An independent evaluation of Shelter Children’s Services
England and Scotland
Acknowledgements

The evaluation team would like to thank all the children, young people and families who have shared their stories. Thanks also to staff of Shelter Children's Services who have contributed their time, data and learning, to Shelter management and administrative staff and to external stakeholders for providing their perspectives.

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To protect the identity of Shelter clients, names have been changed and models have been used in photographs.

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In 2004, Shelter launched its Million Children Campaign to raise awareness of the impact of homelessness on children and families. In response to issues highlighted by the campaign, Shelter made a proactive decision to develop a range of pilot services for children, young people and families, that could test new ways of working to prevent child homelessness and to support children who were already homeless to achieve better outcomes.

The Shelter Children's Services programme, that was developed as a consequence, consisted of seven locality-based services, a legal service, an advice line for frontline workers in children's services and wider co-ordination activities that aimed to influence policy and disseminate the good practice generated by the programme.

Collectively, the programme was branded ‘Keys to the Future’. However, for consistency it is referred to as Shelter Children’s Services throughout the evaluation report.

1.1 Programme aim and objectives

The aim of the programme was to create a number of opportunities to ensure housing was recognised as a key factor influencing children’s ability to achieve positive outcomes, and to promote the importance of good housing for the happy and healthy development of children.

Shelter Children’s Services worked with children who were ‘at risk’ due to their circumstances and life experiences, particularly of homelessness that creates social, educational and psychological disadvantage. As a programme of prevention and early intervention services, the aim was to improve children’s circumstances, where possible, and ameliorate the negative impacts of those circumstances before they became significant for children’s wellbeing.

The objectives of the pilot programme were:

- to prevent children and young people from becoming homeless
- to mitigate the effects of homelessness on those children who have experienced it
- to secure legal, policy and practice changes that produce better outcomes for homeless and badly housed children.

Shelter developed 11 services to address these objectives between 2007 and 2011. These are summarised in Table 1, showing what each intended to deliver and what outcomes they were expected to achieve. Another table presenting the range of interventions delivered by services across the programme can be seen at Appendix 1. Services commenced delivery to children, young people and families in staggered stages, eg the Newham service starting in June 2007 and the Knowsley service in December 2008.

At local level, three services have been delivered in Scotland (Glasgow, South Lanarkshire, and Dumfries and Galloway) and four in England (Newham, Knowsley, Bristol, and Gloucestershire). Each locality-based service has had a different focus:

- The service in Bristol worked primarily to address the economic wellbeing of homeless children and families and those in temporary accommodation. This included children ‘at risk’ of homelessness due to family debt or parental drugs or alcohol misuse. It offered intensive support to children with complex needs.
- The Gloucestershire service sought to prevent youth homelessness by offering peer education and support delivered by homeless young people in schools and other youth settings. Homeless young people are often ‘hidden’ as they may be sleeping at friends’ houses and frequently moving around. All locality-based services, with the exception of Gloucestershire, have worked with families with complex needs and offered holistic packages of support, including one-to-one intensive interventions with children, group work, family advocacy and signposting to other services.

At a national level in Scotland, Shelter Children’s Services staff have been
engaged in policy and influencing work to promote early interventions for children and families at risk of homelessness and/or in temporary and unsuitable accommodation, as well as promoting good practice in preventing evictions. Work of the Children’s Service Policy and Practice Co-ordinator had a particular focus on influencing legislation to extend the right to additional learning support to homeless children and supporting the development of inter-agency working around issues of homelessness, child poverty and education.

In England, three elements of the programme have operated at national and regional levels. The Children’s Service Advice Line (CSAL), established in 2007, was set up to provide housing advice to Children’s Centre staff working with families in housing need and subsequently extended to be available to a wider group of children’s services professionals in the statutory and voluntary sectors.

Regional Children’s Co-ordinators have been responsible for promoting take up of CSAL and have undertaken policy and influencing work in five English regions: North West, North East, South West, London and the South East. Their key role has been the development and dissemination of good practice models and tools, in order to effect changes in policy and practice within mainstream agencies working with children, young people and families.

Shelter Children’s Legal Service was established to influence changes in the law as it affects homeless children and families by undertaking test cases and policy work. A core element of this work has been in developing, through test cases and other interventions, a greater awareness of the impact of eviction on children and families and the importance of human rights legislation in housing law.

Formative evaluation has informed the development of the programme and Shelter Children’s Services management have reflected on the achievements of services and adjusted interventions to ensure a focus on service objectives and outputs. For instance, the Gloucestershire peer education service moved from generic working with schools across the county to targeting young people identified as more vulnerable to becoming homeless through delivering peer education sessions in pupil referral units and linking with Youth Offending Teams. Similarly, Regional Children’s Co-ordinators moved from working with individual ‘champions’ in local authorities to a more strategic model of engagement with child poverty and homelessness networks in England. Following the abolition of most regional government structures (2010–11), the team turned its attention to an exit strategy of promoting children’s services’ ongoing access to CSAL and raising awareness of the likely impacts of proposed changes to Housing Benefit and housing law on vulnerable families.

1.2 Evaluation framework

An independent longitudinal evaluation was commissioned from the Institute of Applied Social Studies, University of Birmingham, to run alongside the Shelter Children’s Services programme, providing both formative research over the period of delivery and summative research of key learning points and outcomes.

The overall aim of research was to evaluate whether Shelter Children’s Services met its stated aims and objectives outlined in section 1.1. The evaluation objectives were to assess:

- the extent to which Shelter Children’s Services improved outcomes (education, safety, health, positive contribution and economic wellbeing) for homeless children
- the extent to which Shelter Children’s Services have prevented homelessness amongst families with children
- the extent to which children from harder-to-reach and excluded communities have benefited from the services
- the extent to which Shelter Children’s Services have contributed to effective changes in the policy and practice of mainstream agencies working with children and to changes in the law
- the economic benefits of Shelter Children’s Services, in particular the locality-based services.

This report summarises findings from research conducted over a four-year period. A ‘Theories of Change’ evaluation framework was adopted to ensure consistency and methodological rigour over time and to be able to respond to a changing policy and financial environment. Theories of Change aims to facilitate identification, in longitudinal studies, of changes effected by such programmes, the rationale informing practice, and identify the short- and long-term outcomes that can be attributed to specific interventions where multiple agencies may be involved.

Evaluation research captured different stakeholder perspectives and used a range of methods to collect data so that qualitative information could be checked against other sources. Responses of different stakeholder groups were collated to identify common themes and anomalies and a thematic analysis was undertaken to assess Shelter Children’s Services against its aim and objectives. Further details of the research methodology can be seen in Appendix 2.

Introductory sections of the report present an overview of the programme’s services, a statement of performance against targets, a summary of the programme’s reach into target groups and an overview of the changing policy context against which the programme has
### Table 1: Shelter Children’s Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service/location</th>
<th>Target group</th>
<th>Interventions</th>
<th>Expected outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bristol</strong></td>
<td>Children 0 to 12 years</td>
<td>Tailored packages of support for homeless children including: one-to-one tailored support to child, advice, information, signposting, group work/user-involvement activities, multi-agency working and advocacy, financial, in-kind support and charity applications, family activities/parental support.</td>
<td>Improved housing conditions, Improved school attendance, Improved educational attainment, Improved emotional and social wellbeing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>locality-based service</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Newham</strong></td>
<td>Children 6 to 12 years</td>
<td>Tailored packages of support for homeless children including: group work/user-involvement activities, one-to-one tailored support to child, multi-agency working and advocacy, financial, in-kind support and charity applications, family activities/parental support.</td>
<td>Improved school attendance, Improved educational attainment, Improved emotional and social wellbeing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>locality-based service</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowsley</strong></td>
<td>Children 6 to 12 years</td>
<td>Tailored packages of support for children including: one-to-one tailored support to child, group work/siblings’ activities, multi-agency working and advocacy, family activities/parental support.</td>
<td>Tenancies sustained, Antisocial behaviour in children reduced, Improved emotional and social wellbeing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>locality-based service</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gloucestershire</strong></td>
<td>Young people 13 to 19 years</td>
<td>Education on homelessness for young people through peer education.</td>
<td>Prevention of youth homelessness, Young people’s improved knowledge of housing options</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>locality-based service</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service/location</td>
<td>Target group</td>
<td>Interventions</td>
<td>Expected outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Scotland**     | Children 6 to 12 years | Tailored packages of support for homeless children including:  
  - one-to-one tailored support to child  
  - support with homework/homework clubs  
  - provision of learning materials  
  - liaison with other professionals and advocacy  
  - volunteer support for children  
  - family activities/parental support. | Improved school attendance  
  Improved educational attainment |
| **Children’s Services Advice Line (England)** | Frontline children’s services staff in statutory and voluntary sectors | Housing advice by telephone to frontline children’s services staff. | Prevention of homelessness  
  Improved knowledge of housing options |
| **Shelter Children’s Legal Service (England)** | Legislators  
  Legal services | Casework, consultancy and the development of a test case strategy to bring about legislative change. | Strengthened legislative framework to support homeless children and families |
| **National policy and influencing work (England and Scotland)** | Legislators  
  Policy makers and practitioners | Policy and influencing work. | Strengthened legislation to support homeless children  
  Shared learning from Shelter Children’s Services pilot programme |
| **Regional influencing and dissemination of good practice (5 regions in England)** | Policy makers and practitioners | Development and dissemination of good practice models and tools.  
  Promotion of Shelter Children’s Services. | Increased uptake of Shelter Children’s Services  
  Shared learning from Shelter Children’s Services pilot programme |
been delivered. Chapter 2 presents evaluation findings against programme objectives, highlighting where Shelter Children's Services have been effective in achieving outcomes for children, young people and families. It summarises where the programme has been able to influence policy and practice, and presents a synopsis of cost-consequence case studies completed as part of the research.

Chapter 3 sets out key learning points from the programme with a view to highlighting ways of working that have been particularly effective in mitigating the effects of homelessness for children, preventing homelessness and influencing other agencies to adopt better practice in preventing and ameliorating child homelessness. Chapter 4 presents overall conclusions of this evaluation.

Where quotations are used in the report, they are chosen to illustrate common themes, outcomes or points of view, and are indicative of a body of evidence. They are either presented anonymously or names have been changed. Findings from earlier stages of the evaluation research are in the interim evaluation summary and service reports previously published. These focused on evaluating the delivery of individual services, and are available on the Shelter website.1

Evidence presented for programme outcomes in Chapter 2 draws on multiple research materials and methods including: reviews of internal Shelter monitoring and related data, case file samples, focus groups, observation sessions and individual in-depth interviews with children, parents, Shelter management, staff and external stakeholders in England and Scotland.

1.3 Programme performance

This section reviews the delivery of Shelter Children's Services against output targets agreed with the funding bodies and donors supporting the pilot programme. The programme had ambitious targets to support homeless children, young people and families and to influence case law related to family housing and homelessness. As a pilot programme, initial targets were set for Shelter Children's Services without the benefit of a baseline. Once delivery was underway and quarterly monitoring returns produced, it became apparent that some services’ targets would not be achievable within the programme timeframe and challenging external context, and they were subsequently reviewed and revised.

From 2007 to 2011, Shelter Children's Services have helped 14,258 children and young people. All of those referred to locality-based services that provided intensive support were vulnerable children and families in housing need, including those with complex and multiple needs who accessed tailored support packages. Table 2 shows the total number of children and young people that have benefited from Shelter Children's Services over the programme’s lifetime. This figure is set to increase as two services were still operating at the time of final evaluation data capture.

Most Shelter Children’s Services were able to successfully achieve2 their revised overall output targets (see Table 3 for details). Services commenced delivery to children, young people and families in staggered stages. This meant that complete data sets are available for most services, but the Knowsley service and CSAL were still delivering at the time evaluation data capture closed.

Services in Scotland were affected by the closure of the Shelter office in Edinburgh and subsequent reallocation of the designated post to Glasgow, as well as other staff changes. The Gloucestershire peer education service was able to significantly over-achieve on its outputs, partly due to a variance being agreed to allow multiple sessions.

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1 http://england.shelter.org.uk/professional_resources/childrens_service/keys_to_the_future_projects#2
2 or are on course to achieve, ie Knowsley 86 per cent completed at report date, CSAL 84 per cent completed.
3 The figures presented refer to children and young people as beneficiaries against targets. This figure increases if the number of parents supported is taken into consideration. No overall data is available on the number of parents supported.
to be delivered to some groups of young people and for each young person to be counted separately for each session.

CSAL experienced challenges in achieving its original targets, particularly as its initial focus was to deliver advice to frontline staff in Children's Centres at an early stage in their rollout. However, once the targets were revised, the service broadened its reach to encompass not only Children's Centre staff but also frontline workers in other agencies supporting children and families. Similarly initial referrals to Shelter Children's Legal Service were slower than anticipated as new solicitors needed time to build connections and establish a mature caseload. However, following the development of partnerships with other children's legal services and national children's services network groups, referral rates increased.

1.4 Programme reach

The services targeted a range of groups (see Table 1, pages 6–7). Of the locality-based services, Gloucestershire was different in targeting its services to young people aged 13 to 19 years. Services in Scotland, Knowsley and Newham all targeted 6- to 12-year-olds, while in Bristol it was 0- to 16-year-olds and this service reached a higher proportion of 0–5s. The 6- to 12-year-olds were specifically focused on by the programme because Shelter recognised this age group often fell through a gap in statutory service provision, with a variety of Early Years support available for the 0–5s and, until recently, Connexions for young people aged 13 to 19.

The locality-based services have been effective in reaching their target age groups, as the majority of children worked with were in their core categories. However, some reached children outside their core target too, ie Knowsley, Newham and the Scottish services all reached children of 13 to 16 years. In many cases, this included work with siblings.

A specific element of the evaluation research was to consider the extent to which children from harder-to-reach and excluded communities have benefited from Shelter Children's Services. Children and families often described by mainstream services as ‘hard to reach’ include newly arrived migrants, asylum seeker and refugee families, and members of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities. People described as ‘excluded communities’ include traveller communities and drug or alcohol users.

Services in Newham, Bristol, Knowsley and Scotland targeted their individually tailored services to children with complex needs, in order to make the most effective use of staff time and the resources available. For instance, to be eligible for a tailored package and one-to-one support, children had to be assessed as needing support with three or more issues, including any housing support. Children with fewer than three issues would be offered access to general support, such as homework clubs or group activities, and signposted to other support agencies if required.

The Knowsley service originally targeted children and families at risk of being declared ‘intentionally homeless’ due to antisocial behaviour by children or other family members. Over time, the referral criteria evolved to include children and families who had experienced multiple moves, as this pattern is a recognised precursor to becoming ‘intentionally homeless’ due to antisocial behaviour.

The Children's Service Advice Line (CSAL) was initially targeted to frontline staff in Children's Centres, to provide advice when parents presented with housing issues. Over time, the CSAL was promoted more widely, by Regional Children's Co-ordinators, to frontline workers in other children's service provider agencies, which has broadened the reach of the service.

The following points summarise the reach of the programme against demographic, geographical and social factors, and draw upon Shelter monitoring and profiling data.

Gender: Figures from locality-based services in Bristol, Knowsley, Newham and Scotland, that captured demographic information, show more boys (52 per cent) than girls (48 per cent) accessed these services. Stakeholder interviews speculate a number of reasons for this, eg that boys are more likely to be referred for additional educational support or be identified as exhibiting antisocial behaviour. The CSAL and Gloucestershire service did not deliver on a casework basis and did not, therefore, collect demographic data in the same way as other parts of the programme.

Disability: In the four areas that captured data, between six to 10 per cent of children accessing locality-based services were recorded as having some form of physical disability or learning difficulty.

Table 2: Total beneficiaries of programme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outputs</th>
<th>Original target</th>
<th>Revised target</th>
<th>Achievement</th>
<th>% against 3-year target</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total beneficiaries supported</td>
<td>16,719</td>
<td>13,412</td>
<td>14,258</td>
<td>106%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beneficiaries (children/young people)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 3: Shelter’s Children’s Services performance against targets

#### Current services (as at June 2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outputs</th>
<th>Original target</th>
<th>Revised target</th>
<th>Achievement</th>
<th>% against 3-year target</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowsley Children’s Service – December 2008 to November 2011</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>452 homeless children’s support needs assessed</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>452</td>
<td>429</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>334 multi-agency support plans developed</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>334</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90 homeless children provided with tailored support</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Children’s Service Advice Line – September 2007 to March 2012</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of cases opened</td>
<td>3,475</td>
<td>2,866</td>
<td>2,051</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of children helped</td>
<td>7,793</td>
<td>4,840</td>
<td>3,909</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Services completed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outputs</th>
<th>Original target</th>
<th>Revised target</th>
<th>Achievement</th>
<th>% against 3-year target</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Newham Children’s Service – June 2007 to May 2010</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>450 children benefiting from educational support</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>481</td>
<td>107%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120 children receiving one-to-one tailored support</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120 children will have mentoring and peer support opportunities</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>107%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 teachers and 20 housing, education and children’s service council staff will receive homelessness awareness sessions</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>163%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bristol Children’s Service – July 2007 to June 2010</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>728 unsettled children’s support needs assessed (housing needs assessment)</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>728</td>
<td>719</td>
<td>99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>554 multi-agency support plans developed and monitored</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>554</td>
<td>659</td>
<td>119%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>177 unsettled children provided with tailored support</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>122%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services completed</td>
<td>Outputs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gloucestershire Peer Education Service – June 2007 to July 2010</strong></td>
<td><strong>Original target</strong></td>
<td><strong>Revised target</strong></td>
<td><strong>Achievement</strong></td>
<td><strong>% against 3-year target</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6,000 children educated on housing and homelessness issues</td>
<td>6,000</td>
<td>6,000</td>
<td>7,785</td>
<td>130%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200 children and young people receive peer support sessions</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>101%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of peer education sessions</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of peer support sessions</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 peer educators trained</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>165%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Children’s Legal Service – October 2007 to September 2010</strong></td>
<td><strong>Conduct 450 cases</strong></td>
<td>450</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take forward 6 test cases</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>N/A (ongoing, beyond timeframe)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write articles for legal journals, magazines etc</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>N/A (ongoing, beyond timeframe)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circulate email briefings within Shelter with progress reports on successful cases</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>N/A (ongoing, beyond timeframe)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speak at conferences from Year 2 (October 2008)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>N/A (ongoing, beyond timeframe)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of children supported</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>445</td>
<td>112%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scottish Education Liaison Project – April 2008 to March 2011</strong></td>
<td>526 school-age children will receive a needs assessment</td>
<td>526</td>
<td>526</td>
<td>457</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>212 children with more profound needs will be helped to attend homework clubs</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90 children will have increased their level of school attendance as a result of receiving an intensive tailored-support package</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
However, this question was not always asked at initial assessment and the figure may be an underestimate.

**Geographical reach:** In Gloucestershire, the service operated across six district council boundaries and staff built on Shelter’s existing links to ensure widespread delivery to young people and recruitment of peer educators from across the county, including setting up an outreach office in rural areas. The service reviewed its reach to young people at higher risk of making unplanned moves away from home, such as care leavers and young offenders, and re-targeted its delivery to those schools and youth providers where clusters of youth homelessness had been identified. It was also targeted to post-16s in local colleges, a greater number of whom were more likely to be thinking about leaving home.

The CSAL aimed to develop nationwide access to housing-related advice for frontline children’s services staff. It was particularly successful in London and the South East (39 per cent of all callers), where regional co-ordination to promote the service was established longest and where it was the primary purpose of Regional Children’s Co-ordinators to promote the service, due to funding invested by donors into the London and South East region.

Targeted marketing has also led to an increase in take up from across other English regions, particularly during 2010–11, which indicates that CSAL is working towards a greater level of national coverage (see Appendix 3, Chart 4).

Families with multiple needs: Evidence from monitoring data, case file reviews (England) and interviews with parents in England and Scotland, suggests the programme was successful in reaching vulnerable families with multiple social, economic and educational needs. In Scotland, Shelter staff estimated that half of those worked with were known to Social Services (either in the past or as active ‘at risk’ cases), while in England case file reviews suggest this figure was between 20 and 25 per cent.

**Ethnicity:** Chart 1 illustrates the ethnic backgrounds of children reached by those locality-based services that captured personal demographic data from clients. Across these services, the ethnicity profile of clients reflected the diversity of the area as recorded in 2001 Census data.

In Bristol and Newham, services focused on accessing vulnerable children and families, often in temporary accommodation. From evaluation activity observations and case file evidence in Newham and Bristol, both services reached children from refugee, asylum-seeking and other new communities.

In Scotland, the monitoring data captured by Shelter Children’s Services shows four per cent of children accessing a service were from new community backgrounds (such as central African nations, Iran and Iraq) and a further two per cent from established Asian communities (Chart 1). The 2001 Census indicated two per cent of the population were from a (non white) minority ethnic group, with 0.10 per cent recorded as African. This suggests an increase in minority, new and emerging communities in Scotland in the intervening period and that Shelter Children’s Services have been effective in engaging with them. A similar pattern is seen for the monitoring data of Bristol and Newham services.

1.5 **Policy context**

Shelter Children’s Services developed at a time when children’s services were high on the national policy agenda. The Every Child Matters (ECM) framework prevailing at that time was informed by the principle that outcomes for children are improved through more effective co-operation between key agencies and the greater accountability of agencies working with children.

This policy agenda generated a range of initiatives to meet the needs of children and young people, such as Sure Start Children’s Centres, the Children’s Fund and Connexions. It also provided a receptive environment in which Shelter could pilot new approaches to tackling homelessness and housing issues for children and to mitigating the attendant problems that come from poor housing.

Further policy developments during the lifetime of the programme created opportunities, and some barriers, for Shelter Children’s Services. For instance, the introduction of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) for co-ordinating cross-agency responses to the needs of vulnerable children was a positive step, as was Extended Schools, which provided opportunities for joint-working on social development and parenting support. However, the re-configuration of statutory Social Services raised the access threshold for some services and made joint-working on early intervention more difficult.

Initially, ECM was intended to be a universal approach for all children to access better outcomes, and initiatives like CAF were focused on the needs of individual children. During the period

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4 Bristol, Knowlesley, Newham and Scotland.
5 However, it is difficult at this time to ascertain whether the client groups reached were proportionate to local populations or whether higher than average numbers of ‘hard to reach’ clients accessed services. This is because the comparison data currently available is still sourced or extrapolated from the 2001 Census and, therefore, does not reflect recent population changes.

6 One Scotland: No Place for Racism website.
Chart 1: Programme reach – ethnicity¹⁰

Keys to the Future – Scotland, Newham, Knowsley and Bristol

Breakdown of ethnicity of children and young people

10 Includes data from services that recorded ethnicity. The Gloucestershire service and CSAL did not consistently collect this information.

¹New communities include recent arrivals from, eg central African nations, Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan.
2006 to 2008, emphasis shifted from the universal approach to focusing and targeting interventions on vulnerable children and by 2008 the publication of *Think Family* marked a shift away from child-centred models of working to ‘whole family’ approaches and more targeted services for vulnerable families. Shelter Children’s Services in Bristol, Scotland, and Knowsley reflected this shift to a more holistic approach.

Cross-departmental policy rhetoric appeared incongruous at times, ie the importance of preventative action and early interventions for children and families in the Department for Education and Skills was increasingly counterbalanced by the Home Office’s ‘Respect agenda’. The Children’s Fund, for example, started out with ideas of universal services then became much more targeted on the early identification of ‘families with problems’. The Respect agenda took this further, with a shift from ‘positive interventions’ with families to a sanction-based approach to ‘poor parenting’ and the active promotion by the Government of Parenting Orders, Child Safety Orders and Anti-social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs). Shelter Children’s Services targeted intensive support to vulnerable children and provided additional support to families, but also offered universal advice and signposting services to all children and families that were referred to them and worked (particularly in Knowsley) to prevent children becoming subject to sanctions such as ASBOs.

More recently, the Coalition Government’s deficit reduction strategies are having an impact on legal services and children’s services provided by both the statutory and voluntary sectors. While the Government remains committed to the 2020 child poverty targets, its focus is less on boosting income through the welfare state and more on encouraging households into work, and children’s services are interlinked with the Government’s wider policies on welfare reform. There has also been a shift away from the ECM outcomes framework in England, to a more generic language of promoting the social and emotional capabilities of children and young people. However, three key themes from the previous administration’s policy have been retained in the Allen Review (2011):

- The importance of prevention and early intervention.
- The need for improved, though devolved, service co-ordination.
- A focus on ‘whole family’ interventions.

These themes were strongly reflected in the Shelter Children’s Services programme, therefore learning from the programme relating to them will be useful and relevant in the current policy climate.

The abolition of regional structures during 2010–11 had an impact for Shelter Children’s Services Regional Co-ordinators, who built up their strategic policy networks through structures such as the regional homelessness forums and child poverty forums that were often co-ordinated by regional government offices that have now been abolished.

There have been some changes in housing policy and legislation over the lifetime of the programme. The Housing Act 2004 in England introduced tenancy deposit protection and gave the Secretary of State the power to update overcrowding standards (though this power has not yet been exercised), while the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 extended the rights of tenants and those at risk of homelessness.

Since 2010, there have been rapid changes to welfare and related legislation which may impact on the housing circumstances of vulnerable families. New ceilings to the maximum amount of Housing Benefit payable to private rented tenants set out in the Emergency Budget and subsequent Comprehensive Spending Review in 2010, restricted the total amount of benefits payable to families in all tenures from 2013.

Deficit reduction strategies have identified the need for longer-term reductions in the level of Housing Benefit from 2013. Tenants in both sectors will also be affected by wider welfare reform, most notably the introduction of a single universal credit. The Localism Bill 2010 also challenges security of tenure and the rights of homeless households. Shelter undertook research to identify the likely impact these changes will have on low-income tenants and subsequently campaigned to raise awareness of the proposed amendments to welfare reform.

This work is supported by data from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2011) which indicates that cuts to benefits and security of tenure, together with the increasing costs of childcare, are likely to impact specifically on the kinds of vulnerable families Shelter Children’s Services have been working with.

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15 See for example www.voluntarysectorcuts.org.uk
16 Independent evaluation of Shelter Children’s Services: England and Scotland
2 Programme outcomes
This chapter reviews the outcomes achieved by the children, young people and families who engaged with Shelter Children’s Services, against the overall objectives of the programme. Findings are grouped under each programme objective to demonstrate how services worked towards achieving those objectives by improving outcomes in education, economic wellbeing, emotional and social wellbeing and preventing homelessness, within the wider children’s services policy framework (ECM), prevailing at the time.

Later in the chapter, the outcomes of influencing policy and practice activity at national, regional, and local levels are described and a summary of a cost-consequence analysis of four individual case studies are presented to demonstrate economic outcomes.

Across the spectrum of Shelter Children’s Services, activities were delivered that contributed to meeting all of the objectives of the programme. Some services delivered against more than one objective, but most focused their activities on either mitigating the impact of homelessness, preventing homelessness, or raising awareness of the needs of homeless children with other children’s services providers and developing resources to improve practice in the sector. Table 1 (pages 6–7) provides an overview of the expected outcomes from each of the services developed.

In general, where services sought to prevent homelessness by securing tenancies or supporting families to move from temporary into more stable accommodation, these are considered to have achieved ‘hard’ outcomes. One approach to quantifying hard outcomes is to attribute an economic value to interventions and, for the purpose of this evaluation, a cost-consequence model of this approach has been adopted.

Where services have worked to mitigate the impacts of homelessness by supporting children with educational or social activities, these have achieved ‘soft’ outcomes of incremental improvements against high levels of assessed need or risk. Shelter developed outcomes-monitoring systems to help measure the ‘soft’ outcomes achieved by locality-based support services and the monitoring data generated by those systems is used in this chapter, in conjunction with qualitative data gathered through evaluation research.

Shelter Children’s Services piloted a number of approaches to improving outcomes for homeless children and families. The balance of activities across the programme can be considered in three broad areas:

I The intensive, tailored packages of support with children and families were relatively low volume, with high resource input, particularly workers’ time. This was effective in achieving measurable positive outcomes for children and peer educators.

II Work with young people in Gloucestershire and CSAL was high volume, reaching higher numbers of beneficiaries, and delivered over wider geographical areas. Some locality-based services such as Bristol and Newham also delivered higher volume activity such as trips and holiday play schemes. It was more difficult to attribute direct outcomes to these services as they worked to prevent future homelessness, provided support to other professionals, or opportunities for fun and socialisation for children and young people.

III Influencing policy and practice, and case law activities, operated more remotely from children and families most of the time and was more likely to achieve longer-term outcomes. The first area was a focus for the evaluation research, to assess the direct and indirect outcomes for children and families in receipt of an intensive, tailored service and a considerable amount of qualitative data has been generated from this group. For the second area, it is possible to quantify how many people have received a service and to assess feedback of people’s experiences of those services, but difficult to ascertain their impact (ie on young people’s homelessness rates especially) without further follow-up research that would be dependent on data from other agencies. The third area has been effective in influencing legislation and case law, and it is possible to record influencing activities and resources that have been produced. However, actual and sustained changes in policy and practice will only be clear in the longer term.

In practice, it should be noted that there was often an overlap between programme objectives. Services that primarily worked to mitigate the impact of homelessness also worked to prevent homelessness, as part of a tailored package. Similarly, activities often had an impact on more than one outcome area, ie improved emotional wellbeing leading to improved attainment at school.
Chart 2: Proportion of interventions against ECM outcomes (England)

Shelter Children's Services – Newham, Bristol and Knowsley

Proportion of interventions against ECM outcomes for children who received intensive support over programme lifetime

NB: Length of chart bars refer to number of interventions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newham</th>
<th>Interventions: % (count)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Achieve economic wellbeing</td>
<td>9% (27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make a positive contribution</td>
<td>3% (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoy and achieve</td>
<td>72% (210)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stay safe</td>
<td>5% (16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be healthy</td>
<td>10% (30)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowsley</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Achieve economic wellbeing</td>
<td>10% (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make a positive contribution</td>
<td>5% (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoy and achieve</td>
<td>29% (50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stay safe</td>
<td>47% (82)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be healthy</td>
<td>12% (21)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bristol</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Achieve economic wellbeing</td>
<td>35% (190)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make a positive contribution</td>
<td>7% (40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoy and achieve</td>
<td>29% (158)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stay safe</td>
<td>18% (101)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be healthy</td>
<td>10% (57)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Knowsley 86 per cent of service lifetime.

Chart 2 shows the different areas of focus, against the ECM outcomes framework, of the three services in England that recorded activity on an internal monitoring system. In Newham 72 per cent of interventions were aimed at ‘enjoy and achieve’ outcomes, in Knowsley 47 per cent of interventions related to ‘stay safe’ outcomes, and in Bristol 35 per cent related to achieving ‘economic wellbeing’ with 29 per cent aimed at ‘enjoy and achieve’ outcomes. These differences reflect the range of service objectives that each was funded to deliver against.

Services in Scotland focused mainly on educational outcomes for children and they recorded achievements of children against a set of improvement indicators, as shown in Chart 3. The indicators demonstrate that the services aimed to effect improvements both within school and in the home environment, and that engaging with parents was identified as a key factor in achieving improvements in educational outcomes for children. For further information on the data generated by internal monitoring systems, see Appendix 3.

2.1 Preventing homelessness

Supporting housing need was a significant component of each of Shelter Children's Services, which reflects Shelter’s charitable purpose in helping those who experience bad housing or homelessness. Part of the purpose of the needs assessments undertaken, with children
Case study 1
Lizzie and her three children

Lizzie is a lone parent in Scotland with three children aged between six and nine years. She had been evicted due to rent arrears, and had been homeless and living in a hostel for nine weeks prior to contact with Shelter Children’s Services. Social Services were considering taking safeguarding proceedings if the housing situation could not be resolved. Lizzie also had enduring mental health problems and a difficult relationship with her children. As a result, Shelter Children’s Services worked with the whole family.

Interventions over nine months
- Housing need addressed.
- Behavioural strategies introduced with children and parent.
- Support to parent with school attendance.

Outcomes
- Permanent accommodation was secured for the family.
- Improved family relationships achieved.
- Improved school attendance by the children.
- Lizzie’s situation stabilised and support with mental health issues retained by Social Services.

referring to locality-based services that offered intensive support, was to establish and then address the issues of homelessness or poor accommodation. This was done either directly or through internal or external referrals, prior to tackling a child’s educational, emotional or social developmental challenges.

There are challenges in evaluating preventative services, as it is difficult to measure things that do not happen because service interventions have been effective. It takes time for effective interventions to be demonstrated, e.g., by decreases in homelessness figures or increases in the uptake of support services, and those longer-term outcomes lay outside the scope of this evaluation.

2.1.1 Primary prevention

For the purpose of this evaluation, primary prevention related to early interventions that directly prevent homelessness, either through direct work with children and families or education.

From the evidence gathered from qualitative research with beneficiaries, staff and stakeholders, the following outcomes have been identified:

Sustained tenancies: Children and families at risk of eviction have been able to sustain their tenancies with the support of Shelter Children’s Services staff. This has been a core element of work in Knowsley, addressing issues of antisocial behaviour by children and families, including neighbour nuisance. Addressing these issues has, in addition to helping people stay in their homes, achieved outcomes of improved safety for the wider community. In Bristol there was considerable work helping people to access Housing Benefits, reduce rent arrears, and address behaviour resulting in noise nuisance, which also achieved sustained tenancy outcomes.

In some complex cases, Shelter Children’s Services staff worked with social workers and other agencies to deal with a range of underlying issues, such as alcohol or substance misuse, that have been at the core of families’ financial difficulties and an underlying cause of repeat homelessness.

Improved housing conditions: Families living in hostels or temporary accommodation were supported to either get on local authority or housing association waiting lists, or to be moved into more suitable temporary accommodation. Families were more able to negotiate offers of permanent accommodation, supported by Shelter Children’s Services staff.

Clients of Children’s Centres or other children’s services providers were able to access advice to improve their housing conditions from frontline workers that have been supported by CSAL.

Increased knowledge of housing rights: Homeless young people who trained as peer educators in Gloucestershire reported they were
more confident about asserting their own housing needs, better able to negotiate tenancies with housing providers, and able to access support from Shelter’s advice services to avoid repeat homelessness.

Frontline workers in other children’s services that had received training and advice from CSAL reported in interviews that they were better able to support clients with housing issues, to inform them of their rights, and to signpost them on to Shelter advice services for further support.

**Extension of housing rights in case law:** Shelter Children’s Legal Service has achieved outcomes that extend the legal framework for preventing homelessness for vulnerable groups such as asylum seekers with children born in the UK, young people within the criminal justice system, families in ‘rent back’ accommodation (where a property has been sold to a mortgage company to cover payment arrears) and women with children fleeing domestic violence.

### 2.1.2 Secondary prevention

For the purpose of this evaluation, secondary prevention related to activities that mitigated against the effects of homelessness and addressed the needs of children and families where crises have already occurred.

Secondary prevention was the core function of the peer education service in Gloucestershire. Evidence from young people, teachers, student support officers, staff and other stakeholders identifies that the service achieved the following outcomes:

**Homelessness stereotypes challenged:** Feedback from young people and teachers shows that homelessness stereotypes were successfully challenged in both groups. Beneficiaries of peer education reported increased awareness that homelessness can happen to anyone, at any time, and that homeless people do not conform to an archetypal model. Young people were able to discuss the stigma attached to homelessness and, in some cases, explore the learning further through drama.

**Increased awareness of the implications of youth homelessness:** Peer educators shared their own experiences of homelessness with young people in schools, colleges and other centres and follow-up research shows that young people retained key messages about the reality of leaving home in a hurry, such as ‘sofa surfing’, moving from one friend’s house to another, sleeping rough and surviving with no money.

Interview and survey data shows that teachers’ awareness was raised that homelessness may be an underlying cause of behavioural issues in school.

**Increased knowledge of housing support for young people:** In follow up research, young people demonstrated retained knowledge of Connexions as the first point of contact for young people in housing need in Gloucestershire. Young people also retained knowledge of different housing options for young people, such as hostels and supported accommodation. Stakeholders reported increased confidence that young people who had accessed peer education would be better able to plan their move or find the best help should they become homeless.

One unintended outcome of peer education being successful might be an increase in young people’s homelessness figures in Gloucestershire, as more young people might access housing support services, rather than being ‘hidden homeless’ sleeping at friends’ houses. This information was not available at the close of data capture for evaluation.
2.2 Mitigating the impact of homelessness

Locality-based services in Bristol, Knowsley, Newham and Scotland were designed to both help children and families with housing issues, and to alleviate and ameliorate the impact of poor housing or homelessness for children and young people. Many of the families that came in contact with these services were dealing with the effects of multiple-deprivation. As well as housing issues, people had problems with debt, poor health, addiction, inter-generational worklessness, poverty etc. Shelter Children’s Services undertook needs assessments with children and families to identify their pressing presenting issues and subsidiary issues and, for those with complex needs, agreed an action plan of support tailored to their individual circumstances. Staff took a holistic approach to each child and family that enabled linked outcomes to be achieved, eg resettlement of a family in better accommodation nearer to a school could lead to school attendance being improved.

Chart 4 draws on Shelter monitoring data to show how, overall, services in Newham, Knowsley and Bristol achieved positive outcomes for children by supporting them to reduce the risk of negative outcomes due to the impact of homelessness or poor housing conditions. In all of these services, against all ECM outcomes, overall levels of risk to children were reduced. The positive outcomes achieved are described in more detail in the following sections.

2.2.1 Education outcomes

Poverty, poor housing and homelessness are factors that can influence educational attainment. Research shows that poorer children are much more likely to do less well in school, and that widening gaps between children in poorer and better off homes at primary school level prove hard to reverse at secondary level.19 Statistics show that homeless children are two to three times more likely than their peers to be absent from school. Attendance has a significant impact on educational attainment.20

In interviews, staff reported that some parents find it hard to engage with their children’s education, ie because they are overwhelmed by their housing, financial or relationship issues, living a chaotic lifestyle, had a poor educational experience themselves and therefore have low expectations of school for their children, or low aspirations for their own future.21 Shelter Children’s Services staff found that in order to improve school

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Mitigating the effects of homelessness on children’s educational attendance and attainment was the primary focus for the Shelter Children’s Services in Scotland and Newham, and was a strong element of the other locality-based services. In Scotland, the Shelter Children’s Services were provided by Educational Liaison Workers whose role was to complement the work of existing Shelter family and child support workers. In the London Borough of Newham, the Shelter Children’s Services approach was similar, using education outreach workers in schools to work mainly with children in temporary accommodation.

Shelter Children’s Services identified a number of issues for homeless or poorly housed children, in relation to school attendance and attainment:

- Children living in crowded or poor housing conditions find it harder to create space at home to study or complete homework.
- Parents may find it difficult to prioritise their children’s educational needs.
- Children may move schools frequently as a result of temporary accommodation moves. The high cost of temporary accommodation may put additional strain on limited

* Knowsley 86 per cent of service lifetime.
incomes, and families may find it hard to provide their children with uniforms or appropriate equipment required for school, particularly if moving to new schools frequently.

- Children tend not to tell schools or their teachers about their home circumstances.
- Long distances to school, travel times and costs may contribute to lateness or erratic attendance.
- Education can be interrupted following a housing move, particularly if the family experiences difficulties in securing a suitable school place.
- Children find frequent housing moves, or the threat of becoming homeless, distressing. They may cope with, or externalise, feelings about their situation by exhibiting disruptive or antisocial behaviour, both at home and in school. Other children manage their distress and anxiety by internalising feelings that manifest in various ways: in becoming withdrawn, shy or underactive or physically ill, experiencing headaches, stomach aches, lethargy or generally feeling unwell.

Shelter staff developed activities and strategies to address these issues and achieved the following outcomes:

**Improved school attendance**

**Removal of financial barriers to school attendance:** Children able to attend school because funding for uniform, equipment and travel costs was accessed. Shelter Children’s Services staff were able to utilise internal budget flexibilities and external grants to remove practical barriers to school attendance.

A broad range of practical support was provided, depending on the individual needs of children, their parents’ financial situation, and school rules. Some schools send children home if they do not comply with uniform standards or if they are infested with head lice. In those cases, access to a uniform grant or nit comb would have a direct impact on a child’s ability to attend school. In poorer households, the ability to secure education maintenance allowance for older children meant the difference between going to college and not.

**Improved access to school:** Some services where education outcomes were a priority, such as Newham, supported families to apply to get children into schools near or within easy travelling of where they were temporarily housed, including applying for school places in neighbouring boroughs. This sometimes involved helping parents to appeal against the school place their child had been allocated.

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**Case study 3**

**Simon**

Simon (10) had been at his current school in Newham for three years. Previously he’d attended eight or nine schools and, as a result, found it difficult to settle in school. He found it hard to articulate his feelings verbally and, although he found it easy to make friends, he often fell out with them and got into fights. Simon was in danger of being excluded from school because of his behaviour.

**Interventions over six months**

- Personal behaviour management system introduced, built around Simon’s love of football.
- Encouraged to take greater personal responsibility for himself and his belongings.

**Outcomes**

- Improved behaviour at home
- Improved behaviour at school.
- Improved school attainment.

![Image of Simon holding a football](image-url)
Parents understand the importance of school attendance: Shelter Children’s Services staff encouraged parents to see the value of regular school attendance for their children by including improved attendance as a goal in children’s action plans, expecting parents to actively engage in supporting their children and encouraging them to raise their aspirations for their children, as part of the contract in which staff would also provide practical support if necessary.

Improved school attainment

A range of improvements in educational attainment were identified from interviews with teachers and parents, and information recorded in case files. Improvements included improved literacy, improved fluency in reading, children reporting greater enjoyment in reading, improved handwriting, improved maths concentration and ability, improved personal organisation and increased learning skills.\(^{22}\)

In addition, the following outcomes relating to improved attainment were achieved, as a more indirect, or secondary, result of Shelter Children’s Services’ interventions:

Improved ability to engage with education: Some children, parents and teachers reported that, as a result of support from Shelter Children’s Services, children were better able to control their own behaviour, actions and responses and were less dependent on teachers or parents to manage their behaviour. Children reported being better able to express themselves in class, more able to wait their turn, and being less impulsive. Teachers reported improvements for some children in their ability to listen and to concentrate for longer periods of time.

Bullying issues addressed:

Evidence from children, parents and case files shows that interventions from Shelter Children’s Services to address bullying issues in a positive way achieved improved personal safety outcomes for children and often led to significant improvements in achievement at school.

Attainment of qualifications:

The majority of the young people recruited as peer educators in Gloucestershire fell into the NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training) category. As a result of volunteering as a peer educator, one went into further education and one went on to university. Nine young people achieved a nationally-recognised ‘BTEC in Peer Education’ qualification. Young people accessing other Shelter Children’s Services reported receiving support to gain qualifications, such as referrals into The Prince’s Trust or on to college courses.

The three services in Scotland had a focus on achieving positive education outcomes for children. Chart 5 shows, overall, how these services achieved improvements for children against a range of outcome indicators.

2.2.2 Emotional and social wellbeing outcomes

The programme was designed to deliver against the ECM outcomes framework, so there was an expectation from the start that services providing intensive support would, where feasible and appropriate, address children and family members’ social and emotional needs, usually as part of a tailored package of services including housing support.

The link between the emotional wellbeing of the main parent or carer and the emotional wellbeing of their children is well established.\(^{23}\) In children, emotional instability often results in unusual or disruptive behaviour, both at home and at school.

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22 While schools monitor attainment levels and projections for achievement for all children, this information is subject to data protection protocols and was not accessible for the evaluation.

If unaddressed, this behaviour may lead to serious consequences such as ASBOs or the threat of exclusion or eviction. This section presents the demonstrable emotional and social wellbeing outcomes achieved by children and family members that were supported by Shelter Children’s Services.

**Improved emotional literacy:** Staff, parents and children reported that children were better able to acknowledge their feelings, to be able to recognise and talk about their emotions and find safe ways to express them. In interviews, children described how they had learnt how to deal more appropriately with their feelings, particularly feelings of anger. They also explained that this often helped them get on better with their family members and with their peers.

Some parents also described how they had been supported to develop their own emotional literacy skills and were better able to manage their feelings and emotions.

**Increased confidence:** Children, parents, and teachers all reported improvements in children’s confidence and self-esteem as a result of interventions from Shelter Children’s Services staff. Children were better able to try new things, meet new people, and ask for help if they needed it, eg at school.

Shelter staff made a point of encouraging children to broaden their experience. Participation in new activities built children’s confidence and self-esteem and parents reported that children subsequently took up other activities and stay engaged.

Parents reported feeling more confident in their ability to support and manage the behaviour of their children.

**Improved behaviour:** As mentioned in the introduction to this section, children often respond to emotional stress exhibited by parents, or carers, with poor behaviour of their own. Support with behaviour management strategies from Shelter Children’s Services enabled improvements in children’s behaviour both at home and in school, as reported by parents and teachers.

Shelter Children’s Services staff worked with parents to develop effective strategies for managing behaviour at home, and modelled the use of effective boundaries and rewards with children for parents to copy. Alongside that, they worked directly with children to help them understand and change their behaviour. Children reported that as a result they felt better able to connect with, and relate to, their peers and had improved relationships with teachers and other adults.

**Increased parental resilience:** Shelter Children’s Services staff recognised that it was ineffective to work just with children on behaviour management or emotional literacy if their parents were stressed, depressed or struggling to cope. They provided activities for parents such as parenting

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**Case study 4**

**Julie**

Julie (10), from Scotland, was not good at managing her emotions in class. Neither was she able to manage her emotions or actions in the playground, and generally she experienced difficulty with her peers. Julie also experienced difficulty with transitions to new teachers. In the previous year she had not been able to resolve these issues herself.

**Interventions over six months**
- Tailored package of support including emotional literacy.
- Behaviour management.
- Homework support.
- Social skills development through play and group informal education activity.

**Outcomes**
- Better able to talk about her feelings.
- Able to resolve issues herself.
- Able to maintain positive relationships with both adults and the children in her class. Decreased disruptive behaviour.
- Improved school attainment.
- Increased self-belief.

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courses, parent partnerships and adult education classes, and acted as positive role models.

Parents reported an improved ability to cope and to be ‘good’ parents. They also reported reduced stress levels and feeling less depressed, describing how coping strategies shared with them by Shelter staff gave them a structure and a way forward. Some parents expressed the view that being better able to cope would help them to deal with future issues and might help to prevent repeat homelessness.

One outcome of parents’ increased emotional resilience was that children reported they felt safer as a result of knowing their parents were happier and strong enough to deal with the issues they faced.

**Improved family functioning:**
Families in crisis, or under ongoing strain, sometimes forget how to have fun together or to find time to play with their children. The Shelter Children’s Services that provided intensive support often identified the need to provide children and families with opportunities to do things together, like go to the cinema, and to develop stronger social and emotional bonds within the family. This support led to improvements in how well families got on at home, including relationships between siblings. Staff and parents reported improved communication and co-operation within the family, and reduced stress and anxiety for both parents and children.

This social, or ‘fun’, element of the programme in particular was highly valued by lone parents and those of larger families, where their housing and financial situation precluded undertaking such activities as a whole family.

**Improved social skills:**
Many children interviewed said that activities provided through Shelter Children’s Services had enabled them to meet new people and make friends. Children in temporary accommodation sometimes move home frequently and group activities, such as regular groups for current and ex-service users of Shelter Children’s Services in Bristol and Knowsley, enabled them to develop and maintain friendships.

Children in poor or temporary accommodation have often not had many chances to take part in activities that other children may consider a normal part of family life. Some services, like Bristol, Newham and Knowsley, organised social and leisure activities for children such as school holiday clubs, trips, sports, art activities, and membership of organised groups like the Beavers. For individual children, staff usually linked activities to something they had expressed an interest in, e.g. ice skating.

**2.2.3 Increased participation**

Another key element of the programme was to promote children and young people’s involvement in decision making, in response to the ‘making a positive contribution’ ECM outcome.

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**Case study 5**

**Alison and Duncan**

Alison and her son Duncan (5) had previously been living in temporary accommodation in Scotland and were sleeping on a relative’s couch when Shelter began working with Duncan. Alison suffered from severe back pain and often felt unable to cope. Duncan had started school the previous year, but had poor attendance and was struggling to keep up. Alison acknowledged that when she was depressed she kept Duncan at home with her to help her deal with her feelings.

**Interventions over seven months**
- Support to Alison with coping strategies.
- Support to Duncan, with reassurance when worried about his mum.
- Homework support.
- Library visits.

**Outcomes**
- Improved school attendance.
- Duncan began to enjoy school.
- Increased confidence in Duncan.
- Alison better able to cope.
Children and young people were given opportunities to shape aspects of the Shelter Children's Services they were engaged with, ie helping to design peer education sessions in Gloucestershire or planning the group activities for children in Bristol, and to engage with local decision-makers, eg peer educators presented their experiences of homelessness and views on services to housing and homelessness policy makers in Gloucestershire.

Outcomes of taking part in such activities can be summarised as:

- development of new skills – debating, negotiating, group decision-making and influencing decision makers
- better understanding of how decisions are made and how to contribute to them
- increased confidence, self-esteem and aspirations as a result of being taken seriously
- improved services that are more responsive to their needs
- becoming more motivated to get involved in their school and wider community.24

**Inclusive participation**: Services in Newham, Bristol, Gloucestershire and Scotland provided opportunities for children and young people from hard-to-reach groups, such as refugees and asylum seekers, to influence services or contribute to resource materials for wider dissemination, eg DVDs or web resources.

**Improved consultation practice in partner agency**: Local authority and voluntary sector stakeholders reported on the effective contributions of young people who volunteered with the Gloucestershire service to consultations they had organised. As a consequence of comments from peer educators, a council promotional leaflet on housing options for young people was amended and improved. Following peer educator facilitation of user-consultation sessions, the voluntary sector stakeholder reported that their involvement had created a much more powerful and useful process. Young people involved in external consultations reported feeling more confident about expressing their opinions and that they had made a difference.

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2.2.4 Economic wellbeing outcomes

As mentioned in the section on preventing homelessness (2.1, page 17), homelessness or poor housing was a key factor in economic wellbeing for the children and families that engaged with Shelter Children's Services. This section summarises other economic wellbeing outcomes achieved through the programme.

There is evidence to suggest that when families are struggling to juggle budgets and finances, the needs of children and young people are often not taken into account.25 Poor or temporary housing can have a direct impact on family income, and this in turn can impact on children's life chances.26 Evaluation interviews with parents indicate that repetitive patterns of poverty and homelessness were common in families accessing Shelter Children's Services and, in some instances, inter-generational.

Economic outcomes achieved for families include:

**Improved access to benefit entitlements**: Case file reviews showed that Shelter Children's Services helped some families to review their benefit entitlements and to make successful applications for previously unclaimed benefits.

**Access to additional funds**: Case file reviews and interviews with staff and parents evidenced staff supporting families to access one-off sums.

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of money to help with short-term costs, through applications made on their behalf to charitable grants or by identifying discretionary funding allocations from within the service's own budget.

**Supported referral to other agencies:** Where families needed additional specialist support, eg to deal with debts or rent arrears, staff referred them to agencies such as Citizens Advice Bureau.

**Improved financial capabilities:** An indirect outcome of the peer education service in Gloucestershire was that peer educators improved their personal financial capabilities as they were able to access financial advice and support from the service staff and from Shelter advice services co-located within the service.

**Increased economic aspirations:** Some parents reported that being involved with Shelter Children's Services had raised their personal aspirations about what they would like to do with their lives and encouraged them to think about future employment. Others were considering taking up volunteering options, and recognised this would improve their employment prospects.

**Access to work experience:** Peer educators described themselves as working towards getting a job, explaining they had learnt about the 'routine' of a working week, turning up on time, being dressed appropriately, and minding their language, which would help prepare them for the workplace.

As a result of volunteering as peer educators, at least four young people went on to employment afterwards. At least two went on to an additional volunteering activity and five achieved a ‘V Involve award’ for 50+ hours of volunteering. All expressed the view that having their Shelter experience on their CV, along with a reference, enhanced their job opportunities.

### 2.3 Influencing policy and practice: national, regional and local

From the outset the programme always intended to draw on locality-level learning from approaches to delivery taken and then use this learning to influence policy and change practices in other organisations. The following section looks at Shelter Children's Services' work to disseminate good practice and contribute to effective changes in policy and practice within mainstream agencies working with children and families, and to influence changes in the law as it affects homeless children and families.

It can be difficult to assess the impact of good practice guidance and networking activities in influencing policy development. External policy stakeholders interviewed in the English Regions and in the Scottish Government noted that such change takes time, involves multiple players, and cannot easily be attributed to any one agency.

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**Case study 6**

**Penny and her two children**

Penny is a lone parent in Knowsley with a three-year-old daughter and a baby. At the point of contact with Shelter Children's Services she was under threat of eviction for rent and Council Tax arrears as well as debts on other loans.

**Interventions over five months**
- Referral to local Citizens Advice Bureau to help with Housing Benefit arrears and in-work benefits.
- Negotiation with Children's Centre day nursery.

**Outcomes**
- A back payment of Housing Benefit was secured.
- Penny's in-work benefits were maximised.
- Secure tenancy retained.
- Day care places for children secured.
- Part-time employment maintained.
Shelter Children's Services' influencing and policy work has evolved over a period of rapid change, particularly within England. The abolition of Government Offices for the Regions, after May 2010, affected Regional Children's Co-ordinators who had developed strong relationships with regional structures and networks to address issues of both homelessness and child poverty. There have also been substantial cuts in services for children and young people, and the full force of proposed changes to Housing Benefit and tenure rights in social housing have yet to be felt. It is against this background that the achievements of Shelter Children's Services' policy and influencing work should be seen.

Best practice and learning from programme delivery has informed policy: It is evident from this evaluation's research that work undertaken by locality-based Shelter Children's Services provided staff working at regional and national policy levels in England and Scotland with added credibility. External stakeholders felt that Shelter Children's Services' experience of practice was crucial in demonstrating what could be done for homeless children and families. Evidence from stakeholders in both nations suggests that seminar and workshop activity had, in some areas, been responsible for a shift in attitudes and awareness. Housing services developed more flexible responses to families as they were more aware of the consequences of poor housing on children, children's services were more attuned to addressing housing need, and education more aware of other services that could be accessed to address the wider issues of families in housing need. Evidence suggests that Shelter Children's Services' influencing work, supported by the national profile and strong reputation that being part of Shelter confers, has helped broker better service co-ordination, particularly between housing and children's services.

Internally, Shelter management and staff felt the organisation had a better understanding of how children's services work and contributed to more informed organisational approaches to influencing provision for homeless children in other agencies.

2.3.1 National changes in legislation and case law

There have been significant achievements from national and regional influencing and legal work, both in Scotland and England, which will have a longer-term impact on policy and practice.

Legislation influenced: Shelter Children's Services in Scotland successfully lobbied for the inclusion, as a statutory right, of clauses in the Housing (Scotland) Act of 2010 that ensure children who are homeless or in temporary accommodation can access additional learning needs services.
Case law influenced: In England, Shelter Children's Legal Service successfully pursued three test cases that, in future, will determine:

- greater security of tenure for families in ‘rent back’ accommodation where a property has been sold to a mortgage company to cover arrears – Redstone Mortgages v Welsh and Jackson [2009]
- access to social housing and related Housing Benefits for families with children born in the UK applying for indefinite leave to remain – Clue v Birmingham City Council [2010]
- clarification of the rights of vulnerable young people within the criminal justice system and in contact with the youth offending service to a Social Services assessment and support in housing matters. This case built on evidence gathered by Shelter Children's Services' Regional Children's Co-ordinators on local authority responses to the G v Southwark judgement [2009], with the Judge noting how Shelter's submission to the court had been 'conspicuously helpful' – TG v LB Lambeth [2011].

National guidance informed: In Scotland, working with the Chartered Institute of Housing (Scotland) has involved the production of Guidance on Standards of Temporary Accommodation (2010). This guidance recommends that local authorities, when inspecting temporary accommodation, consider whether there is 'adequate communal living space which includes, for example, space for children to play or do homework'. While this guidance is non-statutory, external stakeholders found that case studies provided by Shelter Children's Services grounded the guidance and offered practical solutions to implementation.

In Scotland, policy influencing work has contributed to the child poverty agenda in ensuring the implications of poor housing and homelessness for children and young people continued to be highlighted. External stakeholders report that the policy work in Scotland had been instrumental in moving Getting it Right for Every Child beyond education and on to the agenda of other agencies.

Resources produced: Shelter Children's Services in Scotland also produced two key reports (2009, and updated in 2011)\(^2\) \(^2\) quantifying levels of homelessness among children and recording their experience of homelessness. These have been influential in taking forward the housing element of the Scottish Government’s ‘Acting in the Best Interests of the Child’ agenda. In turn, these have informed the development over 2011 of free online resources and learning materials for primary and secondary schools, which are available on the Shelter Scotland website and have been passed on to Children in Scotland to take forward.

Regional Children's Co-ordinators developed a benchmarking model for inter-agency work in England, Improving outcomes for children and young people in housing need (revised 2011). The published guidance was supplemented by workshops and conference activity to promote and share best practice. This positive approach to identifying and disseminating good practice was seen by external policy and service management stakeholders as an approach likely to facilitate service change.

Policy and service developments informed: Regional Children's Co-ordinators and the national Policy and Practice Officer in Scotland have worked with locality-based services to inform and influence a number of developments. Examples include the development of more pro-active eviction prevention services in Scotland, the inclusion of youth homelessness in homelessness strategies, and the development of outreach work from Children's Centres to support families in temporary accommodation in England. Regional Children's Co-ordinators also successfully secured a statement in the national Child Poverty Needs Assessment toolkit and Guidance (IDEA, 2010)\(^3\) that: ‘Without a stable, decent home; secure and free from disrepair, parents often struggle to provide a stable and nurturing environment for their children to develop and thrive’.

2.3.2 Regional level work

Strategic relationships built: In England, Shelter Children's Services' Regional Children's Co-ordinators played a key role in gathering learning from across the pilot programme and in building strategic relationships and alliances to ensure that knowledge from Shelter Children's Services could inform housing policy, and children and families policy development across England and Scotland.

Child Poverty Needs Assessments influenced: Members of the Regional Children's Co-ordination team influenced the shaping of Child Poverty Needs Assessments and

accompanying Guidance\textsuperscript{29} to ensure housing needs were integral to child poverty assessments.

**Briefings and publications produced:** Regional Children's Co-ordinators have produced a range of best practice briefings and publications,\textsuperscript{30} including:

- Legal briefings (jointly developed with Shelter Children's Legal Service) on the legal implications of the *G v LB Southwark ruling* on Social Services and housing support for vulnerable young people who were either homeless or at risk of homelessness

- A benchmarking model, published as *Improving outcomes for children and young people in housing need* (2009, revised 2011) providing best practice guidance on joint-working between children's services and housing. This has been developed, through case studies of good practice from around the country, to offer practical protocols on cross-agency working in preventing and addressing homelessness

- Two good practice briefings for housing professionals – (i) 'Working with families with complex needs', and (ii) 'Eviction – assessing and meeting the needs of children'

- Tailored and targeted good practice guidance ('Supporting Homeless Children', 2010) for children and family service providers, including health visitors, educational professionals, Children's Centre staff, and other frontline professionals working with children and families

- Briefings, accompanied by a series of workshops, on the likely impact of changes to Housing Benefit and tenancy rights on families and children in temporary accommodation and the private rented sector (2010–11)

- The production of a report on what works in peer education and homelessness prevention work with young people (*In their own words*, 2011) and development of age-appropriate advice packs (*Your First Home: Some Stuff You Really Need to Know*, 2011).

Stakeholders interviewed felt that Regional Children's Co-ordinators had influenced the membership of Children's Trust Boards in England, with housing providers and the voluntary sector being offered seats on some boards once awareness of mutual interest in supporting children and families was acknowledged.

### 2.3.3 Local level work

**Awareness raised of the impact of homelessness on children:** Shelter Children's Services worked with schools and other service providers to raise awareness of the adverse impacts of homelessness (and living in temporary accommodation) on the education, emotional wellbeing and aspirations of children and young people.

**Other children's services better able to respond to housing need:** As well as directly working with homeless children and families, the programme has provided children's services with information, advice, and guidance so that they are better able to respond to housing issues in future. For example, questions about housing status are now included on school admission forms in Newham.


\textsuperscript{30} All publications can be found at [http://england.shelter.org.uk/professional_resources/childrens_service/childrens_service_publications](http://england.shelter.org.uk/professional_resources/childrens_service/childrens_service_publications)
Shelter recognised as a provider of children’s services: In Bristol and Knowsley, Shelter Children’s Services have established Shelter as an organisation competent to lead the Common Assessment Framework process for vulnerable children. In Knowsley, Shelter has demonstrated it can work in partnership with other agencies to tackle the causes of antisocial behaviour in children and young people, by working to support and strengthen inter-agency responses and co-ordination.

Homelessness Strategies influenced: In Gloucestershire, peer education has been recognised in the Homelessness Strategies of all six district councils as a preventative measure for homelessness in young people.

Good practice disseminated: There is evidence from stakeholder interviews in both Scotland and England, that local authorities welcomed Shelter Children’s Services’ contribution in disseminating good practice to inform policy. Examples of where good practice dissemination had a positive impact include local-level work with Blackpool Council (commissioned by the Children’s Trust) around the early identification of young people at risk of homelessness. This piece of work has informed its commissioning team that is reviewing service design work has informed its commissioning team that is reviewing service design and delivery.

Scope of other children’s services extended: The CSAL has been effective in translating raised awareness of the impact of poor housing and homelessness into practice on the ground. This service was promoted by Regional Children’s Co-ordinators, and the scope and capacity of the advice line extended over three tiers. Two surveys undertaken by CSAL indicate high levels of satisfaction among frontline children’s services staff. Evaluation interviews with Children’s Centre, Home Start and Family Nurse Partnership managers indicated that staff teams were translating increased awareness of housing and homelessness issues into using CSAL to enable them to deliver housing advice to clients. This was seen as a valuable addition to the advice package these services could deliver for children and families.

Previous evaluations of short-life children’s services initiatives indicate that identifying any long-term impact on policy and practice in this field can be problematic.31 Interviews with external stakeholders indicate the policy and good practice guidance developed over the life of Shelter Children’s Services is a particularly valuable resource for both practitioners and policy makers. There is evidence across a wide range of stakeholder interviews that, through capturing approaches to good practice, and services like CSAL, Shelter has been able to influence the way other charities work with homeless children and families.

2.4 Cost-consequence: economic analysis

Interest has grown in undertaking economic analysis of social interventions, and while it has been recognised that measurement tools to facilitate this kind of aggregation are in their relative infancy,32 current deficit reduction strategies have placed additional pressures on agencies to demonstrate long-term value for money in service delivery – including ‘quantifying’ soft outcomes, such as improved emotional wellbeing, as well as hard outcomes, such as improved attainment at school.33

Assessing the value for money of the Shelter Children’s Services programme as a whole is not easy, as services are varied in their focus and activities. However, it is useful to consider two key characteristics of the programme:

- Intensive, but low volume, work with individual children and families (Knowsley, Bristol, Newham and Scotland) and in Shelter Children’s Legal Service test cases.
- High volume activity, eg the Gloucestershire peer education service reached 7,785 young people, CSAL helped 4,840 children, and other locality-based services reached higher numbers of children and young people through social activities such as holiday schemes.

The value of high volume work cannot be calculated in the short term as (i) it was designed to achieve the non-occurrence of negative outcomes, such as preventing youth homelessness, which is only measurable in the longer term, (ii) it is not known what the outcome of the activity was, ie whether families acted on the advice provided via CSAL, or (iii) activities may contribute to overall outcomes, but the impact of them may not be easily measured in itself, ie the value of having fun at a social event.

For the purpose of this research, it was decided to undertake a cost-consequence analysis of the intensive, tailored support element of Shelter Children’s Services, to set costs incurred by the programme on individual case studies against potential costs that would have been incurred by other agencies if Shelter Children’s Services had not intervened with those children.

The rationale for this approach was two-fold. Firstly, there was sufficient internal monitoring data against which ‘hard’ outcomes, such as prevention of school exclusion and diversion from the criminal justice system, could be

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### Table 4: Summary of cost-consequence analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case summary 1</th>
<th>Interventions</th>
<th>Intervention costs</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Costs not incurred due to intervention</th>
<th>Cost-consequence proxy economic ratios</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Domestic violence</td>
<td>Shelter family support and service co-ordination: initial focus on sustaining tenancy</td>
<td>£4,217 (Shelter)</td>
<td>Tenancy sustained</td>
<td>Cost of eviction: £9,500</td>
<td>Cost savings: £33,462–£44,332 per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children at risk</td>
<td>Securing respite care</td>
<td>£26,079–£39,851[^34] per year</td>
<td>Child sustained in own home</td>
<td>Foster or residential care: £44,335–£68,325 per year</td>
<td>Cost to benefit ratio: £1 to £1.92–£1.97 Year 1 (excludes estimate of partner agency costs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial harassment</td>
<td>Securing Disability Living Allowance</td>
<td>£3,865 per year</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debt/tenancy at risk</td>
<td>Inter-agency interventions: domestic violence/racial attacks support (7 agencies involved)</td>
<td>Costs unknown</td>
<td>Repeat domestic violence prevented[^36]</td>
<td>Cost of domestic violence to criminal justice, health and other agencies: £13,000 per incident</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Racial attacks prevented[^46]</td>
<td>Cost of racial attacks to criminal justice and other agencies: £788–£1,440 per incident</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total costs</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>£34,161–£47,933</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>£67,623–£92,265</strong></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case summary 2</th>
<th>Interventions</th>
<th>Intervention costs</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Costs not incurred due to intervention</th>
<th>Cost-consequence proxy economic ratios</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rent arrears</td>
<td>Shelter family support and service co-ordination</td>
<td>£4,804 (Shelter)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cost savings: £28,644 Year 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antisocial behaviour</td>
<td>Addressing Housing Benefit arrears</td>
<td>£600</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cost to benefit ratio: £1 to £2.13 Year 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School exclusion</td>
<td>Parental mental health problems: advocacy for place in supported accommodation</td>
<td>£9,984 cost per year of supported accommodation[^47]</td>
<td>Able to secure supported tenancy: move from bed and breakfast accommodation</td>
<td>Cost of bed and breakfast: £15,560</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental mental health</td>
<td>Secured place in pupil referral unit (PRU)</td>
<td>£10,000 per year (cost premium of PRU over mainstream education)</td>
<td>Permanent exclusion avoided</td>
<td>Annual cost of permanent exclusion from all education: £15,000</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Unsuitable accommodation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Foster care</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total costs</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>£25,388</strong></td>
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<td><strong>£54,032</strong></td>
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</table>

[^34]: Costs not incurred minus cost of interventions.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case summary 3</th>
<th>Interventions</th>
<th>Intervention costs</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Costs not incurred due to intervention</th>
<th>Cost-consequence proxy economic ratios</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Antisocial behaviour</td>
<td>Shelter family support and service co-ordination: including addressing antisocial behaviour</td>
<td>£3,191 (Shelter)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional learning support needs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Possible eviction</td>
<td>Additional learning needs support secured</td>
<td>£2,850 per year</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ASBO not actioned</td>
<td>Administration costs of ASBO: £5,000 per order</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Eviction not actioned</td>
<td>Cost of eviction: £9,500</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Further engagement in criminal justice system prevented</td>
<td>Excludes lifetime estimated costs of potential custodial sentence38</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total costs</td>
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<td>£6,041</td>
<td></td>
<td>£14,500</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case summary 4</th>
<th>Interventions</th>
<th>Intervention costs</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Costs not incurred due to intervention</th>
<th>Cost-consequence proxy economic ratios</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Threat of eviction</td>
<td>Shelter family support and service co-ordination</td>
<td>£4,828 (Shelter)</td>
<td>Threat of eviction removed</td>
<td>Cost of eviction: £9,500</td>
<td>Cost savings:* £7,442 (the potential one-off saving)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children at risk</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No social work intervention</td>
<td>Cost of initial social work assessment and monitoring: £2,750</td>
<td>Cost to benefit ratio: £1 to £2.54 (one-off cost)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Total costs</td>
<td></td>
<td>£4,828</td>
<td></td>
<td>£12,250</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Costs not incurred minus cost of interventions.

34 Care costs differ between Case study 1 and Case study 2 and the child in the current study has additional special needs.
35 It is not possible to estimate the number of domestic violence incidents that might have occurred over the first year. One incident has been assumed for appropriate cost-consequence analysis.
36 It is not possible to estimate the number of racial attacks that might have occurred over the first year. One incident has been assumed for appropriate cost-consequence analysis.
37 The local registered social landlord operates a 50-week rental year. Supported accommodation and bed and breakfast costs have therefore been calculated over this period to ensure comparability.
38 There are no reliable ‘one off costs’ for remand, custodial or community sentences. These depend on assumptions about the nature and duration of sentences. Figures for lifetime costs also vary depending on assumptions made (e.g. length of sentence, repeat offending etc) or the way in which costs are calculated (e.g. cost of sentence/cost of lost earnings to individuals/families). In terms of cost-consequence analysis the most reliable figure therefore relates to the immediate costs of actioning an ASBO.
identified. Secondly, an economic cost could be attributed to those outcomes using:

- internal Shelter financial information on the unit costs of delivering services to individual children and families. This was undertaken on a full-cost basis, covering direct intervention costs as well as the related costs of management time, accommodation etc
- external cost books, which are nationally recognised sources and/or published research materials.39

Following a rigorous sampling process, four case studies were chosen and care was taken to ensure they were representative of Shelter Children’s Services’ interventions as a whole and not ‘atypical’. They each demonstrated the holistic model of working adopted by services offering intensive, tailored packages (eg multiple interventions including advocacy, one-to-one child support, social activity etc). The sampling process involved:

- 17 family interviews in Scotland that represented a 39 per cent sample of closed cases (at February 2011)
- 67 case file reviews in England, that represented a 22 per cent sample of closed cases (at February 2011)
- interviews conducted from this sample framework with Shelter Children’s Services staff and external stakeholders to triangulate the data.

Further information about the sampling process and the full case studies, including detailed information about how costs have been arrived at, can be found in Appendix 4.

The approach taken to economic analysis has been cautious as the social and financial proxy measures of early intervention with children may take considerable time to filter through (eg into late adolescence)40 and there is no standardised tool for accurately measuring long-term economic impacts and outcomes.41 The assumptions made in case studies for the economic analysis are based as far as possible on realistic assessments of outcomes rather than best and worst-case scenarios.

Potential savings have been arrived at, using the following formula:

Total potential costs (ie costs not incurred because of interventions delivered) ÷ actual intervention costs = cost to benefit ratio.

Potential savings have been arrived at, using the following formula:

Table 4 summarises the findings of the Shelter Children’s Services cost-consequence case studies. Case summaries 1 to 3 represent potential cost savings over one year of between £8,459 and £44,335 and case summary 4 identifies a one-off cost saving of £7,442. These figures indicate potential cost savings of between £1.92 and £2.54 for each £1 spent on interventions through Shelter Children’s Services.

This range of potential cost savings is commensurate with research findings into the financial benefits of Supporting People,42 that there is a variety of possible economic scenarios for Shelter Children’s Services’ interventions, depending on the issues being addressed by early interventions and the assumed outcomes of non-intervention.

During the sampling process, it was possible to identify a further 24 cases in England in which potential cost savings to other agencies may have been achieved and, for example, while these were not investigated further, the types of potential savings indicated included:

- savings for agencies that take on the CAF lead professional role coming from Shelter Children’s Services’ co-ordination of Common Assessment Framework assessments and interventions43
- the reduction of tenancy management time for housing providers where families have been supported to maintain their tenancies
- reduced costs to schools that are caused by repeat non-attendance, disruptive behaviour in the classroom and late arrivals.

It is also possible that access for frontline children’s services workers to the Children’s Services Advice Line was a more cost-efficient means of extending the reach of advice services, rather than providing individual outreach sessions or the employment of specialist housing advisers within, for instance, clusters of Children’s Centres. However, this was not investigated as part of the evaluation.

The cost-consequence analysis evidences that even within a relatively short one-year post-intervention time frame, Shelter Children’s Services made a positive contribution to the wellbeing of children and families and to potential economic cost savings from the interventions delivered.

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3 What works: learning from Shelter Children’s Services
Shelter Children’s Services were designed to capture learning as the programme developed. Internal systems were put in place to record risks and issues as they arose and how they were resolved. It was important that successful approaches and mechanisms were identified from the face-to-face delivery elements of the programme so that learning could be captured, packaged and disseminated through the Regional Co-ordinator functions and the national influencing work. The intention was to build up a body of learning of relevance to other providers of services for children and families, and to ensure that learning from the short-term pilot programme was not lost.

In this chapter, a view has been taken across all of the programme interventions, drawing on the body of qualitative evidence captured by the evaluation team over four years and Shelter’s management information, to highlight ways of working that have proved effective in achieving the aim and objectives of the programme. Key learning points have been identified against the programme objectives while the main section of this chapter presents cross-programme learning points. Quotations have been used alongside text to epitomise generic findings.

3.1 Effective approaches against programme objectives

This section highlights approaches and activities that have been effective in contributing to delivery against programme objectives. Most of the effective approaches to homelessness prevention and mitigating the impact of homelessness on children are covered in detail later in the ‘cross-programme learning’ section of this chapter, so key points only are presented in this section. Effective approaches to influencing policy and practice are presented in some detail in this section.

3.1.1 Homelessness prevention

Raising awareness of homelessness and poor housing: What distinguishes Shelter Children’s Services from other children’s services is a focus on homelessness and putting the need for appropriate accommodation at the core of the economic and social wellbeing of children and families. This has raised awareness for other agencies of the links between, for example, living in temporary accommodation and poor educational attainment or behaviour in children and young people.

Peer education has been effective in raising the awareness of young people, teachers, college lecturers and other stakeholders about the issue of homelessness for young people. Interviewees report that the service was able to educate and challenge stereotypes in a really positive way. Taking peer educators, who had experienced homelessness themselves, into schools, colleges and other services supporting young people, to share their experiences, allowed young people to engage directly with the issues and consider their own future life decisions.

‘Shelter has got it right in terms of filling a gap. Education doesn’t always pick up on homelessness, [...] and if they don’t know, they can’t help.’

Teacher, Scotland

Advocacy: Services, particularly in Bristol and Knowsley, were able to advocate on behalf of families with local authorities and housing providers, to secure better or more appropriate accommodation.

Referral for housing advice: All services were able to refer families to Shelter’s advice services or to CSAL for specific help with housing-related issues.

Raising awareness of frontline staff from other agencies: The Regional Children’s Co-ordinators provided awareness-raising sessions to frontline workers and managers in other children’s services and increased their knowledge of housing issues and the housing support available to families. This in turn has increased the confidence of non-Shelter staff to access CSAL and their ability to support clients on housing matters more effectively.
3.1.2 Mitigating the impact of homelessness

**Advocacy:** Services in Newham, Bristol and Scotland provided support to parents with school admissions, ie helping them to secure school places when moving into a new area. Staff in some locality-based services also helped children secure the most appropriate education, eg negotiating with a school about the benefits of moving a child into a pupil referral unit.

**Tailored packages of support for education:** Services where educational attainment was a priority offered children child-focused, individually tailored support through one-to-one sessions, in school and at home, and small group sessions, eg homework clubs.

**Structured approach to improving emotional and social wellbeing:** The approach to developing emotional and social wellbeing that all Shelter Children's Services providing face-to-face work had was empowering and designed to reduce the risk of children and families becoming dependent on staff members. For example, in Newham staff developed a clear structure for enabling children to value themselves more and look to the future, empowering children and families to increase their capacity to address problematic situations and advocate for themselves:

- They provided contact with positive role models and mentors – and organised events where children could meet and talk with them, such as an aspirations day.
- They linked interventions to self-esteem, self belief and praise for children.
- They encouraged children to look ahead and set goals.
- They encouraged children to focus on their skills, strengths, achievements and how it feels to achieve.
- They encouraged the development of personal qualities and skills, such as being good at leading or setting an example.
- They provided rewards, celebrations and certificates.
- They helped children to overcome the fear of not being able to do something.

This kind of approach was used successfully with children, young people and parents.

‘It just took a little bit of support and someone to believe in you for me to get my life back on track. If someone believes in you, you can do things for yourself.’
*Parent, Knowsley*

**Events and celebrations:** Holding events and celebrating children’s and young people’s achievements was an important factor in building self-esteem and confidence. In Newham, an area with below average educational attainment, celebration events were seen as important in raising children’s and young people’s aspirations and belief that they could be successful.

**Opportunities to make friends:** Services provided opportunities for children to engage with other children, build friendships outside school and develop their social skills. They organised social and leisure activities, eg school holiday clubs, trips, sports, art activities and membership of organised groups like the Beavers. In Newham, Knowsley and Bristol, they ensured a range of activities were on offer during school holidays to help to relieve boredom, reduce stress at home, and maintain contact with the children.

**Trips and social activities:** Children and young people interviewed consistently said that what they liked best about Shelter Children’s Services were the trips and activities. Parents also appreciated that Shelter Children’s Services were offering their children experiences they were not in a position to provide. Services ensured that children were involved in planning trips, and they did things the children were interested in. The Groovy Team (a social group, part of the Bristol service) had a devolved budget for organising activities, with staff providing an administrative support role. This model was subsequently picked up and replicated by the Knowsley service.

**Dealing with bullying:** It can be difficult for children to settle in when they change schools during the academic year. Bullying can be a consequence of being the new child in class. Services providing intensive support worked directly with children and young people to change their response to bullying, developing individual coping or avoidance strategies with them. Sometimes their support involved liaison with the school to address the issue with the other children involved. This delivered against ‘personal safety’ as well as ‘emotional wellbeing’ outcomes.

3.1.3 Influencing policy and practice

Shelter Children’s Services have influenced the practice of a range of other professionals providing services to children, young people and families, often by bringing a housing or homelessness dimension to joint-working. The following effective approaches have been identified:

**Awareness raising and advice for frontline workers and managers:** Staff from other agencies were briefed on housing issues and the support options available for families, enabling those services (eg Children’s Centres, voluntary and community sector agencies) to extend their range of service provision to offer a housing or homelessness advice dimension.
Regional co-ordination of the dissemination of learning: Shelter Children's Services’ policy work was rooted in the practical experience of locality-based services, giving Shelter credibility and access to valuable case study material that it used to develop good practice resources based on evidence from ‘on the ground’ delivery of services.

Cross-service co-ordination: In England, Shelter Children's Services worked to develop relationships and protocols between children's services and housing departments, and in Scotland they brokered better cross-service co-ordination between education, housing and children's services.

Test case model: Shelter Children's Legal Service successfully pursued a number of test cases that set precedents for how housing law is applied for certain vulnerable groups of children and young people, and their families. Housing law focuses on the tenant or homeowner, and children have traditionally been seen as victims of the parents’ behaviour. The test cases provide opportunities for the needs of children to be considered as an integral part of the legal process.

Factors that have facilitated the process of influencing change include:

Persistence: Regional Children's Co-ordinators persevered in identifying and recruiting individual champions at a local, regional and national level, to promote key messages from Shelter Children's Services.

Networking: Building on this work with champions, contributing to national and regional networks ensured the issues of child homelessness remained on education, children's services and child poverty agendas.

Responsiveness: Shelter Children's Services were able to respond quickly to changes in policy, such as recent work done on raising awareness of the likely impact of proposed changes to Housing Benefit on vulnerable families.

Case studies: The development of case studies from practice ‘on the ground’ with children and families was seen by external stakeholders as a powerful tool for raising awareness and influencing policy.

Organisational expertise: Shelter’s national reputation of expertise in housing law and homelessness issues, supplemented by experience-based evidence from locality-based services, was effective in building credibility of Shelter Children’s Services.

‘What Shelter did was provide case studies of the impact of temporary accommodation on children and this makes the guidance much more real... and it is practical, rather than good intentions that cannot be delivered at the local level.’
Policy maker, Scotland

3.2 Cross-programme learning

This section presents learning points that have emerged from a cross-programme assessment of the mechanisms that have helped Shelter Children’s Services to achieve the positive outcomes identified in the previous chapter.

Advocacy

Services staff in Newham, Bristol, Knowsley and Scotland were able to advocate with statutory agencies on behalf of children and families who might not know how to navigate the system. They were able to articulate the rights and entitlements of families in language that other professionals would understand and they were able to bring Shelter’s housing expertise and credibility to the table. In this way they gained leverage to help children and families gain more support.

Advocacy often took the form of practical help, eg filling in forms, making online applications for housing, claiming benefits, applying for school places and associated factors such as
school uniform grants and bus passes. Being tenacious and persistent were key qualities for staff in this role.

Many families reported feeling ‘fobbed off’ by statutory agencies previously, but that intervention from Shelter Children’s Services led to the resolution of ongoing and long-standing issues. Advocacy led to improved economic wellbeing, better housing and additional services from other children’s agencies. A strong belief in individual rights, combined with good practical knowledge and understanding of how to negotiate the housing, benefits, and education systems led to advocacy bringing real improvements, and preventing repeated homelessness for some families.

‘Fiona was not always able to fight her case. She wasn’t aware of what she needed to do. [Shelter Children’s Services] acted as an advocate on her behalf. It wouldn’t have been clear how vulnerable she was otherwise.’

**Homelessness Officer, Bristol**

**Tailored packages of support**

What distinguishes Shelter Children’s Services’ model of working is that it strived to fit services around the child and the family, in contrast to other services that are constrained by entrance thresholds and try to fit children and families into their existing and sometimes rigid services. Shelter Children’s Services had the flexibility to respond to all issues facing a family. Although each had priority areas, they were not restricted to one narrow professional perspective. The programme’s objective of mitigating the impact of homelessness gave services that provided intensive one-to-one interventions a wide remit, and allowed staff to develop a good understanding of what other agencies could offer. They were then able to be proactive about putting together tailored packages of support from the relevant services to meet the individual needs of children and families.

Shelter Children’s Services enabled families with multiple issues to prioritise their issues and then address them. This meant long-running cycles of low income, debt, rent arrears, homelessness and non-attendance, and therefore poor achievement at school were tackled in a way that made sense to children and families and outcomes for children improved significantly.

Peer educators’ engagement with the Gloucestershire service tended to be quite fluid. As homeless young people, their lives could sometimes be chaotic and their circumstances could change frequently and very quickly. Shelter Children’s Services staff recognised these factors and developed the service to accommodate fluctuations in their engagement, in an understanding and non-judgmental manner.

Shelter Children’s Services staff delivering tailored packages of support were able to offer dedicated time to families of up to six months, which was sometimes extended in cases where families had particularly complex needs. Over the lifetime of the programme, it was identified that the optimum time-period for intensive interventions to achieve sustained positive outcomes for children was between four and six months.

**Multi-agency working**

Shelter Children’s Services that provided intensive support to children and families were designed to work with other agencies from the start. Shelter recognised that prevention and early intervention required a multi-agency approach and Bristol and Knowsley staff accepted opportunities to become involved with Common Assessment Framework (CAF) processes. This meant becoming part of a ‘team around a child’ and in some cases taking on the lead professional co-ordinating role, to ensure families could access all services they needed and to follow up with partner agencies in an effective and timely manner. The CAF was particularly useful in providing a degree of continuity for families if they moved from one area to another, or between the jurisdictions of de-centralised services. As a result of this kind of multi-agency working, staff reported they had created a much broader group of professionals, including youth workers, to support children, young people and families.

Shelter Children’s Services staff networked with other children’s services providers and developed reciprocal referral systems between themselves and partner agencies. One example of an outward referral would be to Citizens Advice Bureau for help with debt management, others include referrals on to specialist agencies for support with immigration advice, educational psychology or speech therapy, among other services. It was not unusual for Shelter Children’s Services to be in touch with six or seven other agencies involved with one family. Overall, a key attribute of Shelter Children’s Services’ interaction with other agencies was their persistence in following up when agencies had committed to actions on behalf of children or families, to ensure they received services they had been promised. This happened across the programme, in the locality-based services and Shelter Children’s Legal Service.

Services were also able to refer internally within Shelter for housing advice, educational support or family support services, which enhanced the offer they were able to make to children and families.

**Strategies for building effective relationships with families**

Shelter Children’s Services staff recognised that to decrease risk factors for children and achieve positive outcomes, parents had to be engaged. All children accessing the services came from families with a housing or homelessness issue that was contributing to their presenting issue, ie non-attendance at school. It was not possible to address
the non-attendance issue without addressing the housing issue and other aspects of home life that might be creating barriers to the child attending school. Consequently, services were child-centred but also holistic in that they worked with parents to resolve issues such as debt, benefit applications, asylum status, domestic violence, racial harassment, etc.

Building effective relationships with families involved developing clear contracts at the start, identifying the goals of the interventions and setting out expectations on both sides – what children and families were agreeing to do and what support the Shelter Children’s Services staff were agreeing to provide. This approach is familiar to advice providing organisations like Shelter, but less common in family support services where needs assessment does not always lead to a service since it might demonstrate that potential clients do not meet the access threshold.44

Staff had to be patient in building relationships by not giving up on families when initial appointments were broken. They would often deal with families in crisis, or those with chaotic lifestyles, and it required persistence to succeed in working with families who had disengaged from other services. Shelter Children’s Services were persistent in contacting and chasing up parents who were initially reluctant to engage. However, sometimes cases had to be closed due to lack of engagement by parents.

Staff addressed the presenting problem first, e.g. by offering help with welfare benefits or the threat of eviction, alongside the needs of the child. This enabled them to build family trust and then address underlying problems. Staff demonstrated a robust approach to families that focused on providing practical help and emotional support. They did not judge or criticise, which was something families particularly valued, compared with some other agencies they had encountered. Parents and children reported that they trusted Shelter Children’s Services staff because they did what they said they were going to do.

Shelter Children’s Services provided consistency in interventions. While staff worked flexibly and responsively with families, there was a consistency to interventions that meant difficult choices or decisions were not avoided simply to maintain relationships. They also offered a process of planned withdrawal, to avoid causing distress to families by abrupt case closures. A number of strategies were employed, depending on the circumstances of each case, from reducing the frequency of contact over time, and on an agreed basis, to transferring support to volunteers, referral on to other Shelter services or to external agencies for continued support.

Approaches to improved family functioning

Shelter Children’s Services used ‘positive regard’ and ‘praise’ as models. This was a key component in their holistic approach to supporting children and families. Staff also modelled positive behaviour and language patterns. Families and children were praised and encouraged to adopt positive approaches to communication with each other, and other people. Children and parents reported how staff had helped broker improved relationships between siblings. Evaluators observed children encouraging and praising each other in group sessions, following the example set by the staff.

Staff introduced parents to reward-based behaviour management and boundary setting strategies and then supported them to implement them, again by modelling the desired approaches. Many parents described the positive impact of these strategies on home life, that they felt more in control and better able to respond appropriately to poor behaviour by their children. Staff also supported children to manage their own emotions

and behaviour, through intensive one-to-one sessions, which resulted in children’s improved attainment and better integration at school, as well as improved family relationships.

‘She used to get angry dead quick, and she has learnt to think a bit more before she speaks out.’

Parent, Bristol

Use of multi-media and drama

Shelter Children’s Services developed a range of multi-media, art and drama activities to achieve several outcomes:

- To engage children and young people, enabling them to express themselves and raise their aspirations.
- To provide information on homelessness and housing options for young people in a format that was accessible and relevant to the target audience.
- To provide resources for policy makers and service providers in other agencies on homelessness and the concomitant needs of children, young people and families.

The peer education service in Gloucestershire had a multi-media element embedded from the start. A film-maker worked with homeless young people to develop, hone and practice their stories before they went out to deliver sessions in schools. In this way, peer educators could consciously think about key messages they wanted young people to receive from their stories and also about the language they might use. Peer educators reported that they adapted the words they used to the type of school or youth centre they were delivering sessions in, and the age of the young people who would hear their stories. They tailored their delivery to be most effective, and appropriate, to each group they worked with.

Some peer educators agreed to have their storytelling filmed so that they could be left in schools or youth centres as resources to extend the reach of the service, for the reinforcement of key messages, or as an aid to discussion on homelessness. Films about housing options have also been produced, as DVD resources, covering topics such as emergency accommodation, supported housing, and tenancy in the private rented sector. These films have been distributed to schools and youth services and uploaded to Shelter’s website. Peer educators and Shelter Children’s Legal Service also contributed to a Shelter film for young people advising them of their rights in relation to homelessness. Young people visited six to 12 months after a peer education session, and who had seen one of the films, demonstrated good recall of the key content and peer educators.

The Gloucestershire service also worked with students from Gloucestershire University and peer educators to produce a Forum Theatre piece exploring youth homelessness. Young people in the audience could stop the action, ask characters questions, or tell them what to do next. In follow-up evaluation sessions, young people reported that they found this an effective way to explore the implications of leaving home or of making rash decisions. Another peer education innovation was to offer multiple sessions with groups of young people, to reinforce the key messages, and to introduce drama as a tool for engaging young people and bringing the peer educators’ stories to life.

Feedback from young people and peer educators suggests these were powerful engagement mechanisms. However, they were extremely time and resource intensive and limited in their reach, so they were not repeated during the period of the programme.

‘We got to know the children… it really got into their heads… it just felt better, you got the vibe that they learnt more – one girl decided not to leave home because of arguments [as a result].’

Peer educator, Gloucestershire

(about multiple sessions with drama)

The Newham service used innovative multi-media techniques to engage children and young people and to influence decision makers. A successful animation project was used to help raise awareness of issues for children in temporary accommodation and was shown to key local service managers. The project integrated creative techniques into its work in schools. Transition from primary school to secondary school was explored using drama and role play led by a group of older drama peer mentors. Another innovation was working with...
Budget and other flexibilities

Shelter Children’s Services had some budget flexibilities. This allowed services to secure small items for service users (eg pieces of furniture or school uniforms) quickly and without a protracted application process. ‘Quick wins’ could make a substantial impact on the wellbeing of children and families. It was an advantage that sufficient budget had been designed as part of the service function to allow ‘quick wins’ to be achieved.

Staff were also able to negotiate with other agencies for funding grants to help families, or help them apply to charitable trusts, to help remove other practical barriers, ie travel costs for school attendance.

‘Looking back, I think it was some very basic stuff that made a difference – getting the children school uniforms virtually overnight. But because they sorted it out quickly, it made a difference. It’s hard round here. Kids are hard, but you don’t turn up to school dirty – then you will get bullied! So the children went from having clothes on that you would not mop the floor with, to being well-dressed and proud children. They fitted in because they were no longer dirty, and the bullying virtually stopped overnight.’

Learning mentor, Knowsley

Shelter Children’s Services staff were not constrained by long decision-making chains, like some local authority services, and were therefore able to respond more quickly to the needs of children and families. Staff had flexibilities within the parameters of each service’s objectives that allowed them to respond to whatever issues each new complex case might present (ie issues of domestic violence or a disabled parent) and to deal with what was most pressing for the child and family.

Volunteering opportunities

Shelter Children’s Services added value by providing opportunities for new volunteering roles to be developed within the organisation. They pioneered using volunteer mentors to help improve educational attainment, such as reading or handwriting, for children in both Newham and Bristol. The Newham service established a strong relationship with a city law firm that provided volunteers and role models for young people, to help to raise their aspirations. In Bristol, volunteers offered practical services to families, eg redecorating and help with gardening. Peer educators delivered their sessions as volunteers, but they also felt very much a part of Shelter and that helped to improve their self-esteem. There was also learning for Shelter about the policies and procedures needed to work with, and manage, volunteers.

Learning for further investigation

Shelter Children’s Services in Scotland and England provided valuable evidence to reinforce existing literature on best practice for vulnerable families with complex needs. In addition, evaluation research has highlighted two important areas for future investigation:

Firstly, across all services, there was anecdotal evidence of inter-generational homelessness and family histories of an inability to sustain tenancies. Dating back to the 1970s, there is a substantial body of ‘cycles of deprivation’ literature, on inter-generational worklessness, but less is known about familial patterns of homelessness or the impact of repeat temporary accommodation for children and families.

Secondly, Shelter Children’s Services would benefit from more longitudinal research to better understand the longer-term outcomes of its interventions, and to contribute further to the body of evidence on the effectiveness of prevention and early intervention.

45 www.homelesschildren.org.uk
46 The film is also available to watch at: http://www.youtube.com/user/ShelterScotland
48 Work is underway to examine the long-term experiences of people and families moving into private rented accommodation following resettlement through the Sustain project funded by the Big Lottery. Further information is available at http://england.shelter.org.uk/professional_resources/policy_and_research/sustain/about_the_project.
The aim of Shelter Children’s Services was to create a number of opportunities to ensure that housing was recognised as a key factor influencing children’s ability to achieve positive outcomes, and to promote the importance of good housing for the happy and healthy development of children.

Shelter Children’s Services worked with children who were ‘at risk’ due to their circumstances and life experiences, particularly homelessness that creates social, educational and psychological disadvantage. As a programme of prevention and early intervention services, its aim was to improve children’s circumstances, where possible, and to ameliorate the negative impacts of those circumstances before they became significant for the children’s wellbeing.

The objectives of the pilot programme were:

- to prevent children and young people from becoming homeless
- to mitigate the effects of homelessness on those children who have experienced it
- to secure legal, policy and practice changes that produce better outcomes for homeless and badly housed children.

From 2007 to 2011, Shelter Children’s Services have helped 14,258 children and young people. All of those referred to the locality-based services providing intensive support were vulnerable children and families in housing need, including those with complex and multiple needs who accessed tailored packages of support.

Findings of the evaluation indicate this model effectively provided the structure to enable Shelter Children’s Services to achieve its programme aim. Experience and learning from locality-based services ‘grounded’ the programme’s policy and legal work in practice, thereby enhancing its applicability and credibility. The extent to which programme objectives were achieved is considered below.

Preventing homelessness for children and young people

Shelter Children’s Services worked to prevent homelessness at two levels. Primary prevention was achieved by working directly with children and families to secure better accommodation or prevent eviction. Secondary prevention related to providing education to young people, to enable them to make more informed life decisions and prevent future youth homelessness.

The Knowsley, Bristol and Newham services contributed to homelessness prevention by supporting families to both obtain and retain accommodation that met their individual needs. Where families were living in hostels, temporary accommodation, or with friends and family, Shelter Children’s Services supported them to either get on local authority or housing association waiting lists, or move into more suitable temporary accommodation. When families were offered permanent accommodation, Shelter Children’s Services helped to ensure the transition into their new home was successful and sustainable by helping families deal with practicalities, eg getting furniture, decorating or clearing the garden. Where families were at risk of eviction, or multiple moves, due to antisocial behaviour of children and family members, staff were successful in addressing the causes of poor behaviour and enabled children and families to retain their tenancies.

Follow-up research with young people who received education on homelessness found that, up to a year after participating in peer education sessions, they retained key messages that might contribute to preventing homelessness, such as the need to have a plan before leaving home and that help with housing was available from local agencies. Peer educators increased their ability to advocate for themselves about their housing needs.

Shelter Children’s Services helped to prevent repeat homelessness by working with families in a holistic way that enabled them to address some of the fundamental and long-term causes of homelessness. Staff worked with social workers and other agencies to assist parents to resolve issues that were often the cause of their homelessness, eg debt, benefit issues, asylum status, domestic violence, and racial harassment.

There is no one intervention emerging from the pilot services as most effective in preventing homelessness. However, the persistence of Shelter Children’s Services in advocating on behalf of children and families ensured they received services they were entitled to, and those which prevented homelessness.

Mitigating the effects of homelessness on children

Shelter Children’s Services aimed to mitigate the harmful effects of homelessness on children and to improve outcomes for children in homeless families. The programme
focused on achieving improvements in four main outcome areas – education outcomes, social and emotional outcomes, increased participation and economic wellbeing outcomes.

The Scotland and Newham services aimed primarily to improve school attendance and attainment for homeless children. Evidence shows they were effective at increasing attendance for the children they worked with by helping families to overcome the physical, financial, and emotional barriers they encountered. Interviews with teachers and parents, and information recorded in case files, indicated improvements for children in literacy, handwriting, maths, and personal organisational and learning skills.

Emotional and social wellbeing can be severely affected by homelessness and poor housing and can have long-term implications for the ability of children to aspire and achieve. Evaluation evidence shows that following contact with services children were better able to manage their feelings, demonstrated improved behaviour, had increased in confidence and had better social skills. Interventions were also successful in achieving increased parental resilience and improved how families functioned overall.

Evaluation evidence shows that children and young people were provided with a range of ways to participate through Shelter Children’s Services and that their participation in decision making about the services, and in local consultation and influencing activities, increased their skills and confidence levels. There was also some evidence of changes in practice in other agencies as a result.

Services that provided intensive support were effective in addressing economic issues for children and families, as identified through a needs assessment. They helped with housing applications and benefit applications, sign-posted people for specialist support such as debt advice, and accessed short-term funds to meet immediate needs. Other services provided work experience or volunteering opportunities to support homeless people towards future employment.

The programme has been successful in its aim to engage the most vulnerable and chaotic families, including those from ‘hard to reach’ and excluded communities. Services have achieved this by being persistent, consistent and service-user focused.

**Securing legal, policy and practice changes**

Shelter Children’s Services aimed to highlight the impact of homelessness on children and to promote recognition of their needs within national, regional and local policy and practice, moving away from children being seen as incidental victims of their parents’ actions.

Evidence shows that the programme’s influencing work has resulted in attitudinal change and increased awareness of the impact of poor housing on children among frontline staff in housing, children’s services and education. At a strategic level, it has helped broker better service co-ordination, particularly between housing and children’s services. By contributing to national and regional networks and structures, Shelter has been able to raise the profile of housing in general, and child homelessness in particular, on the preventative and child poverty agendas.

Both in England and Scotland, development of case studies and using the voices of children talking about their experiences of homelessness were identified as a particularly powerful tool for influencing policy. Development and dissemination of a range of good practice guidance and briefings has created a useful resource collection for the wider community of children’s services and a valuable legacy for a relatively short-life programme. Some influencing activity has effected lasting change, such as
the inclusion of housing needs in Child Poverty Needs Assessments.

The work of Shelter Children’s Legal Service gave other agencies a framework through which to consider what happens to children when adults are made homeless. Three successful test cases brought by the legal service ensured a greater security of tenure for families in ‘rent back’ accommodation, access to social housing and related Housing Benefits for families with children born in the UK applying for indefinite leave to remain, and clarification of the rights of vulnerable young people within the criminal justice system to a Social Services assessment and support in housing matters. In Scotland, Shelter Children’s Services successfully lobbied for the inclusion, as a statutory right, of clauses in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 to ensure children who were homeless or in temporary accommodation could access additional learning needs services.

Locality-based services have also influenced people they are working with, building on local relationships as a way of sharing knowledge about how poor housing and homelessness affects children’s life chances.

Value for money

Four case studies of intensive interventions with children and families with complex needs were selected for cost-consequence analysis to assess the value for money aspects of the programme. Three of the case studies indicate potential cost savings over one year, to a range of agencies, of between £8,459 and £44,335 and the fourth case study identifies a one-off potential cost saving of £7,442. For every £1 invested in Shelter Children’s Services’ intensive support, potential savings of between £1.92 and £2.54 could be achieved. The cost consequence analysis indicates that even within a relatively short one-year post-intervention timeframe, Shelter Children’s Services have contributed to the wellbeing of children and families and achieved potential cost savings from the interventions delivered.

Delivering change for children and families

Shelter Children’s Services achieved positive outcomes for children and families by providing flexible and tailored packages of support. Advocacy and proactively co-ordinating inter-agency working were key to helping children and families get what they were entitled to and to addressing the underlying causes of homelessness. Shelter Children’s Services built effective relationships with families and improved how families functioned, eg by modelling ‘positive regard’. Services also used creative and multi-media techniques to engage children and young people and added value by involving volunteers. The learning from the programme about what works is of relevance to both statutory and voluntary sector agencies working in education, children’s services and housing.

The programme successfully combined support for children and families with strategic and policy influencing activity that stressed the impact of homelessness and poor housing on children and brought about changes in policy and practice.

Future plans

Overall, Shelter Children’s Services delivered against its programme objectives and generated, and disseminated, models of effective working with children, young people and families. In the future, the Children’s Service Advice Line will continue to provide advice and support for frontline children and family services professionals. Shelter is also actively seeking funding to develop a programme of services that build on the Knowsley model by drawing on the learning from this service. The good practice identified through the programme49 will be used to inform policy and practice and the development of future services.

49 All publications can be found at http://england.shelter.org.uk/professional_resources/childrens_service/childrens_service_publications
### Table A: Approaches employed by Shelter Children’s Services to deliver interventions

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<th>Approaches</th>
<th>Bristol</th>
<th>Gloucestershire</th>
<th>Knowsley</th>
<th>Newham</th>
<th>Scotland</th>
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<tr>
<td>Forum theatre and drama workshops</td>
<td></td>
<td>●</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General support activities</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group work and user-involvement activities</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td></td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework clubs and homework support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing advice</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td></td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information and signposting</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td></td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multimedia resources</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td></td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-to-one placement with a volunteer</td>
<td>●</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-to-one planned meetings with child</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td></td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer education by homeless young people</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer support</td>
<td>●</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone advice for children’s workers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing training workshops</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>●</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal casework</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>●</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer involvement</td>
<td>●</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>●</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Shelter Children’s Services is a complex programme made up of 11 discreet yet interconnected pilot services, with shared overall aims but individual sets of objectives and targets. These services became active at different points over a four-and-a-half-year delivery period. Each service has operated in different local, regional and national contexts and with different delivery mechanisms.

The overall aim of the evaluation was to monitor whether the programme met its stated aims and objectives:

- to mitigate the effects of homelessness on those children who have experienced it
- to prevent children and young people from becoming homeless
- to secure legal, policy and practice changes that produce better outcomes for homeless and badly housed children.

Specifically, the evaluation was to assess:

- the extent to which Shelter Children’s Services improved outcomes (education, safety, health, positive contribution and economic wellbeing) for homeless children
- the extent to which Shelter Children’s Services have prevented homelessness among families with children
- the extent to which children from harder-to-reach and excluded communities have benefited from the services
- the extent to which Shelter Children’s Services have contributed to effective changes in the policy and practice of mainstream agencies working with children and to changes in the law
- the economic benefits of Shelter Children’s Services, in particular the locality-based services.

As the programme was testing a number of disparate approaches to supporting homeless children, young people and families, the evaluation team adopted a ‘Theories of Change’ (ToC) framework to ensure consistency and methodological rigour over time and to be able to respond to a changing policy and financial environment. This framework (summarised in Diagram 1) was designed for the USA specifically for the evaluation of complex, multi-component interventions. Theories of Change aims to facilitate the identification, in longitudinal studies, of the changes affected by such programmes, the rationale which informs practice, and to identify the short, medium and long-term outcomes which can be attributed to specific projects or interventions where multiple agencies may be involved.

Within the overarching Theories of Change framework, the evaluation adopted an interpretative methodological approach that enables the exploration of different stakeholder perspectives and the use of multiple data sources to address a range of historical, attitudinal and behavioural issues. Thus, data triangulation enabled converging narratives and themes from Shelter Children’s Services to emerge, with different data collection methods building a multi-dimensional but corroborative account of the programme.

Given its longitudinal nature, a staged approach has been taken to the evaluation. The following reports have been produced over the evaluation period:


**Table B: Summary of evaluation activity 2007–2011**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Number of people</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual interviews – Shelter management, staff teams and external stakeholders</td>
<td>Bristol, Newham, Knowsley, Scotland, Gloucestershire, CSAL, Shelter/Policy etc</td>
<td>9, 9, 10, 47, 18, 4, 54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual interview with children</td>
<td>Bristol, Newham, Knowsley, Scotland Policy</td>
<td>16, 9, 1, 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual interviews with parents/family members</td>
<td>Bristol, Newham, Knowsley, Scotland</td>
<td>13, 10, 14, 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus group with parents</td>
<td>Bristol x 1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus group with children/young people</td>
<td>Bristol x 1, Newham x 1, Knowsley x 2, Gloucestershire x 6</td>
<td>14, 8, 8, 54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family interviews to inform cost-consequence case studies</td>
<td>Scotland x 17, England x 23</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus group with staff</td>
<td>Bristol x 3, Newham x 1, Knowsley x 2, Gloucestershire x 2, Legal service x 2, Regl Co-ordinators x 8, Scotland x 4</td>
<td>9, 5, 5, 10, 48, c.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online surveys with schools receiving peer education</td>
<td>Gloucestershire x 2</td>
<td>21 responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site visits</td>
<td>Scotland x 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project steering group meetings</td>
<td>Knowsley x 1, Scotland x 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff meeting observations/attendance</td>
<td>Knowsley x 2, Scotland x 3, KTTF x 2</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation of service delivery</td>
<td>Bristol 6 events, Newham 3 events, Knowsley 1 event, Gloucestershire 4 PE sessions</td>
<td>c. 90, c. 100, c. 120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow-up postal questionnaires to parents 3 to 6 months after case closure</td>
<td>Bristol, Newham</td>
<td>22/90 responses = 24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback surveys with young people, 6 months to 1 year after receiving peer education</td>
<td>Gloucestershire</td>
<td>33 responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone conferences with Shelter</td>
<td>Knowsley x 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case file reviews</td>
<td>Knowsley x 15, Legal x 3, Cost-cons x 46</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project management meetings</td>
<td>x 12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data gathered from these stages then informed the final, summative, evaluation report of the whole programme.

To assess longer-term outcomes, a small-scale closed case follow-up was undertaken of families that had received intensive Shelter Children’s Services support (22 families).

Similarly, follow-up sessions and a questionnaire survey were carried out with young people (47 over both methods) who had received peer education. This was done within six months to a year after delivery, to identify the key messages that had been retained and which might contribute to preventing homelessness.

A mixed methodology has been applied throughout. Quarterly reviews of internal Shelter reports have been undertaken, together with reviews of data generated by Shelter’s internal outcome-monitoring systems. All quantitative data was analysed using SPSS, while qualitative interview and focus-group information was interrogated through NVIVO to ensure consistency of thematic analysis.
Appendix 3  Programme achievement against targets

Chart 1: Shelter Children’s Services offering intensive support: achievements against targets  * = revised target

Shelter Children’s Services – Bristol, Knowsley, Newham and Scotland
Achievement against output targets by area

| Bristol * | Data collected Jul 2007 to Jun 2010 (100% project life) |
| Knowsley | Data collected Dec 2008 to Jun 2011 (86% project life) |
| Newham * | Data collected Jun 2007 to May 2010 (100% project life) |
| Scotland * | Data collected Apr 2008 to Mar 2011 (100% project life) |

* = revised target
Charts 2 and 3: Gloucestershire peer education

Shelter Children's Services – Gloucestershire
Achievement against output 1 target
(Data collected June 2007 to July 2010 – 100% project life)

Chart 4: Children's Service Advice Line (CSAL); regional reach

Children's Service Advice Line
Regional breakdown of agencies who have accessed the service
Data collected from September 2007 to June 2011* (84% project life)

Chart 5: Children's Service Advice Line: performance against targets

Children's Service Advice Line
Achievement against output targets
Data collected from September 2007 to June 2011* (84% project life)

* Includes data from pilot phase (Sep 2007–Mar 2008) and core delivery data from April 2008
One of the issues that emerged from analysis of the data recorded by the three services was that risk indicators were attributed against different ECM outcomes depending on the circumstances of each child and family, or on the target objectives of each service. The impact of this, however, was that recording of risks on the monitoring system was inconsistent. For instance, antisocial behaviour in the classroom or playground could affect a child’s access to school and the risk could be recorded under ‘enjoy and achieve’ by one service and ‘making a positive contribution’ by another.

Chart 6: Shelter Children’s Legal Service: performance against target

Shelter Children’s Legal Service
Achievement against case outputs and children supported targets
Data collected from October 2007 to September 2010 (100% project life)

Table C: Risk indicators against ECM used in the assessment process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ECM outcomes</th>
<th>Aim 1</th>
<th>Children and young people are physically healthy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aim 2</td>
<td>Children and young people are mentally and emotionally healthy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aim 3</td>
<td>Children and young people choose to live healthy lifestyles and choose not to take illegal drugs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stay safe</td>
<td>Aim 4</td>
<td>Children and young people are safe from maltreatment, neglect, violence and sexual exploitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aim 5</td>
<td>Children and young people are safe from discrimination and bullying and are safe from crime and antisocial behaviour in and out of school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aim 6</td>
<td>Children and young people have security, stability and will be cared for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoy and achieve</td>
<td>Aim 7</td>
<td>Children and young people attend and enjoy school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aim 8</td>
<td>Children and young people achieve stretching national educational standards at primary and secondary school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aim 9</td>
<td>Children and young people achieve personal and social development and enjoy recreation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make a positive contribution</td>
<td>Aim 10</td>
<td>Children and young people engage in decision making and support the community and environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aim 11</td>
<td>Children and young people engage in law-abiding and positive behaviour in and out of school and develop positive relationships and choose not to bully or discriminate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achieve economic wellbeing</td>
<td>Aim 12</td>
<td>Children and young people develop self-confidence and successfully deal with significant life changes and challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aim 13</td>
<td>Children and young people live in decent homes and sustainable communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aim 14</td>
<td>Children and young people live in households free from low income</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The risks identified at the initial assessment, for children with complex needs, were recorded on the monitoring system and re-assessed by the staff member assigned to the case at quarterly intervals. The monitoring system calculated the changes in risk levels for children between the initial and final assessments.
Assessment at inception to identify risks against ECM outcomes
Quarterly assessments of progress towards reducing risks
Case closure assessment to measure impact

For each child, each identified risk was scored between 1 and 3 against the likelihood of risk and the seriousness of risk to achieve an overall level of risk between 1 and 9 (likelihood x seriousness). See Table D for the risk calculation mechanism used by staff.

Chart 8 shows the aggregated changes in risk levels for each service across their lifetime (Knowsley 86 per cent) against the broad ECM outcomes. It shows that overall substantial reductions in risk for the children with complex needs were recorded, which indicates positive outcomes for children and families. However, it should be noted that there was a variety of outcomes in individual cases that has been masked by the aggregation of the data.

Table D: Calculation of risk

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>L I K E L I H O O D</th>
<th>3 Probable</th>
<th>3 Low risk</th>
<th>6 High risk</th>
<th>9 High risk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 Possible</td>
<td>2 Low risk</td>
<td>4 Medium risk</td>
<td>6 High risk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Unlikely</td>
<td>1 Low risk</td>
<td>2 Low risk</td>
<td>3 Low risk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IMPACT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Fairly serious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Serious</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Knowsley 86 per cent of service lifetime.
Chart 8: Aggregated ‘start’ and ‘end’ risks against ECM outcomes

Shelter Children’s Services – England

Aggregated ‘start’ and ‘end’ risks against ECM outcomes for children who received intensive support over programme lifetime*

A decreased rating is an improvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Start risk</th>
<th>End risk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Achieve economic wellbeing</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make a positive contribution</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoy and achieve</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stay safe</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be healthy</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Monitoring outcomes in Scotland

In Scotland, the outcomes-monitoring system was designed to record levels of improvement, rather than reductions in risk. The services had a particular focus on improving educational attendance and achievement for homeless children. Children underwent an initial assessment that identified their need for support against a set of ‘areas for improvement’ indicators. These indicators included ‘soft’ outcomes, ie improvements in parental attitudes to education, as a way of measuring the ‘distance travelled’ towards improving children’s educational attendance and attainment. Following interventions from Shelter Children’s Services, children were re-assessed to determine levels of improvement against their identified needs.

Chart 3 in the main report (page 19) shows the proportion of cases that identified need against the set of improvement indicators at the point of initial assessment. The indicators demonstrate that the services aimed to effect improvements both within school and in the home environment, and that engaging with parents was identified as a key factor in achieving improvements in educational outcomes for children.

At the initial assessment stage, staff assessed children’s needs against the improvement indicators on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 was a high level of need and 5 was a very low level. This information was recorded on the monitoring system. At a later point, children were re-assessed to see if their levels of need had improved.

Chart 9 (overleaf) presents the collated data from all completed cases across the three services in Scotland. It shows the aggregated levels of improvement against identified need across all indicators and demonstrates substantial improvements in two areas where more children were assessed as having a need for support, namely school integration and homework, which suggests services were targeted on achieving those outcomes. Two other areas with higher levels of need identified were bullying and parent attitudes to education. There were overall improvements in these areas too, although the figures suggest services were more successful in achieving anti-bullying outcomes in school than in the home environment, as in partnership with the education system they had more opportunity to influence children’s behaviour than parents alone.

* Knowsley 86 per cent of service lifetime.
Learning for operational management: Shelter demonstrated good practice by putting systems in place to capture and quantify the outcomes of Shelter Children’s Services from the beginning of the programme. The monitoring systems have generated quantifiable evidence of outcomes achieved by its services, but not fully captured the extent, variety and impacts of those delivered directly to children and families. Staff reported that the information produced by the monitoring systems, which they received as quarterly reports, did not fully reflect the complexity of their work and the systems were not flexible enough to capture the elements of the programme that enabled their interventions to be successful for children and families.

The following learning points for future consideration have been identified:

- Input of data was local yet managed centrally, which appears to have created a lack of ownership of the data by services. Staff were provided with training in how to access the information, but it was complex and not something that they did regularly, so found it difficult to engage with the monitoring system.

- The diverse nature of interventions across services led to some inconsistency in recording against ECM outcomes, i.e., addressing housing need appeared under ‘economic wellbeing’ indicators in Bristol and ‘stay safe’ ones in Knowsley. Clear guidance on where to record interventions would have enabled more effective cross-service comparisons.

- It would be helpful to introduce a way of checking how assessments on the monitoring systems are recorded, to ensure consistency in inputting data and increase confidence in the evidence of how risks have been reduced or improvements made.

The learning from Shelter’s experiences with these systems could be shared with children’s services networks and inform current debate, highlighted in the recent Allen Report (2011) exploring the need for linked assessment across agencies.

**Chart 9: Overall outcome improvements: Scotland**

Collated ‘start’ and ‘end’ ratings for each outcome indicator used for educational and intensive support to children

(Data collected April 2008 to March 2011 – 100% project life)

NB An increase in rating is an improvement
Appendix 4 Cost-consequence case studies

‘A child who is rounded, capable and sociable has a great chance in life. Those denied these qualities have a bad start and few of them recover. During their lifetimes they can impose heavy penalties on themselves and generate major costs, financial and social, for their families, local communities and the national economy.’

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in undertaking economic analysis of social interventions. This trend has gained momentum with the recession and national deficit reduction strategies, and the recent Allen Report (2011) has secured cross-party support for early intervention with vulnerable children and families as an effective investment to secure long-term savings for the Exchequer.

A range of methodologies have been developed to assess the financial impact of preventative initiatives and early interventions. These range from cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness analysis to social auditing and social return on investment. There are controversies and methodological difficulties surrounding such value-for-money tools reflected in wide variations in assumed savings and efficiencies – depending on the tool used and the rigour of its application.

For example, Depaul UK (2011) argues that £1 invested in preventing youth homelessness can generate a direct cost saving of £26. Other recent economic-analysis research into early interventions with vulnerable families arrives at more conservative analyses of economic benefit. For example the evaluation of the Islington Adolescent Multi Agency Support Service (Brodie et al 2009) estimated a saving of £1.80 per £1 spent. Be Birmingham (formerly Birmingham Strategic Partnering) has estimated that investment in parenting programmes could generate cost savings of between £2 and £4 for every pound spent.

Research carried out for Action for Children by the New Economics Foundation estimated that in its Caerphilly Family Intervention Project and East Dunbartonshire Family Service (targeted interventions designed to catch problems early and prevent them from recurring) between £7.60 and £9.20 worth of social value was generated for every £1 invested.

Given the above range of potential economic outcomes of early interventions, the current evaluation of Shelter Children’s Services has adopted a cost-consequence analysis framework. This allows for a more ‘rounded’ economic analysis, one that recognises the positive benefits of an intervention may have substantial long-term costs for the state – and vice versa. The model, therefore, moves beyond one that is savings driven. This is perhaps best illustrated in Shelter Children’s Legal Service involvement in the Clue v Birmingham City Council case where indefinite leave to remain and access to social housing and other benefits could have long-term costs to the state, but represented a positive outcome for the family.

Therefore the approach taken to economic analysis has been rigorous and cautious, in that the social and financial proxy measures of early intervention with children may take some considerable time to filter through (eg into late adolescence) and there is no standardised tool for accurately measuring long-term economic impacts and outcomes.

The evaluation team looked at four individual case studies. In three cases a one-year time frame has been adopted in terms of identifying the costs and benefits of Shelter interventions, and for the final case study savings are identified as a result of early intervention.

The key challenges in evaluating Shelter Children’s Services, in financial terms, can be summarised as follows:

- Monitoring and recording systems for the initiative were intended as tools for recording (case files) and quantifying (monitoring system) positive outcomes in non-monetary terms.

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5 The Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People’s Services (2010), Cost Effective Children’s Services, C4EO, London (online www.c4eo.org.co.uk/costeffectiveness.
Intensive interventions involved multi-agency responses where time taken by, and cost implications of, external agency interventions are unknown.

Short interventions and signposting (the majority of Shelter Children’s Services’ child and family support work beyond intensive interventions) to other agencies may have been the most cost-effective, but outcomes of referral are not recorded and attributing these to Shelter Children’s Services would be problematic.

Care was taken, using monitoring data on closed cases where outcomes had been reported, to ensure case studies were not ‘atypical’ and reflected Shelter Children’s Services’ child and family interventions as a whole. The case study selection process involved:

- 17 family interviews in Scotland. This represents an 18 per cent sample of the total target for complex/one-to-one support activity and a 39 per cent sample of closed cases (44) as of February 2011
- Case file reviews in England of which 24 (22 per cent) were undertaken in Newham, 20 (9 per cent) were completed in Bristol (where case files are substantially more detailed) and 15 (22 per cent) were completed in Knowsley (involving 12 families from the 67 cases closed as of February 2011)
- Interviews were conducted from this sample frame with Shelter Children’s Services workers, children and families, and external stakeholders to triangulate the data.

The methods for calculating the programme’s financial intervention costs at an hourly rate for these cases are outlined in Table E. These are based on full-cost recovery models developed by the Association of Chief Officers of Voluntary Organisations and agreed by the Charity Commission.16

### Table E: Shelter Children's Services cost analysis calculation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cost component</th>
<th>Calculation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The total hourly intervention cost: £32.24 and equals:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>annual intervention costs per employee</td>
<td>annual intervention costs per employee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>÷ working weeks a year (44)</td>
<td>÷ working hours a week (37.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>where annual intervention costs per employee equals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>individual staff salary + on costs such as National Insurance and pension</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of indirect costs (office accommodation, travel etc) ÷ number of staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of management project management overhead ÷ number of staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of central/organisational support costs ÷ number of staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Shelter 2010

The costs of interventions to external agencies identified in case studies are drawn from nationally recognised health and social care cost books and/or published and peer-reviewed research publications.

In order to calculate the cost-consequence proxy economic ratio, and to identify the potential saving to other services and agencies resulting from Shelter Children’s Services’ interventions, the following equation was used:

\[
\text{Total potential costs} \div \text{actual intervention costs} = \text{cost to benefit ratio.}
\]

The assumptions made in the case studies are based, as far as possible, on realistic commentaries on outcomes rather than best and worst-case scenarios. For the purposes of confidentiality, the names of family members have been changed throughout case studies.

---

### Cost-consequence case study 1

#### Case study 1: Summary of costs, outcomes and cost-consequence proxy economic ratios

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case summary</th>
<th>Interventions</th>
<th>Intervention costs</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Costs not incurred due to intervention</th>
<th>Cost-consequence proxy economic ratios</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Domestic violence</td>
<td>Shelter family support and service co-ordination: initial focus on sustaining tenancy</td>
<td>£4,217 (Shelter)</td>
<td>Tenancy sustained</td>
<td>Eviction cost: £9,500</td>
<td>Cost savings £33,462–£44,332 per annum (ie costs not incurred minus cost of intervention)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children at risk</td>
<td>Respite care package secured</td>
<td>£26,079–£39,851(^{17}) per year</td>
<td>Child sustained in own home</td>
<td>Foster or residential care: £44,335–£68,325 per year</td>
<td>Cost to benefit ratio: £1 to £1.92–£1.97 in Year 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial harassment</td>
<td>Successful Disability Living Allowance claim</td>
<td>£3,865 per year</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debt/tenancy at risk</td>
<td>Inter-agency interventions: domestic violence/racial attacks support (7 agencies involved)</td>
<td>Costs unknown</td>
<td>Repeat domestic violence prevented(^{18})</td>
<td>Cost of domestic violence to criminal justice, health and other agencies: £13,000 per incident</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Racial attacks prevented(^{19})</td>
<td>Cost of racial attacks to criminal justice and other agencies: £788–£1,440 per incident</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total costs</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>£34,161–£47,933</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>£67,623–£92,265</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Throughout these case studies, values used in the cost-consequence calculations are denoted in bold.

**Family profile**

The family consists of mother, Jane, and six children. The three older daughters do not live with their mother all the time. The oldest boy (aged 10) has autism. He has had a social worker and been accommodated by the local authority in the past. The two youngest boys (aged nine and seven) live with their mother and both have life-threatening allergies.

**Presenting issues**

The family were referred by the Council Tenancy Support Service, which had spent approximately 50 hours on the case over a six-month period before referring to Shelter Children's Services. The whole family has suffered trauma due to domestic violence. They have had to leave the family home many times. The father was convicted for violence against Jane and sent to prison in 2008. The children's problematic behaviour reflects the trauma they have experienced.

As a result of the domestic violence the family were rehoused and moved from a multicultural area of Bristol where they lived for 14 years, to a predominantly white working class area. The children are mixed race and the family experienced racial harassment. The family had large debts, including Housing Benefit arrears, that affected their chances of being rehoused and at the point of referral they had very limited income.

\(^{17}\) Care costs differ between Case study 1 and Case study 2, and the child in the current study has additional special needs.

\(^{18}\) It is not possible to estimate the number of domestic violence incidents that might have occurred over the first year. One incident has been assumed for appropriate cost-consequence analysis.

\(^{19}\) Given that it is not possible to estimate the number of racial attacks that might have occurred over the first year, one incident has been assumed for appropriate cost-consequence analysis.
Shelter Children's Services' interventions and direct costs

Shelter Children's Services incurred £4,217 worth of direct costs comprising:
- 100 hours intensive support over a six-month period at a total direct cost of £3,224.00
- 42 hours of ongoing support for a further six months at a total direct cost of £903.00.

The family had complex and long-term needs requiring a multi-agency response. Shelter Children's Services acted as the lead professional co-ordinating access to services as well as providing the family with direct emotional and practical support to enable Jane to address the children's challenging behaviour.

During this time referrals were made to seven agencies to resolve debt and benefit issues, ensure security of housing tenure, provide intensive parenting and victims-of-domestic-violence support, counselling to address the trauma of racial harassment, and secure respite care for the oldest son. Given that the cost of these services is unknown they have been excluded from the cost-benefit calculations.

Outcomes on closure

As a result of direct interventions with the family and the wider co-ordinated support package, on case closure the following outcomes had been achieved:
- Family income maximised. Benefit claims were transferred into Jane’s name and higher-rate Disability Living Allowance was secured for the oldest boy.
- Secure respite care was found for the eldest boy. This enabled all three children to stay at home rather than be taken into care.
- Bankruptcy proceedings cancelled the family’s debts, which meant that they were able to maintain their tenancy.
- The family feel safe enough to stay in their home. When the father is released from prison he will not be able to threaten the family again. Successful inter-agency working secured an injunction preventing him from returning to the family home on his release.

Cost-consequence ratios

Shelter Children's Services undertook a key lead professional role in co-ordinating services for the family. Research has demonstrated that this can be a cost-effective intervention model. The family have seen an increase in weekly income through a successful Disability Living Allowance claim, worth £3,865 annually.

The service also secured respite care for the child with autism at an estimated cost of between £26,079 and £39,851 per annum (excluding benefits and dependant on age). The provision of respite care means that the child with autism can continue to live at home rather than being placed in foster or residential care, at an estimated cost of between £44,335 and £68,325 per annum. This represents an annual saving of between £18,256 and £28,474 on the cost of full-time supported residential care.

In such a complex case, other economic indicators suggest potential savings (as below):

- Repeated incidents of domestic violence (total estimated cost per incident to legal, health and related services) – £13,000 to £73,437 per case. For the purposes of this cost-consequence the lower figure for the cost of a single incident of domestic violence has been used to reflect a cautious approach to identifying potential cost savings.
- Racial attacks – the cost to the individual of a racial assault is estimated at £788 and £1,440 to health and criminal justice services per incident. The range of costs for a single racial assault has been used in the cost-consequence calculation because single-incident costs vary depending on severity.
- Legal costs to landlord associated with eviction – £9,500.

Cumulatively, in such a complex case, this suggests direct service cost-reductions of between £33,462 and £44,332 in the first year, post-intervention, and rising the longer positive outcomes are sustained (eg no repeat domestic violence).

This represents potential cost saving over the first year, post intervention of between £1.92 and £1.97 for each £1 spent on Shelter Children Services’ interventions.

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24 £13,000 cost is drawn from Warwickshire County Council’s Domestic Violence Strategy for 2008–11.
25 £13,000 cost is drawn from Warwickshire County Council’s Domestic Violence Strategy for 2008–11.
Family profile

Bill is a single parent with one 14-year-old son, James. At the point of referral, Bill was unemployed, reported as having mental health difficulties, homeless and living (along with James) with his parents.

Presenting issues

The family presented in housing need with rent arrears of £1,000. Intensive work by Shelter Children’s Services indicated there was a series of underlying problems, linked to James’s behaviour and his fathers’ alcohol dependency. James was repeatedly late for school and excluded from some lessons because of his behaviour, which could be extremely aggressive, and there was the threat of an ASBO being put in place following an incident at a local shop. Social Services had been involved in the past because of repeated absences from the home. During early interventions the relationship between Bill and his parent’s broke down and he moved to bed and breakfast accommodation for 10 weeks. Subsequently, supported housing was secured for the family.

However, Bill found it increasingly difficult to manage his son’s behaviour and James was under threat of school exclusion and temporarily placed in foster care.

Shelter Children’s Services’ interventions and direct costs

Shelter Children’s Services incurred £4,804 worth of direct costs comprising of 149 hours of support delivered across a 12-month period. Interventions focused initially on resolving rent arrears issues. A back payment of £600 Housing Benefit was secured, with Bill agreeing to pay the remaining arrears of £3.05 per week. This enabled Shelter Children’s Service to secure supported accommodation for Bill. Despite intensive one-to-one work with James, his behaviour in school continued to deteriorate and the service was involved in negotiating a transfer to a pupil referral unit. In addition, family mediation (provided by Shelter Children’s Services) enabled James to move from temporary foster care to return to live with his mother.

Outcomes on closure

On closure, the threat of an ASBO had been lifted. James had left temporary foster care to return to live with his mother, and a place had been secured at a pupil referral unit.

Cost-consequence case study 2

Case study 2: Summary of costs, outcomes and cost-consequence proxy economic ratios

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case summary</th>
<th>Interventions</th>
<th>Intervention costs</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Costs not incurred due to intervention</th>
<th>Cost-consequence proxy economic ratios</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rent arrears</td>
<td>Shelter family support and service co-ordination:</td>
<td>£4,804 (Shelter)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antisocial behaviour</td>
<td>Addressing Housing Benefit arrears</td>
<td>£600</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School exclusion</td>
<td>Parental mental health problems: advocacy for place in supported accommodation</td>
<td>£9,984 cost per year of supported accommodation</td>
<td>Able to secure supported tenancy: move from bed and breakfast accommodation</td>
<td>Cost of bed and breakfast: £15,560</td>
<td>Cost savings (costs not incurred minus cost of intervention): £28,644 Year 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental mental health</td>
<td>Secured place in pupil referral unit (PRU)</td>
<td>£10,000 per year (cost premium of PRU over mainstream education)</td>
<td>Permanent exclusion prevented</td>
<td>Annual cost of permanent exclusion from all education: £15,000</td>
<td>Cost to benefit ratio: £1 to £2.13 Year 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsuitable accommodation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Return to foster care prevented</td>
<td>Cost of foster care: £23,472 per year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster care</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total costs</td>
<td></td>
<td>£25,388</td>
<td></td>
<td>£54,032</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

29 From Public Sector source

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Bill was continuing to pay off rent arrears and was living in supported accommodation.

**Cost-consequence ratios**

Interventions focused on school behaviour and housing need.

In terms of education, James was moved from mainstream education to a pupil referral unit. This has a cost implication for the education service with mainstream education allocations at £4,621 per pupil locally and referral unit annual costs at £14,664, with the additional £10,000 cost premium of the pupil referral unit included in the cost consequence analysis.\(^{30}\) This was a negotiated process that pre-empted permanent exclusion from school with potential savings of £15,000 per year, with estimated lifetime costs of up to £300,000 per pupil.\(^{31}\)

In terms of accommodation and housing status, following a period in bed and breakfast the family secured permanent accommodation at an estimated local rental-rate of £97 per week, with additional home support for the father at £95 per week.\(^{32}\) Over a 50-week rental period (operated by the registered social landlord), this represents an accommodation cost of £9,984 compared to bed and breakfast accommodation at local rates of £15,560 over the same period. This represents a housing cost-reduction of an estimated £4,576, with accommodation being both less expensive and more suitable in terms of meeting the father’s mental health needs without further specialist intervention. After a period in foster care, James returned to live with his mother.

Such research suggests that potentially higher savings could result from Shelter Children’s Services’ interventions with the family if the positive outcomes achieved are sustained beyond the one year analysed in the cost-benefit ratio. However, given James’s age, home situation and challenging behaviour, assuming long-term positive outcomes may be problematic.\(^{33}\)

Taking a more immediate economic analysis, looking at the 12 months after the case was closed and making the assumption that James was not returned to foster care for up to 12 months (which costs £23,472 per annum),\(^{34}\) a further saving of £17,660\(^{35}\) (above foster care costs) in the first year would be made if James was taken into local authority residential care. This is an unlikely scenario given his age and circumstances. This represents a potential cost saving over the first year, post-intervention of £2.13 for each £1 spent on Shelter Children’s Services’ interventions, with this figure likely to rise substantially the longer home relationships remain stable.

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30 Department for Education data (2011) Local Authority Education Grant (UGG data) by local authority area.
32 Curtis C. (2010) Unit Costs of Health & Social Care, PSSRU, University of Kent, and local Registered Social Landlord rent data. Costing assumes two rooms in bed and breakfast at the cheapest local rate of £20 per person per night.
34 Curtis C. (2010) Unit Costs of Health & Social Care, PSSRU, University of Kent.
35 Ibid.
# Case study 3: Summary of costs, outcomes and cost-consequence proxy economic ratios

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case summary</th>
<th>Interventions</th>
<th>Intervention costs</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Costs not incurred due to intervention</th>
<th>Cost-consequence proxy economic ratios</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Antisocial behaviour</td>
<td>Shelter family support and service co-ordination: including addressing antisocial behaviour</td>
<td>£3,191 (Shelter)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cost savings (costs not incurred minus cost of intervention): £8,459 Year 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional learning support needs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cost to benefit ratio: £1 to £2.40 Year 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possible eviction</td>
<td>Additional learning needs support secured</td>
<td>£2,850 per year</td>
<td>ASBO not actioned</td>
<td>Administration costs of ASBO: £5,000 per order</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eviction not actioned</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cost of eviction: £9,500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Further engagement in criminal justice system prevented</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Costs of potential custodial sentence (which are not included/estimated in this analysis)36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total costs</strong></td>
<td><strong>£6,041</strong></td>
<td><strong>£14,500</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

36 There are no reliable “one-off costs” for remand, custodial or community sentences. These depend on assumptions about the nature and duration of sentences. Figures for lifetime costs also vary depending on assumptions made (eg length of sentence, repeat offending etc) or the way in which costs are calculated (eg cost of sentence/cost of lost earnings to individuals/families). In terms of cost-consequence analysis the most reliable figure therefore relates to the immediate costs of actioning an ASBO.

**Family profile**

Mary is a lone parent in her 40s. She has two adult daughters and two boys, John and James aged 14 and 13 years respectively. Mary was recently rehoused following problems with neighbour disputes.

**Presenting issues**

Mary contacted Shelter Children’s Services with concerns about her younger son’s behaviour. He was repeatedly leaving home to return to the estate they previously lived on and had become involved in antisocial behaviour. Police had witnessed criminal damage and placed an Acceptable Behaviour Order on James. Several subsequent incidents were reported, one involving smoking cannabis and an incident of potential arson. Mary was sceptical about these reports, stating her son had chronic asthma and therefore did not smoke and at the time of the reported arson incident James had been at home.

**Shelter interventions**

Shelter Children’s Services incurred £3,191 worth of direct costs comprising of 99 hours of support delivered across a 10-month period.

Interventions focused initially on James’s behaviour. However, over time a series of fundamental issues were identified. Mary found it difficult to set clear boundaries with the children and needed support with behaviour management and parenting skills. In addition it emerged James had underlying learning difficulties and found understanding simple instructions and paying attention in class difficult. Shelter Children’s Services negotiated additional learning support for James with the education social worker. They also liaised with local police who agreed that two of the reported incidents of antisocial behaviour could have been cases of mistaken identity.

**Outcomes on closure**

No incidents of antisocial behaviour were reported in the four months prior to case closure and no further action was taken by police to secure
James was given 20 hours of additional educational support per month, while he remained in mainstream education, at an estimated additional cost over one year of £2,850.37

Cost-consequence analysis

This case has two clear short- to medium-term cost consequences. Firstly the family’s tenancy has been maintained, making a saving against eviction costs for the social landlord estimated at £9,500.38 Secondly, the immediate risk of an ASBO has been removed. The application and initial administration costs of an ASBO are estimated at £5,000.39 This, however, excludes the costs of any subsequent breaches and the risk of criminalisation and custodial sentences that have been put at £300,000 per offender.40

This represents a potential cost saving over the first year, post-intervention of £2.40 for each £1 spent on Shelter Children’s Services’ interventions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case summary</th>
<th>Interventions</th>
<th>Intervention costs</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Costs not incurred due to intervention</th>
<th>Cost-consequence proxy economic ratios</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Threat of eviction</td>
<td>Shelter family support and service co-ordination</td>
<td>£4,828 (Shelter)</td>
<td>Threat of eviction removed</td>
<td>Cost of eviction: £9,500</td>
<td>Cost savings (costs not incurred minus cost of intervention): £7,442 (the potential one-off saving)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children at risk</td>
<td>No social work intervention</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cost to benefit ratio: £1 to £2.54 (one-off cost to benefit ratio)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total costs</strong></td>
<td><strong>£4,828</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>£12,250</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

37 Based on national average hourly rates for additional pupil support staff of £14.25 per hour.
39 Ibid.
Family profile

Annie lives with her two children Mike (aged 13) and Mark (aged 12) and her new boyfriend in a housing association property. The boy’s father, Brian, lives locally and is in regular contact.

Presenting issues

The family was referred to Shelter Children’s Services by the landlord. The flat was reported as being in a very poor state of repair, there had been repeated reports of noise nuisance from neighbours, and it was these factors along with rent arrears that led the family to be in danger of breaching tenancy conditions. There were also reports of antisocial behaviour by both children (although not followed up by police) and both children had been on the at-risk register and were known to Social Services. Subsequently it emerged that both boys had been identified with delayed learning needs by their school. Annie was identified as having enduring mental health problems.

Shelter interventions

Shelter Children’s Services incurred £4,828 worth of direct costs comprising 141 hours of support delivered across a seven-month period.

Immediate actions sought to address the family’s housing conditions. This involved securing emergency grant monies to purchase carpets to dampen noise in the flat, and redecorating the children’s bedrooms. Staff liaised closely with the landlord to monitor household noise, and with Social Services on childcare issues as there were concerns both about the children’s hygiene and increasing social isolation. Staff brokered a tenancy transfer between the father and Annie, and Brian moved in to take over the children’s care. He also agreed to pay off the rent arrears and took on responsibility for improving the condition of the house.

Outcomes on closure

Following the transfer of tenancies, no further incidences of noise nuisance were reported and the threat of eviction due to tenancy breaches was removed. Rent arrears were paid off and Shelter Children’s Services staff and the local school reported a substantial improvement in the children’s hygiene and social skills. Both children were removed from the at-risk register.

Cost-consequence ratios

In economic terms, the immediate outcome of this case is the removal of the threat of eviction due to tenancy breaches. This represents estimated savings to the social landlord (for legal costs associated with eviction) of £9,500.41 Further savings are likely in the medium term, given that the children were not returned to the at-risk register because multi-agency concerns around hygiene and behaviour had been addressed. A return to the register, at a minimum, would require regular social-work intervention costing an average of £55 per hour.42 Assuming 50 hours of social work intervention (a realistic supposition of the time likely to be spent on assessment and ongoing monitoring), this represents a cost of £2,750 excluding any additional support or the potential for fostering or other care arrangements outside the family.

This represents a potential cost saving of £2,54 for each £1 spent on Shelter Children’s Services’ interventions.

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Until there’s a home for everyone

In our affluent nation, tens of thousands of people wake up every day in housing that is run-down, overcrowded, or dangerous. Many others have lost their home altogether. The desperate lack of decent, affordable housing is robbing us of security, health, and a fair chance in life.

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