



CordisPulse

December 2024

Welcome to December's edition of the CordisPulse – 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.

At Cordis Bright, we are committed to addressing complex social challenges by fostering collaboration, embracing diverse perspectives, and using evidence to inform action. This month, we're proud to share a range of updates that highlight our work across critical areas, reflecting our dedication to creating meaningful and sustainable change.

From tackling food insecurity among young people to advancing equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in research, and from amplifying the voices of disabled people to joining the global movement against gender-based violence, our updates this month reflect the breadth and depth of our commitment to improving lives and systems. Each initiative underscores the importance of understanding systems holistically, engaging with lived experiences, and using practical tools to drive positive outcomes for communities.

We're particularly excited to share tools and resources developed through our work, including our refreshed [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion \(EDI\) toolkit](#) to embed inclusive practices across research projects and a guide for conducting accessible fieldwork with disabled people and their families. These resources are designed not only to enhance the impact of our own work but also to support others striving for equity and inclusion in their efforts.

Meanwhile, our focus on key social challenges is evident in our participation in [16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence](#), where we're sharing key insights based on a decade of our research and evaluation in domestic abuse, alongside practical recommendations for leaders, policymakers, and practitioners.

Finally, our report on [food security in Newham](#), part of the Shaping Places for Healthier Lives programme, showcases how systems thinking can address urgent issues like health inequalities, offering valuable lessons for local and national



stakeholders alike. This initiative, funded by the Health Foundation in partnership with the Local Government Association, empowers local authorities to tackle pressing health inequalities by addressing the root causes through systems thinking. Beyond Newham, our role as evaluators of the SPHL programme at a national level has deepened our understanding of how local systems can be reshaped to improve health outcomes and address inequalities. This work underscores our belief that solutions to complex issues require a whole-systems approach—one that prioritizes collaboration, innovation, and a deep understanding of the interconnected factors shaping lives and communities.

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.

We wish all our readers a peaceful festive season and a happy new year!

Best wishes,

Dr Stephen Boxford
Director & 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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Cordis Bright News

16 days of activism against gender-based violence

Cordis Bright are proud to mark 16 days of activism against gender-based violence. We have shared 16 key messages for policymakers, commissioners, funders, leaders, managers, practitioners, researchers and evaluators based on over a decade of our research and evaluation in domestic abuse, over on our [LinkedIn page](#). These messages span across four key areas:

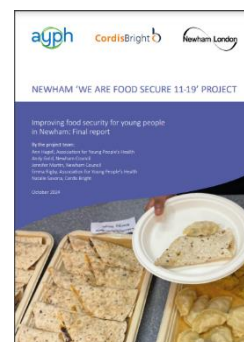
- Understanding need
- Understanding systems
- What works for delivering support
- What works for research and evaluation

We would love to hear from you about our key messages or our work on domestic abuse and gender-based violence. Please contact info@cordisbright.co.uk and one of our team will get back to you.

Cordis Bright. Improving food security for young people in Newham: Final report.

We are pleased to present the final report by the Newham 'We Are Food Secure 11-19' team which included our Principal Consultant, Dr Natalie Savona.

Natalie applied her expertise in systems thinking to 'We Are Food Secure 11-19', which focused on young people's food security in the London Borough of Newham. It was part of the Shaping Places for Healthier Lives (SPHL) programme funded by the Health Foundation in collaboration with the Local Government Association.



For SPHL, five local authorities were awarded grants to focus on a particular issue in their area using systems thinking to help improve health and address health inequalities. Natalie worked with the Newham public health team and the Association for Young People's Health, from the early stages of applying for the SPHL funding to the end of the three-year project. Using not just system mapping but also an overarching systems approach for framing the project, Natalie helped drive and document the process of system change.

As SPHL has drawn to a close, the Newham group has published a series of reports and briefings on the project, including not just a final project report but also some focused papers, for example, on financial incentives in shaping food provision in secondary schools.



Cordis Bright, with PPL, evaluated the SPHL programme, and separately, Natalie was part of the SPHL team in Newham, a role she held from her previous employment at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

Cordis Bright. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in projects: a toolkit.

This month, we have updated our resources for embedding Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) in our projects. This toolkit provides a set of tools for incorporating EDI considerations into different stages of projects undertaken by Cordis Bright. It is designed to help meet our commitments and aspirations as detailed in our EDI Strategy. We recognise that this is vital within all the research that we undertake, to ensure that it is robust, reproducible, ethical and relevant to societal issues. The toolkit is based on a review of available publications on EDI considerations within research. The intention is for project teams to use the toolkit throughout the lifecycle of research projects. We recognise that considerations will vary by project, so this toolkit provides a starting point for reflection and action, rather than a prescriptive set of instructions.



Cordis Bright. Conducting accessible fieldwork.

Consulting with disabled people and their families is a core component of our work. The evidence that it generates is hugely valuable. It helps to ensure that services are designed with disabled people in mind and deliver positive experiences and outcomes for disabled people who access them. But how do you undertake consultation in a way that is appropriate, meaningful and robust?

In light of these questions, and to coincide with UK Disability History Month, we have refreshed a tool on conducting accessible fieldwork. The tool distils a range of effective practice in this field drawing on desk-based research and combines it with our experience of working with – and learning from – disabled adults, disabled children and their families.

We think the toolkit will be useful to others working in the field. We recognise that this is an area of continuous improvement and would welcome any feedback you may have. Please contact Emma Andersen on EmmaAndersen@cordisbright.co.uk , or Hannah Nickson on HannahNickson@cordisbright.co.uk .



Adult Social Care and Health

Reports

Department of Health and Social Care. Feasibility study for survey of incomes and assets of adults with social care needs: summary report.

There is currently a lack of robust data about the income and assets of the population using adult social care services, as well as other information such as demographics and spending on care. The collection of this data can be complex and sensitive with important ethical implications.

This document summarises the findings from a research project exploring the feasibility of collecting data about the care needs, income and assets of people with care and support needs in England. The project explored different options for potential data collection and their benefits and drawbacks.

The project concludes that collecting the information DHSC needs on the care needs, assets and income of people with care and support needs will most likely require a combination of options, as none of the options examined could in isolation provide all the information required. A potential combination of approaches could include the following.

1. Ad-hoc surveys with people in receipt of care and proxy respondents
2. Using existing surveys to model the link between proxy measures and financial information to create derived variables
3. Linking data from surveys to data held by local authorities or government departments

Department of Health and Social Care. Evaluation of DHSC's Grant to Streamline Local Authority Adult Social Care Assessments.

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) commissioned Ipsos, in partnership with the Institute of Public Care at Oxford Brookes University (IPC), to conduct an evaluation of the Grant to Streamline Local Authority Adult Social Care Assessments. This was a one-off non-ringfenced grant of £27 million shared across all local authorities with responsibility for adult social care (ASC). The grant was released on 29 March 2023.

The aims of the grant are to support local authorities to continue the progress they have made in innovating their assessment approach and processes across 3 key impact areas:

- Reducing waiting lists.
- Maintaining and improving the quality of ASC assessments.



- Moving assessments to digital platforms, where appropriate, to improve access, choice and flexibility for people.

The key findings and conclusions of the evaluation are:

- **Grant Utilisation:** Local authorities employed the grant to reduce assessment backlogs, enhance assessment quality, and digitise processes.
- **Impact on Waiting Lists:** The grant contributed to a decrease in waiting lists, though the extent varied across regions.
- **Assessment Quality:** Efforts to maintain or improve assessment quality were noted, but measuring this impact was challenging due to limited data.
- **Digital Transformation:** The grant facilitated the adoption of digital platforms, improving access and flexibility for service users.
- **Challenges:** Local authorities faced obstacles such as workforce shortages and varying digital infrastructure, affecting the grant's effectiveness.

The report recommends that future initiatives should focus on sustained funding, workforce development, and robust data collection to assess impact.

Department of Health and Social Care. Evidence on costs associated with NHS-funded nursing care in 2023.

In October 2023, the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) conducted a cost collection survey to assess the expenses incurred by care homes in delivering NHS-funded nursing care (FNC). This analysis informed the FNC rate for 2024 to 2025.

Key Findings:

- **Scope of FNC:** The FNC rate supports nursing care provided exclusively by registered nurses, encompassing direct and indirect care, paid breaks, supervision, standby time, and related activities.
- **Data Collected:** The survey gathered information on gross registered nurse pay (including allowances, bonuses, overtime, and related costs) and employer on-costs such as National Insurance and pension contributions.
- **Exclusions:** Costs not directly linked to 'nursing care by a registered nurse'—like non-pay training expenses, nursing equipment, recruitment fees, and professional registration costs—were excluded from the analysis.

The authors provide a detailed cost breakdown to inform the FNC rate, aiming to align it with the financial realities faced by care homes. The analysis focuses on supporting appropriate compensation for nursing services and addressing factors that impact the delivery of care.

This analysis may be useful for care home administrators, financial planners, healthcare policymakers, and stakeholders in the adult social care sector, providing critical insights into the funding and operational aspects of nursing care services.

The Health Foundation. Trust and confidence in technology-enabled care.

The Health Foundation has released an in-depth analysis on the critical factors influencing trust and confidence in technology-enabled care, particularly in the context of remote monitoring. The report highlights that while robust design and data accuracy are essential, these alone are insufficient to build trust. Confidence in technology is closely linked to how effectively it enhances existing healthcare services and addresses clinical risks.

A key concern raised is the interplay between technology and health inequalities. If not carefully implemented, digital health solutions risk exacerbating existing disparities, which can undermine trust among underserved groups. The analysis also emphasises the interconnected nature of trust between healthcare professionals and patients, with each group's confidence influencing the other.

The Health Foundation recommends involving end users, such as patients and healthcare staff, in the design and deployment of technology to ensure it meets their needs. Open communication about a technology's limitations and capabilities is also crucial for fostering trust. By addressing these factors, the report argues, technology-enabled care can achieve its potential to improve patient outcomes and system efficiency.

Local Government Association. Earlier action and support: The case for prevention in adult social care and beyond.

Prevention is a central feature of the new Government's mission-led approach to national renewal. This joint publication makes the case for a shift towards taking action and offering support earlier, so that more people can live the lives they want. This creates a new opportunity to deliver.



The Government has committed to developing a new ten-year plan for health which encompasses three key shifts, from: analogue to digital; acute to community; and treatment to prevention. Prevention plays directly into the third shift, and more tangentially, but no less significantly in terms of potential, into the other two shifts.

This report has four key aims:

- Define: there is much talk of, and emphasis on, 'prevention' from the Government, the health and care sector, and civil society more widely. Inevitably, the word means different things to different people, which can hamper understanding of the role it could play in improving both people's lives

and value for money of the public pound. In this paper, LGA offer a definition based on the idea of ‘earlier action and support’ (EAAS).

- Evidence: demonstrating the social return on investment of activity typically categorised as ‘preventative’ is often where the argument for more resources falls down. In this paper, LGA therefore explore a range of interventions which have been selected based on certain criteria, such as publicly-available evaluation, including on social return on investment (SROI).
- Build: across the country we find examples of EAAS approaches that councils and their partners are taking or have taken previously. This needs to be captured, understood and recognised to ensure EAAS investment starts out from the strongest foundations.
- Act: LGA set out how the Government – working with councils and the wider sector – could begin to take forward meaningful action on EAAS (alongside other forms of prevention), towards meeting its overall aim of shifting towards prevention.

Local Government Association. Understanding the management and monitoring of waiting lists in adult social care.



There has been increasing interest in the use of metrics relating to waiting lists and waiting times for adult social care assessment, provision of support and direct payments and reviews of support. This is particularly relevant in light of growing demand (over 400,000 waiting for an assessment of their needs or for help to begin) and increasing complexity of need. However, the differences between waiting lists, different approaches in how councils manage these and in how they record initial contacts, and other activity makes any meaningful comparison or national overview and understanding difficult to achieve.

This work to support better outcomes and experiences for people by informing a shared understanding of adult social care waiting times and waiting lists, to in turn inform the appropriate development and use of metrics locally, regionally and nationally, for performance and insight purposes.

A roundtable was organised so that practice on managing the situation, mitigating risks, and reducing waits could be shared. The aim of this stakeholder engagement was to shape an approach that helps us collectively to establish a shared understanding of how data can be used effectively:

- in the context of how councils understand and manage their adult social care waiting lists and waiting times
- to provide better insight and understanding of the challenges and people’s experiences (people supported, their carers and frontline staff)



- to promote informed self-assessment and improvement
- minimising the reporting burden and ensuring a consistent approach to metrics in this space.

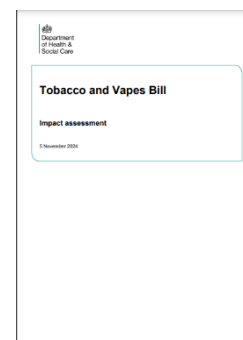
Two distinct elements appear to be being considered nationally, those being:

- how are council and regions currently understanding their waiting lists and the potential impacts on those waiting
- can we identify metrics that will help councils and regions to compare practice and share learning?

Briefings

Department of Health and Social Care. The Tobacco and Vapes Bill: impact assessment.

The Department of Health and Social Care has released an impact assessment for the Tobacco and Vapes Bill, aiming to create a smoke-free generation and address youth vaping. This assessment is likely to be useful for public health officials, policymakers, retailers, and advocacy groups involved in tobacco control and youth health initiatives. Key measures include:



- **Progressive Tobacco Sales Ban:** Prohibiting the sale of tobacco products to individuals born on or after 1 January 2009, effectively phasing out tobacco access for future generations.
- **Enhanced Smoke-Free Zones:** Extending existing smoking bans to certain outdoor areas, particularly those frequented by children and vulnerable groups, to reduce passive smoking risks.
- **Vape Marketing Restrictions:** Banning advertising, promotion, and packaging of vaping products that appeal to children, aiming to curb the rise in youth vaping.
- **Licensing and Enforcement:** Introducing a licensing scheme for retailers selling tobacco and vape products, with strengthened enforcement to ensure compliance.

Department of Health and Social Care. Mental Health Bill 2025: fact sheet.

On 6 November 2024, the UK government introduced a significant [Mental Health Bill](#) aimed at modernising the Mental Health Act to enhance patient care and autonomy. New laws seek to give patients sectioned under the Mental Health Act more dignity and say over their care.

Key reforms include:

- **Greater Patient Involvement:** Patients detained under the Mental Health Act will have more say in their care, supported by statutory care and treatment plans. Family members and carers will also play a more prominent role in decision-making.
- **Protecting Vulnerable Groups:** The Bill seeks to prevent the inappropriate detention of individuals with learning disabilities and autistic people, ensuring they receive suitable and specialised support rather than being sectioned unnecessarily.

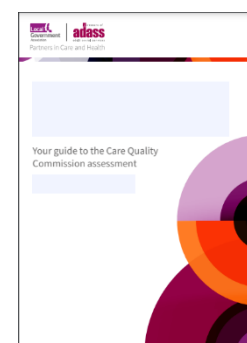
- **More Humane Crisis Responses:** Police cells will no longer be used for individuals experiencing acute mental health crises, with investment directed towards community-based alternatives and crisis response services.
- **Cultural Shifts:** The reforms aim to reduce racial disparities in mental health detentions and improve overall transparency and accountability within the system.

Tools and Guidance

Local Government Association. Your guide to Care Quality Commission assessments for adult social care in councils.

This short booklet aims to give those responsible for preparing for CQC assessment an 'off the shelf' set of information and guidance to share with staff.

It contains the information staff need to understand the CQC assessment process for local authority adult social care, and what staff can do to prepare.

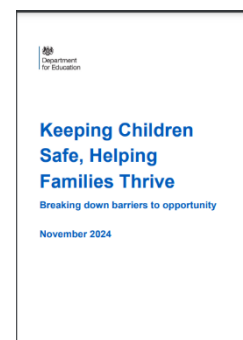


Children and Young People's Services

Reports

Department for Education. Keeping children safe, helping families thrive.

This policy statement sets out the government's commitment to whole system reform of the children's social care system. It also outlines a commitment to support children to live in family settings where children cannot remain at home, including through kinship or foster care, rather than residential care. Alongside this, the statement sets out ambitions to fix the broken care market, and ensure the system is working effectively for vulnerable children and families.



Department for Education. Children with complex needs who are deprived of liberty.

This report investigates the growing use of deprivation of liberty orders for children in the United Kingdom and highlights the urgent need for reform. These orders, now issued at a rate of over 1,000 annually, are used for children at high risk of harm to themselves or others. Children subject to these orders typically have complex needs, unaddressed trauma, or mental health conditions. Many are in the care system and have histories of neglect, abuse, or exploitation. Others, including children with autism or learning difficulties, face deprivation of liberty due to behaviours linked to their conditions.



While the orders aim to ensure safety, they impose severe restrictions such as constant supervision, limited contact with the outside world, and restraint, often leaving children isolated and hidden from public view. The report finds that most affected children are in the care system and face unsuitable living arrangements, including unregistered homes, Airbnbs, and hospital wards. These environments often exacerbate trauma rather than providing the therapeutic support needed to address the underlying causes of their behaviours.

This research included interviews with children to understand their experiences of being deprived of their liberty. Many children described feeling unsupported, let down by the system, and burdened by restrictions that impact their mental health, education, and relationships. Experiences varied depending on the quality of care, with some reporting better outcomes in settings that prioritised individualised support and maintained positive relationships.

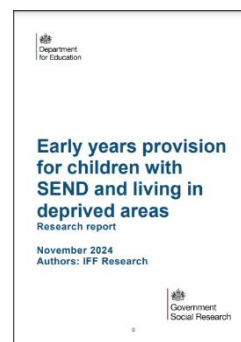
The report calls for a statutory framework to ensure children's rights are protected and stresses the need for more therapeutic children's homes and early intervention.

Department for Education. Early years provision for children with SEND and in deprived areas.

This research aims to better understand childcare and early years provision among providers caring for children aged 0 to 4 with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and those working in deprived areas.

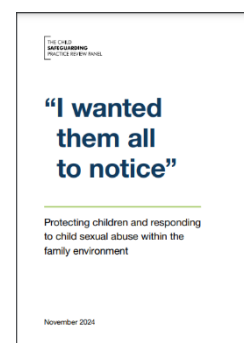
This research involved in-depth quantitative analysis of data collected in the 2023 childcare and early years provider survey, and findings from 22 in-depth interviews with early years providers. The main findings are that:

- between 2019 and 2023 an increasing proportion of providers are looking after children with SEND (particularly those with more complex needs)
- providers value and want more access to special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs) and training to help them more quickly identify children with SEND, navigate paperwork, access funding streams and provide the appropriate support for these children
- some providers reported challenges engaging parents of children eligible for additional funding such as the disability access fund and early years pupil premium



Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel. National review into child sexual abuse within the family environment.

This national review set out to explore the challenges that feature in the identification, assessment and response to child sexual abuse within the family environment. It recommends changes to local and national multi-agency safeguarding policy and practice to better reflect evidence about how to protect children and support family members. It has uncovered significant and long-standing issues. Children who are sexually abused by someone in their family are frequently not being identified by practitioners, nor are they receiving the response needed for their ongoing safety and recovery. Child sexual abuse in the family environment has been allowed to thrive in secrecy and silence for far too long.



The key findings of the review illustrate the scale of the challenge facing practitioners, and indeed wider society, in identifying, responding to and preventing child sexual abuse in the family environment:

- Practitioners working with children and families have not been equipped with the knowledge, skills and practical guidance to respond confidently to concerns. This may stem from uncertainties about what can and cannot be said to children

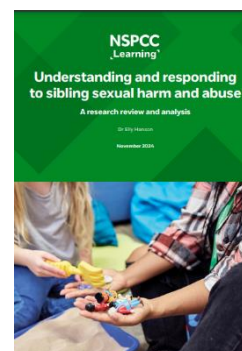
- A lack of understanding of parents' and carers' contexts and vulnerabilities, and especially the impact of domestic abuse and coercive control
- Practitioners across all agencies were not routinely identifying and acting on signs of sexual abuse
- Once concerns had been raised, there was often a lack of thorough investigation and effective action to safeguard and support children.

With this review, the authors aim to break this silence and drive whole-system change that empowers practitioners to identify and respond to concerns of child sexual abuse, putting the needs of children first, confident in the support of senior leaders at local and national level.

NSPCC. Understanding and responding to sibling sexual harm and abuse.

This report examines the prevalence of sibling sexual harm and abuse, the nature and dynamics of this type of harm and the different risk factors for children and families.

Sibling sexual abuse sits within a broad range of sexual behaviours between siblings, including those behaviours which are problematic or harmful but not necessarily abusive. The report explores how different definitions and understandings of sibling sexual harm and abuse can impact professional practice.



The discussion and findings are informed by a review and analysis of qualitative and quantitative research on this topic from 1980 to 2024.

The research reviewed in the report provides a basis for developing good practice principles in understanding and responding to sibling sexual harm and abuse. The report aims to inform and support the development of services to help meet the needs of children and families experiencing sibling sexual harm and abuse.

Local Government Association. Girls involved in youth violence: Key findings and recommendations.

This research explores the situation facing local councils and partners around girls and young women involved in youth violence, primarily as perpetrators. Despite girls accounting for 13 per cent of proven youth offences in 2022, their involvement in violence remains relatively invisible and support services are rarely specifically catered to girls and young women. There are higher rates of arrest and criminalisation of Black and ethnic minority young women compared to white young women due to racialised stereotypes in relation to crime.



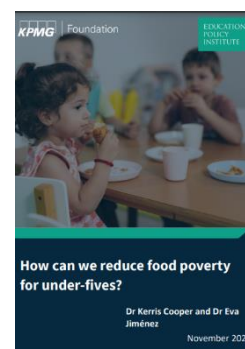
The research primarily uses the term 'involved in violence' rather than 'perpetrators of violence' to avoid labelling girls as 'perpetrators'. The research instead explores the complex circumstances that led to girls becoming violent and/or involved with violent peer groups or gangs.

Key findings:

- **Increase in assaults on frontline workers:** A rise in assaults on police officers, ambulance, and social workers was reported by several local councils. This is attributed to girls' feelings of being let down and re-traumatised by interactions with these services.
- **Low-level crime and violence:** Reported common offences among girls include shoplifting, common assault, and Actual Bodily Harm (ABH), with serious violence considered to be rare.
- **Gang involvement and criminal exploitation:** Girls are perceived to be involved in gang activities like drug transportation and selling drugs in county lines but often go undetected due to gender stereotyping. Instances of girls firstly being exploited by gang members and then exploiting others as a survival strategy were noted.
- **Joint enterprise and exploitation:** Councils reported cases where girls are implicated in serious violence through manipulation by male peers to lure boys or men into locations where they would be attacked by other boys.
- **Peer group violence:** Peer-on-peer violence within school and community settings was reported by participants, with instances often being filmed and shared on social media. Violence can be a means for girls to gain credibility, social acceptance and establish their identity within peer groups.

Education Policy Institute. How can we reduce food poverty for under-fives?

The aim of this report is to understand more about food poverty in the early years and what can be done to effectively address it. The report addresses this through a series of evidence reviews and expert interviews with key organisations whose work focuses on food poverty and/or early years. The report considered evidence on the causes and consequences of food poverty for under-fives; the effectiveness of existing national policies, namely the Healthy Start Scheme and free early years meals; examples of local place-based approaches to addressing food poverty; and what can be learnt from what other countries are doing.





Education Policy Institute. Children with complex needs who are deprived of liberty.

Children experience a deprivation of liberty when restrictions are imposed on their freedom which go beyond what would normally be expected for a child of their age, and this happens without valid consent. Children in England can be deprived of their liberty in secure settings, specifically custodial settings (for youth justice reasons), secure children's homes (for welfare reasons) and mental health units (for assessment and treatment). A deprivation of liberty can also occur in other settings, such as the child's home, a children's home, or residential school, but the Children Act 1989 does not have provision for a child to be deprived of liberty other than in a secure setting.



Children who become subject to deprivation of liberty orders tend to have complex needs and histories, and the behaviours that cause concern may be a manifestation of trauma and mental health conditions that have not been addressed. Most are in the care system at the point of application for the order and many, though not all, will have suffered neglect, abuse or exploitation. There are also children who are deprived of liberty primarily due to behaviours linked to autism or learning difficulties, with restrictions sought to manage and support them safely, although many of these children have also experienced trauma and adversity.

Two key messages stood out from the report:

First, far fewer children should be deprived of their liberty. There is a critical need for high quality registered children's homes which can provide safe accommodation and therapeutic support for children living with trauma and at risk of harm, so that the core reasons for their behaviours can be addressed, in the least restrictive way possible, to enable them to thrive and achieve their potential.

Second, in the small number of cases where it is necessary to deprive children of their liberty, that should never be in an illegal children's home and should be based on a clear legislative and statutory framework. That means the law on depriving children of their liberty needs to be amended, with clarity and transparency provided through a statutory framework and guidance, to ensure that children have a stronger voice in the process and there is greater scrutiny of the effectiveness of the order and the quality of care they are receiving.

Briefings

Department for Education. Regional Care Cooperatives (RCCs): pathfinder regions.

The Department for Education has launched two pathfinder regions, Greater Manchester and the South East, to pilot Regional Care Co-operatives (RCCs), as part of its reforms to children's social care. RCCs are local authority-led bodies designed to improve care for children by commissioning placements, developing new forms of care, and addressing foster parent recruitment challenges. With funding of



up to £8.46 million per region, the pathfinders will focus on forecasting demand, market shaping, and creating regional sufficiency strategies.

This briefing is valuable for local authorities, care providers, and commissioners aiming to understand RCCs' role in creating better outcomes for children.

Bevan Foundation. Childcare in Wales.

Accessing good quality, affordable childcare is a challenge for many families in Wales. Among the main barriers facing families are:

- Childcare costs are often not affordable
- It can be difficult to find childcare that meets the needs of the child/ family
- Parents with disabled children or children with additional learning needs face particular challenges when it comes to finding appropriate childcare with a lack of appropriate provision across Wales.
- Accessing support with childcare is complex, with some parents excluded from accessing some schemes.

These barriers lead to parents being locked out of work, leaving families unable to leave the poverty they experience. Children also miss out on the educational and the developmental benefits of childcare.

The Expert Advisory Group on Childcare have identified three actions regarding early years and childcare that should be a priority for the Welsh Government over the coming months. These actions will enable the Welsh Government to more effectively support thousands of children, deliver on its existing pledges, and setting a positive direction of travel for broader reform into the medium term. These actions are:

- The Welsh Government should commit to Phase 3 of its phased expansion of Early Years Provision from April 2025
- The Welsh Government should increase its expenditure on childcare and make more data available as to how much funding it commits to childcare policy
- The Welsh Government should recognise the centrality of childcare to addressing child poverty.

Bevan Foundation. Challenges to Free School Meals and No Recourse to Public Funds in Wales: A briefing.

In October, the Bevan Foundation launched a [Fair Free School Meal campaign](#), urging Welsh Government to extend eligibility for free school meals to all children, regardless of immigration status. In this briefing, the Bevan Foundation address some of the questions about implementation that have arisen in their conversations with decision-makers and stakeholders.



This briefing highlights:

- In 2022, the UK Government permanently extended eligibility in England for free school meals to all families with NRPF whose household income was below a minimum threshold. This was done via policy change and without any amendment to primary legislation.
- Free school meals are funded by Welsh Government. Any extension of eligibility would also sit within the Welsh Government budget.
- Including children from low-income households affected by NRPF in free school meal eligibility would represent less than a 1.7 per cent increase in numbers in Wales.
- A fair and inclusive free school meals policy is a children's rights issue. Children in secondary schools cannot wait any longer for Fair Free School Meals.

Criminal Justice

Reports

Ofsted. Multi-agency responses to serious youth violence: working together to support and protect children.

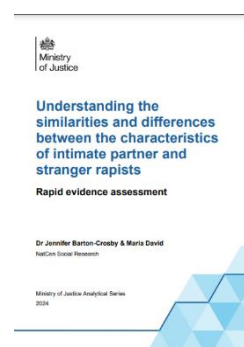
Ofsted, alongside the Care Quality Commission (CQC), HM Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP), HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) have undertaken joint targeted area inspections (JTAs) of Children's Social Care, the police, education, youth offending services and relevant health services, and other key safeguarding partners, to understand the multi-agency response to children affected by serious youth violence in six local authority areas in England.

The inspections revealed that while some areas have effective multi-agency strategies, there are significant inconsistencies in practice. Key findings include:

- **Strategic Responses:** Not all local partnerships have a clear, coordinated strategy to tackle serious youth violence, leading to fragmented efforts.
- **Early Intervention:** There is a lack of early identification and support for at-risk children, resulting in missed opportunities to prevent escalation.
- **Information Sharing:** Inconsistent sharing of information among agencies hampers the ability to form a comprehensive understanding of a child's circumstances.
- **Training and Resources:** Frontline practitioners often lack the necessary training and resources to effectively address serious youth violence.

Ministry of Justice. Characteristics of intimate partner and stranger rapists.

The Ministry of Justice commissioned the National Centre for Social Research to conduct a rapid evidence assessment examining the characteristics of individuals who commit rape against adults, focusing on differences between intimate partner rapists and stranger rapists. The report is intended for policymakers, criminal justice professionals, and researchers seeking to enhance their understanding of rape perpetrator characteristics to develop targeted prevention and intervention strategies.



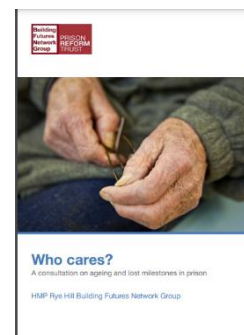
The report includes analysis of demographics, offending histories, offending behaviours and motivations of rape perpetrators using studies from the UK, North America, and Europe.

The authors highlight a scarcity of research directly comparing intimate partner and stranger rapists, particularly within the UK context. Most studies focus on sexual coercion in heterosexual relationships or analyse administrative data on known

stranger rape cases. The report underscores the need for further research to better understand these perpetrator profiles and to inform effective interventions.

Prison Reform Trust. Who cares? A consultation on ageing and lost milestones in prison.

This report, 'Who Cares', looks at the concerns of an ageing prison population, and asks whether the current prison system and its policies will be able to meet the needs of an eventual older majority, given that people aged over 60 are the fastest growing age group within English and Welsh prisons. Five questions were posed to 32 prisoners in invited focus groups, with efforts made to ensure representation of all age groups of long-term prisoners, including those who will grow old during their sentence, not just those already part of the older generation.

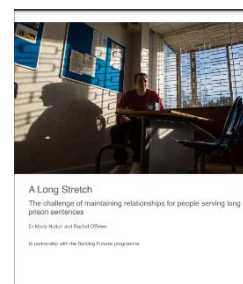


Based on these consultations, five core messages stood out:

- Missing out on a generation of life and its milestones has consequences.
- Prisoners fear growing old—in prison or outside it.
- Prisons need a programme of geriatric healthcare, and adapted regimes for older prisoners. Ageing prisoners can find hope and solace in self-development, and in community.
- Nobody should die in prison.

Prison Reform Trust. The challenge of maintaining relationships for people serving long prison sentences.

This report explores the shifting landscape within which this work takes place and that shapes the nature of prison life, including people's ability to maintain supportive relationships. Alongside increases in the overall prison population, this includes a long-term rise in the number of people serving custodial sentences over 10 years (a trend that looks set to continue). These trends compound pressures on a system that has been overcrowded every year since 1994,² and in which staff shortages are endemic.³ These pressures present significant challenges to those living and working inside, to government, to the prison system and to organisations providing services in prison.



This report underlines how the prison system - behind the curve, under-resourced and emotionally charged in the public imagination - needs to be enabled to contend with disparate current and future needs. It underlines the importance of ensuring the prison system not only better meets current need, but is also fit for the future, treating people with dignity (including when dying) and enabling them to live meaningful lives in the constrained circumstances of prison. The contribution that supportive relationships play to this end has been highlighted by the Farmer reviews of 2017



and 2019 and the measures that have flowed from this. Although long overdue, the government has also acknowledged the need for a strategy for older people in prison.

Briefings

Ministry of Justice, Home Office. New measures to protect victims of domestic abuse.

The UK government has announced new Domestic Abuse Protection Notices and Orders, offering stronger safeguards for victims and expanded tools to address abusive behaviours. These measures unify protections across family, civil, and criminal courts, ensuring a more cohesive approach. Police can issue Notices immediately after an incident, providing swift protection, while Orders can now last indefinitely, addressing the need for sustained safety.

Innovations include the use of electronic tagging by family courts in severe cases and mandatory behaviour change programmes for perpetrators. The Orders also allow third parties, such as friends, family, or police, to apply on behalf of victims, reducing the burden on survivors. Breaches of these Orders will constitute a criminal offence, punishable by up to five years in prison.

The programme will be piloted in Greater Manchester, parts of London, and by the British Transport Police, with expansion to Cleveland and North Wales planned for 2025 and a national rollout to follow. These changes mark a significant step forward in protecting victims and addressing the root causes of domestic abuse.

Ministry of Justice, HM Prison and Probation Service. End of lifetime licences for rehabilitated IPP offenders.

The UK government has announced a major reform to the management of Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) sentences, ending lifetime licence requirements for rehabilitated offenders. Under the new rules, IPP offenders who have demonstrated sustained progress in the community for at least ten years will no longer need to adhere to lifelong restrictions. This change aims to provide greater fairness while maintaining public safety.

IPP sentences, abolished in 2012, continue to affect thousands of individuals who remain under licence. While many offenders face strict conditions even after release, the reform acknowledges that those who have demonstrated rehabilitation should be given the opportunity to move on from their past. Public protection remains a priority, with a rigorous review process in place to assess eligibility for the removal of licence conditions.

This change is expected to reduce the burden on probation services while providing rehabilitated individuals with a clearer pathway to reintegration. The Ministry of Justice describes the reform as a significant step in ensuring the justice system is fair, effective, and focused on rehabilitation.

Youth Justice Board for England and Wales. Youth Justice Board anti-racism statement.

The Youth Justice Board (YJB) for England and Wales has released a statement outlining its commitment to anti-racism and addressing racial disparities within the youth justice system. The YJB plans to enhance data transparency by publishing evidence on ethnic disproportionality and providing tools to support local areas in addressing disparities. A new pathfinder project in the West Midlands will explore approaches to tackling racial inequality, with findings shared to inform broader practice. By fostering accountability and sharing effective local strategies, the YJB aims to create a fairer, more equitable system for children from Black, Mixed heritage, and other ethnic minority backgrounds.

Tools and Guidance

Parole Board. Neurodiversity Guidance.

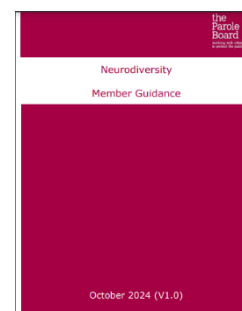
This guidance is intended to aid understanding of neurodiversity and improve support for neurodivergent individuals in the parole process. It is intended for Parole Board members, criminal justice professionals, and advocates working to ensure equitable treatment for neurodivergent individuals within the legal system.

The guidance defines neurodiversity as the natural variation in human neurological functioning, encompassing conditions like autism, ADHD, and acquired brain injuries. Studies indicate that up to half of the adult prison population may be neurodivergent, underscoring the importance of tailored support within the parole system.

The guidance provides information on the various initiatives to address neurodiversity in the Criminal Justice System. It highlights the key principles that panels must follow when reviewing the case of a prisoner with a known neurodivergent condition, as well as good practice for those without diagnoses. The guidance also gives specific advice on different neurodivergent conditions. It emphasises that Parole Board panels must consider individual needs and offers information on what these needs may look like, as well as how panels can support individuals who may be struggling with things such as communication, emotional dysregulation, and sensory overload.

Key points:

- Role of Neurodiversity Support Managers (NSMs): NSMs assist prisons in identifying and supporting neurodivergent prisoners, developing "passports" that outline individual needs to inform parole panels.
- Needs-Based Approach: The guidance advocates for focusing on individual needs rather than formal diagnoses, addressing areas such as communication challenges, emotional regulation, and sensory sensitivities.





The guidance offers strategies for parole panels to accommodate neurodivergent individuals, including clear communication, flexible procedures, and consideration of unique behavioural presentations.