

# Department for Education – Written evidence (PSC0045)

## The Role of Public Services in Addressing Child Vulnerability

### Introduction

This paper sets out the government's evidence for the inquiry on child vulnerability. It brings together input from across government<sup>1</sup> to give a collective view of the role of public services in addressing child vulnerability. The paper does not answer each question set by the committee in turn. Instead, it takes a thematic approach which intends to respond overall to each of the points of interest identified by the committee.

### *Summary*

Some children and young people face a range of social, health, education, and economic challenges that can hold them back in life. This can lead to a range of negative long-term outcomes – such as educational underachievement, unemployment, homelessness, or entry into the criminal justice system – that are detrimental to the individual and also costly to society, and government. Addressing child vulnerability is a key part of the levelling up agenda and this is why government is undertaking a range of activity, working alongside local government and other public services, to support vulnerable children and young people (Q10).

Support for vulnerable children and young people is delivered by local services: through early years settings, schools and colleges; local authority services; VCS interventions; NHS trusts and Clinical Commissioning Groups; and police forces. National government oversees the delivery of these services and plays an important role to co-ordinate activity as well as to provide the legislative and accountability framework and appropriate funding to deliver high quality services to address child vulnerability. Collaboration across services and departments, and between local and national government is crucial to address vulnerability and is a key part of the government response to safeguard and protect vulnerable children during and through recovery from the Covid pandemic.

Public services to address child vulnerability broadly fall into three categories:

- universal services that benefit vulnerable children such as schools and health visitor services;
- targeted support to prevent and address root causes of vulnerabilities including Pupil Premium funding, Supporting Families (previously called Troubled Families Programme), Work Coaches; and
- intervention services to tackle harms, such as Children of Alcohol Dependent Parents Programme (CADEP) and the Trusted Relationships Fund

### *Definition (Q1)*

Ordinarily, the Government does not maintain a single, all-encompassing definition of 'vulnerability', and this allows public services to identify and respond to need, taking into account a child or young person's specific circumstance. In the context of COVID-19, however, a [definition of vulnerable children](#) was set out for the purpose of determining which children should attend education settings during national restrictions. This definition was specific to those circumstances and did not seek to

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<sup>1</sup> Department for Education (DfE), Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC), Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), Home Office (HO), Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), and Ministry of Justice (MoJ) – including arms-length bodies where relevant.

capture all vulnerabilities, for example clinically extremely vulnerable children were not part of the definition as there was no intention that they attend school or college.

A range of factors contribute to child vulnerability and the Government uses proxy measures to identify these children. This includes those with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) ([c.390k \(3.3%\)](#) with an education, health and care plan (EHCP), [c.1.1m \(12.1%\)](#) receiving SEN support), socio-economic background ([1.4m \(17.3%\) eligible](#) for Free School Meals), family situation and risk of threats ([c.400k \(3.2%\)](#) with a social worker, including looked after children). Analysis by the Office of the Children's Commissioner has identified [2.2m \(18%\)](#) as 'wider vulnerable' that don't fall in these groups. These vulnerabilities can overlap and together form a significant minority of children.

### **Role of national government**

Support for vulnerable children and families is largely delivered through local services, overseen by national government. National government has a key role to ensure cross-government co-ordination and appropriate funding of services to support vulnerable children, to work effectively with local government to enable the delivery of services, and to ensure government agendas support vulnerable children and young people (including on levelling up, as covered by the [related inquiry](#)).

### **Cross-government co-ordination (Questions 3 and 4)**

Government co-ordinates a range of activity to address child vulnerability. This includes co-ordination across broad challenges such as support for families and tackling hidden harms as well as specific policy areas such as mental health and special educational needs and disabilities.

The Government has established ministerial and senior official cross-government groups to direct and monitor activity to respond to and address child vulnerability. For example, to fight crime, the Crime and Justice Taskforce, chaired by the Prime Minister, coordinates government activity, including taking action to prevent and support young people at risk of serious violence and exploitation. On broad, cross-cutting issues a range of groups exist to co-ordinate activity such as:

- the Safeguarding Children Reform Implementation Board (DfE, DHSC, HO officials) governs multi-agency safeguarding arrangements to ensure join-up at a national level;
- the Building the Right Support Delivery Board focuses on improving services across education, health and social care for people with autism, learning disability or both, and mental health needs;
- the Vulnerable Children and Young People Programme Board was established in April 2020 to shape the government's strategic approach to support and safeguarding vulnerable children during the pandemic; and
- the Cross-Government Ministerial Board on Care Leavers, to drive action across departments for this vulnerable group, for whom government has a corporate parenting obligation.

Government also takes an active role to shape and influence the delivery of programmes at the local level, to align with national priorities and to support co-ordination across departmental boundaries. For example, Supporting Families (previously called Troubled Families Programme) plays a role in a range of cross-government agendas including unemployment, domestic abuse and mental ill-health, and supports other priorities such as school attendance and reducing crime. In addition, government supports local delivery through:

- Providing specific training or resources to professionals, such as professional development delivered through Social Work England and DHSC work with the Institute of Health Professionals and the Royal Colleges of Nursing and GPS to develop e-learning and training modules to raise awareness of and address domestic abuse.
- Providing support to deliver new programmes or initiatives, such as HO, DHSC and DfE appointing a team of three facilitators to provide support to local areas to implement the multi-agency [safeguarding arrangements that came into force in 2019](#).

We know that the support and systems can always be improved, and we seek to learn lessons, share best practice and improve services, and connections between those services, to improve the outcomes and experiences of vulnerable children and families. Where we see there is scope to achieve better outcomes, formal reviews have been commissioned including:

- The [Early Years Healthy Development Review](#) (EYHDR), led by Andrea Leadsom MP, is working across government departments, looking at statutory and universal services, to further improve health and development outcomes in the period from conception to age two and a half;
- The [Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel](#) produced a briefing with findings and recommendations from analysis of Rapid Reviews relating to cases March- Sept 2020;
- A cross-[Government review of the SEND system](#) to continue to drive up the outcomes from the SEND system and to effect better join up across agencies; and
- The [independent review of children's social care](#), a manifesto commitment, to look at the whole system of support, safeguarding, protection and care, including relevant aspects of preventative services provided as part of early help. The [independent review of drugs](#), a 2-part review led by Professor Dame Carol Black, to inform the government's thinking on what more can be done to tackle the harm that drugs cause, including the ways in which drugs fuel serious violence.

The onset and duration of the Covid-19 pandemic had a huge impact on vulnerable children, young people, and their families. The issues driving child vulnerability have been exacerbated by Covid-19 and many families face new challenges for the first time. Prioritising support for these children - and ensuring that the systems in place were able to manage the increased challenges and risks facing these children - has been a focus for national and local government. This co-ordinated focus on vulnerable children resulted in a range of government activity throughout the pandemic, including:

- Keeping education settings open for vulnerable children and for children of critical workers (enabling professionals that directly support vulnerable children to continue to go to work).
- Prioritisation of testing for children newly entering care settings, frontline staff and supplementary carers, alongside vaccinations (at a local level) for key safeguarding workforces.
- Enabling children's social care and early help services to continue to provide support through relaxing certain regulatory requirements and providing an additional £4.6bn to councils.
- Provided £6.5m through the [Adoption Support Fund COVID-19 Scheme](#) to support adoptive and special guardianship families struggling to cope with challenges arising from the pandemic.
- DfE developing a one-off £7m fund to provide bespoke support for year 11 Alternative Provision pupils at a key point of transition into post-16 settings.

- Delivering the £170m [Covid Winter Grant Scheme](#) which included ringfenced funding to support families with food and essential items over the winter, extended until after Easter.
- Implementing the [Wellbeing and Mental Health Support Plan](#) for COVID-19, backed by £50 million, to set out the support available for individuals, including children and young people; and
- PHE developing a [framework for vulnerability](#) to inform co-ordinated service responses that support 'child and young person-centred recovery'.
- Prioritising care leavers for the receipt of laptops and data packages to ensure they can keep in touch with their support networks and access services online.
- [Vulnerable Children National Charities Strategic Relief Fund](#), through which we distributed £7.6m to provide financial hardship relief for national voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations that support vulnerable children across England and Wales.
- £40.8 million for the Family Fund in 2020-21 to support over 80,000 families on low incomes raising children with disabilities or serious illnesses. This included £13.5 million to specifically respond to needs arising from the pandemic.
- Over £11m to Barnardo's See, Hear Respond programme, helping vulnerable children and young people whose usual support networks were impacted by the pandemic and restrictions, and £1.6 million to expand and promote the NSPCC's helpline.

With the easing of restrictions, we continue to work collaboratively to ensure children and young people have access to the cohesive and comprehensive support they need to recover from the effects of the pandemic. The Government intends to 'build back better' for the most vulnerable and learn from the innovative practices that arose from COVID-19, for example through the greater use of technology, to improve the efficiency of the services provided to vulnerable children. This will include ensuring key services, such as children's social care, are able to respond to potential increases in demand. The Government has already started to work with Sir Kevan Collins on education recovery - ~£1.7bn will be invested to support pupils, targeted at vulnerable children, to engage in education, support their wellbeing and to catch-up on their learning.

### **Working with local government (Q5 and 8)**

Government works closely with and depends upon local government to deliver key programmes to support vulnerable children.

#### Funding

A fundamental role for government is to provide funding to deliver the public services that support vulnerable children and meet their needs, such as children's social care. Funding that contributes to activity to address child vulnerability includes:

- Core school funding increased by £2.6bn in 2020-21, and will increase by £4.8bn and £7.1bn in 2021-22 and 2022-23 respectively, compared to 2019-20. This includes major investment in high needs funding - an additional £730 million in 2021-22, coming on top of the £780m investment in 2020-21 to support children in receipt of an EHCP.
- Eligible families have access to a range of welfare benefits including [Universal Credit](#) (replacing a range of benefits such as Child Tax Credits). Total welfare spending in 2019/20 included over £98bn on benefits for people of working age.
- [Local government finance settlement](#), including an additional £300m to the total Social Care Grant (adult and children's social care) taking it to £1.7bn for 2021/22. Councils spent £10.5bn on children's and young people's services in 19-20, of which the vast majority was on children's social care services (around £9.5bn). Local

Authorities (LAs) will also receive over £1.5bn to support them with Covid-19 spending pressures in 2021-22.

- Since 2015, over £185m has been made available through the [Adoption Support Fund \(ASF\)](#) to LAs and regional adoption agencies to help pay for essential therapeutic services for adoptive and eligible special guardianship children and families.
- [NHS Long Term Plan](#) commits to the development of a comprehensive mental health offer for 0-25 year olds and commits that funding for children and young people's mental health services will grow faster than both overall NHS funding and total mental health spending.
- [Troubled Families Programme](#) funding of up to £1.085bn was made available from 2015-21, with up to a further £165m to take the programme into a new phase as Supporting Families in 2021-22
- Additional investment in activity to support young people at risk of exploitation and involvement in serious violence including £200m to the [Youth Endowment Fund](#) over ten years and £105.5m to [Violence Reduction Units](#) over three years.

### Legislation and guidance

In addition to the provision of funding, government has a key role to put in place an effective legislative framework and provide good guidance for supporting children and young people, particularly in relation to safeguarding. For example:

- [Children Act 1989, and the Children and Social Work Act 2017](#), make provision for the support that should be available to vulnerable children, supplemented by guidance such as [Working Together to Safeguard Children \(2018\)](#) to provide clear expectations and practical advice.
- [Children and Families Act 2014](#) and the [Special Educational Needs and Disability \(SEND\) Code of Practice](#) provide the legislative framework for the SEND system in education settings, ensuring the right support is available to help children reach their full potential
- Under the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011, the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) must hold the Chief Constable to account for the exercise of the latter's duties in relation to safeguarding children under the Children Act 2004. This framework is further supported by national strategies and plans focused on child vulnerability, for example the [National Vulnerability Action Plan](#), which all police forces have signed up to, and the [Tackling Child Sexual Abuse Strategy \(2021\)](#).
- [Health and Social Care Act 2012](#) sets out statutory responsibilities for Clinical Commissioning groups (CCGs) and LAs in delivering and commissioning health services for children and young people.
- Regulations under the [Coronavirus Act 2020](#) set out exemptions to social distancing rules and national restrictions to enable key services that support vulnerable children to operate, such as accessing respite care for families of a child with special educational needs or a disability.
- The [Domestic Abuse Bill](#) currently before Parliament seeks to tackle domestic abuse and reduce its impact on children's lives.

### Local flexibility

In some circumstances, it is important that this framework allows for flexibility within local areas to deliver bespoke solutions that meet local and individual user needs, whilst ensuring consistency of standards and oversight of 'what works'. Some local partnerships have created single access points to bring services together to help service users, or other joint working arrangements to provide support to vulnerable children and families and government plays a role in promoting and supporting those arrangements, for example:

- Investing over £14m to champion family hubs including a new national centre for family hubs to provide expert advice, an evaluation innovation fund to build the evidence base, and data and digital products to help professionals collaborate with families.
- In the twelve [Opportunity Areas \(OA\)](#), DfE empowers local decision makers to determine the area's key priorities and to design and deliver locally-tailored solutions. The OA programme is working to improve the education outcomes and life chances of children in some of the most deprived parts of England, such as piloting early mental health support for Further Education students in Stoke-on-Trent.
- [Plan for Jobs](#) - DWP is on track to recruit 13,500 new Work Coaches by the end of March 21 to ensure that people looking for work receive the right support. The Flexible Support Fund will support the work of Work Coaches, helping local areas purchase bespoke, local provision and enabling the removal of barriers people may face with starting work.
- Investing more than £12m to support 14 existing Innovation Programme projects to continue funding delivery and extending evaluation to capture further learning, including those aimed at tackling adolescent exploitation, domestic abuse, and supporting Children in Care and leaving care as well as improving mental health support.
- Investing £12.4m working with strong LAs through the Partners in Practice programme to develop excellent and innovative practice to be shared with the wider sector. This includes specific projects focussed on the challenges of service delivery to vulnerable children during the pandemic such as blended use of digital methods with face-to-face social work and what good quality family time for children in care looks like when it has to take place virtually.
- Investing over £53m on workforce development programmes for recruiting and developing child and family social workers. This includes fast-track programmes to attract 1,100 high quality participants, strengthened training through 23 teaching partnerships with 113 LAs and 54 Higher Education Institutions and supporting 3,000 new social workers in their first year of practice.

### Accountability

Local areas are held to account for delivery of public services that support vulnerable children - both in terms of the outcomes those services achieve for children and efficiency of delivery. Overall, the MHCLG Permanent Secretary (as Accounting Officer for local government) has responsibility for local government accountability, including maintaining the statutory framework of legal duties and financial controls and ensuring appropriate accountability, transparency, public scrutiny, and audit mechanisms are in place. For specific services that support vulnerable children, Government sets national accountability frameworks and sector inspectorates carry out inspections at local level to assess quality, effectiveness, and efficiency. For example, comprehensive inspection of local area SEND services are undertaken by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC), and HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services has a National Child Protection Inspection programme.

Where services are found to be failing or, in some cases, at risk of failure, Government steps in to provide support and challenge to drive improvement:

- DfE regional case leads work with specialist SEND Advisers and NHS England Advisers to provide support and challenge to LAs and health bodies where improvement is needed.
- For children's social care, DfE has statutory powers to intervene in LAs that are performing poorly and, alongside this formal intervention, works in partnership with the sector (ADCS, LGA, Ofsted and regional improvement alliances) to identify and support LAs at risk of failure. 50 LAs have been lifted out of intervention since May

2010, and the number of inadequate LAs has fallen from 30 in April 2017 to 21 at February 2021.

- Government intervenes to support school improvement where issues arise, including in relation to education provision and safeguarding. Where necessary, Government uses formal powers to address school failure through structural change and provides direct support to schools and MATs to support those at risk of failure through tailored action planning and peer support. 86% of schools are now rated as Good or Outstanding schools – up from 68% in 2010.

### Data

In addition to service delivery, practice and accountability, the Government is working to improve information sharing between agencies to protect vulnerable children – both through enabling national information systems and trialling new approaches, for example:

- The Female Genital Mutilation - Information Sharing (FGM-IS) system allows a family history of FGM to be stored and shared onto the records of a girl under the age of 18.
- The Child Protection - Information Sharing (CP-IS) system enables information sharing between health and children's social care services when a vulnerable child attends an unscheduled NHS setting, such as A&E.
- Through Bradford OA the Centre for Applied Educational Research (CAER) is using matched health and education data on ~13,000 children to show how Early Years Foundation Score Profiles can help with early autism diagnosis. This data has spawned over 10 projects including the £1m EEF funded '[Glasses in Classes](#)' which involves a data sharing agreement between schools and NHS to test the impact of ensuring children receive glasses on children's literacy.
- Operation Encompass facilitates schools and police working together to provide emotional and practical support to children affected by domestic abuse. Government has provided funding to rollout Operation Encompass nationally.

The Government continues to seek and support opportunities for data sharing where that will inform better responses to the risks facing children and ultimately improve outcomes. Fears about sharing information must not be allowed to stand in the way of the need to promote the welfare, and protect the safety, of children.

The Government also has an ambition to use data to inform policy development and any necessary operational response. At the national level, the [Shared Outcomes Fund](#) is supporting a long-term cross-government programme investigating the educational and social care vulnerabilities linked to serious violence amongst young people, bringing together administrative data relating to education and to criminal justice. The Government also requires local areas to provide data for a range of national data collections. During the pandemic this has been particularly important, and we have put in place new systems to report and share data between local and national government:

- The [Vulnerable Children and Young People Survey of Local Authorities](#) provides an accurate picture of contact between vulnerable children and their social workers and enables government to monitor what is happening in local areas.
- Regional Education and Care Teams (REACTs), comprising education and social care staff from DfE and Ofsted, have been working with LAs directly to ensure their systems and processes for maintaining contact with vulnerable children are robust and to improve the information we hold about the risks facing these children.
- The Family Justice Board meets regularly to bring together senior leaders across the system (HMCTS, MoJ, Cafcass, Judiciary, DfE) and referral and court data to consider how the system is functioning and how best to support it to operate in the most effective way possible.

## **Local delivery of public services to support vulnerable children**

### **Local co-ordination and accountability of services (Q7)**

There are partnership structures set up at the local level to focus on cross-cutting issues that affect child vulnerability, bringing together experts to set direction and tackle these issues on the ground, across a range of sectors and services. These partnerships are accountable through statutory duties and guidance as set out above. This approach enables services and funding to be put in place and/or adapted to meet the needs and core spending powers of the local area.

Local multi-agency partnerships enable effective delivery of services and processes for the safeguarding of children and young people; ensuring standards of education and care; and the provision of health care to meet local needs. These partnerships include:

- As the partners in multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, there is an equal and shared duty on the Chief Constable, the Chief Executive of the LA and the Chief Executive of the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) in a local area to plan for any appropriate relevant agencies to work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in their area, and to ensure an effective safeguarding response when a vulnerable child is identified.
- Health and Wellbeing Boards within LAs play an integral role in promoting greater integration and partnership between bodies from the NHS, public health and local government. They have a statutory duty, along with CCGs, to produce a joint strategic needs assessment and a joint health and wellbeing strategy for their local population.
- Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) help ensure that health services are integrated at the local level in a way that meets the needs of vulnerable children, parents, guardians and families. ICSs have been operating in many areas since 2018 to deepen the relationship between public service providers including the NHS, local councils and other important strategic partners such as the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector.

### **Public services to prevent and respond to vulnerability (Q2 and 6)**

The public services available to address and respond to child vulnerability work across three levels: universal services that often, when delivered well, disproportionately benefit vulnerable children; targeted services that prevent vulnerabilities escalating and/or seek to address the root causes of child vulnerability; and intervention to tackle harms when they arise.

These services, and how they are accessed by children and young people, interact together to form a system that is flexible enough to meet a range of needs – from a child whose needs are fully met through SEND provision within school, to a young person whose drug use problem can only be helped through a combination of specialist treatment and wider health and social care, which addresses all the challenges they and their family face.

Universal services that are already available in, or being rolled out to, all areas of England such as schools and early years support for parents, identified as [key protective factors for child wellbeing](#). Services include (not exhaustive):

- All families are offered five [health visitor](#) reviews during the first five years of a child's life, and this service was prioritised to continue through the pandemic from June 2020. Health visitors are ideally situated to identify children, parents and guardians who require extra support, and provide or direct them to appropriate early intervention services.

- Education provision through universal early years offer, school and college, which includes assessment of academic and developmental progress, as well as responsibility for wellbeing and safeguarding.
- Delivery of [three core proposals](#) to support and promote good mental health in a way that joins up education, health and other services to provide early interventions, including new mental health support teams (MHSTs) for schools and colleges and testing approaches to faster access to NHS specialist support.
- Child Benefit is a universal means of financial support aimed at helping people cope with the cost of raising a child or qualifying young person. It is paid at a rate of £21.05 for the eldest or only child and £13.95 for each subsequent child.

Targeted services may provide early intervention support, prevent escalation of existing vulnerabilities, or address the root causes of child vulnerability. Services include (not exhaustive):

- [Early years](#) provision targeted at families facing challenges. This includes 15 hours per week of free early years education for disadvantaged and vulnerable 2YOs for 38 weeks of the year. In addition, the provision of 30 hours free childcare per week for 3-4YO [supports parents to work or increase their hours](#), reducing worklessness which is a driver of vulnerability. In 2019, 71.8% of children achieved a good level of development compared to 51.7% in 2013.
- The SEND system is often the context in which the need for early intervention is identified and addressed, through the delivery of SEN support in schools. Children and young people with complex needs often have Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans which set out a tailored support package and enables the coordination of multi-agency support to meet their needs, including respite services.
- Support for families takes different forms in different localities: family hubs are available in some areas to improve how vulnerable children, young people, and their families aged 0-19 can access a wide range of services; in other areas children's centres perform a similar function for young children (0-5s) and their families. LAs in England reported spending approx. £0.46bn on children's centres in 2019-20.
- Supporting Families (previously called Troubled Families Programme) enables early support for families in need of help which can prevent problems escalating into more complex – and costly – statutory interventions downstream. From [previously published evaluation](#) in 2020 we know that the programme is reducing high cost statutory interventions including to Children's Social Care and involvement in the judicial system. As of January 2021, 401,719 families had made sustained improvements with the problems that led to them joining the programme.
- Additional education support for children, including additional funding to schools through the pupil premium – worth around £2.4 billion annually – to help them support their disadvantaged pupils and the Government established the Education Endowment Foundation with £137m to research the most effective ways of using the pupil premium.
- Virtual School Heads, introduced in 2014 to support children who are looked after, have made a significant impact bringing expert leadership to the system that has seen a reduction in permanent exclusions and absenteeism and improved educational progress (especially at KS2).
- Free School Meals (FSM) is demand-led and any child that meets the eligibility criteria may receive FSM, including those unable to attend education due to self-isolation. Last summer around 50,000 children across 17 LA areas benefited from the Holiday Activities and Food programme, this year it has been expanded across all LAs in England to cover Easter, Summer and Christmas holidays at a cost of £220m allowing more children to benefit across all areas.
- The [period product scheme for schools and colleges](#), ensuring that all learners that need them have access to free period products.

- The child maintenance system possesses levers that can help address child poverty. These include promoting collaboration and parental responsibility; and facilitating effective arrangements for payment of maintenance, including enforcement where possible.
- Additional support for care leavers such as funding Staying Put and the Staying Close pilots, which provide a more gradual and supported transition for those leaving foster care and children's homes and funding the care leaver covenant, which enables organisations from the private and voluntary sectors to provide offers of support to care leavers, and the Civil Service care leaver internship scheme.
- Youth services provide both targeted and general support to vulnerable young people, developing skills for life and work, and supporting mental and physical wellbeing. DCMS is currently undertaking a [Youth Review](#), which is due to report in May 2021.

Intervention services act to tackle harms as they arise, directly with the child or their family, and reduce future risk of harm. Services include (not exhaustive):

- Children's Social Care will typically intervene where a child has faced adversity, trauma and/or complex family circumstances. This may include where domestic abuse, mental ill health or drug/alcohol misuse are present – the factors most frequently identified in assessments of children in need.
- Programmes and funding to support young people at risk of or who have experienced exploitation, abuse and involvement in serious violence, including the £13.2m Trusted Relationships Fund and £200m [Youth Endowment Fund](#) (YEF) to identify what works in diverting children and young people away from involvement in serious violent crime.
- DWP's Reducing Parental Conflict (RPC) programme is developing the evidence base on what works to reduce harmful levels of parental conflict and is supporting LAs and their partners across England to integrate support to parents in their local services for families. As part of this DWP has with DHSC been jointly funding the Children of Alcohol Dependent Parents Programme (CADEP).

### **Working with VCS to deliver (Q9)**

Services and support for vulnerable children are also delivered through the voluntary and community sector (VCS) via nationally funded programmes, locally funded programmes, and through their community outreach activity. VCS organisations are key delivery partners to identify vulnerabilities and provide or signpost to appropriate support. The role of charitable sector led interventions has been particularly important to the Covid response.

VCS organisations play a key role in working alongside local government to deliver services directly to children and young people, including those that are vulnerable. For example:

- In the early years, there were estimated to be 297,700 registered childcare places provided by voluntary group-based providers in 2019.
- At local service delivery level, partnerships are regularly established with the VCS. For example, in Essex Barnardo's deliver the Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service, bringing together children's centres, family nurse partnership, and healthy schools programme into one joined-up, county-wide team.
- We provide funding to VCS organisations to strengthen the participation of parents and young people in the design of SEND policies and services. Activity includes grant funding and support for up to 152 Parent Carer Forums (PCFs) in local areas, support for young people's strategic participation, training and development for local

SEND Information, Advice and Support Services (IASS) and the provision of a national helpline and online support service for families.

- NSPCC's helpline offers advice and support on how to raise concerns about children at risk. The service has seen sustained levels of high demand during the pandemic, with the number of child welfare contacts handled by the service up 26% up in October on pre-lockdown levels.
- [Violence Reduction Units](#) will receive investment of £105.5m over three years to bring together key partners including statutory services, charities and community groups to identify the local drivers of serious violence and agree a multi-agency response to them.

In addition, national and local government allocate funding to children's VCS organisations to deliver specific programmes to address child vulnerability. This included £750m coronavirus funding for frontline charities, of which £360m was allocated to charities providing key services and supporting vulnerable children and adults.

*9 April 2020*