OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

What we'll change for children by 2027 – and how we'll do it

OUR PURPOSE:

CHANGING CHILDHOODS. CHANGING LIVES.

Working with children and young people to be safe, happy, healthy and hopeful.

THE PROBLEM WE'RE HERE TO SOLVE:

We exist because too many children and young people are growing up with disadvantage or at risk of harm, missing out on a good childhood and on opportunities to thrive as adults. On top of this, some children face another set of challenges, as a result of structural inequalities, which can mean they're more likely to have poor health and fewer chances in life.

THE CHANGE WE'RE HERE TO MAKE:

SAFER

So children at risk of harm are better protected.

HAPPIER

So children struggling with their wellbeing can access support and feel they belong.

HEALTHIER

So children growing up with disadvantage can experience good physical and mental health.

MORE HOPEFUL

So children experiencing challenges can move into adulthood with hope and confidence.

HOW WE WILL DO IT:

Run excellent, inclusive services that improve the lives of children and young people

Improve practice, policy-making and systems so that they really work for all children and young people

Drive change in attitudes towards childhood, working closely with partners and supporters

WHO WE'RE HERE FOR:

- Children and young people **struggling with their mental health and wellbeing**
- Children and young people **at greater risk of poor health**
- Children, young people and families **living in poverty**
- Families needing **support to give their children the best possible life chances**
- **Children in care and care leavers**
- Children and young people **at risk of sexual abuse and exploitation**
- Children and families **seeking sanctuary in the UK**

BARNARDO'S

THE CHANGE WE WILL DELIVER BY 2027 AND HOW WE WILL ACHIEVE THIS:

WHO WE ARE HELPING	THE CHALLENGE WE ARE ADDRESSING	THE CHANGE WE WANT TO MAKE BY 2027	HOW WE WILL DRIVE CHANGE		
			Run excellent, inclusive services that improve the lives of children and young people	**Improve practice, policy-making and systems so that they really work for all children and young people**	**Drive change in attitudes towards childhood, working closely with partners and supporters**
Children, young people and families living in poverty	Too many families across the UK are struggling to make ends meet – with too many children going to school hungry and returning to a cold home.	Children and families supported by Barnardo's will be warm and fed. Government support covers families' basic needs and provides opportunities for children and young poeple.	Our three-year Poverty Fund will help meet the urgent needs of children and families in our services. We will focus on developing services in communities facing deprivation.	Work with partners to develop policy solutions and influence national and local decision-making, so that all families can afford the basics and all children and young people have the chance to thrive.	Bring the lived experience of children in poverty to the attention of decision makers and the public, driving empathy and inspiring people to take action.

Families needing support to give their children the best possible life chances	Without the right support at the right time, any family's challenges can escalate and some children will be at risk of needing to live elsewhere. Some families face particular challenges due to poverty and structural inequalities and may need targeted help to address this.	Families are able to access holistic support at the earliest possible time to prevent, cope with and move on from the crises they face. Fewer children are in need of support from statutory social care services.	Develop a core, evidence-based, Barnardo's framework for community-based support for families, focused on stepping in as early as possible to prevent crisis. **This will include:** • Help for parents and babies in their precious 1001 first days. • Help for families seeking sanctuary in the UK – so they can integrate into their community and thrive in their new home. • Help for families with older children who may be at risk of exploitation. In addition to face-to-face support, we will also look to provide advice, information and help for parents and carers online. Through our SEEN programme, we will test new approaches and generate evidence about what works to address inequalities for children and young people from African, Asian and Caribbean communities.	Generate evidence of the positive impact our family support is making for children as well as the savings to the state - and share this insight into 'what works' with key partners. We will make the case to governments across the UK that every family should have access to the 'village' it takes to raise a child.	Build support for the principle that all families must be able to access help when and where they need it, and engage parents receiving advice and information online with the opportunity to help drive change for children.
Children and young people at risk of poor health	Children's health in the UK is falling behind other rich countries, with children and young people growing up in poverty and facing structural inequalities more likely to have poor health in childhood and later in life.	Children at risk of poor health can access the right interventions at the right time to improve their outcomes later in life. Decision makers take action to address the social causes of poor health, including poverty.		Through our Child Health Equity Collaborative, we will collaborate with partners to create a framework for health, social care, charities and others to work together to improve children's life chances at a local level. We will call on governments across the UK to prioritise investment and policy change to improve children's overall health and to address inequalities.	Connect with parents, carers and help decision-makers to recognise that investment in children's health achieves lifelong benefits for people, public finances, and society as a whole.
Children at risk of sexual abuse and exploitation	It's become all too common for children to experience harmful sexual behaviour or harassment, partly driven by the rise in online pornography and newer threats arising from artificial intelligence (AI) and virtual reality (VR). The risk of sexual abuse and criminal exploitation has grown, but we don't know enough about the true scale of these crimes or what we can do to prevent them. Some children are at heightened risk of repeated abuse and exploitation, including those who are trafficked to or within the UK.	Children are safer on and offline with better regulation and resource for schools to tackle harmful sexual behaviour. Children experiencing sexual harrassement, abuse, trafficking and exploitation have access to timely, effective support to help them recover and minimise the risk of further harm.	Work with schools and communities to help keep children safe on and offline, and to improve understanding of consent and healthy relationships. Develop an evidence-based 'Barnardo's model' of support for children who have been sexually abused and exploited outside the home. Safeguard and improve outcomes for trafficked children, including those who are displaced. Together with partners - develop and roll out an online platform with expert advice for professionals supporting children to stay safe online.	Commission research to transform our understanding of the changing scale and nature of child sexual abuse in the UK, including the impact of online pornography and Artificial Intelligence, and the reality of sexual harassment in schools. Using this evidence base, develop recommendations for changes to law and policy to help prevent these crimes and ensure victims and survivors can access timely, specialist support. Host the Centre of Expertise for Child Sexual Abuse, on behalf of the Home Office, to increase understanding of the causes, scope, scale and impact of this crime.	Build awareness of the scale and lived reality of harassment and sexual harm facing children – on and offline - and inspire support to address the root causes.

Children in care and care leavers	The number of children in care is rising in most parts of the UK, and their needs are changing. Too many children are coming into care having experienced significant harm, and are missing out on the right support. There's also a rise in teenagers and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children becoming 'looked after'. Young people growing up in the care of the state are less likely to leave school with good qualifications, less likely to be in employment or training, more likely to have poor health, to become homeless, to be involved with the criminal justice system, and to die prematurely.	More children can live at home safely with their birth families. The gap in life milestones between children growing up in care and those growing up with their birth families is reduced.	Provide support for families to help them stay safely together where possible. Matching children who have complex needs with foster carers and adoptive parents, providing ongoing support for those new families. Providing residential care for small numbers of children for defined periods of time, where this can best meet their needs. Delivering holistic support for young people leaving the care system, supporting their transition to adulthood. Providing specific education, training and skills services to young people most at risk of unemployment. Make sure children in care have long-term, stable relationships, including through 'independent visitors'.	Demonstrate how local systems need to change in order to improve the life chances of their care experienced residents. Work with children and young people with lived experience to change law, policy and investment. Ensure all children in care have equal rights to protection and support – including those not born in the UK.	Inspire everyone to play their part in closing the gap between care experienced young people and their peers – whether that's inspiring individuals to foster or adopt or donate, companies to change their hiring practices, or decision makers to change policy and invest in support.
Children and families seeking sanctuary in the UK	Children arriving in the UK alone or with family have often suffered significant trauma and need specialist support to recover and rebuild their lives in the UK. These children and families too often miss out on the right support and in some cases their rights as well as their wellbeing are at risk.	Displaced children arriving in the UK alone receive the support and protection they need as a child in care. Families arriving in the UK receive the help they need to settle in the country and build a new future.	Provide specialist foster care, therapeutic support, and other tailored help to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, as well as support when they reach young adulthood. Assist families to settle in the UK, accessing basic support to meet their needs and working with partners to make sure they can build a better future.	Work with partners to establish and promote best practice in meeting the needs of displaced children and families. Speak out alongside others and make recommendations for change where displaced children's rights or welfare are at risk.	Challenge narratives like the 'adultification' or criminalisation of children not born in the UK, building support for all children to have the same chance to thrive.
Children and young people struggling with their mental health & wellbeing	One in six children are thought to have a diagnosable mental health condition, whilst many more struggle with anxiety and other challenges. But there's a shortage of support at school and in the community and for those who need clinical services, the waiting lists are far too long.	Children and young people have timely access to the right mental health and wellbeing support, wherever they live. Decision makers prioritise children's wellbeing alongside educational attainment.	Develop a core, evidence-based Barnardo's framework for mental health and wellbeing work in schools, that promotes a positive culture, identifies children who are struggling, provides support, and sign-posts to the right services. Provide support in the community, including through 'social prescribing' – ensuring children access the right help at the right time – whether clinical or non-clinical. Provide expert online advice for educators, on supporting children and young people struggling with their mental health and well-being.	Demonstrate the value of mental health teams in schools, both directly to children and to reduce pressure on other services. Make the case for a 'whole school approach' to wellbeing, as well as access to direct support for those who need it.	Improve public understanding of how and why children and young people struggle with their mental health and wellbeing, inspiring young people, adults and partners to join us in speaking out and calling for change.

Follow us on

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