

# Nurture Portrait

A snapshot of the social,  
emotional and behavioural  
difficulties in pupils throughout the UK

2015/16



# Nurture Group Network

## Nurture **Portrait** 2015/16

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# Nurture Portrait

2015/16

The Nurture Group Network (NGN) works to ensure that every disadvantaged or disengaged child has access to a nurturing intervention to equip them with the skills and resilience they need to make the most of learning and school.

NGN predominantly supports schools in teaching children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD). By helping children through early nurturing interventions, they develop vital emotional and social skills to better cope with the school environment.

Since its inception, NGN has been using the Boxall Profile (a powerful assessment tool developed in the 1970s by Marjorie Boxall) to measure pupils' SEBD. By making the Boxall Profile available online in 2015 the organisation was able to gather anonymised **data from more than 4,715 children** and young people in 2015/2016, providing a **snapshot of the SEBD levels experienced by children and young people** and faced by teachers throughout the UK.

This first edition of the Nurture Portrait recognises the importance of gaining a better understanding of the SEBD needs of children and young people throughout the UK.

NGN campaigns for the Boxall Profile to be implemented in all primary and secondary schools which will ultimately help and allow teachers, policy makers and government to make the best decisions to support and encourage children and young people experiencing SEBD.

# Who we are

The Nurture Group Network (NGN) is a charity aiming to break cycles of low achievement by ensuring that an unequal start in life does not mean an unequal chance to engage with learning.

NGN works to promote the use of nurturing principles in education, ensuring that every disadvantaged or disengaged child has access to a nurturing intervention allowing them to develop the skills and resilience they need to make the most of learning and school.

# What we do

**Early intervention** – We help thousands of nurture groups in schools across the United Kingdom develop children's and young people's social and emotional skills, build resilience and help form healthy attachments to schools.

**Training & consultancy** – We deliver training and consultancy support to teachers and schools applying nurturing principles across their work.

**Awareness** – We organise conferences and campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of nurture, motivating practitioners and policy makers to apply nurturing principles.

**Impact and evidence** – We gather, analyse and use evidence to evaluate and improve the nurturing approach.

## The Nurture Group Network in 2015/16:

**Provided** support to nurture groups  
in **1,976** primary schools  
and **238** secondary schools

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**Trained** **2,164** teachers

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**Organised** **4** conferences

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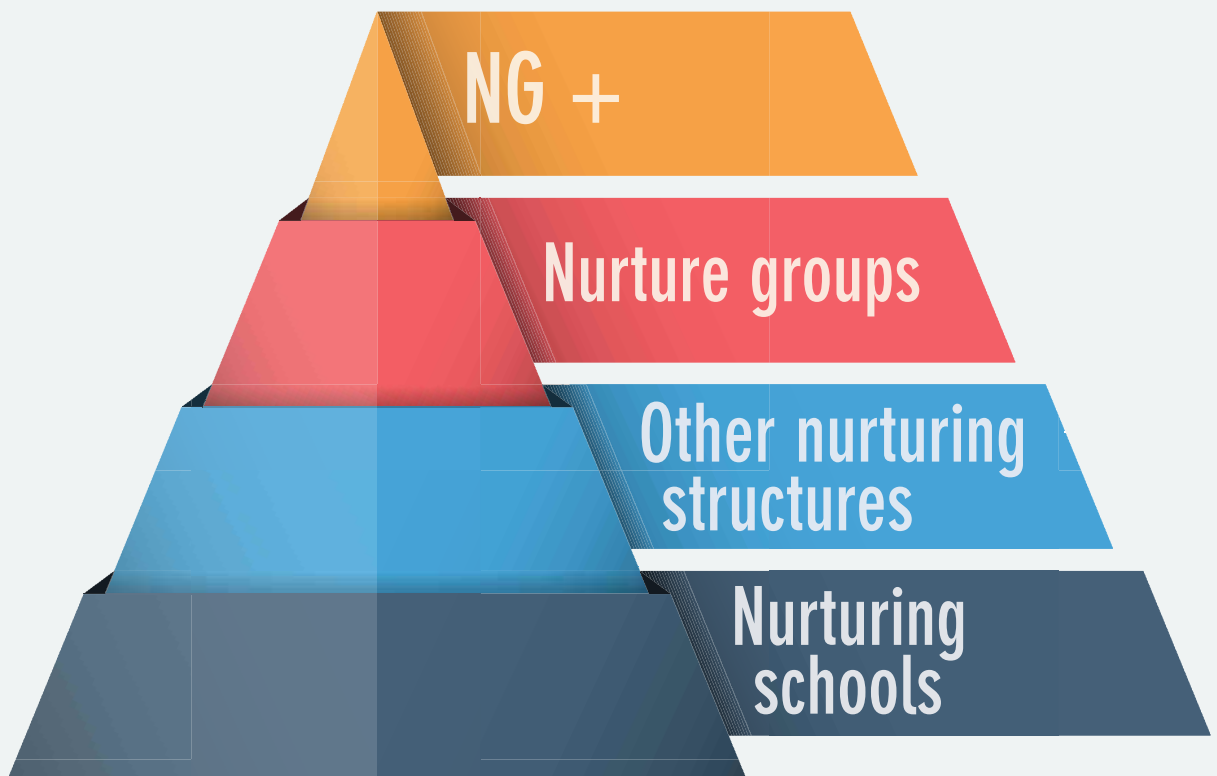
**Awarded** **19** Quality Mark Awards

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# Nurturing approach

The concept of nurture highlights the importance of social environments - who you're with, and not who you're born to - and its significant influence on behaviour and cognitive ability. Children and young people who have a good start in life have a whole host of advantages over those who don't have such positive experiences at home when they are little. They tend to do better at school, attend regularly, enjoy activities such as friends and are significantly less likely to offend or experience problems with poor physical or mental health.

The nurturing approach offers a range of opportunities to learn the early nurturing experiences some children and young people lack, giving them the skills to do well at school, make friends and deal more confidently and calmly with the trials and tribulations of life, for life.



**Nurturing principles** can be implemented in schools at different levels:

- **NG+**, including the provision of a nurture group as well as additional support such as psychological interventions.
- **Boxall Nurture Groups™**, are structured and targeted interventions for children with SEBD.
- **Other nurturing structures**, that provide a safe and nurturing environment to pupils without the structure of a nurture group.
- **Nurturing schools**, where nurturing principles are applied in the whole school and involve all pupils, staff and parents.

# The Boxall Profile

Children and young people lacking early nurturing experiences commonly exhibit challenging behaviours such as acting out or withdrawal that prevent them from successfully engaging with teachers and peers and often lead to failure in learning.

NGN recommends the use of the **Boxall Profile** to assess levels of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) in pupils and identify children and young people who would benefit from a nurturing intervention.

The **Boxall Profile** helps teachers plan focused interventions to allow pupils to develop the specific skills they are lacking. The **Boxall Profile** also provides entry points into the child's world, allowing teachers to think about what lies behind the difficult behaviour and understand what the child's real needs might be.

## The **tool** is divided into:

- **Developmental strands**, that measure aspects of the pupil's cognitive, social and emotional development that influence how well a child is able to learn and function in the classroom.
- **Diagnostic profile**, that measures the child's challenging behaviours that prevent successful social and academic performance. These behaviours are (directly or indirectly) the outcomes of impaired development in the early years and can be resolved once the necessary social and emotional skills are acquired.



# Boxall Profile Timeline

1970s

**The Boxall Profile was first known as The Diagnostic Development Profile** and consisted of 77 questions split into three sections: Adult Dependency, Separation and Developing Autonomy, Internalised Adaptive Behaviour and Internalised Non-Adaptive Behaviour. By the mid-70s, the Profile was changed to two scales (maturity and deviancy) with 150 questions in total.

Early 1980s

**Early 1980s – The Diagnostic Development Profile is radically simplified.** The two scales are renamed **Developmental Strands** and **Diagnostic Profile** and each consists of 34 questions.

1984

**The Diagnostic Development Profile is standardised**

1998

**The Diagnostic Development Profile is renamed The Boxall Profile**

2010

Inspired by the Boxall Profile, **The Boxall Profile for Young People** is created and standardised. The questionnaire aims to be a reliable assessment tool to be used in secondary schools with young people aged 11–18 years.

2011

**A study by Couture et al (2011)<sup>1</sup>** highlights the concurrent validity between the Boxall Profile and the Goodman's Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ).

2015

**November 2015**

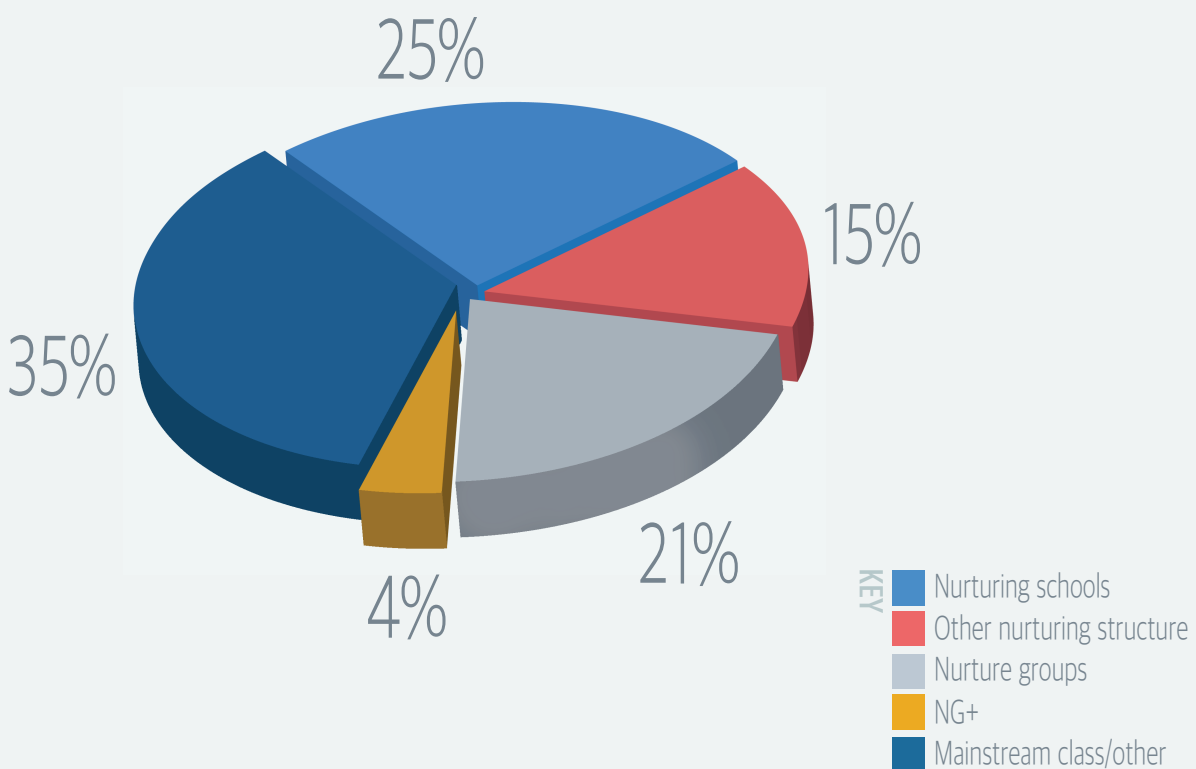
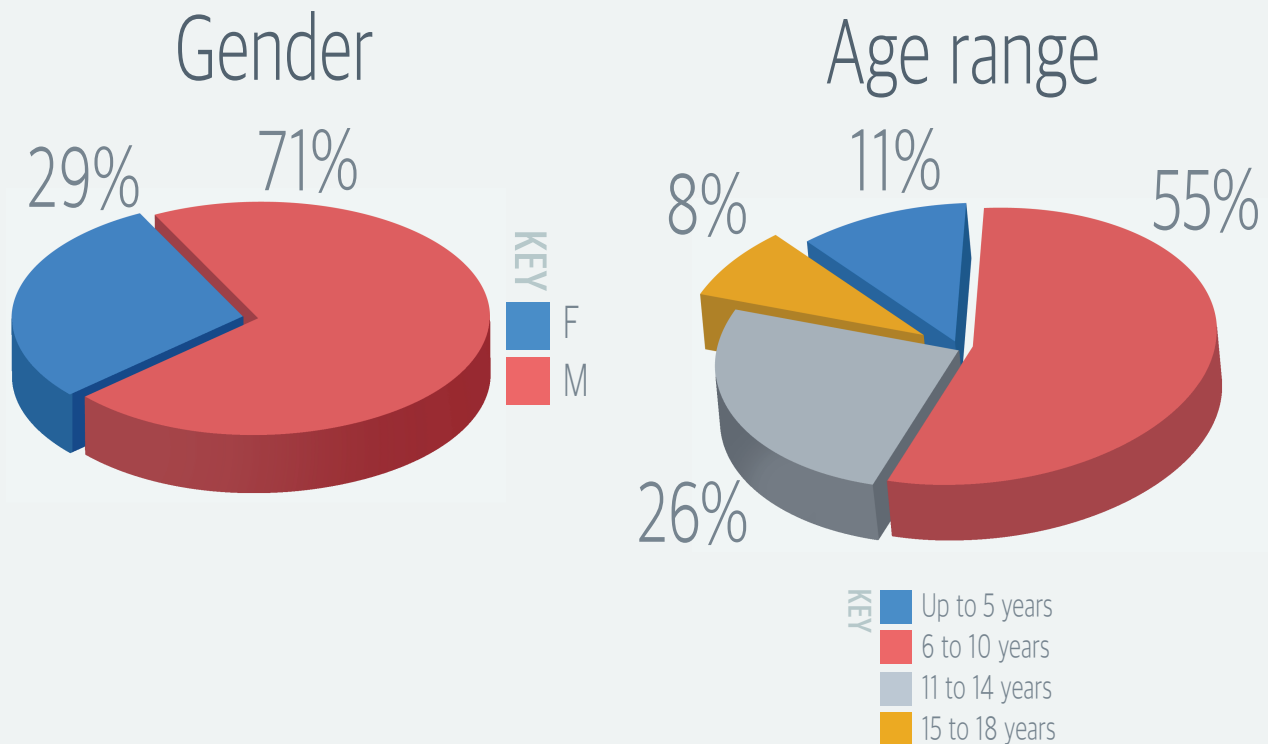
**– The Boxall Profile is digitised**

and available for education staff to use online. Scores are now automatically tallied, potential areas of concern are highlighted and students' scores can be easily tracked over time.

1. Couture, C. Cooper, C. Royer, E. "A Study of the Concurrent Validity between the Boxall Profile and the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire." *The International Journal of Emotional Education*, Vol. 3, No. 1, pp. 20- pp.29

# Online Boxall Profile Results

## Children and young people characteristics





# A snapshot of SEBD in the pupil population

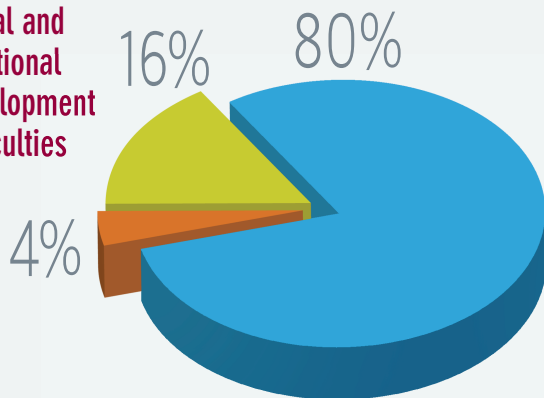
In 2015/2016, 80% of the pupils assessed (both children and young people) had high levels of social and emotional development difficulties (measured using the Developmental Strands of the Boxall Profile).

In addition, 89% of the pupils assessed displayed high levels of challenging behaviours (measured using the Diagnostic Profile).

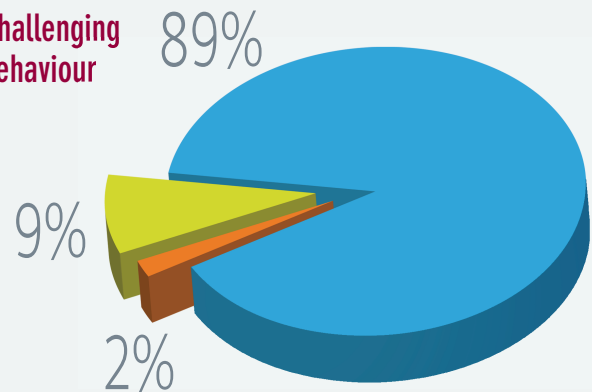
## Children

Administered to **3,086** children aged 3-10 years

**Social and emotional development difficulties**



**Challenging behaviour**

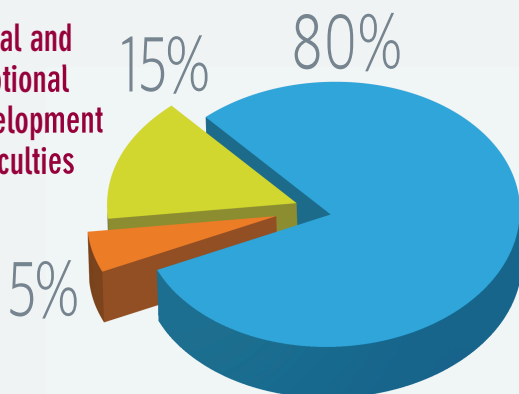


KEY  
■ High levels  
■ Low levels  
■ No apparent difficulties

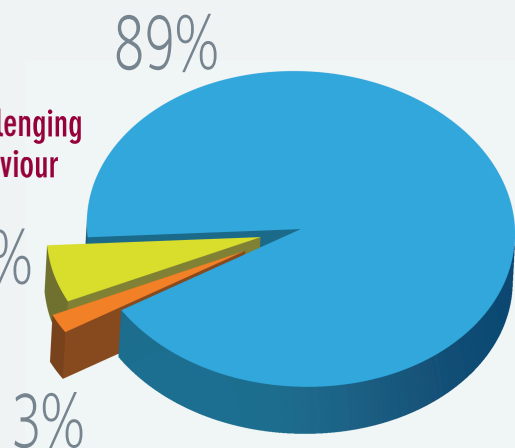
## Young people

Administered to **1,629** young people aged 11-18 years

**Social and emotional development difficulties**



**Challenging behaviour**



The results seem to indicate that the high levels of SEBD in our sample reflect the fact that teachers and practitioners preferentially administered the Boxall Profile to pupils they suspected of having SEBD. As a consequence, our sample is not representative of the overall population of children and young people across the UK.

Social and emotional development difficulties are generally caused by missing or distorted early nurturing experiences. They translate into challenging behaviours including being aggressive, unco-operative or withdrawn. Overall, our data shows a strong need for nurture provision among the pupils assessed. In addition to preventing pupils from achieving well in their studies, these high levels of SEBD also put unnecessary stresses on teachers and negatively impact the rest of the class.

# Online Boxall Profile Results

## Gender differences in SEBD

Among the pupils assessed, 69% of girls compared to 85% of boys were experiencing social and emotional development difficulties, and 82% of girls compared to 92% of boys were displaying high levels of challenging behaviours.

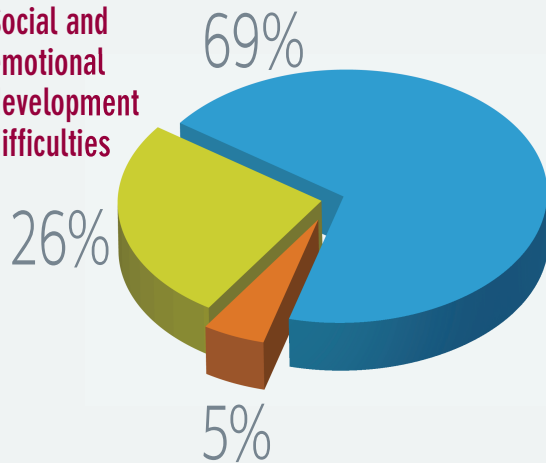
The difference we observe between male and female pupils (both children and young people) is in line with previous research showing a higher prevalence of SEBD in boys and young men.

Please note that this comparison is purely illustrative and that we lack the means to thoroughly control for potential differences across the female and male groups.

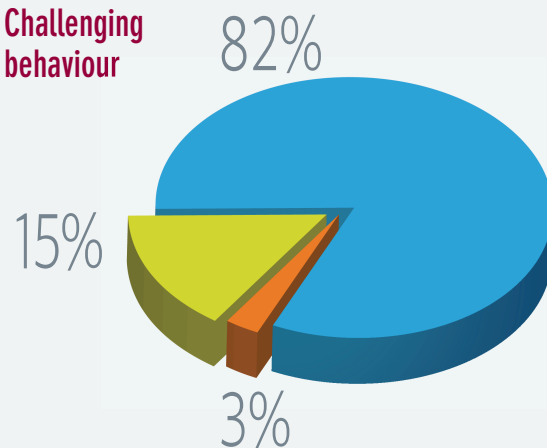
### Females

Boxall Profile administered to **1,345** girls in primary and secondary schools

Social and emotional development difficulties



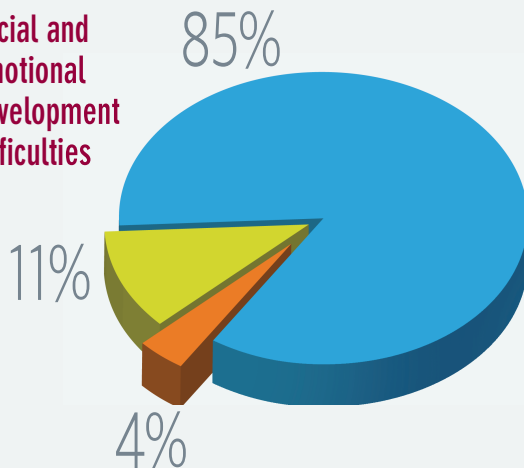
Challenging behaviour



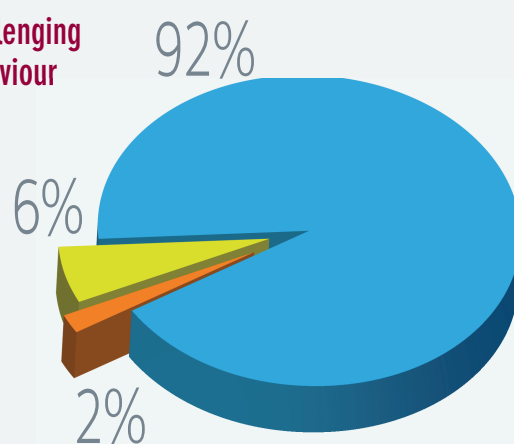
### Males

Boxall Profile administered to **3,370** boys in primary and secondary schools

Social and emotional development difficulties



Challenging behaviour



Social and emotional development difficulties were assessed using the Developmental Strands and challenging behaviours were assessed using the Diagnostic Profile.

# Changes in SEBD levels across time

We investigated the potential benefits for pupils in receiving nurturing provision (either as part of a nurturing school, a nurture group, NG+ or other forms of nurturing support).

In 2015/2016, 455 children and 100 young people who received nurturing provision were administered the Boxall Profile twice or more, allowing us to observe changes in their Boxall Profile scores across time.



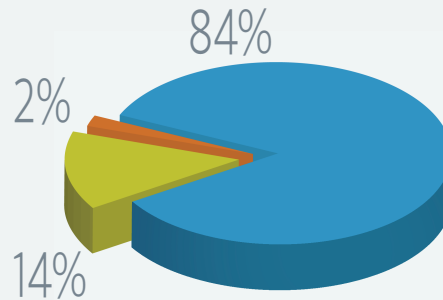
## Children

Across time, 26% of children with high levels of social and emotional developmental difficulties had improved to low levels or no apparent difficulties (as measured using the Developmental Strands).

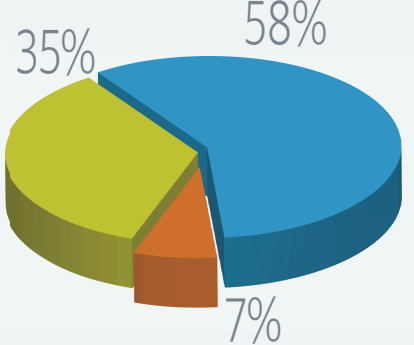
Similarly, 17% had improved from high levels of challenging behaviours to low levels or no apparent difficulties (as assessed using the Diagnostic Profile).

### Social and emotional development difficulties

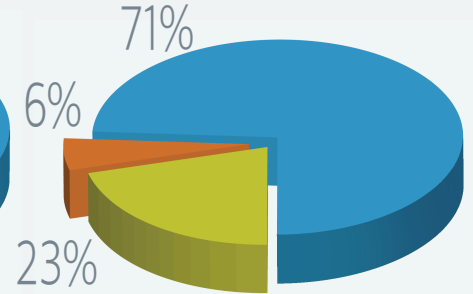
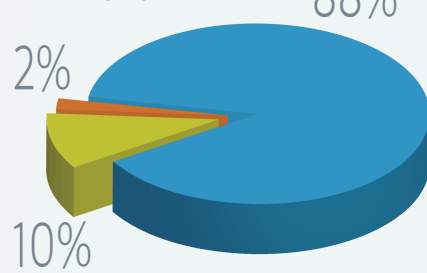
#### 1st measure



#### 2nd measure



### Challenging behaviour



## Young People

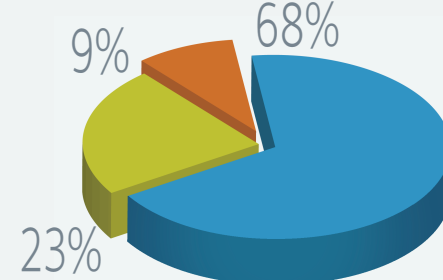
Across time, 12% of young people with high levels of social and emotional developmental difficulties had improved to low levels or no apparent difficulties. However, only 4% had improved from high levels of challenging behaviours to low levels or no apparent difficulties.

This data suggests that although young people experience a reduction in developmental difficulties, these improvements do not easily lead to behavioural changes as their difficulties are more ingrained and less easily adaptable.

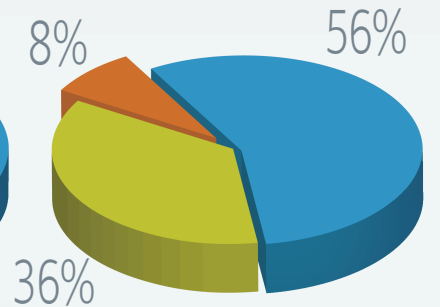
*(measures were taken 4 to 9 months apart)*

### Social and emotional development difficulties

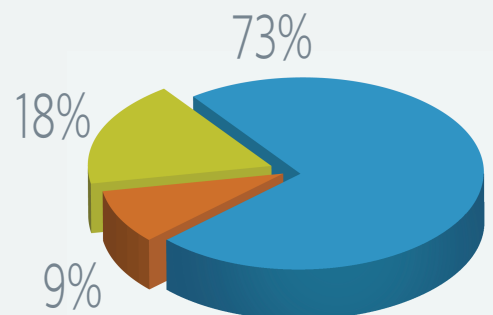
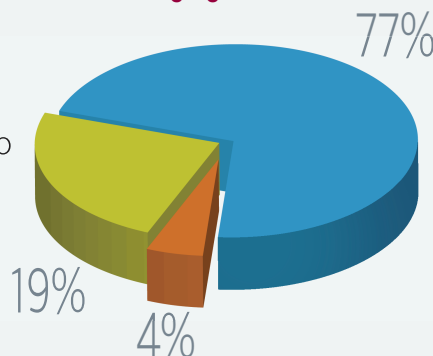
#### 1st measure



#### 2nd measure



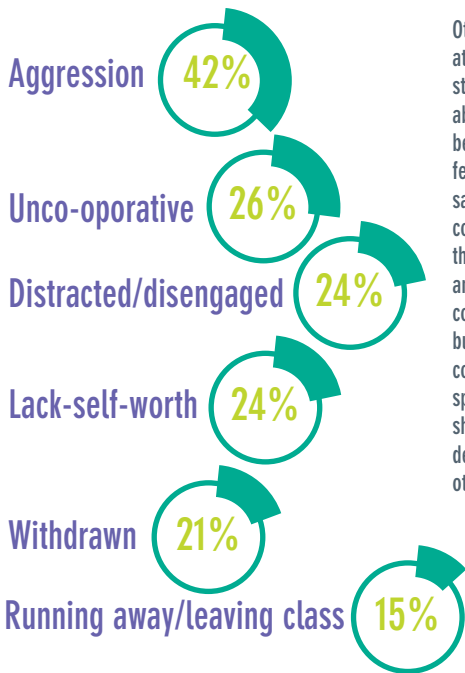
### Challenging behaviour



# Insights into pupils' difficulties

NGN conducted a study in 2015 to assess children's SEBD characteristics and gain a better understanding of the stressors commonly experienced by pupils attending nurture groups. This data provides information about the challenging behaviours commonly expressed by pupils attending a nurture group and the life experiences that may explain pupils' missing or distorted early nurturing experiences.

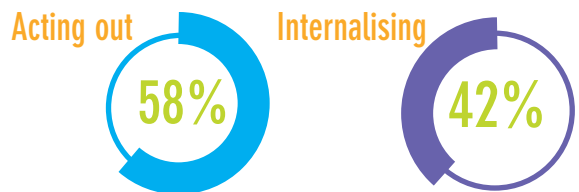
## Most common social, emotional and/or behavioural difficulty of students undergoing nurture group provision\*



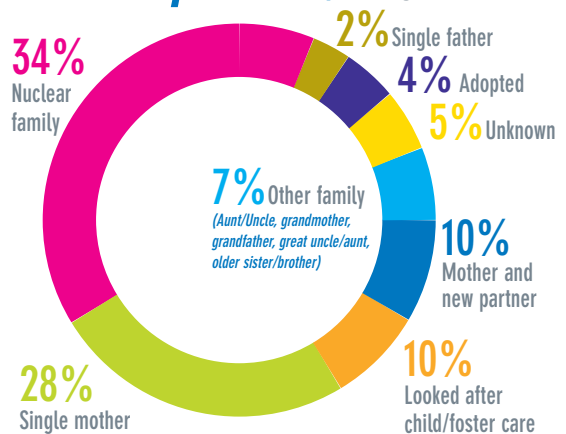
Other reported SEBD included attention-seeking behaviour, stealing, swearing/verbal abuse, being confrontational, being excitable/erratic, feigning illness, self harm, saying inappropriate comments/shouting in class, throwing things, lying, being anxious to please/need for constant reassurance, bullying, immaturity, being controlling, issues with food, speech problems, inability to share, encopresis, and destroying their own and others work.

\*Data from 85 nurture groups in the United Kingdom in the academic year 2014/15.

## Social, emotional and/or behavioural difficulties in nurture groups

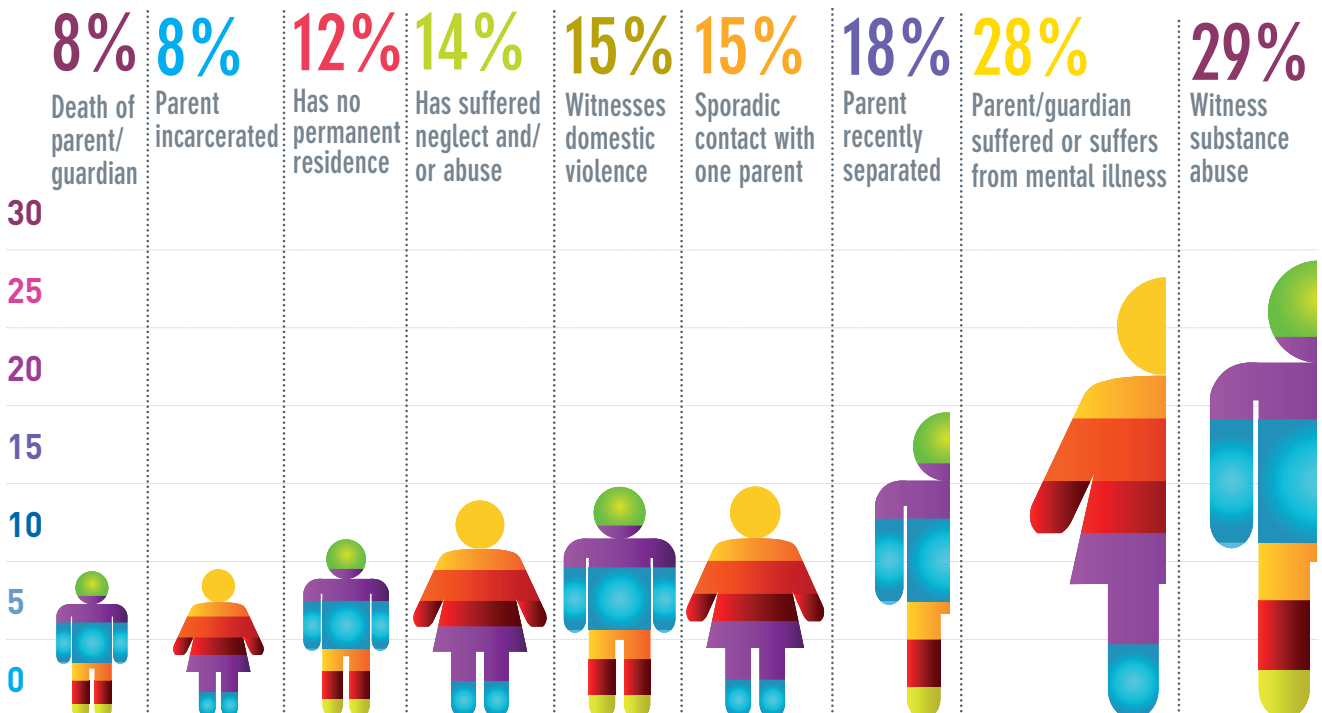


## Primary carer/family background



## Common stressors

\* Data from 85 nurture groups in the United Kingdom running in the academic year 2014/15.



# Impact of Nurture Group provision

For pupils with SEBD, nurture groups offer a safe space to develop and restore missing or distorted early nurturing experiences.

During the past two decades, 60-plus academic studies have demonstrated the impact of nurture groups. In 2015 the Centre for Evidence and Social Innovation at Queen's University Belfast carried out a large-scale evaluation across Northern Ireland to investigate changes in SEBD in children who received nurture group provision<sup>1</sup>.

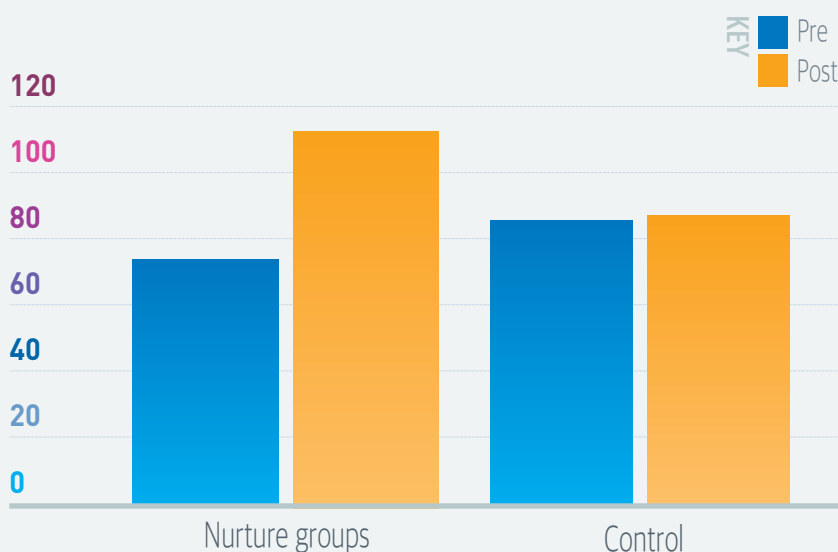
## Outcomes

Compared to children who did not receive nurturing provision, children who took part in a nurture group had increased scores on the Developmental Strands, showing improvements in their social and emotional development.

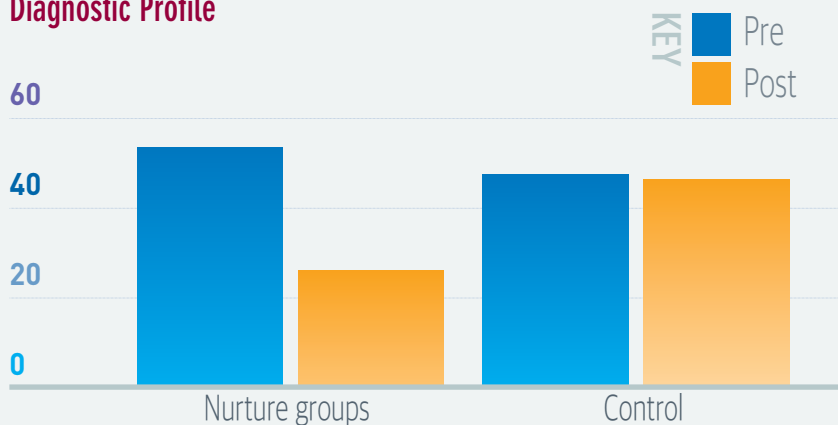
In addition, children who received nurturing provision (but not children in the control group) had decreased scores on the Diagnostic Profile, highlighting a significant reduction in challenging behaviours.

Overall, both results provide **strong evidence that nurture provision significantly improve children SEBD.**

### Developmental Strands



### Diagnostic Profile



## Cost-effectiveness

The study estimated an average of £12,912 in total is required for every child with behavioural issues to improve and become competently functioning via a nurture group intervention. Without nurture group intervention, an average of £5,960 to £15,282 is spent per year by families, educational and social services for each child with antisocial behaviour. The study concluded that the investment in nurture group provision was therefore likely to pay for itself after just two years!

1. Sloan, S, Winter, K, Lynn, F, Gildea, A & Connolly, P (2016) *The impact and cost effectiveness of nurture groups in primary schools in Northern Ireland*. Belfast: Centre for Evidence and Social Innovation, Queen's University Belfast

# Recommendations

## Using the Boxall Profile across UK schools

Our data reveals high levels of SEBD and a strong need for nurture provision among children and young people assessed in 2015/2016. Teachers who have used the Boxall Profile will be able to better understand and answer the needs of their pupils and therefore be more equipped to support them.

Sadly, most teachers and educational staff across the UK do not have access to the information about their pupils' SEBD and wellbeing. Year-on-year measurements of SEBD prevalence currently do not exist and right now whole-classroom assessments are not implemented in British schools. This prevents teachers and educational staff from providing the adequate support children and young people may require.

NGN is campaigning for making the assessment of SEBD in all children and young people a priority.

### **By administering the Boxall Profile in all primary and secondary schools across the UK:**

- Policy makers and governmental institutions will be able to make more informed decisions regarding SEBD policies and funding.
- Teachers and schools will be able to better understand and respond to their pupils' needs and difficulties.
- Ultimately, children and young people suffering from SEBD will be able to receive the support they need to develop and thrive in school and in their lives.

## Providing nurturing provision as early as possible

As our data illustrates and as research has shown, challenging behaviours resulting from early developmental difficulties become ingrained and children become less easily adaptable as they mature into young people and adults.

### **NGN therefore recommends that children benefit from nurture provision as early as possible during their primary school years.**

This is not to say that nurture groups in secondary schools do not work.

- Interventions with young people do provide real benefits and should be available in secondary schools if required.
- However, pupils' SEBD needs should be identified and addressed as early as possible.





# About the Nurture Group Network

The Nurture Group Network (NGN) works tirelessly to promote access to education for all.

With increasing numbers of children and young people affected by social, emotional and behavioural difficulties inhibiting their progress and limiting their life chances, NGN has developed a range of interventions and support to give disadvantaged children and young people the opportunity to be the best they can be.

Whether it is delivering certified training, supporting whole-school or authority-wide nurturing schools or promoting evidence-based research, NGN is providing quality support, resources and support to make nurturing provision a reality for pupils across the UK and beyond.



Visit our website for more information about the Nurture Group Network

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