Child protection becoming an ‘emergency service’, warns NSPCC

Child protection is becoming an ‘emergency service’ as a result of record reporting of child abuse and increased thresholds, according to the NSPCC. A report published by the charity asks ‘how safe are our children?’ across 20 different indicators and warns that child protection systems across the UK are “buckling under pressure”. According to the research, the number of children on a child protection register in Scotland between 2002 and 2012 increased by 3%. There were 1,463 recorded offences of cruelty and neglect against under-18s in Scotland last year, the report states. The charity also warns of an increase in cyber bullying and calls for a greater focus on early intervention.

Children’s Hearings Scotland announces new Interim Chief Executive

Boyd McAdam has been appointed as Interim Chief Executive of Children’s Hearings Scotland. The appointment follows the departure of Bernadette Monaghan, who is to move on to pursue a professional interest in progress research at Strathclyde University. Mr McAdam, Head of the Better Life Chances unit within the Scottish Government, will take up the role on secondment until a new National Convener and Chief Executive is appointed later in 2014.
Charity warns of barriers preventing professionals intervening in child neglect

Just under a third (32% in 2013) of professionals across the UK have felt powerless to intervene over concerns about child neglect, according to a new report. Highlighting research from its annual review of child neglect, produced in partnership with the University of Stirling, Action for Children highlights a range of perceived barriers to effective intervention, including a lack of resources, high intervention thresholds, poor links between adults and children's services, and in some cases a lack of expertise. The charity’s ‘Child Neglect: The Scandal That Never Breaks’ report highlights the importance of a joined up approach and early intervention in addressing child neglect. The report also suggests there are lessons to be learnt across the UK from Scotland’s Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) approach.

Fatal accident inquiry into death of foster mother to be held

A fatal accident inquiry (FAI) is to be held into the death of foster mother Dawn McKenzie, STV reports. Ms McKenzie’s foster son was charged with her murder, although his guilty plea to culpable homicide was accepted. A significant case review, published by Glasgow Child Protection Committee in October 2013, found that the death could not have been foreseen or prevented. A preliminary hearing is to be heard on April 29, with a FAI due to start on September 17.

UK Government to consider ‘Cinderella’ child neglect law (England and Wales)

The UK Government is considering whether to introduce a new offence of emotional cruelty to children, the BBC reports. The proposed ‘Cinderella’ law would see parents in England and Wales face prosecution for child neglect for the first time.

Disability

Progress made in improving access to autism services, minister says

Progress has been made in improving access to autism services since the publication of a national strategy, according to the Public Health Minister Michael Matheson. Marking World Autism Awareness Day (2 April), Mr Matheson highlighted the establishment of six new ‘one-stop shops’ where families can get support and information, funded as part of the Scottish Strategy for Autism, launched in 2011.

Early Years and Childcare

Family and Childcare Trust warns of childcare cost ‘postcode lottery’ in Scotland

Costs for childcare continue to increase faster in Scotland than in England and there are “substantial variations” in costs between local authorities, according to the Family and Childcare Trust (FACT). Publishing the findings in its third annual Scottish Childcare Report, FACT warns that parents face a “postcode lottery” in childcare costs, suggesting that there is an 80% difference between some neighbouring local authorities. The report also suggests that under a quarter (23%) of local authorities in
Scotland have sufficient childcare for working parents, compared to 54% in England. Care Inspectorate childcare statistics are referenced throughout the report.

Calling for the Scottish Government to demonstrate a “long-term vision” for childcare, FACT outlines a number of short-term steps which could be taken to “ease the burden on parents”, including strengthened legislation, an inquiry into variations in costs, free early education for all two year olds and better use of school premises to provide high-quality and flexible childcare provision, particularly in rural areas.

**GIRFEC evaluation guide for schools and nurseries published**

A guide to evaluating wellbeing in schools and nurseries has been published by the Scottish Government. Focused on GIRFEC, the interactive resource is designed to give staff a clear understanding of wellbeing, help identify actions to improve culture, systems and practice, highlight good practice, and support the development of improvement. A tailored version of the guidance for the third sector is also available.

**Briefing outlines legislative and policy context for childcare provision in Scotland**

A briefing on the legislative and policy context for the provision of childcare and preschool education in Scotland has been published by the Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPiCE). The briefing looks at a range of issues related to childcare, including increased provision, subsidies, use and supply. The document places the information in the context of the Scottish Government’s proposed expansion of childcare provision as set out in the White Paper ‘Scotland’s Future’.

**Briefing on health inequalities in early years published by Children’s Commissioner**

A briefing on health inequalities in early years has been published by Scotland’s Commissioner for Children and Young People (SCCYP). The paper provides a policy overview, an explanation of how the issue relates to children’s rights and a list of key messages. The briefing is featured in the SCCYP’s latest quarterly newsletter.

**Aberdeen Waldorf School to close**

The Waldorf School in Aberdeen has announced that it is to close, the BBC reports. The school council said: “We had hoped to keep the school open longer, and the Care Inspectorate and Education Scotland have been working with us to try and do so following their recent inspections, which will be published on 22 April. However, events over recent weeks have forced us to re-evaluate the financial situation.”

**Film launched to encourage listening to children in their early years**

A film highlighting the importance of listening to children in their early years has been launched by Scotland’s advice service for additional support for learning, Enquire. The film showcases good practice using creative techniques to listen to children, looks at how parents can be supported to help with their children's learning and development, and highlights how a multi-agency approach can benefit families.
Poor attachment hampers educational chances in later life, charity finds

Children’s early attachment to parents has a significant impact on future educational chances as well as emotional wellbeing, according to a report by an education charity. ‘Baby Bonds’, published by the Sutton Trust, suggests that the effect of insecure attachment lasts into later life and estimates that around 40% of children in the UK lack a secure attachment with their parents. The Trust calls for better support for parents to improve how they bond with young children.

Ofsted publishes first Early Years Annual Report (England)

Ofsted has published its first Early Years Annual Report, warning that too many children from poorer backgrounds lack basic skills when starting school. The report finds that the quality of provision has been rising in recent years but that only a third of children from low income backgrounds reached a good level of development at the age of five last year. The report suggests that complexity and fragmentation in the sector means that information from inspection and regulation are not clear enough for parents to compare quality across different types of provision.

Health

Dr Aileen Keel announced as Acting Chief Medical Officer

Dr Aileen Keel has been announced by the Scottish Government as Acting Chief Medical Officer (CMO) for Scotland following the decision by Sir Harry Burns to leave for a post at the University of Strathclyde. Dr Keel has held the post of Deputy Chief Medical Officer since 1999 and is an honorary consultant in haematology at Edinburgh Royal Infirmary and Chair of the Scottish Cancer Task Force.

Looked After and Accommodated Children

Children adopted through concurrent planning experience less problems, says study

Children adopted through concurrent planning are less likely to experience problems, related to issues such as behaviour and mental health, than those who are placed with families at a later stage, according to new research. A study by children’s charity Coram looked at concurrent planning, where children are placed at an early stage with foster carers who are able to adopt them, and found 68% of children placed this way were free of major difficulties and needed no or very little extra support. The researchers looked at other studies for children who were placed without concurrent planning and found that a higher proportion experienced problems.

Focus on throughcare and aftercare in latest issue of CELCIS magazine

The Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland (CELCIS) has published the Spring 2014 issue of ‘Reach’ magazine. The issue focuses on throughcare and aftercare, including recently published research by CELCIS and an article by Children’s Minister Aileen Campbell.
Care leavers ‘excluded’ by widening access efforts, charity says

Efforts to widen access to university “exclude” young people in the care system, Who Cares? Scotland has said. The charity has written to Education Secretary Michael Russell, suggesting that “if outcome agreements had specific recruitment targets for care leavers, as they do for people from SIMD20 postcodes, more care leavers would attend university”, Holyrood Magazine reports.

Charity launches Scottish centre to reduce youth homelessness

A Scotland-wide resource centre providing support and advice to reduce youth homelessness and family conflict has been launched by an Edinburgh charity, the BBC reports. The Scottish Centre for Conflict Resolution, established by Cyrenians, is funded by the Scottish Government and has received the support of the SCCYP.

Mental Health

Childhood behavioural report and briefings in latest Centre for Mental Health bulletin

The Centre for Mental Health has published the latest edition of its quarterly news bulletin. The Spring 2014 issue features a report on the ‘lifetime costs of childhood behavioural problems and the benefits of early intervention’ and a range of briefings for professionals on childhood behavioural problems.

Adults unsure of child mental health issues, survey suggests as website launches

Many adults are unsure of the signs of child mental health, according to a survey marking the launch of a new website designed to raise awareness. A survey of 2,100 adults found a third were unsure of signs of depression in children, the BBC reports. The survey, carried out on behalf of the mental health groups behind the new MindEd website, also found that half of those questioned would be worried about saying anything if they did suspect there was a problem, for fear of being mistaken.

Mental Welfare Commission publishes business plan for 2014/15

The Mental Welfare Commission (MWC) has published its Business Plan for 2014/15. The plan, to be read alongside the MWC’s Strategic Plan 2014-19, outlines the actions the Commission intends to take during 2014/15 to achieve its strategy and the key performance indicators that will measure performance in each area.

Self-directed Support

Self-directed Support legislation comes into force

The Social Care (Self-directed Support) (Scotland) Act came into force on Tuesday 1 April. The Act places duties on local authorities in Scotland to offer people who are assessed as needing social care the option of designing their own care package. This could mean using a direct payment to employ their own support, choosing to
have the council hold the funds while the individual decides how it is spent, opting for the council to arrange the support package for them, or a mix of all three options.

**Self-directed Support guidance published by Scottish Government**

Guidance has been issued to councils to accompany the introduction of Self-directed Support. This is supported by further guidance on the Carers (Waiving of Charges for Support) (Scotland) Regulations 2014, and a handbook for employers of personal assistants (PAs). Noting that the Care Inspectorate “does not cover situations where an individual employs PAs, whether or not paid for through a direct payment”, the handbook states that PA employers are responsible for “making sure your support meets outcomes”. An easy read version of the handbook is also available.

**Independent providers not involved by councils in rolling out SDS, research says**

Research has been carried out by Scottish Care which suggests that local authorities are not involving independent care providers in putting Self-directed Support (SDS) into practice. Scottish Care’s People as Partners project reports that 88.9% of providers responding indicated that there had been no specific information given to care home organisations about what SDS might mean for them and their residents.

**Other**

**Children and Young People Bill passed into law**

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Bill has received Royal Assent, placing the Bill into law. Passed by MSPs in February, the Bill makes provision across a range of policy areas, including children’s rights, childcare provision and support for looked after children and care leavers. A briefing summarising the Bill’s provisions and changes made during its passage through parliament has been published by the Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe).

**Bill to integrate health and social care integration passed into law**

The Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Bill, which aims to integrate health and social care services, has also received Royal Assent.

**Annual Scrutiny and Inspection Plan published by Healthcare Improvement Scotland**

Healthcare Improvement Scotland (HIS) has published its Annual Scrutiny and Inspection Plan, which sets out areas for scrutiny and assurance in 2014-15. The plan highlights joint inspections with the Care Inspectorate and the intention to work with a range of bodies, including the Care Inspectorate, to establish a Healthcare Intelligence Review Group.

**CCPS optimism survey report highlights challenges faced by third sector providers**

The Coalition of Care and Support Providers in Scotland (CCPS) has published the tenth of its Service Provider Optimism surveys, a study looking at the impact that
changes within the sector are having on third sector providers. The latest survey, covering winter 2013/14 warns of funding pressures, an “overall trend for staff terms and conditions to deteriorate” and the impact of welfare reform on services.

One statute should regulate health professionals, law commissions recommend

A single statute should regulate healthcare professionals across the UK, a joint report from the Scottish Law Commission, the Law Commission for England and Wales and the Northern Ireland Law Commission recommends. This would standardise the powers and responsibilities of nine UK regulatory bodies, including the General Medical Council and Nursing and Midwifery Council. The report also explores the regulation of social care professionals in England, and recommends that social workers who cannot communicate clearly in English could be banned. The draft bill included in the report would also allow UK ministers to introduce a licence to practise and system of revalidation for social workers in England.

Study commissioned into external delivery of children’s services (England)

The UK Government has asked a team of experts to research ways of delivering children’s services nationally outside of local authority control. The study, led by Professor Julian Le Grand, will assess what outsourcing options currently exist and how these can be developed further. Children’s Minister Edward Timpson has asked the group to report the findings by September.

Disclaimer

This weekly bulletin is produced as an update on the key issues concerning children and young people.

Each item in the bulletin has a hyperlinked headline that will take the reader to the original source.

We collate items from our parliamentary and Scottish Government monitoring covering health and social care news from throughout the UK, and current research and policy development. We use a variety of sources for the bulletin, including alerts from Newsdirect, Community Care, Children & Young People Now and ISD Scotland.

We aim to be representative rather than comprehensive, so we try to cover only the main Scottish stories, along with some stories from the rest of the UK. The purpose of the bulletin is to alert readers to items of interest. It should be noted that these items are the works of others and are neither authorised nor endorsed by the Care Inspectorate, with the exception of publications which are identified as Care Inspectorate publications.

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