauspicious introduction to Barnardo's, Ms K has engaged very well, and she frequently says how much she 'values the work Barnardo's does.' This is reinforced by other professionals – at a recent school meeting, one of the teachers reported that Ms K 'is really impressed with Barnardo's.'



As well as helping Ms K deal with her son's behaviour in a more effective way, Parenting Matters has identified the need for more specialist support and has been able to refer her to other agencies that can help – helping to allay her suspicions of 'authority'. Ms K has taken part in solution-focused therapy sessions and says that as a result of these, she is calmer and more confident in dealing with her son. This has impacted on his behaviour; he is staying at home more and planning to return to school this term.

Ms K still has a long way to go but is making steady and purposeful progress. She has always said that her ambition is to have 'my own version of a normal family' and now she finally feels that she is on the way to achieving this.

Sam's story

A real alternative

Sam's problems started at a young age. He reacted badly to the breakdown of his parents' marriage and had been excluded from school three times before he reached secondary age. At secondary school, he was very unhappy and started getting into serious trouble with the police.

After being charged with a number of offences, Sam was referred to Barnardo's New Directions project in Scotland. New Directions works with children who are in trouble and may be at risk of being locked up because of their offending.

'I really enjoyed my time at the project as they have helped

me very much,' says Sam. 'No matter how I was doing they were always there and never let me down. They really helped me turn my life away from crime.

'Since working with them I've steadily progressed and things now look good for me. It's been two years since my last charge... I leave school at the end of term and I have got a place at college to start building work, which I really like. I think if there are any young people out there who need help, then they should go for it before it's too late.

'I've been lucky to get the help and it was well worth it.'

Facts and figures

- It can cost as much as £185,700 to lock up a child for a year.
- Almost 90 per cent of children who are locked up for their offending will reoffend again within two years.
- In 2006/7, there were 1,014 parenting orders made for parents whose children were committing crimes – almost all parents made subject to an order completed the course.¹⁰

¹⁰ Youth Justice Board. *Youth Justice Annual Workload Data 2006/7*. Youth Justice Board, London.

The Barnardo's solution:

A second chance

Some children do commit serious offences and are dealt with by the formal criminal justice system, but Barnardo's believes that even these children deserve a chance to move away from a life of crime. We run 12 services which support young people who have committed offences and many more that work with parents who are on orders from the court.

These services are not an easy option: the families and young people have to attend and we

make them face up to what they have done. Young people have to make amends for their actions and must attend activities and education, which help them see another way forward. Parents have to attend the parenting education classes. We spend just under £1 million on these services. This may seem expensive, but it is considerably cheaper than locking children up and is much more effective in the long term in keeping children out of trouble.



Can you believe in troublesome children too?

Helping children and young people keep out of trouble requires a long-term investment, in terms of money and staff who will 'stick with them'.

Overcoming what is often years of disadvantage cannot be done overnight. But it is in all our interests to help these families. Children who commit crime and antisocial behaviour are more likely to continue if no one intervenes. This is damaging and expensive for communities, for taxpayers and, of course, for the children themselves.

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Published by Barnardo's
Tanners Lane
Barkingside, Ilford
Essex IG6 1QG

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Barnardo's Registered Charity
Nos. 216250 and SC037605

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