Cordis Pulse

September 2026

Welcome to September'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 delighted to share findings from two studies commissioned by the Youth Endowment Fund which strengthen the evidence available to those working to prevent children's involvement in violence.

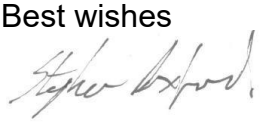
The first is our evaluation of Future Men's Boys' Development Programme: a targeted, school-based social and emotional learning programme for boys at risk of disengagement or exclusion. This randomised controlled trial involved 486 boys across eight secondary schools in South London. It found that the programme had a positive impact on boys' engagement with school, alongside promising findings relating to behavioural difficulties, emotional problems and relationships with teachers. The study received the Youth Endowment Fund's highest evidence security rating. It makes an important contribution to the UK evidence on targeted social and emotional learning, while highlighting the value of consistent support from trusted and relatable adults.

The second is our exploratory review of evidence-based practice in policing to prevent children's involvement in violence. Drawing on a national survey of police forces and police and crime commissioners, expert interviews, policy and practice reviews, and multi-agency workshops, the research examined how evidence informs police decision-making and what shapes its use in practice. The report sets out six recommendations for police leaders, organised around three priorities: treating children as children, focusing on what works, and delivering diversion well.

These reports reflect how we support clients in preventing involvement in the criminal justice system: building evidence about what works and helping understand how this evidence can be translated into practice across organisations and systems to improve outcomes.

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



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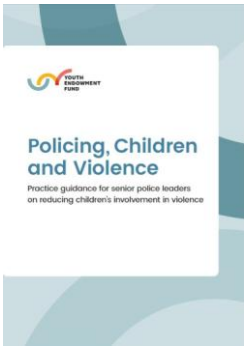
1 Cordis Bright news

1.1 Review of evidence-based practice in policing to prevent children from being involved in violence



Cordis Bright was commissioned by the Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) to carry out an exploratory study into the use of evidence-based practice in policing to prevent children from being involved in violence.

Children who come into contact with the police in relation to violence are often among the most vulnerable in society, and decisions made at the point of police contact can have long-term implications for their outcomes. This study explored the extent to which police forces across England and Wales draw on the best available evidence - including the YEF Toolkit - when deciding how to respond, and what shapes those decisions in practice.

The study addressed five research questions, examining:

- **Practice:** which interventions police forces are delivering to reduce children's involvement in violence, and how this aligns with the evidence base.
- **Race equity:** how equitably EBP is delivered for children from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds.
- **Funding**: the extent to which evidence-based interventions are funded by the Home Office and Offices of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCCs).
- **Knowledge**: what commissioners, senior leaders and frontline officers know about what works, and what shapes their decision-making.
- **Policy and practice change:** what changes, at both local practice and system level, are needed to support evidence-based practice.

The study used a five-phase, mixed-methods approach: a rapid review of policy and practice; a national survey of 43 regional police forces and British Transport Police, and of 37 OPCCs and five mayoral offices; in-depth case studies with five police forces; ten expert interviews; and five multi-agency workshops.

Key findings include:

- **Delivery of evidence-based interventions was mixed**. Restorative justice, a high-impact approach in the YEF Toolkit, was delivered by 76% of surveyed police respondents (n=528), and moderate-impact approaches such as hot spot policing (84%) and problem-oriented policing (69%) were widely used. However, focused deterrence - one of the strongest evidence-based approaches - was delivered by only 32%, despite 75% of respondents believing it to be effective.
- **Equitable delivery is not yet systematically embedded**. Only 17% of police respondents reported routinely collecting and analysing data on how interventions affect children from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds, and evidence on approaches designed specifically for these groups remains limited.

- **Funding structures were seen to constrain evidence-based practice**. Where external funding was available, it typically came from the Home Office, OPCCs and Violence Reduction Units, but 50% of surveyed OPCC respondents (n=36) identified short-term funding cycles as a barrier to planning, delivering and evaluating interventions.

- **Decision-making is still primarily shaped by internal police data, professional judgement and operational demand rather than external research evidence**. Resource constraints (78% of police and 97% of OPCC respondents), time pressures (66% of police respondents) and skills gaps (42% of police respondents) were widely reported barriers to embedding EBP.

The project was led by Cordis Bright with support from Professor Iain Brennan (University of Hull), and quality assurance and advice from Dr Paul Quinton and Rob Braddock at the College of Policing.

The full report is available here: https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/reports/policing-children-and-violence/

For more information about the study, please contact Dr Jade Farrell or Dr Angela Collins.

1.2 Youth Endowment Fund and Education Endowment Fund. Future Men Boys Development Programme

Cordis Bright are delighted to share the findings from an independent evaluation of Future Men's Boys' Development Programme (BDP), carried out by Cordis Bright and funded by the Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) and the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF).

What is the Boys' Development Programme?

The Boys' Development Programme is a targeted social and emotional learning programme for secondary school boys who are at risk of disengagement or exclusion from school. Delivered through 12 weekly one-to-one sessions, the programme aims to strengthen boys' social and emotional skills, including emotional regulation, communication and conflict management, alongside their sense of identity and connection to school. The programme is designed to strengthen protective factors that may help boys remain engaged in school and reduce behaviours associated with exclusion, and a central feature is the opportunity to develop a consistent relationship with a trusted adult.

Why does this evaluation matter?

School engagement, absence and exclusion are closely interconnected. Evidence suggests that lower engagement with school can increase the risk of behavioural difficulties, absence and exclusion, while exclusion can in turn further weaken young people's connection to school. This is important, because school exclusion and persistent absence are strongly associated with later involvement in offending, with emerging evidence suggesting that exclusion may itself contribute to increased risk of youth custody. However, there is still relatively little robust UK evidence about which targeted approaches can strengthen school engagement and reduce the risk of exclusion.

What did the evaluation find?

The randomised controlled trial involved 486 boys across eight secondary schools in South London. The study received the Youth Endowment Fund's highest evidence security rating, reflecting the strength of the evaluation design and providing a high degree of confidence in the reliability of the primary finding.

The study found that:

- **The BDP had a small positive effect on boys' school engagement immediately after the programme**. Boys who received the BDP had slightly higher levels of school engagement than boys receiving usual school support.

- **Effects across the secondary outcomes were mixed.** The BDP had a moderate positive effect on reducing both behavioural difficulties and emotional difficulties, and a small positive effect on improving teacher bonding. There was also a moderate negative effect on peer difficulties, meaning that boys receiving the BDP reported greater peer difficulties. As these were secondary outcomes, they should be interpreted more cautiously.

- **Exploratory follow-up suggested that improvements may have strengthened over time**. Twelve weeks after the programme ended, the BDP had a moderate positive effect on school engagement. At this later follow-up, there was also a moderate positive effect on reducing behavioural difficulties, small positive effects on emotional difficulties and teacher bonding, and a small negative effect on peer difficulties.

- **Exploratory analysis of school administrative data provided encouraging evidence on exclusions**. Data from five of the eight schools showed a moderate reduction in the number of exclusion incidents and a large reduction in the duration of suspensions among boys receiving the BDP, with a small negative effect on attendance. These findings should be interpreted cautiously because the analysis was exploratory and administrative data were not available from all participating schools.

- **The BDP successfully reached its intended cohort and was generally delivered as intended.** The programme engaged boys from racially minoritised and low-income backgrounds and was supported by clear referral and screening processes, relatable practitioners and engaging programme content. Some challenges emerged around referrals for boys whose needs were less clearly suited to the programme, accessibility for boys with language or learning needs, and practical issues associated with delivery in schools.

The evaluation also provided exploratory evidence about how the BDP may bring about change. The quantitative findings were consistent with a pathway in which stronger relationships between boys and their project co-ordinators supported later improvements in school engagement. This was supported by qualitative findings, with boys describing project co-ordinators as approachable, trustworthy and easy to talk to.

Looking ahead

This evaluation makes an important contribution to understanding whether and how relationship-based social-emotional learning approaches can support boys experiencing difficulties with school engagement.

This is the result of a single study, and it should be noted that several of the positive findings - including those relating to the later follow-up and school administrative data - were

exploratory. Further research would therefore be valuable to understand whether these effects are replicated and sustained over a longer period.

Nevertheless, the findings provide important new UK evidence on targeted support for boys at risk of school disengagement and exclusion, while also highlighting the potential importance of consistent, trusted adult relationships.

Cordis Bright would like to thank every boy, school, practitioner and partner who took part in the study. Their contribution has helped strengthen the evidence available to schools, commissioners and policymakers seeking to support boys at risk of disengagement and exclusion.

1.3 South East London ICS. South London Prevention Framework

We're delighted to see the South East London Prevention Framework officially launched, following our work with South East London ICS to support its development.

The Framework is designed to help South East London ICS embed prevention as business-as-usual, make better use of evidence, data and insights, and focus resources on high-impact prevention to improve population health and support the future sustainability of the system. It is accompanied by a practical toolkit to support professionals with decision-making, prioritisation and evaluation when commissioning and delivering prevention work.

Cordis Bright provided consultancy and facilitated multi-agency collaboration throughout the Framework's development, supporting the thinking that underpinned the final product. It's fantastic to see that work now out in the world and providing a foundation for the ICS's approach to prevention, in line with the NHS 10 Year Health Plan's shift from sickness to prevention.

Read the Prevention Framework and access the toolkit here.

1.4 Cornwall Council's Youth Engagement Project

Cordis Bright has been funded by Youth Futures Foundation to conduct a two-armed randomised controlled trial (RCT) of Cornwall Council's Youth Engagement Project (YEP) – a multi-component programme for young people aged 16-24 who are Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET).

YEP combines one-to-one keyworker support with a 12-week Pre-Employment Vocational Training (PEVT) programme, with access to wider one-to-one or small-group support covering life skills, employability, functional skills, and wider support. The programme works with young people aged 16-24 who are NEET and living in Cornwall. It aims to support young people towards EET by building self-esteem, self-efficacy, and work readiness.

You can read more about the evidence base for YEP's approach on Youth Futures Foundation's website, here.

The evaluation is an efficacy randomised controlled trial (RCT) with an integrated implementation and process evaluation and cost evaluation. It will assess whether YEP is effective at improving EET outcomes for young people, as well as their self-esteem, agency and self-efficacy, and work readiness. Alongside the impact evaluation, the implementation

and process evaluation will explore how YEP works in practice, how it is experienced by young people and practitioners, and the factors that support successful delivery.

The evaluation is working in partnership with a group of young people from Cornwall as peer researchers. They are helping to inform the design of the evaluation, ensuring that research tools, consultation approaches and outputs are accessible, relevant and ethical.

The study began in March 2026 and is expected to finish in 2028.

1.5 New research from Cordis Bright team members

Dr Jordan Tomkins, a Consultant at Cordis Bright, has co-authored a new study in the Journal of Family Violence. Based on her doctoral research, this study examines whether partner stalking predicts subsequent episodes of intimate partner violence reported to police. Read the full, open-access study here.

Louise Ashwell, a Senior Consultant at Cordis Bright, has co-authored a new study in *BMC Women's Health*. The study reports findings from a feasibility trial of **IDEA³**, an online adaptation of an evidence-based campus sexual assault prevention programme. The study found IDEA³ was feasible and highly acceptable to participants, with promising changes in some outcomes. A large RCT involving nearly 2,000 students across six universities in the US and Canada is now underway. Read the full, open-access study here.

2 Adult social care and health

2.1 NHS England. Quality and Outcomes Framework 2025 – 2026

NHS England has published annual statistics from the Quality and Outcomes Framework (QOF), indicators covering key areas of clinical care and public health. The latest publication covers the period April 2025 to March 2026 and provides information on recorded disease prevalence, achievement against QOF indicators and personalised care adjustments.

The data cover 6,145 GP practices in England, representing 98.3% of practices. Results are available nationally and at regional, Integrated Care Board (ICB), sub-ICB and individual practice levels.

Key findings include:

- Hypertension (15.8%), depression (14.9%) and obesity (14.3%) were the conditions with the highest recorded prevalence in 2025/26.
- Non-diabetic hyperglycaemia saw the largest annual increase, rising by 0.7 percentage points compared with 2024/25.
- Overall, 4,660 practices (75.8%) achieved more than 90% of the QOF points available to them.
- The publication also reports substantial variation in personalised care adjustments, which allow patients to be excluded from particular QOF indicator calculations where specified circumstances apply. These were highest for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, at 28.5%, and lowest for smoking indicators, at 1.8%.

2.2 Local Government Association. Local Government Reorganisation: Adult Social Care Checklist

A new checklist to support councils undergoing local government reorganisation (LGR) to safely transfer and maintain adult social care services has been released by LGA. This supplements the LGA's broader LGR checklist by identifying activities specifically required for adult social care throughout the transition to new unitary authorities.

The checklist draws together existing guidance, resources and learning from previous reorganisations, including examples from Buckinghamshire, Dorset, Cumbria, North Yorkshire and Somerset. It structures recommended activities across different stages of reorganisation, from initial government decisions through to the establishment of new authorities.

The checklist highlights several areas requiring early planning, including workforce, service contracts, client data, IT systems and finance. Councils are encouraged to undertake due diligence on assets, liabilities, contracts and existing service arrangements, alongside detailed workforce planning.

2.3 Local Government Association. Health in All Policies Manual

Local Government Association (LGA) manual provides practical guidance for councils on adopting a Health in All Policies (HiAP) approach, which considers the health and health equity implications of decision-making across all areas of local government. It emphasises that health is shaped by wider social determinants including housing, employment, transport, education, planning and the environment, meaning improving population health requires action beyond public health and healthcare services.

The manual synthesises existing evidence, guidance, practical tools and examples from local government. It includes case studies illustrating approaches adopted by councils, alongside frameworks for assessing organisational readiness, selecting HiAP tools and measuring progress.

The manual highlights collaboration across council departments, the NHS and other local partners as central to effective implementation. It recommends embedding health considerations within strategies, budgets and partnerships; strengthening organisational capacity; using tools such as health impact assessments; and involving communities in decision-making.

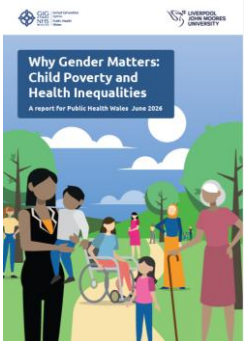
2.4 Local Government Association. Deliver, deepen and define: the next phase of English devolution

The LGA has published a statement setting out its priorities for the next phase of English devolution. It argues that further devolution can support inclusive and sustainable economic growth, improve living standards and enable better integration of public services by bringing decision-making closer to communities.

The statement builds on the LGA's wider work on place-based leadership and sets out a three-point plan: delivering existing commitments, removing barriers to further devolution, and defining the next generation of devolution.

The LGA calls for a clear timetable for delivering existing commitments and for meaningful devolution to be extended across England. It argues that local government reorganisation should not delay areas that are ready to pursue devolution and recommends greater availability and flexibility of integrated funding settlements. Looking longer-term, the LGA advocates strengthening local leaders' roles in areas including housing, health, skills, economic growth and prevention. It also calls for greater fiscal autonomy and financial certainty, alongside better integration of public services at place and neighbourhood level.

2.5 Public Health Wales. Why gender matters: Child poverty and health inequalities



Public Health Wales has published new research examining how gender inequality contributes to child poverty and health inequalities in Wales. The report explores how gendered differences in income, employment, caring responsibilities and access to resources accumulate across the life course and affect children and families.

The report synthesises international trend data, secondary statistics, existing research and policy evidence, taking an intersectional approach that considers factors including family structure, disability, ethnicity and caring responsibilities.

Key findings include:

- 31% of children in Wales live in poverty, with particularly high risks among lone-parent and larger families.
- Substantial health inequalities in Wales: healthy life expectancy in Wales is 19 years lower for women and 18.1 years lower for men in the most deprived areas compared with the least deprived.
- Women are disproportionately affected by low-paid and insecure employment and unpaid care, creating a ‘motherhood penalty’ that can intensify household financial pressures.

2.6 The Health Foundation. General practice funding in England

The Health Foundation has published new research examining how general practice in England is funded and the implications for government ambitions to shift more care from hospitals into communities. The report provides a comprehensive picture of changes in funding over the past decade.

The analysis finds that while overall spending on general practice has increased, it has not kept pace with wider NHS spending. General practice’s share of the NHS budget fell from 8.8% in 2015/16 to 8.3% in 2024/25, despite repeated policy commitments to increase investment in primary care. This comes as patient needs have increased and the number of full-time equivalent GPs relative to the patient population has fallen, although the wider general practice workforce has expanded.

The report argues that current funding arrangements risk undermining plans to deliver more care in community settings. It recommends a clear multi-year commitment to increase general practice’s share of NHS spending, alongside a review of payment mechanisms and how they align with policy objectives.

2.7 The King’s Fund. The single patient record explained: what could it mean for patients and the health and care system?

The King’s Fund has published new analysis exploring the government’s plans to introduce a Single Patient Record (SPR) in England. Proposed through the NHS Modernisation Bill, the SPR would bring together information from GP, hospital, community, mental health and social care records, giving patients and relevant professionals a more complete view of an individual’s health and care history.

The report examines how the SPR could operate, how patients and professionals would access information, and its relationship with existing infrastructure such as shared care records and the NHS Federated Data Platform.

The King’s Fund argues that better-connected records could improve patient safety and care co-ordination by giving professionals faster access to information on conditions, medications,

test results and previous care. This could be particularly valuable for people with complex needs who interact with multiple health and social care services. Patients would also gain access to their complete record through the NHS App. However, significant questions remain around implementation, data governance, cyber-security, privacy and public trust. The King's Fund concludes that, with appropriate safeguards and effective implementation, the SPR could be transformative for patient care and experience.

2.8 Joseph Rowntree Foundation. The economic insecurity trap

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation has published new research examining why economic insecurity persists and how it can become self-reinforcing. The report draws on the JRF–Nuffield Economic Insecurity Panel Study, a nationally representative survey of around 8,000 adults in Great Britain. Respondents were surveyed across three waves in March 2024, October 2024 and April 2025, allowing researchers to track how changes in people's financial circumstances were associated with later changes in economic insecurity.

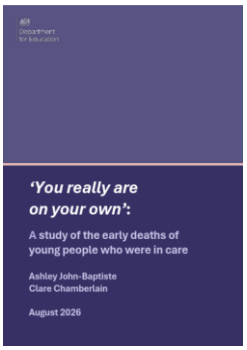
The study finds that financial setbacks, including unemployment, falling income, declining savings, higher housing costs and reduced working hours, substantially increase feelings of insecurity. However, the relationship also works in reverse: people experiencing greater insecurity tend to focus more on short-term financial survival, take fewer financial risks and save less, leaving them more exposed to future shocks.

Economic insecurity was particularly high among people who were unemployed, on low incomes, had little or no savings, rented privately, were single parents, had disabilities or held problematic debt.

The report concludes that policy should focus on strengthening household resilience, particularly by helping those with the weakest savings buffers build greater long-term financial security.

3 Children and Young People's Services

3.1 Department for Education. Review of early deaths of care leavers



The Department for Education has published an independent review examining the early deaths of care-experienced young people and how support could be improved. The review analysed all 112 deaths of care leavers aged 18–24 notified to the Department during 2025, alongside a subset of deaths among 16–17-year-olds. This was supplemented by in-depth conversations with professionals across 18 local authorities and, where possible, young people's families and friends, as well as roundtables with care-experienced young people and other stakeholders.

Key findings include:

- The review estimates a death rate of approximately 130 per 100,000 care leavers aged 18–24, three to four times that of the general population.
- More deaths occurred at age 18 than at any other age examined, highlighting the particular vulnerability of young people transitioning out of care.
- An estimated 36% of deaths likely died by taking their own lives. The suicide rate is potentially five times higher than among the general population. Females were significantly over-represented in suicide rates, potentially 15 times higher than that of the female rate for the general population.

The review identifies three key learning themes; being alone and readiness for adulthood, the drop in levels of support after turning 18 and workforce to help young people to make the transition to adulthood.

It also identifies five broad areas for change; workforce, improved support and awareness for those in custody, supported accommodation for young people leaving care, health services for those with medical conditions and lessons learned following the death of a young person.

3.2 Department for Culture, Media and Sport. Evaluation of the Enrichment Partnership Programme

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport has published an evaluation of the Enrichment Partnership Programme (EPP), a £2.73 million pilot designed to improve access to extracurricular activities and increase participation among pupils not already taking part in enrichment. Delivered between November 2023 and March 2025, the programme involved 17 coordinating organisations working with 166 secondary schools across the North East, North West and East of England.

NFER conducted a mixed-methods process and outcomes evaluation, combining surveys and monitoring data from schools and enrichment providers with interviews with coordinating organisations and programme stakeholders. Researchers also conducted 14 school case studies at baseline and 13 at follow-up, incorporating pupil surveys, interviews and focus groups.

The evaluation found improvements in schools' enrichment offers and partnerships: 72% reported links with external providers at follow-up, compared with 45% at baseline, while 70% felt their offer was better aligned with pupils' needs and interests.

However, evidence of increased pupil participation was mixed. Although 70% of schools perceived an increase, monitoring data and pupil surveys indicated participation remained broadly unchanged, with disadvantaged pupils still less likely to participate.

Pupil voice, providing activities during the school day and direct funding for schools were identified as potential routes to increasing participation.

3.3 Department for Education. Five to Twelve: Year 1 Report

The Department for Education has published the first findings from Five to Twelve, a new longitudinal study tracking children's wellbeing and educational outcomes throughout primary school. The study will examine factors associated with inequalities in children's development and attainment, including family circumstances, health, special educational needs (SEN) and the home learning environment.

Researchers randomly selected children from the National Pupil Database, with additional sampling of children eligible for Free School Meals (FSM). Between November 2023 and August 2024, 8,632 families of Year 1 children in state-funded education in England participated in home-based survey interviews, representing a 47% response rate. Children also completed cognitive assessments, with information collected from parents and teachers.

Key baseline findings include substantial inequalities at the beginning of primary school. Children eligible for FSM, with SEN, from lower-income households and whose parents had lower educational attainment generally experienced poorer outcomes across health, wellbeing, learning and attainment measures. For example, 30% of FSM-eligible children had 'atypical' socio-emotional difficulty scores, compared with 10% of other children. FSM-eligible children also achieved lower cognitive assessment scores and were less likely to be predicted by teachers to meet expected standards in maths and reading.

3.4 Department for Education. Post-16 education: pathways and outcomes for disadvantaged learners

The Department for Education has published new research examining post-16 education and employment pathways for disadvantaged young people in England. The study explores differences in attainment, earnings and experiences of being not in education, employment or training (NEET), particularly among learners eligible for free school meals (FSM) and those with special educational needs (SEN).

Researchers used the Longitudinal Education Outcomes study, linking education, employment, earnings and benefits records. Analysis of outcomes at age 25 included 579,750 learners who were aged 15 in 2012/13, while separate cohorts of young people were followed between ages 16 and 21 to examine NEET experiences.

Substantial inequalities persisted into adulthood. At age 25, 22% of FSM learners held a Level 6+ qualification, compared with 42% of non-FSM learners, while 21% earned over £30,000 compared with 38% respectively.

Among learners with SEN, only 15% achieved Level 6+, compared with 42% without SEN, and 19% earned over £30,000 compared with 38%.

Importantly, earnings inequalities remained even among young people achieving the same qualification level, suggesting that educational attainment alone does not eliminate differences in labour-market outcomes associated with disadvantage.

3.5 Action for Children. Building the foundations. Good practice for supporting young people with complex barriers to participation

Action for Children has published new research exploring how services can better support young people facing complex barriers to participation in education, employment and training. The paper forms part of its wider Young People and Work Review and focuses on young people experiencing overlapping challenges such as poverty, trauma, homelessness, poor mental health, care experience and neurodiversity.

Between June and August 2026, researchers conducted 14 semi-structured interviews and two focus groups with 25 frontline practitioners and managers across Action for Children services in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The study was supplemented by site visits, performance data, case studies and examples of employer partnerships.

The research identifies six principles of effective support: building trusted relationships; providing person-centred, holistic and trauma-informed support; addressing foundational needs such as housing and finances before focusing on employment; recognising progress beyond jobs or qualifications; providing meaningful opportunities to build skills and confidence; and maintaining support for as long as needed.

The report also highlights weaknesses in the existing evidence base for young people with complex needs and recommends longer-term local funding, expansion of the Youth Guarantee, trauma-informed workforce training and stronger evaluation infrastructure.

3.6 Department for Work and Pensions. Our Children, Our Future: Tackling Child Poverty: Monitoring and Evaluation – Baseline Report

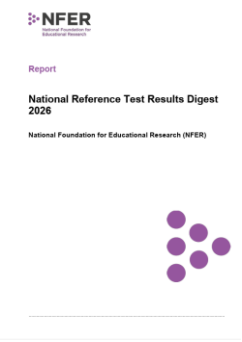
The Department for Work and Pensions has published a baseline report setting out how progress against the government's ten-year Child Poverty Strategy will be monitored and evaluated. The strategy aims to reduce child poverty and its impacts, focusing on improving families' financial security and children's opportunities.

The report establishes a 2024/25 baseline, drawing primarily on national statistics including the Households Below Average Income dataset. Progress will be assessed against two headline measures -relative low income after housing costs and deep material poverty - alongside eight indicators covering factors such as parental employment and earnings, savings, arrears and housing conditions. A theory-based evaluation will combine quantitative and qualitative evidence, including a four-year longitudinal study of parents and carers experiencing or at risk of poverty, policy evaluations and place-based research.

Baseline findings include:

- In 2024/25, 4 million children (27%) were living in relative low income after housing costs, unchanged from 2023/24, while 1.9 million (13%) experienced deep material poverty, a decrease of 100,000.
- Poverty risks remain particularly high among children in larger and single-parent families, ethnic minority families, families affected by disability and those living in rented accommodation.
- Government projections estimate relative child poverty will fall to 3.6 million (25%) by 2029/30.

3.7 National Foundation for Educational Research. National Reference Test Results Digest 2026



The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) has published the 2026 results of the National Reference Test (NRT), which tracks changes in Year 11 pupils' performance in English and maths over time. Conducted annually for Ofqual since 2017, the NRT provides evidence to support the awarding of GCSEs by comparing performance against equivalent grade 4, 5 and 7 standards established in 2017.

Testing took place between February and March 2026 using a nationally representative sample of secondary schools, stratified by school size and historical GCSE attainment.

The results show contrasting long-term trends. In English, 66.1% of pupils performed at or above the grade 4 standard and 50.3% at grade 5, representing statistically significant declines from the 2017 baseline. However, there was no significant change at grade 7. In maths, performance at grades 4 and 5 was not significantly different from 2017, while the proportion reaching the grade 7 standard increased significantly, from 19.9% in 2017 to 23.9% in 2026.

3.8 Children's Commissioner. Children referred to the Prevent programme

The Children's Commissioner has published new research examining children referred to the Prevent programme in England and Wales, with a particular focus on whether existing systems adequately support children who are fixated on violence but do not have a clear extremist ideology.

The report analyses Home Office Prevent statistics, including 4,715 child referrals in 2024/25, alongside additional data obtained using the Commissioner's statutory powers covering repeat referrals, referral outcomes and recorded mental health and neurodevelopmental needs. This was supplemented by qualitative interviews with six professionals, plus one adult and one child with experience of Prevent interventions.

Children accounted for 54% of all Prevent referrals in 2024/25, while 71% of child referrals involved no clear ideology, multiple ideologies or fascination with extreme violence. Yet 79% of children's referrals were closed without progressing through Prevent, rising to 86% among

those without a clear ideology. Education made 60% of referrals, and many closed cases were referred back to education rather than progressing to specialist support.

The Commissioner recommends a new multi-agency safeguarding pathway for children at risk of violence, clearer referral guidance, stronger evidence-based interventions and better data collection.

4 Criminal Justice

4.1 Home Office. Standards for stalking and domestic abuse perpetrator interventions

The Home Office has published updated national standards for organisations commissioning and delivering specialist interventions for perpetrators of stalking and domestic abuse in England and Wales. The framework aims to ensure interventions reduce harm while prioritising the safety and freedom of victim-survivors, including children.

The Home Office utilised a mixed-methods approach, including a rapid review of academic and grey literature and mapping of current perpetrator services. They also surveyed 54 commissioners and third-sector organisations, conducted nine action-learning sessions involving 34 experts from the stalking and domestic abuse sectors, and held two panels with seven victim-survivors to review the draft standards.

Through this process, the following seven overarching standards have been developed for interventions with stalking and domestic abuse perpetrators. The evidence underpinning each and their associated guidelines are documented in the full report.

- The priority outcome for perpetrator interventions should be increasing the safety and freedom of all victim-survivors, including children.
- Interventions should be located within a wider multi-agency response in which all agencies share the responsibility for identifying stalking and domestic abuse behaviour, enabling perpetrators to change and enhancing the safety and freedom (space for action) of victim-survivors.
- Interventions should be perpetrator-focused to enable them to take accountability for the harm they have caused, whilst treating them with respect, and offering them opportunities to choose to change.
- The right intervention should be offered to the right people at the right time.
- Interventions should be delivered equitably with respect to protected characteristics that intersect and overlap.
- Interventions focused on a specific form or context of perpetration should be delivered by staff who are skilled and supported in responding to that specific form or context.
- Monitoring and evaluation of interventions should take place to improve practice and expand the knowledge base.

4.2 Ministry of Justice. Estimated progression model tranche release volumes

This report sets out the methodology and estimates for the volume of offenders expected to be released on the first day of each progression model tranche release from October 2026 to June 2027.

Introduced through the Sentencing Act 2026 in response to prison capacity pressures, the model changes release arrangements for eligible people serving Standard Determinate Sentences (SDS), with implementation phased across ten tranches.

The Ministry of Justice estimates that approximately 4,500 prisoners will be released on the first day of the ten tranches, with individual tranches ranging from around 200 to 700 releases.

A further 1,400 prisoners are estimated to be ineligible following exclusions for offences including rape, certain child sexual offences, unlawful killing and indecent assault.

The report stresses that these are modelled estimates rather than precise forecasts, with actual releases dependent on future sentencing, prison population changes, secondary offences and additional days imposed for poor behaviour.

4.3 Centre for Crime and Justice Studies. Behind the Decline: How the criminal justice system is processing young adults

The Centre for Crime and Justice Studies has published new research examining why fewer young adults aged 18–24 are entering the criminal justice system, while those who do face increasingly punitive outcomes. The report builds on previous analysis showing a 65% fall in young adults appearing in court for serious offences between 2010 and 2024.

The research synthesises criminal justice data and existing literature on young adults, ethnicity and gender, informed by conversations with policy advisers, practitioners, academics and researchers. It examines diversion, decision-making across the justice system, gaps in ethnicity data and the use of remand for young women.

Key findings include:

- Although fewer young adults enter the system, a core group with complex needs remains.
- More than three-quarters of young adults who had received a custodial sentence by age 24 had previously been identified with special educational needs, while over two-thirds had received free school meals.
- It argues that ethnic disparities accumulate across policing, charging, prosecution, sentencing and rehabilitation, rather than resulting from a single decision point.
- The report also finds that young women continue to be remanded where cases ultimately receive non-custodial outcomes, sometimes to manage unmet needs.

The report recommends more holistic diversion, cross-agency approaches to addressing disparities and improved ethnicity and remand data.

4.4 Office for National Statistics. How a change in the Crime Survey for England and Wales questionnaire affected responses to questions on anti-social behaviour

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has published new analysis investigating whether a recent increase in people reporting that they experienced or witnessed anti-social behaviour (ASB) reflects a genuine rise or changes made to the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) questionnaire in April 2025. The CSEW surveys a nationally representative sample of people aged 16 and over living in households in England and Wales.

Researchers analysed CSEW data collected between April 2023 and March 2026, comparing responses across four randomly allocated questionnaire pathways. They used significance testing and interrupted time-series regression to assess the impact of removing household and vehicle security questions from two pathways in April 2025.

The proportion of respondents experiencing or witnessing ASB increased from 35.5% in the year ending March 2025 to 40.9% in 2026. The increase was larger among respondents receiving the altered questionnaire, indicating that the changes inflated the overall estimate. However, excluding these pathways still produced a 4.4 percentage-point increase, compared with 5.4 points across the full sample. ONS therefore concludes that most of the increase in ASB was genuine, although a relatively small proportion resulted from questionnaire changes. It will continue using the full sample while strengthening monitoring of future questionnaire changes.

4.5 Home Office. Notice, Check, Share guidance

The Home Office has published new ‘Notice, Check, Share’ guidance to help professionals working in sectors subject to the Prevent duty, including health, education and local authorities, identify and respond to concerns that someone may be at risk of radicalisation.

The guidance provides a three-stage framework for professional decision-making.

- Under ‘Notice’, professionals are encouraged to consider concerning behaviours in context. Potential indicators include expressing violent extremist views, supporting violence for ideological reasons, accessing extremist material or displaying a fascination with extreme violence. Importantly, a clearly identifiable ideology is not required for a Prevent referral, while vulnerabilities such as mental ill-health, adverse childhood experiences and neurodivergence should be treated as contextual factors rather than explanations in themselves.

- Under ‘Check’, professionals should gather relevant information and discuss concerns with safeguarding leads and colleagues before determining whether Prevent is appropriate. Concerns solely about issues such as knife crime, gangs or domestic abuse should generally be addressed through alternative safeguarding routes unless linked to terrorism.

- Finally, ‘Share’ advises professionals to make a police referral where a radicalisation risk remains, while continuing any other necessary safeguarding support alongside Prevent.