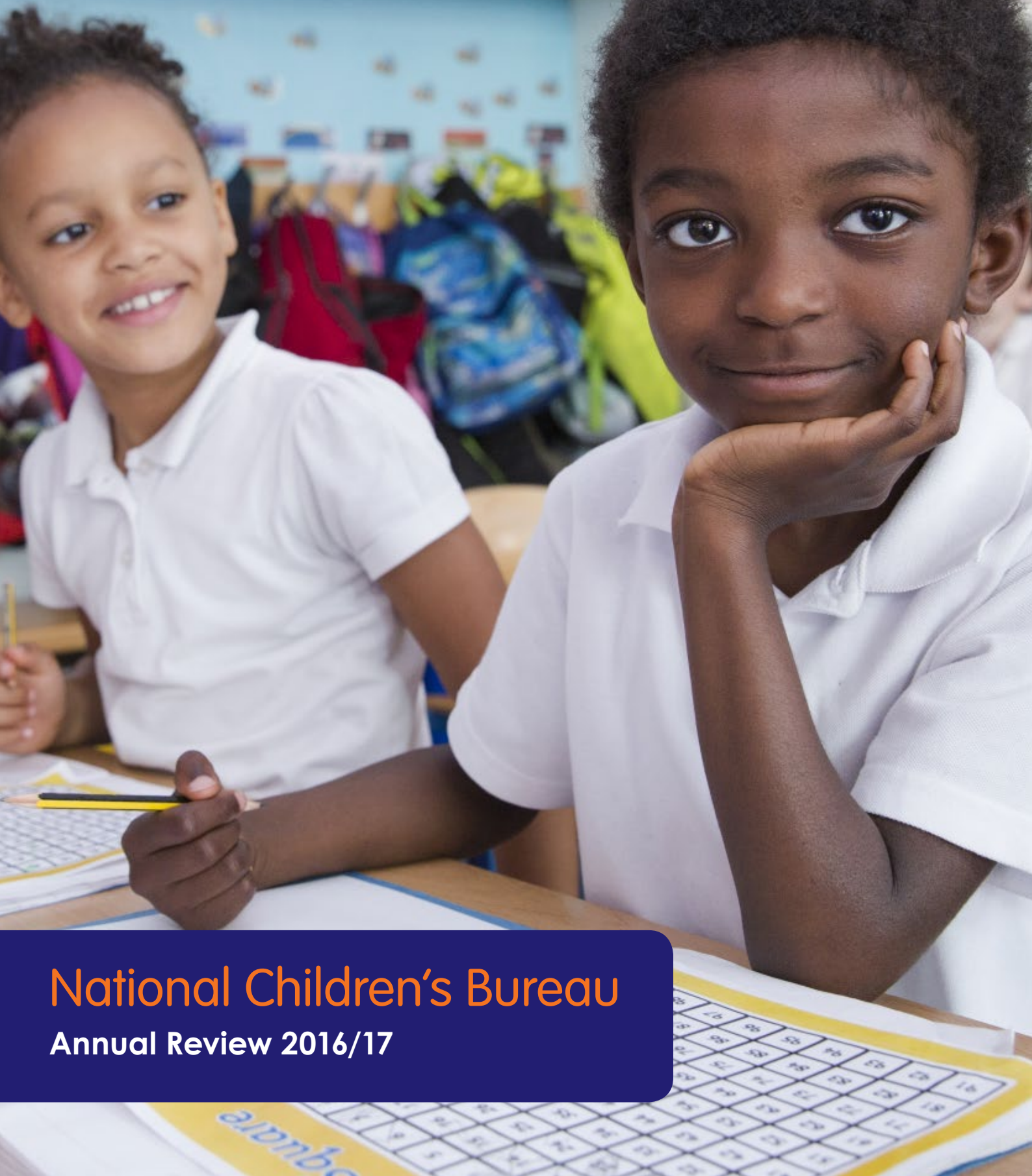




National Children's  
Bureau



National Children's Bureau

Annual Review 2016/17



# Contents

Welcome from our Chief Executive	3
How we make a difference	4
The NCB family	5
Early years	6
Health and wellbeing	9
Vulnerable children	11
SEN and disability	14
Our finances	16
Thanks to our funders and supporters	18

# Welcome from our Chief Executive

Too often, children's rights and welfare are threatened by poor quality, patchy provision of services. Over the last year, continued austerity measures have reduced services while demand has risen ever higher. We believe that children and young people deserve care and support in the right place and at the right time, based on need rather than resources.

NCB's work for more than fifty years has demonstrated that the best services are informed by robust evidence about what works including how young people experience those services. We work with professionals to deliver change on the ground and then feed these insights to central government. NCB's network also enables us to evaluate the impact of government policy on children. This is NCB's 'virtuous cycle'.

We are proud to set the agenda on behalf of children who face the most challenges. Dame Christine Lenehan, Director of the Council for Disabled Children at NCB, conducted a major review of the care of disabled children with challenging behaviour and complex mental health needs on behalf of the Department of Health. With the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Children, we coordinated a year-long inquiry into the challenges facing social care services for vulnerable children and families. In its 30th anniversary year, the Sex Education Forum celebrated the government's acceptance that every child, in every type of school, should receive relationships and sex education. And the Childhood Bereavement Network spearheaded a high-profile campaign against benefits cuts for widowed parents and their children, gaining extensive national media coverage and prompting scrutiny of the issue in Parliament.

Our practical support at local level includes the provision of Information, Advice and Support Services and Independent Support contractors across every local authority in England, to give guidance and advice to disabled children, young people and their families.

NCB Northern Ireland's significant policy development work saw it organise a global summit attended by more than 500 professionals, sharing its expertise in outcomes-based accountability, an innovative approach to making measurable changes in communities which has been adopted by the Northern Ireland Executive.

Our work is vital, diverse and insightful. We champion the rights of children, young people and their families in England and Northern Ireland in partnership with many other organisations, supported by funders who share our vision. So, thank you for your support and I hope this snapshot of our achievements in 2016/2017 inspires you to engage with the work of NCB.

**Anna Feuchtwang**  
Chief Executive



# How we make a difference

NCB aims to build a better childhood for every child in England and Northern Ireland, by championing their right to be safe, secure and supported. Our breadth of knowledge and depth of expertise mean we're unique in our approach to delivering effective change.

## Our approach

We work with children and families to research the issues they face, use this knowledge to change policy and legislation, and support staff to do a better job. We involve children, young people and families in every aspect of our work.

### Using evidence-based learning

We base everything we do on the best research available.

This year our research included the first analysis of the numbers of disabled children with complex needs and life-limiting conditions in over a decade, estimating that numbers have swelled dramatically by more than 50% since 2004, from 49,300 to 73,000 children and young people.



### Influencing policy

We engage with policymakers on a range of pressing social issues. On behalf of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Children, we coordinated a year-long inquiry into the social care of children and young people. We learned that 90% of senior managers find it increasingly difficult to provide children in need, including those with disabilities, with the support they require. We called for an urgent government review of resourcing for children's social services and early intervention work.



### Supporting the workforce

It's vital that the children's workforce have the skills and confidence to meet the challenges they face. We trained thousands of staff across the country supporting disabled children and their families, worked with hundreds of early years practitioners to improve their understanding of how literacy develops, and trained teachers and other school staff on the essential elements of effective relationships and sex education.



## Involving children and young people

This year we made available hundreds of opportunities for children and young people to have their say. Young NCB members and our Young Research Advisors responded to government consultations and inquiries, spoke at conferences, participated in focus groups, contributed to programmes of work across the NCB family, and created videos and blogs on the issues that are important to them.

# The NCB family

A number of specialist membership groups and networks are part of NCB.



## Council for Disabled Children

We are the umbrella body for the disabled children's sector, bringing together professionals, practitioners and policy-makers. Our vision is a society in which disabled children and young people's rights are respected, their aspirations supported and life chances are assured.

[www.councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk](http://www.councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk)



## Lambeth Early Action Partnership (LEAP)

LEAP, which we formed in 2014 from funding from the Big Lottery Fund, is an innovative partnership programme committed to transforming early years services across four wards in Lambeth, so that every child has a better start in life, from pregnancy up to their fourth birthday.

[www.leaplambeth.org.uk](http://www.leaplambeth.org.uk)



## Childhood Bereavement Network

We are the hub for organisations and individuals working with bereaved children, young people and their families across the UK. We share a vision that all children and young people in the UK, together with those caring for them, can easily access a choice of high quality local and national information, guidance and support to enable them to manage the impact of death on their lives.

[www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk](http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk)



## Anti-Bullying Alliance

We are a coalition of organisations and individuals united against bullying. We work to stop bullying and create safe environments in which children and young people can live, grow, play and learn. ABA coordinates Anti-Bullying Week each November and is the national voice for evidence-based practice on the prevention of bullying. We have a growing membership and are seen as the national voice on bullying.

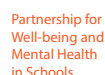
[www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk](http://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk)



## Sex Education Forum

We are a thriving membership organisation working together for quality Relationships and Sex Education (RSE). Established in 1987, we believe that ALL children and young people have the right to good RSE. Our members include schools, colleges, local authorities, NHS trusts, local and national organisations and individuals. Our work on RSE is underpinned by evidence, a rights-based approach and the expressed needs of children and young people.

[www.sexeducationforum.org.uk](http://www.sexeducationforum.org.uk)



## Partnership for Wellbeing and Mental Health in Schools

Our vision is an education system where good wellbeing and mental health are at the heart of the culture and ethos of all schools, so that children and young people – supported by their teachers – can build confidence and flourish.

[www.ncb.org.uk/partnership-well-being-and-mental-health-schools](http://www.ncb.org.uk/partnership-well-being-and-mental-health-schools)

# Early years

Every child must get the best start in life because the early years are the foundation on which a person's future life chances are built.

## Better early childhood development

Our Making it REAL programme raises children's early achievement in literacy and mathematics. We give practitioners effective ways of working with parents to support children's early learning by creating a rich home learning environment. Through Sharing REAL with Parents we delivered a series of workshops for volunteer parents who want to learn more about their own children's early literacy development.

89%

of children taking part in Making It REAL share books regularly at home (compared to only 65% when they start the programme)\*

This year, we have worked directly with more than 1490 children and families and trained more than 1364 practitioners in the REAL approach, working in:

- 18 local authorities across England, funded by the Department for Education (DfE). Our new project Supporting the Early Home Learning Environment, is funded by the DfE and run in partnership with the National Literacy Trust and PEEPLE
- Jersey, as part of our Early Childhood Development Project funded by UBS Optimus Foundation
- Lambeth, through our LEAP work funded by the Big Lottery Fund's 'A Better Start' initiative
- Colchester, through the Early Literacy Matters project, funded through the Essex Community Foundation
- Blackpool and Sandwell, where the Foyle Foundation funded Sharing Real with Parents and the development and dissemination of 500 parent resource packs
- Oldham, funded by The Sutton Trust in partnership with the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, through the Parental Engagement Fund

## Better outcomes in pregnancy and the early years

We lead the Lambeth Early Action Partnership (LEAP), one of five 'A Better Start' programmes funded by the Big Lottery in England. Our work improves the health and development of children from pregnancy to age four in four wards of Lambeth - some of the most diverse communities in the country.

We aim to improve diet and nutrition, communication and language, and social and emotional development, and we launched ten services to deliver better outcomes in these areas.

Parental attachment is a key building block of healthy child development and LEAP's Parent and Infant Relationship Service has supported 135 families to encourage positive early relationships.

We have provided training opportunities for 212 practitioners through the Brief Encounters and Family Partnership Model programmes; the Community Activity and Nutrition team has supported 103 pregnant women to make healthier choices; and we have tested our Making it REAL offer, supporting 40 families and trained 27 practitioners to enhance literacy development in settings and through home visits. The Community Engagement Strategy commenced its implementation supported by the Parent Champions programme.

Our services are co-designed in collaboration with our community and local partners, with most still in the testing phase. We held 24 service design workshops, as well as focus groups with parents, and tested service prototypes with professionals and service leads for future interventions including overcrowded housing, breastfeeding peer support and oral health.





NCB also hosts two development and learning advisors who disseminate the learning and support the implementation of the Big Lottery's A Better Start programme across five areas in England, including LEAP. In Northern Ireland (NI) we continued to champion Outcomes Based Accountability, a system for improving the impact of projects and services.

With the system now a part of the programme for government in Northern Ireland, we convened a global summit in Belfast to share learning. The First and Deputy First Ministers opened the summit, and 480 delegates attended, with 38 contributors from the UK, Australia, New Zealand and the USA.

Our Northern Ireland team also helped create the first infant mental health strategy for NI, and conducted a strategic review of nursery provision for children with special needs on behalf of the Education Authority. In Jersey, we delivered the first year of an ambitious three-year programme funded by UBS Optimus Foundation to build the capacity of the early years sector and to improve outcomes for young children and their families. We supported 113 practitioners and policy makers to use an outcomes-focussed approach for early years services, 144 early years staff attended our Knowledge Makes Change seminars and disseminated information to 616, improving understanding of 'what works' when supporting families.

Our training for Making it REAL was delivered to early years practitioners from 34 settings, benefiting 524 parents and 587 children and we recruited Champions

to become local trainers, as we pass skills on and embed the approach.

*\* In our DfE funded Making it REAL project, 89% of children who received two home visits and attended events showed this improvement.*

### Working with funders

#### Sutton Trust and Esmée Fairbairn Foundation

NCB has successfully delivered the second year of the Making it REAL (Raising Early Achievement in Literacy) project in Oldham. The project is one of five funded by the Parental Engagement Fund to build the evidence base for parental engagement interventions.

Oldham Council and NCB have worked together since 2009, and schools and nurseries have seen positive changes in levels of children's literacy and parents' confidence in supporting their children's learning.

The funding from the Sutton Trust and Esmée Fairbairn Foundation allowed the highly promising early literacy work in Oldham to develop further. The project's focus on home visits has led to greater parental involvement and improvement in the home learning environment for children and their younger siblings, and greater connection with support services for families.



# Health and wellbeing

All children have a right to high quality healthcare which meets their needs and supports them to live their lives to the full.

## Influencing health policy

We have an active role in shaping health policy. As a leading member of the Children and Young People's Health Alliance, we campaign for the government to prioritise and invest in child health.

Working as a strategic partner to the Department of Health, we brought together the perspectives of the voluntary and community sector (VCS), health partners and young people, to influence policymakers.

In 2016/17, one of our priorities was childhood obesity, producing guidance exploring the opportunities for partnership working between local authorities, education providers and VCS organisations as they support the Childhood Obesity Plan for Action.

## Supporting children with long-term conditions and complex health needs

School nurses make an important contribution to the health of all children, and in particular those with long-term health needs.

We published research which showed that high workloads and having to work across numerous schools risk undermining the confidence of school nurses to provide essential support to children with health conditions like diabetes, asthma, eczema and epilepsy.

We worked closely with NHS England, and the Council for Disabled Children advised their Children with Complex Needs Board so that local commissioners and providers of health services could improve what they offer to these children, young people and their families.

As a voluntary sector partner of NHS England's Integrated Personalised Commissioning (IPC) programme, we champion the importance of personalised care for those with the most complex needs.



## Mental health and wellbeing

NCB is focused on improving the mental health and emotional wellbeing of children and young people. Working with our Partnership for Wellbeing and Mental Health in Schools, we launched a groundbreaking toolkit setting out the key components of a 'whole school' approach, where emotional wellbeing becomes a priority for the whole school community.

Our Director of the Council for Disabled Children, Dame Christine Lenehan, led a review focussing on the care of children and young people with challenging behaviour, learning disabilities and/or autism who experience a mental health crisis. *These Are Our Children* featured on ITV national news in January 2017.

We adapted our unique Expert Parent Programme to focus specifically on supporting parents of disabled children and young people to understand and engage with mental health services.

So far, more than 300 parents and carers have attended our workshops, with many more accessing our resources online. Parents who attended workshops reported improved interactions with health professionals, with more outcomes-focussed conversations.

Young NCB members played an active role on the advisory group of the ETHOS project, led by the University of Roehampton. The project looks at the effectiveness of school-based counselling services and whether they provide good value for money.

300+

parents took part in our Expert Parent Programme supporting parents of disabled children to engage with mental health services.

## Improving relationships and sex education

In the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of the Sex Education Forum, we were at the forefront of the campaign that brought about the introduction of compulsory Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) in all secondary schools, and Relationships Education in all primary schools. The Forum will now play a key role in helping schools prepare for curriculum change.

The Sex Education Forum's training events included a flagship programme in East Sussex where we provided training, advice and ongoing support, equipping secondary schools across the county to meet pupils' needs for informative, reliable and high quality RSE.



# Vulnerable children

Every child deserves to grow up free from harm and in a stable and nurturing home environment, with the same opportunities to succeed as every other child.

## Improving children's social care

We coordinated a year-long inquiry with the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Children, which highlighted the crisis engulfing children's social care.

The report, *No Good Options*, found the system is struggling to keep pace with rising demand, with nearly 90% of senior managers finding it increasingly difficult to provide children in need with the support they require. NCB and Catch 22 brought together influential figures across the children's sector, to publish *Rethinking Children's Services*, a collection of essays putting forward ideas for the transformation of children's social care over the next decade.

The Council for Disabled Children also focused on ensuring children with special educational needs and disabilities get high quality social care. We trained more than 470 practitioners across nine regions on the role of social care in delivering SEND reforms, as well as creating training and resources on a range of other topics, including safeguarding disabled children, and a legal guide to short breaks. We worked with four local authorities to develop new approaches to assessments for social care, and published two reports on learning from the Social Care Innovation programme.

## Children in care

NCB conducted a study of how children's homes are adopting new regulations and Quality Standards, finding that while reactions to the new ways of working were, overall, quite positive, managers encountered a number of challenges, including around measuring progress and outcomes.

Our research report, *From Care to Independence*, for The Prince's Trust, examined what works in supporting care leavers, so they can make the transition to independent living smoothly, and avoid risks such as social exclusion, homelessness, unemployment or involvement in crime.

## Missing education

We published new research on the thousands of children missing education, with funding from Lankelly Chase. Our report shed light on the complex reasons why some children are not learning, either at school or at home, sharing our findings at a roundtable in Parliament. We look forward to contributing to statutory guidance being published in 2018.

## Improving policy

We played a key role in securing significant change in national policy, persuading the government to drop the controversial 'innovation' clauses in the Children and Social Work Bill that would have allowed local authorities to be exempt from certain child welfare requirements.

## Working with funders

### The True Colours Trust

The True Colours Trust has supported the Childhood Bereavement Network since 2011. By funding CBN's core costs, the True Colours Trust has ensured we have a platform to amplify the voices of the sector. This has led to a step change in the awareness of grieving children's needs, with media attention and parliamentary discussion focussed on bereaved children.

The support of the True Colours Trust has given us the flexibility to continue our work advocating for bereaved children, young people and those supporting them, and supporting professionals to find and share knowledge and resources. We will continue to work with the True Colours Trust next year to improve the quality and coverage of bereavement services for the 40,000 children a year who are bereaved.

We also persuaded the government to pilot mental health assessments for all children in care, and to place an explicit duty on local authorities to promote wellbeing as part of the new Corporate Parenting Principles.

## Tackling bullying

The Anti-Bullying Alliance (ABA) held a successful Anti-Bullying Week in 2016, reaching three-quarters of schools in England. The Ben Cohen StandUp Foundation and SafeToNet sponsored the week. Young NCB members played an integral part, leading an influential social media campaign from Twitter's headquarters in London. Anti-Bullying Week was also a key focus of the Northern Ireland Anti-Bullying Forum, which is hosted and chaired by NCB in Belfast.

Anti-Bullying Week reached

75%

of schools in England

In partnership with the Council for Disabled Children, ABA launched the All Together programme, helping schools to prevent and respond effectively to the bullying of all children, with a special focus on disabled children and those with SEN. ABA also worked closely with a group of young people with learning disabilities to produce a film on how they use the internet.

ABA and the Sex Education Forum secured funding from the Government Equalities Office for work to reduce homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying. The Learn Equality, Live Equal programme has worked with 43 schools across 12 local authorities, with a further 80 schools recruited to take part next year.

## Supporting bereaved children

The Childhood Bereavement Network (CBN) led a high-profile campaign to persuade the government to rethink its plans to cut financial support for three-quarters of widowed parents and their children. Our campaign received widespread national media coverage and we gave oral evidence to the Work and Pensions Select Committee, persuading the government to extend payments from 12 to 18 months.



This year, 84 practitioners attended our seminars on supporting children and young people before a death, and we coordinated the second Children's Grief Awareness Week, publishing data showing the differences in how bereaved and non-bereaved children share their worries with others.

## Next Steps

In Northern Ireland, we completed Next Steps, a research study exploring the experiences of young people at risk of disengaging from education, training or employment.

We worked with young people, practitioners and government departments to create the first Northern Ireland online safety strategy for children, on behalf of the safeguarding board and the NI Executive.

And we established the LINKS network, offering recipients of the Big Lottery Fund's Empowering Young People grant the chance to improve their skills in engagement and participation, and in the use of evidence, measuring impact and influencing policy.

## Working with funders

### SafeToNet and the Ben Cohen StandUp Foundation

Anti-Bullying Week plays a firmly established role in the school calendar, and in 2016 the support of SafeToNet and the Ben Cohen StandUp Foundation enabled us to encourage children, teachers and parents to use their 'Power for Good' to stop bullying.

Our funders were amongst attendees of a parliamentary reception where our first Power for Good Awards were made to teachers nominated by their pupils.



# Special educational needs and disabilities

Disabled children are children first. They are people with their own lives to lead and ambitions to achieve.

## Understanding the needs of disabled children

With growing concerns that services are not keeping pace with the rising numbers of disabled children with complex needs or life-limiting conditions, the Council for Disabled Children (CDC) and the True Colours Trust published the first analysis of the numbers of these children in over a decade, estimating that numbers have increased dramatically by more than 50% since 2004, from 49,300 to 73,000 children and young people.

For the Department of Health, we conducted the Lenehan Review of the care of disabled children and young people with challenging behaviour and complex mental health needs, and called for urgent action to prevent these children being institutionalised at an early age, at huge cost to the taxpayer and with little ambition for improving their lives.

## Putting the SEND reforms into practice

As Strategic Reform Partner to the Department for Education, the Council for Disabled Children plays a key role in implementing the SEND reforms introduced by the Children and Families Act.

This year our work has focused on: improving joint working between education, health and social care services; growing disabled children and young people's participation in the assessment and planning process; and supporting the longer-term cultural changes that are demanded by the reforms.

We developed a new approach to increasing access and inclusion in the early years for young children with SEN and disabilities, and held four training events in partnership with Face Front Inclusive Theatre, which used performance to explore the Mental Capacity Act with more than 80 practitioners.

## Local advice services for families, children and young people

CDC helps children, young people and families navigate the system of care through the support we give to Local Information Advice and Support Services (IASS) and Independent Support (IS) contractors across England.

The Independent Support programme worked with

57,408

disabled children, young people and their families during 2016/17

## Building the participation of disabled children and young people

We aim to give young disabled people a voice and our two-year Making Participation Work programme, funded by the Department for Education, is making sure they are heard. This year, we held three national awareness raising events, facilitated 12 training workshops with local authorities and CCGs, and our young people-led social media campaigns reached 3.5 million people.

## Recognition for years of service

In recognition of her work as a champion of the rights of disabled children, Christine Lenehan, Director of CDC, was made Dame in the Birthday Honours List. She accepted the honour on behalf of all the children, young people and families whose lives are affected by disability or special educational needs.



# Our finances

NCB's financial performance continues to be strong. We have taken a proactive approach to ensuring financial stability in challenging economic times, restructuring the organisation and diversifying our income base.

Although our overall headline income is £19.4m, we pass a significant proportion of that directly to partner organisations to deliver the Independent Support programme, amongst others. The vast majority of our underlying remaining income of £6.4 million is tied to the direct delivery of grant and contract-funded projects.

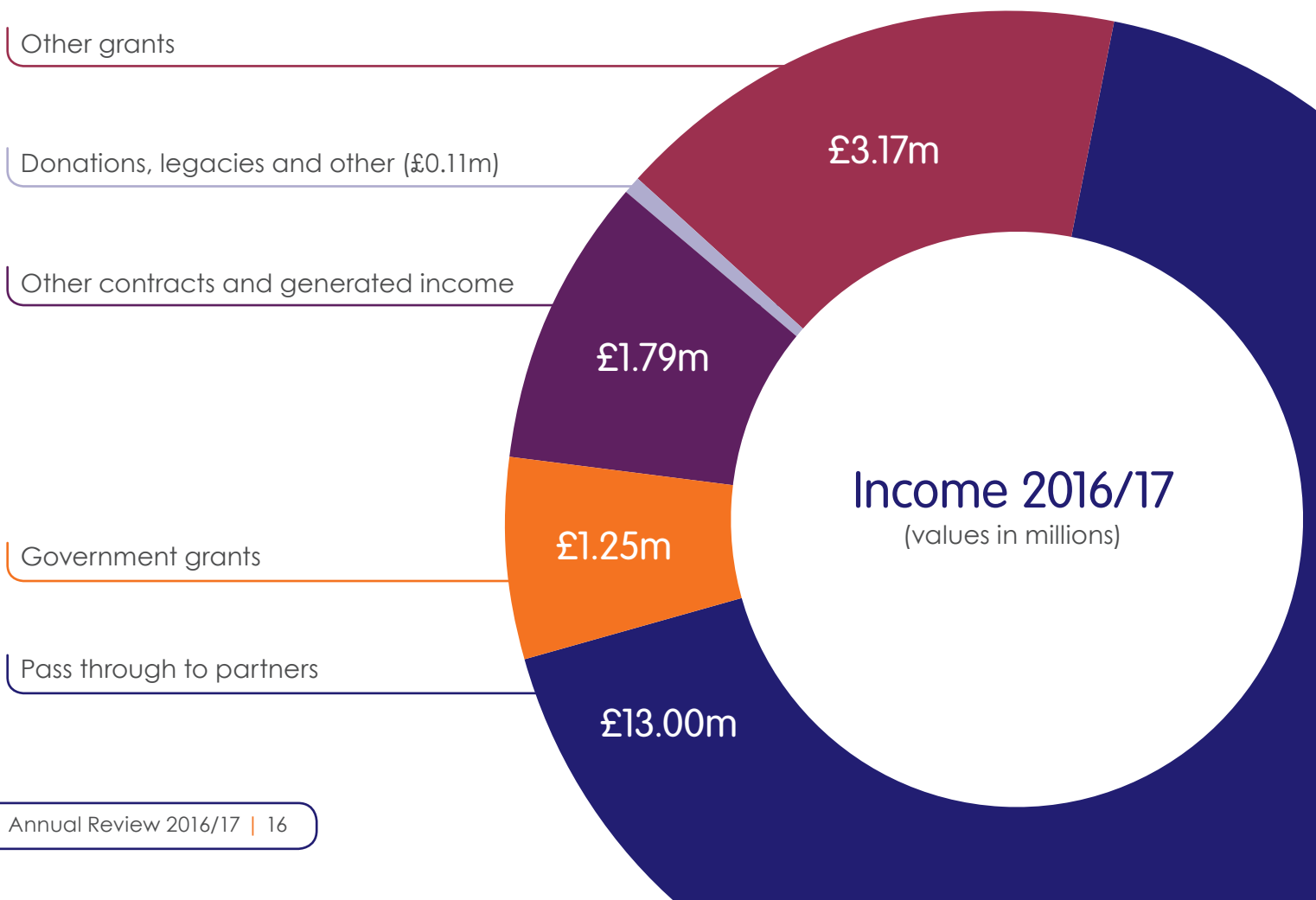
We are proud to have continued to diversify our income, developing and maintaining relationships with important funders such as the UBS Optimus Foundation, which has supported a three-year programme of work to improve outcomes for children in Jersey.

We have been successful in winning work across government departments and in securing support from charitable trusts, donations and corporate partnerships.

Our 10-year programme of work leading the Lambeth Early Action Partnership (LEAP), part of the Big Lottery's A Better Start programme, has further strengthened our long-term sustainability.

We continue to focus on financial stability and providing best value. We have restructured the organisation, providing a new shape that is fit to deliver our strategy for the future, and we are relocating from a head office building that was inefficient and unsuitable. We are investing in developing new income streams, including income generated through training and events.

For a copy of our Annual Report and financial statements, email [enquiries@ncb.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@ncb.org.uk)







# Thank you

We would like to thank all those who have funded and supported our work on behalf of children and young people during 2016/2017.

Atlantic Philanthropies

Ben Cohen StandUp  
Foundation

Big Lottery Fund

Department for  
Education

Department for  
Education NI

Department of Health

Education Endowment  
Foundation

Essex Community  
Foundation

Esmée Fairbairn  
Foundation & The  
Sutton Trust Parental  
Engagement Fund

Foyle Foundation

Government Equalities  
Office

Health Education  
England

Joseph Rowntree  
Foundation

JP Getty Jnr Charitable  
Trust

NHS Lambeth CCG

Lankelly Chase  
Foundation

London Borough of  
Lambeth

NHS England

The Prince's Trust

SafeToNet

Souter Charitable Trust

True Colours Trust

UBS Optimus Foundation

University of  
Roehampton

Young Minds

Also our grateful thanks for the support and donations received from members, companies, trusts and foundations, voluntary organisations, schools, community organisations, individual donors and participants in sponsored events.





The National Children's Bureau is a leading children's charity working to build a better childhood for every child. We champion children's right to be safe, secure and supported, by using evidence and our expert knowledge to influence government policy, and help practitioners to do the best job possible, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children and young people.

For more information visit [www.ncb.org.uk](http://www.ncb.org.uk)

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