

# Children and young people – what can be done?

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## Focus: Mental Health

### Young people's experience of low-level mental health issues and violence (Part 1)

**Initiative:** Rocket Science was commissioned by West Yorkshire Violence Reduction Unit (November 2021) to research the links between low-level mental health issues and violence amongst young people.

**More Information:** <https://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/media/8511/young-people-s-experience-of-low-level-mental-health-issues-and-violence.pdf>

### What did they do?

They undertook an extensive evidence review to understand the issues, and then conducted consultation with young people, parents, youth workers and teachers. Consultation used a mix of surveys, focus groups, workshops and interviews.

### Evaluation:

Key findings from this research were:

- Mental health issues are a growing issue, with data showing that they particularly affect girls in their teens
- They increased due to COVID-19: the loss of routine, lack of school structure, social isolation, and prolonged uncertainty are key factors
- Presentation and interpretation of mental health issues differs between boys and girls, likewise their experiences of violence are likely to be different
- Reports of mental health issues, and of involvement in violence, are more common in teens than younger children
- Risk and protective factors are broadly similar for both mental health and for violence and include family situation, lack of engagement with school, ACEs, special educational needs and being NEET
- Experiences of violence exacerbate mental health issues, and people with mental health issues are more likely to be victims of violence as they are more vulnerable; in the case of serious mental health challenges, a reputation for violence can make it harder for these young people to access support services

# Focus: Mental Health

## Young people's experience of low-level mental health issues and violence (Part 2)

**Initiative:** Rocket Science was commissioned by West Yorkshire Violence Reduction Unit (November 2021) to research the links between low-level mental health issues and violence amongst young people.

**More Information:** <https://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/media/8511/young-people-s-experience-of-low-level-mental-health-issues-and-violence.pdf>

### Evaluation:

- School pressures, social pressures, family life, and the impact of social media and their online life are all key factors
- Almost all young people referred to support services are girls; boys face similar challenges of social isolation and loss of routine, but don't seem to report problems or accessing services
- Low-level mental health issues can lead to violent outbursts or misbehaviour through a frustration response and poor emotional regulation skills
- Young people with low-level mental health issues are more vulnerable to peer pressure and to being targeted by gangs
- Young people, their parents and youth workers would like more activities to be available, particularly sports and activities to support wellbeing and prevent or reduce exposure to negative peer influences
- Barriers to access to activities and support include availability, transport and cost of activities
- For specific mental health services (e.g. CAMHS), waiting lists and limited sessions are problems for access, and many low-level issues are below the threshold for referral to CAMHS
- Schools often offer mental health and wellbeing support but their time and resources are stretched; there is increasing pressure on schools to do more: education, mental health support, family and community support
- Sport is big source of support for young people, but focus on football and rugby may reduce opportunities to access support for girls
- Training for practitioners working with young people, including teachers, does offer specific content on supporting young people's mental health; little standardisation of training beyond need for safeguarding
- Senior leadership teams have a big influence on the ethos of a school and its treatment of mental health and violence
- High quality training is available, but resources are stretched, and teachers are stressed so time and budget are barriers to access
- Some schools recruit staff specifically for wellbeing and pastoral care, as it is too much to expect teaching staff to do this

### What did they recommend?

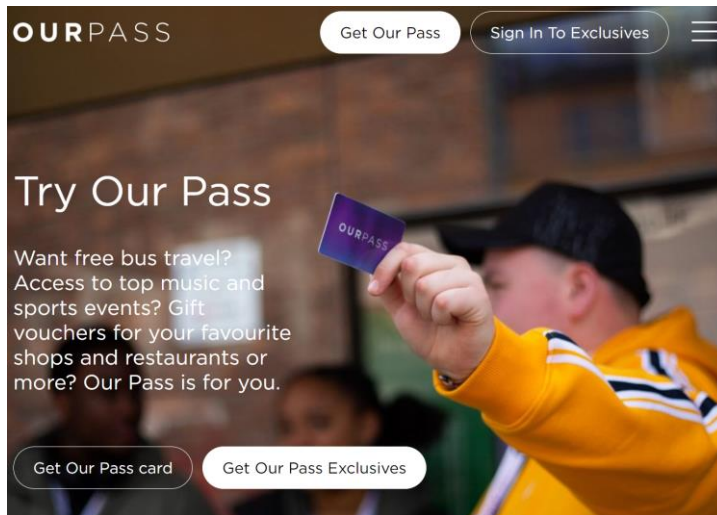
To address these issues, they suggested the following core preventative and early intervention actions:

- Schools to embed mental wellbeing support (with additional resources to support this)
- More meaningful activities available outside of school
- Engage girls in hobbies and activities
- Improve transport links, and ease of access to transport (including cost)
- Fundamentally, support needs to be long term, and consistent.

# Focus: Transportation

## Sheffield Fairness Commission

**Initiative:** “Day Saver” ticket for children and young people



**Activities:** Work undertaken to look at this and a trial of a day saver ticket for children and young people run in Sheffield during the summer of 2013.

**Evaluation:** No details. Other schemes:

e.g. West Yorkshire: “Fare Deal for Young People”

Manchester Andy Burnham’s “Opportunity Pass” (2019):

“The National Minimum Wage for teenagers and employees under 25 years of age, is at worst, slightly over half the adult rate. Apprenticeship rates, even lower.

Our Pass is probably the fairest way of giving 16 to 18 year-olds affordable bus travel to college, work, or leisure facilities. Part time college students on day release from an apprenticeship would also benefit. If they keep up the bus habit, their transition to full adult fares would be a more gradual one. By 18, this would mean a jump from Our Pass to the under-21s Young Person tickets”.

**More Information:** <https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/sites/default/files/docs/your-city-council/our-plans%2C-policies-and-performance/Fairness%20Commission%20Report.pdf>  
<https://democracy.sheffield.gov.uk/documents/s8573/Council%20Response%20to%20Fairness%20Commission%202.pdf>

## Focus: Transportation

Institute for Public Policy  
Research

Initiative: Mayoral  
Recommendations for Transport

**Activities:** Recommendations for metro mayors (2017 mayoral elections)

- reduce fares for public transport on some bus routes and for some groups – young people, the low-paid or jobseekers
- guarantee that no resident lives more than an hour's bus journey or an affordable bus ticket away from a job, so that all residents are connected with vital work opportunities, and to make a similar commitment around travel to a leisure centre.

**Evaluation:** No details.

**More Information:** Raikes L (2016) Connecting lines: How devolving transport policy can transform our cities, IPPR North. <http://www.ippr.org/publications/connecting-lines-how-devolving-transport-policy-can-transform-our-cities>

# Focus: Knife Crime

## Knife crime: safeguarding children and young people in education

**Initiative:** Ofsted research project on knife crime in education. Report sets out findings and recommendations.

### Activities:

Ofsted carried out research in 29 schools, colleges and pupil referral units (PRUs) in London.

Research looked at 3 broad questions:

- What are schools, colleges and PRUs in London doing to safeguard children and learners from knife crime while on school premises?
- How are schools, colleges and PRUs in London giving children the knowledge and skills to stay safer in their local communities?
- How are exclusions being used when children bring knives to school?

### Evaluation:

Schools have very different ways of dealing with knives and teaching children about risks of carrying a knife. Schools need guidance about what works.

Some schools shy away from searches/specific education programmes - they are worried about sending the “wrong message” to parents, despite evidence that these methods can effectively deter children from bringing weapons into school.

Inconsistent approaches to police involvement. School leaders have very different approaches to involving the police in incidents of knife-carrying, and there is an overall lack of clarity on when police involvement is necessary.

Clarity is needed on ‘managed moves’. As an alternative to exclusion, pupils are sometimes moved to other mainstream schools or PRUs. But no single body has a clear picture of the number of children who are moved, where they go, or for what reason.

Report finds no evidence to suggest exclusions are the root-cause of the surge in knife violence. Children who carry knives almost invariably have complex problems that begin long before they are excluded.

While acknowledging that permanent exclusions are a necessary and important sanction, some schools may be doing children a disservice by failing to follow statutory guidance on exclusions.

Schools should consider whether early intervention or extra support can be put in place for children in groups with disproportionately high rates of exclusion – such as children in care. Exclusion may be the right option in many cases, and schools must be able to take the necessary action to keep other pupils safe. However, it is important that all factors are considered.

For a longer term solution, partners must work together on early help services that can prevent children from reaching the point of exclusion in the first place. Report acknowledges challenges local agencies face in prioritising resources for such services.

**More Information:** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/knife-crime-safeguarding-children-and-young-people-in-education>

# Focus: Knife Crime

## HM Inspectorate of Probation (Part One)

### Initiative: Promising approaches to knife crime: an exploratory study

Research & Analysis Bulletin  
2022/03 (May 2022)

#### Methods

- Cross-sectional qualitative design in which Sheffield Hallam University researchers interviewed 77 people from five Young Offender Teams. Interviews focused on what participants believed to be promising practice in responding to knife crime. Interviewees included caseworkers, managers and leaders, external stakeholders (such as partners who worked with the YOT), and children.

#### Findings:

- Some elements of the knife crime programmes seen as effective but should be considered as part of a framework which includes more individualised and trauma-informed work. Programmes alone should not be seen as a panacea.
- Diversionary activities viewed positively as a way of keeping children busy. Their focus on opportunities which provide children with the chance to develop their skills and self-esteem is underpinned by theory, if not necessarily evidence.
- Some evidence that programmes are incorporating an element of the 'scared straight' model, known to be counter-productive (College of Policing, 2015) – this needs exploring in greater depth and these aspects should be removed.
- Did not manage to capture the voices of many children because difficulties in recruiting young participants.

# Focus: Knife Crime; Mentoring

## HM Inspectorate of Probation (Part two)

### Initiative: Promising approaches to knife crime: an exploratory study

Research & Analysis Bulletin  
2022/03 (May 2022)

#### Methods

- Cross-sectional qualitative design in which Sheffield Hallam University researchers interviewed 77 people from five Young Offender Teams. Interviews focused on what participants believed to be promising practice in responding to knife crime. Interviewees included caseworkers, managers and leaders, external stakeholders (such as partners who worked with the YOT), and children.

#### Findings:

- Exploitation as a cause of knife crime emerged frequently in discussions. Working with/supporting children at risk of exploitation should be a priority.
- Mentoring is potentially beneficial and authors recommend that YOTs make a concerted effort to bolster this element.
- **However**, mentoring seen as filling gap in shared cultural experiences and expectations created by workforce unrepresentative of the demographic of people on the caseload.
- Recruitment should focus on employing more people with experience of the (youth) justice system as a more sustainable and ethical way forward.

More Information: <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2022/05/RAB-2022-03-Promising-approaches-to-knife-crime-v1.1.pdf>



## Focus: Knife Crime

### Risk factors associated with knife-crime in United Kingdom among young people aged 10–24 years: a systematic review

**Initiative:** Systematic review from Imperial College London, London, UK

**Activities:** Aim of review is to identify and synthesise evidence from literature to identify risk factors associated with weapon-related crime, for young people (aged 10–24 years) within the UK.

Systematic search of published/grey literature within four databases identifying papers within a UK-context.

**Findings:** No association found between gender or ethnicity and youth violence, contrasting current understanding within media.

Multiple research papers identified **adverse childhood experiences and poor mental health as positively associated with youth and gang violence.**

It was suggested that **community and societal risk factors, such as discrimination and economic inequality, were frequently linked to youth violence.**

**More Information:** Haylock S, Boshari T, Alexander EC, Kumar A, Manikam L, Pinder R. Risk factors associated with knife-crime in United Kingdom among young people aged 10–24 years: a systematic review. BMC Public Health [Internet]. 2020 Sep 25;20(1). Available from: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1186/s12889-020-09498-4>

## Focus: Knife Crime

### Project Zao

**Initiative:** Multi-organisation knife crime campaign



**Activities:** Group of organisations working with young people in Derby have joined forces to reduce knife crime in the city.

*Project Zao* campaign launched by Derbyshire police, Derby City Council, Youth Offending Service, Derbyshire Probation, Derby Schools, Derby County and youth group Enthusiasm. Project aims to discourage young people in Derby from carrying knives by series of activities that educate, prevent and enforce the consequences of doing so.

*Fearless* website to access non-judgemental information and advice about crime and criminality.

Website also provides safe place to give information about crime - 100% anonymously.

More Information: <https://www.derby.gov.uk/community-and-living/crime-prevention-community-safety/project-zao/>

## Focus: Vaping

**Insights Work**- Bracknell Forest Council and Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead

**Initiative:** Response to:

- Recent survey by Action on Smoking and Health that found use of e-cigarettes is increasing among young people.
- Local insight from schools and professionals reporting increasing level of e-cigarette use among young people.

### Activities:

Healthy Dialogues has been commissioned by Bracknell Forest Council and Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Public Health teams to carry out insights work into young people's use of, and attitudes towards, e-cigarettes and vaping.

### Evaluation:

Aim of project is to understand:

- Young people's motivations for vaping and what would discourage uptake and use
- Opportunities for young people to vape (e.g. where, when and who with)
- How young people are accessing e-cigarettes
- Role of vaping in managing anxiety and stress
- How young people would respond to messages to re-consider using vapes

Work is to help understand and inform support, messages and interventions locally for young people, schools and parents around e-cigarettes and vaping.

More Information: <https://can-do.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/Article/144957>

# Focus: Vaping; Youth Health Champions

## Youth Health Champions investigate underage vaping in the City (Southend)

**Initiative:** Trading Standards and Southend-on-Sea City Youth Council tackling rise in underage vaping and e-cigarettes.

### More Information:

<https://www.southend.gov.uk/news/article/2883/youth-health-champions-investigate-underage-vaping-in-the-city>

### Activities:

- Youth council members helped Trading Standards by acting as mystery shoppers to see which shops will sell disposable vape pens containing nicotine to underage children.
- Youth council worked with public health team on youth vaping survey which received 1,540 responses, gathering the views of young people, parents, and carers about the issue. Results used to inform future awareness campaigns about effects of vaping and benefits of stopping.

### Evaluation:

- Youth council members went shopping for vapes in April, working with Trading Standards to visit six stores, as mystery shoppers. Southend-on-Sea City Youth Council found that for every visit during April they were refused when trying to purchase vaping products without ID.

### Related: Vape danger letter success for Youth Council: Letters Written To local MP

Concerns about illegal vape sales to young people raised by members of Blaby District Youth Council (South Leicestershire) have helped inspire legislation change at Government level. At their recent annual conference Youth Council attendees wrote letters to local MP highlighting the issue of vapes being targeted at young children. Now the Member of Parliament has written back, acknowledging the letters and saying the Government is planning to enforce stricter controls on vape sales.

Vaping and its impact on the young is one of four core issues the Youth Council has focused on over the last 12 months, the other three being the green agenda, night safety and hate crime.

# Focus: Food Poverty

## Derbyshire Council; Rural Action Derbyshire

## Initiative: The Feeding Derbyshire Partnership

### Activities:

Derbyshire Council works closely with and provides funding to Feeding Derbyshire, a countywide partnership led by Rural Action Derbyshire, which works to support and feed people who are struggling either in debt or on low incomes.

Feeding Derbyshire supports a range of programmes including the school holiday food programme, community food banks and community kitchens across the county.

Currently 15 holiday hunger clubs are being supported and it is estimated that between 1,300 and 1,500 children and young people will benefit from this during this half term.

**Evaluation:** Senior stakeholders advocated a collaborative and flexible model of holiday provision and identified the need to utilize and develop existing community assets to deliver this provision (Mann et al, 2020).

Senior stakeholders acknowledged multiple barriers of delivery related to cost, sustainability and organizational capacity and, in the absence of a strategic response and sustained funding by national, regional and local governments, questions remain whether this type of approach truly addresses and targets all of the most vulnerable in society.

**More Information:** Mann E, Widdison C, Defeyter MA. Implementing holiday provision programmes: A qualitative investigation of the experiences of senior stakeholders. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*. 2020 Jul 27;8(07):286.

# Focus: Food Poverty

## Holiday Activities and Food: Literature Review December 2020

**Initiative: Department for Education. Author: Jane Evans**

### Activities:

Commissioned by Department for Education to understand the evidence about the impact of school holidays on pupils, especially those from disadvantaged homes. Reviews published evidence regarding two potential effects:

- Holiday learning loss: where pupils potentially lose academic skills and knowledge over the summer holidays. Review investigates the extent of holiday learning loss, who might be affected and what provision is effective to mitigate holiday learning loss.
- 'Holiday Hunger': where children and families are unable to afford sufficient nutritious food during school holidays. Review investigates the extent of holiday hunger, which children are affected and how they and their families can be supported during the holidays.
- Also covers evidence on existing holiday food provision, including best practice on encouraging participation and attendance among disadvantaged groups.

### Evaluation:

- No conclusive evidence on extent of holiday hunger/holiday learning loss in England.
- Much of evidence on effects of holiday hunger/holiday learning loss and on effective provision to address these issues is drawn from the international literature, especially evidence from the USA.
- Only a few UK providers of holiday activities with food had sufficient records to draw any substantive conclusions about best practice or value for money in holiday food and activity delivery. Most informative evidence came from those which had been formally evaluated.
- While learning from international (especially US) evidence, review reveals evidence gaps in the UK and lack of evaluation of current provision to address both holiday hunger and holiday learning loss.

More Information: [https://essenceproject.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Essence\\_4\\_signposting.pdf](https://essenceproject.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Essence_4_signposting.pdf)

# Focus: Youth Councils

## Youth Civic Engagement

### Initiative: Evaluation from the U.S.

#### Activities:

Data from interviews with youth council members, interviews with adult allies, observations of youth council meetings, and a review of council documents. Thematic analysis identified four overarching themes related to social inequality: member representation, social networks, community engagement, and youth engagement in governmental decision making.

#### Evaluation:

Youth engagement in municipal government has the potential to benefit both youth and the community.

Yet, some forms of youth civic engagement may be related to social class/ race resulting in benefits to select youth and communities, thus perpetuating a longer term trajectory of privilege or marginalization.

Although the council was committed to diversity and authentic youth engagement, findings identified areas in need of further attention:

1. recruiting diverse youth, including those who attend non-traditional school settings.
2. providing youth with ongoing training and support focused on effective strategies for community engagement.
3. engaging socially disadvantaged youth in municipal government and assisting them in enhancing their social networks.

More Information: Augsberger A, Collins ME, Gecker W, Dougher M. Youth Civic Engagement: Do Youth Councils Reduce or Reinforce Social Inequality? *Journal of Adolescent Research*. 2017 Jan 4;33(2):187–208. Available from: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0743558416684957>

# Focus: Mystery shoppers

**Initiative:** A ‘mystery shopper’ project to evaluate sexual health and contraceptive services for young people in Croydon

**More Information:** Sykes S, O’Sullivan K. A “mystery shopper” project to evaluate sexual health and contraceptive services for young people in Croydon. *Journal of Family Planning and Reproductive Health Care*. 2006 Jan 1;32(1):25–6. Available from: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1783/147118906775275334>

## Activity:

- To evaluate accessibility of, and advice provided by, sexual health and advice services for young people in Croydon using ‘mystery shopper’ approach.
- Nineteen young people aged 13–21 years **trained** as mystery shoppers.
- **The group developed a set of standards**, based in part on existing guidelines of best practice, **to be met when working with young people**.
- The group accessed local sexual health services in pairs posing as genuine patients. Using one of four scenarios, the mystery shoppers assessed the service they received against the predefined standards.

## Evaluation:

- Main access difficulties occurred in the reception area. Confidentiality was a major concern and was frequently not explained. Advice and information received was generally clearly given and with appropriate level of detail.
- Additional training and support needs to be offered to receptionists. Confidentiality policies and statements need to be more effectively communicated.