Written evidence submitted by Barnardo’s

About Barnardo’s
1. Barnardo’s is the UK largest national children’s charity supporting more than 300,000 children, young people, parents and carers through over 1,000 services across the UK. Our 2017/18 Impact Report, including case studies from children and young people as well as our practitioners, can be viewed here.
2. Barnardo’s has consistently called for a long-term, strategic approach to transforming children’s services, which incentivises both early intervention and partnership working (including with the voluntary sector).
3. Barnardo’s, Action for Children, National Children’s Bureau, NSPCC, The Children’s Society and the Local Government Association are working together calling on central government to address the estimated £3bn funding gap facing children’s services by 2024-25.

Summary
4. Key points:
   - The gap between demand for children’s services and the resources available to local authorities is unsustainable.
   - Early intervention and prevention services have taken the biggest hit, meaning more costly interventions are needed later to tackle more entrenched and complex needs.
   - Vulnerable children are facing new and overlapping risks, leading to increasingly complex needs. There is a clear understanding of the link between early adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), including trauma and neglect; and grooming, sexual/criminal abuse and exploitation, and involvement with gangs later on.
   - Support for children is too fragmented and agencies are not working together to provide comprehensive, child-centred wraparound support. This is inefficient and not conducive to effective early identification and intervention.
   - Barnardo’s response is to form “Strategic Partnerships” that bring together local authorities and other agencies from across health, education, social care, police and justice to co-design and co-deliver innovative and holistic services.

5. Key recommendations:
   - The Government should use the Spending Review to address the funding gap in children’s services, with a particular focus on early intervention and prevention and to incentivise partnership working, including with voluntary organisations.
   - The Government should develop a long-term cross-departmental vision for children and young people, focused on prevention and early intervention (ideally with cross party support), which would inform the spending review in 2019 and subsequent spending reviews and policy making.
   - Local authorities should be encouraged and incentivised to develop place-based, multi-agency approaches to commissioning, with longer-term cycles, shared budgets and targets shared by multiple partners, including health, children’s services, education, housing, charities and others.
   - One form this could take is “Strategic Partnerships” with the voluntary sector which involves co-design and co-delivery of services.
   - The long-delayed consultation on children’s centres should be reinstated but with a broader remit to consider all 0-19/25 universal and targeted prevention and early intervention delivery models, including family hubs.
Current pressures on children’s social care

6. Demand for children’s services is rising - between 2006 and 2016 the number of child protection enquiries undertaken by local authorities rose by 140 per cent; the number of Children in Need has increased from 389,040 in 2017 to 404,710 in 2018 - an increase of 4%; and as of March 2018, there were 75,420 looked after children in England - the highest level since the mid-1980s.

7. Alongside this there is an increase in the complexity of need. Our analysis of referrals to our fostering services found:
   - 16% of children referred had issues related to child sexual exploitation, often in addition to violent behaviour, self-harm, experience of domestic violence or drug use.
   - 17% of children referred were unaccompanied asylum seekers or had been trafficked having experienced extreme distress, loss and hardship.

8. The vast majority of looked after children are in foster care - 55,200 children or 73%. The reasons for this are complex but it is understood to be driven by a number of factors including an increase in child poverty, heightened awareness of abuse and neglect and increasing numbers of unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

9. Barnardo’s polled 1,090 statutory workers and found that 60% have seen an increase in the number of particularly vulnerable children and 44% have seen an increase in the number of children who have experienced multiple forms of abuse or trauma.

10. As a result of the rise in demand and complexity of need, children services are struggling to respond. Early help services, which include statutory duties, are under resourced and increasing pressure, with many children and young people only able to get support when they reach crisis point.

11. Whilst demand and complexity of need has increased, funding has decreased.
   - Between 2010-11 and 2015-16, central government funding for local authorities’ children and young people’s services decreased by £2.4 billion (24 per cent) in real terms.
   - England spends nearly half of its entire children’s services budget on 75,240 children who are looked after by local authorities – leaving the other half for the remaining 11.7 million children.
   - Last year, councils in England had to spend £816m more on children’s social care than they had budgeted for.
   - The additional one-off funding for children’s services announced in the 2018 Budget is welcome. However, analysis by the Local Government Association indicates that councils face a further funding gap for children’s services of up to £2 billion by 2020.

12. Despite a decrease in funding local authorities have seen their statutory duties in relation to children services increase from 200 to 299, since 2011.

13. Barnardo’s is urging the Government to:
   - Develop a long-term cross-departmental vision for children and young people, focused on prevention and early intervention (ideally with cross party support), which would inform the Spending Review in 2019.
   - Address the need for sustainable children’s social care funding in the spending review in 2019. This must focus on how local authorities can be encouraged and incentivised to develop place-based, multi-agency approaches to commissioning,
with longer-term cycles and budgets/targets shared by multiple partners, including health, children’s services, education, housing, charities and others.

- One form this could take is "Strategic Partnerships" with the voluntary sector which involves co-design and co-delivery of services.

Understanding the need and the impact on children’s services

14. The report from the National Audit Office has concluded that the Department for Education does not fully understand what is driving demand for children’s social care nor why there is such wide variation between local authorities in their children’s social care activity and costs, as it has not yet done the work to tie together available sources of information.

- In 2017-18 655,630 children were referred to local authorities because of concerns about their welfare. This was a rise of 7% since 2010-11, slightly above population growth for children aged 0-17.\(^1\)
- The most expensive and serious cases, where children are taken into care, have risen by 15% since 2010-11 - more than double the rate of population growth. Local authorities expect to spend £4.2 billion on children in care in 2018-19, which is £350 million (9.1%) more than they budgeted for in 2017-18.
- There is significant variation between different local authorities in the activity and cost of their children’s services. In 2017-18 the amount spent by local authority per children ranged from £566 and £5,166 per year across different local authorities.

15. The challenge for local authorities in providing non-statutory services can be summed up very simply – they are being expected to do more with less resource.

16. In terms of needing to do more, thresholds for accessing statutory children’s social care are rising, which inevitably puts increased pressure on non-statutory services. The APPG for Children’s 2018 report *Storing Up Trouble* reported that ‘70 per cent [of social workers] felt thresholds had risen for qualifying as a “child in need”…half said the same in relation to making a child subject to a child protection plan.’

17. For example, in the North-West, the fostering framework has different tiers for placements. The definition of a ‘standard’ placement has been changed to include children who have been in care for a significant amount of time and may also have experienced trauma or even child sexual exploitation. It is possible to request a move from standard to specialist but it takes time which can result in vulnerable children not getting the specialist support they need, when they need it.

18. In this context, when Barnardo’s considers responding to tenders, we now work with the assumption that all early intervention and prevention services will have to manage rising thresholds. This is despite the fact that, in our experience, it is now more common for commissioners to offer flat-line budgets, with no uplift to allow for increase in demand, running costs, and staff over the life of the contract.

19. Barnardo’s recent experience of the commissioning environment has been characterised by local authorities commissioning non-statutory services with:

- Reduced budgets, and
- Requirements to shift delivery towards targeted services and away from preventative and universal provision.

20. This was seen particularly acutely in one local authority. While the extension of provision beyond just early years is welcome, the lack of universal services is concerning:
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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Previous model</th>
<th>New model</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Model</strong></td>
<td>Traditional 0-5, universal services with targeted 1-1 support.</td>
<td>Targeted 0-11 Family Support ‘Children and Family Centres’. Services only provided to children and families who are referred – no “walk in”.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Contract value</strong></td>
<td>£8m+ (Barnardo’s £3.8m)</td>
<td>£3.8m (Barnardo’s £2.4m)</td>
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<td>(annual)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Number of</strong></td>
<td>49 (23 Barnardo’s-run)</td>
<td>16 (10 Barnardo’s-run)</td>
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<td><strong>Children’s</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Centres/Children</strong></td>
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<td>and Family <strong>Centres</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Locality</strong></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>areas (number of <strong>contracts)+</strong></td>
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*The new Targeted Family Support contracts removed the previous requirement for Early Years childcare delivery and there is no expectation to deliver universal provision as before, meaning a significantly reduced early intervention offer across the county.

+ For clarity, the four remaining localities have not been expanded to cover the same geographical area served previously. Provision has been cut in three areas.

21. In response to reduced budgets, it is now common for commissioners to expect providers to ‘add value’, either by using volunteers or bringing additional income into services. The implication of this is that even commissioners have little confidence that services can be properly delivered within the allocated budgets.

22. For example, another local authority with which Barnardo’s worked recently cut the budget of its non-statutory family support services by two thirds, amalgamating three contracts into one area-wide contract. Barnardo’s successfully bid for the contract, but raised concerns about the budget allocated (as did the incumbent contract-holders). After the commission was awarded, the local authority recognised these concerns, acknowledged that the service was not financially viable, and withdrew the contract.

23. Barnardo’s has been urging the Government to reinstate the planned consultation on children’s centres but with a broader remit to cover other models of delivery. This should include the free early education and childcare offer, which Barnardo’s nursery leaders report is insufficient and unsustainable. The 30 hours offer available to parents is posing significant issues with the funding of these settings. Funding rates across most local authorities are insufficient and this poses a risk to us in terms of sustainability – staff ratios/wages, building and other costs. We also offer spaces for disadvantaged two-year-old children and those with special education needs and disabilities, for whom provision is more expensive.

**Strategic Partnerships**

24. The current commissioning environment compounds the pressures on services by encouraging competition over collaboration, and is also increasingly driven by costs and not the needs of children. In response, local authorities are shifting responsibilities in various ways, for example through forming Trusts or other partnerships.

25. We need to radically rethink how we support vulnerable children and young people; giving them the right support at the right time. Barnardo’s is forming strategic
partnerships across the UK with local authorities and partners to share our breadth of knowledge and skills to deliver a common goal – better outcomes for more children.

26. Barnardo’s believes that working in partnership with other organisations and agencies from across health and social care, and wider agencies like police, criminal justice and education is the most efficient, agile, and effective means of improving outcomes for children and young people. This involves partners thinking beyond the limits of their own budgets – and considering how they can come together to address local challenges and meet local needs. However, a more sustainable approach to funding from central government is a key part of the picture.

27. For example, Barnardo’s strategic partnership with Newport City Council highlights the benefits of a partnership approach to deliver preventative services. Since the Newport Integrated Family Support Service (IFSS) partnership began, referrals to social services in the area have almost halved. Newport now has one of the lowest rates of looked after children per 10,000 when compared to similar local authorities, and the recruitment and retention of child protection teams, vital to providing a high-quality, consistent service, has also been improved. Further examples of Barnardo’s strategic partnerships include:

- Norfolk, where a joint governance approach has led to a transformation of children’s services and a move from an Ofsted rating of ‘inadequate’ to ‘good’;
- Redbridge, where we provide support for care leavers and a wellbeing hub for families in partnership with the council.
- Essex, where we deliver pre-birth to 19 provision in partnership with the council, NHS, and Virgin Care on a 7 year contract.

28. Barnardo’s is also involved in Birmingham Forward Steps. By integrating services like health visiting, early years parenting support, and children centre workforces, the partnership is better placed for early identification and to ensure that resources are allocated in a smarter and more cost-effective way.

29. Local authorities need to be encouraged and empowered to form strategic partnerships with the voluntary sector, drawing on that wider pool of expertise to co-design and co-deliver wraparound provision that supports the child’s whole journey. Investing in early intervention and preventative services is central to this.

30. Government departments and local authorities need to develop strategic partnerships to rethink using spot purchase funding frameworks as whilst these may make savings in the short term, they tend to be reactive rather than forward-looking and are not suited to delivering long-term outcomes or consistency of care. This requires sustainable funding.

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4 See https://www.catch-22.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Rethinking-Childrens-Services-FINAL.pdf for an interesting discussion of some of the factors likely to be at play in the changing nature of child protection and the care system.
7 As at 31st March 2018
10 https://www.cypnow.co.uk/cyp/news/2005974/massive-increase-in-childrens-services-statutory-responsibilities-under-conservative-government
11 A survey by the Pre-School Learning Alliance found that only a third of places under the scheme were completely free and 37% of nurseries have introduced or increased charges to meet the funding gap.
13 Barnardo’s and Newport City Council Strategic Partnership – the impact of integrated family support services: http://www.barnardos.org.uk/what_we_do/wales/partnerships.htm