Children's Alliance
Better starts, brighter futures

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY

The fourth in a sequence of reports charting a new start for children and young people

"This report considers the nature of 'community'; the ways in which our many and diverse communities are evolving; the impact on family life and the subsequent outcomes for children and young people."

Trudi Beswick
CEO Caudwell Children

Children's Alliance
Better starts, brighter futures
www.childrensalliance.org.uk

'FAMILY & COMMUNITY'

List of contributors:

HELEN CLARK	Lead Author
TRUDI BESWICK	Co-Author
PHIL ROYAL	Head of Campiagns
PAUL WRIGHT	Marketing and Administrative Consultant
ALEC RAVEN	School Home Support
BEN SUTCLIFFE	Caudwell Children
BETH BRADSHAW	Food Active
CHRIS WILLIAMS	CHATTA
CLAIRE GRAHAM	Independent
DAN WILSON	Yorkshire Sport Foundation
DR ALISON MURRAY	University of Roehampton
DR AMANDA NORMAN	University of Winchester
DR ANJA HEILMANN	University College London
DR ESTELLE MACKAY	Public Health Nutritionist
DR HELEN CHARMAN	V&A Museum
DR JULIE PEARSON	St Mary's University
DR KATHRYN PECKHAM	Nurturing Childhoods
DR PAMELA MURRAY	Worcester University
DR RACHEL SANDFORD	Loughborough University
HELEN WOOLEY	The University of Sheffield
JUNE O'SULLIVAN MBE	London Early Years Foundation
KAREN COOKE	UCEN Manchester
KATH WOODS	University of Southampton
MARION BRIGGS	Alliance for Childhood
MARY LUBRANO	Association of Play Industries
NICOLA CALDER	Food Active
PIPPA BAGNALL	Resilience + Co
PROFESSOR KEITH GODFREY	University of Southampton
PROFESSOR SONIA BLANDFORD	Plymouth Marjon University
SARAH DEAN	My Time Active
TAMSIN BREWIS	Water Babies

CONTENTS:

PREFACE

To me, family and community is everything.

I've experienced hardship and trauma, both as a child growing up in Merseyside and as an autistic person with three autistic children. Therefore I can recognise and empathise with many of the challenges highlighted in this report.

I firmly believe that, given the correct environment and support, every child has the opportunity to flourish. The world is becoming more tolerant and accepting of our differences, but children and young people have to believe that they can become whoever they want to be.

If we are to break the repetitive generational cycle of unemployment, poverty and poor health that we see in so many communities around the country we have to ensure this and future generations have the exposure to positive role models and the nurturing of a community who instil aspirational goals at an early age.

Despite the financial and emotional hardship we faced growing up, I was always encouraged to follow my dreams, which on reflection was even more difficult given my undiagnosed autism at the time.

For the millions of children and young people without positive influences in their life it is up to us to ensure they receive the support they need, both through school and the community settings in which they can be nurtured, and to provide the necessary resources to change the status quo for the vast majority of children living in low-income homes.

I plead with policy-makers, politicians and influencers to take heed of the recommendations detailed in this comprehensive report and start to make the changes needed to break the destructive cycle of poverty for our children and communities.

Thank you for reading, and for caring.

Mrs Christine McGuinness

FAMILY & COMMUNITY

INTRODUCTION

'As CEO of a national children's charity, my team and I have witnessed the changing dynamic of families and communities both in the support they need and the way people interact in many settings,' - Trudi Beswick

This report considers the nature of 'community'; the ways in which our many and diverse communities are evolving; the impact on family life and the subsequent outcomes for children and young people.

Communities in the UK have changed; they had changed before COVID-19 and they have changed as a result of the pandemic. 'Family and Community' discusses what this means for children and young people today and how strong families and healthy communities can lead the transition to a thriving and productive society for present and future generations.

Our contributors have provided real world examples of individuals and families whose lives have been impacted, whilst also offering innovative and considered ways in which the positive influences of strong families and connected communities can be used to replenish society as a whole.

This can only be achieved if the needs of children and young people are at the heart of strategy and policy-making.

We explore examples of best practice and seek out what we can learn from different countries and Governments; moving from narrow investment-based solutions to evidence-based suggestions that can offer public savings and efficiencies whilst delivering positive outcomes for generations to come.

Here we highlight the everyday reality for people living in communities across England and examine opportunities to make things better.

'Community' is what made the UK prosper and, with Government support, can still bind us together, so that future generations will grow and live together with equity of choice, opportunity, dignity and understanding.

'The goal is a connected society, with everybody contributing to the greater good. Rather than symbolising our collective failure and a nation's inevitable decline, family and community should be the touchstone of its strong and united future,' – Helen Clark

This report begins a conversation that is open to everybody. We hope it will be the first of many to come.

Lead Author: Helen Clark   **Co-Author: Trudi Beswick**

Helen Clark is a Policy Consultant who has been published on a wide spectrum of issues concerning the education, health and wellbeing of children and young people

Trudi Beswick is the Chief Executive of national children's charity, Caudwell Children; an ambassador for the Institute of Directors and a regular contributor to the United Nations Human Rights Council, Giving Pledge and the global think tank, the Milken Institute

GOING FORWARDS – A SUMMARY

1. THE EARLY YEARS: SOCIAL MOBILITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

1.1 Improvement of pay, training and career structure so that the Early Years Workforce (EYW) have parity of pay, Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and employment conditions with teachers holding Qualified Teacher (QT) status

1.2 A national network of fully integrated, community-based and multi-purpose Children's Centres providing education to all children, plus other services for families with opening hours that support parents' employment

1.3 Extra funding for the Pupil Premium to reflect long-term disadvantage

1.4 The 30 hours of funded childcare to be extended to all children

1.5 Revaluation of the benefit and financial support system for families

1.6 A National Assessment Framework to track social mobility progress year on year accompanied by an Annual Statement to the House (comparable to the Budget Statement)

1.7 Changes to the housing and planning systems to promote social cohesion and integration including the promotion of mixed tenure neighbourhoods.

2. THE IMPACT OF CULTURAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL INEQUALITIES ON THE HEALTH OF THE POPULATION

2.1 Commitment to resource community-led youth initiatives which provide a safe environment for young people to attain their full potential

2.2 Provision of opportunities for healthy physical activity in safe environments for children and families. If these are financially subsidised, all children will have the opportunity to engage in healthy activity with benefit to parenting skills also

2.3 Training and mentoring for potential community mentors who are able to support young people in their own environment

2.4 Devolved funding, autonomy, decision-making and influence to community residents creating conditions which create social action that is beneficial and ensures that the voices of children and young people are both heard *and put into action.*

2.5 Commitment to universality for resource-based provision. Targeting areas because they are supposedly 'deprived' (as with current proposals to site family hubs) breeds a culture of blame and stigma, reducing the likelihood of the facilities being used by those who need them most

3. SCHOOL AND THE CURRICULUM AS A HUB FOR FAMILY AND COMMUNITY

3.1   School inspections must continue to scrutinise a school's commitment to working with their local community. In addition to curriculum content, a wider understanding of the impact of the community on the school's students must be evidenced, with examples of community engagement across a range of educational, health and economic work

3.2   Increased investment (revenue and capital) into maintaining and improving school facilities. To function as 'community hubs', school sites must be functional, welcoming and safe

3.3   Resilience development is important for the whole community and should be an important element of the National Curriculum giving parents, carers and communities an opportunity to strengthen the ways in which individuals approach new issues with a collaborative approach

3.4   Tackling the issue of persistent absence should be prioritised and working from the outset to address it with families and the community is both beneficial to those concerned and cost effective long-term

3.5   Restore EHCP funding levels to the 2015-16 real value and cancel the high needs deficits built up by councils as a consequence of the spiralling costs of providing support outstripping the SEND budgets available to councils

3.6   Prioritise specialist training and support for the SEND workforce especially in early years settings

3.7   It is essential to use school platforms to inform, educate and excite a new generation about the food they eat; seeking the active involvement *with dignity* of parents on matters such as food inequality and free school meals

3.8   Ensure a culture of value and respect for parents' knowledge, skills and authority as equal partners in the school food debate; a family-centric approach.

3.9   The Holiday Activities and summer holiday Food Clubs were attended by 600,000 children (including 495,000 eligible for free school meals) and need additional investment to benefit all in the community

3.10   The Sugar Levy monies (£800 million) must be allocated as promised, to improve the health of the next generation of UK children.

4. ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES FOR FAMILIES AND CHILDREN

4.1   A review of the definition of 'disability' and the associated needs of building users within the 'Access to and use of buildings: Approved Document M.'

4.2   A new 'Inclusion and Diversity: Approved Document' to ensure that all new developments consider the wider needs of the community (such as quiet spaces, prayer rooms, communication boards, changing facilities etc.)

4.3   A deadline for all existing properties to meet new Inclusion and Diversity regulations

4.4   The introduction of locally elected Community Inclusion Commissioners and National Community Integration targets

4.5   The current voluntary food and drink standards for early years settings to become mandatory and recognised in the OFSTED Common Inspection Framework. Training and support on nutrition to be added to the curricula for the Early Years Workforce (EYW)

4.6   Government investment in a national network of public play spaces so that every community has at its heart somewhere safe, local and stimulating to play

4.7   The planning process to contain an obligation to provide high quality playground facilities and access to green space within all new housing developments

5. TRANSITION INTO ADULTHOOD AND ISSUES CONCERNING EMPLOYABILITY

5.1   A responsive and structured approach to early years education including adequate funding, training and quality assurance

5.2   Good physical *and* mental health to be at the heart of all policy-making involving children and young people

5.3   Re-modelling of the curriculum to make it responsive to modern day needs rather than an early 'herding' of pupils into particular 'types' of examination route that may exclude other choices and options

5.4   Reverse the decline in apprenticeships; ensuring that more young people are recruited to – and complete - an apprenticeship at all levels

5.5   Government to initiate a National 'Internship Scheme' to which participating firms will contribute an agreed level of subsistence and remuneration and involving open and transparent methods of application and selection

5.6   Parent and carer involvement to be considered and reflected in the day-to-day business of every school, college, early years setting and local authority

5.7   'Workplace readiness hubs' engaging a multi-professional approach to assist the transition to work in local communities for young people in need of extra assistance.

6. FAMILY AND COMMUNITY. PRACTICE IN OTHER NATIONS AND THE DEVOLVED UK

6.1   Children need to be confident in their food choices and guided in their knowledge and actions. Young food ambassadors/diet opinion-formers can act as role models within school. Issues such as climate change and the environment, veganism and vegetarianism and ubiquitous ultra-processed food are all topics of present and future relevance to the school curriculum

6.2   Ensure a culture of value and respect for parents' knowledge, skills and authority as equal partners in school food debate; a respected family-centric approach

6.3   Place greater emphasis on urban design for children and families, adopting child-friendly policies in all areas and incorporating them into new planning laws

6.4   Adopt a 'rights based' approach led by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; in particular, Article 31, with General Comment and Article 12

6.5   Require Local Authorities to carry out three yearly play sufficiency assessments as developed in Wales and Scotland

6.6   Involve local communities in carrying out a Place Survey as developed in Scotland, to assess the health of a community and to discover where physical and social infrastructure is inadequate

6.7   UK Government to invest in children's early social and emotional development by promoting, evaluating and rolling out programmes such as Roots of Empathy and Seeds of Empathy; thereby seeking to further and increase children's pro social behaviour and empathetic capabilities and prepare them for later life

6.8   England and Northern Ireland to follow Scotland and Wales in removing the corporal punishment 'defence' of 'reasonable punishment' thus protecting *all* UK children from common assault inside or outside of the home. This legislative reform to be accompanied by public information campaigns; parents to be supported in using positive parenting strategies and the impact of the law reform monitored.

7. INVESTMENT IN FAMILY AND COMMUNITY. THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIETAL RETURN

7.1   Government to invest in and roll-out high quality birth to age five programmes

7.2   School facilities to be open to the community as well as to commercial companies

7.3   Community/voluntary work to be part of the National Curriculum; assessed by OFSTED

7.4   Local businesses to pay a levy proportionate to turnover to be spent within the local community to provide local services and facilities

7.5 **Ring-fenced funding for all local authorities to invest in community leisure projects and services**

7.6 **Government to facilitate independent audit of its progress on the Sustainable Development Goals; publishing an Annual Statement subject to debate in the Houses of Parliament (as with the Budget Statement).**

CHAPTER 1: THE EARLY YEARS: SOCIAL MOBILITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

The wellbeing and stability of children and families is a measure by which the value placed by a society upon equality, diversity and inclusion can be gauged and policymakers should therefore evaluate the social and financial price of poor social mobility, poverty and divided communities when making long term plans.

In 2021, the cost of child poverty in the UK approached £38 billion with costs to the benefits system, social services, health services, policing and justice and education services – in sum the price of running a society (*https://www.lboro.ac.media/media/research/crsp/downloads/the-cost-of-child-poverty-in-2021-crsp-paper.pdf*).

Getting things right from the start paves the way for success and strength in the future.

> *'If the race is already halfway run before children begin school, then we clearly need to examine what happens in the earliest years,'* ('Untying the Gordian Knot of Social Inheritance,' Gosta Esping-Andersen, 2004).

> *'Like it or not, the most important mental and behavioural patterns, once established, are difficult to change once children enter school,'* ('Home Alone,' Wall Street Journal, Heckman and Wax, 2004).

The effects of poverty in early childhood impact every aspect of a child's life *(Ridge T.,2011 'The everyday costs of poverty in childhood: a review of qualitative research exploring the lives and experiences of low-income children in the UK,' Children and Society 2591): 73-84)* with increased risk to health and life expectancy *(Office for National Statistics 2014 Statistical Bulletin: 'Life Expectancy a Birth and at Age 65 by local Areas in the United Kingdom; 2006-08 to 2010-12)* as well as educational attainment *(Social Mobility Commission [SMC] 2017 'Time for Change; An Assessment of Government Policies on Social Mobility,')*.

The Covid-19 pandemic has presented huge challenges to the Early Years sector (catering for around 2.1 million children under the age of five). Unprecedented economic and public health consequences of Covid-19 are likely to entrench existing patterns of vulnerability, inequality and under-achievement for young children and families; in particular, those living in and circumscribed by poverty and disadvantage. The early years are now acknowledged as crucial to children's outcomes – but the poorest children will start school already 11 months behind their more affluent peers.

Child poverty is becoming integral to policy debate and some specific new programmes have been launched in the UK.

However, there is a danger that these may become enmeshed in historic perceptions of the 'undeserving poor' with stigma a corollary of child poverty;

damaging the self-esteem of children and families, informing aspirations for the future and risking children being negatively judged, stereotyped or undervalued. The classroom is then a place of negativity rather than achievement, including experiences of bullying *(Goldfield et al, 2021 'Findings from the Kids in Communities Study (KiCS): A Mixed Methods Study Examining Community-Level influences on Early Childhood Development. PloS one 15.9:e0256431-e0256431).*

Children growing up in 'disadvantaged' homes may encounter a multitude of problems. Financial difficulties, under funded living environments, reduced policing and poor transport links as well as issues involving health, personal aspiration and historical stigma combine to create complex problems that require multi-layered solutions. The surrounding area may be unsafe or offer additional negative influences to reduce the opportunity for socialisation or physical play.

The more disadvantaged the community during a child's early years, the greater the impact on their development *(Woolfenden et al 2013 'Inequity in child health; the importance of early childhood development,' Journal of paediatrics and child health: 49(9)* https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/23551940/*).*

A study by the Australian Government showed that children in the most disadvantaged communities were twice as vulnerable to adverse developmental effects *(Australian Government Department of Education and Training, 2018, Australian Early Development Census National Report: 'A Snapshot of Early Childhood Development in Australia').* It therefore makes sense to consider the impact of family and communities on children's developmental trajectories when deciding the strategic direction of future policy.

The issue of social mobility should be a key priority for the Government and in 2020 the Early Years Social Mobility Peer Review Programme *(https://assets.pubishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/703493/Early_Years_Social_Mobility_Peer_Review-Programme.pdf)* recognised that children who lag behind in the development of vocabulary and spoken language skills will begin at a disadvantage when they start school. Recent government initiatives such as the National Tutoring Programme designed to address challenges in early language due to the Covid-19 pandemic have attempted to add support in this area but with limited resources and low levels of wider attention *(https://www.gov.uk/government/news/early-years-support-package-to-help-close-covid-language-gap).*

Many aspects of social and education policy have the capacity to influence matters related to social mobility and inclusion and if these are acted upon in a holistic strategy, real change is possible. There are clearly defined population size and cultural differences between the UK and Nordic/Scandinavian countries but an integrated approach to policy in Finland has led to one of the highest levels of income equality and the lowest

proportion of low income families in Europe. Finland has a long term tradition of prioritising early years education in particular; together with parent partnership as mechanisms for sustaining equality, social mobility and an inclusive society *(https://theconversation.com/what-the-world-can-learn-about-equality-from-the-nordic-model-99797).*

Children from the most disadvantaged backgrounds are already more at risk of losing ground once they start school and are more likely to then attend a school where a majority of pupils come from a similar background in terms of social and economic family status.

The priority of early years education therefore should be to relieve unrealistic expectations of anxious families rather than adding to them.

In place of goal-oriented universal measures of 'school readiness' there should be a concentration on the learning and educating of families and communities as much as the specific learning and development of children 'in isolation.' Quality adult education available to all would be rooted in the knowledge and understanding of child development; free at the point of access and combined with linked policies at a national and regional level to address 'community' priorities such as green space, housing, health, policing, leisure, culture, food and transport. Public investment to realise the objectives of one policy will reinforce the objectives of others. Poorer communities experience greater rates of crime, anti-social behaviour and child poverty; all of which induce people who can, to leave and those who can't, to stay and communities therefore become segregated according to social and economic disadvantage and cultural and racial difference.

Within its 'State of the Nation' report in 2021, the Social Mobility Commission (SMC) called for a 'shake-up' of child welfare benefits and significant investment in education to end child poverty and reduce the widening attainment gap. The Social Mobility Commission (SMC) (an independent body advising the Government) stated that the youngest and most deprived in society should be at the centre of the UK's pandemic recovery. According to the Commission, almost one in three children (4.3 million) now live in poverty; 700,000 more than in 2012. In order to make progress, proposals for change include:

- Re-evaluating benefits and financial support for families

- Extending eligibility for the 30 hours of funded childcare to all children

- Giving the early years workforce better pay and career structures

- Extra funding for the Pupil Premium to reflect long-term disadvantage

- Drawing up measures to track social mobility over the next 30 years.

The Early Years Workforce (EYW) itself needs increased investment in order to support children in the best way:

(*https://www.nurseryworld.co.uk/news/article/government-urged-to-put-disadvantaged-children-at-centre-stage-of-covid-19-recovery-plan*).

One in eight childcare workers are paid less than £5 per hour and many are forced to take second jobs to finance their own living costs, with some relying on food banks and others leaving the sector for more remunerative and fulfilling employment elsewhere.

A 2020 report by the Social Mobility Commission (*https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/906906/The_stability_of-the_early_years_workforce-in_England.pdf*) listed the continued low pay, long hours and lack of status amongst the barriers to a stable Early Years Workforce. Key negative issues included low pay, lack of career and training opportunities and negative perceptions of working in the sector. All were exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The stability of the workforce fluctuated across regions.

31% of Early Years Workers in the North of England remained with their current employer for less than two years compared with 37% in the Midlands and 40% in the South of England suggesting a variance in pay, working conditions and career opportunities.

Neil Leitch, Chief Executive of the Early Years Alliance stated that:

'With the huge challenges that the coronavirus pandemic has created for the childcare sector, it's clear that much more Government support is needed if providers are going to be able to not just stay afloat but to continue to recruit and retain quality early years professionals who can deliver quality early years provision as well.'
(*https://www.nurseryworld.co.uk/news/article/early-years-workforce-forgotten-key-workers-driven-out-by-low-pay-in-increasingly-volatile-sector*).

There remains a persistent and urgent need to improve the qualifications of the Early Years Workforce and The Education Policy Institute in their 2020 report (*https://epi.org.uk/publications-and-research/early-years-workforce-development/*) found that qualifications have not kept pace with the rise in workforce numbers since 2014 and the introduction of the minimum GCSE grade requirement for key staff has created difficulties in attracting highly qualified workers to the sector as well as hampering providers' ability to develop the skills and career range of Early Years Professionals (EYPs)

In 'Fairness First: Social Mobility, Covid and Education Recovery,' (*https://www.suttontrust.com/our-research/social-mobility-covid-education-recovery-plan-catch-ip*) The Sutton Trust maintains that Early Years education should form a central plank of recovery and that an increase in the Early Years Pupil Premium to the levels of primary schools and funding for Continuous Professional Development (CPD) of the Early Years Workforce

should form part of a new financial settlement so that small Early Years settings and those in less affluent areas can survive and deliver high quality provision. There is nothing more essential in education than to get things right in the early years and The University of Philadelphia reports that early years investment will save money long term and on a larger scale in innumerable ways (*https://www.impact.upenn.edu/early-childhood-toolkit/why-invest/what-is-the-return-on-investment/*).

The Sutton Trust has advised that the recruitment of Early Years Teachers (EYTs) should be prioritised with the aim of having a qualified teacher in every setting with the status and pay parity of teachers holding Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) and improved working conditions for teachers in the non-maintained sector. A setting's work with children should take place in close and confidential cooperation with the home and The Early Years Alliance promotes consistent and positive parental involvement, with parents engaging in the early development of their children as much as possible (*https://www.eyalliance.org.uk/involving-parents-their-children%E2%80599s-learning*).

However, although attendance at high quality settings can make a big difference to children under age five, those most in need are currently locked out of 30 hours of Government-funded early education.

In September 2017, the Government introduced the '30 hour offer'; an entitlement for a further weekly 15 hours Early Years education for three and four year olds (*https://www.gov.uk/30-hours-free-childcare*).

Children qualify for this entitlement if the parent(s)/carer(s) living with the child are in work and earning between the minimum wage of £1,853.28 per month and £100,000 per annum per parents. However, children from low-income homes where at least one parent is unemployed have comparatively less entitlement at three and four years old, even though they would benefit most from the provision. In practice, The Sutton Trust study *(as above 2021)* confirmed that the main benefits have been to support relatively high earning parents' career progression with 70% of the extended entitlement for three and four year olds spent on the top 50% of earners.

The Sutton Trust also calculated the cost of the additional hours and argued that the 15 hours of funded places should be extended to children from disadvantaged backgrounds. The estimated cost of a **universal** 30 hour entitlement would raise spending by around £250 million in 2024-25 and extending the entitlement to disadvantaged three and four year olds would cost an additional £165 million a year in comparison with the approximate figure of **£735 million** for the existing 30 hour entitlement.

Early Years Alliance research *(as above)* contends that provision for disadvantaged two year olds has been negatively impacted by providers choosing to prioritise the 30 hour entitlement. Over a quarter (27%) of parents with children under five struggled to balance work and childcare and 80% of parents and carers from deprived areas said that the Government did not do

enough to help them to secure affordable and accessible good quality childcare.

The London Early Years Foundation (*https://www.leyf.org.uk*) has addressed the problem via its 'Doubling Down' scheme; doubling the hours available to children from poor and disadvantaged backgrounds by increasing the standard funded 15 hours to 30 hours; supplying a cooked lunch and targeting children returning from the Covid pandemic whose development had suffered badly. Crowd funding and other sources of charitable giving enabled Doubling Down initially and the LEY have continued to fund it (although the public appetite to finance 'Covid fallout' has declined). Some of the beneficial outcomes include:

- A constructive impact on children's learning and communication skills observed by over 70% of parents and staff

- Learning and development amongst disadvantaged three and four year olds improving by an average eight per cent in seven key Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Learning and Development areas

- Communication and language improvement from 57%-68% (+ 12%)

- Mathematics improvement from 52%-61% (+ 9%)

- Expressive Arts and Design improvement from 67%-76% (+ 9%)

- Children returned to eating independently; replacing the reversion to bottle feeding for some that had occurred during the pandemic

- 77% of parents said that their own health and wellbeing had improved (many of whom were caring for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) with a further 85% more engaged in at-home learning with their children)

- Staff morale improved as they felt that they had more time to support vulnerable children in their learning and development.

The Government remains as yet to be persuaded of the arguments.

Disadvantaged children and families tend to live in 'disadvantaged communities'. Inflated house prices where median purchase prices have far outstripped median incomes have combined with a social housing programme whose lengthy waiting lists exclude all but the most acutely in need. As a consequence, key workers, essential workers and many others are forced to live in substandard or inappropriate accommodation because they have been left behind by the market and squeezed out of social housing (*https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/eploads/attachment_data/file/7606/1775205.pdf*).

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation promotes the development of mixed tenure housing (*https://www.jrf.org.sites/default/files/jrf/migrated/files/2295.pdf*) as avoiding the polarisation and negative outcomes of single-tenure neighbourhoods while stimulating economic development and social cohesion (*https://realassets.ipe.com/news/viewpoint-ahy-the-uk-should-embrace-mixed-tenure-housing/10051985.article*).

Housing and planning policy can therefore be directed towards the achievement of a fairer, more cohesive and inclusive society in preference to one in which a culture of separation, division and exclusion is paramount with parallel communities living perhaps a couple of miles apart.

Community cohesion is the key to an improvement in outcomes for future generations with all policies combining to restore the primacy of family and community; placing the youngest children at the forefront of all decision-making with benefits accruing to everybody of a safer, healthier, happier – and ultimately, more prosperous society.

Going Forwards

1.1   Improvement of pay, training and career structure so that the Early Years Workforce (EYW) have parity of pay, Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and employment conditions with teachers holding Qualified Teacher (QT) status

1.2   A national network of fully integrated, community-based and multi-purpose Children's Centres providing education to all children, plus other services for families with opening hours that support parents' employment

1.3   Extra funding for the Pupil Premium to reflect long-term disadvantage

1.4   The 30 hours of funded childcare to be extended to all children

1.5   Revaluation of the benefit and financial support system for families

1.6   A National Assessment Framework to track social mobility progress year on year accompanied by an Annual Statement to the House (comparable to the Budget Statement)

1.7   Changes to the housing and planning systems to promote social cohesion and integration including the promotion of mixed tenure neighbourhoods.

CHAPTER 2: THE IMPACT OF CULTURAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL INEQUALITIES ON THE HEALTH OF THE POPULATION

'I speak from experience, both working in the North East with some people who are in poverty and also as someone who has lived in very poor areas (although these were in the South).There is a large degree of distrust of people who are not from the same background. They think people will be judging them and often they find comfort in continuing their lives as they have always led them.

This isn't wrong, but we need to work out how we can help educate them to lead healthier lifestyles and what the benefits are in doing so. From here, we can really start to bridge the massive gaps that have been generated between richer areas and poorer,' (Claire Graham: Independent Consultant Nutritionist).

Children living in poverty-stricken, low-income households can experience myriad negative health, economic and social consequences. These transfer into adulthood and throughout the UK, many regions are cauldrons of second, third and even fourth generation unemployment and deprivation. It is a cruel, relentless cycle because child poverty increases year on year and reached a figure of 4.1 million young people (nine in every classroom of thirty) in 2018 *(Government, H 92018) 'Households below average income: 1994/95 to 2016/17': Gov.uk:* [*https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/households-below-average-income-199495-to-201617*](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/households-below-average-income-199495-to-201617)*)* and The Institute of Fiscal Studies estimates that the tally will exceed five million by 2021 *(Cribb 2021 'Living standards, poverty and inequality in the UK 2021,' London: Institute for Fiscal Studies).*

A lifespan dogged by ill health is now widely acknowledged as an outcome of growing up in poverty. Birth weights of children in the most deprived areas are (on average) 200g lower than those in more affluent places and sudden infant death is more prevalent in disadvantaged families as are acute childhood infections and the experience of mental illness *(British Medical Association, 2017 'Health at a price. Reducing the impact of poverty,' London: British Medical Association).* Children from economically disadvantaged families are also more prone to the onset of chronic disease and diet-related maladies.

In 2021, a paper by The King's Fund (*https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/press/press-releases/new-analysis-stark-inequalities-obesity-england*) highlighted a marked rise in obesity in England's most deprived communities; discerning a growing disparity between the richest and poorest parts of the country. The obesity rate gap in women from the most and least poverty-stricken areas is recorded as 17%; up from 11% on 2014 figures, while a male deprivation gap given as 8% has risen from a base of 2% in 2014. Data from the government National Child Measurement Programme showed a sharp worsening in disparities in obesity in Year Six children during the Covid-19 pandemic. This is such that rates became twice as high in those living in the most deprived communities as compared with those in the least deprived communities (*https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-*

The urban Northern areas of England have the highest recorded rates of obesity and more obesity-related illnesses with repercussions including a worsening of health-related inequalities such as an inability to work and resultant lower income. Many people trapped by poverty cannot afford the cost of prescription charges and are unaware of the limited range of situations/conditions exempting them from charges resulting in a steady deterioration of their health over time. A negative sequence then dogs successive generations, starting from pre-birth and impacting parenting, educational attainment and employment.

Smoking which is hugely detrimental effect to health is more prevalent in low income areas. According to a 2019 paper by ASH (Action on Smoking and Health):

'The more disadvantaged someone is, the more they are likely to smoke and to suffer from smoking-related disease and premature death,'
(*https://ash.org.uk/wp-content/uplioads2019/09/ASH-Briefing_Health-inequalities.pdf*).

The report uncovers a repetitive adverse pattern underpinning social norms, familiarisation and addiction. Children with parents who smoke are exposed to the habit more often and from an earlier age; are more likely to smoke themselves and later on, find it more difficult to stop. The North of England has higher statistics for poor health than the South and this is in part due to the fact that more people in the North of England smoke.

One of the biggest components of the 'North/South divide' and a significant indicator of geographical inequalities is the unemployment rate.

In 2018, UK unemployment was fairly low with the highest rate recorded in the North East (5.5%) compared to the lowest in the South West and East of England; both 3.1% (*https://www.economicshelp.irf/blog/1416/unemployment/geographical-unemployment*). The difference is historic with comparative rates in 1984 being 18.1% and 9.6% respectively.

This means that third and sometimes fourth generation unemployment is being 'inherited' by families and communities and becoming a social 'norm.'

In 2010, Duncan et al (*'Early Childhood Poverty and Adult Attainment, Behaviour and Health,' Child Development)* found statistically significant (in some cases, quantitatively large) detrimental outcomes of early poverty on some later life attainment-related categories including adult earnings and work hours.

In many financially insecure communities, young people at ever decreasing ages are encouraged to boost the family income via part-time jobs when academic school demands have never been higher.

Similarly, a proportion of ethnic minority families rely upon young people to translate important written information for the family and some carry an additional responsibility of being the only person in their household who can speak or understand English. Some of the poorest areas nationwide have high numbers of ethnically diverse communities and 2019 Government data depicts people from the Pakistani ethnic group as being over three times as likely as White British people to live in the overall 10% most deprived neighbourhoods *(Government H 2020 'People living in deprived neighbourhoods,'* https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/uk-population-by-ethnicity/demographics/people-living-in-deprived-neighbourhoods/latest*)*.

According to the 2011 census, 19% of Black households were comprised of a single parent with dependent children; the highest percentage out of all the ethnic groups for this type of household *(HM Government, 2020 'Families and households' Gov.uk:* https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/uk-population-by-ethnicity/demographics/families-and-households/latest*)*. Many boys in these family groups grow up without a male role model.

Habits and ways of living in communities evolve over time and those in areas of poverty and deprivation are often unhealthy. Poor eating habits and smoking are contributory factors of ill health and children may enjoy less access to 'wellbeing' lifestyle pursuits such as swimming lessons, football classes or dancing because they are financially prohibitive and possibly hard to access.

Children's experience of poverty can distort their experience of school; they may have fewer friends and feel excluded because they cannot participate in the social activities of their peers. A 2019 study *(Campbell: 'Understanding social inequalities in children being bullied; UK Millennium Cohort Study findings. PLoS ONR 14(5): e0217162.* https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0217162*)* found that while nearly half the children surveyed reported being bullied (48.6%) those living in the lowest income households were at 20% greater risk compared to those from the highest income homes.

The situation in its entirety has been exacerbated by the Covid-10 pandemic.

On March 20th 2020, Government Minister Michael Gove observed that:

> *The virus does not discriminate,'*

but low-income families who encounter difficulty in accessing services and for whom communication can be a barrier have taken a greater 'hit'. Digital poverty therefore is significantly more likely to affect low-income households

with its attendant negative impact upon young people's access to the internet and the required technology for their educational needs.

Low income households are increasingly faced with hard choices about what must be eliminated from the essential items of food, heating, water and health services. As energy and fuel prices increase exponentially, the choice is often between food and fuel. The fuel poverty action charity, National Energy Action, has warned that the average increase of £153 for prepayment customers is likely to trigger more utility debt, 500,000 extra households in fuel poverty and an increase in preventable deaths this winter *(National Energy Action, 2021 '500,000 at risk of fuel poverty after tomorrow's price rises,' NEA.org.uk: https://www.nea.org.uk/news/5000000-at-risk-of-fuel-povertyafter-tomorrow's-price-rises/)*

There is a clear correlation between childhood poverty and reduced employment opportunities in later life and educational disparity within groups from different backgrounds plays a significant part in cycles of unemployment or low levels of income. The extent of the gulf between richer and poorer communities *(https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/nationalaccounts/uksectoraccounts/compendium/economicreview/february2020/childpovertyandeducationoutcomesbyethnicity)* is reflected in employment and earning capacity.

During the pandemic, children without viable internet access frequently fell behind at school and the educational backlog for some became irrecoverable. Digital poverty also deprives children of leisure opportunity choice, increasing the likelihood of socialising per force outside the home and risking being stopped by the police. 'Street socialising' can also create a 'them and us' dynamic between young people and the rest of the community based on a fear of what 'loitering' young people 'may be up to'.

Communities have understandable concerns about anti-social behaviour, and damage to public equipment in many of the poorest neighbourhoods increased during the pandemic. Undeniably, areas with a rise in benefit claimants experienced more anti-social crimes, but the fact that the economic and crime effects of Covid-19 are hitting the most vulnerable communities the hardest is incontrovertible *(Kirchmaier, 2020 'Covid-19 and changing crime trends in England and Wales,' London: Centre for Economic Performance).*

To make matters worse, local authority spending restrictions due to austerity combined with long-term negative perceptions of certain areas result in damaged equipment often not being replaced, thus 'validating' the charge that there is 'nothing available' for young people and intensifying negative feelings towards authority. At the same time, societal stereotypes are distorting the life experiences of some young people who are experiencing 'postcode judgement' because they live in certain neighbourhoods. This especially appertains to young people from ethnically diverse communities who find themselves less likely to be employed, more likely to be stopped by the police and more likely to be involved in the criminal justice system.

In 2020, 78% of White people were employed compared with 66% from all other ethnic groups combined *(HM Government 2020 'Employment,'* https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/work-pay-and-benefits/employment/employment/latest*),*

2019 saw 6 stop and searches for every 1,000 White people compared with 54 for every 1,000 Black people *(HM Government 2021 'Stop and Search'* https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/crime-justice-and-the-law/policing/stop-and-search/latest*)* and 3% of the UK's population is Black compared to 13% of the prison population *(HM Government, 2021 'Ethnicity and the Criminal Justice System, 2020* https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/ethnicity-and-the-criminal-justice-system-statistics-2020/ethnicity-and-the-criminal-justice-system-2020*).*

Yorkshire Sport Foundation work across a vast number of communities in West and South Yorkshire and have found that it is possible to reverse the tide of decline if community-led organisations with the impetus to effect change are supported to boost their skills and achieve their ambitions.

In 2016, 'Reach up Youth' was formed (and led) by young people in Sheffield in response to high crime rates, lack of opportunities and fear from local families. The ethos is that young people are the solution rather than the problem and guided by principles of community cohesion and equality for all, they aim to provide a programme of social, educational and recreational activities within a safe and secure environment. With sport as a unifying driver, young people are enabled to expand their personal development by taking part in activities designed to reduce isolation and promote positive life-skills, good mental health and wellbeing. In this way, they are diverted from the negative lure of potential gang crime and anti-social behaviour.

Elsewhere in Yorkshire, 'Empower', a youth-centred organisation, works with young people to sever the links with gangs. They offer safe spaces for socialising and being active together away from the immediate community in order to build confidence, resilience and positive opportunities for individual development. The youth-led community-driven nature of the work involves signposting to Empower by means of a support network of other community groups and local schools. Transport costs are provided, enabling young people to travel out of their own community and feel safe to attend the sessions. Community-building underpins the project, but there is also an opportunity for young people to meet others from different areas of the district thus negating postcode barriers.

Yorkshire Sport Foundation have found that supporting local people to create their own solutions to societal problems can facilitate a sustainable change in behaviour and improved outcomes for individuals with the help of training provision and building capacity within the communities themselves.

It is therefore essential that these progressive initiatives can rely on secure funding streams. It is necessary to invest in physical assets such as facilities and spaces, the local third sector groups and individuals themselves.

Support to local people in Sheffield and Wakefield has resulted in the creation of local social action projects; building a local workforce, good practice role models and improving access to much-needed local services.

When organisations in local communities are given the skills and equipped with the knowledge to navigate through systems, they are the best service by which to support the most vulnerable people in communities. However, the organisations themselves also need the time and support to be able to access funds, develop their skills and understand how to engage with and be a part of the wider system beyond their doorstep.

Going Forward

2.1   **Commitment to resource community-led youth initiatives which provide a safe environment for young people to attain their full potential**

2.2   **Provision of opportunities for healthy physical activity in safe environments for children and families. If these are financially subsidised, all children will have the opportunity to engage in healthy activity with benefit to parenting skills also**

2.3   **Training and mentoring for potential community mentors who are able to support young people in their own environment**

2.4   **Devolved funding, autonomy, decision-making and influence to community residents creating conditions which create social action that is beneficial and ensures that the voices of children and young people are both heard *and put into action.***

2.5   **Commitment to universality for resource-based provision. Targeting areas because they are supposedly 'deprived' (as with current proposals to site family hubs) breeds a culture of blame and stigma, reducing the likelihood of the facilities being used by those who need them most**

CHAPTER 3: SCHOOL AND THE CURRICULUM AS A HUB FOR FAMILY AND COMMUNITY

Schools are currently places of directed learning to address specific outcomes such as grades, skills and requirements that are valued for future life *(Cordal. 2015, 'The school, Installation,' 2015 www.http://cementeclipses.com/Works/school/).*

They sit **within** communities as opposed to being **of** them and the education offered is dominated by examination curricula decided by the Department for Education *(https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-curriculum)* and content shared by examination boards. Therefore family and community links and needs are often left to ad hoc moments or delivered through National Curriculum subject areas such as personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) *(https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/personal-social-health-and-economic-education-pshe/personal-social-health-and-economic-pshe-education).* Key aspects of life relating to families and communities can too easily be viewed as tick box exercises that are 'covered' in lessons but evade authentic dialogue, exploration and challenge.

If schools are to become dynamic hubs for families and communities, trust and understanding is needed between all parties to enact a process whereby all stakeholders develop a connection rather than engaging in a 'top down' directed process *(Pearson, J.2019 'Developing a Culture of Care within Primary Physical Education in Higher Education,' https://ray.yorksj.ac.uk/id/eprint/4137/).* Truly **knowing** the community, not just **knowing about** or **of** the community, is an important aspect of developing schools as community hubs.

This concept is not new.

The Labour Government in 2003 introduced the 'Full Service and Extended Schools,' policy with the ambition of schools *'work(ing) with the local authority and other partners to offer access to a range of services and activities which support and motivate children and young people to achieve their full potential.'* These schools were located in areas with the highest levels of deprivation and while data from the Department of Education showed that 13,400 after-school settings were offering a total of 612,400 places, the initiative was axed in 2011 when ring-fenced funding was withdrawn by the new Government *(Education, D. f.2013 Department for Education https://assets.pubishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/355075/SFR33_2014_Main_report.pdf).*

There is now an increasing awareness of the correlation between the socioeconomic status of pupils and the impact of this upon their educational outcomes. Four key influencing factors have been identified *(Haig, T 2014 'Equipping Schools to Fight Poverty: A community hub approach,' Educational Philosophy and Theory, 1018):*

- Family investment in children's learning experiences

- The negative effect of stress on families can affect learning

- Diseases associated with poverty can affect learning

- The quality of teaching affects learning.

If academic outcomes are to be addressed, a broad and holistic understanding of and collaboration with the wider community outside the school gates must be achieved and one effective instance of this can be seen in the School Streets programme 2022 *(SchoolStreets.org.uk: http://schoolstreets.org.uk/)*.

Here, roads outside schools are converted into pedestrian and cyclist zones with clear wins of reducing air pollution and safeguarding children from traffic but also improving the community's connection and relationship with the school because travelling to school is safer and healthier for children and their families. The experience of the pandemic changed the physical activity patterns of many families; shown, for example, by the finding in a Sport England Covid-19 survey of July 2020 that 70% of children aged 3-12 were 'walking' with parents or guardians during lockdown and that there was an increase of 'informal play or family games within the home.'

Schools have much to gain from being alert to shifts in family behaviours and taking opportunities to use extra curricular activities to strengthen the family unit and 'build back better.'

The Department for Education recently invested £10.1m into opening school facilities and a report published by The Active Partnership Network in 2021 *('Opening School Facilities: Final project report. Loughborough: Active Partnership Network)* identified that:

- School facilities offer an accessible, safe and trusted space

- Schools are primarily driven to open their doors for community use to strengthen relationship with their local community

- There should be a concerted and collective effort to change the narrative around a school's motivation to open their facilities. In most cases, income generation is a secondary driver for both primary and secondary schools and support and guidance to schools needs to reinforce this

- Many schools are **already** open for community use; however they remain a hugely under-utilised asset

- Secondary schools need small to large scale capital investment into their facilities to make them more appealing and suitable for community use.

A whole-school and whole-community approach facilitates strong partnerships between schools and communities and The National Children's Bureau (2022) has said that:

> *'In a whole school approach, wellbeing and mental health are everyone's business,'*

highlighting the importance of communal goals and clear engagement across the entire community *(https://www.ncb.org.uk).*

The Anna Freud National Centre for Children suggest that children who have a weak relationship with their family, community and school are more likely to be excluded from school and as a consequence, experience mental health difficulties *('Pupils isolated from family, school and community at highest risk of exclusion,' 5th February 2019 https://www.annafreud.org/insights/news/2019/02/pupils-isolated-from-family-school-and-community-at-highest-risk-of-exclusion).*

The School-Home Support Practitioner Service *(https://www.schoolhomesupport.org.uk/)* know that attendance at school affords children the best life-chances and opportunities to succeed and view schools as integral to the cohesion of a wider community. Their experienced practitioners work in a variety of ways to achieve the aim of having children in school; guided by the needs identified by individual school and community settings. The Service will consider strategies beyond the school room to address difficult whole-family issues such as parenting, poverty and mental ill health and bespoke support methods enable each child to maximise their potential.

Schools that are rated 'outstanding' by OFSTED foster mutually beneficial ties with families and the broader community and parents have a meaningful effect on the policies and processes of the school *(www.gov.uk).*

In post-pandemic recovery, aspects of the curriculum are in urgent need of review; not focusing on 'lost learning' alone, but seeking opportunities to engage young people **with the world around them and the times they are living through**; giving them tools and skills to apply across the curriculum and beyond. Specific examples might include supporting health literacy and preparing for future parenthood and this approach to the curriculum can make a definitive contribution to the 'levelling up' of opportunity whilst beginning to reverse the persistent decline in children's physical and mental health.

The University of Southampton 'LifeLab' educational programme is designed to encourage young people to make positive lifestyle choices and to feed back to communities the challenges that young people face; helping to shape a more effective response in their support *(Woods-Townsend K, Hardy-Johnson p, Bagust L, Barker M, Davey H, Griffiths J, Grace M, Lawrence W, Lovelock D, Hanson M, Godfrey KM, Inskip H 2021. 'A cluster randomised controlled trial of the LifeLab education intervention to improve health literacy in*

adolescents,' PLoS One 16: p.e0250545). The LifeLab approach comprises four core elements:

- **Teacher professional development**
  An insight into the research foundations to the Lifelab programme and training to give teachers the skills and confidence to support behaviour change in their children

- **Science for Health Literacy Education Programme**
  Using authentic relatable contexts for young people, engaging modules of work have been developed on world-leading research on effective pedagogical approaches

- **Developing Trust**
  Providing opportunities for young people to learn about potential careers that challenge their stereotypes (such as girls not working in science, technology, engineering and mathematics), have employment experience opportunities and school holiday opportunities

- **Peer-Peer education**
  Delivering Ofqual accredited Young Health Champions qualifications for young people in partnership with the Royal Society for Public Health; enabling a body of young people to be trained as health champions in their communities (schools and wider).

In this way, school-based programmes can reach a large population of children and young people across the socioeconomic spectrum both within school and in family and community settings.

The Government is due to publish its response to the Consultation on the Green Paper 'SEND review: right support, right place, right time' *(https://www.goc.uk/government/consultations/send-review-right-support-right-place-right-time)* at a time when demand for education health and care plans (EHCPs) has hit record levels *https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/education-health-and-care-plans).*

Responding to the figures, the National Education Union (NEU) has claimed that restoring EHCP funding levels to their real value in 2015-16, would cost an additional £3.6 billion *(https://neu.org.uk/press-releases/demand-send-support-continues-outstrip-funding-government)* and in June 2022, the Local Government Association (LGA) called for the Government to cancel the high needs deficits built up by local authorities due to the spiralling costs of providing support outstripping local SEND budgets *(https://www.local.gov.uk/about/news/sharp-rise-children-special-needs-approaching-councils-support).* Both the NEA and LGA are asking the Government to increase resources for local authorities so that they in turn can support schools to fulfil their statutory duty to SEND pupils by providing education suited to their needs.

The Council for Disabled Children (CDC), national charity Cereba and the National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA) are among organisations advocating investing in pre-school education by providing early help for children with learning difficulties:

'The importance of early intervention is recognised in a range of policy and guidance around support and services for children and young people with learning disabilities. Examples from practice also demonstrate how early intervention support can be delivered successfully to children with learning disabilities and their families in the UK to support prevention and a joined up approach. Yet too often it is not happening,' (Dame Christine Lenehan, Director of the Council for Disabled Children 'Investing in early education – a report from the national charity Cereba in collaboration with The Challenging Behaviour Foundation, Council for Disabled Children, University of Warwick and Mencap
https://cereba.org.uk/download/investing-in-early-intervention/*)*

'Sufficient investment and resources must be in place now to help all children, along with specialist training and support for the workforce,' (Stella Ziolkowski, Director of Quality and Training: The National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA)
https://nda.org.uk/hub/news-events*).*

School food provision and food education for UK children is integral to the role of the school as a community asset. Can schools act as effective community hubs to improve the nation's nutritional health via the education of the child?

Children arriving at school are influenced by what they have already perceived, understood and eaten in their family home. This can be a major nutritional challenge as illustrated by the case of Liverpool where 32% of adults are food-insecure, equating to 160,000 people, and with only 12% of children in Liverpool aged 11-18 having five portions of fruit and vegetables per day *(Ian Byrne MP; Food Strategy and Public Health Debate* *https://hansard.parliamnet.uk/commons/2021-12-15/debates/E73E...99-4B73-86E9-E1B3E3360D1/NationalFoodStrategyAndPublicHealth).*

The National Food Strategy (Parts1&2) recognises that the UK continues to fall short both in the quality of food provision and the level of preventive action to address the problem *(The National Food Strategy: Part One July 202/ The National Food Strategy; The Plan. July 2021).*

However, post pandemic, the school food dialogue has 'exploded' together with climate change concerns and many countries are at last reviewing their school food provision and education after years of apathy. Schools are being viewed afresh as 'active community hubs' and as such are expected to meet many needs of the child and their family in these challenging times.

Unless radical change in food systems is embraced wholeheartedly, there will be only limited protection from future pandemics and climate change. This weakness was a contributory factor in the health crisis. Acting as an amplifier for the impact of Covid-19 and at COP26 2021, young people world-wide demanded change including free school meals for all and a strengthened food system.

However, the concept of schools as nutritional hubs is complex. Two potential 'red light issues' when interacting with parents/grandparents in the community are breakfast clubs and packed lunches. Bringing the family into the school at breakfast time introduces 'food moralities' with a focus on the home /school interaction over children's health. Another potential flashpoint is the content and quality of the packed lunch box.

'Quite a number of our children don't have particularly healthy lifestyles, and a number of our parents don't … involved with drugs, smoking and when you look at the 'packed lunch' they send in, you know they don't follow particularly health lifestyles. And I think that's quite hard when you're teaching children because it's not what happens at home .And I think for children that must be quite hard because their parents are doing one thing an yet they are being told to do something else. It can be quite tricky,' (Schools and Food Education in the 21st Century,' Lexi Earl. 2018 Routledge. P87).

The packed lunch can result in perceived criticism of the family as it exposes their food choices to the school environment; however it can also generate positive opportunity for interaction suggesting adjustment with broader community action needed. All matters of food provision however are delicate and need careful handling. Parental support is the key to a healthy school food environment but food remains a sensitive issue and the parent/school relationship can veer from mutual respect through distrust to open hostility.

Since 2014, there has been a legal requirement for schools to teach cookery and nutrition to all children up to age 14 but 'food technology' carries the stigma of a 'second class subject' and The National Food Strategy *(The Plan 2021)* has recommended that the food A level (axed in 2016) should be re-modelled and reintroduced because it is *'time to take food seriously.'*
In the UK home, the amount of time spent in cooking and eating has fallen drastically. A household's average spend on prepared food is 23% higher than in France, 64% higher than in Spain, 101% higher than in Germany and 178% higher than in Italy *(National Food Strategy: Part One July 2020)* with vast amounts of ultra-processed food consumed.

The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) considers the food landscape and believes that a healthy school environment allows and encourages the community (children, families, school staff etc.) to make choices about eating that are consistent with better diets and improved wellbeing (*https://www.fao.org/school-food/areas-work/food-environment/en/*). The National Food Strategy commented:

'Schools should be encouraged to adopt a whole school approach to food. This means integrating food into the life of the school, the dining room should be treated as the hub of the school where children and teachers eat together,'
(The National Food Strategy: The Plan July 2021).

The Soil Association believes that food poverty-proofing the school day requires social capital to be built and local communities engaged. Schools can contribute to longer-term solutions; changing the map of food poverty in their local area and here, the involvement of parents is essential via invitations to come into the school and participate in the food debate. This could include involvement in a school food growing process such as gardening, setting up food markets to learn about food that is grown locally and providing holiday food clubs.

'Schools are reinvigorating communities…waking up to the idea that they can be beacons of education and also vital, stable economic support systems for local regenerative farmers….school-supported agriculture,' (Alice Waters 'We are What We Eat. A Slow Food Manifesto, 2021, Penguin Press).

However, it remains a matter of major concern that despite the flurry of goodwill surrounding the introduction of the Industry Soft Drinks levy in 2018, Government promises that the revenue generated would go to child health programmes, new sports facilities, healthy breakfast clubs etc. have not been realised. The £800 million appears to have been absorbed without trace into the general tax pot *(https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2022/01/03/bitter-row-sugar-tax-millions-diverted-away-fighting-childhood).*

It is money that could be used to develop the school as a hub, possibly extending the model programme of hubs for young families which recently received £500 million from the Government.

Going Forward

3.1   School inspections must continue to scrutinise a school's commitment to working with their local community. In addition to curriculum content, a wider understanding of the impact of the community on the school's students must be evidenced, with examples of community engagement across a range of educational, health and economic work

3.2   Increased investment (revenue and capital) into maintaining and improving school facilities. To function as 'community hubs', school sites must be functional, welcoming and safe

3.3   Resilience development is important for the whole community and should be an important element of the National Curriculum giving parents, carers and communities an opportunity to strengthen the ways in which individuals approach new issues with a collaborative approach

3.4	Tackling the issue of persistent absence should be prioritised and working from the outset to address it with families and the community is both beneficial to those concerned and cost effective long-term
3.5	Restore EHCP funding levels to the 2015-16 real value and cancel the high needs deficits built up by councils as a consequence of the spiralling costs of providing support outstripping the SEND budgets available to councils
3.6	Prioritise specialist training and support for the SEND workforce especially in early years settings
3.7	It is essential to use school platforms to inform, educate and excite a new generation about the food they eat; seeking the active involvement *with dignity* of parents on matters such as food inequality and free school meals
3.8	Ensure a culture of value and respect for parents' knowledge, skills and authority as equal partners in the school food debate; a family-centric approach.
3.9	The Holiday Activities and summer holiday Food Clubs were attended by 600,000 children (including 495,000 eligible for free school meals) and need additional investment to benefit all in the community
3.10	The Sugar Levy monies (£800 million) must be allocated as promised, to improve the health of the next generation of UK children.

CHAPTER 4: ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES FOR FAMILIES AND CHILDREN

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (*https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention*) stipulates that all children should be *'fully prepared to live an individual life in society, and brought up in the spirit of the UN Charter.'*
As The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) (*https://www.un.org/dvelopment/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html*) states, this should include disabled children who continue to encounter barriers over a range of issues that inhibit or prevent their full and equal participation in society.

The quality of the built environment can enhance daily life for everyone; enriching local communities and stimulating the economy. It can also act as the enemy of inclusion and diversity. Since 1971, UK legislation has made cautious progress in affirming the link between the nature of the built environment and the quality of disabled people's lives. The Equality Act (*https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents*) National Planning Policy Framework (*https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2*) and guidance on building regulations (*https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/access-to-and-use-of-buildings-approved-document-m*) require new and existing buildings and spaces to provide access for all, but both guidance and developers frequently fail to recognise the diversity of those who use the buildings.

The Government's statutory guidance on 'Access to and use of buildings; Approved Document M,' (*https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/access-to-and-use-of-buildings-approved-document-m*) does not reference neurodiversity or sensory impairments related to a range of neurodivergent conditions including attention deficit disorders, autism, dyslexia and dyspraxia.

As a result, the design of many buildings and environments excludes large parts of the community and inhibits social cohesion.

Developers failing (or unable) to meet the accessibility guidelines of Approved Document M (*https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/access-to-and-use-of-buildings-approved-documentation-m*) are currently able to rationalise, justify and explain the lack of accessibility within a Design and Access Statement (*https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2013/1238/article/4/made*). These are required at the Planning and Building Regulations Approval stages of the design process and in some instances, developers may calculate that it is not feasible to comply with all the design requirements of Part M of the Building Regulations. An Access Statement can thus be used to argue for restricting access given limitations that may be presented by elements of the site or building design.

The Disability Unit's UK Disability Survey 2021 (*https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-disability-survey-research-report-june-2021/uk-disability-survey-research-report-june-2021*) collated 14,491 answers to a range of questions, and found that disabled people,

carers and the general public all referenced 'Improving the accessibility of public spaces and buildings,' when asked to select their top choice of life-improving change *(https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-disability-survey-research-report-june-2021/uk-disability-survey-research-report-june-2021).* Only 23% of respondents said that they felt valued by society; one third had experienced prejudice in the course of their daily lives and two thirds had abandoned an activity in the past year because of other people's attitudes.

A growing body of research findings confirm that where children live, learn and play has a significant impact on their health and development and therefore the housing, neighbourhood and community conditions in which families live will be key determinants of health and wellbeing. Creating a truly inclusive environment means prioritising a sense of emotional 'belonging' as well as making appropriate adaptations to physical aspects

Dan Harris from Peterborough has worked with local Councillors to make Longthorpe Village Park more accessible for children like his eight year old son, Josh, who is autistic and non-verbal.

As a result of this collaboration, a new communication board has been installed in the park containing images and symbols which allow non-verbal children to communicate their feelings and what they want to do. Dan, who has now teamed up with national charity, Caudwell Children, to install similar boards in play areas and public spaces across the country *(https://www.caudwellchildren.com/communication-board)* said:

'Communication does not always need to mean verbal communication. My little boy may not necessarily verbalise what he wants, but he can use technology and pictures to communicate....This communication board truly gives him a voice!

Having a communication board available in the community won't only make the play park more enjoyable for my son; importantly it will raise awareness of autism and get the people who use the park talking about those children who communicate in other ways than the 'standard' verbal communication. It's so important for society to accept that autistic people are 'different' but not 'less'.

Good quality outdoor environments can benefit children, families and communities in many ways.

According to the largest national study of play in Britain, conducted by the University of Reading *(Dodd, H.F.; FitzGibbon, L; Watson, B.E.; Nesbit, R.J; Children's Play and Independent Mobility in 2020; Results from the British Children's Play Survey. Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health 2021, 18, 4334 https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18084334)* when children are away from home, they spend more time in playgrounds than anywhere else. The study confirmed the importance of public play provision in the lives of children and communities.

Public spaces such as playgrounds promote community cohesion. Children in 1 in 8 UK households and I in 5 in London have no garden *(Office for National Statistics, May 2020)* and playgrounds are often their only outdoor play space. Playgrounds are at the heart of communities and connect neighbourhoods every day. A 2013 study of community cohesion and children's play supports the idea that community playgrounds foster integration amongst children and the adults accompanying them:

'The park was a space not only for recreation but for family gatherings and it was rare to see children unaccompanied by parents and/or older siblings. The busiest times in the park were between 3 and 5 o'clock on Saturday and Sunday afternoons when almost as many adults and children were present. The playground was a hub of activity,' (Holden, Andrew 2013 'Community cohesion and children's play: A new conceptual framework. Education 3-13. 1-13.10.1080/03004279.2011.586950).

The current creation of public play spaces is piecemeal; handed over to cash-strapped local authorities but post pandemic they have never been more important to the wellbeing of the nation. They have been pivotal in helping everyone to recover from two years of restrictions which have separated families, damaged communities and denied children vital outdoor play.

The relationship that children have with nature and the benefits that they derive from experiencing it in their daily lives has been well documented.

Green space in children's housing arrangements is beneficial to their health and wellbeing and evidence suggests that for children moving from one housing area to another, those whose homes improved most in quality of greenness tended to have the highest levels of cognitive functioning *(Wells N. M. 2000 'At Home with Nature: Effects of 'Greenness on Children's Cognitive Functioning, Environment and Behaviour', 32:775-795).*

Similarly, children with attention deficit disorder (ADD) have been recorded as having less severe symptoms after participating in 'green setting' activities; the greener the setting, the less severe the symptoms *(Taylor, A. F. and Kuo, F. 2006 'Is contact with nature important for healthy child development? State of the evidence,' Spencer, C and Blades, M., 2006, 'Children and their Environments: Learning, Using and Designing Spaces,' Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.').*

In recognition of the importance of outdoor green space for children and families, various projects across the country have aimed to improve the quality of green spaces associated with social housing in communities. Many have made working with children and families integral to the process.

The 'Living with Nature' partnership project was funded between 2011-2014 by the Big Lottery Reaching Communities Fund.

Over the funding period, most of the allocated money paid for project team staff to work with tenants and residents in 24 social housing areas;

communities where green spaces were not being used for play because of previous vandalism and no budget capacity to renovate them.

Prior to the hiatus caused by the pandemic, children and families re-connected with forgotten green spaces through many collaborative activities and events. People of all ages used the spaces, resulting in new and positive ways in which the spaces were perceived and used. For the duration of the project, children played, older people made friends, people of all ages developed skills and confidence.

At the same time, other members of the community began to revise their previous negative perceptions of the site. In addition to an increase in the use of green spaces, the activities and engagement designed and fostered by the project team and local residents enabled a fresh understanding of current and potential ways in which the spaces might be used by children, families and communities.

The amount and availability of opportunities for physical activity in local environments can impact positively on the health and wellbeing of those who live there.

The concept of 'Walkable Neighbourhoods' involves local residents being within access of basic services and goods in a 15 minute walk *(Weng, M. et al 2019 'The 15 minute walkable neighbourhoods: Measurement, social inequalities and implications for building healthy communities in urban China,' Journal of Transport and Health).* Motor traffic with its multiple adverse effects can inhibit residents' opportunities to use the streets to walk or jog *('Living Streets. Walkable Neighbourhoods,' https://www.livingstreets.org.uk/policy-and-resources/our-policy/walkable-neighbourhoods.*

A WHO report *(WHO Europe 2017 'Urban Green Space Interventions and Health,' https://www.euro.who.int/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/337690/FULL-REPORT-for-LLP.pdf)* argued that access to urban green spaces can promote mental and physical health and wellbeing but data shows that urban green space in England declined from 63% to 56% between 2001 and 2016 *(Friends of the Earth 2020 'England's green space gap,' https://policy.friendsoftheearth.uk/insight/englands-green-space-gap)* while an earlier survey found that one in six people reported that their local park or green space was at risk of being lost or built on *('Fields in Trust,'2015 'Census wide survey of 2,079 UK adults, 13-20 October 2015 ,' www.fieldsintrust.org/Upload/file/research/PArk-User-Survey.pdf).*

Local leisure centres provide children and families with opportunities to enjoy recreational sports and activities such as swimming but these places too are under threat and a District Councils' Network survey found that one in three districts expected to close leisure centres *(Local Government Chronicle, 2021 'One in three districts expect to close leisure centres,' https://www.lgcplus.com/politics/devolution-and-economic-growth/one-in-three-districts-expect-to-close-leisure-centres-14-05-2021).*

Childcare settings can play a key part in influencing children's health and wellbeing and the Early Years Workforce (EYW) has a crucial role in supplying and promoting healthy nutrition. Guidance in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) states that:

'Where children are provided with meals, snacks and drinks, they must be healthy, balanced and nutritious,' (Department for Education 2017 'Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage,' https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uplods/attachment-data/file/596629/EYFS_STATUTORY_FRAMEWORK_2017.pdf*).*

However, there is no specific mandatory food and nutrition guidance equivalent to the food-based 'Standards for School Food,' *(Department for Education 2021 'School food standards practical guide,'* https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-food-standards-resources-for-schools/school-food-standards-practical-guide*)* that are currently in place for primary and secondary schools to support providers and ensure a common standard and consistency of provision.

Providing healthier food and drink within vending machines located in community facilities can help to increase everybody's opportunity to eat well.

Vending machines are commonly found in a wide range of community facilities, including leisure centres, hospitals and libraries but the food and drink in the machines is frequently energy dense and of poor nutritional quality. Healthier options in the machines are generally sparse, often more expensive and positioned away from the consumers' main view, thus making a purchase of the unhealthy option more likely.

Leeds City Council is one of a number of local authorities aiming to improve the quality of their vending machine content offer; incorporating more healthy options and removing some of the less healthy choices. A trial in 2021 found no overall sales reduction and a significant decrease in overall energy and nutrients vended *(Food Active 2021 Guest blog: 'Healthier Snack Provision in Vending Machines- Findings form Leeds City Council Trial,'* https://foodactive.org.uk/guest-blog-healthier-snack-provision-in-vending-machines-findings-from-leeds-city-council-trial*).*

Neighbourhoods characterised by poverty, poor public transport and a shortage of supermarkets have limited access to affordable fresh fruit and vegetables and often the only option to be found in these so-called 'food deserts' are corner shop convenience stores. These tend to be expensive but are often the sole outlet for consumers who have limited opportunities to buy fresh, healthy produce with the end result being a community with limited chances of consuming a healthy and affordable diet.

Fast food outlets are also clustered in neighbourhoods of high deprivation *(Public Health England, 2018 'Fast food outlets: density by local authority in England,'* https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fast-food-outlets-density-by-local-authority-in-england*).* Although such food is invariably cheap

and palatable it lacks nutritional value and the high levels of fat, sugar and salt are linked to obesity and related health conditions including cardiovascular disease, type two diabetes, stroke and some cancers. When consumed regularly, they can pose a threat to local levels of public health especially in the absence of healthy food alternatives.

However, although recent years have seen a reduction in community facilities for families – whether green space , playground or youth service as above; the latter estimated at 70% budget cuts in a decade *(YMCA 2020 'Out of Service,' https://www.ymca.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/YMCA-Out-of-Service-report.pdf)* some encouraging thinking is behind projects such as that of the Victoria and Albert Museum in transforming the 'Museum of Childhood' into 'Young V&A *(https://www.vam.ac.uk)* a creative hub for children from the early years to young teens.

Young V&A is seen as a community facility for the local environment of Bethnal Green and the London Borough of Tower Hamlets; manifest via a community outreach programme which puts in place sustained relationships where resource is most needed and will be of most benefit. The learning ethos places every kind of family at the centre of the children's developmental journey and community champions help in broadening the nature of the audiences reached; for example Children's Centres, Holiday Childcare Schemes and schools. The museum welcomes a wide and diverse audience to all the programmes and seeks to tackle under-representation by addressing barriers to participation and social inequalities.

The strength and value of the museum as a community facility dates back to its inception in 1872 as part of the Victorian project to redress poverty through education. The importance of culture in bridging the gulf of exclusion and uniting fragmented and divided communities is just as relevant today – as are the words of the V&A's first Director and champion of inclusion, Henry Cole:

'All of this for all of you.'

Going Forward

4.1   A review of the definition of 'disability' and the associated needs of building users within the 'Access to and use of buildings: Approved Document M.'

4.2   A new 'Inclusion and Diversity: Approved Document' to ensure that all new developments consider the wider needs of the community (such as quiet spaces, prayer rooms, communication boards, changing facilities etc.)

4.3   A deadline for all existing properties to meet new Inclusion and Diversity regulations

4.4   The introduction of locally elected Community Inclusion Commissioners and National Community Integration targets

4.5   The current voluntary food and drink standards for early years settings to become mandatory and recognised in the OFSTED Common Inspection Framework. Training and support on nutrition to be added to the curricula for the Early Years Workforce (EYW)

4.6   Government investment in a national network of public play spaces so that every community has at its heart somewhere safe, local and stimulating to play

4.7   The planning process to contain an obligation to provide high quality playground facilities and access to green space within all new housing developments

CHAPTER 5: TRANSITION INTO ADULTHOOD AND ISSUES CONCERNING EMPLOYABILITY

Prior to the pandemic, a Prince's Trust survey of over 3,000 11-30 year olds attempted to gauge the extent to which young people felt connected to their communities. Many felt pessimistic, excluded and disconnected and were not 'ready for work' *(The Prince's Trust 'Futures at Stake,' 2018 London: England http://P820_PT-Futures-at-stake-WEB_(2).pdf).*

In 2019, the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) claimed that:

> *'Our education system is leaving young people unprepared for the modern world,'*
> https://www.cbi.org.uk/articles/getting-young-people-work-ready/

and in 2021, The Prince's Trust estimated the potential cost to the economy of a large number of young people feeling excluded and marginalised from the world of work at £7 billion *('Facing the future: employment prospects for young people after coronavirus,' London, England; The Prince's Trust http://Facing-the-future:employment-prospects-for-young-people-after-coronavirus(princes-trust.org.uk).*

Current strategies are failing to enthuse and motivate an unacceptable number of children and young people and until this is reversed, UK society will not achieve its cohesive and productive potential.

Family circumstances are still unduly pervasive in determining young people's employment prospects. The Social Mobility Commission in 2016 found that only 45 of doctors, 6% of barristers and 11% of journalists came from working class backgrounds *(Social Mobility Commission, 'State of the Nations 2016:Social Mobility in Great Britain,' London, England; Social Mobility Commission http://Social-Mobility-Commission_2016_REPORT-WEB_1_.pdf_(publishing.service.gov.uk).*

Where a child lives also has a profound impact on their future employment prospects with UK regional disparities now wider than in any other Western European country *(Inequality Briefing 2015 'Briefing 61: Regional inequality in the UK is the worst in Western Europe,' http://inequalitybriefing.org/brief/briefing-61%20regional-inequality-in-the-uk-is-the-worst-in-western-europe).* Providing work experience opportunities via unpaid internships is a norm necessitating independent financial support for the candidates that is too often reliant upon informal contact networks deriving from family and friends. Therefore a whole swathe of candidates is excluded and patterns of social inequality are reinforced and perpetuated.

The current education curriculum is insufficiently flexible and fails to meet the aspirations of the majority of young people today.

Positive transitions start at birth but the early years sector has witnessed the demise of Sure Start Centres in England that were initially heralded and then

unceremoniously stopped *(Nursery World 2020 'New Government figures reveal true scale of children's centre closures,'* http://New-Government-figures_reveal_true_scale_of_children's_centre_-closures_I_Nursery_World)*.*

To embed a positive approach to transition, a responsive and structured approach to early years education is essential, including adequate funding, training and quality assurance. Resilience must be developed in children from the outset so that transitions to primary through to secondary, post sixteen education and employment are as seamless as possible.

The current curriculum is restrictive and categorises pupils. New technical levels (T levels) introduced from 2020 have been controversial with business leaders saying that 16 year olds should not be confined to a choice of A or T levels and the CBI arguing that Government cuts to BTECs *(BBC 2019 'Give 16 year-olds more choice-employers 'BBC News* http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-48599333*)* were premature.

While the principle of a simpler system with strong technical options available attracted initial support, many organisations have subsequently expressed concern about the implementation of too much change too quickly *(Bedenik, L 2020; No Time for T levels,' National Centre for Universities and Business* http://No_Time_for_T-Levels_-_National_Centre_for_Universities&Business(ncub.co.uk)*.*

In 2006 Sir Ken Robinson said:

> *'The unpredictability, I think, is extraor-dinary…you were probably steered benignly away from things at school when you were a kid, things you liked, on the grounds that you would never get a job doing that… Do not do music, you are not going to be a musician; do not do art, you would not be an artist. Benign advice - now, profoundly mistaken,' ('Do schools kill creativity?' TED talk* http://Sir-Ken-Robinson:-Do-schools-kill_creativity?_I-TED_Talk*).*

The need for a fluid, more creative curriculum is supported by Andreas Scheleicher, Head of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA):

> *'In the near future arts subjects could become more important than maths, due to the radically changing nature of work and employment.' (George, M. 2019 'Tech revolution 'could make arts more important than maths,' TES* www.tes.com/news//tech-revolution-could-makearts-more-important-maths*).*

In particular, post-pandemic, the UK faces a potential crisis in terms of the mental and physical health of young people with an urgent need for inclusive approaches in all policies to build a culture of good mental and physical health *(Blandford, S., Baumber, J,. Foote, G., COVID-19 'Leading Virtual Learning in Schools and Colleges,' Bolton: RISE* http://Publication;COVID-19,LeadingVirtualLearninginSchoolsandCollege-RISE(risethinktank.co.uk)*.*

Children who experience chronic adversity will need specialised support in order to make a successful progression to work and research has shown that they fare better when they have a positive relationship with an adult *(Masten & Garmezy et al 1990 'Resilience and development; Contributions from the study of children who overcome adversity,' Development and Psychopathology, 2(4), 425-444* https://experts.umn.edu/en/publications/resilience-and-development-contributions-from-the-study-of-children-who-overcome-adversity *).*

'A Blueprint for children's Social Care Unlocking the potential of social work,' *(*https://thefrontline.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/New-blueprint-for-childrens-social-care.pdf*)* makes the case for strongly supported professional social workers; skilled in their dealings with families, but in 2021, Alice Miles, Director of Strategy and Policy for the Children's Commissioner observed that:

> *'Our society as well as the system itself, doesn't trust social workers,'*
> *('Children, Social work leaders, Workforce*
> https://www.communitycare.co.uk/2021/06/17/end-staggering-misuse-childrens-social-workers-allow-direct-work-says-care-review/ *).*

The likely outcome of such distrust, further exacerbated by the untenable nature of working conditions, revealed in an independent study to include UK social workers working beyond 'paid hours' to the upward tune of £600 million unpaid overtime, is to increase the number already choosing to leave the profession *(UK Social Workers: Working Conditions and Wellbeing. British Association of Social Workers 2018* https://www.basw.co.uk/resources/uk-social-workers-working-conditions-and-wellbeing-0*).*

More generic support for a wealth and breadth of professional capacity might be effective – and more ably or flexibly funded (across departments and sectors) involving a 'workplace readiness hub' to include perhaps a youth worker, health worker, social worker and a 'workplace coach.' For emerging adults from different backgrounds, this multi- and inter-disciplinary approach could emerge with new insights, accumulated from looking at an individual's circumstances from different professional lenses *(*https://www.preparingforadulthood.org.uk/SiteAssets/Downloads/vjdeulog63637960580857800 5.pdf*).*

Growing up in substitute care is shown to place young people at a clear disadvantage when making the transition to adult working life. A common theme is that of inadequate resourcing across such communities *(Mann-Feder et al 2019 'Leaving Care and the Transition to Adulthood: International Contributions to Theory, Research and Practice,' Oxford University Press).*

Children who have been in custody including a secure youth corrections facility face additional transitional challenges with yet fewer resources to do so *(Collins Mary Elizabeth, 'Enhancing Services to Youths Leaving Foster Care: Analysis of Recent Legislation and Its Potential Impact,' Children and Youth*

Services Review. 2004;26(11):1051-65
www.//https:/psycnet.apa.org/record/2004-20365-005).

Young people exiting the care system can 'age out' of policy supported initiatives and many have been reported to be left to navigate the transition to adulthood with minimal support.

It is clear that a range of more holistic initiatives, perhaps specified for specialist interventions (such as Special Educational Needs and Disability, SEND) could be opened up to a wider application of their holistic nature. Some initiatives to help young adults into the world of work can already be found within existing legislation – but unless pathways also exist to enable professionals to share and support the use of best practice with local areas and communities, a sizeable number of young people will continue to be left behind – at an ever increasing cost to them, their families and the wider society of which they are a part.

Going Forwards

5.1 **A responsive and structured approach to early years education including adequate funding, training and quality assurance**

5.2 **Good physical *and* mental health to be at the heart of all policy-making involving children and young people**

5.3 **Re-modelling of the curriculum to make it responsive to modern day needs rather than an early 'herding' of pupils into particular 'types' of examination route that may exclude other choices and options**

5.4 **Reverse the decline in apprenticeships; ensuring that more young people are recruited to – and complete - an apprenticeship at all levels**

5.5 **Government to initiate a National 'Internship Scheme' to which participating firms will contribute an agreed level of subsistence and remuneration and involving open and transparent methods of application and selection**

5.6 **Parent and carer involvement to be considered and reflected in the day-to-day business of every school, college, early years setting and local authority**

5.7 **'Workplace readiness hubs' engaging a multi-professional approach to assist the transition to work in local communities for young people in need of extra assistance.**

CHAPTER 6: FAMILY AND COMMUNITY: PRACTICE IN OTHER NATIONS AND THE DEVOLVED UK

Early social and emotional development is crucial for a child's future social, education and health outcomes. A 1996 Canadian classroom programme 'Roots of Empathy' (*https://rootsofempathy.org/*) brings trained and certified volunteer instructors (usually parents) into primary schools with their babies for the duration of an academic year. They deliver an age-appropriate curriculum demonstrating the power of a secure parent/infant attachment relationship and children learn about the baby's emotional development through their own interactions with the baby and observations of baby and parent. The aim is to increase children's empathetic capabilities, leading to positive behaviour change and later life preparedness.

Roots of Empathy is available throughout Canada and is funded by government grants, foundation finance and corporate and individual donations.

Independent evaluation findings of increased children's 'pro-social' sharing, helping and including behaviours and reduced levels of aggression and bullying led to initial international roll-out in 2007. Scotland was the first country to adopt the programme; providing £1.2 million Scottish Government funding to deliver it in every council area. The subsequent evaluation confirmed increases in pro social and empathetic behaviour *(MacDonald A et al 2013 'Evaluation of the Roots of Empathy Programme by North Lanarkshire Psychological Service,' https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/roots-of-empathy-evaluation-of-the-roots-of-empathy-programme-by-North-Lanarkshire-psychological-service).*

A Northern Ireland randomised controlled trial recorded equally positive outcomes; in particular that a reduction in aggressive and 'difficult' behaviours was sustained after three years. The programme was judged to be a cost-effective means of improving children's quality of life *(Connolly P et al 2018 'A cluster randomised controlled trial and evaluation and cost-effectiveness analysis of the Roots of Empathy schools-based programme for improving social and emotional wellbeing outcomes among 8-9 year olds in Northern Ireland,' Public Health Research 6(3) https://doi.org/10.3310/phr06040).*

From 2012, the Early Years Alliance have trained and co-ordinated Roots of Empathy instructors in 29 primary schools in Lewisham. However, despite proven benefits, the availability of the programme in the UK is piecemeal.

More recently, 'Seeds of Empathy' has provided professional development for Early Learning and Child Care settings with the aim of fostering social and emotional competence and early literacy skills and attitudes in three to five year olds.

As with Roots of Empathy, a parent and infant from the local community and a trained Family Guide visit for a year's duration and coach children to observe the baby's development and label the baby's feelings. The baby is a 'teacher';

enabling the children to identify and reflect on their own and others' feelings thereby encouraging the growth of 'emotional literacy' with enhanced understanding.

AARP Foundation (formerly the American Association of Retired Persons) Experience Corps is an intergenerational volunteer-based tutoring programme engaging adults of 50+ as literacy tutors for struggling students in the USA.

Beginning in 1988, the AARP Foundation Experience Corps now has nearly 21,000 highly trained volunteers working in 21 cities and serving over 30,000 students annually in 'high need' elementary (primary) schools. Local community organisations implement the programme alongside the AARP Foundation Experience national office. The 6-15 hours of weekly support for the children enhances both their academic outcomes and socio-emotional development and evaluations have shown that after one year, many of the students involved achieve as much as a 60% improvement in their critical literacy skills in comparison with their peers and a reduction in classroom misbehaviour *(Rebok et al 2004 'Short –term impact of Experience Corps participation on children and schools: results from a pilot randomised trial,' J Urban Health 81:79-93* https://doi.org/10.1093/jurban/jth095*).*

The AARP Foundation's Experience Corp programme is funded via an AmeriCorps grant which, together with US Department of Justice funding provides 16% of the support for Experience Corps with the remaining 84% supplied by the AARP Foundation and non-governmental sources. Cost-effectiveness analysis has demonstrated that the programme requires only small long-term benefits to the target children to make it cost-effective or cost-saving *(Frick KD et al 'Modelled cost-effectiveness of the Experience Corps Baltimore based on a pilot randomised trial,' J Urban Health 81; 106-17.* https://doi.org/10.1093/jurban/jth097*).*

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states unequivocally that protection from physical punishment in all settings including the family home is a basic right of every child *(United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child 2006 : Forty Second Session. General Comment 8: the right of the child to protection from corporal punishment and other cruel or degrading forms of punishment,' Geneva: United Nations* https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/583961?in=en*).*

In the UK, physical punishment has been illegal in Scotland and Wales (November 2020 and March 2022 respectively) but in England and Northern Ireland, the common assault of a child by a parent or adult acting in loco parentis remains legal via the defence of 'reasonable punishment' *(Crown Prosecution Service 2020 'Offences against the Person, incorporating the Charging Standard,'* https://www.cps.gov.uk/legal-guidance/offences-against-person-incorporating-charging-standard*).*

Decades of research on physical punishment for children have found that it has no beneficial outcomes whatsoever; however the adverse effects are behavioural problems directed outward such as aggression, antisocial

behaviour and issues of conduct; indeed the very problems that the assault had supposedly aimed to 'correct.' The majority of research findings have also concluded that the detrimental effect of physical punishment is not mitigated by parental warmth or supportiveness *(Helimann A., et al 2015 'Equally protected/ A review of the evidence on the physical punishment of children. London: NSPCC https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/2015/equally-protected/).*

To date, 63 countries have legislated against physical punishment in all settings *(Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, 2022: 'Global progress towards prohibiting all corporal punishment,' http://endcorporalpunishment.org/wp-content/uploads/legality-tables/Global-progress-table-commitment.pdf).* There is an overwhelming case for England and Northern Ireland to follow suit by reforming legislation that, as it stands, is a violation of children's rights and has no place in a modern and caring society.

There is growing consensus around the idea that there are greater social and economic benefits for society if a child and family-centric approach is taken to creating the built and social environment.

The UNICEF Child Friendly City model is an important international network of towns, cities and local authorities that aims to create a healthy and safe environment in which children live, play and move around. It encompasses the design and spacing of buildings, social hubs, green space and opportunities for play both dedicated and incidental.

There are many success stories in the creation of children friendly spaces including:

- **Vancouver, Canada:** family-friendly housing polices; guidance for high-density housing in the city typically specifies that a quarter be designed for families; developments to be located near to schools, day-care centres and grocery stores with safe walking routes; play space for children and informal 'hanging out' space for teenagers

- **Vaubab, Germany:** limited car access and encouragement of walking and cycling with plenty of play space; the most sustainable town in Europe where one of its pioneering communities, 'Sun Ship' is the first in the world in which all buildings produce a positive energy balance; child-friendly and environment-friendly measures combining to ensure a traffic strategy whereby the principles of 'car-free' and 'parking-free' living have been applied

- **Rotterdam, The Netherlands:** a 'family strategy' to encourage families to live in the city with more green spaces and play areas including school playgrounds; walking and cycling routes predominate and public transport is encouraged

- **The Devolved Nations: Aberdeen** is working towards being a Unicef-recognised Child Friendly City where the views of children and young people underpin decision-making; **the Welsh Government** has carried out its Ministerial Review of Play and has consulted with children and young people on the Review and associated recommendations

- **Wales and Scotland** have developed a rights-based approach in line with Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, giving 'respect for the views of the child; both Wales and Scotland have a 'play sufficiency duty'; the Scottish Government's 'Place Standard' tool prompts discussions on the suitability or otherwise of a specified physical and social environment for all members of a relevant community; Scottish and Welsh Governments follow the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child Article 31, the right to play and recreation .

Involving children and young people in decisions that concern them in areas such as planning and play area design achieves better and more sustainable solutions than those put forward by adults acting alone.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) a number of countries worldwide have taken steps to promote healthy diets in public facilities (*https://www.who.int/news/item/12-01-2021-who-urges-governments-to-promote-healthy-food-in-public-facilities*).

In **Brazil**, the National School Feeding Programme requires 30% of the budget to be used to purchase food from family farms and that menus are based on fresh or minimally-processed items, centred on the region's sustainability, seasonality and agricultural diversification.

In the interests of children's health improvement, the **Republic of Korea** established Green Food Zones regulating the food available within a 20 mile radius of schools. Businesses cannot sell food in Green Zones that is above a set threshold for calories per serving, total sugars and saturated fats.

Portugal provides universal free school meals where all children sit down and eat a three course meal together – a worthy direction for the UK to emulate (*https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2021-12-15/debates/E73e...99-4B73-86E9-E1B3E3360D1/NationalFoodStrategyAndPublicHealth*).

Finland has provided free school meals for over 70 years and The North Karelia Project initiated a whole community approach. School meals and food education are defined in the comprehensive school curriculum with each school making an individual action plan for food education; taking into account health, nutrition and behavioural education. JAMK University has a two day intensive programme for the developers of the school meals system with the aim of familiarising the participants with the Finnish school meal ethos and learning to build healthy and sustainable meals that promote children's health

In **Japan**, children participate in cooking, serving and clearing up the meal for fellow students and in France, they practice describing the colour and texture of their food, learn about its origins and are rarely served the same meal twice over the course of two months. This approach has also been adopted in **The Netherlands** and **Sweden** *(Stephanie Walton, 'What We Can Learn; A Review of Food Policy Innovation in Six Countries,' 2020 City University, London).*

As part of 'Be Active Eat Well,' (2011-2016) schools in **South Australia** devised their own programmes; one school for example, aimed to change community norms on school food and sports by involving the community and families. They transformed the school canteen menu, hired new sports coaches, started a new PE curriculum and used school garden produce to make and sell healthy snacks. Parents and teachers as well as the wider community all helped to support the process.

In **Scotland,** Glasgow council has made school meals more balanced for all pupils. 34,000 meals are served per day in Glasgow and 75% of the dishes are freshly made from unprocessed products. The 'Parent Insight Project' was developed as part of the programme with the design of sharing with families the benefits of having a nutritious daily breakfast as part of a healthy diet.

School catering and education can be one of the most effective ways in which children and their families in the community are supported. A healthy family-centred community food culture with the school at its heart is an important investment in the individual, helping them to learn, earn a living and thus contribute to society as a whole.

Going Forward

6.1   Children need to be confident in their food choices and guided in their knowledge and actions. Young food ambassadors/diet opinion-formers can act as role models within school. Issues such as climate change and the environment, veganism and vegetarianism and ubiquitous ultra-processed food are all topics of present and future relevance to the school curriculum

6.2   Ensure a culture of value and respect for parents' knowledge, skills and authority as equal partners in school food debate; a respected family-centric approach

6.3   Place greater emphasis on urban design for children and families, adopting child-friendly policies in all areas and incorporating them into new planning laws

6.4   Adopt a 'rights based' approach led by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; in particular, Article 31, with General Comment and Article 12

6.5   Require Local Authorities to carry out three yearly play sufficiency assessments as developed in Wales and Scotland

6.6 **Involve local communities in carrying out a Place Survey as developed in Scotland, to assess the health of a community and to discover where physical and social infrastructure is inadequate**

6.7 **UK Government to invest in children's early social and emotional development by promoting, evaluating and rolling out programmes such as Roots of Empathy and Seeds of Empathy; thereby seeking to further and increase children's pro social behaviour and empathetic capabilities and prepare them for later life**

6.8 **England and Northern Ireland to follow Scotland and Wales in removing the corporal punishment 'defence' of 'reasonable punishment' thus protecting *all* UK children from common assault inside or outside of the home. This legislative reform to be accompanied by public information campaigns; parents to be supported in using positive parenting strategies and the impact of the law reform monitored.**

CHAPTER 7: INVESTMENT IN FAMILY AND COMMUNITY: THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIETAL RETURN

An increasing body of evidence shows that investing in the early years leads to better education, health, social and economic outcomes that increase government revenue and lessen the need for expensive social spending (*https://heckmanequation.org/*).

Economic evaluations on the Roots of Empathy and AARP Foundation's Experience Corps (mentioned above) demonstrate cost-effectiveness and cost-saving *(Connolly P., et al 2018 'A cluster randomised controlled trial and evaluation and cost-effectiveness analysis of the Roots of Empathy schools-based programme for improving social and emotional well-being outcomes among 8-9 year olds in Northern Ireland,' Public Health Research 6(4)* *https://doi.org/10.3310/phr06040)*
Frick KD et al 'Modelled cost-effectiveness of the Experience Corps Baltimore based on a pilot randomised trial,' J Urban Health 81; 106-17 *https://doi.org/10.1093/jurban/jth097).*

The Nurse Family Partnership (NFP) originated in the USA but was later piloted in the UK with evaluation also showing considerable economic savings to the Government and society, increasing as children get older. There are indications that the cost of the programme is recovered by the time the children are aged 4 for the highest risk families - and certainly by age 12 *(Olds DL et al 2010 'Enduring effects of prenatal ad infancy home visiting by nurses on maternal life course and government spending – follow up of a randomised trial among children at age 12,' Arch Pediatr Adolesc Med 164; 419-424).*

Investing in families and communities in the wake of Covid-19 has acquired a new urgency.

While political parties vie to present as 'the party of the family', and 'levelling up' has entered the lexicon, the efforts of individual enterprises both social and commercial are substituting for direction and resolve at the heart of Government. Their efforts should be recorded and some are listed below.

The Didcot Powerhouse Fund

The business park on the outskirts of Oxford is undergoing some regeneration following the devastation of Covid and the enforced decision of over a third of the businesses to leave. Milton Park (*https://www.didcotpowerhousefund.co.uk*) has helped to establish the Didcot Powerhouse Fund which is fuelled by businesses in Didcot and Harwell and the local area to promote better futures for families and children in the surrounds. Commercial Director, Philip Campbell stated:

'Having worked at Milton Park for over 15 years now, I have had the privilege of supporting many world-leading, innovative businesses and seeing the science sector go from strength to strength.

Through my involvement with Didcot First, I have also seen social challenges that affect the area, which are often hidden by the amazing economic statistics. I believe it is important for all businesses, that the environment within which they operate thrives and The Didcot Powerhouse Fund will give businesses a real opportunity to come together to make a significant local impact.'

Mytime Active

Mytime Active is a leisure social enterprise and like many others of similar nature in the UK, can only function if customers pay to use its facilities or are funded to do so. All profits are reinvested into the facilities and community outreach schemes. The pandemic brought a solvency crisis; only abated thanks to Bromley Council supplying deficit funding along with other grants and schemes so that Mytime Active could stay afloat. Post-pandemic they have invested in (or run at a loss) some of the services listed below:

- Wraparound childcare: breakfast and after school clubs, holiday camps; enabling 487 families in the local community to return to work and also allowing the organisation to provide childcare and physical activity for primary-aged children

- Swimming and swimming lessons: re-opening the three largest pools as quickly as possible and establishing family sessions; thereby ensuring that 8000 children and adults are participating in swimming lessons monthly. Despite a current trend of pool closures and relentless decline in government funding, a report by Swim England on the Value of Swimming (*https://www.swimming.org/swimengland/value-of-swimming/*) shows that swimming can contribute to £357 million per year in NHS savings

- Children with physical disability and SEND: in partnership with Bromley Mencap and a small funding pot via London Sport, Mytime Active has developed a free programme of activities and sessions for families with disabilities and SEND. In Bromley alone, there are over 7,000 children and young people with a physical disability or SEND. Due to the enthusiastic response and uptake, Mytime Active are increasing their investment in the community by funding a Changing Places changing room, specialist equipment for sensory play and training staff in partnership with local charities to encourage more families to attend Mytime Active sites.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have succeeded the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) agreed by governments in 2001. The eight MDGs were designed to end poverty and improve the lives of the poor and were applied to all countries but in reality, were considered as targets for poor countries to achieve aided by finance from wealthy nations (*https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2015/jan/19/sustainable-development-goals-united-nations*).

By contrast, every country is expected to work towards achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

Stephanie Draper, the Chief Executive of Bond, the network for British development charities (*https://www.bond.org.uk*) said:

> *The next Prime Minister should make the SDGs a central framework for the Government so that the UK can achieve these targets by 2030. The food and fuel insecurity caused by the Russian invasions of Ukraine, and the Covid pandemic showed us how connected we all are, but they have also set back development grants. The SDGs are more needed than ever.'*

In July 2019, the Government published its progress towards attaining the goals, prior to reporting to the United Nations. Open Democracy UK (*https://www.opendemcoracy.net/en/opendemocracyuk/sustainable-development-goals-uk--not-rosy-government-wants-you-believe/*) suggests that the Government has been (and remains) in denial about the true state of hunger, inequality and poverty in the UK suggesting that:

- 8.4 million people in the UK are food insecure; in order to follow the Government's own 'Eat Well Guidelines' one in five families would have to spend 40% of their income after housing costs; the Trussell Trust reported that in 2019, food banks within their network had distributed a record number of 1.6 million emergency food parcels

- Life expectancy for women born in deprived areas has declined in recent years – **in the fifth highest world economy**

- Regional inequality is rising, with the North East of England facing above average child poverty, fuel poverty rates and the lowest median household total wealth of all of the UK

- Changes to the tax and welfare system have disproportionately affected people with disabilities, people from minority ethnic backgrounds and women, and these groups are also affected by the persistent gender ethnicity and disability pay gap and are frequently amongst the most affected by poverty.

Rather than 'no-one being left behind', families and communities in a divided UK are being increasingly left out; marginalised and simply not enabled to contribute to their nation's social and economic potential. Much can be talked about 'persuading' families to 'invest in their community' but unless families can see that their communities, businesses and above all, the state are prepared to invest in them – we all lose out.

The Covid-19 pandemic has taken the civilised world to the brink of disaster. By investing as a truly United Kingdom in children, families and communities we can:

'Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all,' (SDG 8)

and equally:

'Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages,' (SDG3).

Going Forward:

7.1 **Government to invest in and roll-out high quality birth to age five programmes**

7.2 **School facilities to be open to the community as well as to commercial companies**

7.3 **Community/voluntary work to be part of the National Curriculum; assessed by OFSTED**

7.4 **Local businesses to pay a levy proportionate to turnover to be spent within the local community to provide local services and facilities**

7.5 **Ring-fenced funding for all local authorities to invest in community leisure projects and services**

7.6 **Government to facilitate independent audit of its progress on the Sustainable Development Goals; publishing an Annual Statement subject to debate in the Houses of Parliament (as with the Budget Statement).**

Children's Alliance

Better starts, brighter futures

Supported by Water Babies

water babies
learn for life®

Children's Alliance
water babies
learn for life®
Learn more at our website

www.childrensalliance.org.uk

Children's Alliance
water babies
learn for life®
Sign and Share our Petition calling
for a Cabinet Minister for Children &
Young People

www.change.org/cabinetminister4children