



“Barnardo’s helped me realise what was happening, and then they helped me escape. The worker helped me mend the broken relationship with my mum and get the whole family back on track.”

Young person supported by Barnardo’s

Who will notice, who will ask?

How we keep children safe from sexual and criminal exploitation

**Believe in
children**
 **Barnardo's**

Foreword



Barnardo's is the UK's oldest and largest national children's charity. In 2017/18 we supported 300,100 children, young people, parents and carers in more than 1,000 services.

For over 150 years, our mission has been to transform the lives of the most vulnerable children and young people in the country, and we are as committed to that today as we have ever been.

At Barnardo's, we believe in children. We believe that with the right support, every child, whatever their background or circumstances, can recover from past harm and go on to thrive.

In our 10 year Corporate Strategy (2016-25), we set out our ambition to achieve better outcomes for more children, by helping to achieve stronger families, safer childhoods, and positive futures.

To achieve this, we:

- Provide direct, specialist support to children, young people and families
- Build our evidence base – for instance we host the Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse and the National FGM Centre (in partnership with the LGA)
- Use our frontline experience and deep expertise to inform Government policy

Since the early 1990s, Barnardo's has been tackling child sexual abuse, supporting victims, raising awareness in communities, and calling for national leadership. In recent years, welcome political leadership has led to important steps forward, but sadly we know that children in every community are still at risk from this horrific crime. Wherever we open a new service, we find young people who need our help.

As the world changes and evolves, so do the risks facing young people. We know all children can become victims of sexual abuse and exploitation: girls and boys, from every ethnicity, religion and cultural background; LGBTQ young people; and those with disabilities. Children who have already experienced neglect and abuse are especially vulnerable. But with new technologies, all children are at risk of being groomed online, often by adult predators using the cover of anonymity to "befriend" them.

At the same time, evidence from our services supports growing concerns about a rise in child criminal exploitation – where children are coerced into engaging in criminal activity, often linked to gangs, drugs, serious violence, and sexual abuse.

At Barnardo's we don't just respond to the challenges of today, we seek to prevent problems from occurring tomorrow. Focusing on prevention, we work in partnership with National and Local Government, police, health bodies and local communities to support families, keep children safe from harm, and give young people the tools and resilience they need to achieve a positive future.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Javed Khan". The signature is stylized, with a large, sweeping initial 'J'.

Javed Khan
Chief Executive

Barnardo's Strategic Aims

Stronger Families

Early support, family support and mental health and wellbeing

Barnardo's helps parents give their children the best possible start in life. Our Children's Centres and family hubs provide parenting programmes, structured play and nurseries, as well as support for parents with post-natal depression, isolation, domestic abuse, family breakdown, and help to get into work. In 2017/18 our Children's Centres worked with 143,500 people, including 64,500 children and 70,500 parents/carers. We believe a 'whole family approach' is one of the best ways to support children. Barnardo's also provides specialist mental health and therapeutic support. Last year we supported 23,500 children through our school-based programmes known as 'Paths', 'All Stars' and 'Lifeskills'.

Safer Childhoods

Child sexual abuse including child sexual exploitation

Children in care

For over two decades we have been committed to tackling child sexual abuse (CSA) and child sexual exploitation (CSE). In 2017/ 18, we supported 3,300 people through our child sexual exploitation direct support services.

Ever since Barnardo's was founded, we have supported children who could not live with their birth family. In 2017/18 we supported 7,000 children in care across a range of our services such as advocacy and independent visitors.

Positive Futures

Leaving care

Most young people have parents who help them on their journey to becoming adults. But many young people who have been in the care system don't have that kind of support and advice. In 2017/18 we supported 3,200 care leavers to access education, training and skills; to move into appropriate housing; and to improve their mental health and wellbeing.

Who will notice, who will ask? How we keep children safe from sexual and criminal exploitation

- An estimated 1 in 20 children will experience sexual abuse before their 18th birthday.¹
- Sexual abuse is a very real threat to children across the UK irrespective of their age, gender, faith, ethnicity or sexuality.
- Around 65,000 sexual offences against children were recorded by the police in the UK in 2016/17.²
- In 90% of cases, sexually abused children know their abuser.³

Tackling child sexual abuse

More than 20 years ago, Barnardo's began tackling sexual abuse, calling attention to a "taboo" issue, when few others dared. Since then we've come a long way in increasing awareness and improving support for the victims of child sexual abuse (CSA), but there's still much more to be done.

Our frontline services are now identifying an emerging trend of sexual abuse linked to criminal exploitation, where vulnerable children are coerced into criminal behaviour, including through so-called "county lines" activity, where children are used to traffic drugs from one area of the country to another.⁴

Child criminal exploitation: evidence of emerging threats

In a recent survey of Barnardo's services:

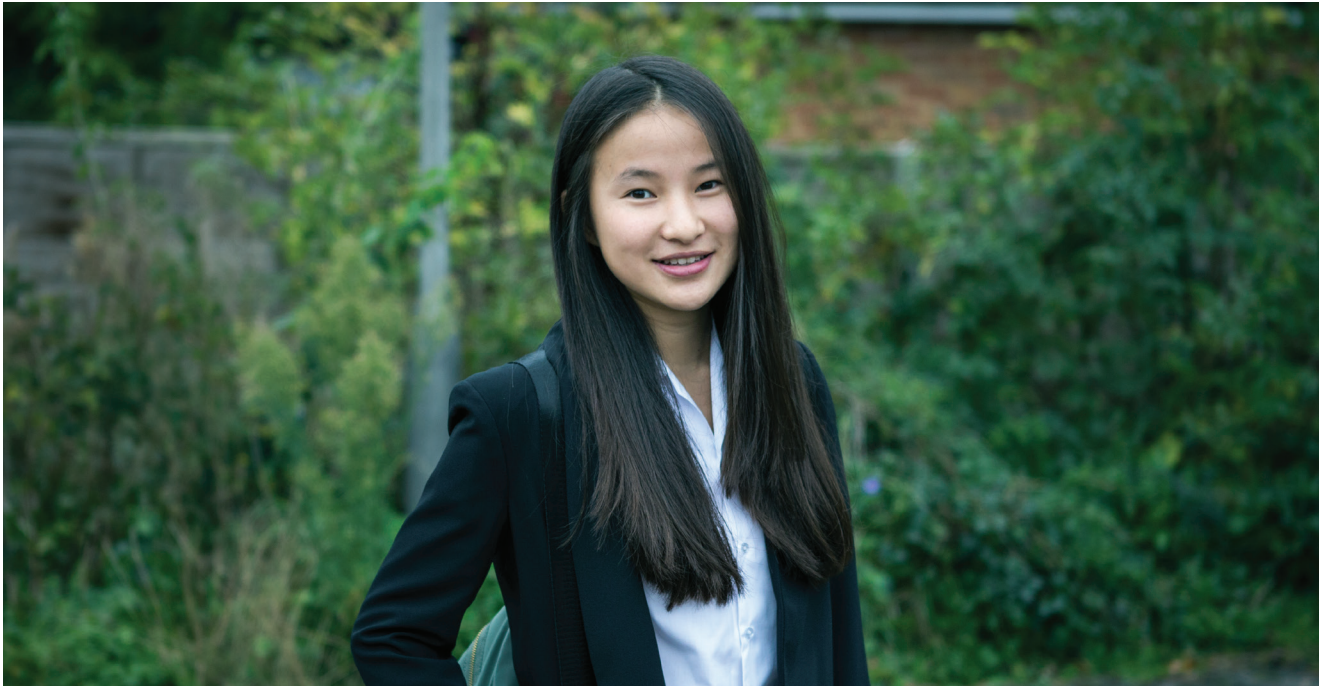
- Almost 60% of our service managers said they believe that they have supported a young person involved in criminal activity over the last year;
- Approximately 75% of those thought the young person had been coerced, deceived or manipulated by others into criminal activity;
- Over 60% said that in their experience children who were criminally exploited were also victims of sexual abuse.⁵

Links between child sexual abuse and child criminal exploitation

This new research demonstrates that vulnerable children and young people are increasingly at risk from interconnected forms of adversity. National and Local Government, and agencies supporting children and young people, must work together to address these complex, interrelated challenges in a holistic, child-centred way.

Children are groomed through fear, threats and intimidation or by being befriended and receiving gifts or financial rewards. They can find themselves trapped, controlled and forced to engage in criminal activity such as theft, trafficking drugs on behalf of their abusers and carrying weapons. These forms of exploitation have been linked to recent increases in knife crime in major cities as well as smaller towns.⁶

Sexual abuse can be used as a powerful tool to exert power and control over young people. In some cases the stigma and shame associated with this abuse is used as a form of blackmail to coerce vulnerable young people into criminal activity.⁷



Achieving safer childhoods and positive futures

Too often, children who have been abused are treated as criminals, not as vulnerable victims. Criminal and sexual exploitation – and the resulting trauma – are overlooked. Barnardo's is committed to ensuring that children and young people receive the support they need to help them recover, and thrive. Alongside providing direct support to individuals and communities, we use our expertise, derived from frontline services,

to call for changes to policy and practice, which will improve support for vulnerable young people.

To respond to this emerging crisis it is critical that Government departments responsible for social care, education, health, housing, police and the judicial system work in partnership – together with Local Government, agencies and civil society. Together we must adopt a new approach that does not criminalise abused exploited children, and which puts recovery and safeguarding first.

Barnardo's recommendations

- Child sexual abuse and criminal exploitation must be tackled through a multi-agency approach that recognises the interconnected nature of the threats facing vulnerable children. These include abuse, exploitation, trauma, and being coerced into criminal activity.
- Children who have been forced to undertake illegal activities by gangs or individuals should not be criminalised. They must be recognised as victims and given appropriate support which prioritises their safety, recovery and future outcomes.
- All victims of trafficking, including children who have experienced sexual abuse or criminal exploitation, should be referred to the National Referral Mechanism and safeguarded.
- Children and young people who have been victims of sexual abuse and criminal exploitation should receive specialist advocacy to help them navigate the complex systems of social care and criminal justice.

Barnardo's work with children and young people

Barnardo's operates services that provide support to children and young people who have experienced sexual abuse or criminal exploitation. These services include:

Barnardo's Boys 2 project

Our Boys 2 project, funded by the Home Office, identifies boys and young men who have experienced abuse and trauma and who may be at risk of developing harmful sexual behaviours or being criminally exploited. The service delivers targeted interventions that enable young people to achieve positive outcomes.

Barnardo's YouTurn service

Barnardo's runs the specialist YouTurn anti-gangs project in Lambeth, Southwark and Croydon, funded by the Big Lottery, which supports young people, including girls and young women, considered to be at risk of becoming involved in gangs. It was commissioned in response to a rise in the number of young girls committing criminal offences. The service delivers group work sessions at school and in the community, as well as intensive one to one support.

Bristol BASE project

Bristol BASE supports sexually exploited young people across the City of Bristol and our model is research-led and has been robustly reviewed showing consistently excellent practice.

As part of the Bristol BASE project Barnardo's offers direct support for children and young people who have been missing from home. We provide one to one support and aim to prevent future episodes of a child or young person going missing.

During 2017, Bristol BASE worked with 263 young people across five Local Authorities. 31% of those young people had a disability, 28% were Looked After Children and 18% were Black or Minority Ethnic.

Independent Child Trafficking Advocates

Independent Child Trafficking Advocates (ICTA) are specialist professionals who support children who have been identified as victims, or potential victims, of trafficking to navigate the complex systems of social care, immigration and criminal justice.

The ICTA provision was trialled by Barnardo's in 2014 – 2015 and we have now established the ICTA Service in three Early Adopter Sites across England and Wales, commissioned by the Home Office.

The ICTA service received 290 referrals between January 2017 – April 2018. In that period 42% of the children and young people supported by the ICTA service had been trafficked internally in the UK. In every Early Adopter Site over half of internally trafficked children and young people had been criminally exploited.

Barnardo's R-U-Safe?

Barnardo's R-U-Safe? service works with children and young people aged between 11-18 years who have been sexually exploited or gone missing from home across Buckinghamshire.

The service began in 2006 following a CSE scoping exercise commissioned by Buckinghamshire County Council. Since then, we have been influential in developing the local response to CSE and form part of the local statutory response, the Swan Unit. Our model is research-led and based on the Barnardo's 4-A's model – Attention, Advocacy, Assertive outreach, Access.

Life story

Professionals think Jenny, 13, was sexually abused as a young child, although she has never disclosed the abuse explicitly. Her family had strong links to gang activity and involvement in crime felt normal at home. As a teenager, Jenny was sexually exploited, trafficked and believed to have carried/held drugs on behalf of her abuser.

To help protect her, Jenny was placed in a residential children's home but she started to go missing from this home, gravitating back to her family environment. Over time, she would go missing along with other children from the home, and was thought to be encouraging them to go with her. Jenny and the other children were all identified as being at risk of sexual abuse and exploitation whilst absent from the home.

How we supported Jenny and the other children:

- We made sure Jenny knew we saw her as vulnerable, and a victim of abuse.
- We spoke to Jenny openly and honestly about the risk that she could face criminal prosecution for involving other children in criminal activity.
- We worked with the police to identify perpetrators so they could take action to disrupt the exploitation.
- We worked with the Local Authority to support a joined up, multi-agency response.





Centre Of Expertise On Child Sexual Abuse

The Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse (the CSA Centre) aims to reduce the impact of CSA through improved prevention and better response; its vision is for children to be able to live free from the threat and harm of sexual abuse.

The CSA Centre brings about change by collating and analysing existing research, policy, practice and the real experiences of those affected, and filling the gaps with new research, insights and analysis. It uses that evidence and insight to develop new approaches and apply learning in practice.

Although the CSA Centre is independent, it is funded by the Home Office and Barnardo's is proud to both host the CSA Centre and be part of its Advisory Board.

The CSA Centre is focused on building knowledge and understanding by:

- Collating and analysing existing research, policy, practice and the real experiences of those affected, and filling the gaps identified with new research, insights and analysis; and
- Using that evidence and insight to challenge and improve existing policy and practice, develop new approaches and increase everyone's knowledge and confidence to more effectively tackle the issue.

The CSA Centre has a range of resources and reports available on its website (www.csacentre.org.uk) as well as details about how you can get involved and stay up to date with its work and opportunities.





“The vulnerability and complexity of cases is increasing, if these young people do not get the right support, they will become the disfunctioning adults in society, the abuse and exploitation will continue, and will continue for their children and future generations.”

Barnardo's Children's Service Manager

To find out more information about Barnardo's work or to arrange a meeting please contact:

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Endnotes

- 1 Radford, L. et al (2011) Child abuse and neglect in the UK today. London: NSPCC. To note: There is insufficient evidence to determine exactly what the scale and nature of CSA, in its varied forms, is in the UK. It is widely accepted that this figure is likely to be a conservative calculation which underestimates true prevalence.
- 2 NSPCC, freedom of information request reported in February 2018.
- 3 Radford, L. et al (2011) Child abuse and neglect in the UK today. London: NSPCC.
- 4 "County lines" refers to dedicated mobile phone lines used by criminal gangs to traffic drugs and/or offensive weapons. Children and vulnerable adults are coerced by gangs in county lines activity to move drugs, weapons or money from urban centres to towns and rural areas.
- 5 Barnardo's survey of Children's Service Managers 2018 – 123 responses.
- 6 Police recorded knife crime has risen by 36% between 2013/14 and 2016/17.
- 7 The Office of the Children's Commissioners Inquiry into child sexual exploitation in gangs and groups (2012) 'I thought I was the only one. The only one in the world'.

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