

October 2026

Welcome to October's edition of the Cordis Pulse – a monthly digest of key research and policy developments across the sectors in which Cordis Bright provides research and consultancy services, i.e. adult social care and health, children and young people's services, and criminal justice.

This month, we're pleased to share two new Cordis Bright reports for the Youth Endowment Fund, both focused on improving support and outcomes for children and families. The first reviews how the [care system in England and Wales](#) can better protect children in care from involvement in violence, looking at placement stability, multi-agency safeguarding and reducing unnecessary criminalisation.

The second reviews the landscape of [parenting programmes and family therapy provision](#) available to local authorities, examining how evidence-based approaches can be expanded and better matched to local need. Both studies have informed the [YEF's new practice guidance](#) for children's services leaders on preventing children's involvement in violence.

A common thread this month is the value of stable, trusted relationships. It runs through the Department for Education's work on enduring relationships for care-experienced children and its review of the children's homes workforce. It also runs through the Ministry of Justice's review of prison violence. HM Inspectorate of Prisons' Children in custody report shows why this matters: 64% of children in custody said they had been in care.

Elsewhere, we cover services under strain and options for reform, including NHS productivity, safety in adult social care, the annual State of Policing report and support for people leaving custody.

If you would like to discuss any of the issues raised in this month's Pulse, please do contact us on 020 7330 9170 or email stephenboxford@cordisbright.co.uk.

Best wishes



Dr Stephen Boxford
Director and Head of Research

If you would prefer not to receive future editions of the CordisPulse, please click 'unsubscribe' at the very end of this email. If you would like to discuss anything that arises from the Pulse (or if there are others who you think would like to receive copies) then please contact Dr Stephen Boxford on stephenboxford@cordisbright.co.uk or 020 7330 9170.

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1 Cordis Bright news

1.1 Review of how the care system can protect children from involvement in violence

Cordis Bright was commissioned by the Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) to carry out an exploratory study into how the care system in England and Wales can protect children in care from involvement in violence. The study examined how features of the care system and professionals' responses shape the risk of children in care becoming involved in violence, what barriers local authorities face in safeguarding them, and how those barriers can be overcome.



The study identifies two main pathways through which children in care can become involved in serious violence: violent incidents occurring within care settings themselves, and violence linked to exploitation. It finds that this risk is shaped by wider pressures on the care system, including placement instability, shortages of suitable homes, gaps in therapeutic and educational support, workforce pressures, and inconsistent responses to children's needs and identities.

Based on these findings, the review sets out recommended changes across three areas:

- **Strengthening the care system's protective role**, through better placement sufficiency and matching, support for children's mental health, neurodivergent and educational needs, culturally appropriate support, and continuity of trusted relationships, including through the transition out of care.
- **Safeguarding children at risk of, or involved in, exploitation or violence**, by including them in multi-agency pathways for extra-familial harm, offering targeted support at "reachable moments" such as missing episodes, school exclusion or disengagement from education, and training care staff and foster carers to recognise and respond to risk.
- **Reducing unnecessary criminalisation**, through local protocols, trauma-informed responses from care staff, child-centred policing, and diversionary pathways so that trauma-related behaviour is met as a support need rather than treated as an offence.

The report concludes that achieving consistent practice across the sector will require both local action and national support to address the underlying pressures on children's social care. The findings have directly informed YEF's new practice guidance for senior leaders in children's services on preventing children's involvement in violence, in particular its recommendation that the care system proactively safeguard children in care from violence.

The full report is available here: <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/10/YEF-Review-of-the-Care-System-and-Violence.pdf>

Alongside the report, Cordis Bright have also produced a youth-facing summary of the findings available here: <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/10/YEF-care-system-youth-facing-template-FINAL.pdf>

1.2 Review of parenting programmes and family therapy provision

Cordis Bright was commissioned by the Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) to carry out an exploratory study mapping the current landscape of evidence-based parenting and family therapy programmes in England and Wales. The study aimed to understand how local authorities can be supported to commission more of these programmes, and how provision can be designed and delivered to meet local need effectively.



The review finds that programmes with some evidence of improving children's outcomes are already widely used, but that provision varies considerably between areas, and that only around a third of surveyed local authorities currently deliver programmes with the strongest evidence base.

To address this, the report points to two areas needing change:

- **Expanding evidence-based provision**, which requires clearer national direction on programme selection, more accessible and up-to-date evidence for commissioners, and sustained, flexible funding that reflects the real costs of delivery, including workforce development and implementation support.
- **Ensuring provision is effective and meets need**, which requires a better understanding of local need, stronger monitoring of reach, outcomes and equity of access, further research into how these programmes can contribute to violence reduction, support for culturally appropriate and engaging delivery that maintains fidelity to programmes' core components, and ongoing support for commissioners and practitioners.

The findings have informed YEF's new practice guidance for senior leaders in children's services on preventing children's involvement in violence, including its recommendation that evidence-based parenting and family therapy programmes be used to improve parenting practices, family functioning, and children's behavioural difficulties.

The full report is available here: <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/10/YEF-Parenting-and-Family-Therapy-Review.pdf>

For more information about this study or the review of the care system, please contact [Caitlin Hogan-Lloyd](#) or [Bethan Peach](#)

The full YEF guidance featuring these reports is available here: <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/reports/childrens-services-and-violence-prevention/>

2 Adult social care and health

2.1 Joseph Rowntree Foundation. Essential but unequal: the need for social infrastructure in every place

This report examines the role of 'social infrastructure' - community spaces, groups, organisations and activities - in supporting resilient and economically secure communities across England. It finds significant inequalities in access to this infrastructure, identifying 686 neighbourhoods, home to 5.7 million people, experiencing both high economic deprivation and comparatively weak social infrastructure. The report finds that these 'doubly disadvantaged' areas face particular pressures. Community worker numbers have declined, community spaces are more likely to close, and voluntary and community organisations in areas with weaker social infrastructure tend to receive less grant funding. It also links weaker social infrastructure with poorer health, insecure employment and lower qualifications.

The report argues for a longer-term approach to strengthening community infrastructure, including sustained investment, greater community control over local assets and funding models that better reflect differences in local need and capacity.

2.2 The Health Foundation. The public's views on the regulation of AI in health care

This report summarises the findings from deliberative research with the UK public, focused on understanding people's views on the aims for regulating AI in health care, how they prioritise them and the conditions needed for public trust and confidence in regulation. The study finds broad support for AI regulation, with participants placing particular importance on safety, accuracy, transparency and clear accountability when things go wrong.

Views varied depending on how AI was being used, with stronger safeguards expected for applications involving greater potential risk to patients. Participants also valued meaningful human oversight and wanted patients to be informed about the use of AI in their care. Overall, the findings suggest public support for innovation is accompanied by expectations for proportionate regulation and ongoing monitoring of AI technologies.



2.3 The Health Foundation. Breaking the Cycle: How to build a more productive NHS

This report by the Health Foundation examines how the NHS could improve productivity while responding to rising demand and ongoing financial pressures. It takes a broad view of productivity, considering how resources can support better outcomes and patient experience, rather than focusing solely on increasing activity.

The report highlights several factors that can affect productivity, including short-term planning, complex accountability arrangements, regulatory requirements and variation in improvement capability. It identifies four areas for consideration:



- More stable, longer-term planning and investment
- Clearer priorities and greater focus on outcomes
- Greater flexibility for local organisations to deliver
- Stronger leadership, management, data and improvement capability.

The Commission sets out ten recommendations across these areas, including greater local autonomy and increased use of 'test-and-learn' approaches to assess and scale new models of care and technology.

2.4 Care Quality Commission. Safety management systems in adult social care: research report

New research by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) explores how safety is managed within adult social care and the sector's awareness and use of Safety Management Systems (SMS). The research aimed to fill the evidence gap in available information on safety management and SMS in adult social care. SMS provide a structured approach to identifying and managing risks, with elements including clear accountability, incident response, staff involvement, communication and learning.

The research considers how these practices are currently understood and applied across adult social care, and the opportunities and challenges associated with developing a more systematic approach to safety. The findings will inform CQC's understanding of safety management in the sector and its approach to assessing how providers identify, monitor and manage risks to people receiving care.

2.5 NHS England. Learning from national patient experience surveys: qualitative insights across care pathways

This report by Solutions Research and NHS England brings together qualitative insights from seven national patient experience surveys to identify both the factors that consistently shape patient experience and the ways in which experience differs depending on the type, duration and setting of care.

Across all pathways staff interactions, communication, administration issues, waiting and awareness of system pressures emerged as a central influence on how care is experienced. The analysis shows that experiences can accumulate across a patient's care journey. Longer and more complex pathways place greater importance on continuity, coordination, personalised care and effective handovers. The report highlights qualitative feedback as an important tool for understanding these experiences and identifying opportunities for improvement across services.

3 Children and Young People's Services

3.1 Department for Education. Enduring relationships

The Department for Education has published its approach to strengthening enduring relationships for care-experienced children in England. It highlights the role that consistent relationships with family, friends, carers and other trusted adults can play in providing stability and support throughout a child's time in care and into adulthood.

The approach sets out how relationships could be better considered across children's social care, including in care planning, placement decisions and support for young people leaving care. It also considers how inspection and accountability arrangements can reflect the importance of maintaining significant relationships. The government will work with local authorities, practitioners and other partners to develop and share approaches that support lasting connections for care-experienced children.

3.2 Department for Education. Breakfast clubs early adopters: results from parents' survey

This data shows the results from a survey of parents on the Department for Education breakfast clubs early adopters pilot. The data tables include the survey results from parents about school breakfast clubs, including on attendance, costs and experiences. The parents and carers survey was carried out between 2 March 2026 and 27 March 2026. It was administered online in primary schools across England and collected opinions and experiences from 5,487 parents and carers in early adopter schools.

3.3 Department for Education. Piloting the EdTech Evidence Board: Report on key findings from phase one and phase two

A new Department for Education report shares findings from piloting the EdTech Evidence Board, delivered by the Chartered College of Teaching, to test an independent way of evaluating evidence behind educational technology products. Running December 2024 to April 2026, the project took a broader view of "efficacy" than controlled trials alone, weighing theoretical evidence alongside real-world use. Key insights from the report include:

- Independent evaluation proved feasible and valued, with providers describing the review process as rigorous, transparent and fair.
- The challenge is not simply a shortage of evidence: many providers already produce plenty, but few could link educational need, design, implementation and outcomes into one coherent account.
- Evidence maturity varies widely across the sector, pointing to a need for clearer progression routes rather than lowered standards.
- Educators want evidence that is concise and contextual highlighting evidence alone rarely drives adoption.

The report concludes that lasting improvement depends on building sector-wide evidence capability and closer collaboration between providers, researchers and schools.

3.4 Department for Education. Children's homes workforce knowledge and skills: Rapid evidence assessment

A Rapid Evidence Assessment commissioned by the Department for Education examines the knowledge and skills required by England's children's homes workforce, drawing on literature from 2015-2026 and nine stakeholder interviews. The authors note the evidence base is fragmented, presenting their conclusions as indicative rather than definitive.



Children's homes workforce knowledge and skills

Rapid evidence assessment

September 2026

Authors: Dr Claire Baker and Ellie Mendez Sayer



The report identifies relational skill, rather than technical competence, as the core requirement for staff. It also notes the absence of a shared national definition of homes' purpose, arguing this matters less than ensuring each placement suits the individual child.

On workforce development, the report finds a mixed picture. Level 3 and 5 qualifications provide a baseline but are considered overly theoretical and poorly aligned with relational practice, whereas training works best when it offers protected reflective space linked to supervision, provision it describes as inconsistent. Compliance-driven cultures, high turnover and uneven supervision are cited as persistent barriers, regardless of staff values.

The report concludes that national clarity of purpose and stronger organisational conditions matter as much as individual skills.

3.5 Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. Young Futures Hubs Early Adopters Pilot evaluation: interim report

An interim evaluation, commissioned by DCMS and delivered by Ecorys, covers the first phase of the Young Futures Hubs Early Adopters pilot across eight local authority areas, bringing universal youth work, targeted provision and specialist support together in local settings. Findings draw on consultation with 43 professionals and 12 young people, alongside monitoring data.

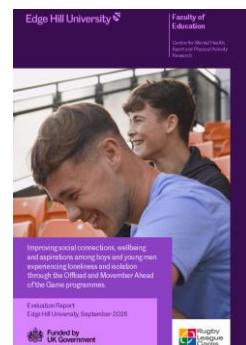
The report's main findings:

- Early adopters have made a positive start on locally tailored hub models, with partnership working identified as a particular strength.
- There is early evidence of improved engagement, access to support and trusted relationships between young people and staff, though outcome evidence remains indicative at this stage.
- Challenges include tight mobilisation timescales, capital-works delays and referral pathways still in development.
- Aggregate data on reach and attendance is currently the strongest evidence base; linking individual-level data is not yet feasible, and outcomes such as safer streets are harder to measure robustly.

For wider rollout, the report recommends allowing adequate mobilisation time, setting clear expectations for youth involvement, keeping monitoring proportionate, and planning impact evaluation and data-sharing arrangements from the outset.

3.6 Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. Improving social connections, wellbeing and aspirations among boys and young men experiencing loneliness and isolation through the Offload and Movember Ahead of the Game programmes

Edge Hill University's independent evaluation, commissioned by Rugby League Cares and funded by DCMS, looks at two pilot programmes tackling loneliness, isolation and NEET status among boys and young men in Wigan and Wakefield: Movember Ahead of the Game (ages 11-18) and Offload (ages 16-24), delivered via rugby league community foundations between November 2025 and March 2026.



- Both programmes met or exceeded engagement targets: 897 young people joined MAOTG, and 346 young men engaged with Offload.
- The report finds evidence of positive impact on social connections, wellbeing and aspirations, though small sample sizes for the pre-post surveys limited its ability to detect statistically significant change.
- Male role models and gender-responsive, non-clinical approaches are highlighted as key to engagement.
- Building new partnerships took one to four months, with word of mouth identified as a particularly effective recruitment route.

3.7 Department for Education. Understanding Independent Scrutiny in Safeguarding Partnerships

This report explores how independent scrutiny operates within local safeguarding partnerships in England and how it contributes to assurance, learning, accountability and system improvement. The research combines 78 responses from a national survey of safeguarding partnerships (representing 55% of partnerships nationally) with qualitative interviews involving independent scrutineers, safeguarding partners and other key stakeholders from 15 safeguarding partnerships.



Understanding Independent Scrutiny in Safeguarding Partnerships

September 2026



The research finds that independent scrutiny is now well established, but approaches vary considerably between areas. Key findings include:

- Scrutiny can support constructive challenge, accountability and learning, particularly where there is strong leadership, clear governance and openness to challenge.
- Continuing variation in how partnerships understand and position the scrutiny role with differing interpretations of how scrutiny should be commissioned, positioned and supported within local safeguarding systems.
- Embedding the experiences and views of children and young people within scrutiny emerged as a consistent priority for participants although practice remains uneven.

3.8 **Joseph Rowntree Foundation. Falling through the cracks: how childhood hardship shapes life chances**

New research from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation explores the relationship between childhood poverty and young people's later participation in education and employment. Analysis of the Millennium Cohort Study finds that young people who experience persistent poverty are more than three times as likely to be out of education and employment at ages 17 and 23, while six in ten of those not earning or learning at 23 experienced poverty during childhood.

Drawing on qualitative research alongside this analysis, the report highlights how financial hardship can interact with challenges relating to education, relationships, mental health and transitions into adulthood. It also identifies practical barriers, including transport, training and childcare costs, that can make returning to work or education more difficult. The report calls for efforts to reduce child poverty alongside more tailored support and improved access to secure employment and training opportunities.

3.9 **Children's Commissioner. Hidden NEETs - The attendance of 16 and 17-year-olds in further education colleges in England**

New analysis from the Children's Commissioner examines attendance among 16- and 17-year-olds in further education in England. It estimates that around 42,000 students could be 'hidden NEETs' - enrolled in college but attending less than half of expected sessions.



Low attendance is not evenly distributed. Young people experiencing disadvantage, including those eligible for free college meals, those with Education, Health and Care Plans, and children in care, are among the groups more likely to be severely absent. The report highlights a range of factors affecting attendance, including mental health needs, financial pressures, transport difficulties and caring responsibilities.

The Children's Commissioner calls for better national data and monitoring of post-16 attendance, alongside earlier, more personalised support for young people at risk of disengaging and stronger pathways connecting further education with work and future employment.

3.10 **Department for Education. Evaluation of pilots to reduce unnecessary family court delays**

The Department for Education (DfE) commissioned Verian and partners (Alma Economics and National Children's Bureau (NCB)) to deliver an independent evaluation of three pilot interventions, implemented between April 2024 and March 2025, that were designed to reduce unnecessary family court delays:

- **Designated Family Judge Trailblazer.** This pilot aimed to identify local causes of delays and implement targeted interventions in response to the issues identified in five Designated Family Judge (DFJ) areas. The report finds there were improvements in the quality and consistency of social work assessments and improved cross-agency collaboration. However, findings indicated no clear overall effect on reducing the length of proceedings.

- **Pre-Case Management Hearing Meetings.** This pilot introduced a consistent approach to conducting pre-case management hearing (CMH) meetings for non-urgent cases, to take place after proceedings have been issued and before the first CMH. The pilot promoted systematic approach to information sharing providing the opportunity to agree details such as the proposed timetable and proposed expert assessments ahead of, rather than at, the first CMH. Findings from interviewees and survey respondents indicated improved case preparation and cross-agency working, but evidence of reduced case duration, cost-effectiveness and benefits for families was inconclusive.
- **Suspected Inflicted Head Injury Service.** This pilot introduced a new multidisciplinary Suspected Inflicted Head Injury Service (SIHIS) for children 0-8 years old in three NHS Trusts. The evaluation found that SIHIS improved the quality and timeliness of medical evidence, supported more informed decision-making and increased clinician confidence. However, evidence that the service reduced overall family court case duration was limited. The evaluation identified potential cost savings, although conclusions on value for money remained uncertain.

3.11 Department for Education. Family Routes: needs, experiences and support for adoptive parents and special guardians

The Family Routes study, commissioned by the Department for Education and delivered by Ecorys UK with the Rees Centre (University of Oxford) and Ipsos, examines the needs, experiences and outcomes of young people aged 12–25 growing up in adoption and special guardianship and their families. Many families described close, warm relationships and valued aspects of family life together. However, findings also included challenges accessing timely support, alongside impacts on their relationships, employment, finances and wellbeing.



Family Routes: needs, experiences and support for adoptive parents and special guardians
Research report

September 2026

Authors: Ecorys UK



Recommendations included:

- Timely, tailored parenting training (including around specialist topics such as child-to-parent violence and neurodivergence), available to both adoptive parents and special guardians throughout childhood and adolescence into early adulthood.
- Better support and training for schools to understand and meet trauma-related needs, which will help to reduce exclusions and school placement instability.
- Improving access to counselling/therapies for adoptive parents and special guardians.
- Expanding high-quality respite options that can safely and confidently support young people with higher needs.

3.12 Department for Education. Expanded childcare entitlement: process evaluation report

This process evaluation conducted by IFF research explored how successfully the expansion of the childcare entitlement was implemented, drawing on surveys and interviews with local authorities, early years providers and parents. The evaluation finds that the expanded childcare entitlement has been implemented successfully at scale, with high take-up and widespread provider participation. Most local authorities reported being able to meet demand, while parents commonly experienced reduced childcare costs, improved household finances and greater confidence about returning to work.



Expanded childcare
entitlement: process
evaluation report

September 2026

Authors: IFF Research

However, experiences varied across families, providers and local areas. Workforce shortages, capacity pressures and administrative demands shaped how the entitlement was experienced in practice, while restrictions and additional charges sometimes reduced the flexibility and affordability of funded childcare. Access was also less consistent for families in more deprived areas and, in some places, children with SEND.

3.13 Department for Education. Keeping children safe in education 2026

The Department for Education has published updated statutory safeguarding guidance for schools and colleges in England. The 2026 guidance covers responsibilities for identifying and responding to safeguarding concerns, safer recruitment, child-on-child abuse and online safety. Updates include greater emphasis on Family Help, prejudice-based harm, AI-generated sexual imagery and safeguarding children in alternative provision.



Keeping children
safe in education
2026

Statutory guidance for schools
and colleges

September 2026

3.14 Department for Education. Early years foundation stage (EYFS) statutory framework

The Department for Education has published an updated statutory framework for EYFS. There are two frameworks for childminders and group and school-based providers. The framework sets the standards that all early years providers must meet to ensure children learn and develop well, are kept healthy and safe and have the knowledge and skills needed to start school.

4 Criminal Justice

4.1 Ministry of Justice. Better Outcomes through Linked Data (BOLD)

The BOLD Partnership helps government organisations make better use of data and work more effectively across organisational boundaries. Building on the Better Outcomes through Linked Data (BOLD) Programme, it brings together expertise from across government and public services to address barriers to data sharing and linking, strengthen collaboration and identify opportunities to tackle shared priorities.

Working across justice, health, local government and the third sector in England and Wales, the Partnership aims to improve the evidence and tools available to support people with complex needs, while driving efficiency and productivity. Over the next three years, it will focus particularly on Youth Justice, Health and Prevention.

4.2 Ministry of Justice. Community Accommodation Service Tier 2 (CAS-2) process evaluation

The Community Accommodation Service Tier 2 (CAS-2) provides temporary accommodation and structured support to eligible men and women in England and Wales – predominantly, those subject to bail conditions or Home Detention Curfew (HDC) – who might otherwise remain in custody due to lack of suitable or available housing. Delivered by Nacro across England and Wales, CAS-2 aims to ease pressure on prisons while helping residents stabilise in the community and, where possible, move into settled accommodation.

The evaluation found that CAS-2 was broadly operating as intended and positively regarded by residents and frontline staff. Between April 2023 and March 2025, 5,211 people used the service, while capacity grew by 58%. Properties generally met required standards and residents valued the structured support provided. Indicatively, around 72% of nights spent in CAS-2 would otherwise have been spent in prison, suggesting the service is contributing to its aim of relieving prison capacity. However, outcomes and experiences varied. Staffing pressures and turnover affected continuity, while the availability of local partnerships and specialist support differed by region. Overall, the report identifies CAS-2 as a valuable alternative to custody, while highlighting opportunities to improve consistency, referral information, workforce stability and partnership working.



Community Accommodation Service Tier 2 (CAS-2) process evaluation

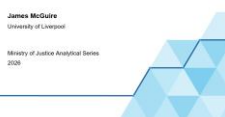


4.3 Ministry of Justice. Safety in prison: effects of regime management, workforce factors, and prisoner activity on levels of violence. A rapid evidence assessment.

This Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) was conducted to explore the impact of specific factors on prison violence and to identify implications with respect to staff training, staff-prisoner interactions, and system management. Drawing on 51 primary studies and 14 research reviews, it finds no single solution to improving prison safety, with evidence instead pointing to a combination of approaches.



Safety in prison: effects of regime management, workforce factors, and prisoner activity on levels of violence
A Rapid Evidence Assessment



Positive and respectful staff-prisoner relationships, consistent and fair application of rules, and adequate staffing levels and staff-to-prisoner ratios were associated with lower levels of violence. Evidence on the impact of time out of cells and education or vocational activities was more mixed, although some studies linked participation in rehabilitative programmes and employment with reduced violence.

Overall, the review highlights the interconnected factors influencing prison safety and suggests improvements are likely to require coordinated approaches across staffing, prison regimes and the wider environment. It also identifies gaps in the evidence, including around workforce composition and the economic impact of different approaches.

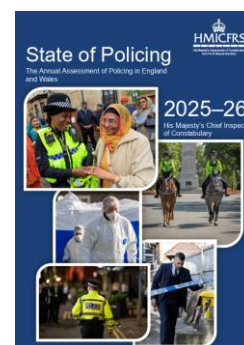
4.4 Office for National Statistics. Children's perceptions of crime and online safety in England and Wales: year ending February 2026

The Office for National Statistics has released estimates of children's experiences and perceptions of safety online and in their daily lives, using data from the redesigned Children's Crime Survey for England and Wales, an online survey of children aged 10 to 15 years. Findings include:

- 20% of children aged 10 to 15 years thought they were very or quite likely to see people involved in gangs in their local area; 9% were worried a lot or a fair amount about gangs in their local area, in the last 12 months, in the year ending February 2026.
- Among children aged 10 to 15 years, around 4 in 5 (84%) spent three or more hours online a day at the weekend, with a quarter (25%) spending seven or more hours online a day at the weekend.
- Nearly half of children (48%) aged 13 to 15 saw a lot or a fair amount of hateful content online targeted at people with certain characteristics.
- Around 1 in 10 children aged 13 to 15 years (12%) received at least one sexual message in the last 12 months, in the year ending February 2026.
- Around 7 in 10 children aged 10 to 15 years (69%) saw or heard about a fight or other type of physical violence between their peers in the last 12 months, in the year ending February 2026.

4.5 His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services. State of Policing: The annual assessment of policing in England and Wales 2025-26

HMICFRS's annual assessment finds that policing in England and Wales has significant strengths, including a committed workforce and strong operational resilience, but is under increasing strain as crime, technology and public expectations change. Performance remains inconsistent, with particular concerns around crime investigation, safeguarding vulnerable people and responding to the public.



The report supports substantial reform, including proposals for a National Police Service and a reduction in the number of territorial forces, while stressing that structural change alone will

not improve performance. It highlights effective leadership, workforce skills and support, stronger performance management, and better use of technology and AI as important priorities for improving policing and maintaining services during reform.

4.6 His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons. Children in custody 2025-26.

HM Inspectorate of Prisons' latest Children in custody report presents a mixed picture of children's experiences across young offender institutions (YOIs) and one STC. While there were signs of progress, inspectors found that improvements remained slow and fragile. The report includes findings from 315 survey responses and interviews with 10 children.



Key findings include:

- The custodial population continues to fall, averaging 371 children and young people in 2025–26, compared with 939 a decade earlier. Despite the fall in population the number of children held on remand has plateaued.
- Children have high levels of need: 64% reported previous experience of local authority care, 48% said they had health problems, while 38% reported a disability.
- Safety remains a significant concern. 39% of children said they had felt unsafe, while violence continued to affect all establishments inspected.
- Education provision was inadequate in three of the four YOIs, and across the estate, 16% of children said they were not participating in any education, work or offending behaviour interventions.

4.7 Youth Justice Board for England and Wales. Final independent evaluation of the London Resettlement Partnership

IFF Research's final evaluation of the London Resettlement Partnership (LRP) examines its work to improve resettlement support for children leaving custody across London. Established as a Youth Justice Board Pathfinder, the LRP aimed to embed Constructive Resettlement principles, strengthen collaboration and develop a pan-London data tool to support resettlement practice.



Key findings include:

- The LRP helped develop a shared understanding of Constructive Resettlement, strengthen relationships between partners and increase awareness of disproportionality. Forums, training and resources were particularly valued.
- Data-sharing delays, technical barriers, repetitive data entry and limited feedback to boroughs affected engagement and data quality.
- While the evaluation could not establish a clear link between the tool and improved resettlement outcomes, it identifies opportunities to strengthen governance, streamline data collection, improve feedback and continue pan-London collaboration.

4.8 Prison Reform Trust. 'It's about time': The need for a national strategy for long-term prisoners

This is the final output from the Prison Reform Trust's Building Futures programme funded by the National Lottery Community Fund. This report examines the experiences and needs of people serving long prison sentences, drawing on six years of engagement with more than 1,000 people across over 70 UK prisons, alongside families, prison staff and other stakeholders.

The report considers the effects of long-term imprisonment across different stages of a sentence, including experiences of prison life, opportunities for progression, health and wellbeing, family relationships and preparation for release. It highlights particular challenges associated with an ageing long-term prison population and the importance of maintaining constructive relationships and opportunities throughout a sentence.

Based on its findings, the report proposes a 10-year national strategy for long-term prisoners, organised around three themes: safety, decency, and resettlement and release. Recommendations include developing clearer approaches to progression, strengthening health and social care provision, supporting family relationships, involving prisoners in decisions about prison life, and improving preparation and support for release.



'It's About Time'
The need for a national strategy for long-term prisoners

Prison Reform Trust
In partnership with the Building Futures programme
November 2020