

Transitions to adulthood

The case for a cross-departmental taskforce

Produced by:





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Introduction

In 2018, The Children's Society's 'Crumbling Futures' report revealed the extent to which 16 and 17 year olds face multiple disadvantages across different areas of their lives. These multiple issues put their health, safety and long-term outcomes at risk. The research highlighted that many vulnerable 16 and 17 year olds need more support as they move into adulthood

One in five 16 year olds experience five or more complex issues. Their age means these young people often fall between the cracks of children's and adults' services and are left without support.¹ Many face further challenges as support drops off overnight after their 18th birthday, making the transition into independent adulthood difficult.

This report contains essays from organisations who work with 16 and 17 year olds. It also highlights the experiences of young people, bringing to life the complexity of the issues that vulnerable teenagers can face as they approach adulthood.

The issues this age group can face – mental ill health, poverty, and homelessness – are rarely experienced in isolation. Many young people are simultaneously managing challenges across different aspects of their lives. Too often they must cope with these problems alone.

Young people face barriers to accessing support, and a cliff edge in that support at 18. They are often let down by universal services (such as education), by targeted and specialist services (such as child protection), and by more complex structures (such as youth justice or immigration systems). The key theme in this report is the lack of support young people are afforded as they traverse the difficult transition to adult life.

There has been progress in recognising the need to improve transitions for young people – eg changes to the 'Working Together' guidance, and a commitment in the NHS Long Term Plan to move to a model of 0 to 25 healthcare provision – yet young people still face huge barriers in accessing support. There is much more to be done.

This report outlines steps that Government departments and other agencies should take to improve transitions for young people. However, no single Government department or agency can take on this challenge by working alone. A solution to addressing multiple disadvantage in young people's lives will require a co-ordinated response.

For this reason, we recommend that the Government forms a cross-departmental taskforce to look into transition planning for older teenagers as they move into adulthood, to ensure the best outcomes for vulnerable young people.

Together, we can ensure that young people in Britain have the best chance to succeed as they begin their journey into adult life.



Mental Health



Children & Young People's
Mental Health Coalition



Championing advice and counselling

1 in 6

17 to 19 year olds
experience a
mental health problem²

17 to 19 year old
girls are more than

**twice
as likely**

as boys to have a
mental health disorder³

At 16 and 17, young people are gaining greater independence and preparing to juggle new responsibilities, as well as dealing with the physiological and emotional changes that come with adolescence. These vulnerabilities make this age group more likely than younger children to experience mental health difficulties.

Sixteen and 17 year olds are the biggest service users of NHS mental health services.⁴ They have needs distinct from those of both younger children and adults, and require tailored support. But young people often face barriers to accessing support and end up falling between the cracks of both child and adult services.

Increasing recognition of the specific needs of this age group is welcome, with a number of positive steps having been made to improve support. Most recently, the NHS Long Term Plan 2019⁵ committed to creating a comprehensive offer for 0 to 25 year olds, reaching across mental health services for children, young people and adults. The Mental Health Act Review (2018)⁶ put forward recommendations to improve decisions around admissions and treatment for 16 and

17 year olds. Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision: A Green Paper ⁷ set out proposals to create a network of mental health support in educational settings, committing to setting up a cross-government partnership to look at the needs of 16 to 25 year olds.

However, it is clear there is more to be done. The proposals in the Government's Green Paper will initially only be rolled out to one fifth of the country by 2022, leaving thousands of 16 and 17 year olds across the country without support in the meantime. Furthermore, many 16 and 17 year olds will be outside of educational settings. Some will be in apprenticeships or training. Others may not be in any education, employment or training all together (NEET).

The Children's Society's Crumbling Futures research found that 16 and 17 year olds known to children's services were more likely to be NEET and that young people who said that they were not happy/ satisfied with their lives at 16 and 17 were 2.5 times more likely to report that they were NEET at ages 18 and 19. Further clarification is therefore needed on how the new reforms plan to reach all young people. Equally, the NHS Long Term Plan sets out ambitious plans

to support this age group, but at present local mental health services vary greatly in quality across the country.⁸ More needs to be done to ensure consistency of support.

Given that Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) will no longer be required to produce Local Transformation Plans to outline how they will improve children and young people's mental health services past 2021, a new benchmarking standard for the implementation of the Long Term Plan is needed to ensure that 16 and 17 year olds have improved access to high quality and consistent information, advice and support.

Investment in services for 16 to 25 year olds over the next few years will be crucial to support 16 and 17 year olds to transition into adulthood with improved outcomes. We know that early intervention in young adult years can be effective in reducing life-course impairment, but right now young adults are currently less likely to receive treatment than other age groups.⁹

However, there are a number of models beginning to address the needs of 16 and 17 year olds across the country which we can learn from. Youth Information, Advice and Counselling Services (YIACS) provide holistic support

for young people (typically aged 13 to 25) including emotional, health, social and practical needs, putting a focus on tackling transition periods.¹⁰ Camden's Minding the Gap programme has worked with a young people's board to develop a transitions protocol and training programme for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) workers, developed 'transition champion' roles in adult services, and set up a fortnightly multi-agency panel to improve transitions.¹¹

These services demonstrate how both NHS and voluntary sector services can support young people effectively, with many voluntary services playing a vital role in improving outcomes for young people in this space.^{12,13} However, with some areas of the country such as Birmingham and Norfolk¹⁴ already moving to develop transitional mental health services for 0 to 25 year olds, we expect to see a wider drive towards developing transitional services. It will be increasingly important that such models and practice are evidence based and are evaluated for impact on young people's outcomes, to ensure that they are effective for all children and young people.

Potential solutions

- CCGs should improve coordination between mental health service providers and other key agencies to provide support for young people aged 16-25 who are transitioning to adult mental health services. NHS England should test and evaluate emerging service models seeking to address issues around transitions, to ensure that they are effective for all children and young people. This includes initiatives aimed at 0-25 year olds, paying specific attention to the transition into adulthood.
- As work is underway to implement the NHS Long Term Plan, NHS England should establish a benchmarking standard for transition plans laid out in the NHS Long Term plan to ensure that young people have improved access to high quality and consistent information, advice and support as they approach the point at which they will have to leave Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services.

Hannah's story*

After struggling to get counselling through CAMHS, my therapist basically disappeared after a couple of really difficult sessions. By the time they found someone else I was too old for CAMHS and adult services wouldn't take me till I was 18. Luckily, I was also in touch with a local youth advice and counselling service at Berwick Youth Project – who have been amazing.

I'm 23 now and for 10 years they've been my lifeline. From helping me deal with the death of my Dad to making sure I had a laptop to start uni, they consistently go above and beyond for me. After my own experiences, I couldn't imagine building that sort of trust anywhere else.

Hannah – a young person who received counselling at her local Youth Information Advice and Counselling Service (YIACS)

*This young person's name has been changed to protect their identity.

Education



712,000

16 to 18 year olds
study in college – two
thirds of this age group¹⁵

16%

of students in college
had claimed free school
meals at the age of 15¹⁶

College can be an extremely beneficial placement for many vulnerable students, allowing them to follow a variety of learning programmes, both vocational and academic, often with extra support for those with additional needs. However, transitioning from the structured school environment to a more fluid environment at college can be challenging for some young people.

The scale of vulnerability in colleges is relatively high, with 18% of students at college identifying as having a learning difficulty and/or disability¹⁷ – yet despite this, colleges are generally less well funded than school sixth forms and must use limited resources to support students with high needs. A small proportion (around 3%) of young people have an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan (outlining support they will receive to meet additional learning needs), and a proportion of these will receive High Needs Funding. However, most students with learning or emotional needs rely on the college Disadvantage Fund, which is increasingly stretched. Furthermore, colleges are reporting an increase in students who have previously

been removed from school either to attend Alternative Provision or to be home educated. While parents have every entitlement to home educate their children, and do so well in many cases, there are situations where parents are pressured to home educate when schools are struggling to meet a child's needs. Parents, in turn, are not effectively supported to provide their child's education at home. While some colleges have established programmes to address this problem as young people enter college, there are no additional resources to cover this.

Sixteen to 18 year olds who have not yet gained the average grade in maths and English must re-sit exams, regardless of their programme of study. While students should rightly have the opportunity to re-sit these exams, it is questionable whether this improves outcomes for vulnerable young people – less than 17% of English and 8% of Maths students catch up by age 19.¹⁸ The pressure on vulnerable young people to re-sit can also have an adverse impact on their well-being. It is important that new initiatives are evidence-based to demonstrate improved outcomes for young people, and assessed for their likely impact on vulnerable students.

Mental health issues are also a significant problem in colleges, preventing young people from achieving their potential. The Association of Colleges (AoC) carried out two mental health surveys in 2014 and 2016, finding an increase in declared mental health issues among students in 85% of colleges, with many indicating issues had first arisen since the young person joined college. Eighty one percent felt there were more students with undeclared issues, while 74% had referred students to A&E with mental health related issues in the previous year. This problem is further amplified as colleges face barriers referring to local CAMHS such as lengthy waiting times, and CAMHS advising them not to refer due to young people nearing adult thresholds. Colleges also cover larger areas than schools and take students from multiple local authority areas, resulting in further complexities in linking up with services.

In response to mental health concerns, the AoC has developed mental health resources for colleges. These include a toolkit adhering to a holistic model and looking at areas such as leadership and management, environment and curriculum, which helps colleges

assess how well they are supporting students' well-being.

However, more could be done to ensure services are integrated and colleges are able to fully implement a whole college approach to mental health. While this is done well by a number of colleges, it needs to be universal. Increased funding is needed for additional staff training and resources. Not all vulnerable young people will have an EHC plan and so staff must be equipped to identify students with additional needs, be supported to have conversations with young people about their mental health, and have a clear referral pathway to follow.

The AoC have also set up a mental health policy group to share good practice and liaise more closely with services at a national level, resulting in greater representation of colleges in Government papers such as the recent mental health Green Paper. However, there remains a lack of full understanding on the differences between schools and colleges and more could be done to understand how plans could extend to colleges, for example through college trailblazer sites.

Potential solutions

- CCGs should invest in mental health support for young people age 16 to 25, including improved integration of key services, such as mental health and social care, with educational settings – in particular colleges.
- The Department for Education should increase funding for colleges, to help them meet young people's additional needs and develop a whole organisational approach to mental health, including ensuring all students can access counsellors and all staff have training to support students with mental health needs.
- Colleges should move towards a whole organisational approach to addressing mental health. A designated mental health lead who could provide support to navigate the system, signpost to services and conduct outreach would help identify and support students in need.
- New policy initiatives – such as the obligation to re-sit GCSE's – should be impact assessed. Initiatives should only be implemented if they are evidence-based and improve young people's outcomes.

Maryam's story*

Maryam, who was suffering from anxiety and depression, was referred for a one to one session with her college health, well-being and sport service.

The programme was launched to reduce social anxiety and depression, aiming to keep both staff and students active. The team worked collaboratively with Maryam after her referral to develop a 'safe plan' suited to her needs. The plan focused on risks, warning signs, triggers and management of support to monitor and minimise risks to her well-being.

Maryam talked about what exercise was enjoyable, attended timetabled gym sessions – initially with no other users present but eventually joining a session with fellow students and staff on a similar journey. Maryam is now volunteering to support others starting out and participating fully in studies and sitting exams.¹⁹

*This young person's name has been changed to protect their identity.

Skills, social mobility and employment



From 2016/17 to 2017/18
the number of Level 2
apprenticeship starts
dropped by
38% from 260,650
to 161,390²⁰

From 2016/17 to 2017/18
the number of Level 2
starts for under 20s
dropped 20%
from 78,502
to 62,627²¹

Transitioning from secondary education into post-16 pathways can be challenging, and young people often need additional support as they navigate this period. By providing 16 and 17 year olds with the skills and employment opportunities they need, we can support them to fulfil their potential.

The Prince's Trust supports young people to build the confidence and skills they need to live, learn and earn. It equips young people to feel optimistic about their futures; build their stake in society; and meet the challenges of our modern labour market. For many young people supported by The Prince's Trust, the years between their 16th and 18th birthdays form a critically important part of their journey.

Often, the route to building skills and getting into work lies in vocational education. Given this, The Prince's Trust welcomes Government's recent focus on apprenticeships, vocational education, and the transition into post-16 education. There is now a crucial window of opportunity to ensure these reforms work for all young people, and in particular for the 16 and 17 year olds who are most at risk of becoming NEET.

One of the most significant reforms in Government's Post-16 Skills Plan is the creation of T Level qualifications, developed as a technical equivalent to A Levels. This should be a positive move towards developing genuine parity between vocational and academic qualifications. However, many 16 and 17 year olds aren't ready for a rigorous Level 3 T Level qualification when they finish school – highlighting the need for provision for young people to build the confidence and skills they need to succeed. This is particularly true for disadvantaged young people, who are more likely to have fewer qualifications when they move into this stage of education.²² As such, Government plans to develop a 'Transition Offer' for young people who are not yet ready for Level 3 at 16 is welcome, but Government must use this as an opportunity to ensure all young people are supported effectively.

The UK apprenticeships system provides another essential stepping stone for young people aged 16 to 18. Having undergone equally radical reforms, especially through the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy, more control is now in the hands of employers. But there are growing concerns about whether the reformed apprenticeship system is

working for young people. Statistics published since the introduction of the Levy show a major drop in starts at lower levels and for 16 to 18 year old learners. This is something that must be addressed to ensure that apprenticeships continue to be a route into work and training for young people from all backgrounds.

Apprenticeships help young people to get a foot on the career ladder as they leave school or college, and have a lifelong impact on their earning potential, with a Level 2 apprenticeship boosting earnings by 11 per cent on average.²³

An apprenticeship system which genuinely works for young people must also offer a sustainable way for them to invest in their own skills. For apprenticeships to be a genuinely viable option for all young people, wages must be considered as part of how we deliver a viable, inclusive route for young people. Alongside support for young people, support for employers is essential. When it comes to boosting lower level apprenticeship starts, employers should be supported and incentivised to invest in Level 2 and 3 apprenticeships alongside the focus on retraining and upskilling that has been seen so far through the Levy system.



Potential solutions

- The Department for Education should ensure the T Level Transition Offer:
 - is tailored to the needs of different learners
 - provides flexibility according to the readiness of the young person
 - engages and inspires young people to take part in vocational education
 - is properly funded within the FE system.
- Transitional support must be matched by high quality Level 2 provision for young people to move into, on their pathway to higher levels or employment.
- The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy should build greater flexibility into Apprenticeship Levy spending, ensuring employers can use up to 10% of Levy funds on **pre-apprenticeship training**, to support employers to focus on opportunities for young people. This would support employers to focus on opportunities for young people, rather than just providing training for existing employees.
- The Children's Society recommends aligning apprenticeship rates with the National Minimum Wage rate for under 18s.

Jimmy's story*

At secondary school, Jimmy was diagnosed with a serious long-term health condition. Despite challenges, he went on to pass his GCSEs and begin his A Levels – but after experiencing difficulties at college, he dropped out before taking his exams. His searches for employment or an apprenticeship were unsuccessful, and his confidence dropped.

But at the age of 18, Jimmy met a Prince's Trust outreach worker at the Job Centre Plus, who referred him to the Prince's Trust Get Into Retail programme with House of Fraser. Despite his initial nerves, and worries about his health, Jimmy was supported to push himself out of his comfort zone during the group activities, and whilst interacting with customers during work experience. His confidence soared, and he impressed the House of Fraser team so much that they offered him a part-time contract.

Jimmy now feels excited about the future, and is looking forward to developing his career. He credits the support he received at this crucial time with changing his life forever.

*This young person's name has been changed to protect their identity.

Poverty and social exclusion



Young parents receive
£75 – £100
per week less
under Universal Credit
than under the benefits
it replaces

Under Universal Credit,
children and young
people with certain
disabilities receive around
£30 a week less
support than
under tax credits

Young people aged 16 to 24 are the group at highest risk of poverty and social exclusion in the UK.²⁴ For vulnerable young people, poverty heightens their risk of experiencing many of the poor outcomes discussed throughout this report. Poverty increases the risk of physical and mental health problems, and affects young people's well-being, educational outcomes and future opportunities.

Heavy cuts to benefits and tax credits have increased poverty among children and young people by half a million since 2010.²⁵ Vulnerable 16 and 17 year olds are disproportionately likely to be affected as they are more likely to receive support from the social security system – either on their parents' claim, or as claimants in their own right (eg if they are living independently or have their own children).

Some changes affect this age group specifically, most notably the replacement of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) with Personal Independence Payment (PIP) from the age of 16. CPAG's early warning system also shows worrying signs that universal credit (UC) is not always serving this age group well. Some groups of vulnerable young

people lose out on support under UC compared with the system it replaces.

On turning 16, disabled young people claiming DLA must put in a new claim for PIP within four weeks of receiving a letter or their DLA will be suspended. For young people in difficult circumstances, managing to claim within this time frame can be hard, leaving them at risk of losing vital financial support to help with the costs of their disability.

For those who claim on time, having to apply for a new benefit and go through a medical assessment can be extremely stressful. Some groups are at risk of losing support altogether due to the different assessment criteria for PIP compared with DLA. Those with psychiatric and neurodevelopment conditions are at particular risk of losing support in the move from DLA to PIP.²⁶

CPAG is seeing a concerning number of cases where vulnerable 16 and 17 year olds attempting to claim UC are having claims wrongly refused because staff are unaware of the eligibility rules. While UC is mainly available to over-18s, 16 and 17 year olds are entitled to claim under certain circumstances (eg having caring responsibilities or a

lack of parental support). Wrongly refused claims can leave young people with no income and no help with rent, putting them at risk of severe hardship and debt. Even if the problem is corrected, they may have accrued rent arrears, seen their housing put at risk or been unable to buy essentials for themselves or their children.

Young people claiming jobseekers' allowance or UC receive a lower benefit than over-25s. The Government's justification is that young people are more likely to live with their parents and have lower wage expectations. Yet young people living independently can't access cheaper housing or essentials by virtue of their age. In UC parents under-25 will also receive a lower rate of support, leaving vulnerable young parents £75 to £100 worse off each month than a similar family aged 25 or over.

Families with 19 year olds in non-advanced education also lose out in UC. The definition of a 'qualifying young person' has been tightened, meaning many 19 year olds will be excluded from support on their parents' claim. This means that 16 and 17 year olds whose education has been disrupted and who later have to retake qualifications could lose out on support at a later stage.

Children and young people with certain disabilities will also receive around £30 a week less support under UC than through tax credits. While not specific to teenagers, this will make life harder for some families with disabled teenagers.

Looking beyond age-specific impacts, the greatest driver of rising poverty among 16 and 17 year olds are the huge cuts to social security benefits for families with children. Benefits have been frozen for four years despite higher than expected inflation, a number of child-related premiums have been cut, and support through tax credits and UC is now limited to two children in a family. These changes put extra strain on families, particularly where young people have additional needs. All children feel the impacts of living in poverty, but 16 and 17 year olds can feel pressured to leave home and become financially independent, or to abandon education for paid work to contribute to family income.²⁷

New research has also found that the amount of food which young people can buy with their free school meal allowance is not always enough for older teenagers, with some not able to afford proper portions for lunch, or a snack at break. As well as putting young people at risk of inadequate nutrition, this can also make school

mealtimes and break times a stigmatising experience for young people.

Finally, it is important to remember vulnerable teenagers who do not qualify for any social security support because their families have no recourse to public funds. Some schools and local authorities have policies to ensure these children receive a school meal, but in some cases they do not eat during the school day and are likely to face dire poverty at home. Many families in this situation rely on charity and help from communities to meet their most basic living costs.

Addressing the level of benefits available for families with children will help reduce the likelihood of 16 and 17 year olds being forced into poverty, and give families greater financial security. Adequate support for young people through the social security system will also allow those 16 and 17 year olds starting out on an independent life, or caring for their own children, to thrive.



Potential solutions

- The Department for Work and Pensions should end the freeze on children's benefits, scrap the two-child limit, raise support for disabled children on universal credit to bring it in line with previous levels on tax credits, and abolish the lower levels of support for young parents and young people with limited capability for work under UC.
- Specific changes to increase the support available for vulnerable 16 and 17 year olds include considering moving the age of transition from DLA to PIP to 18 (or 21 for care leavers and young people living independently). Additionally, more support support to help young people apply for PIP, and a longer grace period after notification, would to help ensure young people in vulnerable circumstances do not see their DLA stopped. People should also be given more time to apply for PIP.
- All children attending school in the UK should receive a lunch, regardless of their parents' immigration status or entitlement to support from public funds.
- Improvements to the training of Universal Credit staff are recommended to address the lack of understanding around eligibility for 16 and 17 year olds. Additional questions on the claim form would clarify eligibility and ensure that young people who are entitled to claim are not refused support.
- Sixteen and 17 year olds claiming UC should be offered at least a year's suspension of jobseeking requirements to undergo an approved training course. This would give young people an opportunity to develop their skills and move into higher quality, sustainable jobs in the long term.
- Portions for children receiving free school meals must be adequate for their nutritional needs. For young people whose families are struggling with severe poverty, this may be their most reliable and largest meal of the day.

Jasmine's story*

Jasmine was living with her mother in a socially-rented home. When she was 16, her mother died leaving Jasmine living independently. Jasmine succeeded to her mother's tenancy and applied to universal credit for help with living costs and rent payments. Her aunt moved in temporarily to help her during this very difficult time, but she was unable to provide any financial support or help with rent payments, as she had another household with children of her own.

Jasmine is eligible for universal credit in these circumstances but her claim was wrongly refused because she stated that her aunt was living in her home, leaving her with no income for basic needs or rent. When this decision is corrected and she is awarded universal credit, she will receive a lower rate than an adult over 25 would receive despite having similar living costs.

*This young person's name has been changed to protect their identity.

Homelessness



103,000

young people approached their local authority for help as they were homeless or at risk of homelessness in the UK in 2017/18²⁸

52%

of homeless young people in England left their last settled base because their parents, relatives or friends wouldn't accommodate them²⁹

Young people aged 16 and 17 are particularly vulnerable to homelessness, often due to multiple disadvantages in their lives. Factors such as poverty, poor mental health, peer influence or crime can lead to tense relationships between parents and children, which often escalate to a critical point at this age. Abuse and neglect experienced by young people in families may also result in a child becoming homeless at the age of 16 or 17.

Centrepoint accommodates 16 to 25 year olds in supported housing and helps them move on to housing services across England. Around two thirds of these young people have left home due to family breakdown,³⁰ and the responsibilities that come with independent living can be daunting. For those dealing with complex issues and a lack of support from parents and services this transition can result in homelessness.

Despite their vulnerabilities, young people are often failed by the services in place to support them. 5,111 young people contacted Centrepoint's national helpline for young people at risk of homelessness in 2018, of which

397 were aged 16 to 17 years old. At least 28 had already approached the council. Of these, 11 were refused an assessment and only four accepted as a priority need and offered accommodation. A further 35 were already rough sleeping.

Local Authorities should accommodate homeless young people aged 16 and 17 but we know that in practice, most young people do not meet thresholds for support. This provides looked after children with comprehensive support for their accommodation needs up until the age of 21. But simply being a young person without a home is no longer enough to warrant priority need. In such cases, young people are instead accommodated under Section 17, which does not offer the same levels of support, or they are dealt with by local authority housing teams rather than children's services. These decisions are often made without consulting young people and without their understanding of the process.

'It is concerning that those children who do not quite meet the threshold for being "looked after" are pretty much left to fend for themselves and are not afforded this same support.'

Centrepoint practitioner

Young people face additional barriers to accessing support when channelled through this route. Some housing teams prolong assessment periods until young people turn 18 and are no longer priority need. As a result, young people are not effectively referred to children's services and are not afforded the support they may be entitled to. Some young people are even turned away if the housing team do not believe they are homeless, meaning initial homelessness assessments are not carried out as required by the Homelessness Reduction Act. The burden of proof unfairly rests with the young person. In some instances, housing authorities have requested written proof from the young person's parents that they cannot return home – which can be distressing when a young person is at this point of crisis.



Potential solutions

- The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government should extend priority need to young people who were accommodated under section 17, bringing their priority need status in line with that of care leavers under 21.
- The Department for Education should produce co-designed guidance for young people (and practitioners) which explains their rights and entitlements if they are accommodated under section 17 or under section 20.
- The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and Department for Education should ensure that the burden of proof does not sit with the applicant, but instead the local authority. Young people should be listened to and taken at their word.
- The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government should ensure that young people who present as homeless before they turn 18 should be entitled to the support they would have received at 17 and the assessment spans their 18th birthday.

Comfort's story*

At age 16 the police were called to an incident involving violence against me perpetrated by my family, however because my next of kin were the two people involved, the police returned me to them. I had contact with Social Services numerous times, however when I approached the council at 17 I was funnelled through the housing pathway. When I approached SHIP (Single Homelessness Intervention and Prevention) I was asked to bring written proof from my mother that I could no longer live at home. This was a problem because my mother would have never written the letter. Luckily, my uncle was willing to write me a letter and spoke to the case worker on the phone on my behalf. This moment possibly saved my life.

The two boroughs could not decide who owed me the duty and Social Services were unwilling to accept me because "I was too old". This decision was devastating because I had no idea what my rights were. Every morning I would go to SHIP with a bag of clothes to get my appointment for after college. I would never be seen until just before closing when they would give me a map, an emergency number and a few pounds to travel to my destination. This was my routine until I came to Centrepoint. This decision to put me on the housing pathway affected the levels of emotional, mental and financial support I received throughout my homelessness journey. – Comfort, Young person supported by Centrepoint.

Comfort, Young person supported by Centrepoint

*This young person's name has been changed to protect their identity.

Disability



The gap in social care funding for disabled children is estimated to be

£434m³²

The gap for disabled children's health services at

£1.1bn³³

Outcomes for disabled Children in Need (CiN), and the support they require, vary depending on their specific needs.³¹ At 16 and 17 young people need support and protection, in addition to being supported in their choices and decision making. However, the severe lack of evidence on outcomes for disabled CiN means it is difficult to accurately identify how to most effectively support them.

Over the past five years there has been a 12.5% reduction of disabled young people aged 16+ classed as CiN, despite overall numbers of CiN increasing, and despite the fact that all disabled children should be classed as CiN under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989. There is likely a drastic underrecording of the number of CiN who have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)³⁴ and increasing numbers of young people who would benefit from monitoring and support are not currently not recorded as being in need.³⁵ This means many young people will be missing out on support, a problem that is exacerbated by reductions in services and increasing thresholds, and likely caused by gaps in funding.

Currently, funding focuses on later interventions at the expense of early interventions. For every £1 spent on preventative help, £4 is spent on reactive child protection work³⁶ and spending on early and preventative interventions – such as Sure Start, young people’s services, short breaks and family support services – was cut by around 60% in real terms between 2009/10 and 2016/17.³⁷ Fewer disabled children’s needs are met, resulting in needs escalating to the point where more intensive, later interventions are required.

Local authorities are also responsible for securing education and training provision for those with an EHC plan up to the age of 25. However not enough is being done to ensure this is carried out effectively to improve young people’s outcomes

Young people who were in need at any point from 2011/12 to 2016/17 had worse educational outcomes than pupils who were not, with lasting negative impact beyond the point of being in need.³⁸ Furthermore, the number of NEET 16 to 24 year olds who are long-term sick or disabled, or temporarily sick, has drastically risen from a low of 7.7% at the end of 2011 to 19.5% at the end of 2018. Local authorities are clearly struggling to meet the educational needs of young people,

which is concerning given that post-16 SEND demand is projected to rise: a recent review of SEND provision in London forecasted that the number of 16 to 18 year olds with EHC plans will rise by 5% between 2018 and 2022 (MIME 2019). Improving aspirations for young people around education, employment and training is vital across legislation, policy and practice. This will require coordination of services, advice and guidance to give young people meaningful, realistic but stretching aspirations.



Potential solutions

- Government must ensure there is sufficient funding to adequately meet the needs of Children in Need, including providing for early help and preventative services to support those who do not meet escalating thresholds for statutory social care services.
- Local authorities must better record the number and needs of children with SEND who are CiN.
- Government must ensure that all disabled young people, including people with a learning disability, can equally access training opportunities ranging from supported internships to traineeships and apprenticeships across the UK.
- Government must address any remaining barriers that stop young disabled people from accessing these opportunities, and look to improve the offer available to this group, including making the flexibilities around the maths and English requirements of apprenticeships available to all young people with SEND who need it.

Beth's story*

I reached breaking point after we had been on a waiting list for overnight residential breaks for two and a half years and I heard that the centre David* was waiting to go to was under threat of closure. I felt I couldn't go on any more. I was distraught that there was going to be nothing. I rang social services – I was beside myself with grief as I felt there was no hope. Eventually we got the overnight breaks we so needed, beginning with two nights a month.

David is now in his third year at college and he's really thriving. I believe that short breaks helped his transition because he had become used to being away from home. Now David is away during term time and with us for the holidays. Looking back I don't know how we did it! You have to remember that there is an effect on the whole family when you don't have breaks – this kind of help early on really stops problems escalating. Things are so much better for us as a family now, but I always worry that David's support could be driven by "what's in the pot". I also worry that things haven't changed as much as they should have and saddened to still see friends struggling to get the breaks they need.

Beth, Mother of David

Safeguarding

saferlondon

In 2018

2,220

children in England
aged 16-17 were on
a child protection plan⁴⁰

Over

10,000

child protection plans
started in London during
2017/18⁴¹

All children under the age of 18 are protected under safeguarding legislation, as laid out in the Children Act and statutory guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children.³⁹ But 16 and 17 year olds are often not afforded the protection they need.

Safer London supports 11 to 25 year olds in London who face complex issues in their lives. At 16 and 17, young people are particularly vulnerable to violence, sexual exploitation, peer on peer abuse and domestic violence – risks which the current child protection system is not equipped to respond to.

There is a lack of understanding of these vulnerabilities amongst professionals and misconceptions that young people have the capacity and resources to keep themselves safe from harm. For example, young women are often questioned on their previous sexual relationships, suggesting they are complicit in their exploitative situation. In addition, 16 and 17 year olds who have experienced criminal exploitation, have involvement with gangs or serious youth violence, or who present with Harmful Sexual Behaviour, are not perceived as vulnerable due to their age and stigmatising views of behaviour as purely 'challenging' or 'anti-social'.

As such, professionals sometimes fail to follow due process and procedures and do not provide an adequate safeguarding response when concerns are raised. This can result in children being criminalised instead of receiving the recognition and support they need as victims.

Moving towards a contextual safeguarding approach, which recognises and responds to the risks that young people experience in a range of social contexts outside of the home, is key to keeping young people safe.

This approach has been implemented successfully in several pilots. For instance The Safeguarding in Public Spaces pilot delivered by Safer London used a peer advisor model to raise awareness about Child Sexual Exploitation in shopping centres in London. This resulted in new evidence – such as that 1 in 4 young people felt unsafe in the shopping centres – and security staff being trained to more appropriately respond to young people at risk.⁴² Another example is the partnerships the University of Bedfordshire has developed with Councils in Hackney, Kent, Knowsley, Swansea and Wiltshire to implement, embed and evaluate contextual safeguarding so local systems consider the wider contexts within which harm occurs outside the family home.⁴³

Service delivery at Safer London also takes a trauma and gender-informed approach which recognises diversity and places the young person's wishes and needs at the centre of support planning. This is essential for young people to trust their services, effectively engage with support workers and therefore achieve better outcomes.

Another key issue is the lack of recognition of domestic abuse within 16 and 17 year old's intimate relationships. A third of young women have experienced abuse in a relationship,⁴⁴ however the needs assessment that Safer London carried out found that 16 and 17 year olds are the least referred group at MARAC meetings⁴⁵ and are disproportionately unrepresented in domestic abuse services or refuges in London.⁴⁶ It is clear that more needs to be done to address the response to domestic abuse for this age group.



Potential solutions

- Services should receive additional training and guidance for professionals on safeguarding 16 and 17 year olds, as statutory guidelines are not being consistently followed.
- Contextual safeguarding models and practice should be implemented as standard across the UK to safeguard 16 and 17 year olds in public spaces.
- A national review – involving statutory and voluntary sector agencies – is needed into the disconnect between children and adult support services and frameworks, including between child safeguarding/MACE and domestic abuse/MARAC stakeholders to ensure responses do not undermine the risks for 16 and 17 year olds.
- In line with the recommendations outlined in The Children’s Society’s ‘Crumbling Futures’ report, local authorities need the appropriate resources to provide holistic needs assessments for 16 and 17 year old children who are referred to children services. Local authorities should also design and plan services around transition, and consider extending key services such as mental health and homelessness services for young people up to the age of 25.

Laura's story*

Young women in London are not generally picked up by adult domestic violence services, it usually goes down the safeguarding or child sexual exploitation route.

I supported one young woman under 18 experiencing domestic violence where the perpetrator was also under 18 and all the agencies involved treated this through a safeguarding lens, therefore the usual safety procedures around the perpetrator were not followed and information was shared with both the perpetrator and his family that put the young woman at extreme risk.

Without the young woman's consent, Children's Social Care alerted the young man's family to the domestic violence report. He and his family were then invited to a team around the child meeting along with the young woman and her family in an attempt to mediate.⁴⁷

Laura – Young Women's Service Manager

*This person's name has been changed to protect identities.

Family and community

Pace

Parents against
child exploitation

1in4

prosecutions in
child sexual abuse
cases are unsuccessful⁴⁸

8in10

cases of sexual offences
against 16 and 17 year
olds reported to the
police resulted in no
further action⁴⁹

Sexual exploitation can have a lasting impact on a young people and their families. The response to exploitation at 16 and 17 can be particularly complex, given young people have autonomy to consent at 16, but are still protected by law as children up until 18.

Young people can be groomed for years prior to exploitation, affecting their capacity to make informed decisions or effectively safeguard themselves against abuse once they are of the age of consent. By age 16 or 17, they may be trapped in a cycle of exploitation, through control and manipulation. As well as the long lasting impact on young people's emotional and physical well-being, sexual exploitation can be devastating for the rest of the family. Parents may find their relationship with their child becomes increasingly difficult and they themselves can experience mental health issues as a result.

The current child protection system is not equipped to deal effectively with this type of abuse or to respond appropriately to both young people's and parents' needs.

Pace work alongside parents and carers of children who are, or who are at risk of, being exploited by individuals from outside of the family. Pace provide parents with emotional support, information and advocacy, as well as providing guidance and training to professionals. In addition, their parent liaison officers work within complex multi-agency hubs tackling child exploitation in some local authorities.

Through this work, Pace have evidenced that parents working in partnership with services is crucial – it increases the chances of success of early interventions, and prevents abuse from escalating. For example, through co-creation of a safety plans, or through sharing parents' information with key frontline services (eg completing intel sheets for the police), it is possible to disrupt the cycle of exploitation. Sharing information from services with parents, so they know what actions are being taken, is also key in building an effective partnership. The result where this is implemented successfully is a reduction in children going missing from home, a reduction in children entering care, and an increase in convictions using the intelligence that parents share to assist police investigations.

'I don't know what that woman who is working with my mum is doing, but tell her "thank you".'

Child affected by CSE commenting on improved relationships within the home

This highlights the value of a relational safeguarding model, where families are involved and working with services to protect and safeguard their children from extra-familial threats. This should be a key component of any response to child sexual exploitation and should be developed as part of a wider contextual safeguarding model.



Potential solutions

- Services must move towards a safeguarding model that includes recognition of the difference between intra-familial abuse and extra-familial abuse.

This should include:

- Recognising and respecting the protective powers of parents, and developing better relationships so they can work in partnership with services to protect their children.
- Providing frontline professionals with training to recognise signs of CSE and CCE and develop an appropriate response.
- Developing an offer of support for parents, including helping them to understand the process of exploitation and its impact on their child and supporting them through court processes. This should be a separate source of support from their child.

Ruth's story*

I contacted Pace as a result of seeing a web link when looking online into the issue of child sexual exploitation (CSE). It quickly became apparent to me that no other organisation was addressing the problems that we were facing as a family when dealing with this type of exploitation.

Anyone who's had to deal with CSE will know that the issues faced are traumatic, complex and highly fraught for everyone involved. The response therefore calls for a unique set of skills and knowledge, informed by experience of actually working with families and individuals affected. When I contacted PACE, myself and my family were in a terrible state: scared, isolated, confused – our lives had been turned upside-down.

The agencies that were supposed to help us proved to be ineffective. These same agencies ended up compounding the awful experiences suffered by my daughter. This was primarily due to a lack of understanding of the complexities involved with CSE and the changing context of this criminal activity. Had it not been for the timely intervention of Pace, I honestly don't know how we'd have managed.

Ruth, parent supported by Pace

*This person's name has been changed to protect their identity.



26,700

children and young people were cautioned or sentenced between April 2017 and March 2018⁵⁰

The number of children held in youth custody on remand increased by

19%

between April 2017 and March 2018⁵¹

Young people in contact with the youth justice system face discrimination in all aspects of the system. From engagement with the judicial process, to their treatment in custody, older teenagers face disadvantage which can have profound and life long consequences.

There has been welcome progress in some areas. For example, the frequency with which 16 and 17 year olds are placed in custody has fallen greatly over a 10 year period: down from 2,352 (Oct 2008) to 695 (Oct 2018), a fall of 70%. Similarly, the number of under 18s appearing in court has fallen substantially.⁵² Much of this has been put down to police and youth offending services seeking to deal informally with minor offending.

However, custody is still not being used as a last resort, and race inequalities within the youth custody system are rising (whilst figures for ethnicity of 16 and 17 year olds not separately available, statistics indicate that the proportion of all children in custody from BAME communities has risen from 25% to 47% in last 10 years). There are also concerns that prison remains an unsafe place for 16 and 17 year olds – with rates of both assaults amongst 15 to 18 year olds, and incidents of

self-harm, rising in recent years.⁵³ Too often older children also report not being helped to address their offending behaviour.

As well as developing support for teenagers in custody, more needs to be done to improve older adolescents' experience of the judicial process. Many children are still tried in adult courts such as Crown Courts (particularly for more serious offences) meaning they miss out on the adjustments made in youth courts, such as being closed to the public. Even where trials happen in youth courts, it has been found that language used remains arcane and inaccessible, often leaving children confused about the outcome.⁵⁴ There also remains a lack of specialist training for judges and lawyers in working with children.

The consequences of poor treatment through the criminal justice system at 16 and 17 can travel with young people through the rest of their lives. While the criminal justice process itself can result in trauma, the criminal records system can lead to widespread discrimination against young adults for offences committed at 16 and 17.

Further difficulties with the criminal justice system occur after children reach their 18th birthday. Whilst custody rates have fallen amongst 18 to 21 year olds over the last decade, the rate of decline has been considerably less than amongst under 18s. In December 2018 there were 4,071 young people aged between 18 and 20 in prison – over six times the number of 15 to 17 year olds. Not enough has been done to address the 'cliff edge' in the approach taken to criminal justice before and after someone's 18th birthday. The sudden changes that can happen from this point do not reflect a young person's developing maturity as they transition into adulthood. Too often a young person who has been a victim of sexual or criminal exploitation as a child may face criminalisation once they reach young adulthood.

In 2018, the House of Commons Justice Committee recommended that the Ministry of Justice lead on developing research on sentencer's and prosecutor's understanding of maturity, and on the way that assessments of maturity are used. In particular they highlighted the impact of traumatic experiences in childhood and adolescence on maturation.⁵⁵

The introduction of 'young adult' courts is a potential approach to improve justice approaches. It could provide a tailored approach to court processes for young adults that takes into account developmental maturity, and adopts language and communication to ensure that young people understand and engage with proceedings.⁵⁶ The Justice Committee said it was 'inexplicable' that proposed pilots of these courts had not materialised, given that local support and funding had been secured.⁵⁷

Potential solutions

- Youth Custody Service and the Youth Justice Board should prepare a joint plan of how they intend to reduce the proportion of 16 and 17 year olds in custody from BAME backgrounds, with annual targets for achievement.
- The Youth Custody Service should publish its three-year plan for secure accommodation for children, and within this its plans to improve the safety for children in custody, to improve the safety of those who are detained.
- A review should be carried out on the operation of youth courts to ensure court procedures are clear and accessible for children. Furthermore, youth courts should be used for all cases involving under 18s, and the Government should move ahead with pilots of young adult courts.
- A new statutory framework should be developed for the treatment of criminal records gained before the age of 18 (as per the recommendations of the Justice Committee).
- Further exploration is needed into how a modified version of such a framework could be applied to young adults aged 18 to 25.

Max's story*

In 1979 I received a conditional discharge for indecent exposure. I was at school at the time and celebrating finishing my exams. I 'mooned' a passer-by but didn't appreciate the legal difference between exposing my bottom rather than my genitals. I went to university, and when my conviction was spent, started working in a bank. I carved out a career in financial services and ended up working in a number of senior roles in prestigious firms.

In 2007 the Financial Services Authority obtained complete exception from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (ROA) meaning that I need a full CRB check. Since then I have dropped out of a senior new role as I couldn't take the risk of a check damaging my reputation in the industry.

So, bizarrely, my conviction has become more relevant the older it has got. Now, nearly 35 years on, it is strangling a career that, until now, flourished with the same criminal background. Surely, there should be some sensible time after which spent means spent. To find that, after nearly 35 years, a conviction that merited only a conditional discharge is still as live today as it was 35 years ago, is very odd. In fact, in a way it is more live today.⁵⁸

*This person's name has been changed to protect their identity.

Immigration



1 in 7

undocumented children living with uncertain immigration status are able to overcome institutional barriers to secure permanent status⁵⁹

71%

of the 2,399 children claiming asylum in 2017 were 16 or 17⁶⁰

Sixteen and 17 year olds are significantly impacted by complexities of the asylum and immigration system, and many young people are left vulnerable as they transition into adulthood if they have unresolved immigration issues.

Each year between 2,000 and 3,000 unaccompanied young people claim asylum in the UK,⁶¹ the majority of whom end up looked after by a local authority under section 20 of the Children Act 1989. While around half of claims were granted asylum in 2017, over a quarter were refused, not granted refugee status and instead granted leave as an unaccompanied asylum seeking child (UASC leave).⁶² This lasts until age 17½, or for 2½ years (whichever is shorter), and leaves young people's futures in the UK uncertain. Both young people and social workers lack an understanding of the options available when a child's asylum claim is refused, and 16 and 17 year olds can face the threat of having their leaving care support cut off, or being removed from the country, at the age of 18.

There are thousands more children who are in care but are 'undocumented' – living without regular immigration status – having been born here or having arrived

at a young age with family and 'overstayed' their visa. Many of these children are eligible to remain in the UK on the basis of long residence, and some are eligible for British citizenship. But few local authorities know how many of these children are in their care. This means they rarely take action to regularise young people's immigration status before they turn 18, which can result in barriers such as preventing young people going to college or university, or even accessing benefits or secondary health care.⁶³ Those living 'undocumented' in the UK also cannot drive, cannot rent privately and cannot open a bank accounts. At worst, they may be removed from the UK, where they have spent most of their life.

Unnecessary age assessments are an additional barrier for young people who arrive in the UK without documentation to prove how old they are. Age disputes cause delays in children's asylum claims, leaving young people without the child-specific support they need, and vulnerable to being accommodated with adults or held in immigration detention. As young people will not qualify for full care leaver services without being looked after by their local authority for 13 weeks, these lengthy delays pose significant problems for 16 and 17 year olds

transitioning into adulthood, leaving them without the support they need or are entitled to, both before and after they turn 18.⁶⁴

Despite government guidance outlining that age assessments should only take place if there is significant doubt about a young person's age,⁶⁵ it is clear this is becoming more of a routine practice. With the numbers of age disputes by the Home Office rising from 318 in 2017 to 716 in 2018 (16% and 30% of children's asylum applications respectively),⁶⁶ this is a significant problem which needs to be addressed to ensure 16 and 17 year olds are not denied the support they need. Furthermore, due to a lack of monitoring of disputes it is impossible to accurately assess the outcomes of age assessments or the development of practice in this area.

Potential solutions

- Local authorities must take steps to ensure that all children in their care subject to immigration control are identified and assisted to secure their status in the UK, including access to legal advice and representation.
- The Home Office should provide all unaccompanied young people with an independent guardian to support them, given the complexities and the resulting mental health impacts of being involved in age assessments and navigating the asylum system. A similar scheme exists in Scotland and Northern Ireland and has improved outcomes for vulnerable young people.
- The Home Office should reform the immigration and nationality systems so that children and young people who are long term residents of the UK are able to regularise their status through timely, affordable processes and decisions on immigration that prioritise their best interests and need for permanence.
- The Home Office should introduce a multi-agency assessment of the best interests of any unaccompanied asylum-seeking child that informs the outcome of their application for protection. Children who do not meet the threshold for refugee status should receive a decision on leave to remain that reflects their personal circumstances and best interests.

Omar's story*

Omar is a 17 year old who arrived in the UK as a young boy and has been in local authority care since the age of 8, following his mother's death. He was placed foster care under section 20 of the Children Act 1989 and very little was done to address the Omar's immigration status until he was 15, when an immigration application was finally made. Despite living in the UK for over 10 years, and with no family to return to, Omar was only granted limited leave to remain for 2½ years.

He will need to reapply for leave a further three times, until he is eligible to apply for indefinite leave to remain at the age of 26. He will be ineligible for student finance so if he wants to go to university he might only be able to if the local authority pays his costs. Omar wants to become British. He doesn't feel 'safe' in the UK due to his temporary status.

If he had received good immigration legal advice earlier in life he could have settled status by now. But the local authority, acting as his corporate parent, failed to secure high quality legal advice for him at the earliest opportunity.⁶⁷

*This young person's name has been changed to protect their identity.

Conclusion

This collection of essays has drawn on the wide ranging expertise of organisations working with 16 and 17 year olds. Each piece has focused on an area where support is crucial to ensuring young people have the best chance in life.

The essays show that transitioning to adulthood can be difficult across all areas of young people's lives. But for those facing multiple disadvantages – simultaneously juggling a range of different challenges – it can be exceptionally hard.

The stories throughout this report illustrate the stark impact that a lack of support can have on young people's lives – as well as the profound difference that can be made when services come together to offer young people holistic support.

The essays reveal that whilst certain services or settings are best placed to lead on supporting young people in a certain area of their life, the issues that young people face are complex, and cut across all aspects of their lives- as well as a wide range of areas of Government policy and local practice.

Responding to this requires a co-ordinated and cross-departmental approach. As shown in the contributors' recommendations, a number of departments and bodies must play a role in supporting young people. The tables on the following pages group these recommendations by their intended audience.

However, these recommendations can only be truly effective in transforming young people's transitions to adulthood, if they are implemented as components of a wider approach to transition planning. Government departments – and other agencies – must come together to achieve this.

We recommend the formation of a cross-departmental taskforce to look into transitions for 16 and 17 year olds across all areas of their lives. This should bring together the Department for Work and Pensions, The Department for Education, The Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government, the Department for Health, the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice – who all have a key role to play. Collaboration between Government Departments should also secure

input from Ofsted, the Youth Justice Board, and other key organisations and experts operating at both a national and local level.

The taskforce should oversee the implementation of the recommendations put forward in this report as part of a broader approach to planning transitions into adulthood. It must ensure young people are offered integrated and timely support, and that appropriate measures are in place to enable transitions to adult services when young people are ready.

Through the provision of integrated and holistic support, we can ensure the most vulnerable young people in society are supported to thrive as they move into adult life.

Recommendations: National

Department for Education (DFE)

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| Disability See page 28 | Ensure all disabled young people can access training opportunities by removing any barriers, such as offering greater flexibilities around the maths and English requirements of apprenticeships for those young people with SEND who need it. |
| Educational outcomes See page 10 | Carry out impact assessments for new policy initiatives, such as the obligation to re-sit GCSE's, and implement them only if they are evidence based and improve young people's outcomes and are not detrimental to young people's wellbeing. |
| Employment See page 14 | Work with the Treasury to build greater flexibility into Levy spending, allowing employers to use up to 10% of Levy funds on 'pre-apprenticeship training' to support employers to focus on opportunities for young people. |
| Mental health See pages 6–14 | Take a whole organisational approach to mental health in FE settings, including ensuring all students have access to counsellors and all staff are provided training to equip them to support students with mental health needs. |
| T-Levels See page 14 | Review the T-Level Transition Offer to ensure it is tailored to the needs of different learners; is flexible according to the readiness of the young person; engages and inspires young people to take part in vocational education; and is properly funded within the FE system. Transitional support must be matched by high quality Level 2 provision for young people to move into, on their pathway to higher levels or employment. |

Ministry of Housing, Community and Local Government (MHCLG)

Housing

See page 24

- Extend priority housing need to young people who were accommodated under section 17 to bring priority need status in line with that of care leavers under 21.
- Young people who present as homeless before they turn 18 should be entitled to the support they would have received at 17 and the assessment spans their 18th birthday.
- Work with DFE and Local Authorities to produce co-designed guidance for young people and practitioners explaining rights and entitlements if they are accommodated under section 17 or 20.

Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)

Benefits for families

See page 18

- End the freeze on children's benefits.
- Scrap the two child limit for Child Tax Credit and Universal Credit.
- Raise support for disabled children on UC, to bring it in line with previous levels on tax credits.
- Abolish the lower levels of support for young parents and young people with limited capability for work under UC.

Benefits for 16 and 17 year olds

See page 18

- Move the age of transition from DLA to PIP to 18 (or 21 for care-leavers and young people living independently).
- Improve training and guidance for Universal Credit staff to address the lack of understanding around eligibility for 16 and 17 year olds.
- Offer at least a year's suspension of jobseeking requirements for 16 and 17 year olds, to undergo an approved training course.

Home Office

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| Immigration See page 44 | Provide all unaccompanied young people with an independent guardian to support them through the immigration system. |
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NHS England

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|------------------------------------|---|
| Mental health See page 6 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Establish a benchmarking standard for transition plans laid out in the NHS long-term plan to ensure that young people have improved access to high quality and consistent information, advice and support as they approach the point at which they will have to leave Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services.■ Evaluate any new service models developed to address issues around transitions, to ensure that they are effective for all children and young people, paying specific attention to the transition into adulthood. |
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Recommendations: **Local**

Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs)

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|------------------------------------|---|
| Mental health See page 6 | Improve coordination between mental health service providers and key agencies such as education, social care and substance misuse services, to provide support for young people aged 16-25 who are transitioning to adult mental health services. |
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Local Authorities

| | |
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| Safeguarding See pages 32–40 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Implement contextual safeguarding models and practice as standard to safeguard 16-17 year olds in public spaces. This should include training and guidance for professionals on safeguarding 16-17 year olds and recognise the protective powers of parents.■ Develop an offer of support to help parents understand the process of exploitation and its impact on their child and to support them through court processes. |
| Disability See page 28 | Ensure the number and needs of children with SEND who are Children in Need are recorded – including by age group. |
| Immigration See page 44 | Identify and assist all children in their care who are subject to immigration control to secure their status in the UK. |
| Housing See page 24 | Work with MHCLG and DfE to produce co-designed guidance for young people and practitioners explaining rights and entitlements if they are accommodated under section 17 or 20. |

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This report contains essays from organisations who work with 16 and 17 year olds.

Together we are calling on the Government to form a cross-departmental taskforce to look into transition planning for older teenagers as they move into adulthood, to ensure the best outcomes for vulnerable young people.

For more information on this report, please contact:
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