

Understanding the impact of changes in government spending on children and young people

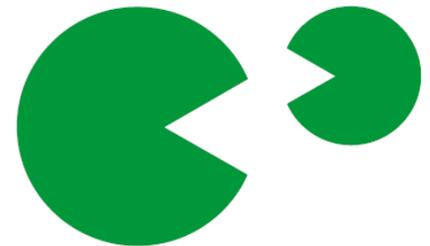


The Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC) is a national organisation, led by the Children's Commissioner for England, Dr Maggie Atkinson. The OCC promotes and protects the rights of children and young people by listening to what they say and telling the Government and other organisations about what they think.



What does the report say?

Every year the government announces changes to what they spend on tax, benefits and the other money they give to help people. The Office of the Children's Commissioner is worried about the effect these changes have on the lives of children and young people. We worked with the University of Brighton to find out more about how the rights of children and young people are likely to be affected by changes the government is making.



How did we find out what people thought?



We talked with 51 children and young people and 19 parents and carers about changes the government is planning to make. We asked for their views on how these changes are likely to affect rights of children and young people. We looked at 54 rights listed in the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child. This Convention was signed by the UK Government in 1991 and says that the Government must consider how children would be affected by how it spends money.

What did we find out?

Changes in Government spend meant benefits not increasing in line with the cost of living which led to some families not able to afford nutritious food, clothes, heating and activities. This has a negative effect on the rights of children and young people.

If families aren't getting enough money from the Government to buy nutritious food, to heat their homes and to look after families properly, then their rights are being violated (Young person)

Sometime you have to choose, do I buy gas and electricity or food?' (Parent)

Where the Government planned to spend more money on helping young people get qualifications and skills and jobs, this had a positive effect on children's rights, except where young people felt 'forced' to study when they didn't want to. Increasing university places was not thought to be a good idea by many young people as they said they would not be able to afford go.

It would be good to know more about this [more apprenticeships] because that might actually help us (Young person)

Not many people want to go to university now, it's just too expensive (Young person)

Where the Government spent money on housing this supported children's rights. However, if families were encouraged to buy their own home and this left the family with less money to spend on other things such as nutritious food and heating, this was thought to have a negative effect on children's rights.

Help-to-buy [housing scheme] would help people buy a house...so it would be a long term gain for them (Young person)

If parents borrow too much money for a house they will have less to spend on clothes and food (Young person)

What should the government should spend money to improve the rights of children and young people



Affordable housing



Stop people being homeless



Affordable facilities like libraries and parks



Make communities safe



Money for poor families so they afford to buy essential things



Good teachers and schools



Raise the minimum wage



Cheaper travel

What will we do next?

The report will be used to look at how changes to taxes, benefits and spending affect children's rights and to show the Government how important it is to protect and promote children's rights in spending decisions.

