

The Government's agenda for 'building back better' from Covid-19 should ensure the most vulnerable and disadvantaged benefit from the recovery. In order to achieve the ambition to 'level up' the UK, the Government should prioritise the following areas for urgent investment, as part of a 'new deal' for children and young people:

1. Children and young people's mental health and wellbeing

- There is growing evidence that the pandemic and necessary lockdown have had a significant negative impact on children's mental health.
 - A YouGov [survey](#) of 4,000 8-24 year olds for Barnardo's found that one in three said they had suffered additional mental health challenges during lockdown.
 - Some groups of children are more likely to be in need of support. For instance, BAME children are more likely to have experienced bereavement or serious illness in the family, and to be anxious about the virus.
 - Children who care for ill or disabled relatives (young carers) are likely to have been under additional pressure, taking on more caring responsibilities and being especially isolated from friends.
- Whilst we welcome the £1 billion investment for children's 'catch up' when they return to school, this will not address the challenges they face that will make it more difficult for them to learn.
- Without appropriate support children's needs will escalate leading to even longer waiting lists for already over-stretched specialist services (CAMHS).

We are therefore calling for urgent investment in wellbeing programmes over the summer holidays and specific mental health support for schools when they return in September.

2. Early intervention and children and young people's services funding

- Prior to Covid-19, local authorities were facing a funding crisis in children's services which meant resources were increasingly concentrated on late intervention.
- Our [analysis](#) found that early intervention funding fell by £1.6 billion between 2010/11 and 2018/19. Overall funding for local children and young people's services fell by £2.2 billion between 2010/11 and 2018/19 — a 23% reduction.
- With a lack of early support for families, more children are entering care. There are 78,150 children in care — a 10 year high.
- However, we know that early intervention is more likely to result in positive outcomes for children and families, reducing the need for more expensive services later on.
- The Government has committed to £5bn in infrastructure investment, and we believe that this should include a programme to realise the [manifesto](#) commitment to champion family hubs, to 'serve vulnerable families with the intensive, integrated support they need to care for children – from the early years and throughout their lives'.

The Government should invest in the physical and digital infrastructure necessary to provide a Family Hub in every community.

3. Support for vulnerable young people as part of the Government 'Opportunity Guarantee'

- Young people aged 18-24 are most likely have lost their job or to have been furloughed during the pandemic.
- While we welcome the Government's commitment to the offer of an apprenticeship or in-work placement for young people, at Barnardo's we know that the most vulnerable often struggle to take advantage of these opportunities.
- Young people who have been in the care system often do not meet high entry requirements for apprenticeships and need additional 'wrap around' support to address mental health and wellbeing issues, develop confidence and build 'soft skills', in order to thrive in their placement.

We are calling for the Government to:

- **Invest in pre-apprenticeship programmes such as traineeships, aimed at bridging the gap for young people who need further support before moving onto a full apprenticeship;**
- **Introduce flexible and part-time apprenticeships for young people who may have caring responsibilities or other vulnerabilities.**
- **Work with charities to fund and deliver additional support so that the most disadvantaged groups can benefit.**

4. Investing in an Innovation Fund for charities

- Charities are the glue that holds society together and in times of immense and growing hardship, our services are needed more than ever.
- At Barnardo's, most of our services have moved to 'remote' or 'distanced' support, reaching vulnerable children on the phone, through instant messaging and using video conferencing.
- The changes triggered by the pandemic necessitate new models of delivery - including a digital-first approach — and requires charities to understand and respond to new challenges facing children.

We are calling for the Government to consider creating an innovation fund for children's charities which would enable charities and statutory services to reach children 'where they are' and to capture and share learning which would be available to all, which would reduce duplication of effort and resources.

Questions for the Chancellor

- Evidence from children's charity Barnardo's suggests one in three children and young people developed new or additional mental health needs during the lockdown. Will the Government urgently invest in wellbeing support for children over the summer holidays and beyond?
- What steps is the Government taking to invest in Family Hubs, in keeping with its Manifesto commitment? This could be a programme of physical and digital infrastructure investment, creating jobs and providing early intervention to vulnerable families.
- Will the Government invest in support for vulnerable young people such as care leavers who need additional help to prepare for an apprenticeship or in-work placement?
- What assessment has he made of the merits of an Innovation Fund for charities to help the voluntary sector develop services that work for children and take advantage of digital technology?