

## Opposition policy costing – Mental Health Support Workers – Labour

Description of policy
<p><b>Labour will provide ‘mental health support workers in schools’ for ‘children who are excluded or sent to Pupil Referral Units’.</b> ‘Labour will be tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime...a prevention-first approach, including access to mental health support workers in schools and providing mentors for children who are excluded or sent to Pupil Referral Units to help them get back on track’ (National Policy Forum, <i>Final Policy Documents</i>, 15 September 2023, p.53, <a href="#">archived</a>).</p> <p><b>Sarah Jones said Labour would put ‘mental health workers in schools’, ‘youth workers in custody suites’ and ‘mentors in our pupil referral units’ to crack down on anti social behaviour.</b> Sarah Jones: ‘<i>And that’s why Labour has said, we want to see youth workers in custody suites. We want to see mentors in our pupil referral units, we want to see mental health support workers in our schools. So that we can prevent kids from getting involved in this kind of activity in the first place</i>’ (LBC, 4 April 2023, <a href="#">archived</a>).</p> <p><b>Labour will ‘place youth workers in accident and emergency departments and custody suites’.</b> ‘Labour will be tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime...We will place youth workers in accident and emergency departments and custody suites to reach young people who are becoming involved in gangs’ (National Policy Forum, <i>Final Policy Documents</i>, 15 September 2023, p.53, <a href="#">archived</a>).</p>
Additional policy assumptions
<p>Sufficient funding should be provided to support pupils in all schools in England, including non-maintained mainstream schools (including independent schools)</p> <p>There are around 335 Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) so each of these should be provided sufficient funding for the mentors needed to meet this commitment.</p> <p>There are around 170 A&amp;E units in England so each of these should be provided sufficient funding for the youth workers needed to meet this commitment.</p>
Additional technical modelling assumptions or judgements required
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. DHSC has only provided detailed cost modelling for Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs) in schools. Other support worker functions listed above are the responsibility of other government departments. We have passed the commission on via Permanent Secretaries.</li><li>2. Costs for mentors in PRUs have been provided by DfE and assumptions of modelling of youth workers in custody suites have been provided by Home Office.</li><li>3. The total below is the sum of these costs.</li></ol> <p><b>a) Mental Health Support Teams for 100% coverage of pupils in England</b></p> <p><b>Background:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>4. We have assumed that provision of mental health support workers in all schools means 100% rollout of our existing programme to introduce MHSTs in schools and colleges, as set out in <i>Transforming children and young people’s mental health provision: a green paper</i> in 2017.</li></ol>

5. We expect that these teams will cover over 50% of pupils in schools and colleges in England by March 2025. There are alternative models to deliver this commitment, such as expanding the provision of counselling support in schools, which have not been costed here.
6. The costs provided below are the costs to keep the operational teams already in place running and then for training and operational costs of the new teams to reach 100% coverage.
7. Although we have been asked to model on the basis of the number of schools, our current programme to roll out Mental Health Support Teams, and associated modelling, is based on the number of pupils covered by support teams as school sizes are not uniform across England. The costs below are presented to reach 100% coverage in England. Please note that this costing also includes coverage of pupils in colleges and non-maintained mainstream schools (including independent schools).
8. Offsetting savings have not been considered in costings. The MHST Impact Assessment provides consideration of some of these wider benefits, such as improved future earnings/productivity, reduced burden on the health and social care system, and reduced burden on the criminal justice system. [Impact Assessment \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

#### **Methodology:**

1. Costs cover existing operational teams as well as training and operational costs for new teams to reach 100% coverage of pupils by the end of the 5-year period (100% coverage by 2029/30).
2. School-aged population projections have been used for estimates provided by ONS [Zipped population projections data files, England - Office for National Statistics](#). This takes into account that population numbers are expected to fall. We do not have pupil projections for full age cohort as these are not publicly available.
3. Training and education costs are included. It is assumed that there are no constraints around the ability to recruit into training posts. It takes one year of training before a team becomes operational.
4. Once operational, each team consists of 4 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) qualified Education mental health practitioner (EMHP), 2 FTE Practitioners, 1 FTE Senior Practitioner, 0.5 FTE Team Leader and 0.5 FTE Admin. Pay bands split has been previously provided by NHSE.
5. Salary and training costs have been taken from [Agenda for change – pay rates | Health Careers](#). These have been uplifted by the GDP deflator (November 2023) to account for inflation each year, with an additional 25% to 34% to account for on-costs (including employer pension contributions and National Insurance).
6. Training costs are in the first year only.
7. Training and salary costs have been converted from academic to financial years. Therefore, some costs for training will fall into the next financial year.
8. An average of 12% salary uplift has been applied across all salaries for teams in London (internal only). MHSTs in London account for 16% of total.
9. Additional costs such as attrition and one-off costs have also been included. It is assumed that 120 more EMPHs are needed each year to account for attrition and one-off costs are associated with Senior Practitioner Training.
10. The territorial extent of this policy is England only so Barnett consequentials are presented in the costing tables.

## Assumptions:

11. It is assumed that each MHST covers around 8,500 pupils, in line with published DfE coverage reporting based on current practice - [Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Implementation Programme \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)
12. It takes one year for a team to become fully operational.
13. Capital costs have not been costed for as we have assumed existing capital and capacity would be leveraged.
14. Costs on rollout of MHSTs include coverage of PRUs. PRUs are labelled under 'Alternative Provision' in DfE data – of which there are 11,413 total pupils in England.
15. This is DHSC modelling, and we are working with NHSE to refine these costings further separate to this commission.
16. Offsetting savings have not been considered in costings. Future savings could be reduced crime and improved and pupil attainment for example. Wider labour market impacts, savings from prevention/early intervention and behavioural impacts of policies have also not been considered.

### **b) Mentors in PRUs**

17. Costs and methodology provided by DfE.
18. This is not within DHSC's policy remit or current DfE policy.
19. As per the direction we have been given, the costings assume 1 FTE mentor per state-funded Alternative Provision (AP) school. There are 335 state-funded AP schools. Of these, 177 are Local Authority-maintained and as such are formally designated as PRUs. The remaining 158 are AP academies or AP free schools. Though the AP academies / free schools are not formally designated as PRUs, they perform the same function. We have therefore provided costings that assume the policy would apply to all state-funded AP schools.
20. Data is not available on the number of pupils that a single mentor could support and this figure could vary considerably depending on the nature of the mentoring that was provided. Therefore, the above assumption of 1 FTE mentor per state funded AP school remains.
21. The average costs below have been taken from cost of youth workers given the similarity in roles. Sector intelligence estimates that the average salary of a youth worker is £29,354 (note this does not include additional recruitment costs and on-costs) and the salary will vary depending on experience and qualifications<sup>1</sup>. DfE employ youth workers in APs through the Alternative Provision Specialist Taskforce (APST) programme. The average FTE cost through this programme is £49,191 (including on-costs inc. pension and NI). Due to the disparity in costs, and without making further assumptions on the policy, we have provided a range.
22. Inflation has not been factored into costings by DfE.
23. To note, as we only have the average salary from sector intelligence, the lower range is likely to be an underestimate of true costs.
24. Salary range taken from different programmes, none of which are a direct comparison with this proposal.

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<sup>1</sup> [Frontier Economics, 2022. The economic value of youth work, Accessed here](#)

25. Costings calculated from FY24-25. Given recruitment lead-in times, a later start time has been assumed, the beginning of Academic Year 24/25 (ie. Sept 2024).
26. Further guidance on the expected reach of the mentors (e.g. what proportion of children in AP schools) and the type and professionalism of mentors would help provide more accurate costings.
27. Training and capital costs have not been included in cost estimates, as data or insights to calculate such costs are unavailable. There is an expectation that if factored in, they would have a much smaller impact on the range of costs. Considerations about the actual design of the programme (e.g. nature of the mentoring, selection of pupils for involvement in the programme, how long mentors would work with each pupil etc) would have more impact on costs.
28. Offsetting savings have not been considered in costings. Future savings could be reduced crime and improved and pupil attainment, for example. Wider labour market impacts and behavioural impacts of policies have also not been considered.
29. The territorial extent of this policy is England only so Barnett consequentialia are presented in the costing tables.

**c) Youth workers in custody suites**

30. Assumptions and methodology provided by Home Office – this is not DHSC or Home Office current policy. New funding would be required.
31. Sector intelligence estimates the average salary of a youth worker is £29,354 (excluding additional recruitment costs).<sup>2</sup> The salary will vary depending on experience and qualifications. On-costs (including pension and NI) of 25% have been applied and have been uplifted by GDP deflator (November 2023) to account for inflation each year. This is the lower bound.
32. An upper bound has been used using data from the DfE employment of youth workers in APs through the Alternative Provision Specialist Taskforce (APST) programme. The average FTE cost through this programme is £49,191 which includes on-costs for pension, NI etc. Costs have been also uplifted by GDP deflator (Nov 2023) to account for inflation each year. Due to the disparity in costs, and without making further assumptions on the policy we have provided a range.
33. Salary range taken from different programmes, none of which are a direct comparison with this proposal.
34. No salary uplift for London/regions has been considered.
35. There are 43 Home Office funded Police Forces in England. 40 are small in size, two larger (West Midlands and Greater Manchester) and then the Metropolitan Police Force (MPS)
36. As custody suites are 24/7 operations a shift rota of 5 FTE is required for full coverage. However, children make up about 9% of those arrested (59k in 2022/23), and detentions of children are likely to cluster around a few times (school kick-out, weekend evenings, etc), so 24/7 coverage at all suites would be inefficient. Therefore, modelling assumes a coverage per force area and expect YWs to travel between suites (60 in MPS, 20 in mid-size force and 5 in small force).
37. No capital and training costs have been applied.
38. Offsetting savings have not been considered in costings. Future savings could be reduced crime and improved and pupil attainment for example. Wider labour market impacts and behavioural impacts of policies have also not been considered.

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<sup>2</sup> [Frontier Economics, 2022. The economic value of youth work, Accessed here](#)

39. The territorial extent of these policies is England only so Barnett consequential are presented in the costing tables.

**d) Youth Workers in A&E**

40. This not current DHSC policy. New funding would be required.

41. Sector intelligence estimates that the average salary of a youth worker is £29,354 (excluding additional recruitment costs). On-costs (including pension and NI) of 25% have been applied and have been uplifted by the GDP deflator (November 2023) to account for inflation each year. This is the lower bound.

42. An upper bound has been used using data from the DfE employment of youth workers in APs through the Alternative Provision Specialist Taskforce (APST) programme. The average FTE cost through this programme is £49,191, which includes on-costs for pension, NI etc. Costs have been also uplifted by the GDP deflator (November 2023) to account for inflation each year.

43. Due to the disparity in costs, and without making further assumptions on the policy we have provided a range (as above).

44. Salary range taken from different programmes, none of which are a direct comparison with this proposal.

45. No salary uplift for London/regions has been considered.

46. There are 170 A&E departments in England. As these are 24/7 operations a shift rota of 5 FTE is required for full coverage. This is likely to be inefficient as children presenting with mental health conditions represent a small percentage of total A&E attendances.

47. No capital and training costs have been applied.

48. Offsetting savings have not been considered in costings. Future savings could be reduced crime and improved and pupil attainment, for example. Wider labour market impacts and behavioural impacts of policies have also not been considered.

49. Costs are for England only.

**Cost/Revenue to the Exchequer over five years**

	RDEL costs (£m)					
	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30
Resource (England)	348 – 367	404 – 426	455 - 478	509 - 532	565 – 588	603 – 626
Total Barnett	65 – 69	76 – 80	85 – 90	95 – 100	106 – 110	113 – 117
Total Cost	413 - 436	480 - 506	540 - 568	604 - 632	671 - 698	716 - 743

Numbers are rounded to nearest million

**Comparison with current system (if applicable):**

MHSTs support the mental health needs of children and young people in primary, secondary and further education settings (ages 5 to 18) and use an evidence-based approach to provide early intervention on some mental health and emotional wellbeing issues, such as mild to moderate anxiety. MHSTs also promote wellbeing and good mental health in schools/colleges, introduce mental health expertise in education settings and help to

bridge the gap between education and the NHS to encourage a more collaborative approach to tackling mental health issues in children and young people in a timely way.

There are currently around 400 mental health support teams in place across England, covering over 3 million children or around 35% of pupils in schools and colleges. We estimate this will increase to 43% by April 2024 and we are working to increase this coverage to 53% of pupils by March 2025.

Other comments (including other Departments consulted):

This note sets out the costs of the delivery of the policy, it does not include estimates of any benefits or potential cost savings that may flow from it.

DHSC provided costs and modelling assumptions on MHSTs for 100% coverage

DfE provided costs and modelling assumptions on mentors in PRUs.

Home Office provided modelling assumptions on youth workers in custody suites.

Salary range for youth workers in PRUs and custody suites are taken from different programmes, none of which are a direct comparison to this proposal.

DCMS were consulted on costs of youth workers.

This costing was produced by DHSC.

*To be completed by Permanent Secretary's Office*  
Date costing signed off:

02/02/2024

*[If applicable]*  
Date revised costing signed off: