Archbishops' Commission on Families and Households

Themes Emerging from the Call for Evidence: Briefing Seven
Children and Young People: promoting mental health and wellbeing, and protection from harm

The Call for Evidence

The Commission launched its Call for Evidence in October 2021 as the first major step in our inquiries. It provided an opportunity to engage with a wide range of people aged 18 and over, faith communities, and organisations working with children and families in England in thinking about some of the key issues relevant to the Commission's work. These are described in our first Briefing paper.[1]

We are analysing the responses thematically and sharing the emerging themes through a number of discrete briefing papers. In reporting the emerging themes the Commission is not commenting on them at this stage, but simply sharing them with a wider audience while using them to inform our thinking and to guide the various Commission activities that are taking place to dive more deeply into the evidence. [2] The briefings we share may well spark additional conversations, which we would welcome.

About this Briefing

The Commission is examining the factors that promote strong relationships, stability, safety and sustainability within families and households and the conditions in which children can thrive and reach their full potential. The Commission explored a number of questions in the Call for Evidence to help us understand these factors. In Briefing Six, we reported on the responses to questions about the factors in family life that either help or inhibit children and young people from all kinds of backgrounds to flourish.

In this briefing we report on responses to questions about how parents can be supported to promote the mental health of children and young people, and to protect them from harm. We invited respondents to provide examples of initiatives and programmes locally and nationally that are known to offer support for parents and protection for children. We received information about a wide range of initiatives, programmes and organisations which the Commission is reviewing carefully as it undertakes further evidence-gathering activities. We are very grateful for all the responses we have received.

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[1] *Themes Emerging from the Call for Evidence: Briefing One - The meaning of family*, March 2022

[2] ibid

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In your personal or professional experience, how can families be supported to promote the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people?

Context

Concerns about the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people have escalated in recent years, heightened by the coronavirus pandemic and the impacts of repeated lockdowns. The Good Childhood Report 2021[3] reported the latest trends in children's wellbeing, Wellbeing is '*used to refer to a range of things in everyday life, such as being happy, not being ill, feeling fulfilled and being financially secure*'. [4] The report found that some 12 per cent of children aged 10-17 had scored below the mid-point on a multi-item measure of life satisfaction and were deemed to have low wellbeing. Children's happiness with life as a whole, including friends, appearance and school, was significantly lower in 2018-2019 than it had been in 2009-2010. Moreover, the report points out that young people with lower life satisfaction scores at age 14 were significantly more likely to have poorer scores across mental health measures at age 17. The Good Childhood Report concluded that:

'*The continuing downward trajectory of children's happiness with life as a whole, and other important indicators, suggests the UK is struggling to create conditions in which all children can thrive*'.[4]

Other reports suggest that mental health problems in children are quite common with about one in ten children aged between five and sixteen diagnosed with a mental health issue each year. [5] These can include eating disorders, self-harm, depression, anxiety, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and ADHD (attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder). NHS Digital reported that one in six children had a probable mental health disorder in 2021, an increase from one in nine in 2017.[6] Furthermore, research into the impacts of the pandemic found that children and young people with a probable mental health disorder were more likely to say that lockdown

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[3] The Children's Society (2021) *The Good Childhood Report*
https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/information/professionals/resources/good-childhood-report-2021 [4] Ibid Summary p 3

[4] Ibid Summary p18

[5] Nip in the Bud (2021) *Child Mental Health* Conditions https://nipinthebud.org/child-mental-healthconditions/?gclid=CjwKCAjw9qiTBhBbEiwAp-GE0ftBJudZocdXxs64E-rRY0PJIZ3-XhV4iuAwpOSRFtmtQuhJRdzIxoCqsAQAvD_BwE

[6] NHS Digital (2021*) Mental Health of Children and Young People in England 2021*   https://digital.nhs.uk › publications › statistical › 2021-f..

had made their life worse (54% of 11-16 year olds and 59% of 17-22 year olds) than those unlikely to have a mental disorder (39% and 37% respectively).[7]

Given these trends, the Commission is keen to understand how parents and carers can be supported to promote the wellbeing of their children, and to learn about programmes which demonstrate best practice. Here we report on the responses to our question.

Early Intervention

There was considerable consensus that early intervention is important to support parents:

➢ *The foundations for lifelong mental health are laid in infancy. Many services can play a valuable role in strengthening early relationships, which are critical for early development. For families facing the most severe and complex challenges to early relationships, more specialised support is required. We believe these families should be able to access specialised relationship support through a parent-infant relationship team*

➢ *Early intervention (perhaps compulsory) for families who show up on the radar for domestic violence,, mental health and neglect*

A number of respondents referred to the importance of parents being able to access mental health services early:

➢ *Ensure CAMHS services [Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service) are available before [the problem is] critical*

➢ *CAMHS need far more money and support if they are properly to assist kids. More mental health support workers in schools. Social Services and Family Functional Therapy*

Better information and knowledge for parents

Several responses talked about the need for better information being available for parents to increase their knowledge about children's mental health:

➢ *[Parents need] education on signs to look out for*

➢ *They [parents] need to be able to recognise the signs of poor mental and emotional health and guide them [children] to the right supports. So educating parents about this and promoting what supports are available is important*

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[7] NHS Digital (2020*) Mental Health of Children and Young People in England 2020: wave one follow-up to the 2017 survey* https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/mental-health-of-childrenand-young-people-in-england/2020-wave-1-follow-up

> ➢ *There needs to better education on this subject for all, children and parents. There needs to be better access to counselling for children and family therapy, not just from the NHS and not just for people in the most desperate need. It needs to be initiated before things become that bad*

> ➢ *Families need both training and support for themselves in order to support children and young people. There are many parents desperate to offer support, but who don't have the understanding of how to do that, or are facing too many of their own problems to be able to do so*

> ➢ *Support and training for parents/carers through parenting or other courses (e.g. listening, mental health first aid courses). Parenting courses … … Knowing how to access more specific/urgent support if needed, through school/youth workers/social services*

> ➢ *They [parents] need information about services but they also need information about what is normal behaviour*

Taking pressure off children and parents

Several, responses highlighted the pressures children and young people face and the impact of these on their mental health. The following very detailed response reflects the thinking of several respondents and the various suggestions as to how parents and children can be helped:

> ➢ *The mental health and wellbeing of children can be supported by easing the pressure on children to conform to a certain formula or achieve a set objective, for example at school in learning or to be like their peers. Support should focus on promoting children's opportunities for play and development … in line with their interests, driven by challenge and motivation to be their best in what they do.*

> ➢ *Reduce education expectations - allow children to take "mental health days" without fear of punitive fines. Increase Universal Credit and minimum wage to reduce material stress. Increase mental health provision, including systemic help for families. Fathers, in particular, can be helped to play a nurturing role, and they are currently often ignored.*

> ➢ *[Provide] practical help to relieve the stress on parents. Universal support for new parents e.g. parenting groups … All schools provide a place of safety for children and young people and a source of support for parents… Less emphasis on the GCSEs and A-levels. They are not as life-determining as the media and government make out … Structured out-of-school activities for children and young people: Sport, fun, music, dancing.*

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Some respondents talked specifically about the pressures of family conflict on children's mental health and called for more to be done to reduce conflict in the family:

> *First and foremost, the harm done to children from parental conflict must be widely known. We support the DWP Reducing Parental Conflict programme but more is needed, especially for couples who separate*

Others talked about the role that government can play in reducing pressure on parents and their children:

> *By [families] receiving a proper living wage and living in a properly supportive welfare state*

> *[Provide] food banks or a social supermarket where people can have the dignity of choosing their food donations; lunch and activities provided for children during school holidays (especially for those that are on school vouchers); online and live events [for children] to socialise and learn with others of similar ages; children / young adults mentoring scheme to provide additional pastoral care for children and young people; safely organised camps and retreats to allow young people a break from the home/school routine, gain new skills, socialise with peers, become more independent and give their parents a break!*

> *[Providing] more help through social services and councils*

> *Reduction of food poverty …*

The role of schools and education

There was considerable agreement that schools can play a key role in supporting young people:

> *Better mental health support in schools. School chaplains*

> *Have mental health awareness weeks in school and colleges, student support staff*

> *This [mental health awareness] needs to be a central part of the school curriculum. We will all face challenges at some point in our life. We cannot simply focus on dealing with these post-issue. We need to build resource so that when issues arise, people are able to cope with them more effectively*

One respondent described a new curriculum at their school which has emotional health and wellbeing at its core which:

> *empowers children, builds their resource and develops their skills and knowledge but also helps parents to better understand this …*

There was a call for schools to challenge idealised images of childhood:
> *Reset the education system and the media that promotes idealised versions of childhood, along with an emphasis on a form of 'success' in life that is an illusion*

Others referred to the important role played by youth work and argued for greater investment:
> *Funding youth work, youth workers and children centres. Free school meals available for all*

> *Clubs and additional support*

> *[Provide] places [for children] to enjoy themselves together and laugh together that won't break the bank*

Community support

Many respondents drew our attention to different kinds of community support, all of which promote the mental wellbeing of parents and their children. The Mothers' Union, for example, described a wide range of activities and opportunities for children and their families which promote the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people. These include: short breaks for families who could otherwise not afford them or are experiencing particular stress in family life; experience days; contact centres which enable children and young people to spend time in a safe and supportive environment with a parent they do not live with.

The Mothers' Union also highlighted the role of toddler groups which enable both parents and young children to have fun and positive experiences, and where parents are able to find people to talk to, build their support networks, and have space to engage and play with their children. Other work takes place with parents in prison such as 'Book Share' which provides a parent in prison and their child with the same book so they can read it together to help in promoting wellbeing both for the parent and the child.

Other community groups placed an emphasis on activities which enable children and parents to connect with other families:
> *Lots of free activities that can be enjoyed safely while they reconnect with neighbours and friends. Preferably outside and using nature to inform and reassure that there are constants that are stable and reliable*

Support from the church

We heard about a number of initiatives in local churches designed to support parents whose children have mental health challenges. A clear view was expressed that the church should be engaging with these families more actively, being proactive in helping parents know more

about their own emotions and how they handle them, thereby supporting parents' own mental health so that they can better teach and guide their children:

 ➢ *Churches can also provide opportunities for families to be valued and contribute to the church and wider community. For example, being involved in creation care, grounded and connected to the wider community, valued and nurtured to grow each child's gifts. Helping parents to support their children to walk faithfully through suffering, hurt and pain with hope and with the presence of God as actively comforting and providing a refuge for them. Setting up church based centres for family care and counselling, that provide parenting groups. Family counselling, and materials that help church members/families to navigate the harsher edges of family life (mental health, abuse, trauma, additional needs)*

 ➢ *Providing for faith development of all, giving children and young people opportunities to lead, influence, provide suggestions according to their preferences and personality types*

Other suggestions included targeted support for vulnerable families including counselling, family days out and lunch clubs.

Talking about mental health

A theme running through many of the responses is the importance of talking about mental health, de-stigmatising it and taking away the shame felt by families. This has been a theme which has characterised the recent campaigns which have attracted media attention.[8]

 ➢ *Encourage talking and listening*

 ➢ *Respect and recognise that mental health and physical health are interrelated and important for positive outcomes*

 ➢ *It would be amazing for there to be WAY more talk around mental health and wellbeing within schools, churches, even bringing it more into the workplace. It needs to reach every generation, it affects everyone but also, if there is a better understanding, then there can be better practice in supporting children and young people*

 ➢ *Talk, talk, talk*

Summary

The Call for Evidence responses are unequivocal about the importance of talking about mental health and wellbeing, and many suggested that the church needs to play a more active role in

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[8] See: The Royal Foundation of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge   https://royalfoundation.com/mentalhealth/

shining a light on the issue and doing more to support parents and children. Respondents recognised that parents' own mental health is critical in their being able to nurture and support their children. There was agreement on the need for all kinds of organisation, national and local, to play a part in this, to show compassion and encourage early intervention. There was also a call for more attention to be paid to mind-mindedness:

> *The most key factor, from the evidence base on child development and wellbeing, is mind-mindedness or mentalising - relationships where attention is on mental states - how children feel and think. This allows children to learn about themselves and other people, and to work through challenges which arise, including extreme experiences such as trauma or loss. People learn to mentalise by being mentalised themselves - parents who are on the receiving end of a curious and compassionate approach from those around them, including in faith settings, will be supported in their relationships with their children.*

In your personal or professional experience, how can families be supported to protect children and young people from harm, such as abuse, bullying, substance misuse and criminality?

Context
Protecting children and young people from various kinds of harm is critical if they are to be able to flourish. Over recent decades there have been many high profile cases of child abuse, increasing concerns about the long-term impacts of bullying, and the extent to which children and young people are engaging in substance misuse and crime.

Child abuse
Paedophile rings have been the subject of police investigations, and clergy and members of faith groups have themselves been implicated in the abuse of children. Child abuse (physical, emotional, sexual and neglect) causes outrage and disgust and renewed calls for greater vigilance to prevent more children and young people being abused. The NSPCC reports that half a million children in the UK suffer abuse every year - an average of 62 children each day.[9] The NSPCC has estimated that seven children in each classroom will experience abuse before they reach the age of 18.[10] In 2020/21, there were over 24.8 thousand child abuse offences recorded by the police in England and Wales, an increase of 2.9 thousand offences when compared with the previous reporting year, and a peak for this type of offence.[11] During the life of this

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[9] NSPCC (2022) https://www.nspcc.org.uk/about-us/news-opinion/2022/childhood-day/

[10] ibid

[11] Statista (2022) https://www.statista.com/statistics/303514/child-cruelty-abuse-in-england-and-wales-uk-yon-y/

Commission two cases of horrific abuse have caused enormous public concern: Star Hobson (aged 16 months) and Arthur Labinjo-Hughes (aged 6), died at home at the hands of the adults looking after them.

Bullying

In recent years, more attention has been paid to the impacts of children being bullied. According to a global report, [12] almost a quarter of British pupils say they are being bullied a few times a month, while more than 14 per cent say they are bullied frequently.[13] Figures suggest that nearly half (46%) of children and young people have been bullied at school at some point in their lives.[14] The NSPCC points out that bullying can be a form of discrimination, particularly if it is based on a child's disability, race, religion or belief, gender identity or sexuality.[15] The emotional effects of being bullied are far-reaching and can include: sadness, depression and anxiety; low self-esteem; social isolation; self-harm, and suicidal thoughts and feelings.[16]

Substance misuse

Substance misuse, notably drugs and alcohol, is commonly associated with parental behaviour which may adversely affect the ability of parents to attend to the emotional, physical and developmental needs of their children in both the short and long term.[17] While children are less likely to take drugs than try drinking alcohol, substance misuse, especially in teenagers, is cause for concern. Young people are subject to peer influence and may be encouraged to try drugs.

County lines

Of increasing concern has been the growth in the number of children, some as young as six, being involved in carrying drugs as part of county lines activities. Children are encouraged by the drug dealers to skip school, sleep in drug dens, and keep secrets from their parents. They are treated as criminals when they often feel trapped in a hopeless situation.[19] The Children's

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[12] https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/apr/19/british-teenagers-competitive-bulliedschools-anxiety

[13] https://www.nhs.uk/L https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/child-abuse-andneglect/bullyingivewell/Bullying/Pages/Bullyingfacts.aspx

[14] NSPCC Learning https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/child-abuse-and-neglect/bullying

[15] ibid

[16] Bainbridge, J., Ross, C., & Woodhouse, A. (2017). *Children's and Young People's Voices and Experiences of Bullying and Harassment in Schools.* Edinburgh: Children in Scotland; Arseneault, L. (2018*). Annual Research Review: The persistent and pervasive impact of being bullied in childhood and adolescence: implications for policy and practice.* Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 59(4), 405-421. doi:doi:10.1111/jcpp.1284; Vaswani, N., (2019) *Bullying Behaviours: adverse experiences for all involved*? , Centre for Youth and Criminal Justice

[17] Social Care Institute for Excellence (2005) SCIE *Research Briefing 6: Parenting capacity and substance misuse* [19] The Children's Society (2020) https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/what-we-do/our-work/child-criminalexploitation-and-county-lines?

Society has reported that the number of children groomed into county lines activities has increased, and estimates that phone lines associated to drug deals almost tripled during the coronavirus pandemic.[18] While the tactics of the dealers changed, primarily using online messaging, exploitation has increased. The Children's Society has pointed out that with more children playing online games, using social media, and relying on messaging apps to talk to friends, the numbers of children at risk of exploitation are far greater than previously. [21] Any child from any community, in towns, cities and in rural areas, can be groomed and made to carry drugs across the country. Not only do these activities mean that children miss school and expose themselves to tremendous personal risk, they also bring children and young people into the realm of the criminal justice system.

Youth crime

The Youth Justice statistics for England and Wales from April 2019-March 2020 show that while 19,000 children were cautioned or sentenced for a wide variety of offences, this number has fallen consistently over the past ten years. Although 4,400 knife and offensive weapon offences were committed by children in this time period, this too is a reduction on previous years. [19] Nevertheless, concern has always been expressed about the numbers of children and young people who commit offences or who are victims of violent crimes.

The Commission is exploring how children and young people can be protected from various kinds of harm, looking specifically at how families can be supported. Hence our question in the Call for Evidence. The answers to this question were very similar to those relating to children's mental health. They focus primarily on the importance of: educating and supporting parents; providing support in the community and through schools and churches; and ensuring that sufficient resources are available to tackle these issues.

Educate and equip parents

A large number of responses talked about the need to equip parents to deal with these issues:
Easier access to parents for support in spotting signs, behaviours and risks. Increase community cohesion. Model what you want to see at every level of society! Technology changes so fast a potential problem becomes a significant risk before parents know it exists

Educate and equip parents to be strong, resilient role models themselves; encourage, educate and empower parents to create strong healthy bonds with each other and with their children; raise more awareness around internet safety and manage online time; encourage family time

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[18] The Children's Society https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/what-we-do/blogs/how-county-lines-groominggrowing [21] ibid
[19] Youth Justice Board (2021) *Youth Justice Statistics 2019-20*

/activity for meaningful conversations - dinner time, board games, family activities like walking in the woods etc.

> *By offering them [parents] a way to improve their adult lives then children can have adults that they are safe with*

> *Supporting parents in understanding how to best build positive relationships with their children. How to recognise the signs of concern and what to do*

> *Courses and information for parents, possibly delivered through schools*

> *Secure attachment and emotional regulation are built through nurturing relationships, and these things reduce the risk of children engaging in a range of later risky and harmful behaviours … teach parents to communicate with their children*

Listen to children

Many responses spoke about the importance of listening to children:

> *Listen to them. Look for signs that might indicate harm such as being withdrawn, bullying themselves. [Provide] After-school clubs … and support parents who may themselves be suffering economic hardship with information about where they can access help*

> *Create a culture where the child/young person feels they can speak up, where they know they won't be shut up for opening up about something*

> *Offer [children] a safe place to talk*

> *Teaching children what harm and neglect looks like and encouraging them to talk to someone if they are in that situation*

> *Provide opportunities for children to speak out without prompting fear*

Education /schools

Respondents indicated that, just as with mental health, schools have an important role to play in supporting parents:

> *Education, education, education. Both of the children, and their parents. Adults need classes on parenting skills!*

> *Education; support of families as a whole; protection from social media over- exposure*

> *Awareness and education … but also support with practical needs like adequate and accessible after school care; adequate support for volunteers and finance for coordinators to organise such activities*

There was strong agreement that schools must also be supportive of children and young people:

> *Good safe-guarding training [for teachers] and protocols. Better communication with young people about the issues that concern them*

> *Schools have to provide a good safe-guarding policy in the curriculum and educate children on how to stay safe as well as protect them from physical/emotional harm*

> *Schools have a role to play via encouraging a culture of mutual respect, as well as providing boundaries and information - plus opportunities for discussion. For older children, confidential counselling services, free at the point of access, can offer individual support and containment that may feed back into better family relationships as well as addressing the symptomatic concerns of young people*

> *Children need to know that wrongdoing will be punished to feel safe …*

> *Make sure children always have a trusted adult to look after them, help children to identify relationships that are abusive. Immediately report bullying. Always know where children/teenagers are and who they are with*

> *[Put] trained staff in schools to deal with bullying - teachers don't have the time or resources.*

Community support
Alongside the role of schools in supporting parents and children, there was a strong focus on the provision of support in the community:

> *Good localised community support groups that people can trust and turn to when they're struggling*

> *Being very clear about what constitutes these [abuse and harm] and the harm they can do, and having clear routes and permission to raise concerns. Not being afraid to talk about worries or concerns and naming these earlier rather than later*

Responses made reference to the positive role of youth groups and clubs, and some bemoaned the fact that so many youth clubs seem to have closed down:

➢ *Have open talks & discussions - youth club*

➢ *Provide alternative and safe provision for children out of school, which is affordable or free*

➢ *Provide drop-in centres for young people! Youth work*

➢ *Charities and community groups mainly working with families and young people, especially around detached youth work*

The responsibility of churches

A consistent theme running through many responses was the importance of talking about the issues which harm children and young people and the critical role of the church in speaking out and connecting with community groups in tackling the issues. One very detailed response reflects the views of other respondents:

➢ *Tackle it and speak about it [abuse] in church, children's groups and youth groups. The diocese should have focussed training for its church leaders and lay people so they feel able to have these conversations with children. Safeguarding training is good but many church people find it hard to have a faith-based conversation about these issues for fear of saying the wrong thing. The church can train teams in cities to go out and work with vulnerable children as some already do … …*

➢ *[Churches should] recognise that abuse is real, and exists in our churches. Churches can be unsafe places too, especially when silence or ignorance allows abuse to continue. Churches are unique, since families gather together, as do victims and perpetrators. With a better understanding of abuse, neglect and what to look for, churches are well placed to identify harm and provide early interventions to protect victims and refer perpetrators to the appropriate statutory agencies. Churches could be better connected into their local community and local authority services, to provide better interventions and support for children and young people who are being harmed. Being aware of the needs of the children in their community, how many are in need, and being aware of county lines drug trafficking, so raising awareness, identifying harm early, and also teaching (through preaching, home groups, youth and children's groups) on what is harmful, what is coercive and controlling behaviour and what factors might nurture substance misuse or criminality.*

This respondent went on to say that it is important to equip churches to know how to respond by:

> ➤ *creating a culture where safeguarding is everyone's concern ... The Family Hubs initiative ... is an important springboard that encourages churches to form stronger partnerships with local authorities and other agencies to support families, especially where children are particularly vulnerable.*

Other responses put emphasis on the church modelling kindness and being non-judgmental:

> ➤ *Groups that model kindness and respect. Lead by example and come alongside folk who are struggling. Messy church and youth groups that model these values and maintain boundaries in a firm but caring style*

> ➤ *Not judging. Simply offering support*

> ➤ *We all need to be better at signposting what support is available ... We also need to ensure we always report any safeguarding concerns as appropriate, and we need to know when to provide support in-house, and when to refer on ... We need to learn to be less judgemental and exclusive, and more supportive ...*

Respondents to this and other questions in the Call for Evidence commented that that the church can often appear judgmental and this turns parents/families away from seeking support.

Coordinating support

There was recognition that while there is support available it is not always well-funded or well-coordinated; to be effective support needs to be holistic:

> ➤ *In my area and my school there are lots of council groups, charity groups, offshoots of the education and health services, and faith groups, which support young people and families. ... all could do with better funding*

> ➤ *In our local area the relationships between school and the local social services is imperative. To ensure clear sharing of needs and how a holistic approach can be put in place to support children in vulnerable settings*

Controlling digital access

Some responses referred to the negative impact of social media, the easy access to a plethora of online platforms, and called for more control of children's access to these:

> ➤ *[There needs to be] more awareness of the need to keep things age-appropriate and to restrict access to content. Cracking down on parents who permit children to access and play age-restricted games and films. The difficulty of the digital age is that children and*

young people know more about tech then adults and can get around most 'parental controls'

➢ *Better social media security and privacy*

➢ *Monitor online activity, create an open relationship where things can be discussed safely*

➢ *Education especially around social media; Safe open space to talk; Parents to take responsibility*

Ensuring adequate resources

Many of those who spoke about ways to support families also pointed to the need for support to be adequately resourced. They referred to a range of initiatives and services that require funding:

➢ *More funding for the police and for children's and youth services*

➢ *[More funding for] social workers, youth clubs, YOT workers. More health visitors to support parents of young children, who actually do home visits*

➢ *Offering safe external non-judgemental support and spaces. Funding youth workers and centres. Access to CAHMs and fund mental health support and services. Invest in the NHS*

➢ *A social care system that has enough staff and money to function; a functioning justice system. [Families having] enough money to live on. Good schools.*

➢ *[More] resources to learn about: drug abuse/awareness … suicide Awareness, County*
  o *Lines awareness, signs of all types of abuse, safeguarding, signposting to organisations that help families of prisoners*

➢ *Government policy has withdrawn a lot of support, there is a lack of midwifery, health visiting and school nursing support. Unless adequate resources are committed to educating young people into positive healthy cultural and life skills the problems will only exacerbate harm for children*

A few people talked about the impact of poverty and inequalities in society:

➢ *[We need] equality of access to services, support services in place for people living in poverty areas*

> *Universal Basic Income would unlock physical and emotional availability in adults, to better support and protect children*

> *Poverty to be fought against, so that people don't fall into these things*

Summary

The key messages from the responses to this question are:
- the importance of ensuring greater awareness of the behaviours which harm children and young people
- educating families, children, young people and professionals to recognise the warning signs of harm of all kinds
- the need for early intervention to prevent escalation of harm
- promoting effective coordination of support services, with schools, community organisations and the church working together
- talking about these issues in society, including within faith communities and churches
- churches and others not being judgmental
- listening to children and providing safe places for them to talk about difficult issues
- ensuring adequate resources to support parents/carers and their children

The following response encapsulates these themes:

> *Education and training; counselling; relevant community events with speakers and witnesses; pro-active cooperation and coordination of resources between local authority, faith organisation and schools; GP/health staff training and awareness; proactive efforts between police, health staff, local councils, schools and faith groups to share plans, information and find solutions*

> *With regards to substance and other misuse - Increase restriction of "supply" - e.g. deal with pornography use (age restriction legislation be passed). Proactively deal with the trauma that underlies most abuse and criminality. Support families materially. Reduce regulatory burden (e.g. sanctioned benefits). Increase mental health provision. Churches can help with the provision of a positive, warm, place of belonging.*

Professor Janet Walker OBE
May 2022