

### **About Barnardo's**

Barnardo's is the UK's largest national children's charity. Today we support around 300,000 children, young people, parents and carers through more than 1,000 services.

#### **Key messages**

- **School exclusions have been increasing** at an alarming rate - affecting some of the most vulnerable groups of children.
- **Exclusion is a tipping point** for children to exploitation and/or involved in serious youth violence.
- **Nearly half of Barnardo's practitioners said that school exclusions impact negatively** on families.<sup>1</sup>
- **1 in 3 local authorities in England reported having no places in their state funded pupil referral units.**<sup>2</sup>
- The quality of education in alternative provision is patchy - **almost 1 in 5 spaces in alternative provision is rated inadequate or requires improvement.**<sup>3</sup>
- To improve support for excluded children the Government should:
  - Conduct a full review of the use of part-time provision for those who are excluded from school.
  - Ensure local authorities have sufficient capacity to deliver on their legal obligation to provide full-time education for excluded children.
  - Require local authorities to appoint a leader to oversee the education of children in alternative provision.
  - Establish a Practice Improvement Fund for schools and alternative provision to access additional resources to tackle school exclusions.

### **School exclusions**

School exclusions have been increasing at an alarming rate. In 2017/18 in England, there were:

- **7,900 permanent exclusions** - a 70% increase since 2012/13;
- **410,800 fixed-period exclusions** - a 54% increase since 2012/13.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Barnardo's Practitioner Survey, October 2019.

<sup>2</sup> APPG on Knife Crime, 2019. [Back to School? Breaking the links between school exclusions and knife crime.](#)

<sup>3</sup> IPPR, 2017. [Making the Difference.](#)

<sup>4</sup> Department for Education, 2018. [Permanent and fixed period exclusions in England 2017/18.](#)

**However, these figures are likely to underestimate the true scale of the problem** as it does not include those who have been unofficially removed from their school, through 'off-rolling', a 'managed move' or where the parents have been encouraged to remove their children from a school which is failing to meet the individual needs of the pupil.

Government statistics show:

- Children with special education needs and disabilities **make up 45 percent of all permanent exclusions and 43 percent of all fixed-period exclusions.**
- Children who are eligible for free school meals are **four times more likely to be excluded.**
- **In the 10 percent most deprived areas, exclusion rates in schools are higher** than in the 10percent least deprived areas.<sup>5</sup>

*"There is a common thread of experiences in children who are excluded. Exposure to violence, abuse, loss or neglect that cause long term physiological and psychological damage to the brain. In adolescence this presents as seriously confrontational and withdrawn behaviour and may lead to exclusion. It is these vulnerabilities that hugely increase the risk that they will e.g. be drawn into a gang associated with county lines or become a victim or perpetrator of knife crime."*<sup>6</sup>

**Nearly half of Barnardo's practitioners said that school exclusions impact negatively** on families, including increased stress, financial strains, and having to juggle child care.<sup>7</sup>

One young person told the APPG on Knife Crime, *"Since they kicked me out I've got time on my hands to do more crime, commit more crime...in Croydon with my friends who have also been kicked out who are also doing wrong things, who are also selling drugs who are also carrying knives."*<sup>8</sup>

**All professionals working with vulnerable children should be trained in trauma responsive practices and better coordination of sharing best practice of what works in supporting vulnerable young people between mainstream and alternative provision.**

### **Alternative provision**

In 2017 there were **48,000 children being educated in alternative provision - five times the annual exclusion rate.**<sup>9</sup> Local authorities are responsible for placing excluded children in an alternative place. In July 2018, Barnardo's conducted a freedom of information request which

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<sup>5</sup> Department for Education, 2018. [Permanent and fixed period exclusions in England 2017/18.](#)

<sup>6</sup> APPG on Knife Crime, 2019. [Back to School? Breaking the links between school exclusions and knife crime.](#)

<sup>7</sup> Barnardo's Practitioner Survey, October 2019.

<sup>8</sup> APPG on Knife Crime, 2019. [Back to School? Breaking the links between school exclusions and knife crime.](#)

<sup>9</sup> IPPR, 2017. [Making the Difference.](#)

found that **1 in 3 local authorities in England reported had no places in their state funded pupil referral units.**<sup>10</sup>

Even where there are alternative places the quality of education is patchy as nationally **almost 1 in 5 spaces in alternative provision is rated inadequate or requires improvement by OFSTED.**<sup>11</sup> These findings were echoed in the Timpson Review, *"Overall the quality [in alternative provision] is too unreliable and outcomes are poor."*<sup>12</sup>

Too many children are not receiving access to the full time education they are legally entitled to. The **Government should conduct a full review of the use of part-time provision for those who are excluded from school.**

All children are entitled to full time education from the sixth day following exclusion, therefore the **Government must seek to ensure that local authorities have sufficient capacity to deliver on this legal obligation.** Alongside this, **all local authorities should be required to appoint a leader - similar to the virtual school head for looked after children - to oversee the education of children in alternative provision.**

### **Link between school exclusions and serious youth violence**

All too often the moment of exclusion is the tipping point that leaves often already vulnerable children even more vulnerable to exploitation and/or involvement in serious youth violence.

Evidence given to the Ofsted review stated, *"Gangs know that once children have been excluded, they are much more vulnerable and easier to groom. Gangs are taking advantage of this by, for example, getting children to take a knife into school or to break another rule which gets them excluded."*<sup>13</sup>

As concluded by the Education Select Committee's inquiry into knife crime<sup>14</sup>, schools play a central role in providing prevention and early intervention and in a multi-agency response to keeping children safe.

The Government should commit to:

- **Establishing a Practice Improvement Fund for schools and alternative provision to access additional resources to tackle school exclusions**, particularly by focusing on delivering good quality early intervention.
- **Extending the Youth Endowment Fund to enable schools and alternative provision providers** to access funding to support

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<sup>10</sup> APPG on Knife Crime, 2019. [Back to School? Breaking the links between school exclusions and knife crime.](#)

<sup>11</sup> IPPR, 2017. [Making the Difference.](#)

<sup>12</sup> [Timpson Review of School Exclusions](#), 2019.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

<sup>14</sup> Education Select Committee, 2019. [Knife Crime Inquiry.](#)

pupils who are at high risk of being involved in violent crime, as recommended in the Timpson Review.

- **Education should be seen as a key partner in multi-agency working.** Clear protocols on working with schools should be established to enable information sharing about serious youth violence in the local area.

### **Questions for the Minister**

1. When he plans to take forward actions in the Government's response to the Timpson review.
2. What steps his Department is taking to improve alternative provision.
3. Whether his Department intends to conduct a review into the provision of part time education for children who have been excluded from school.
4. What assessment the Government has made of the correlation between school exclusions and knife crime.

**For more information or if you would like to arrange a meeting please contact Claire Stewart, Senior Public Affairs Officer, on 020 8498 7644 or [claire.stewart@barnardos.org.uk](mailto:claire.stewart@barnardos.org.uk)**