

Dear Chancellor,

I am writing ahead of next week's Budget. My priority, and I hope one of yours too, is the impact it will have on children and their families. To help you consider this impact, I have produced a short briefing which lays out what the Government currently spends on children, how it is spent and on which children.

I know you have been inundated with briefings this week, and will have even more next week, so I have kept it concise. But I hope you will find it helpful, both when considering the Budget, and more so, when thinking ahead to next year's spending review.

The briefing is largely based on a piece of research I commissioned this year from the Institute for Fiscal Studies. Broadly, it shows that we spend more on children than we did in 2000, but less than we did in 2010. However, within this is a more nuanced picture that shows that while headline budgets have been largely protected it is often the smaller budget areas that have been squeezed.

It is equally important to understand the context of this spending, and the children on whom this money is being spent. For example, both the child protection and special educational needs budgets have been protected. Yet this masks huge rises in the number of children in care and attending special schools who require high cost support which has resulted in drastically less funding available for low level support – the in-school counsellor, the speech and language therapist, or the family support workers who stop children going into care.

Often it is the same children who require support from lots of different budgets: the child who has a difficult home life who is more likely to have a special education need and to access CAMHS, but is also more likely to be in a family reliant on benefits. When I meet these families I see them struggling without support until something goes badly wrong, at which point the state has to step in. Sometimes this is bringing the child into care, sometimes sending them to a Pupil Referral unit, sometimes the child has ended up in the youth justice system. Either way, the support given is extremely expensive and rarely effective.

I want to see more intelligent spending on children. Spending that sees and supports the child, and their family, before things get into crisis to ensure children do well at home and in school. So it is these often forgotten children and families, struggling but not collapsing, who I would urge you to think about, both next week and in the future.

One area where I would particularly urge you to consider children, is in relation to welfare spending. The attached analysis shows that less than a third of total welfare spending supports families with children, yet these families have borne the brunt of changes to benefits introduced since 2010, and particularly since 2015. When we look at the projected impact of benefit changes over the next few years, we often see that the impact on families with children is twice as great as those without. As Children's Commissioner, I don't believe this is fair, especially when children are already significantly more likely to be in poverty than any other group of the population.

I hope this is something we can work together on, and, if there is anything I can help you with, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Sincerely,

Anne Longfield OBE
Children's Commissioner for England



Children's Commissioner for England: [Anne Longfield OBE](#)

Post: Sanctuary Buildings, 20 Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BT
Tel: 020 7783 8330 Email: info.request@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk
Visit: www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk

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Tel: 0800 528 0731 Email: help.team@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk

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