Tough love, not get tough
Responsive approaches to improving behaviour in schools.

Believe in children
Barnardo’s

By Jane Evans
Introduction and summary

Behaviour policy

As an organisation which works to improve outcomes for disadvantaged children, Barnardo’s shares and welcomes the Government’s vision to promote fairness, reduce child poverty and improve social mobility by intervening early into family and childhood difficulties. This vision is underpinned by an aspiration to narrow the gap between poor children and their better-off classmates in educational opportunity and outcomes.

While we welcome this vision and aspiration, we are concerned that the Government’s focus on strong disciplinary methods as set out in the Education Bill 2011 runs counter to this drive for fairness, and risks dealing with disciplinary problems too late.

Barnardo’s has called for changes to the Education Bill 2011 to revoke new and extended powers, as set out in clauses two and three of the Bill.

The increased powers proposed for teachers include:
- the right to search pupils for an extended list of belongings considered to be a threat to order
- extending the definition of an ‘offence’ to include behaviour of children below the age of criminal responsibility
- the right to search pupils of the opposite sex without any witnesses
- the right to use force to conduct such searches
- the right to erase data from pupils’ electronic equipment
- greater powers to issue detentions without notice.

We have asked for these clauses to be deleted from the Education Bill because we believe focusing on the symptoms of bad behaviour rather than on tackling the causes is counterproductive and will lead to greater disengagement from learning by the disadvantaged children we work with. Minor amendments will not alter this skewed perspective on discipline.

Barnardo’s view of this legislation is strongly informed by our work and practice with children, young people and their families. Many of our services work effectively with pupils who are vulnerable to disengagement from school or behaviour problems. This briefing builds on Barnardo’s research on school exclusions, which showed that behaviour difficulties frequently have their causes in distressing problems at home or unhelpful influences in the community. In this briefing we show how authoritative schools, which combine high expectations about behaviour and achievement with responding to their pupils’ needs, can succeed in maintaining good behaviour.

What works to improve behaviour in schools

This briefing shows that schools which succeed in engaging children and improving behaviour for the long term respond to their pupils’ needs by offering an authoritative approach to discipline which addresses the underlying causes of bad behaviour, which often lie in problems at home. Although providing support for pupils and their families requires initial investment, early intervention offers value for money by improving the long-term outcomes for those children most in need of support.

Section one reviews the evidence on effective approaches to improving behaviour and discipline in school, drawing on international research about authoritative discipline models in school which help children regulate their own

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3 Together with several other children’s charities: The Children’s Society (TCS), Action for Children (AFC), Children’s Rights’ Alliance for England (CRAB), British Youth Council (BUC), Ambitious about Autism, and The Runnymede Trust.
4 Education Bill 2011
5 Evans, J (2010) Not present and not correct: understanding and preventing school exclusion. Barnardo’s, Barkingside.
behaviour. It then draws on findings from Ofsted inspection data which shows the importance of effective care, guidance and support in schools.

Section two provides evidence about what works when addressing the underlying causes of poor behaviour, based on information about two innovative Barnardo’s services working with clusters of schools in the east of England.

The analysis that follows also shows examples of other early intervention projects that are successfully used by schools. Barnardo’s frequently works in partnership with other providers to ensure an integrated package of support for the child.

The concluding section draws together the evidence and analysis to make recommendations for the Government and Ofsted.
Section one: the evidence on effective approaches to improve behaviour and discipline in school

Authoritative and authoritarian parenting styles

Influential theories first developed by psychologist Diana Baumrind⁶ describe the parenting styles needed for ‘rearing competent children’. Education researchers have extended these theories to schools. Competent children can regulate their own behaviour without having to rely on external controls. They do well academically and socially; they are less likely to engage in substance misuse and anti-social behaviour.⁷

Using Baumrind’s theories, parenting specialists⁸ draw a distinction between authoritarian styles of discipline, which rely on inflexible rules, sometimes supported by forceful punishments; and authoritative discipline. This focuses on providing firm, fair and consistent boundaries through dialogue which takes account of the child’s understanding; it is this which develops the child’s ability to regulate their own behaviour.

Applying the principles to school discipline

These insights into childrearing can be extended to models of discipline in schools. Large scale, quantitative studies consistently find that authoritative schools have a range of improved outcomes compared to authoritarian schools.⁹ Gregory et al¹⁰ found that a ‘tough love’ combination of both structure and support that characterised authoritative schools resulted in less bullying and victimisation than in schools which simply adopted a ‘get tough’ or authoritarian approach.

The numbers of low-income or at-risk students had no effect on this finding – all students felt safer in authoritative schools. Gill et al¹¹ conclude that in order to improve student achievement ‘schools need to maintain high expectations for students within a warm environment that is responsive to their individual differences, rather than emphasize rigor at the expense of community’ (p407). In line with findings that children raised by authoritative parents regulate their own behaviour better, Gregory’s study shows behaviour in school is improved because ‘students who feel supported and respected at school are more accepting of structure’ (p492).

Dinham’s research into school leadership notes that an ‘authoritative teaching style, where high responsiveness is accompanied by high demandingness, proves the best model for enhancing student achievement and self-esteem’.¹² Negative outcomes result when authoritarian school leaders ‘focus on procedures rather than people’ (p35). The quality of relationships within the school is important, with the authoritative model having the best results for both pupils and staff.

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¹⁰ Gregory (2010) ibid
¹¹ Gill (2004) ibid
Pellerin’s study is particularly illuminating about disengagement. She found that many US schools were adopting a ‘zero tolerance’ approach to discipline, using hard-line punishments for low-level misdemeanours. However, she demonstrated that disengagement is actually worse in schools with authoritarian approaches to discipline. She suggests that ‘this [authoritarian approach] may be particularly problematic for adolescents. As part of their cognitive and social development, adolescents question the authority that constrains and trains them, and are likely to rebel unless they sense its legitimacy’. Baumrind found that adolescents are more likely to rebel if authority is imposed externally by authoritarian parents. Pellerin’s research confirms this is true for schools as well. She concludes that, under an authoritarian regime, ‘students who remain in school may have no choice but to obey, but more students may chose to leave’ (p300). These findings are reflected in Barnardo’s individual interviews with young people who had disengaged from school. They reported that harsh discipline, being shouted at by teachers, or being bullied, makes them disinclined to study or go to school. They prefer to work with trusted adults who offer consistent boundaries and positive attention.

14 Evans, J (2010) Not present and not correct: understanding and preventing school exclusions. Barnardo’s, Barkingside.
Ofsted: effective care, guidance and support

By making ‘effective care, guidance and support’ one of its measures for inspection, Ofsted placed value on an authoritative approach to school discipline characterised by fairness, consistency and firm, but well-understood boundaries together with a good range of effective, supportive measures. Our research into its statistics shows that the quality of care, guidance and support offered in school is one of the most important factors in explaining the differences in pupil behaviour between schools, accounting for up to a third of the difference in standards of behaviour between different schools. The implication is that improving the quality of care, guidance and support could significantly improve pupil behaviour, and thereby school exclusion rates, no matter how poor the area.

Now Ofsted is piloting a new inspection framework which will not include a judgement on how schools are delivering effective care, guidance and support. Based on our analysis of its inspection data, Barnardo’s encourages Ofsted to consider restoring this important judgement to its inspection criteria.

Effective care, guidance and support are especially important to children who have specific needs, whose support systems at home are poor, or who are generally more at risk. So the inspection of this aspect of schools’ provision included ‘the effectiveness of transition arrangements’ at crucial stages of children’s schooling. This is important, because many young people reported in Barnardo’s interviews that ‘it all went pear-shaped’ on transition to secondary school. This common observation is supported by the exclusion numbers which rise sharply at Key Stage 3, reflecting a range of difficulties experienced by young people at this stage of life, which can be compounded by difficulties in the home and by an inability to integrate successfully into secondary school. Ofsted also inspected the ‘effectiveness of care, guidance and support...for more vulnerable groups and individuals, including those exhibiting challenging behaviour [and] those that are persistently absent’. (2009, p35)

Early intervention and support for children at risk of exclusion or disengagement

Behaviour problems at school often have their roots in underlying problems at home or in the community. In line with Ofsted’s attention to care, guidance and support, good schools recognise that it is worthwhile tackling the causes of poor behaviour through early intervention. However, early intervention into complex problems in the home, which go on to affect children’s behaviour and engagement, is a time consuming and sometimes specialist task which schools may wish to commission from a range of other providers.

There are a large number of interventions which can be applied to alleviate difficulties which underlie poor behaviour at school. Several are listed in the table overleaf.

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17 Barnardo’s carried out regression analysis which investigated the factors explaining the differences in behaviour standards in schools as rated by Ofsted. The key finding was that the variation in Ofsted’s rating of ‘Care, Guidance and Support’ explained a third of the variation in the behaviour ratings. Behaviour ratings in turn explained a third of the variation in primary school exclusions rates between LAs.

18 Evans, J (2010) Not present and not correct: understanding and preventing school exclusions. Barnardo’s, Barkingside.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Early Intervention in schools</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Type of intervention</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Alternative curricula for classroom use</td>
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<td>Health support</td>
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<td>Learning support</td>
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<td>Mentoring schemes</td>
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<td>Peer mediation</td>
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Section two: evidence from Barnardo’s School Cluster family support services

Barnardo’s has developed a model of family support services in the east of England, working in partnership with groups, or clusters of schools to deliver the support that families need to cope with a range of problems at home.

Two family support services work with clusters of schools in Essex. These services are funded directly by the school clusters they work with for the benefit of all the children at the schools. Teachers also feel supported, knowing this service is available. At a time when local authority funding is being cut, and budgets and decision making are increasingly devolved to school level, this is an effective way for schools to ensure that they can call directly on the sort of provision they need to support a range of pupils, including vulnerable or disadvantaged children. The introduction of the Pupil Premium, paid directly to schools to target their poorest pupils, will mean schools will need to make decisions about how they will support those children.

Helping the whole family

A family of three children was referred the North East Thurrock parent support service for lateness and challenging behaviour from the middle child. Julie, the mother, felt like a failure as a parent. She had been unable to set boundaries and routines for her children because she didn’t want to repeat the negative experience of her own childhood. The children were not sleeping in their own beds and bedtime was chaotic. As a result Julie felt increasingly tired and stressed and less able to deal with behaviour issues in a calm manner, which added to her feelings of failure. The work with this family involved building up the mother’s self-esteem and confidence, introducing reward charts and proper bedtime and morning routines to tackle lack of sleep and lateness, and arranging literacy and numeracy classes for Julie at the family learning centre. Now relations in the family have improved and Julie is bonding well with the child she found most difficult. The children arrive at school on time and Julie is helping out there once a week – a clear sign of her increased confidence.
In its report on the exclusion of very young children from school, Ofsted observes that ‘there were high levels of involvement in terms of social care... particularly about child protection, domestic violence and family breakdown’. All the schools in Ofsted’s survey had children who had experienced trauma and ‘domestic violence was seen as a significant influence on children’s behaviour’. Domestic violence and safeguarding issues together accounted for about one third of the caseloads for both Barnardo’s services. While the most severe behavioural problems may be associated with children who are abused or neglected, workers explained that common experiences like family breakdown, housing problems, and bereavement also negatively affect children’s behaviour at school.

The Moulsham Schools cluster

The Moulsham Schools cluster in Chelmsford was set up five years ago. A single worker is a familiar face to 2,500 pupils, from infants to secondary, in four closely located schools. Working with referrals from school, parents, or pupils themselves, her case load consists of around 20 individual cases. She also works with groups to address specific issues, like anger management and friendship problems and runs transition groups for children who might find the move to secondary school difficult. Children who have known her since infant school appreciate the fact that she will continue to support them at secondary school.

Outcomes at Moulsham

Amongst a range of outcomes reported on, the family support service at Moulsham reported a 71 per cent improvement in attendance for the children where this had been an issue, 86 per cent improvement for mental health and a 75 per cent improvement in parenting. The worker also assisted with nine housing relocations in the past year and helped two people gain employment through the Royal Mail Group employment scheme.

The North East Thurrock Schools cluster

The North East Thurrock Schools cluster consists of 13 primary schools and three secondary schools. Two workers share a caseload of around 50 cases. Referrals are made through the school, but a home visit is usually made which helps the family to see the intervention as independent of the school. Issues ranged from parents who needed guidance about bedtime routines, to cases of domestic violence, mental health problems and substance misuse. A school might refer a child for persistent absence or lateness, but workers would often find much more serious issues were involved. Like the worker in Chelmsford, workers offered confidentiality to the families, but would also ask the family or child if they could liaise with the school as this is often beneficial to all parties.

Pyramid for Parents

The North East Thurrock Service supports parents through the Pyramid for Parents programme. This is a group-work programme, specially developed to enhance parents’ skills and understanding of how to support their child’s emotional well-being.

Pyramid for Parents aims to raise parents’ awareness of the role they play in promoting a positive self-image and resilience in their children. It provides parents with knowledge, skills and positive experiences to enhance their parent/child relationships and helps promote the creation of a supportive home environment for all. The groups also utilise the ethos of the pyramid clubs for children and raise parents’ own self-esteem and confidence. In the North East Thurrock cluster, children attend towards the end of each session and join their parents in an activity and refreshments.

Parents felt very positive about their engagement with Pyramid for Parents and 83 per cent completed the course; even those that were only able to attend for some of the sessions benefited. At the end of one course a parent explained:

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19 Ofsted (2009), The exclusion from school of children aged four to seven, report 090012, Ofsted, Manchester.
‘I have learned not to worry about the small things and to spend more quality time with my child’.

Teachers may not have the time or the skills to work in this way, but as Lupton notes, in schools in disadvantaged areas ‘supposed non-contact time was taken up with pupils’ emotional and behavioural problems’. This created a work environment that was ‘demanding on a personal level’. The extra support offered by a family support service benefits teachers as well as children; while children’s emotional problems are being dealt with by family support workers, teachers are free to get on with teaching and raising academic standards. Both these family support services add to the schools’ responsiveness to their pupils and reinforce their ability to maintain an authoritative approach to behaviour and discipline.

What does it cost to provide family support to a cluster of schools?

Children and their families are supported by both these services for around six months. The frequency of meetings varies according to the family’s individual requirements. On average it costs £930 to support a child referred to the Thurrock service and £850 at the Moulsham service. The cost effectiveness of these services is illustrated by comparing the costs of other services for children at risk of poor behaviour. For example, for the same cost of referring a child to either of these services, we could provide:

- 12 days in a pupil referral unit
- an hour a week of one-to-one catch up tuition for one academic year
- six weeks of social work support for the child and their family

Savings of early intervention

For the case of a child experiencing domestic violence, the Moulsham family Support Service used the Family Savings Calculator\(^{21}\), developed by the UK Government’s Department for Education (DfE), to estimate the potential costs avoided to other services per family per year. In the case of this boy and his family of five, the savings to other services could total as much as £274,637.53. The breakdown of possible savings can be seen in the chart below.\(^{22}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Single family results</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total family saving</td>
<td>£274,637.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family member 1</td>
<td>£64,167.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family member 2</td>
<td>£37,950.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family member 3</td>
<td>£116,617.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family member 4</td>
<td>-£1,613.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family member 5</td>
<td>£59,016.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime/anti-social behaviour</td>
<td>£4,730.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Drug and alcohol services</td>
<td>£0.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education/employment</td>
<td>£172,170.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health care</td>
<td>£1,062.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>£2,721.84</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social care</td>
<td>£9,948.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic violence</td>
<td>£69,945.59</td>
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<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commercial sector</td>
<td>£0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal justice</td>
<td>£3,519.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health service</td>
<td>£5,892.45</td>
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<tr>
<td>Local authority</td>
<td>£3,621.94</td>
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<tr>
<td>Police</td>
<td>£6,186.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Private sector</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social services</td>
<td>£8,337.11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Society</td>
<td>231,291.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Various</td>
<td>£0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth offending team</td>
<td>£230.00</td>
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</table>

The benefits of intervening early continue and represent a saving to society long into the future, when the young person is able to complete qualifications and find employment.


\(^{22}\) [http://www.c4eo.org.uk/costeffectiveness/files/negative_outcomes_costing_tool_template.xls](http://www.c4eo.org.uk/costeffectiveness/files/negative_outcomes_costing_tool_template.xls)

With thanks to Rachel Kitchen
Section three: conclusions and recommendations

Learning from the evidence about improving behavioural outcomes

The Coalition Government has set out clear commitments to improving behaviour and discipline in schools. Ministers know that no parent wants to see their child’s lessons disrupted by unruly classmates and that children, teachers and families are seriously troubled by bullying – especially modern forms of bullying using mobile phones and online social networks.

Barnardo’s understands the political desire to have a firm and robust message on school behaviour and discipline. But we are concerned that the policy which is emerging is actually counterproductive, being narrowly focused on dealing with extreme symptoms of poor behaviour, rather than addressing the underlying causes in a preventative way.

While the previous Government produced lengthy, detailed and frequently updated guidance on behaviour and discipline, the Coalition Government’s Education Bill 2011 sharpens the focus on to strengthening the powers of teachers to use force, detain and search pupils without their consent, confiscate belongings and erase data. Interim guidance has been abbreviated to all but the most basic, last resort measures to tackle bad behaviour in schools.

The Government’s current reduced guidance to schools on behaviour and discipline does not do justice to the evidence. By encouraging teachers to tackle the symptoms of bad behaviour and not address the causes, it risks increasing unfairness by tackling the problem from the wrong end. A model for supporting behaviour founded on the evidence-based principles about authoritative models of discipline in schools would be fairer for all pupils. It would especially promote fairness for disadvantaged pupils.

There is a balance to be struck between offering excessive guidance and numerous recommendations to school professionals and local authority experts, and sending the message that discipline is simply a matter of ‘nipping problems in the bud’ through a ‘get tough’ approach that deals with problems only when they have become untenable.

The evidence is straightforward but convincing:

- An authoritative ‘tough love’ approach to discipline, which combines high expectations of good behaviour with high levels of response to students’ needs, produces better outcomes for behaviour, safety, achievement and engagement than an authoritarian ‘get tough’ approach which uses punitive discipline, but offers little support for emerging problems.
- Intervening early, to get to the root of emotional and social problems that frequently underlie bad behaviour in schools. Barnardo’s is concerned that this reduced guidance and forthcoming legislation will lead schools into adopting an authoritarian approach to discipline which, the evidence shows, may not have the effect that parents, schools and pupils are looking for.
- Responsive schools provide support systems for their students which draw on the expertise of a range of specialist agencies; therefore enabling teachers to concentrate on raising aspirations and achievement for their pupils.
- Our examples have shown that this approach is cost-effective and that early intervention saves money in the

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23 National Archives: School discipline and pupil behaviour policies: guidance for schools.
24 Clauses two and three.
long run. In the context of finances being increasingly devolved to schools and the Pupil Premium, this will become an important consideration.

Since fairness is a priority for the Government, this evidence on maintaining good behaviour needs to be heeded, in order to ensure an integrated approach to narrowing the gap for those children most likely to fall behind their better off classmates.

Policy recommendations

**Government policy on behaviour and discipline**

Barnardo’s is concerned that the extended disciplinary powers proposed in the current Education Bill will be counter productive to an ethos of early intervention. Only the rarest incidents of dangerous behaviour should require the use of force or restraint, and searching pupils without a witness is not safe and is never acceptable.

We have provided evidence in this briefing to show that timely intervention in the causes of behaviour problems is cost effective and has better long-term outcomes than waiting until difficulties are expressed through extremes of bad behaviour.

**Recommendation 1:**
New powers being sought in legislation through the Education Bill 2011 to search, restrain and use force on pupils should be deleted from the face of the Bill as requested by Barnardo’s and several other children’s charities. These clauses also do not have the support of major teaching unions.

**Ofsted’s inspection remit**

Barnardo’s analysis of Ofsted inspection data indicates that one of the most important factors in managing pupil behaviour is the extent to which schools provide ‘effective care, guidance and support’. In revising Ofsted’s inspection framework, the Government and Ofsted must now ensure that the measure of ‘effective care, guidance and support’ is retained, in order to assess how far schools are responding to pupils’ needs and so supporting their emotional, social and behavioural development.

**Recommendation 2:**
Ofsted are currently piloting their revised inspection framework. We encourage Ofsted to consider retaining a judgement on ‘effective care, guidance and support’, since Barnardo’s analysis of inspection data shows that this measure accounts for significant differences in behaviour across schools.

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26 TCS, AFC, CRAE, BYC, Ambitious about Autism and the Runneymede Trust.
27 NUT Education Bill Second Reading – House of Lords: A briefing from the National Union Of Teachers (June 14th 2011); NASUWT evidence to the House of Commons Education Select Committee on behaviour and discipline.
References


Education Bill 2011

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Ofsted (2009), The exclusion from school of children aged four to seven report 090012, Manchester: Ofsted


Thanks to:

Services

The workers and managers at North East Thurrock Parent support and Moulsham Family Support and their school clusters for their time and willingness to provide information on how the services support children and their families.

Econometric analysis

Ritu Patwari for the econometric analyses. Luke Sibieta and David Hounsell for advising on and reviewing the econometric analyses.

Much more work has been undertaken than was used for this short briefing and an important contribution to knowledge and understanding on the gap in educational achievement for children from disadvantaged families has been made through econometric analysis. It is the hope that the original contribution arising from this painstaking work will be published elsewhere in the near future.

Support

Verity Clarke and Helen Mackin for referencing. Kate McGown and Eulina Clairmont for media support. Louise Bamfield, Puja Darbari, Kate McGown and Neera Sharma for support, ideas, challenge and review.
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The research was carried out by the Barnardo's Policy, Research and Media team, and the report was written by Jane Evans.

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Some images posed by models. Names have been changed to protect identities.

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