

Key messages

- **Children growing up in England today face some of the worst health outcomes in Europe,¹** with those in the most deprived areas suffering most.
- The Health and Care Bill therefore represents a welcome opportunity to tackle health inequalities – including for children, and to integrate health and care services.
- A core aim of the proposed Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) is to reduce inequalities. To achieve this, improving **children's health outcomes should be a key priority within this legislation.**
- For children, health starts at home, at school and in the neighbourhood. **Almost a third of children growing up in poverty will suffer worse health outcomes** and a reduced life expectancy than their peers - often taking health issues with them into adulthood.²
- Andrea Leadsom's *Best Start for Life* Review found that receiving high quality care during a child's early years can lead to better physical and emotional health outcomes throughout a person's life. **Intervening earlier has the potential to circumvent longer-term costs** of poor health to the UK economy and the NHS.
- However, as drafted, **the Bill fails to recognise and address the needs of children.**
- Barnardo's found **of the 42 existing ICSs only one has a visible dedicated Children, Young People's and Maternity Lead³** - demonstrating a potential lack of focus on children. Whilst flexibility within the ICS model is necessary, improving children's health is integral to the Bill's success and must not be left to chance.
- If we are to 'level-up' and fulfil the ambitions of the Bill, **we must ensure the Bill represents children and meets their needs.** Therefore, Barnardo's recommends:
 - A commitment to **reducing children's inequality** of access to health services and unequal health outcomes should be **made explicit in the Bill.**
 - **ICSs should represent children, young people and the voluntary, community and social enterprises who support them** by ensuring they are represented within ICS structures.
 - **The Better Care Fund should be extended** to support and promote the integration of children and young people's health and care services.
 - **The Bill should recognise the needs of young carers** when discharging patients from hospital.
 - **The Bill should mandate that a Child Impact Assessment is undertaken by the Government** within two years of the Bill's implementation to assess its impact on children.

1. Children should be included on the face of the Bill

The Bill sets out that the new Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) are expected to reduce inequalities, which must be an urgent priority:

- Pre-pandemic, almost a third of children (4.3million) in the UK were growing up in poverty, which leads to worse health outcomes⁴ and a reduced life expectancy.⁵
- Poverty increases a child's likelihood of catching common childhood illnesses,⁶ and developing a mental health condition.⁷

¹ Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, 2018. [Child health in 2030 in England.](#)

² Office for National Statistics. (2020). [Health state life expectancies by national deprivation deciles, England: 2016 to 2018.](#)

³ North London Partners in Health and Care ICS has a Children, Young People and Maternity Lead.

⁴ RCPCH, 2021. [One year on: State of Child Health.](#)

⁵ Office for National Statistics. (2020). [Health state life expectancies by national deprivation deciles, England: 2016 to 2018.](#)

⁶ The BMJ, 2020. [Adversity in childhood is linked to mental health physical health throughout life.](#)

⁷ Mental Health Foundation, 2021. [Physical and mental health.](#); World Economic Forum, 2018. [Half of all mental illness begins by the age of 14.](#)

- Research has shown that around 30-40% of the risk of anxiety and depression is genetic and 60-70% is environmental.⁸

In addition, the pandemic has placed a greater strain on children's health and wellbeing:

- One in six children (aged 5-16) are now likely to have a mental health condition.⁹
- Childline received over 30 calls a day about children living with domestic abuse during the pandemic.¹⁰

To improve children's health outcomes and reduce inequalities we must intervene earlier. Poor mental health costs the UK economy between £74bn and £99bn a year¹¹, obesity-related illnesses cost the NHS £6bn a year¹² and at least £2.5bn a year to treat people with illnesses linked to living in cold, damp and dangerous conditions.¹³ Investing in children is the best place to start as it lays the foundation for a lifetime of good health and has the potential to save money, and relieve pressure on systems, in the longer term.

Recommendation 1: Amend Clause 14Z35 to include children in its aims of reducing inequalities in relation to health service access and outcomes.

2. ICSs should champion the health needs of children and young people

To ensure the needs of children and young people are addressed effectively, ICSs should champion the representation of children, young people and the voluntary, community and social enterprises (VCSEs), who support them, within the ICSs structures.

However, Barnardo's found of the 42 existing ICSs **only one** has a dedicated Children, Young People and Maternity Lead. ICSs have evolved differently throughout the country, and whilst Barnardo's understands the importance of flexibility within the ICS model, we are concerned that without clear direction to meet the needs of children and young people we risk undermining the Bill's ambition to reduce inequalities; and that children will be swept aside to address what are considered more immediate priorities, given the financial pressures on the NHS due to the ongoing pandemic.

Recommendation 2: We recommend the insertion of a new clause which would create a duty on Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) to represent the physical and mental health needs of children and young people and require them to:

- Establish a Strategy for Children, Young People and Family Services;
- Mandate that each ICB establishes a Committee or Sub-Committee dedicated to service planning for children and young people;
- Ensure representation for VCSEs on the Committee; and
- Require NHS England's annual performance assessment of each ICB to assess whether the Board is meeting its duty to champion the physical and mental needs of children and young people.

3. The Better Care Fund should be extended to fund integration between children and young people's services

Since 2015, the Better Care Fund has been used to promote 'person-centred integrated care' in adult services. Barnardo's believes it is essential this fund is used to support and promote the delivery of integrated children and young people's health and care services.

⁸ World Economic Forum, 2018. [Half of all mental illness begins by the age of 14](#).

⁹ NHS Digital, 2020. [Mental health of children and young people in England](#).

¹⁰ NSPCC, 2021. [Calls to NSPCC about children living in violence homes rise by over 50%](#).

¹¹ Department for Work & Pensions and the Department for Health and Social Care, 2017. [Thriving at Work: a review of mental health and employers](#).

¹² Department for Health & Social Care, 2020. [Promotions of unhealthy foods restricted from April 2022](#).

¹³ Local Government Association, 2019. [The cost of unhealthy housing to the NHS](#).

Recommendation 3: Amend Clause 9 of the Bill which would enable the Secretary of State to direct NHS England to use funds relating to service integration to be directed towards children and young people's health and care services, as well as adults.

4. The Bill should recognise the needs of young carers when discharging patients from hospital

Clause 78, known as 'discharge to assess', removes the requirement under the Care Act 2014 for hospital patients with care and support needs to have a social care needs assessment prior to being discharged home, if they have been assessed as no longer needing hospital care. This may have unintended consequences on young carers.¹⁴

In England, it is estimated that there are 800,000 young carers¹⁵ providing regular care, just over a third (250,000) of whom are providing high levels of care.¹⁶ Barnardo's is concerned that releasing an adult home into the care of a child or young person may come with risks, therefore we regard an assessment of care and support needs in these circumstances to be a safeguarding matter. Hospitals provide a vital role in identifying young carers for additional support, discharge is an opportunity for the question of who will support the adult at home to be asked.

Recommendation 4: Amend Clause 14Z36 to include the needs of young carers, as well as inserting a new sub-clause to consider the impact on young carers when discharging hospital patients with care and support needs.

5. Child Impact Assessment to be undertaken within two years of the Bill's implementation

Barnardo's is calling for a Child Impact Assessment to be carried out within two years of the Bill's implementation to assess its impact on children. In England, there are 13.9 million children and young people (18 and under), compared to 12.4 million people aged over 65.¹⁷ This generation will have had their health and wellbeing impacted by Covid-19 and in just over a decade, over half of this group will enter further and higher education or employment.

Barnardo's view is that this legislation cannot claim to be addressing the challenge of improving overall population health without tackling child health inequalities. The success of this Bill should be measured by the practical impact it will have in ensuring children and young people's access to timely, appropriate health and social care services.

Recommendation 5: Insert a new clause requiring ICBs to review and prepare a report on their impact on children and young people within two years of the enacted changes; and the Secretary of State to publish an annual report which compares the Child Impact Assessments undertaken by ICBs and lay the report before Parliament for consideration.

About Barnardo's

Barnardo's is the UK's largest national children's charity. In 2020-21 we supported 382,872 children, young people, parents and carers, through more than 791 services and partnerships. For more information contact Ceri Finnegan, Policy and Public Affairs Lead, on ceri.finnegan@barnardos.org.uk.

¹⁴ A young carer is a child under 18 who provides care to a relative who has a condition, such as a disability, illness, mental health condition or a drug alcohol problem, with many also look after their siblings.

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¹⁶ BBC & University of Nottingham, 2018. [New research suggests more than one in five children in England carry out some care for sick and disabled family members.](#)

¹⁷ ONS, 2019. [Population estimates for the UK, England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.](#)