



spurgeons
children's charity

The Parent Report

**Hopes and fears
and the support available
Parent Survey 2018**



About the research

Government cuts are having a negative impact on the lives of children and families across the UK, both practically and emotionally.

Families are feeling the pressure, with fewer options available for help, support or reassurance. This, in turn, creates a greater need for the services provided by charities like Spurgeons.

Our survey, conducted by YouGov*, explores the nature of these cuts and their impact on parents and children. We want to uncover the hopes and fears of parents.

This enables us to shape and develop our services, so we can play a key part in the wider conversation to improve families' wellbeing.

CONTENTS

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| About the research..... | 2 |
| Foreword..... | 3 |

Key Findings: part 1

| | |
|--|---|
| Parents concerns..... | 4 |
| Parents feel out of their depth..... | 5 |
| Younger parents worry about gang related activity..... | 6 |
| Millie's Story..... | 7 |
| Healthy relationships are a concern for young parents..... | 8 |
| Sophie's Story..... | 9 |

Key findings: Part 2

| | |
|--|----|
| Implications and Support Services..... | 10 |
| Not enough support is available..... | 11 |
| Government cuts are having a big impact..... | 12 |
| Delroy's story..... | 13 |
| Self-harm is the top reason for seeking support..... | 14 |
| About Spurgeons..... | 15 |

*The total sample size was 1,055¹ parents with children under 18. Fieldwork was undertaken between 17 and 21 October 2018. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults aged 18+. For references, please see Appendix 1.



Foreword

Paul Ringer, Deputy Chief Executive of Spurgeons Children's Charity

Our Parent Report 2018 clearly illustrates the Government spending cuts have bitten Britain's families hard.

The views of surveyed parents provides an important window on the state of the nation for families today. Too many identified the impact as being: less confident as a parent; more worried as a result; and that the need to travel further afield for services is a real barrier to receiving support.

You can see within the findings how parents' hopes for their children's future are concentrated on traditional matters of financial security and healthy relationships. A small but significant number attributed increased alcohol consumption and illegal drug use to the impact of cuts to services, whilst others have not been able to safely end an abusive relationship as a result. This is shocking and we should all be deeply concerned - not about the statistics themselves - but of what is increasingly the day-to-day experience of some parents across the country.



Throughout Spurgeons' range of services and projects, staff and volunteers work with families to reduce isolation, provide support, and run activities and groups to meet need or address particular vulnerabilities or risks. Those members of the public who access our face-to-face services routinely feedback how: "a smile, being listened to, and not feeling judged", are what makes the biggest difference in their lives and gives them hope.

Everyday, our work with partners is focused on taking action to tackle risks and needs for children and families before their impact becomes more difficult to reverse. Early intervention represents both a good heart and head response to dealing with the root causes of disadvantage rather than the human costs of its after-effects. Acting promptly in a less intrusive, more cost-effective, way can prevent much higher cost interventions such as: the care system, prison or mental health services, being needed further down the line.

It's essential that we speak up about a generation being short-changed. There is compelling evidence that the services and support that children, young people and families rely on are at breaking point. Despite this, they are largely being ignored in the Government's spending plans.

It is for that reason we are standing shoulder to shoulder alongside other organisations as part of the **#ChildrenAtTheHeart** campaign calling for the Government to act swiftly to put children at the heart of its spending decisions.

As a national children's charity whose work focuses on supporting some of the most vulnerable and disenfranchised, our vision is to give hope to every child and it is only through supporting the whole family that this can be achieved.

Key Findings:

part 1: Parents' Concerns

48%

of parents feel out of their depth some or more of the time

What is worrying parents and why?

“Parents feel out of their depth”

More than one in 10 parents (12%) feel out of their depth most or all of the time

“Parents worry about their children’s future”

Lack of affordable housing (51%) and employment prospects (42%) are key when asked about their three main concerns.

“Younger parents worry about gang related activity”

Those aged 25-44 (19% of parents aged 25-34 and 19% of parents aged 35 to 44) are most concerned with their children getting mixed up with gangs.

“Healthy relationships are a concern for parents”

Parents are worried about their child getting into a physically or mentally abusive relationship (43%).



Key Findings:

part 1: Parents' Concerns

55%
of parents are worried that their child will feel lonely or isolated

Parents feel out of their depth

Nearly half* of all parents (53% of mums and 42% of dads) with children aged 18 and under feel they're out of their depth some of the time or more, according to our report.

57% of younger parents aged 25-34 years are even more likely to feel this way. Yet a much smaller number of all parents (12%) are likely to ask for help with their parenting confidence.

"The reality is that within our services we are seeing an increase in the breadth of different concerns and issues that parents are dealing with. For many, who are in areas where services have been cut, the support they need is just not available and charities like ours are identifying and responding to those needs. We understand that parenting is a hard enough job under the best of circumstances and so it's no surprise that those who are left unsupported and vulnerable are feeling more out of their depth."

Sarah Smith, Practice Improvement Manager,
Spurgeons Children's Charity

Biggest negative impacts on child's future²

51% affordable housing
42% employment prospects
37% missing out on life opportunities



Key Findings:

part 1: Parents' Concerns

30%

of parents worried about their child getting involved with gangs.

Younger parents worry about gang related activity

The risk of their child getting involved in gang related activity is a concern for all parents but the younger the parent, the more worried they are about it³.

Geographically, parents in Yorkshire (37%) and London (42%) are most worried about the risk of gang activity.

BeLeave is an early intervention programme in Birmingham, which aims to prevent Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) and help young people find positive alternatives to anti-social behaviour and gang exploitation.

"I have joined the cadets. I do not go out on the streets. I spend more time with my family."
BeLeave service user

We've had 65 referrals to our BeLeave service since its launch in 2017.



Millie's Story

Living with her mum and her older brother Max, 13-year-old Millie started to push the boundaries while her mum was out working two jobs. She was caught shop lifting and was getting into fights and hanging out in areas frequented by gangs.

Millie's behaviour caused problems both at home and school. Max was annoyed and embarrassed and her mum had completely lost trust in her.

When she was referred to the Spurgeons BeLeave service, we worked with Millie to help her improve her family relationships and keep her safe. Along with giving her tools to cope better with her emotions and communicate better with her family, we also helped her join a running club. Millie is a talented runner and running lifts her mood.

While life is still tough, things have greatly improved. Millie has a better relationship with both Max and her mum, and she's no longer at risk of getting involved with gangs.

“Parents often express to us their concerns about their children's ability to keep safe in the local community and the influence peers have on them. They are particularly worried about access to drugs and alcohol and about the dangers of their daughters travelling into different post code areas, where there are risks from high rates of crime and gang activity.”

Kelly Walker, Childrens' Services Manager

Healthy relationships are a concern for young parents

43% of all parents are worried about this issue

More than half (52%) of parents aged between 18-34 are worried about their child getting into a physically or mentally abusive relationship.

This is reflected in the number of referrals to Spurgeons services which help families recover from harmful relationships and domestic abuse:

13% of cases at our Children's Centres have domestic abuse as the main or secondary reason for using our family support services

46 referrals to our Recovering Together service

Domestic abuse is the main concern in 27% of instances where Spurgeons has acted to safeguard children in the last year - continually highest of any child concern category



“The parents we support through our domestic abuse service regularly report that they are concerned about the impact witnessing abuse has had on their children. Not only do they need support in their own recovery from abuse, they also need help in understanding how abuse may affect their parenting. Through receiving support, they build their confidence and self-belief as parents.”

Rosalie Mead, Children's Services Lead, Spurgeons' Recovering Together whole family domestic abuse programme

Sophie's Story

Sophie, who has three children, was overwhelmed and out of her depth before she came to us, having suffered years of sustained domestic abuse.

Her eldest son had witnessed some of the violence and it was having a marked effect on his own behaviour. He became angry and frustrated, having tantrums at the little things.

After finding safety in a refuge, Sophie's health visitor referred her to her local Spurgeons Children's Centre. There she was able to get the help she needed - food boxes, support for dealing with debt and help for her son's behavioural issues and concentration at school.

Sophie has turned her life around and sees a brighter future for her and her children. "At one point I didn't think things would get any better," she says. "But thanks to Spurgeons we've made huge improvements. My son rarely kicks off now, I'm no longer on anti-depressants and we've had grief counselling, as well as lots of other practical support. The staff have been brilliant and are very easy to talk to."

Key Findings:

part 2: Implications and Support Services

Not enough support available

“Government cuts are having a big impact”

Parents are worried that Government cuts are affecting their child's future. This includes cuts to local children's centres and play activities.

“Self-harm is the top reason for seeking support”

Parents were most likely (48%) to turn to support services if their child was self-harming.

“Financial burdens are affecting parents”

Some parents (28%) have struggled financially when it comes to looking after their family, with women (18%) struggling the most.

37% of parents think not enough support is available to them for helping with family challenges. This increases for those with older children.



Key Findings:

part 2: Not enough support is available to help with family challenges

43% of parents with children aged 12 to 16 said they don't think enough support is available to support them with family challenges and this rises to 48% of parents with children aged 17 to 18 years of age. When thinking about those whose parents are separated and/or divorced, this rises to 54%.

Parents are also impacted by Government cuts and financial burdens when it comes to caring for their children and they're most likely to seek support when their child is self-harming (48%)

"It just made me realise how much support I've got and don't be afraid to ask for help."

Wiltshire Children's Centre service user

"Increasing numbers of young people with mental health conditions are not getting appropriate and timely support."

Dudley Young Carers' Manager



Key Findings:

part 2: Government cuts are having a big impact

17%
of parents have struggled to meet their rent or mortgage payments in the last year

A quarter of parents (25%) are worried that Government cuts to support services are affecting their child's future. Parents also said in the last five years cuts in their main residential area included their local children's centres (38%) and play activities (34%).

When asked to think about the past year, some parents said that they have also struggled financially to feed and clothe their children (13%), heat their home (14%) or keep up mortgage or rent payments (17%). As a result of government cuts, over one in ten feel less confident as a parent (11%) and 3% reported using illegal drugs as a result of cuts to support services.

1 in 4
parents of children aged 18 and under said that government cuts to support services has made them worry about their child(ren)'s future

“The pressures of daily life can be overwhelming, and parents find it hard to look after their children effectively when worrying about daily challenges, such as where the next meal is coming from or dealing with low level mental health issues. Localised support becomes ever more crucial in these circumstances. Budgeting, getting ready for work and learning how to be a parent are all skills shared by the outreach team at our Children's Centres.”

Andrea Gray, Children's Services Manager
Wiltshire Children's Centres



Delroy's Story

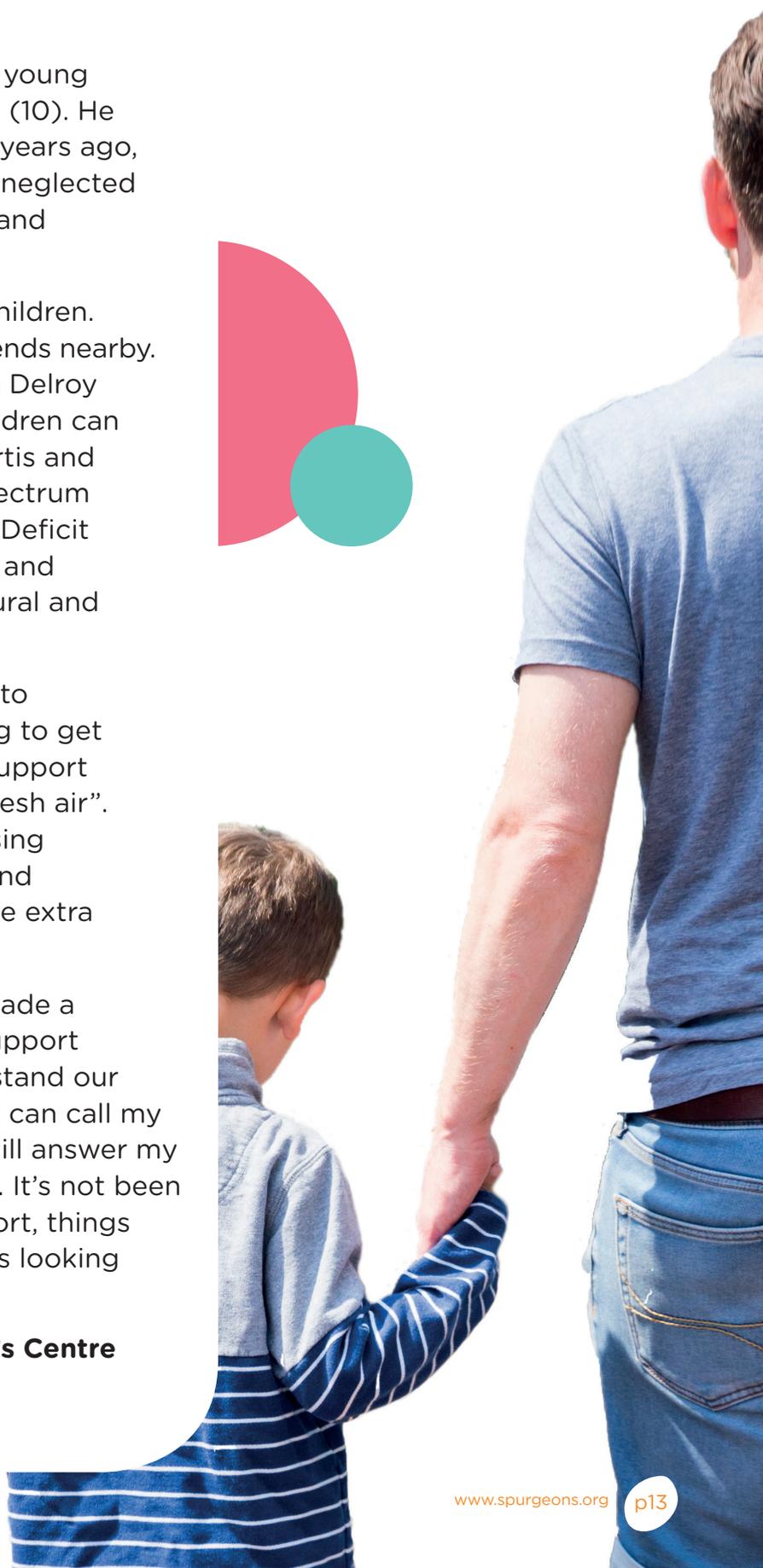
Delroy is a single parent of two young children, Curtis (12) and Delisha (10). He gained full custody of them six years ago, when they were being severely neglected by their mum, due to her drink and drugs misuse.

Life is hard for Delroy and his children. They have no close family or friends nearby. They live in a 2-bed house, with Delroy sleeping on the sofa, so the children can have their own rooms. Both Curtis and Delisha have Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and experience associated behavioural and emotional issues.

Their school introduced Delroy to Spurgeons, as he was struggling to get any support. He describes his support worker Naomi as “a breath of fresh air”. She has helped him with a housing application for a 3-bed house and applications to get Delisha some extra social and emotional support.

Delroy says “Spurgeons have made a big difference, helping me to support my children better. They understand our situation and can relate to me. I can call my support worker any time; she will answer my questions or help in other ways. It’s not been easy but with Spurgeons’ support, things have improved, and the future is looking brighter.”

Spurgeons’ Honeyhill Children’s Centre



Key Findings:

part 2: Parents worry about self harming risk

Our report shows that 35% of parents are worried at the risk of their child self-harming. This would also be the biggest reason for them to turn to support services (48%), more than those seeking help for debt, domestic abuse or child sexual exploitation.

Our Family Intervention for Self-Harm (FISH) service, as established to provide a whole family approach to this problem. The FISH project is a confidential service to support young people (aged 10 to 19) and families in reducing their instances and severity of self-harming and to lessen the likelihood of them falling into crisis, without them requiring referral to a specialist mental health support service

66

referrals to FISH
since October
2017

13.6

the average age of
a FISH service user

100%

of FISH service users
have managed to reduce
the severity of self-harm
since the project began in
October 2017.



About Spurgeons

Spurgeons Children's Charity is one of the UK's leading children's charities, supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged children and their families for 150 years.

Inspired by the Christian faith, our mission is to improve the lives of families and children who are struggling to cope and to give every child the opportunity of a hope-filled life.

Family Support

With around 400,000 children in the UK classed by the child protection service as being in need, Spurgeons' services ensure vulnerable children and their families can access the support they need for a better future.

We offer family support in many ways, including through our children's centres and prison visitor centres, with both one-to-one and group activities. Our goal is to help families cope better with their difficulties and provide them with resources and support to find long lasting solutions to challenging problems.

 www.spurgeons.org

 @spurgeonsUK

 @spurgeons

#ParentReport

**400,000
children**

Classed by child protection as being in need⁵

**Over
4.1million**

Children in the UK living in poverty today⁴

“Hope itself is like a star
- not to be seen in the
sunshine of prosperity but
to be discovered in the
night of adversity.”

Charles Haddon Spurgeon
(Spurgeons' founder - 1867)



Spurgeons is a supporter of the
#ChildrenAtTheHeart campaign.

Names in this report have been changed to protect identities

 www.spurgeons.org

 @spurgeons

 @spurgeonsUK

#ParentReport