



The outcomes & impact of youth advice – the evidence

Key research evidence on the difference made to young people's lives by social welfare advice services

James Kenrick

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Abbreviations used

An attempt has been made to minimise the use of jargon throughout the report, but some has been unavoidable. These are the abbreviations that are used most frequently in the report:

CAB	Citizens Advice Bureau
CSJS	Civil and Social Justice Survey
CSJPS	Civil and Social Justice Panel Survey
LSRC	Legal Services Research Centre
NEET(s)	(Young people) not currently in employment, education or training
YIACS	Youth information, advice, counselling and support services

Foreword

This is such a useful report and it deserves to be widely read. More importantly, it deserves to be widely acted on. It gathers in one place evidence that shows how important it is for young people to have access to good quality social welfare advice.

Behind the research are thousands of individual stories. We get a glimpse of these through the many direct quotations in the text. These bring to life the fears that many young people had before receiving advice and the wide range of benefits they experienced having been helped.

Also behind the data are the hundreds of advisers doing real work with young people and doing it well. These workers are a national resource and it seems astonishing that they are not widely regarded as being simply indispensable.

The capacity of vulnerable young people to secure their rights and to hold others more powerful than them to account is under the most enormous pressure. These young people need places to go where they know with total certainty that they will receive skilful help that is in their best interests. Without that, their lives, and the lives of those around them, will not be happy or fulfilled or productive. We must do everything to ensure vulnerable young people have these places and people to whom they can turn.

Matthew Smerdon
Baring Foundation

Acknowledgements

I am extremely grateful to Professor Pascoe Pleasence and Dr Nigel Balmer for satisfying my frequent requests over the past few years for data on young people from the Civil and Social Justice Survey. This has enabled us to build a detailed and unique picture of young people's experiences of social welfare problems.

I would like to thank Shanta Bhavnani, Barbara Rayment, Mandy Wilkins and Matthew Smerdon for providing detailed comments on earlier drafts of this report.

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James Kenrick

1. Executive Summary

Despite major methodological and funding challenges in researching the impact of advice, resulting in significant gaps in the evidence base, there is sufficient data available from a diversity of sources pointing to a critical role for advice services in improving young people's lives.

There is robust and consistent evidence that unresolved social welfare problems have an adverse impact on many aspects of young people's lives

Social welfare problems relating to issues such as housing, homelessness, debt, welfare benefits, education and employment can lead to a range of adverse consequences for young people, most commonly involving young people becoming ill, often due to stress; losing income; or losing confidence. However, such problems can also lead to young people experiencing crime, homelessness, relationship breakdown, unemployment and barriers to education and employment.

Social welfare problems have a greater adverse impact on disadvantaged young adults

Disadvantaged young people, such as those who are NEET or socially isolated, are more likely than the population as a whole to worry about their problems and to report, as a result of their problems: stress-related illness; violence; loss of home; loss of confidence; and physical ill health.

Unresolved problems carry a substantial cost to wider society and the public purse

One estimate puts the cost of the unresolved problems experienced by 16-24 year olds at £1 billion per year.

The receipt of advice averts serious adverse outcomes

Young people who have received advice report that it averted homelessness, criminal behaviour, mental health problems, social services intervention and even death.

Obtaining advice increases the chances of young people successfully resolving their social welfare problems

The positive difference made by getting advice appears to be greater for young people than for the general population, suggesting that targeted investment in advice services for young people could be better value for money than all-age approaches.

Getting advice commonly leads to improvements in many aspects of young people's well-being

Users of youth advice services report that getting advice has led to improvements in their physical, mental, social and emotional well-being, their problem-solving skills, their housing situations and their ability to manage money.

Youth advice services can contribute to the achievement of a range of major central and local government policy goals

Mental health

There is substantial evidence of the adverse impact of social welfare problems on young people's mental and emotional health, with around a quarter of young adults experiencing stress-related illness, of whom around a third go on to use NHS services. However, 70% of young people self-reported that their levels of stress improved as a result of getting advice from a youth advice agency.

Physical health

Around one in ten young people experience physical ill health as a result of their social welfare problems, with around half of these young people visiting a GP, hospital or other health care worker at an average cost to the NHS of around £650 per case. However, 34% of young people getting advice from a youth advice agency self-reported that their health had improved as a result, with many eating more healthily or tackling smoking or drug habits.

Social and emotional health and well-being

Young people who are 'resilient' and possess strong social and emotional skills cope better with difficult life events and are less likely to engage in risky behaviours. A quarter of disadvantaged young adults suffer a loss of confidence when they have a social welfare problem. After getting advice, large proportions of young people report improvements in their control over their lives, their overall enjoyment of life, their confidence, their feelings about their future, their relationships, their sense of their place in the community and their problem-solving skills.

Education, employment and training

Employment problems contribute to about one in twenty of the civil legal problems young people experience. In turn, civil legal problems lead to employment problems in around one in 12 cases. As a result, many of these young people go on to claim unemployment related benefits, at an average cost of £8,140 per case, and have a heightened risk of further social welfare problems. After getting advice, more than a third of young people report improvements in their ability to engage in education, employment and training.

Housing situations

Up to 15% of young people living independently lose their home when they have a social welfare problem. Homelessness can cost the state many thousands of pounds in temporary accommodation, health services, police and criminal justice services and lost output. However, nearly half of all young people who get advice report improvements in their housing situation, rising to nearly two-thirds amongst the most disadvantaged young people.

Standard of living

Two million 16-24 year olds are living below the poverty line, 77% have been in debt by age 21 and young people possess the lowest rates of financial capability. A lack of money is the most common cause of civil justice problems amongst young people. In turn, one in five young people experience a loss of income as a result of their problems. After getting advice, a third of young people report an improvement in their income and a similar number feel better able to manage their money.

Youth offending

It is established that social welfare problems increase the risk of re-offending, with very high costs associated with youth offending. New research shows that young people who have recently been arrested are more likely than other young people to experience civil justice problems, but are even less likely to obtain advice. Many young people who get advice report improvements in their behaviour, as well as in the conditions that are likely to give rise to offending behaviour.

Safety from harm

5% of young people aged 16-24 point to 'violence aimed towards me' as having contributed to their civil justice problem. In turn, young people's social welfare problems can lead to them coming into danger, with significant numbers reporting fear, property damage, assault and harassment. For example, problems lead to violence against 9% of disadvantaged 18-24 year olds, at an average cost to the state of £255 per case. After getting advice, 72% of young people report feeling safer.

The wider impact of advice

As well as resolving young people's problems and effecting change in individuals, advice services play other important roles, including:

- promoting social justice and the rule of law
- improving public services
- preventing problems from occurring in the first place

The limitations of advice

Whilst advice, by resolving the problems that act as barriers to the achievement of stability, happiness, self-development and resilience, may often facilitate longer-term changes in young people's lives and increase the chances of long-term positive life outcomes, there is little evidence currently available to prove that advice has a substantial long-term impact on individuals. More research is needed into the longer-term impact of advice and the economic benefits of youth advice services. However, there are significant methodological challenges in conducting such studies.

Factors facilitating good outcomes

Simply having someone to talk to can often be beneficial to young people. However, an adviser who possesses the skills to engage with troubled young people, the expertise and

capacity to provide technically proficient active assistance and the tenacity to pursue a case to a successful resolution is more likely to produce good results that can change clients' lives. The report identifies a number of advice service characteristics and other factors that appear to be linked to the achievement of good outcomes:

- The degree of trust that the young person has in the service
- The quality of the one to one relationship between client and adviser
- The extent to which the service is age appropriate, young person-focussed and holistic
- The degree of independence of the service
- The availability of face to face advice
- The depth and quality of the advice intervention
- The timing of the intervention
- Whether or not the problem was successfully resolved
- The level of disadvantage suffered by the client

2. Introduction

Background to this report

Improving young people's access to high quality rights-based advice has been a strategic priority for Youth Access for the past decade. In that time, we have published a number of reports on the subject, including major reports in 2009 on the advice needs of young people¹ and on young people's access to advice.²

This previous research has revealed that each year 16–24-year-olds experience at least 2.3 million rights-related problems requiring advice, but fewer than half manage to obtain advice. As many as 200,000 problems result in young people trying, but failing to obtain advice, often because there is no service able to help them.

We have examined the barriers young people face in accessing the high quality advice they need and identified models of delivery that are effective.

Our previous research has also indicated that unresolved social welfare problems may have a greater adverse impact on disadvantaged young people than on other groups and that getting advice may have a greater beneficial impact on young people than on other groups.

However, although we have undertaken a number of projects aimed at improving the evidence base on the effectiveness of youth advice services, we have not previously collated that evidence into a single report.

Purpose of this report

This report is intended as a one-stop evidence resource for anyone wishing to understand the adverse impact of social welfare problems and the beneficial impact of youth advice services on young people's lives.

It is hoped that it will be used by:

- providers developing advice services for young people to inform their models of delivery and to refer to the most relevant evidence in their applications for funding;
- policy-makers in the legal and youth sectors to inform their policies, priorities and strategies;
- funders to ensure they focus their limited funding on projects that have been designed on the basis of the evidence available;
- researchers with an interest in the subject to inform further research.

¹ *The Advice Needs of Young People – The Evidence*, Kenrick, J., Youth Access, 2009.

² *Young People's Access to Advice – The Evidence*, Kenrick, J., Youth Access, 2009.

The report may be particularly relevant in the current context of widespread local authority cuts to youth advice services and Government plans to reduce the scope and funding of civil legal aid.

Scope of this report

This report focuses on the outcomes and impact of advice provided:

- **to young people between the ages of 13 and 25** (although with a greater focus on 16-25 year olds);
- **by advice agencies targeting young people**; primarily youth information, advice, counselling and support services (YIACS), but also Citizens Advice Bureaux, Law Centres and other independent advice agencies providing advice services to young people;
- **in relation to social welfare rights-based issues**, such as housing, homelessness, welfare benefits, debt, employment rights, education rights, social services and discrimination.

Data sources

This report has been compiled using a variety of complementary primary and secondary data in order to provide a comprehensive evidence base on the subject. As well as referring to evidence identified in a literature review of evidence relating to the impact of advice services, the report draws heavily on the following key data sources:

- a) **Data from the English and Welsh Civil and Social Justice Survey (CSJS)**,³ a major national private household survey focusing on people's experiences of everyday problems⁴ which were 'difficult to solve', and its successor, the Civil and Social Justice Panel Survey (CSJPS). Three main CSJS surveys were conducted: in 2001,⁵ 2004⁶ and, on a continuous basis, from 2006-2009.⁷ In total, these CSJS surveys involved interviews with over 21,000 individuals aged 18 and over, of whom around 11% were under the age of 25. In 2010 the CSJS was replaced by the CSJPS; some data from the first wave of the CSJPS in 2010, which involved

³ These analyses are reported in greater detail in other reports. See, for example, *Young People and Civil Justice: Findings from the 2004 English and Welsh Civil and Social Justice Survey*, Balmer, N., Tam, T. and Pleasence, P., Youth Access, 2007; and *Young People, Advice and Mental Health: A Data Digest*, Legal Services Research Centre, 2009.

⁴ The CSJS covers 18 problem types: employment; rented housing; owned housing; homelessness or the threat of being homeless; money/debt; welfare benefits; consumer; neighbours; personal injury; clinical negligence; discrimination; divorce; relationship breakdown; domestic violence; children; unfair police treatment; immigration; and mental health.

⁵ Reported in *Causes of Action: Civil Law and Social Justice*, Pleasence, P., et al., 2004. Findings on young people are the result of analysis by Youth Access of data supplied by the LSRC.

⁶ Reported in *Causes of Action: Civil Law and Social Justice (2nd edition)*, Pleasence, P., 2006. The main findings on young people are reported in Balmer et al. (2007) op. cit.

⁷ Further information about the CSJS and CSJPS is available at:

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/research-and-analysis/lsrc/research-projects/english-and-welsh-civil-and-social-justice-survey/index.htm>

interviews with 3,806 individuals aged 16 and over, was available for this report.⁸ Youth Access has worked with the Legal Services Research Centre (LSRC), which leads the CSJS and CSJPS, over a number of years to analyse data on young people⁹ from the surveys, providing a unique insight into the nature and impact of young people's problems and how they try to resolve them. Amongst the data from the CSJS and CSJPS referred to in this report are data on the impact of civil justice problems and some limited data (from the 2010 CSJPS) on the impact of advice.

- b) **Outcomes monitoring data** from two separate exercises managed by Youth Access:
- i) Quantitative data collected through successful testing of a new Youth Advice Outcomes Toolkit.¹⁰ The fieldwork was undertaken between January and September 2009 by ten youth advice agencies with a total of 516 young clients who had received rights-based advice on social welfare issues. The most common presenting issues were housing/homelessness (advised on in 57% of cases), welfare benefits (36%) and debt (15%). In addition, many of the young people received advice on inter-related non-rights-based issues, such as careers, relationships, sexual health and mental health. The majority (87%) of young people were aged 16-24. The depth of the advice intervention ranged from one-off advice (in 37% of cases), through to further advice/assistance/advocacy (71%), right up to representation at hearings (3%). The toolkit uses a 'retrospective pre post' methodology¹¹ – now commonly agreed within the advice sector to be the most appropriate methodology for use in advice settings. The full methodology and results are set out in an independent evaluation report.¹²
 - ii) Quantitative data collected through more limited testing of an earlier two-stage 'pre post'¹³ outcomes toolkit for youth advice work. The fieldwork was undertaken in 2007 by three youth advice agencies with a total of 33 young clients aged 16 to 25 who had received in-depth rights-based advice and assistance on social welfare issues in

⁸ Reported in *Civil Legal Problems: Young People, Social Exclusion and Crime*, Pleasence, P., Law Centres Federation and Youth Access, 2011.

⁹ Note that the CSJS surveyed people aged 18 and over, whilst the CSJPS surveys people aged 16 and over.

¹⁰ *The Youth Advice Outcomes Toolkit*, Youth Access, September 2010.

¹¹ This involves a single assessment conducted some time after the provision of advice. The user is asked to remember back to how they were before the service started and to rate the changes that have taken place as a result of getting advice. The key advantage of this approach compared to pre post methodologies is that only one assessment is needed, thus avoiding the problem of 'attrition', in which clients in the sample are lost between assessments, and reducing the burden to the client and the cost to the agency.

¹² *Youth Advice Outcomes Pilot*, Widdowson, B., Del Tufo, S. and Hansford, L., Evaluation Trust for Youth Access, 2010.

¹³ Pre post methodologies involve measuring change by comparing a baseline assessment conducted before or at the start of the service with a second assessment conducted after the delivery of the service. This two-stage approach theoretically provides greater certainty that changes recorded have actually taken place, but was found to be highly resource-intensive in a youth advice setting.

a youth setting. Further details of methodology and results are set out in an independent evaluation report.¹⁴

- c) **Data from qualitative interviews** conducted by independent researchers on behalf of Youth Access with 27 young clients aged 16-24 who had received in-depth rights-based advice and assistance on social welfare issues, most commonly housing, homelessness, welfare benefits and debt, in a youth setting. The key question tested in the study was “*Does good legal advice produce sustainable benefits for young people?*” Initial interviews were conducted in autumn 2006, with follow-ups completed in August 2007.¹⁵

NB: Quotes from young people included in this report are primarily drawn from the unpublished transcripts of interviews conducted by Butler and Hutchinson (2007); additional quotes come from comments written by young people on outcome monitoring forms.

¹⁴ Partially reported on in *Transforming Lives: Evaluation of the Rights to Access Project*, Butler, M., and Hutchinson, G., Michael Bell Associates Research & Consultancy for Youth Access, 2007.

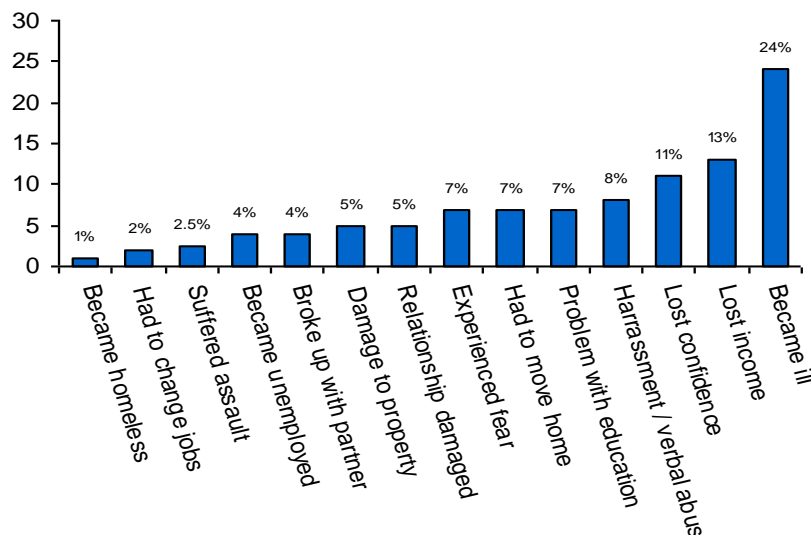
¹⁵ Results are reported in Butler and Hutchinson (2007) op. cit.

3. The disproportionate impact of unresolved social welfare problems on disadvantaged young people

Evidence from the CSJS indicates that social welfare problems not only routinely lead to broader problems, but have a greater adverse impact on disadvantaged young adults than on the general adult population.

It is now well-established that unresolved rights-related civil justice problems often result in adverse consequences for individuals of all ages.¹⁶ Analysis of the most recent available data, from the 2010 CSJPS, shows that young people aged 16-24 reported adverse consequences on 55% of occasions, compared to 49% amongst other age groups.¹⁷ Most commonly, young people reported becoming ill (24%), generally as a result of stress, loss of income (13%) or loss of confidence (11%). Figure 1 provides full details of the rates of different types of adverse consequences reported by young people.

Fig. 1 Adverse impacts experienced by 16-24 year olds as a consequence of civil justice problems (Source: 2010 CSJPS)



Analysis of data from the 2004 CSJS enabled identification of differential rates of adverse consequences between disadvantaged young people and others. Young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs)¹⁸ and 'socially isolated'¹⁹ young people were significantly more likely than the population as a whole to worry about their problems and to

¹⁶ See, in particular, *Mounting Problems: Further Evidence of the Social, Economic and Health Consequences of Civil Justice Problems*, Pleasence, P., Balmer, N.J., Buck, A., Smith, M. and Patel, A., in *Transforming Lives: Law and Social Process*, Legal Services Research Centre, 2007.

¹⁷ Pleasence (2011) op. cit.

¹⁸ The increased incidence of worry amongst 18-24 year old NEETs experiencing civil justice problems has been identified in unpublished analysis by Youth Access of 2004 CSJS data. See also LSRC (2009) op. cit.

¹⁹ Balmer et al. (2007) examine the role of social isolation on problem experience, by looking separately at the experience of those young respondents living apart from their parents or any other adult over the age of 24.

report, as a result of their problems: stress-related illness; violence (aimed at them); loss of home; loss of confidence; and physical ill health (see Figures 2, 3 and 4). Loss of employment or income were more common amongst young adults with lesser disadvantage.

Fig. 2 Percentage of people experiencing adverse consequences from civil justice problems: comparison between NEET young adults and all people aged 25 and over
(Source: 2004 CSJS)

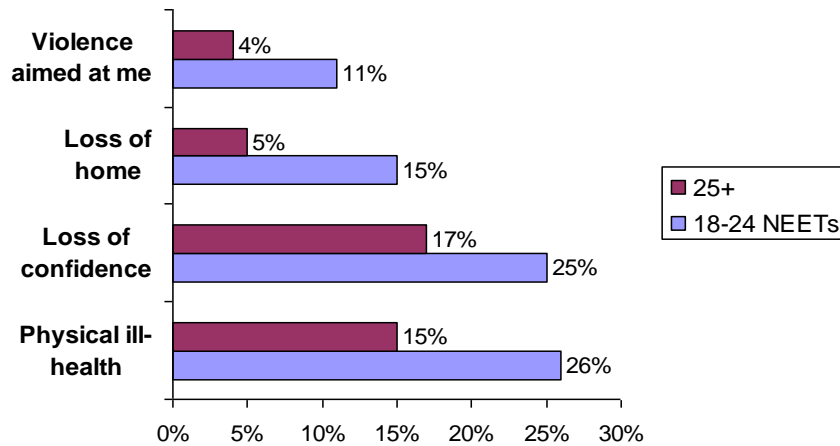


Fig. 3 Percentage of people worrying all or most of the time about their civil justice problems
(Source: 2004 CSJS)

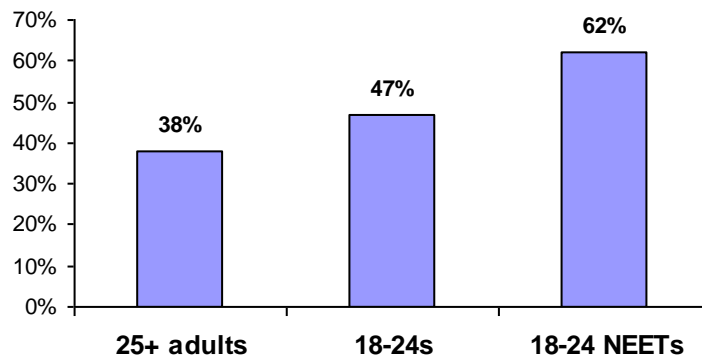
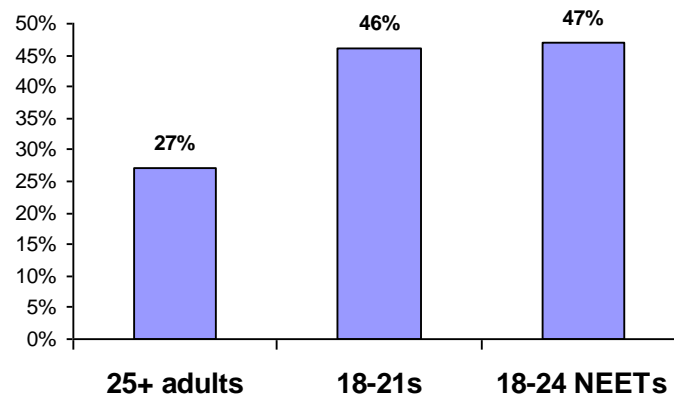


Fig. 4 Percentage of people reporting stress-related illness as a result of their civil justice problems
(Source: 2004 CSJS)



Butler and Hutchinson (2007) report that at the start of the advice process, all the young people surveyed as part of a small outcomes monitoring study reported some type of significant impact on their lives as a result of the social welfare problems they were experiencing. The most commonly reported adverse consequences were: difficulties with enjoying and achieving in life; problems with health and well being (particularly worry and stress); barriers to studying or working; difficulties managing money; the absence of a safe and comfortable place to live; and difficulties feeling involved and respected in society.

It is perhaps merely common sense to expect that young people, who have relatively little experience of 'the system' compared to older groups and the lowest level of 'legal capability',²⁰ should fare worse than average when they have a problem. In addition, it should be noted that young people are less likely to obtain advice than older age groups, rendering it less likely that their problems will be resolved and the impact of their problems alleviated.²¹

Evidence of the impact of social welfare problems on specific aspects of young people's lives is provided in Chapter 6.

The cost of no advice

Young people's failure to get advice matters a great deal. Government economists have used CSJS data to estimate that over a three and a half year research period, unresolved law-related problems cost individuals and the public purse at least £13 billion as a result of loss of employment, lost income, physical and stress-related illness and violent behaviour resulting from the stress of problems and resultant relationship breakdown.²² JustRights, the campaign for fair access to legal services to children and young people, has conservatively estimated the cost of the unresolved problems experienced by 16-24 year olds alone at £1 billion per year.²³

Butler and Hutchinson asked the 27 young people in their qualitative interviews what they thought would have happened to them if they hadn't obtained advice when they did. As many as five reported that they "*felt that they would probably be dead now*", with many others indicating that getting advice averted probable homelessness, criminal behaviour, mental health problems or social services intervention.²⁴

²⁰ *Knowledge, capability and experience of rights problems*, Balmer, N.J., Buck, A., Patel, A., Denvir, C., and Pleasence, P., Plenet, 2010.

²¹ Kenrick (2009a) op. cit.

²² *Getter earlier, better advice to vulnerable people*, Department for Constitutional Affairs, 2006.

²³ *Children and young people denied their rights as over one million fail to get legal advice every year*, press release, JustRights, October 2009.

²⁴ Butler and Hutchinson (2007) op. cit.

'If I hadn't got advice...'

"I would have been homeless, mentally disturbed and in the gutter."

19 year old female with debt and benefits problems

"My little girl could have been taken away."

17 year old female with housing and benefits problems

"We would be stuck – homeless and hungry".

Young couple aged 17 and 18 with housing and benefits problems

"I would have got worse and committed crimes."

21 year old male with housing and benefits problems

"I would probably have been dead, I was sharing needles, involved in prostitution. The staff here encourage me, they believe in me, and I have started to believe in myself. I used to hate myself before."

18 year old female with housing and social services problems

"I would have lost my home, been back in B and B and may have got into trouble again."

20 year old male with housing, debt and benefits problems

"I wouldn't be alive now"

20 year old male with housing and immigration problems

"I would be in prison. We would certainly have lost our home and I probably wouldn't have been seeing my children now."

25 year old female with debt, housing and social services problems

"I think I would probably have had a breakdown....and still looking for advice."

17 year old female with immigration, housing and

"I would have been very depressed and doing nothing with my life"

17 year old female with domestic violence and housing problems

4. The role of youth advice services

Advice on social welfare issues is provided to young people through a range of services:

- **Youth information, advice, counselling and support services (YIACS)** typically provide information, advice and assistance to young people aged 13-25 on a wide range of often inter-related personal, practical, health, social and legal issues through a holistic young person-centred service model. Youth Access estimates that there are around 350 YIACS in England and Wales, working with over a million young people each year.
- **Youth services** – many young people may turn for advice to a range of youth professionals, such as Connexions advisers, youth workers and social workers. However, the level and quality of rights-based advice available from such sources is highly variable.
- **Mainstream advice agencies**, such as Citizens Advice Bureaux (CABx) and Law Centres, provide generic advice to the general population. Most do not target young people, but may nevertheless work with large numbers of young people. For example, between April 2010 and March 2011 CABx across England and Wales dealt with over 700,000 problems from people under the age of 25,²⁵ whilst a number of Law Centres have developed specialist legal advice services targeting young people in recent years.²⁶

It is worth noting that many of the above services have been severely depleted as a result of the ongoing spending squeeze in the public and voluntary sectors.²⁷

The most common rights-based social welfare issues dealt with by youth advice services concern:

- housing and homelessness
- welfare benefits
- debt
- education rights
- employment rights

²⁵ http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/index/pressoffice/press_index/press_20110606.htm

²⁶ Through Law Centres Federation's Young People's Project, over half of Law Centres are currently developing services targeted at young people.

²⁷ See, for example, *Cuts leave 45,000 young people without vital support*, Youth Access press release, 27/04/11; <http://www.youthaccess.org.uk/news/Cuts-leave-young-people-without-vital-support.cfm>,

The Youth Information Advice and Counselling Services (YIACS) service model

The YIACS model has a long-established evidence base as an effective model at meeting young people's complex needs.²⁸

YIACS services vary according to local need, but share the following features:

- A range of interventions delivered 'under one roof'
- Young person-centred
- Open to a wide age range, typically 13 to 25
- Holistic approach, meeting multiple and complex needs
- Multi-disciplinary teams, providing wrap-around support
- Flexible access routes, including through open door 'drop-in' sessions
- Free, independent and confidential

Through interventions such as counselling and other psychological therapies, advice work, health clinics, community education and personal support, YIACS offer a unique combination of early intervention, prevention and crisis intervention for young people.

Open to all young people, YIACS offer a universal access point to targeted and specialist services, supporting young people on a diverse range of issues that are frequently inter-related:

- social welfare issues, e.g. benefits, housing, debt, employment
- mental and emotional health issues, e.g. depression, low self-esteem, self-harm, family problems and stress
- wider personal and health issues, e.g. relationships, sexual health, drugs and alcohol, healthy eating
- practical issues, e.g. careers, money management, independent living skills

²⁸ *A Proven Early Intervention Model: the evidence for the effectiveness of Youth Information, Advice, Counselling and Support services*, Lee, S. and Kenrick, J., Youth Access, 2010.

'What I like about youth advice services'

"They are different from everywhere else because they don't just shove a form at you and tell you to go away. They spend time with you and you feel they are interested in you."
24 year old male

"I liked the fact that [my adviser] got back to me and followed up the advice with me, she kept in regular contact which made me feel like I was being taken seriously; like the Centre was there to help."
21 year old male

"Young people have a lot of problems and it is easier for them to walk into a place that deals with young people.... It is good to come to just one place where they sort everything out. I wouldn't want to keep explaining my situation over and over again, it is just too difficult and upsetting."
20 year old male

"They went out of their way to help you and give you peace of mind...they go the extra bit to help young people."
22 year old female

"I think without them I would be lost."
18 year old male

"It is often hard to walk into somewhere with a lot of older people..... I sat in CAB for an hour once and ended up leaving without being seen.... advice really needs to be provided by someone who is prepared to listen to young people."
25 year old female

"When I came to seek advice I didn't think I would be listened to because my life was in a mess and I was young. I thought they would think it was all my fault and that they would judge me."
23 year old female

"They don't just give you advice and send you on your way; they help you to sort the situation out"
17 year old female

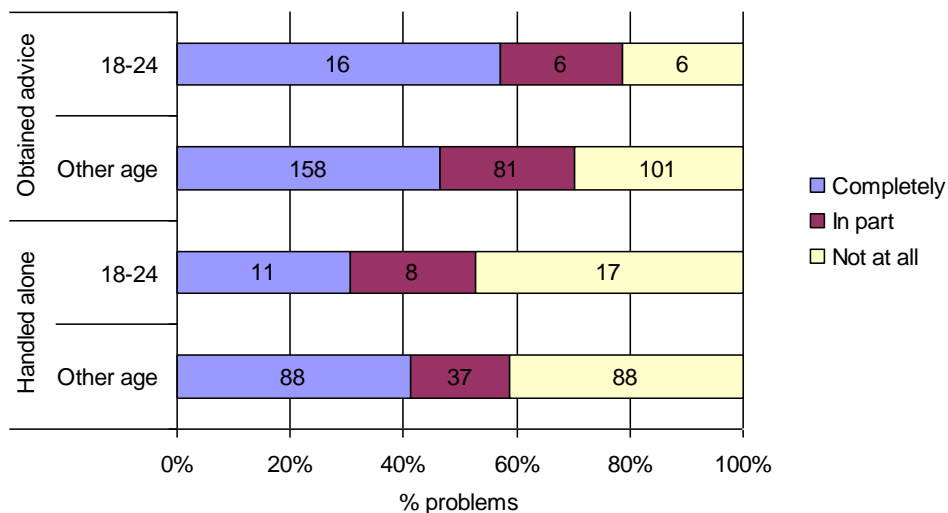
5. The difference getting advice makes to the resolution of social welfare problems

Evidence indicates that obtaining advice increases the chances of successfully resolving social welfare problems. Further, it appears that the positive difference made by getting advice is greater for young people than for the general population and that getting early advice can stop problems from escalating.

Data from the 2004 CSJS indicated that 58% of 18-24 year olds who had experienced social welfare problems and obtained advice felt that the help they received helped to bring about a better outcome to their problem.²⁹

Analysis of 2006-08 CSJS data revealed that young respondents were twice as likely to 'meet their objectives'³⁰ where they managed to obtain advice in comparison to when they handled their problems alone.³¹ In contrast, the general adult population aged over 25 met their objectives only slightly more often where they obtained advice (see Figure 5 below). This data would seem to indicate that young people are more likely to need advice than people with greater experience when they have a comparable problem.³²

Fig. 5 Extent to which objectives were met by strategy and age³³
(Source: 2006-2008 CSJS)



²⁹ Balmer et al. (2007) op. cit.

³⁰ These objectives were related to people's motivations for trying to resolving their problems and ranged from a desire to put right something that had gone wrong or to correct a sense of injustice to obtaining money or housing.

³¹ The LSRC analysed data for Youth Access from the Civil and Social Justice Survey on the extent to which respondents met their objectives relating to 9,591 adults aged 18 and over, including 841 young adults aged between 18 and 24, interviewed between 12th January 2006 and 31st September 2008.

³² Kenrick (2009a) op. cit.

³³ This chart first appeared in Kenrick (2009a). The figures shown in the bars on the chart refer to the numbers of respondents.

Analysis of new data on the impact of advice, available for the first time in the 2010 CSJPS, shows that 62% of young respondents aged 16 to 24 reported that formal advice from another person or organisation led to an improvement in their life circumstances, compared to 43% in the case of older respondents.³⁴ This would seem to reinforce the notion that advice may make a greater difference for certain types of clients than others and that it could be particularly important to ensure that young people are helped to get good advice to deal with their social welfare problems.

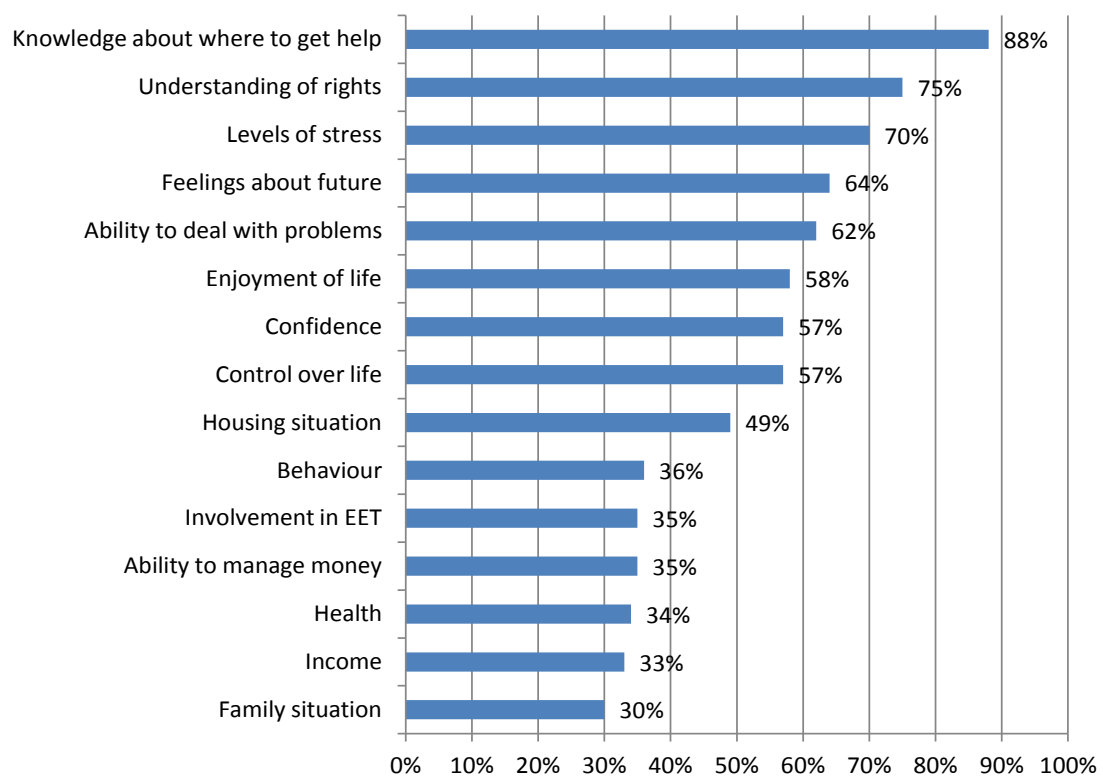
³⁴ Pleasence (2011).

6. The impact of youth advice services on young people's lives

Testing of Youth Access' Youth Advice Outcomes Toolkit³⁵ in 2009 indicates that youth advice services are ideally placed to contribute to a range of major central and local government agendas, from improving mental health and financial capability to reducing crime and unemployment.

Figure 6 sets out the key results from the 516 young respondents in the study³⁶ and indicates that young people often reported improvements across a range of well-being and capability indicators.

Fig. 6 Percentage of young people reporting improvements in different aspects of emotional, psychological, social and material well-being as a direct result of getting advice from a youth advice service (Source: Widdowson et al. 2010)



An independent analysis of the data led to the observation that:

“Many of the highest positive ratings relate to knowledge, skills and emotions, suggesting that YIACS are highly effective at developing young people as individuals.....although advice

³⁵ Youth Access (2010) op. cit.

³⁶ See details of methodology in Introduction under ‘Data Sources’.

may not always deliver a tangible gain, it can nevertheless contribute much in enabling a person to better deal with their situation.” (Widdowson et al. 2010)

The following pages detail the impact of youth advice services on specific aspects of young people’s lives, such as their health, well-being, engagement in employment and standard of living.

a)on young people’s mental health

The problem

- The economic and social costs of mental health problems in England amounted to £105.2 billion in 2009/10.³⁷ This figure includes:
 - £21.3 billion in health and social care costs, e.g. NHS and local authority services;
 - £30.3 billion in lost output to the economy resulting from people’s inability to work;
 - £53.6 billion in ‘human costs’ resulting from the negative impact on quality of life.
- Demand for mental health treatment increased as a result of the recent recession because of rising levels of debt, home repossessions, unemployment and threat of redundancy.³⁸
- At any one time, around one in six 16-24 year olds meet thresholds for clinical diagnoses of mental health problems such as anxiety and depression. When problems such as post traumatic stress, attempted suicide, eating disorders, and alcohol and drug dependency are added in, the proportion affected rises to almost a third.³⁹
- The average annual costs of each case of poor mental health include £11,432 in lost employment costs and £1,508 in costs from the use of health and social services.⁴⁰

The link between mental health problems, social welfare problems and youth

Sefton has highlighted strong links between mental health problems, rights-based social welfare problems and youth.⁴¹ Using data from the 2006-08 CSJS,⁴² he found that 31% of

³⁷ *The economic and social costs of mental health problems in 2009/10*, Centre for Mental Health, October 2010.

³⁸ *Mental Health and the Economic Downturn*, Royal College of Psychiatrists, the London School of Economics and the NHS Confederation’s Mental Health Network, 2009.

³⁹ *With Rights In Mind: Is there a role for social welfare law advice in improving young people’s mental health? A review of evidence*, Sefton, M., Youth Access, 2010.

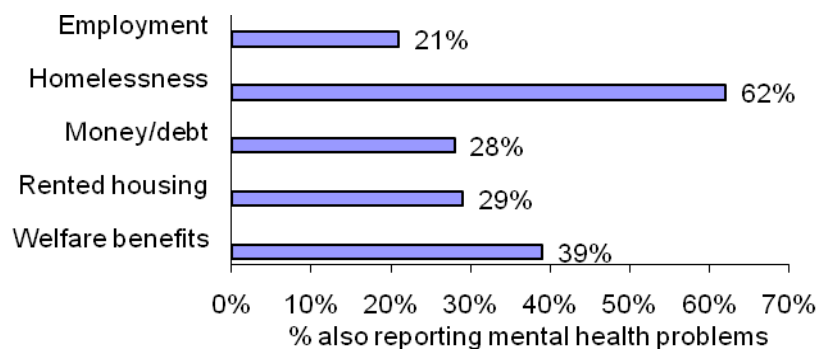
⁴⁰ *Paying the Price. The Cost of Mental Health Care in England to 2026*, McCrone, P., Dhanasiri, S. et al., Kings Fund, 2008.

⁴¹ Sefton (2010) op. cit.

young people who experienced one or more social welfare law problems also reported mental health problems, compared to just 9% of those who did not report social welfare law problems.

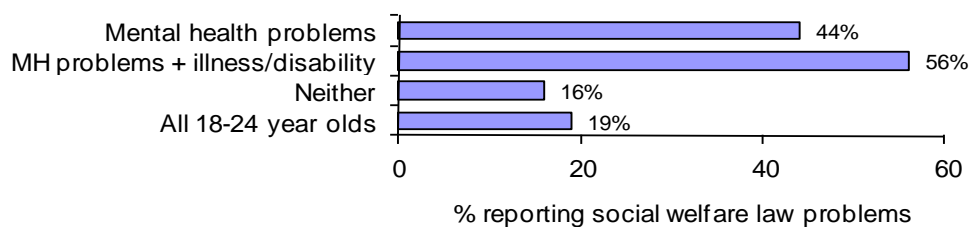
Figure 7 shows that the association was particularly strong where young people reported homelessness problems (62% also reporting mental health problems) and, to a lesser extent, welfare benefit problems (39%).

Fig. 7 Percentage of 18-24 year olds reporting social welfare law problems who also reported mental health problems (Source: 2006-08 CSJS)



Looking at the association from the opposite perspective, Sefton found that young people reporting mental health problems were far more likely to also report social welfare problems – see Figure 8. Forty-four per cent of young people reporting mental health problems without long-standing illness/disability and 56% of those who reported both mental health problems *and* long-standing illness/disability also reported social welfare law problems, compared to just 16% of those with neither type of health problem.

Fig. 8 Social welfare law problems by mental health status (Source: 2006-08 CSJS)



Again, a particularly strong link with homelessness was found: 15% of 18-24 year olds who reported mental health problems, whether or not together with long-standing

⁴² For full data tables, see LSRC (2009).

illness/disability, reported homelessness problems, compared to 1% of those reporting neither type of health problem.⁴³

New data from the 2010 CSJPS reveals that 7% of young people aged 16-24 specifically pointed to stress-related illness, and 2% to 'other mental illness', as having contributed to their civil justice problem.⁴⁴

The impact of social welfare problems on young people's mental health

Aside from the general coincidence of young people's mental health problems and their social welfare problems, there is substantial evidence of the adverse impact of social welfare problems on young people's mental and emotional health.

Sefton reports that 22% of 18-24 year olds' rights-related problems in the 2006-08 CSJS led to stress-related illness. This almost doubled to 41% where pre-existing mental health problems were reported, and further increased to 59% where mental health problems featured together with long-standing illness/disability.⁴⁵ More recent data, from the 2010 CSJPS, shows that 22.4% of 18-24 year olds' problems and 11.1% of 16-17 year olds' problems led to stress-related illness. In addition, 2.3% of 18-24 year olds' problems led to 'other mental illness' and 0.6% to drinking problems.⁴⁶

Previously, Balmer et al (2007), reporting on the 2004 CSJS, found that 25% of 18-24s suffered from stress-related ill health as a result of their rights problems, rising to 45% amongst disadvantaged 'socially isolated' young people.⁴⁷ Sefton also found that disadvantaged young people – in his analysis, NEETs – were more likely to experience stress-related illness: 34% of NEETs did so, compared to 18% of young people who were in education, employment or training.⁴⁸

CSJS data indicates that homelessness and employment problems are most likely to lead to stress-related illness and to be the subject of worry all or most of the time. There is also a growing evidence base indicating the adverse impact that debt and welfare benefits problems have on mental health.⁴⁹ For example, individuals who initially have no mental health problems but find themselves having unmanageable debts within a 12-month period have a 33% higher risk of developing depression and anxiety-related problems compared to

⁴³ Sefton (2010) op cit.

⁴⁴ Pleasence (2011) op. cit.

⁴⁵ Sefton (2010) op. cit.

⁴⁶ Pleasence (2011) op. cit. NB: none of the 16-17 year olds in the 2010 CSJPS reported other mental illness or drinking problems as a consequence of their civil justice problems.

⁴⁷ Balmer et al. (2007) op. cit.

⁴⁸ Sefton (2010) op. cit.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

the general population who do not experience financial problems.⁵⁰ The costs to the NHS due to the depression and anxiety caused by unresolved debt problems has been estimated at up to £13,800 per person over two years.⁵¹

Thirty-five per cent of 18-24 year olds in the 2006-08 CSJS who reported stress-related illness as a consequence of their rights problems said they used NHS services as a result.⁵² Average costs for stress-related ill health consequent to rights problems experienced by people of all ages have been estimated by the LSRC at £195 for those who visited GPs, £258 for those who visited counsellors and £2,224 for those who received care from Community Psychiatric Nurses.⁵³ However, a study by Prince's Trust has suggested that the indirect costs of health problems experienced by disadvantaged young adults are many times greater than the average for the population as a whole.⁵⁴

The beneficial impact of advice on young people's mental health

New data from the 2010 CSJPS reveals that young respondents aged 16 to 24 reported that advice from another person or organisation (excluding family and friends, but only rarely provided by youth advice services) led to an improvement in their levels of stress on 32% of occasions.⁵⁵

Earlier Sefton (2010), in a review of evidence on the subject, concluded:

“There is some evidence indicating that social welfare law advice may have a positive impact on the mental health of young people – and that when it does, the impact can be substantial. But the evidence base is currently limited. What evidence there is, including evidence from qualitative studies, points to advice potentially being instrumental to improvements in this area.”

Of the 516 young people participating in trials of the Youth Advice Outcomes Toolkit, 70% self-reported that their levels of stress had improved as a result of getting advice from a youth advice agency.⁵⁶

A smaller trial of an earlier version of the Youth Advice Outcomes Toolkit found that at the outset of the advice process, 85% of young people reported that they often felt stressed. At

⁵⁰ *Socio-economic position and common mental disorders. Longitudinal study in the general population in the UK*, Skapinakis, P., Weich, S., et al., 2006, *British Journal of Psychiatry* 189:109–117.

⁵¹ *Debt and mental health*, Knapp, M., et al., article in *Mental health promotion and mental illness prevention: The economic case*, Knapp, M., McDaid, D. and Parsonage, M. (editors), Personal Social Services Research Unit, London School of Economics and Political Science, Department of Health, April 2011.

⁵² Sefton (2010) op. cit.

⁵³ Pleasence et al. (2007b) op. cit.

⁵⁴ *The Cost of Exclusion: counting the cost of youth disadvantage in the UK (2)*, Prince's Trust, 2010.

⁵⁵ Pleasence (2011) op. cit.

⁵⁶ Widdowson et al. (2010) op. cit.

the end of the advice process, 51% still reported that they often felt stressed, but 90% said that the support the adviser had given had helped them feel less stressed.⁵⁷

In interviews with young people who had received legal advice, the most commonly reported change attributed to advice was feeling less stressed.⁵⁸

There is particularly strong evidence of the impact of debt advice in alleviating mental health problems. A recent study by the London School of Economics on the economic case of mental health interventions concludes that *“even under conservative assumptions, investment in debt advice services can both lower expected costs and reduce the risk of developing mental health problems. The intervention appears to be cost-effective from most societal and public expenditure perspectives.”*⁵⁹ (See section 6(f) for more on the link between debt and mental health)

Integrating advice with mental health services

Youth Access has long identified a need to integrate social welfare advice services with mental health provision for young people. *The Making Tracks Project* worked in three pilot areas to:

- develop better partnership working between GPs, Primary Care Trusts and young people’s information, advice and counselling services;
- develop and evaluate an improved service offer for young adults with complex needs, who were able to access a distinctive package of holistic support combining social welfare advice services with NHS medical services and psychological therapies.

Nationally validated outcome tools, including The Generalized Anxiety Disorder Assessment Tool (GAD-7), W&SAS Work and Impact tool and Manchester Short Assessment of Quality of Life (MANSA) were used in the pilot sites for a period of just over one year (between February 2010 and March 2011) to monitor the impact of this combined offer on the young people using the services.

An independent evaluation⁶⁰ found consistent improvements across all three pilot sites in young people’s social, mental and physical health after receiving services.

⁵⁷ Butler and Hutchinson (2007) op. cit.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Knapp et al. (2011) op. cit.

⁶⁰ *Making Tracks Project Final Report*, Street, C., Youth Access, 2011.

Impact of advice on young people's mental health – in their own words:

"I'm not as depressed now. I have begun living again – no tears and 'don't know what to do's' now" **25 year old female**

"I am feeling less stressed now we have somewhere to live" **21 year old female**

"I feel a little bit less stressed – but I have still got big problems to deal with" **17 year old female**

"I'm not as depressed now. I have begun living again – no tears and 'don't know what to do's' now" **25 year old female**

"I don't feel depressed now and feel less stressed." **25 year old female**

"After my problem was resolved I felt a lot less stressed. New problems have made me feel stressed again, but I am coping better with them." **20 year old male**

"Getting both advice and counselling here has made me feel less stressed and depressed." **16 year old female**

"My mental health has improved now that I'm accessing mental health services" **21 year old male**

b)on young people's physical health

The problem

- Some 175 million working days are lost each year as a result of ill health, costing the economy £100bn in lost productivity, benefits and taxes.⁶¹
- Class A drug use in England and Wales costs around £15.4 billion in economic and social terms.⁶² One-third of drug users die prematurely, with premature death 'valued' at £50,000.⁶³
- The total costs of alcohol misuse in England amount to £23.1bn, comprising: £3.0bn in NHS costs, £7.2bn in output losses and £12.9bn from the costs of crime.⁶⁴
- Young people under 18 attending Accident and Emergency departments as a result of alcohol misuse cost the NHS £19m per year.⁶⁵
- Every year, around 120,000 smokers in the UK die as a result of their habit. Stopping before age 35 can reduce a smoker's health risks to the same as those of a life-long non-smoker.⁶⁶
- Obesity in childhood and youth, which has been rising fast in recent years and is linked to low income, as well as diet,⁶⁷ costs the NHS around £1 billion a year and the UK economy a further £2.3 billion in indirect costs.⁶⁸

The impact of social welfare problems on young people's physical health

The LSRC has analysed the impact of everyday rights-related problems on young people. Of all respondents to the 2004 CSJS aged 18 to 24, 15% suffered from physical ill health as a result of their rights problems. However, a higher proportion of disadvantaged young people within the cohort reported physical ill health, including 19% of 'socially isolated' younger respondents⁶⁹ and 26% of NEETs.⁷⁰ (NB: The equivalent figures from the most recent data,

⁶¹ *Working for a healthier tomorrow: Dame Carol Black's Review of the health of Britain's working age population*, 2008.

⁶² *The economic and social costs of class A drug use in England and Wales*, Gordon L, Tinsley L, Godfrey C et al. (2006). (In: Singleton N, Murray R, Tinsley L editors. *Measuring different aspects of problem drug use: methodological developments*. Home Office online report 16/06.)

⁶³ *A False Economy: How failing to invest in the care system for children will cost us all*, New Economics Foundation, 2008.

⁶⁴ *Screening and brief intervention in primary care for alcohol misuse*, Aslam, R. et al., article in *Mental health promotion and mental illness prevention: The economic case*, Knapp, M., McDaid, D. and Parsonage, M. (editors), Personal Social Services Research Unit, London School of Economics and Political Science, Department of Health, April 2011.

⁶⁵ *Services for young people – the evidence*, Department for Education, 2011.

⁶⁶ <http://www.ash.org.uk/>

⁶⁷ *Health Survey for England 2008: Volume 1: Physical activity and fitness*, NHS Information Centre, 2009.

⁶⁸ <http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=6462869>

⁶⁹ Balmer et al. (2007) op. cit.

⁷⁰ Unpublished analysis by the LSRC for Youth Access based on 2004 CSJS data.

from the 2010 CSJPS, are lower, with 3.7% of 16-17 year olds and 8% of 18-24 year olds reporting physical ill health as a consequence of their civil justice problems.)⁷¹

Of those young people in the 2004 CSJS who said they had suffered physical ill health as a result of their rights problems, 58% said this had caused them to visit a GP, hospital or other health care worker. Of this group, 55% said it had caused them to visit a hospital.⁷² (More recent equivalent data is not available for this report, but it is known that 80% of respondents of all ages in the 2006-09 CSJS who suffered from physical ill health as a direct result of a problem visited a GP, hospital or other health care worker about it.)⁷³

Based on the cost of visiting GPs, hospitals and other healthcare workers, the LSRC has calculated the average cost to the state of each person in the LSRC reporting physical ill health at £650.⁷⁴

Health problems can, in turn, lead to social welfare problems. New data from the 2010 CSJPS shows that 2% of young people aged 16-24 pointed to physical ill health, and a further 0.5% to a disability, as having contributed to their civil justice problems.⁷⁵

The beneficial impact of advice on young people's physical health

Of the 516 young people participating in trials of the Youth Advice Outcomes Toolkit, 34% self-reported that their health had improved as a result of getting advice from a youth advice agency. In the same study, advice workers reported that 9% of their young clients had achieved an identifiable improvement in their health and social care position, rising to 17% of their more disadvantaged clients and 21% of clients aged 16 to 18.⁷⁶

A smaller trial of an earlier version of the Youth Advice Outcomes Toolkit found that 41% of young clients self-reported feeling physically healthier as a result of the support their adviser had given them.⁷⁷

In interviews with young people who had received legal advice, many attributed physical health benefits to the advice they had received. Some young people said that their physical health had improved because they were eating more regularly or eating healthier food, helped by the fact they had higher incomes as a result of getting advice on benefits or debt. Some reported either reducing their drug intake or kicking their drug dependency entirely. Others had managed to reduce the amount of cigarettes they were smoking. Two young

⁷¹ Pleasence (2011) op. cit.

⁷² Balmer et al. (2007) op. cit.

⁷³ Pleasence (2011) op. cit.

⁷⁴ Pleasence et al. (2007b) op. cit.

⁷⁵ Pleasence (2011) op. cit.

⁷⁶ Widdowson et al. (2010) op. cit.

⁷⁷ Butler and Hutchinson (2007) op. cit.

people said they were attending GP's more regularly because they felt better able to talk to them.⁷⁸

There is also evidence linking the receipt of debt advice (by people of all ages) to improvements in physical health. At both 6 and 12 month follow-up, about two-thirds of debt advice clients stated that their health had improved a little or a lot since the baseline interview, with most stating that the improvement was the result of getting advice.⁷⁹

Such evidence has led many advice agencies to develop services in conjunction with health services. In a study of advice delivered in GP's surgeries in Wales, 73% of surgeries felt that *"the advice worker had taken a lot of work off the shoulders of health workers and thus released them for other activities"*.⁸⁰

Impact of advice on young people's physical health – in their own words

"I didn't use to eat properly. I am eating regularly now, I smoke less cigarettes and I am managing to kick drugs... I feel a lot less stressed." **16 year old male**

"I eat better and am happier and able to focus on other aspects of life – not just housing." **20 year old male**

"I am living more healthily and attending the doctors more regularly. Even my appearance has changed!" **24 year old female**

"As well as getting help with my housing and benefits, I am getting help with my drugs and it is working, I have cut down a lot." **16 year old male**

"My physical health has improved, they helped me to realise that I didn't need to stress." **17 year old female**

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ *A Helping Hand: the impact of debt advice on people's lives*, Pleasence, P., Buck, A., Balmer, N. J., Williams, K., Legal Services Research Centre, 2007.

⁸⁰ *Welfare Advice in General Practice – The Better Advice Better Health Project in Wales*, Borland, J., Owens, D., 2004.

c)on young people's social and emotional health and well-being

This section covers: self-esteem; confidence; control over one's life; enjoyment of life; relationships; social life; social isolation; sense of community; social cohesion; non-cognitive skills (e.g. communication skills and problem-solving ability).

The problem

- The UK was ranked last in a UNICEF study into the well-being of children and adolescents living in rich countries.⁸¹
- Poor social and emotional health is linked to low levels of 'resilience' and a vulnerability to a range of poor outcomes in areas such as education, health and employment.⁸²
- The most important external factors affecting individual happiness and well-being are human relationships.⁸³ Failed relationships cost the UK £41.7 billion each year.⁸⁴
- The UK has recently been affected by widespread social unrest,⁸⁵ arguably reflecting the poor social health of the nation.
- Young people belonging to lower social classes, as well as being more likely to experience social welfare problems, are more likely to experience low levels of social cohesion (encompassing sense of community, social mobility, fairness, freedom, respect, discrimination and inclusion).⁸⁶
- The brain's centre of reasoning is now known to be among the last to mature, hampering young people's problem-solving ability.⁸⁷

The impact of social welfare advice problems on young people's social and emotional health and well-being

A recent review of evidence by the Department for Education found that personal and social skills, such as confidence or communication skills, contribute to economic outcomes *"both by mediating educational attainment directly and by being associated with fewer of the risky*

⁸¹ *Child poverty in perspective: An overview of child well-being in rich countries*, UNICEF, 2007.

⁸² *Policy Review of Children and Young People: a discussion paper*, HM Treasury and DfES, 2007.

⁸³ *Happiness*, Layard, R., UK National Child Development Study (second ed.), 2011.

⁸⁴ *Counting the cost of family failure*, Relationships Foundation, 2010.

⁸⁵ Riots took place in several parts of the UK between 6th August and 9th August 2011.

⁸⁶ *Young People and Community Cohesion: Analysis from the Longitudinal Study of Young People in England (LSYPE)*, Demack, S. et al., Sheffield Hallam University (Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research and the Centre for Educational and Inclusion Research), Department for Education, 2010.

⁸⁷ www.nimh.nih.gov/publicat/teenbrain.cfm

*behaviours that tend to undermine achievement. Cognitive and social skills often work together in mutually reinforcing ways to generate better outcomes for young people.*⁸⁸

Research has indicated that children who are 'resilient' and possess strong social and emotional skills cope better with difficult life events⁸⁹ and are less likely to engage in risky behaviours such as smoking, exclusion from school, engagement in criminal activity, and becoming a teenage parent.⁹⁰ Furthermore, evidence suggests that 'soft skills' may be becoming increasingly important for young people's employment prospects.⁹¹

Given the fundamental importance of developing strong social and emotional health and well-being, there is a surprising lack of research evidence demonstrating the adverse impact of social welfare problems in this area. What data there is relates mainly to confidence and relationships.

Confidence

Data from the CSJS has consistently demonstrated the impact of problems on young people's confidence. The most recent data, from the 2010 CSJPS, shows that civil justice problems led to loss of confidence in 14.8% of 16-17 year olds and 10.9% of 18-24 year olds.⁹²

This is a phenomenon that impacts disproportionately upon disadvantaged young people. For example, 25% of socially isolated 18-24 year olds with civil justice problems in the 2004 CSJS were affected by a loss of confidence,⁹³ whilst analysis of 2006-09 CSJS data found elevated incidence of loss of confidence amongst NEET young people and amongst young people with mental health problems and long-standing illness or disability.⁹⁴

Analysis of 2006-09 CSJS data on adults of all ages looked at which problems were most likely to lead to a loss of confidence. As many as 33% of people with employment problems and 19% with homelessness problems reported a loss of confidence as a result, compared with only 6% with welfare benefits problems.⁹⁵

Relationships

Data from the 2010 CSJPS tells us that 4% of 16-24 year olds' civil justice problems led to them breaking up with a partner and 5% to damage to a relationship. In turn, it shows that relationship problems can lead to social welfare problems; 2% of young people aged 16-24

⁸⁸ Department for Education (2011b) op. cit.

⁸⁹ See, for example, *Promoting resilience in fostered children and young people (Resource Guide No. 4)*. Bostock, L., Social Care Institute for Excellence, 2004; *What works in building resilience?* Newman, T., Barnardo's, 2004; *Bouncing Back: How can resilience be promoted in vulnerable children and young people?* Glover, J., Barnardo's, 2009.

⁹⁰ *The impact of early cognitive and non-cognitive skills on later outcomes*, Carneiro, P., Crawford, C. and Goodman, A., 2007, cited in Department for Education (2011b).

⁹¹ *Freedom's Orphans: Raising Youth in a Changing World*, Margo, J., and Dixon, M., IPPR, 2006.

⁹² Pleasence (2011) op. cit.

⁹³ Balmer et al. (2007) op. cit.

⁹⁴ Sefton (2010) op. cit.

⁹⁵ Pleasence et al. (2007b) op. cit.

specifically pointed to a break up with their partner as having contributed to their civil justice problem.⁹⁶

There is some evidence that a lack of income can contribute to relationship breakdown between young people and their parents/carers.⁹⁷

Social isolation

It is also known, from analysis of 2004 CSJS data, that young people who are socially isolated and living in households without an older adult are far more likely to experience social welfare problems than other young people.⁹⁸

The beneficial impact of advice on young people's social and emotional health and well-being

Impact on self-esteem, confidence and enjoyment of life

New data from the 2010 CSJPS reveals that young respondents aged 16 to 24 reported that advice from another person or organisation (excluding family and friends, but only rarely provided by youth advice services) led to an improvement in their confidence on 15% of occasions,⁹⁹ confirming other evidence pointing to the contribution of advice in this area.

Of the 516 young people participating in trials of the Youth Advice Outcomes Toolkit, 57% self-reported improvements in their control over their lives, 58% in their overall enjoyment of life, 64% in their confidence and 64% in their feelings about their future as a result of getting advice from a youth advice agency.¹⁰⁰

A smaller trial of an earlier version of the Youth Advice Outcomes Toolkit found that 76% of young clients felt before getting advice that their social welfare problem was preventing them doing the things they enjoyed. After getting advice, 70% reported that the support the adviser had given had made it easier for them to do the things they enjoyed.¹⁰¹

In interviews with young people who had received legal advice, nearly all reported that their confidence and self esteem had improved. This was attributed, in part, to *"having someone who took them seriously"*.¹⁰²

⁹⁶ Pleasence (2011) op. cit.

⁹⁷ *An evaluation of welfare rights advice for teenage parents*, Bateman, N., Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council, May 2007.

⁹⁸ Balmer et al. (2007) op. cit.

⁹⁹ Pleasence (2011) op. cit.

¹⁰⁰ Widdowson et al. (2010) op. cit.

¹⁰¹ Butler and Hutchinson (2007) op. cit.

¹⁰² Ibid.

Impact on relationships

Thirty per cent of young people participating in trials of the Youth Advice Outcomes Toolkit self-reported improvements in their family situation as a result of getting advice from a youth advice agency.¹⁰³

In interviews with young people who had received legal advice, many had begun to develop skills which enabled them to talk more openly to their partners or their families and some felt they had developed a better relationship with their parents, own children or other family members.¹⁰⁴

A study into the impact of debt advice found a reduction in rates of relationship breakdown amongst people (of all ages) receiving advice, compared to a control group.¹⁰⁵

Impact on community cohesion

Butler and Hutchinson reported substantial improvements in young people's sense of their place in the community as a result of getting advice from a youth advice service. Of young people participating in a small-scale pre-post survey, the biggest improvement in how young people felt between the beginning and the end of the advice process was feeling as if they were a part of their community. Only 27% agreed that they felt involved in their community before getting advice; at the end of the advice process this figure had risen very substantially to 60%.¹⁰⁶ These findings were confirmed in in-depth interviews:

“Many reported feeling more of a part of society and recognising that they have a place within it. One young person said that they now realised that they had to take responsibility for themselves and their actions.” (Butler and Hutchinson 2007)

Impact on problem-solving skills

Outcomes monitoring conducted in youth advice agencies has consistently found that getting advice improves young people's ability to deal with other problems in the future.

Of the young people participating in trials of the Youth Advice Outcomes Toolkit, 88% reported improved knowledge about where to get help, 75% reported improved understanding of their rights and 62% felt better able to deal with future problems. The independent evaluators commented:

“The effect is iterative; obtaining timely advice contributes to improvements in young people's emotional, personal and health issues. It also increases their understanding of rights and their confidence that in turn builds their capacity to manage problems in the future.” (Widdowson et al. 2010)

¹⁰³ Widdowson et al. (2010) op. cit.

¹⁰⁴ Butler and Hutchinson (2007) op. cit.

¹⁰⁵ Pleasence et al. (2007a) op. cit.

¹⁰⁶ Butler and Hutchinson (2007) op. cit.

Similarly, Butler and Hutchinson's earlier outcomes study found that only 36% of young people knew what their rights were and 61% felt able to speak up for themselves before getting advice. Almost all of the young people surveyed (94%) reported at the end of the advice process that getting support from the adviser had made them feel they could deal with other problems in the future. Qualitative interviews conducted as part of the same study found that 96% of young people better understood their rights and responsibilities as a result of getting advice, over 90% indicated that they would feel more confident about dealing with the problem themselves in future and 85% said they had a much better idea of where to seek advice from.¹⁰⁷

Impact of advice on young people's social and emotional health and well-being – in their own words

"I understand the housing system better now, which is important because otherwise you can get stuffed by them – maybe that's because we are young? I have a better circle of friends now. My confidence is minimally improved – I still can't handle 3-way conversations." **21 year old male**

"I didn't know there were people who cared. My self esteem and self respect are getting better. When you think no one cares, why should you care? I'm much more positive about my life now and very excited about going to College and having somewhere of my own to live." **16 year old female**

"I understand my rights now. It's important so that you can carry on studying/working and can pay bills etc. – if you don't know your rights you are living illegal" **18 year old male**

"I feel loads better about myself, I'm more confident and enjoying life more. I also feel more a part of society now and go swimming, which is a new activity for me. I am more optimistic, I want to achieve more goals and do the things I've always wanted to do, but didn't know how to." **24 year old female**

"I have a lot better understanding of my rights now and would feel more confident in dealing with problems myself, but I would still come and get advice here to be sure – it's good to know there's someone there to help us if we need it." **21 year old male**

"I feel better about life and my confidence has improved – but it's early days." **21 year old female**

"Life's still really hard, but I've got somewhere to live now – it's not brilliant, but it's somewhere. My relationship with my Mum is improving and I see people differently now – there's help out there, you just have to find it." **17 year old female**

"I feel I know what to do now if I have another problem and wouldn't just leave it and worry about it – but it's good to have somewhere to come for that support and advice" **23 year old female**

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

*“I have learnt to talk with my partner; we were on the brink of divorce when I came here. I have begun to build my relationship with my family, but this is difficult as they have my children. Before I came here I felt that I couldn’t do anything and had to sit back and take it, now I know I can do something and have done it. I probably would have stopped seeing my children if I hadn’t come here. I have greater respect for myself now and have a lot more motivation.”*25 year old female

*“Things were improving and I was really loving life – I saw my brother for the first time in over two years – before my partner went to prison. But I’m more optimistic and proving to myself that I can cope on my own and sort out our problems by myself.”*17 year old female

*“I have a lot more confidence and self esteem knowing my family are living in a nice area. I feel more responsible too, and am looking to set up my own business.”*21 year old male

“I’m definitely more confident and optimistic now – and more independent.”
17 year old male

“My relationship with my Mum will improve now that we aren’t living together. I’m more confident and enjoying life – going to the gym, playing pool and table tennis. I feel like I’m going somewhere.” 17 year old male

*“I’ve got some money now and my relationship with my Dad has improved, but I don’t feel welcome here in the UK and just wish I could go home.”*18 year old female

“I still don’t have any confidence – life just gets worse. But when someone rings now and tells me what they are going to do, I have a better understanding of whether they can do it. I feel more confident dealing with it myself because I know what to do, but I would come back here because I liked the advice they gave me.”
19 year old female

“I do understand my rights and feel much stronger now, though I would need to seek advice again if I had another problem – they care about me here and really listened to me.”
20 year old male

*“I’ve got my own place now. My confidence has improved by 75%. I feel emotionally stronger now to cope with life.... My outlook on society has changed, I feel like I have a place in it now. I’ve joined the cadets and want to be an RAF pilot.”*17 year old female

d)on young people's engagement in education, employment and training

The problem

- 6,500 young people were excluded permanently and 363,000 for fixed periods from schools in 2008/09;¹⁰⁸ 60% of young people excluded from mainstream education have offended.¹⁰⁹
- The total cost of each school exclusion is £63,851 and the cost of each persistent truant is £44,468.¹¹⁰
- Nearly a million 16-24 year olds in the UK were NEET (not in education, employment or training) in the first quarter of 2011, including nearly one in five 19 to 24 year olds and one in twelve 16 to 18 year olds.¹¹¹
- The official youth unemployment rate in the UK stood at 20.8% (a record) by mid-2011.¹¹²
- The number of long term unemployed young people has risen by 40% since before the 2008/9 recession; in 2010, 72,000 18-to 24-year olds had been out of work for more than two years.¹¹³
- In January 2010 almost half (48%) of black people aged between 16–24 were unemployed, compared to a rate of unemployment among white young people of 20%.¹¹⁴
- The average individual life-time public finance cost of an individual being NEET is £56,300 (including welfare payments, costs to health and criminal justice services, loss of tax and national insurance revenue).¹¹⁵
- The 2008 cohort of NEETs alone will cost the UK economy £22 billion in lost economic opportunities and cost the taxpayer £13 billion over their lifetimes.¹¹⁶
- Youth unemployment costs UK tax payers £20 million per week in Job Seeker's Allowance and £70 million per week in productivity loss to the economy. In addition,

¹⁰⁸ *Permanent and Fixed Period Exclusions from Schools in England 2008/09*, Department for Education, 29th July 2010.

¹⁰⁹ *Typical young offender gets younger*, press release, Youth Justice Board, 2004.

¹¹⁰ *Misspent Youth: The Costs of Truancy and Exclusion*, Brookes, M., Goodall, E. and Heady, L., New Philanthropy Capital, 2007. This report considers the costs of truancy, exclusion and alternative provision. It gives the annual cost of a place in a mainstream school as £4,355. In comparison, the annual cost in a Pupil Referral Unit is £14,664, with annual costs of £26,225 for a Special School and £24,996 for home or alternative education.

¹¹¹ *NEET Statistics Quarterly Brief*, Department for Education, May 2011.

¹¹² *Labour Market Statistics: September 2011*, Office for National Statistics, 14 September 2011.

¹¹³ *Labour Market Statistics*, Office for National Statistics, October 2010.

¹¹⁴ *Youth unemployment and the recession*, IPPR, 2010.

¹¹⁵ *Estimating the life-time cost of NEET: 16-18 year olds not in Education, Employment or Training*, Coles, B., Godfrey, C., Keung, A., Parrott, S. and Bradshaw, J., University of York, 2010.

¹¹⁶ *Young people not in education, employment or training: A Manifesto for Action*, Private Equity Foundation, 2011.

youth unemployment imposes a 'wage scar' on individuals of between 8% and 15%.¹¹⁷

- Unemployment leads to stress and unhappiness, leaving a psychological scar that can still be significant after the individual is back at work.¹¹⁸
- Male NEETs are three times more likely to suffer from depression, four times more likely to be out of work in the long term and five times more likely to have a criminal record.¹¹⁹

The impact of social welfare problems on young people's engagement in education, employment and training

Around 8.5% of young respondents in the 2004 CSJS experienced loss of employment as a result of their social welfare problems.¹²⁰ New data from the 2010 CSJPS shows that 4.6% of 18-24 year olds and 3.7% of 16-17 year olds reported becoming unemployed as a result of their problems, with a further 2.9% of 18-24 year olds reporting having to change jobs. In turn, 3.5% of young people aged 16-24 reported a loss or change of employment as having contributed to their civil legal problems in the first place, with a further 1% pointing to 'other work problems'.¹²¹

Looking at all age groups, where respondents to the CSJS reported losing a job as a result of civil legal problem, 70% went on to experience a period of unemployment and, of these, 59% then went on to claim unemployment related benefits.¹²² The LSRC has calculated the direct costs to the public purse of those CSJS respondents experiencing loss of employment.¹²³ For those claiming unemployment-related benefits, an average of 19 weeks was claimed, making the average cost of job loss £1,057. In addition to these costs, loss of employment caused a net social cost amounting to £8,140 on average, measured in terms of lost output, using GDP per head.

There are established links between specific types of social welfare problems and individuals' engagement in education, employment and training. For example, there is evidence that debt can act as a barrier to finding work, be a disincentive to seeking work and prevent people from sustaining newly found work.¹²⁴

Meanwhile, stress at work, which is sometimes caused by employment or other social welfare problems, has significant adverse impacts on the individuals concerned, the

¹¹⁷ *The Cost of Exclusion: Counting the cost of youth disadvantage in the UK (1)*, Prince's Trust, 2007.

¹¹⁸ *Happiness: lessons from a new science*, Layard, R., 2005.

¹¹⁹ *Against the Odds – Re-engaging Young People in Education, Employment or Training*, Audit Commission, 2010.

¹²⁰ Balmer et al. (2007) op. cit.

¹²¹ Pleasence (2011) op. cit.

¹²² Pleasence (2006) op. cit.

¹²³ Pleasence et al. (2007b) op. cit.

¹²⁴ *Out of work and out of money: A study of financial inclusion and worklessness in Manchester: how to improve support for people with money problems to obtain and sustain employment*, Gibbons, D., May 2010.

workplaces, and the wider community. In total, 13.4 million working days were lost to stress, depression and anxiety in 2001,¹²⁵ with each case of stress-related ill health leading to an average of 29 working days lost.

There is also a relationship between young people's education and their social welfare problems. For example, Shelter have demonstrated that children and young people living in bad housing are more likely to struggle at school.¹²⁶

New data from the 2010 CSJPS shows that 7% of civil justice problems reported by 16-24 year olds resulted in problems to do with their education. This rises to 11% amongst 16-17 year olds (and compares with just 0.5% amongst people aged 25 and over). Young people also ranked problems concerning education as the most severe of the civil justice problems they experienced.¹²⁷

It should also be noted that young people's social welfare problems are highly concentrated amongst NEET young people. Data from the 2004 CSJS indicates that NEET 18-24 year olds accounted for nearly half of all young people seeking and obtaining advice.¹²⁸ Consistent with this, 52% of users of youth advice services in a recent study by Youth Access were NEETs aged 16-25.¹²⁹

Further, NEETs are more likely to experience relatively severe problems than non-NEETs. Homelessness and rented housing problems are the most common problems experienced by NEETs, ahead of consumer problems (which are many times more prevalent than homelessness problems amongst the general population).¹³⁰ It is known that severe problems are more likely to lead to adverse consequences than are more minor problems¹³¹ and NEETs are indeed more likely to report adverse impacts from their social welfare problems than other young people. For example, 34% of NEETs reported stress-related illness, 13% loss of confidence and 45% that they worried all or most of the time as a result of their problems, compared to 18%, 7% and 32% of those young people in education, employment or training who experienced similar types of problems.¹³²

The beneficial impact of advice on young people's engagement in education, employment and training

As well as supporting young people to enforce their education rights, advice services maximise young people's opportunities for sustainable employment by providing advice on rights at work, ensuring entitlement to tax credits and in work benefits, and removing disincentives to employment, such as unresolved debts and unstable housing.

¹²⁵ *Tackling Stress: the management standards approach*, Health and Safety Executive, 2007.

¹²⁶ *Key Statistics*, Shelter, 2007.

¹²⁷ Pleasence (2011) op. cit.

¹²⁸ Kenrick (2009b) op. cit.

¹²⁹ Widdowson et al. (2010) op. cit.

¹³⁰ Unpublished analysis of 2004 CSJS data by LSRC for Youth Access.

¹³¹ Pleasence (2006) op. cit.

¹³² Unpublished analysis of 2004 CSJS data by LSRC for Youth Access.

The role of advice in improving young people's engagement in education, employment and training was recognised in a cross-departmental paper aimed at joining up the Community Legal Service with the Connexions Service, which argued that providing good, early advice to young people on issues such as benefits, housing and debt was "*key in helping them to overcome barriers to participation in learning and make a smooth transition to adulthood and working life*".¹³³

Of the 516 young people participating in trials of the Youth Advice Outcomes Toolkit, 35% self-reported improvements in their ability to engage in education, employment and training after getting advice. In the same study, advice workers reported that 14% of their young clients had achieved an identifiable improvement in their education, employment and training position.¹³⁴

In interviews with 27 young people who had received legal advice, many had either returned, or were considering returning, to college following the help they had received. One young person had secured a place on an apprenticeship scheme and another had started at University. Several had been referred on by their advice workers to careers advisers or Connexions Personal Advisers.¹³⁵

It is also worth noting here that youth advice agencies often offer young people volunteering opportunities. Volunteering has been shown to promote economic development, active citizenship and social involvement.¹³⁶

¹³³ *The Community Legal Service and Connexions - joint initiatives*, Department for Constitutional Affairs, Legal Services Commission and Department for Education and Skills, 2003.

¹³⁴ Widdowson et al. (2010) op. cit.

¹³⁵ Butler and Hutchinson (2007) op. cit.

¹³⁶ *Volunteering works*, Institute for Volunteering Research and Volunteering England, 2007.

Impact of advice on young people's engagement in education, employment and training – in their own words

"I'm more optimistic about my future – I want to be the first member of my family to get qualifications."

20 year old male

"I've learnt a lot of skills that make me more confident about working."

17 year old female

"I was able to stay at school to complete my GCSE's and I'm in college now."

17 year old female

"[Getting advice] informed me of my rights, and I know what my position is. It also made me feel safer and I'm looking forward to starting my college course. I have a life now!"

17 year old female

"I'm not quite ready to find a job yet – I want to get my housing situation sorted first."

21 year old female

"I am now considering training or full time work"

20 year old male

"The advice centre also told me about courses I could go on – I've been to cooking, DJ courses, music and photography. I'm looking again at going to college."

21 year old male

"I always wanted to go to college but never had the encouragement and help to do it. I left school at 14, but I really want to make something of my life now. I want to re-do my GCSE's."

24 year old female

e)on young people's housing situations

The problem

- The National Audit Office estimated in 2005 that the nation spends around £1 billion a year to prevent and deal with homelessness.¹³⁷ This includes central and local government spending on administration, accommodation and support to homeless people, but excludes indirect costs to government (e.g. arising from health or benefits).
- Research in 2008 by the New Economics Foundation indicated an annual cost to the state of £26,000 for each homeless person. This figure included the cost of benefits, hostel accommodation, and care of children.¹³⁸
- In 2008/09, the most recent year for which figures are available, at least 78-80,000 16-25 year olds experienced homelessness in the UK, an increase of around 5,000 in two years.¹³⁹
- 15,480 young people aged 16-24 were accepted as homeless by local authorities in 2010, representing 36% of all homeless acceptances.¹⁴⁰
- Homelessness almost trebles a young person's chances of developing a mental health problem.¹⁴¹
- A third of homeless 16 and 17 year olds have current mental health problems and a third have discontinued participation in education, employment or training since leaving their last settled accommodation.¹⁴²

The impact of social welfare problems on young people's housing situations

Around 7% of young respondents in the 2004 CSJS experienced loss of their home as a result of their social welfare problems.¹⁴³ However, those young people who were living independently were far more likely to have lost their home than young people still living in the family home (see Figure 9), reflecting their greater likelihood of experiencing rented housing and homelessness problems.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁷ *More than a roof: progress in tackling homelessness*, National Audit Office, 2005.

¹³⁸ *Work it out: barriers to employment for homeless people*, New Economics Foundation, 2008.

¹³⁹ *Ending youth homelessness: Possibilities, challenges and practical solutions*, Quilgars, D., Fitzpatrick, S., and Pleace, N., Centre for Housing Policy, University of York & School of the Built Environment, Heriot-Watt University, July 2011.

¹⁴⁰ *Homeless households in priority need accepted by local authorities, by age of applicant, England, 2006/07 - 2011*, Communities and Local Government, 2011.

¹⁴¹ *Transitions: Young Adults with Complex Needs*, Social Exclusion Unit, 2005.

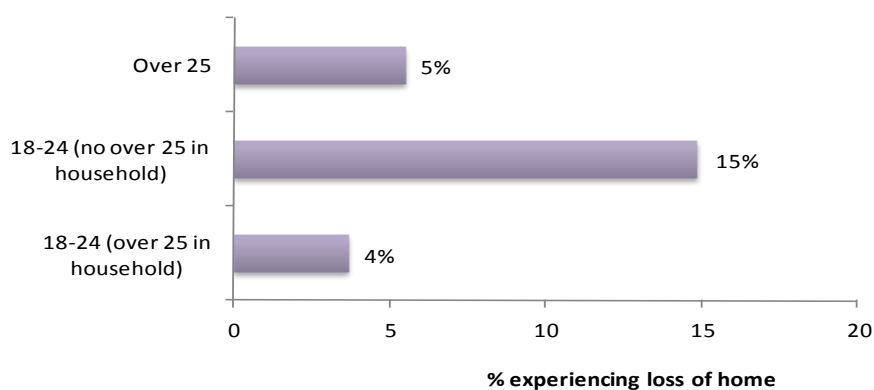
¹⁴² *Statutory Homelessness in England: The experience of families and 16-17 year olds*, Pleace et al., Centre for Housing Policy, University of York, 2008.

¹⁴³ Balmer et al. (2007) op. cit.

¹⁴⁴ *Locked Out: The prevalence and impact of housing & homelessness problems amongst young people, and the impact of good advice*, Kenrick, J., 2007.

More recent data from the 2010 CSJPS shows that 7.5% of 18-24 year olds and 3.7% of 16-17 year olds had to move home, with a further 1.1% of 18-24 year olds becoming homeless, as a result of their civil justice problems.¹⁴⁵ In addition, this survey reveals that young people aged 16-24 pointed to moving home as having contributed to their civil justice problems in the first place in 3% of cases.¹⁴⁶

Fig. 9 Percentage of 2004 CSJS respondents who lost their home as a result of their rights problem. (Source: 2004 CSJS)



Looking at all age groups, loss of home most often resulted from family and rented housing problems, although problems with money are also common causes of homelessness.

Homelessness, and the problems typically associated with it, can cost the state many thousands of pounds in temporary accommodation, health services, police and criminal justice services and lost output through unemployment.¹⁴⁷

The LSRC has reported that of people losing their home as a result of social welfare problems in the 2004 CSJS, 46% spent a period in temporary accommodation. Average costs of temporary accommodation provided by the local authority were £5,640. Average costs for the two respondents in the survey who moved to a shelter or refuge were £6,400.¹⁴⁸

A number of other studies have attempted to put costs on the impact of homelessness:

- The Housing Corporation has estimated the cost of a failed tenancy at between £4,000 and £10,500 per case, excluding health and social care costs.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁵ Pleasence (2011) op. cit.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ *How Many, How Much? Single homelessness and the question of numbers and cost*, Kenway, P., Palmer, G., Crisis, 2003.

¹⁴⁸ Pleasence (2006) op. cit.

¹⁴⁹ *Homelessness Prevention and Housing Associations – Contributing to Efficiency*, Housing Corporation, April 2006.

- The Centre for Housing Policy at the University of York has estimated the cost of processing a local authority homelessness application at £650 and the cost of a hostel bed at £400 per week.¹⁵⁰
- A study for Depaul UK¹⁵¹ estimated the costs of accommodating a 16-25 year old in Oldham under the Housing Act at £3,978, including £558 national average cost of assessing a homeless application,¹⁵² £872 local cost of temporary accommodation for 30 nights and £2,548 local cost of an average 7 month stay in low support supported accommodation. The same study estimated the costs of accommodating a 16-17 year old under the Children Act at £39,848.¹⁵³

The beneficial impact of advice on young people's housing situations

Of the 516 young people participating in trials of the Youth Advice Outcomes Toolkit, 49% self-reported improvements in their housing situation, rising to 64% amongst the most disadvantaged young people in the study, whilst advice workers reported that 39% of their young clients had achieved an identifiable improvement in their housing position.¹⁵⁴

In interviews with young people who had received legal advice, most often advice on housing or homelessness, three-quarters reported that their housing situation was better as a result of getting advice. A majority also reported that they now lived in better standard accommodation and felt better able to hold onto their home.¹⁵⁵

Every time an adviser helps a client avoid homelessness they save the local authority the costs of re-housing them in temporary and/or permanent accommodation (see above).

Securing housing also removes barriers to engagement in employment¹⁵⁶ and reduces re-conviction rates of ex-prisoners by 20%.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁰ *The Safe Moves Initiative: An Evaluation*, Quilgars, D. et al., Centre for Housing Policy, University of York, 2004.

¹⁵¹ *Homelessness prevention: Can we afford not to? Reconnecting families to prevent youth homelessness*, Insley, E., Depaul UK, 2011.

¹⁵² *Summary report: Value for money in housing options and homelessness services*, Shelter and Acclaim Consulting, 2010.

¹⁵³ Based on calculations of the average annual cost of a looked-after child's care journey contained in *In Loco Parentis*, Hannon, C., Wood, C. and Bazalgette, L., Demos, 2010.

¹⁵⁴ Widdowson et al. (2010) op. cit.

¹⁵⁵ Butler and Hutchinson (2007) op. cit.

¹⁵⁶ www.homeless.org.uk

¹⁵⁷ *Reducing Re-offending By Ex-prisoners*, Social Exclusion Unit, 2002.

Impact of advice on young people's housing situations – in their own words

"I never used to pay my rent and was in a homeless B & B before getting advice. I'm now in a maisonette and have no rent arrears." **24 year old female**

"We would have been homeless. Before I came here I was staying with friends with my one year old. Now we're living in a B & B and I'm hopeful we'll be allocated accommodation." **21 year old female**

"They've given me loads of advice and are helping me into shared housing. I think what they do for the community is brilliant."
19 year old male

"Instead of being abused, I've got my own place and it's stable. I'm even managing to pay my bills, though I only get a little bit of money."
17 year old female

"I was homeless, but they've helped me into B & B and now into a studio flat. I have a home to hold onto now and I'm getting the right level of benefit."

16 year old male

"Because of my debts, I nearly lost my home. I feel in a better position now to hold onto it." **25 year old female**

"I left my parents and didn't know where I was going to stay. I had no money and now I have a place to stay and will get my benefits soon."
17 year old male

"We had damp in our bedroom, were sleeping on the floor and had a shortfall in housing benefits. We followed up the advice and the landlord put more ventilation in. Now we've moved to a better area where there are no drug addicts and we've got more income support to deal with the shortfall." **21 year old male**

"I was going to lose my flat because of rent arrears and problems with benefits. If I hadn't had help I would be homeless."
23 year old female

"The advice I got made me aware of my rights. I've got somewhere to live now, so I don't need to be sofa hopping."
17 year old female

"When I came here I was homeless and sleeping on a park bench. Now I'm living in a shared house." **20 year old male**

"Having someone to argue my case means I can get out of home – I don't get on with my Mum and it makes me self harm – I will feel safer and less stressed when I move out and they've got me the right level of benefits." **16 year old female**

"They were very supportive. We didn't get much support from social services... I probably would have been homeless if it wasn't for my adviser." **18 year old female**

f)on young people's standard of living

The problem

- An estimated two million 16-24 year olds are living below the poverty line.¹⁵⁸
- Poverty rates in the UK stand at just over 20% amongst 20-24 year olds and almost 23% for the 16-19 age group.¹⁵⁹
- Total personal debt in the UK currently stands at £1.46 trillion, with the average household debt being £8,920 (excluding mortgages).¹⁶⁰
- Over half of England's teenagers have been or are in debt by the time they are 17,¹⁶¹ with 77% in debt by age 21.¹⁶²
- The average cost per debt problem to the public (including lost economic output) is estimated to be over £1,000, with more serious problems costing many times this amount.¹⁶³
- More than half of all 16-24 year olds say money is the issue that makes them worry the most.¹⁶⁴

The relationship between social welfare advice problems and young people's standard of living

Youth poverty is closely related to the wider causes of social exclusion in youth, including: inter-generational family poverty; living in poor housing or disadvantaged neighbourhoods; exclusion from school; spending time in care or prison; and unemployment.¹⁶⁵ These are also factors that increase the likelihood of experiencing social welfare problems requiring advice. Young people are known to be at particularly high risk of poverty when they have recently left home or had a child.¹⁶⁶

19% of young respondents in the 2004 CSJS experienced loss of income as a result of their social welfare problems, compared to 15% of respondents aged 25 or over.¹⁶⁷ Loss of income frequently results from problems with welfare benefits, but can also follow from other social welfare problems, such as employment problems or relationship breakdown.¹⁶⁸ It is

¹⁵⁸ Figures released in a Parliamentary answer, quoted in article in *The Daily Telegraph*, 18/02/08, 'Lost generation rely on benefits'.

¹⁵⁹ *Youth poverty in Europe*, Iacovou, M., and Aassve, A., Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2007.

¹⁶⁰ www.creditaction.org.uk/debt-statistics.html

¹⁶¹ Personal Finance Education Group (pfeg), February 2007.

¹⁶² *80 per cent of young people in debt by 21*, press release, Rainer, November 2007.

¹⁶³ Pleasence et al. (2007a) op. cit.

¹⁶⁴ *Money is No 1 worry for young adults, says new poll*, press release issued by Citizens Advice, Youth Access and adviceUK, based on GfK NOP poll of 2,000 people aged 16 and over, 18/09/07.

¹⁶⁵ Social Exclusion Unit (2005) op. cit.

¹⁶⁶ Iacovou and Aassve (2007) op. cit.

¹⁶⁷ Balmer et al. (2007) op. cit.

¹⁶⁸ Pleasence (2006) op. cit.

also known that delays and complexities in the benefits system are a major cause of youth debt.¹⁶⁹

Problems with money can, in turn, lead to social welfare problems. In the 2010 CSJPS, which enquired into the causes of civil justice problems for the first time, 10% of 16-24 year olds, higher than any other age group, pointed to a lack of money as having contributed to their problem. This was the most commonly-cited cause of problems amongst young people, with loss of income (4%) another common cause.¹⁷⁰

It is also known that money problems can lead on to wider problems for individuals in areas such as health, employment, child poverty, housing and re-offending.¹⁷¹

Arguably, young people are particularly vulnerable to the negative effects that social welfare problems might have on their standard of living. Despite being subject to high consumer pressure to spend, young people tend to live on incomes that are considerably below those enjoyed by older age groups. Not only are young people more likely to be unemployed or economically inactive, they are entitled to welfare benefits paid at differential lower rates. If they are working, they may be on lower wages than their older colleagues and there are even special lower rates of the National Minimum Wage for younger workers.¹⁷² Young people also possess relatively low levels of financial capability,¹⁷³ making it harder for them to manage their money effectively and mitigate the effects of any financial setback.

The beneficial impact of advice on young people's standard of living

New data from the 2010 CSJPS reveals that young respondents aged 16 to 24 reported that advice from another person or organisation (excluding family and friends, but only rarely provided by youth advice services) led to an improvement in their income on 11% of occasions,¹⁷⁴ confirming other evidence pointing to the contribution of advice in improving young people's standard of living.

Of the 516 young people participating in trials of the Youth Advice Outcomes Toolkit, 33% self-reported that their income had improved and 35% felt better able to manage money. In the same study, advice workers reported that 26% of their young clients had achieved an identifiable improvement in their income, most often as a result of obtaining welfare benefits to which they were entitled or reducing debts that they owed.¹⁷⁵

¹⁶⁹ Rainer op. cit.

¹⁷⁰ Pleasence (2011) op. cit.

¹⁷¹ *Action on Debt: Why it matters and what you can do*, Social Exclusion Unit, ODPM, 2004.

¹⁷² Kenrick (2009a) op. cit.

¹⁷³ *Financial Capability in the UK: Establishing a Baseline*, Financial Services Authority, 2006.

¹⁷⁴ Pleasence (2011) op. cit.

¹⁷⁵ Widdowson et al. (2010) op. cit.

A smaller trial of an earlier version of the Youth Advice Outcomes Toolkit found that 64% of young clients self-reported feeling better able to manage their money as a result of the support their adviser had given them.¹⁷⁶

In interviews with young people who had received legal advice, the vast majority (80%) reported improvements in their standard of living as a result of getting advice.¹⁷⁷ Similar numbers reported improvements in their financial situation and in their ability to manage money. Significantly, this was often because their advisers had not just dealt with the presenting money advice issue, but had also provided broader educational support aimed at improving their financial capability. The study's authors noted:

"It was evident from the interviews that for many young people the advice they received has changed their attitudes. For example, many recognised that rent, food and utility bills are the most important things to spend your money on. Others have set up repayment plans to pay off debts. For many, developing a budget plan with the advisers transformed their lives and they felt more in control of the small amount of money they have to live on." (Butler and Hutchinson 2007)

There is a growing body of evidence confirming the effectiveness of benefits advice and debt advice interventions.

Studies into the value of **welfare benefits advice** have established that:

- Take-up of entitlements can make a considerable contribution to improving the financial situation of a household, delivering an increase in living standards and a reduction in deprivation and poverty experienced.¹⁷⁸
- For younger claimants in particular, a reduction in financial worry from increasing income may contribute to long term reduction in ill health associated with such anxiety and stress, whereas for older patients, the impact will be most keenly felt on immediate improvements in quality of life and reduction in financial strain.¹⁷⁹
- It leads to gains not just for the individual, as a result of higher income and associated improved health and well-being, but also for the local economy, as a result of clients spending a high proportion of their increased incomes on goods and services locally.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁶ Butler and Hutchinson (2007) op. cit.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ *The benefits of welfare rights advice: a review of the literature*, National Association of Welfare Rights Advisors, 2006.

¹⁷⁹ *Prescribing welfare benefits advice in primary care: is it a health intervention, and if so, what sort?* Abbott, S., *Journal of Public Health Medicine*, pp 307-312, Vol. 24, No.4, 2002, cited in *The benefits of welfare rights advice: a review of the literature*, Wiggan, J., and Talbot, C., Centre for Public Policy & Management, Manchester Business School, University of Manchester, April 2006.

¹⁸⁰ See, for example, *The effect of Citizens Advice Bureaux on the Glasgow economy*, Fraser of Allander Institute, 2003.

An evaluation of a local Citizens Advice pilot project providing advice to young people found that the project gained money for clients at the rate of £29.17 for each £ spent on the project in addition to non-monetary outcomes such as housing obtained.¹⁸¹

A recent report published by the Department of Health on the economic case of mental health interventions concludes that there is potential for **debt advice** interventions to alleviate debt, and hence reduce mental health problems resulting from debt. Without an advice intervention, almost two-thirds of people with unmanageable debt problems will still face such problems 12 months later. For the general population, contact with face-to-face debt advice services is associated with a 56% likelihood of debt becoming manageable.¹⁸²

In a randomised controlled trial of debt advice, the financial circumstances of participants (of all ages) improved to a greater extent when debt advice was provided compared to a control group. A year later, those who had received debt advice owed £7,585 less on average, were better at budgeting and had improved health.¹⁸³ A report on the impact of debt advice found that, 12 months after receiving advice, two thirds of participants stated that their health had improved, with 90% stating that this improvement was strongly associated with the advice they received.¹⁸⁴

A study for HM Treasury analysing the costs and benefits of establishing a national money advice service identified potential benefits to consumers of £16.4 billion, as well as substantial gains for the Treasury itself.¹⁸⁵

A report on the impact of 'financial exclusion work'¹⁸⁶ in Leeds found that for every £1 invested in financial inclusion in Leeds, £8.40 is generated for the regional economy.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸¹ *Impact of the Advice for Youth Pilot Project against agreed targets*, Sandwell Citizens Advice Bureaux Ltd, 2004.

¹⁸² Knapp et al. (2011) op. cit.

¹⁸³ Pleasence et al. (2007a) op. cit.

¹⁸⁴ *The impact of debt advice – advice agency client study*, Williams, K., Sansom, A., Ministry of Justice, 2007.

¹⁸⁵ *Thorensen Review of generic financial advice*, HM Treasury, 2008.

¹⁸⁶ 527 service users of debt and money advice providers, welfare rights and benefit support services and Leeds City Credit Union were involved in the survey.

¹⁸⁷ *Economic impact and regeneration in city economies: The case of Leeds*, Financial Inclusion Initiatives, 2009.

Impact of advice on young people's standard of living – in their own words

"We would have been left in poverty. We've got what we were entitled to now. Our lifestyle has improved. We now sleep in a bed rather than on the floor." **21 year old male**

"When I came here I had rent debt – over £1,000 – and bank debts. I still don't have any money really, but I'm not in debt." **20 year old**

"We don't really have any more money now, as we're reducing our debts, but I can see a time now when we won't have debts. We have worked on drawing up a budget plan, so we know how much we have to spend on what. We make sure we spend it on bills, food and the children."
25 year old female

"My adviser helped me get some benefit and I manage as best I can, but my lifestyle hasn't really improved – I only have enough to spend on food and my bus pass to college."
18 year old female

"I had loads of problems when I came here – housing, benefits and mental health problems. Getting advice has really helped me. I've still got a few rent problems and owe the electric, but my standard of living has definitely improved." **21 year old male**

"Before I came here I didn't have any money. I am in receipt of benefits now and I can manage on that. I feel like I have taken a few steps forward." **20 year old male**

"I have some money now and my lifestyle has improved because I have things to look forward to, but it's still a struggle managing my money." **17 year old female**

"I haven't got so many debts now. They sat with me to work out what I can spend my money on, prioritised my debts so I know which ones I have to pay first. I spend my money on household stuff, clothes, bills. My lifestyle has definitely improved." **24 year old female**

"My financial situation has improved 100%. I still have debt, but will clear that when my backdated benefit comes through." **16 year old male**

"We've got just enough money to get by, but they're giving me advice on money management."
Couple aged 18 and 17

"The advice so far has been brilliant. My benefits are getting sorted, so my lifestyle should improve."
21 year old female

"I'm not in as much debt as I used to be and the budget plan helped. But I can't afford to eat that often, can't afford to buy clothes or go out much." **19 year old female**

g)on youth offending

The problem

- England and Wales have particularly high rates of youth crime, with more young people in custody than in other European countries, with the exception of Turkey.¹⁸⁸
- The total number of recorded offences committed by youth in 2007/08 was 277,986.¹⁸⁹
- The total annual economic and social costs of crime have been estimated at £75 billion.¹⁹⁰
- The cost to the criminal justice system alone of dealing with young offenders is £4 billion.¹⁹¹
- In 2009 the National Audit Office estimated the cost to the economy of young people aged 10-17 offending at between £8.5bn and £11bn.¹⁹²
- The average cost of imprisoning one young offender has been estimated at up to £100,000 a year. In addition, the indirect costs to society incurred after release amount to £40,000 per ex-offender.¹⁹³
- In 2003/04 it cost the state £50,800 to keep a young person in a Young Offenders Institution and £164,750 to keep a young person in a Secure Training Centre for one year.¹⁹⁴
- Three-quarters of juvenile offenders re-offend within one year of release.¹⁹⁵
- The average cost to the criminal justice system of a re-offending ex-prisoner was put at £65,000 in 2002, with prolific offenders costing substantially more.¹⁹⁶
- Reducing the re-offending rate of ex-prisoners by just 10% could save over £1 billion for the UK economy each year.¹⁹⁷

The link between social welfare advice problems and youth offending

Data from the CSJS and CSJPS reveals clear links between civil justice problems and crime amongst people of all ages. Using findings from the 2006-09 CSJS, the LSRC has reported a statistically significant difference in the problem incidence rate reported by those who had recently been arrested and those who had not. Whilst 63% of people who had recently been arrested and 82% of those who had recently served prison or community sentences experienced at least one 'difficult to solve' rights problem, only 34.5% of others did so. These respondents were thirteen times more likely than other respondents to report homelessness problems, five times more likely to report money or debt problems, nearly four times more

¹⁸⁸ *Responding to Youth Crime and Antisocial Behaviour*, Independent Commission on Youth Crime and Antisocial Behaviour, 2010.

¹⁸⁹ *Youth Justice System*, Youth Justice Board, 2010.

¹⁹⁰ *The Economic and Social Costs of Crime*, Dubourg, R., Hamed, J., and Thorns, J., 2005.

¹⁹¹ Independent Commission on Youth Crime and Antisocial Behaviour (2010) op. cit.

¹⁹² *The Youth Justice System in England and Wales: Reducing Offending by Young People*, Ministry of Justice and National Audit Office, 2010.

¹⁹³ *Punishing Costs*, New Economics Foundation, 2010.

¹⁹⁴ Social Exclusion Unit (2005) op. cit.

¹⁹⁵ Social Exclusion Unit (2002) op. cit.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ *Getting back on the straight and narrow*, CBI and Centre for Criminal Justice, 2009.

likely to report rented housing problems and twice as likely to report employment problems. They were also considerably more likely to have experienced multiple problems.¹⁹⁸ Meanwhile, data from the 2010 CSJPS shows that 49.1% of people of all ages who had recently had contact with the police reported civil legal problems, compared to 32.8% of all respondents.¹⁹⁹

A new report by Pleasence (2011) examines CSJS and CSJPS data relevant to the relationship between young people's civil justice problems and crime for the first time, concluding that: "*The findings illustrate clear links between civil legal problems, social exclusion and crime.*"

Whilst 34.2% of 16-24 year olds in the 2010 CSJPS reported civil justice problems, incidence rose to 62.7% amongst young victims of crime, 50% amongst young people who reported drug use and 46.8% amongst young people who had recently had contact with the police. Equivalent data from the 2006-09 CSJS shows that whilst 35.4% of 18-24 year olds reported problems, this rose to 47.7% of young victims of crime and 55% of young people who had recently been arrested. (NB: It was not possible to conduct meaningful analysis of specific age groups for those who had recently served prison or community sentences.)²⁰⁰

Analysis of 2006-09 CSJS data reveals stark differences in the types of problems experienced by the 20 young people in the survey aged 18 to 24 who had recently been arrested (see Figure 10 overleaf). Whilst the numbers involved are low, this group was more likely to have experienced problems with unfair police treatment, personal injury, money/debt, discrimination, homelessness and welfare benefits. They were less likely to have experienced consumer problems and employment problems.²⁰¹

Young people in the 2006-09 CSJS who had recently been arrested were less likely to obtain advice than other young people. This group obtained advice on just 33% of occasions, compared with 44% of other young respondents and 50% of all respondents. As many as 28% of young people who had recently been arrested did nothing to resolve their problems, compared to 11% of other young people.

Data from the 2010 CSJPS also shows that young people aged 16-24 point to their 'being violent' as having contributed to 2% of their civil justice problems. Of these 14 cases of being violent: seven contributed to family problems (of which two were problems of domestic violence); four contributed to employment problems; and one each contributed to problems concerning anti-social neighbours, rented housing and education.²⁰²

¹⁹⁸ *Criminal offending, social and financial exclusion, and civil legal aid: Factsheet*, Legal Services Research Centre, 2010.

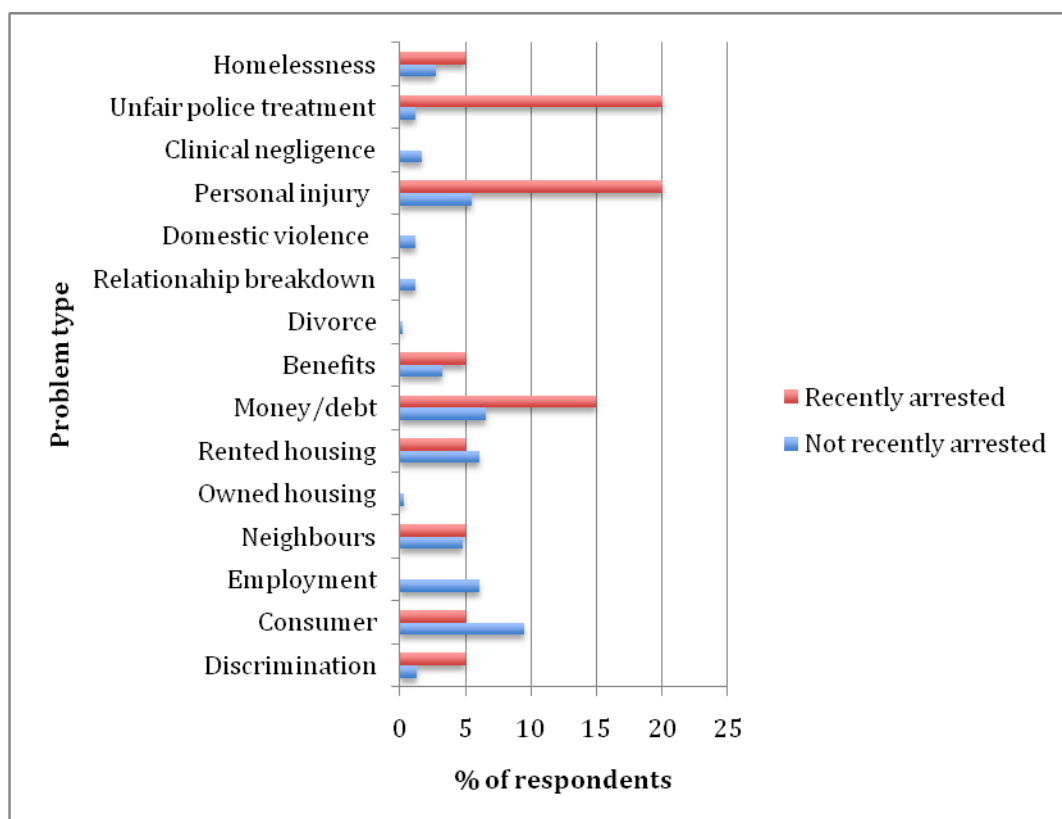
¹⁹⁹ Pleasence (2011) op. cit.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Ibid.

Fig. 10 **Problem incidence by whether respondent recently arrested (18-24 year olds)**
(Source: 2006-09 CSJS)



The Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) has identified that debt, money problems, homelessness, difficulties finding and retaining employment and mental illness were amongst the key factors increasing the risk of re-offending. Having stable accommodation alone reduces the risk of re-offending by a fifth.²⁰³ One study estimates that a young person caught in a cycle of homelessness and reoffending could cost the government as much as £116,094 over three years.²⁰⁴

There is also evidence that denial of benefits can lead to offending by young people.²⁰⁵

Wider associations between social welfare problems and crime, but which do not necessarily prove a causative link, have been reported. The SEU found that nearly three-quarters of prisoners were in receipt of benefit before coming into prison, with almost half having a history of debt. After release, 81% claimed benefit and many ex-prisoners said they had needed help with benefit and debt problems.²⁰⁶

²⁰³ Social Exclusion Unit (2002) op. cit.

²⁰⁴ *No Fixed Abode: The housing struggle for young people leaving custody in England*, Glover, J., and Clewett, N., Barnardo's, 2011.

²⁰⁵ *Beyond the blame culture*, Holmes, P., Working Brief, 2005.

²⁰⁶ Social Exclusion Unit (2002) op. cit.

Finally, the LSRC reported a 'problem cluster' evident in the 2001 CSJS, predominantly affecting young people, that involves people experiencing a combination of homelessness, unfair treatment by the police, action being taken against them and rented housing problems:

*"The inclusion of problems relating to the police in the homelessness cluster stems from both problem types being most often experienced by young people in receipt of welfare benefits, and the increased vulnerability to police related problems that accompanies extended periods of time being spent on the streets and the social problems associated with the homeless population (e.g. alcohol and drug abuse)."*²⁰⁷

The beneficial impact of advice on youth offending

Citizens Advice has argued that independent advice and support for prisoners, while in prison and on release, on issues such as debt, benefits and housing can help break the cycle of re-offending:

*"Advice plays a key role in rehabilitating offenders. Independent, quality assured advice, delivered by voluntary sector providers, offers skills and advocacy which may not be available from statutory providers, such as Jobcentre Plus. Access to advice should therefore be at the heart of NOMS's strategy for reducing re-offending."*²⁰⁸

However, hard evidence of the impact of advice on offending behaviour is in short supply. The most detailed evidence appears to come from a study of a local advice project for ex-offenders (of all ages) who were on probation. Advice affected the recidivism rate: the greater the depth of advice provided, the more likely clients were not to re-offend.²⁰⁹

It should also be noted here that 36% of young people participating in trials of the Youth Advice Outcomes Toolkit self-reported improvements in their 'behaviour', rising to 48% amongst the most socially excluded young clients,²¹⁰ whilst in interviews with 27 young people who had received legal advice, three young people reported that they no longer got into trouble.²¹¹

²⁰⁷ Pleasence et al. (2004) op. cit.

²⁰⁸ *Locked Out: CAB evidence on prisoners and ex-offenders*, Citizens Advice, 2007.

²⁰⁹ *NACAB Kent Probation Project: Report on recidivism amongst clients referred to the project between April 1997 and October 1998*, Samuel, T., 2001.

²¹⁰ Widdowson et al. (2010) op. cit.

²¹¹ Butler and Hutchinson (2007) op. cit.

Impact of advice on young people's offending behaviour – in their own words

"I've had help with my housing, drug use and social services....[My offending behaviour] has definitely improved." **24 year old female**

"I would have been homeless. [Now] my outlook has changed, I know that I need to do things for myself....I don't get into trouble now."

17 year old male

"They stopped me from being thrown out and gave me advice on how to talk to people. I've been a little bit calmer, not lashing out as much, haven't been in trouble with the police."

20 year old male

"I would have got worse and would have committed crimes."

21 year old male

"The help and support helped me change and take responsibility."

18 year old female

h)on young people's safety from harm (exploitation, abuse, violence)

The problem

- One in four young adults report being severely maltreated during childhood, with 11.5% having experienced severe physical violence at the hands of an adult, 11.3% contact sexual abuse and 9% severe neglect.²¹²
- At 31 March 2010 there were 375,900 children assessed as being 'children in need', of which 39% were at risk of abuse or neglect.²¹³
- There are 15.4 million incidents of domestic violence acts (non-sexual threats or force) in England and Wales each year,²¹⁴ costing an estimated £22.9 billion per year, including £3.1 billion in costs to services (the criminal justice system, health, social services, housing and civil legal), £2.7 billion per year in lost output and £17 billion in human and emotional costs.²¹⁵
- The total cost of sexual offences committed in England and Wales in 2003-04 was £8.46 billion, representing 23% of the estimated total cost of crime against individuals and households.
- Young people are roughly four times more likely than average to be a victim of crime.²¹⁶
- Up to 75% of women involved in prostitution began when they were under 18 years of age²¹⁷ and the average age women become involved in on-street prostitution is just 12yrs old.²¹⁸ 63% of women in prostitution experience violence.²¹⁹ Most teenage prostitutes are involved in street prostitution, which is estimated to be ten times more dangerous than working from houses or flats.²²⁰

²¹² *Child cruelty in the UK 2011: An NSPCC study into childhood abuse and neglect over the past 30 years*, NSPCC, 2011.

²¹³ *Children looked after by local authorities in England (including adoption and care leavers) - year ending 31 March 2010*, Department for Education, 2010, cited in *Where is my advocate? A scoping report on advocacy services for children and young people in England*, Office of the Children's Commissioner, July 2011.

²¹⁴ *Domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking: Findings from the British Crime Survey*, Walby, S. and Allen, J., Home Office Research, Development and Statistics Directorate, 2004.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

²¹⁶ *British Crime Survey, 2010; Crime in England and Wales: Statistical Bulletin*, Home Office, 2005/06.

²¹⁷ *Street prostitution: Ten facts in search of a policy*, Benson, C., and Matthews, R., 1995, in *International Journal of Sociology of the Law*, Vol. 23, pp395-415.

²¹⁸ *Paying the Price: A consultation paper on prostitution*, Home Office, 2004.

²¹⁹ *Client violence against prostitute women working from street and off-street locations: A three city comparison*, Barnard, M., Hart, G. and Church, S., Economic and Social Research Council, 2002.

²²⁰ Benson and Matthews (1995) *op. cit.*

The relationship between social welfare advice problems and young people’s safety

Domestic violence, abuse, crime and exploitation are arguably not *caused* by social welfare problems, as the perpetrator must first have the propensity to commit such acts. However, social exclusion and related social welfare problems, such as housing and money problems, may sometimes act as contributory factors.

In addition, it is known that abuse and domestic violence are common reasons for young people leaving the family home and becoming homeless, leading to wider social welfare problems. Indeed, new data from the 2010 CSJPS reveals that 5% of young people aged 16-24 specifically pointed to ‘violence aimed towards me’ as having contributed to their civil justice problem.²²¹

In turn, young people’s social welfare problems can lead to them coming into danger. For example, homelessness might lead to a young person sleeping on the streets or being rehoused in unsuitable housing where they are more exposed and vulnerable to harm. Research for Centrepoin²²² into the safety issues and risk of violence to young homeless people found that young people are highly vulnerable to sexual assault, violence and crime if they spend any time on the street. This study also refers to earlier research identifying a link between running away and involvement in child prostitution.

The LSRC has reported that civil justice problems in the 2004 CSJS led to violence against 9% of socially isolated 18-24 year olds (compared to 4% of older adults) and property damage against 7%.²²³ The average cost to the state, from the resultant criminal justice costs, was £255 where someone experienced personal violence or physical assault and £126 where damage to property resulted.²²⁴

New data from the 2010 CSJPS provides a more up-to-date and complete picture of the consequences for young people’s safety of the civil justice problems they experience – see Figure 11. It is clear that the combined impact of these adverse consequences on young people’s safety is substantial.

Fig. 11 **Selected stated consequences of young people’s civil legal problems**
(Source: 2010 CSJPS)

	16-17 year olds	18-24 year olds
Fear	3.7%	8.0%
Property damage	7.4%	5.2%
Assault	-	2.9%
Harassment / verbal abuse	14.8%	7.5%

²²¹ Pleasence (2011) op. cit.

²²² *Youth Homelessness in the UK*, Quilgars, D., Johnsen, S. & Pleace, N., Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2008.

²²³ Balmer et al. (2007) op. cit.

²²⁴ Pleasence et al. (2007b) op. cit.

The beneficial impact of advice on keeping young people safe from harm

New data from the 2010 CSJPS reveals that young respondents aged 16 to 24 reported that advice from another person or organisation (excluding family and friends, but only rarely provided by youth advice services) led to an improvement in levels of violence against them on 9% of occasions,²²⁵ pointing to the contribution of advice in improving young people's safety.

Many young people seeking advice are fleeing abuse or exploitation. Advice services assist victims of abuse, domestic violence, prostitution and gang culture to successful resettlement through securing safe accommodation, resolving benefit claims, tackling debts and countering discrimination. Advice services can give young people at risk a voice and force social services and other authorities to fulfil their legal obligations to them.

Outcomes monitoring by youth advice agencies found that 72% of young clients self-reported feeling safer where they were now living as a result of the support their adviser had given them, most often concerning housing and homelessness issues.²²⁶

²²⁵ Pleasence (2011) op. cit.

²²⁶ Butler and Hutchinson (2007) op. cit.

Impact of advice on young people's safety from harm – in their own words

"I'm not exploited any more. I used to be vulnerable because of drug taking which led me into prostitution."
24 year old female

"We're not hassled where we live now." **21 year old male**

"I feel a lot safer than I was before I got help here, but because of my paranoia and nightmares, I'll never feel totally safe." **21 year old male**

"I can lock my own door now and not worry about people coming in."
21 year old female

"I feel safer knowing I won't be on my own and that people can't put me out on the streets – Mum threatened to do that"
16 year old female

"I'm no longer threatened by the people I owe money to"
22 year old male

"I'm no longer living in an area where there are drug addicts, so I feel safer leaving my girlfriend and baby in the house now." **21 year old male**

"I feel safer now I've got my own place."
17 year old female

"The housing I'm in now isn't great – young people aren't offered much – so I don't feel very safe going out, but at least I'm away from my [abusive] dad."
19 year old female

I'm free from (the abuse in my forced marriage) and feel safer where I'm living now – it's really important to me."
17 year old female

7. Sustaining impact – nine months later.....

Whilst much of the outcomes data referred to in this report comes from follow-up interviews with young people around three months after the receipt of advice, it does not provide a great deal of insight into the extent to which positive outcomes and impact from advice are sustained over longer periods of time. More research is clearly needed in this area, notwithstanding significant methodological problems in conducting such studies.

However, ten of the 27 young people interviewed as part of Butler and Hutchinson's qualitative study examining whether legal advice produces sustainable benefits were successfully followed up nine months later to ascertain whether the impact of getting advice had lasted.²²⁷ Given the chaotic nature of many of the participants' lives, the picture was inevitably mixed, but many positive changes had been sustained or had led to further personal development, as the quotes here indicate.

"I have received continuous advice over the past year. My financial situation went a bit off course when my partner came out of prison, but I'm getting back on track now. I've got all my benefits sorted now and I'm about to move into my own flat with my baby. I'm a lot less stressed, not crying all the time. I'm sleeping loads better and feel I can cope. I'm in touch with my old friends and feel like I'm part of society at last. Everything in my life is so much better."
18 year old female

"When I first got advice I was completely off my rocker, very unstable. I could have ended up dead or in jail. I've got advice again for some minor stuff – money things, rent arrears, exchange on flat, car stuff – which has sorted most of it out. I've had some nasties health-wise – a couple of big lows and back problems since my accident, so I can't work. I've discovered my head injury has caused cognitive problems – post traumatic stress disorder. But at least my housing and money are far more secure – and that's thanks to the advice."
22 year old male

"I am still living in the place I was helped to move into and my partner has moved in. We've decorated and we now have a baby. I cook every night and I'm trying to be a hands-on dad. My confidence has improved. I'm calmer now and still haven't got back into trouble with the police."
21 year old male

²²⁷ It is worth noting that the researchers were unable to contact the remaining 17 participants, reflecting the transient and chaotic lifestyles of many disadvantaged young people needing legal advice, which often leads to high rates of 'attrition' in such studies.

“Things were going well until a couple of months ago. I’ve had more housing problems. My adviser dealt with it again and has made a big difference to me, but I can’t get a self-contained flat to have my baby stay over in.” **16 year old male**

“I have reduced my rent debt down from over £1,000 to £51. I still don’t have any money to spare, but I can make it last a bit better now.” **21 year old male**

“My problem is complex and ongoing. I’ve got back into debt and am very scared my baby is going to be taken away from me. Because I’m now over 25, I can’t use the youth advice service any more, so getting advice is more difficult now. But getting advice has made me stronger and I now cope with everything better.” **26 year old female**

8. Evidence of the economic benefits of advice

A number of studies have attempted economic analyses of the benefits of advice. Whilst there is no single study that is commonly agreed to have produced reliable definitive figures, and none that focuses specifically on youth advice services, it is nevertheless worth reporting some of the key studies here.

Citizens Advice have calculated, using a Cost Benefit Analysis, that the CAB service provides a return on investment, “using the lowest range of indicators”, of £6 for every £1 spent, saving society £1 billion per annum.²²⁸

New Economics Foundation, using Social Return on Investment methodology, has reported that for every £1 invested in a Law Centre, a further £15 of ‘social value’ is generated.²²⁹ This study includes an analysis of the social return from a Law Centre providing advice and assistance that averted homelessness for a 16 year old client who had presented after being asked to leave bed and breakfast accommodation following the local authority’s decision that she was ‘intentionally homeless’. The report identifies £20,000 in benefits to the young person (from not being homeless, having improved diet and health, improved employment prospects and improved well-being) and benefits to Government (from not having to maintain her in a hostel, savings to NHS, savings to welfare benefit bill and increased tax receipts.) This compared with a cost of providing the service of £1,700, giving a socio-economic benefit to cost ratio of ten-to-one.

Several studies have found that the extra resources acquired by advice service clients, for example as a result of increased benefits or reduced debts, tends to be directed towards extra spending in the local area on things like fuel, food, education, recreation and transport, thus boosting the local economy.²³⁰ One study estimated that the £5.48 million of additional benefits generated by the activities of the CAB in Glasgow supported a total of 120 additional jobs across Scotland.²³¹

It is also worth noting here that there are studies pointing to the economic benefits of supporting young people. For example, a Social Return on Investment study by New Economics Foundation for Catch22 calculated that by giving young people with complex needs the one to one support they need, it would be possible to improve their life chances and reduce their negative outcomes, generating a return on investment of £5.65 for every £1 invested in one to one services, or potential total value of £3.2 billion including:

²²⁸ *Towards a business case for legal aid*, Citizens Advice, 2010.

²²⁹ *The socio-economic value of Law Centres*, New Economics Foundation, Law Centres Federation, 2009.

²³⁰ See, for example, Wiggan and Talbot (2006) op. cit; and *Eleven Plus To One: The Value of the Brighton and Hove Citizens Advice Bureau to the Local Economy*, Ambrose, P. and Stone, J., Health and Social Policy Research Centre, University of Brighton, 2003.

²³¹ *Deprivation measures – the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation*, Fraser of Allander Institute, 2005.

- £1.3 billion for young people themselves, through reductions in their drug misuse, increased employment and overall independence;
- £490 million for young parents and their children, as a result of being better able to look after their child;
- £1.4 billion for the state, from gains such as less money spent on putting young people in prison as offending rates are reduced, more young people having jobs and being in training, fewer young people making demands on emergency services and mental health services, and fewer children going into care.²³²

²³² *Improving Services for Young People: An economic perspective*, NEF for Catch22, 2011.

The cost-effectiveness of holistic advice & support – Katie’s story

Katie* was a victim of physical and sexual abuse. She left school aged 14 and was kicked out of the family home at 15. A drug user, she regularly got into trouble with the police. Aged 17, pregnant and homeless, Katie was housed temporarily in unsuitable B&B accommodation, where she was vulnerable to drug dealers and became involved in prostitution, before being told by the council she was intentionally homeless. Having spent two years trying to get effective advice regarding persistent housing, benefits and debt problems, she eventually found her way to a specialist young person’s solicitor based in a youth advice and counselling agency. Several months later, she is now living in a maisonette, has claimed the benefits she is entitled to and has reduced her debts. In addition to these material gains achieved through legal advice, she was able to access a whole package of complementary services through the ‘under one roof’ youth advice centre, including counselling, drug services, pregnancy advice and pre-parenting classes, as well as embarking on a youth development programme. This ‘personalised’, holistic package of services has enabled her to make far wider improvements in her life, to the benefit of wider society and the public purse:

- She is no longer involved in prostitution, is kicking her drug habit and has stopped offending [**SAVINGS:** *Cost to criminal justice system of a non-prolific re-offender = £65,000.*]²³³
- She is now managing her money successfully, and avoiding running up rent arrears [**SAVINGS:** *Cost of a failed tenancy = £4,000 to £10,500 per case, excluding health and social care costs.*]²³⁴
- She feels optimistic about her future and intends to go to college to get qualifications [**SAVINGS:** *long-term cost of a young person being NEET = £97,000.*]²³⁵
- Her health has improved – she is eating better, attending her GP more regularly, feels less stressed and is no longer depressed [**SAVINGS:** *Cost of a young person suffering from depression = £3,197 in lost output, NHS and other costs.*]²³⁶
- She feels confident she can look after her child when he’s born [**SAVINGS:** *Cost of a child looked after in local authority care = £675 to £2,300 per week.*]²³⁷

In addition, Katie reports wider improvements in her social health and well-being, including: greater self-confidence; a better circle of friends; improved relationships; and generally enjoying life more.

These improvements in her life could not have been made without the solicitor resolving her complex social welfare problems, but nor could they have been made by legal advice alone.

“It makes it easier that the services are linked, you don’t waste your time going from one to the other or going to the wrong place at the wrong time. The staff here believe in me and I have started believing in myself. I used to hate myself before. If it hadn’t been for the advice I received, I would probably have been dead. At the very best, I’d probably still be looking for advice, have had a breakdown, and be unable to care for my child when he’s born.”

*** Name has been changed. This case study is based on transcripts from Butler and Hutchinson’s qualitative interview study²³⁸ investigating the impact of targeted legal advice for young people**

²³³ Social Exclusion Unit (2002) op. cit.

²³⁴ Chartered Institute of Housing (2006) op. cit.

²³⁵ Coles et. al. (2010) op. cit..

²³⁶ Prince’s Trust (2007) op. cit.

²³⁷ See, for example, *Performance Assessment Framework performance indicators 2004-05*, Commission for Social Care Inspection, November 2006, and ‘Dispatches: Profiting From Kids In Care’, shown on Channel 4, 25 November 2006.

²³⁸ Butler and Hutchinson (2007) op. cit.

9. The wider benefits of advice

Aside from the beneficial impact that advice can have on young people's lives, in relieving other local services and on the local economy, there are wider benefits that may be even harder to measure.

Perhaps the most fundamental of these wider benefits is the promotion of social justice and the rule of law. Advice Services Alliance has argued that:

“In a democracy, the law protects our civil liberties and our rights. Disadvantaged people, in particular, need help to safeguard their rights as, more than most, they rely on the law to protect their personal safety, homes and incomes. It is important that the law is seen to be fair and that everyone, regardless of their means and personal characteristics, is confident of having equal access to justice.”²³⁹

Advice services can also play an important role in improving public services. By challenging incorrect decisions, bad practice and maladministration through casework, advice services are effective at making public services accountable. Many advice agencies also undertake social policy work, whereby they collate evidence of systemic problems, provide feed-back to public bodies and make suggestions for improving policy and practice. Such work helps to prevent problems from occurring in the first place, thus reducing waste in public services, demand in advice agencies and unnecessary suffering on the part of individuals.

Citizens Advice have argued for recognition by commissioners of the hard-to-quantify added value that advice agencies provide in the form of a 'community premium'. Such a community premium, it is suggested, might enable consideration in the commissioning process of such things as

- the added 'reach' offered by advice services through their high level of accessibility to their client group and their offer of complementary services;
- the 'community capital' provided through the involvement of users or volunteers in the design and delivery of services;
- the added value provided by preventative work.²⁴⁰

²³⁹ *The Case For Advice*, Advice Services Alliance, 2010.

²⁴⁰ Citizens Advice (2010) op. cit.

10. Factors facilitating good outcomes

Given the potential benefits of advice that have been detailed elsewhere in this report, it is clearly vital that services are configured so as to maximise their effectiveness. Research by Youth Access and others has identified a number of service characteristics and other factors that appear to be linked to the achievement of good outcomes for the clients of advice services. The over-riding factor appears to be the degree of trust that the young person has in the service. Many of the service characteristics discussed below are important primarily because they promote that trust.

Quality of one to one relationship with adviser

The Council on Social Action has reported that the quality of relationship between adviser and client, often achieved through building up trust through a tailored service and spending enough time with clients to listen to their needs and follow through solutions to their problems, is crucial to effective service provision. Key conditions for advisers that were identified as facilitating these relationships included: having time to listen to clients and build relationships; holding certain values and attitudes, such as respect for their clients and a proactive and dogged approach to working on their clients' behalf; possessing good listening and communication skills; operating within a non-bureaucratic system that recognises the value of building relationships of trust and enables the adviser to deal with clients as people not cases.²⁴¹

These findings are supported by those of Butler and Hutchinson from their interviews with young people:

"It was evident from all the interviews the advice workers had an impact on young people interviewed and had built solid and trusting relationships. All those interviewed reported that the advice workers were polite and made them feel comfortable. They calmed them down if they got upset and treated them like adults. Many young people had expected to be judged by the agency, and were surprised that they had not been. They felt that the advisers really listened to them and were impressed that the advisers kept in touch with them."²⁴²

Moorhead and Robinson, reporting on interviews with clients of adult advice agencies, found that simply having someone to talk to was often beneficial for clients:

"Clients talked about being calmed down, cheered up and made to understand their rights.... Many clients spoke of dramatic reductions in stress levels, feeling much more relaxed about their situations and many of those who had reported health problems arising from the stress

²⁴¹ *Time Well Spent: The importance of the one-to-one relationship between advice workers and their clients*, Council on Social Action, 2009.

²⁴² Butler and Hutchinson (2007) op. cit.

*talked about how the advice had led to their problems abating. ...advisors could act as an antidote to bureaucratic indifference.*²⁴³

Age appropriate / young person-focussed service

The Department for Education has recently released research confirming the need for and effectiveness of services that are targeted at young people's specific needs.²⁴⁴

Butler and Hutchinson found that the vast majority of young people they interviewed would prefer to get legal advice in a youth setting from an adviser who specialised in young people.²⁴⁵

Youth Access has previously reported on evidence from legal aid case data that outcomes achieved for young people by mainstream adult advice agencies are not as good as those obtained by specialist advice services for young people.²⁴⁶

Holistic 'wrap-around' provision

Young people needing legal advice often have other non-legal, but inter-related, support needs. Just as it can be ineffective to try to resolve a young person's drug or mental health problems without tackling their social welfare problems, so it can be equally ineffective to seek to resolve their social welfare problems in isolation.²⁴⁷

All the young people interviewed by Butler and Hutchinson were very positive about the holistic services they had received in youth information, advice, counselling and support services and many were pleased that they hadn't had to go to different places to get help and support.²⁴⁸

Independence

The Baring Foundation has asserted that independence for advice organisations "*is what gives people the confidence and trust to seek the support they need.*"²⁴⁹ Youth Access has previously evidenced young people's preference for voluntary advice providers and the mistrust that many disadvantaged young people have in statutory services, linking these phenomena to evidence of the relatively poor access to and quality of advice offered by statutory services.²⁵⁰

Conflicts of interest for statutory services invariably restrict the depth and scope of the advice they are able to provide appropriately. This issue is critical, as it is generally accepted

²⁴³ *A trouble shared – legal problems clusters in solicitors' and advice agencies*, Moorhead, R., and Robinson, M., Cardiff Law School, Cardiff University and Matrix Research and Consultancy, 2006.

²⁴⁴ *Services for young people – the evidence*, DfE Youth Research Team, Department for Education, July 2011.

²⁴⁵ Butler and Hutchinson (2007) op. cit.

²⁴⁶ Kenrick (2007) op. cit.

²⁴⁷ Kenrick (2009b) op. cit.

²⁴⁸ Butler and Hutchinson (2007) op. cit.

²⁴⁹ *Rights With Meaning*, Smerdon, M., The Baring Foundation, 2009.

²⁵⁰ Kenrick (2009b) op. cit.

in the advice sector that *incomplete* advice is very often *incorrect*. Restricting the courses of action that young people can take will sometimes prevent them from enforcing their rights and securing their entitlements. This, in turn, is bound to reduce the chances of achieving good outcomes for clients.

New analysis by Youth Access²⁵¹ of outcomes monitoring data collected by youth advice agencies does indeed suggest that those services managed by local authorities may achieve less good outcomes for their young clients than those services based in the voluntary sector. This appears to be partly linked to subtle differences in the nature of the advice offered by services in the statutory sector, which are generally less focussed on legal rights-based issues and tend to provide less in-depth advice. It may be significant that the one outcomes indicator on which statutory services score relatively well compared to voluntary sector services relates to education, employment and training, which has been a major area of focus for government in recent years.

Face to face advice

Butler and Hutchinson reported that all the young people they interviewed felt that receiving information and advice face to face was the best method of getting advice.²⁵² A review by Youth Access of evidence on the methods of advice delivery accessed by young people found that young people were far more likely to access advice face-to-face than other age groups, with their preference related strongly to trust.²⁵³

It has been argued that the interpersonal relationship between adviser and client can determine the success or failure of a case, that trust is essential to this relationship and that it is often easier to establish trust in a face to face setting.²⁵⁴ Indeed, the significance of non-verbal communication in establishing trust has been confirmed in a study into community legal advice centres,²⁵⁵ whilst new evidence from analysis of legal aid case data indicates that the case outcomes achieved for clients via telephone advice are significantly inferior to those from face to face advice.²⁵⁶

Depth and quality of advice intervention

Analysis of data from trials of the Youth Advice Outcomes Toolkit with 516 young clients showed a clear pattern of case and personal outcomes improving as the depth of intervention increased. There was a clear progression on every indicator of clients' self-assessed personal outcomes as the depth of intervention increased from level 1 (one-off advice) to level 2 (further advice/assistance) to level 3 (advocacy/putting case for the client)

²⁵¹ Based on outcomes data from ten youth advice agencies, of which three were managed by local authorities. Given the small sample, these findings need to be treated with caution.

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Kenrick (2009b) op. cit.

²⁵⁴ *From face-to-face to telephone advice?* Griffith, A., and Burton, M., Legal Action, February 2011.

²⁵⁵ *Piecing it together: exploring one-stop shop legal service delivery in community legal advice centres*, Buck, A., Smith, M., Sidaway, J. and Scanlan, L., Legal Services Commission, 2010.

²⁵⁶ *Just a Phone Call Away: Is Telephone Advice Enough?* Balmer, N.J., Smith, M., Denvir, C., and Patel, A. (In Press) *Journal of Social Welfare and Family Law*, 33(4).

up to level 4 (representation at court or tribunal). For example, of clients receiving level 3 or 4 advice, 91% reported reduced stress (compared with 70% of all clients), 72% improved enjoyment of life (58%) and 50% improved family situations (30%).

“On every indicator soft outcomes were higher for users where the agency had acted on their behalf. This may indicate that improved results come from greater involvement by the agency with the user. Alternatively it could indicate that an agency will undertake more involvement where the need is greatest and that consequently the ‘baseline’ for improvement is lower than for other users.” (Widdowson et al. 2010)

Youth Access has previously identified a need to develop the capacity of the youth advice sector to provide a greater depth of intervention.²⁵⁷ For individual agencies this will often require additional resources and developing the technical expertise of advisers.

Early intervention

It is now well-established that problems can be resolved more easily, or even prevented, through earlier intervention.²⁵⁸ A Barnardo’s study found that in half of the case examples examined, earlier intervention with children and young people, for example through drop-in centres, would have cost less than 10% of the actual costs incurred later by government as a result of later involvement with the criminal justice system, NHS services and homelessness services.²⁵⁹ Ensuring young people can get good advice is likely to be more cost-effective than picking up the pieces when they are older.

A report by AdviceUK with New Economics Foundation compared the outcomes and knock on costs of cases involving debt or housing problems in which there had been an early advice intervention against cases in which there had been a late advice intervention. They demonstrated that early interventions produced better outcomes and avoided many knock on costs from occurring.²⁶⁰

Problem resolved

Analysis of Youth Advice Outcomes Toolkit data indicates that in cases where the adviser recorded a hard outcome, i.e. a technical improvement in the client’s situation, the client was more likely to self-report positive personal outcomes. This correlation was strongest in cases involving housing and money.²⁶¹

It is perhaps self-evident that problems which have been resolved are more likely to lead to good personal outcomes for the client. However, it is worth noting that even where the problem was not resolved, clients very often reported positive personal outcomes,

²⁵⁷ *The Youth Advice Workforce: Now And In The Future*, Youth Access, 2009.

²⁵⁸ *Early Intervention: The Next Steps, An Independent Report to Her Majesty’s Government*, Graham Allen MP, HM Government, 2011.

²⁵⁹ *Counting the cost of child poverty*, Hughes, M., Downie, A., Sharma, N., Barnardo’s, 2000.

²⁶⁰ *Outcomes in Advice*, AdviceUK and nef, August 2010.

²⁶¹ Widdowson et al. (2010) op. cit.

particularly in relation to levels of stress and confidence.²⁶² This would seem to reinforce evidence referred to earlier that the advice process itself can bring benefits for many clients.

Level of disadvantage suffered by client

Amongst participants in trials of the Youth Advice Outcomes Toolkit, the greatest improvements in well-being were reported by the most disadvantaged young clients. Those clients whom the adviser recorded as having two or more known 'social exclusion factors'²⁶³ were more likely to report improvements against almost all indicators, most notably behaviour (48% of the disadvantaged group reported improvements compared with 36% of all clients), health (43% vs 34%), housing (64% vs 49%) and income (42% vs 33%).²⁶⁴

These findings are likely to partly reflect the greater likelihood of the most disadvantaged clients having more complex problems and a lower starting-level of well-being; and, therefore, more scope for improving their situation, from both a technical and personal viewpoint.

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ The following social exclusion factors were recorded by the adviser where known: Not in education, employment or training; Young carer; Sick or disabled; Mental health problems; Substance misuse problems; Young offender; Homeless; Living in care, prison or other institution; Care leaver; Young parent or pregnant; Young refugee or asylum seeker; Parental substance misuse/mental health problems/offending.

²⁶⁴ Widdowson et al. (2010) op. cit.

11. Discussion – implications for policy, practice and research

There are major methodological and funding challenges in researching the impact of advice. Some academics would argue that only randomised controlled trials could get around issues for outcomes studies of self-selection of clients and enable the comparison of the outcomes of people who get advice with those in similar situations who do not. Even then, there are potential problems with attributing outcomes to a specific advice intervention. These challenges have led to a lack of definitive, robust data on the impact of advice services in general, and of youth advice services in particular. In writing this report, therefore, it has been necessary to rely to a large extent on a patchwork of evidence sources that tend to point in similar directions.

Whilst acknowledging that significant gaps in the evidence base remain, there would nonetheless appear to be sufficient data from a diversity of sources to justify the following assertions:

- Rights-related problems can lead to a range of adverse consequences for young people, which often damage individuals and are likely to have financial implications for the public purse.
- Getting advice often resolves these problems and leads to improvements, at least in the short term, in young people's health, well-being and personal situations, with likely benefits to wider society and the public purse.
- Youth advice services in particular may have a significant role to play in addressing a wide range of policy priorities in areas such as public health, education, criminal justice, homelessness, unemployment, child poverty and child protection.

Evidence from trials of the Youth Advice Outcomes Toolkit showing that many of the highest positive ratings relate to knowledge, skills, emotions and confidence suggests that, whilst advice can in many cases effect a material change in a young person's circumstances, it may be particularly effective at developing young people as individuals. It is perhaps significant that even where advisers failed to achieve a hard, technical case outcome, many young clients still reported improvements in their levels of stress, confidence and problem-solving skills. This would seem to reinforce other evidence that simply having someone to talk to can be beneficial.

Nevertheless, it is also clear that an adviser who possesses the skills to engage with troubled young people, the expertise and capacity to provide technically proficient active assistance and the tenacity to pursue a case to a successful resolution is more likely to produce good results that can change young people's lives. Good outcomes may be particularly likely to occur in services that are: focused on meeting young people's specific range of needs holistically; independent from public authorities; and delivered face to face. Further research on the factors facilitating good outcomes would be helpful in informing the development of services and the deployment of diminishing resources for maximum impact.

However, whilst advice, by resolving the problems that act as barriers to the achievement of stability, happiness, self-development and resilience, may often facilitate longer-term changes in young people's lives and increase the chances of long-term positive life outcomes, it has its limitations. For example, there is little evidence currently available to prove that advice has a substantial long-term impact on individuals. Further research in this area would be welcome.

It must also be acknowledged that advice can't realistically be expected to change every young person's life for the better in the long-term. The disadvantage and difficulties faced by some young people are simply too great for advice on its own to turn things around. Thus, advice services – like counselling services, sexual health services and youth services, amongst others – should be seen as one of a number of complementary interventions that need to be available in a local area if good outcomes are to be achieved for young people.

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Feedback

Feedback on any aspect of this report is sought and should be addressed to:

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Youth Access

Youth Access is the national membership organisation for a network of 200 youth information, advice and counselling services.

Through its members, Youth Access is one of the largest providers of youth advice and counselling services in the UK, dealing with over 1 million enquiries a year on issues as diverse as sexual health, mental health, relationships, homelessness, benefits and debt.

Youth Access provides the training, resources, research, campaigning and other infrastructure support to ensure high quality services exist to meet young people's diverse needs.

For more information about Youth Access, including a national directory of youth information, advice and counselling services, go to www.youthaccess.org.uk.



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