Child Protection

Call for law change to ban adults sending sexual messages to children

A campaign calling for it to be a criminal offence for an adult to intentionally send a sexual message to a child aged under 16 has been launched by the NSPCC. The ‘Flaw in the Law’ campaign comes after ChildLine figures, reported in *The Scotsman*, showed a 168% increase in the number of children counselled by the charity about online sexual abuse last year. The service carried out 2,842 counselling sessions about online sexual abuse across the UK, including 524 sessions in the charity’s Scottish bases in Aberdeen and Glasgow.

‘Hear Me’ project sees parents with mental health problems advise social workers

A project that involves parents with mental health problems acting as advisers to social workers and police is the subject of an article in *The Herald*. The ‘Hear Me’ initiative, based in the Highlands and led by HUG Action for Mental Health, involves parents with mental health problems sharing their own stories which are then used in training for professionals such as social workers, healthcare staff and police officers. The project aims to help address gaps in knowledge and has received positive feedback from mental health officers, according to the report.
New safeguarding children toolkit for GPs

The Royal College of General Practitioners and the NSPCC have published a new child safeguarding toolkit to help GPs identify and support children at risk of abuse. The toolkit, bringing together recommendations from police, social workers, government agencies and schools, highlights newer safeguarding challenges such as Female Genital Mutilation and forced marriage but also covers aspects such as neglect, physical abuse and caring for children with disabilities.

Report into child sexual exploitation in Greater Manchester published (England)

Ann Coffey MP has published her report into child sexual exploitation in Greater Manchester (CSE) following an inquiry commissioned by the UK Government. Warning that CSE has become the a “social norm” in some areas of the region, Ms Coffey makes a number of recommendations, including greater involvement of young people in tackling CSE, the establishment of CSE as a priority public health issue and ‘spot checks’ on children’s homes due to concerns they are not reporting to police and local authorities when a child at risk of CSE moves into their home.

Lack of trust in police among vulnerable children, say MPs (England)

There is a lack of trust in the police among many children and young people and this is particularly pertinent for looked after and vulnerable children, according to a Westminster report. The report, published following an inquiry by the All Party Parliamentary Group for Children, found that children in care or children with additional support or mental health needs have particularly negative attitudes towards the police. The way in which the police treat children who have experienced sexual abuse was described as a “postcode lottery”, with such children often confused by police processes and reporting being treated with a lack of respect.

Baby P documentary screened on BBC (England)

The BBC has screened a documentary entitled ‘Baby P: The Untold Story’. The programme, available to watch on the BBC website, features interviews with a number of people involved in the case, including Haringey’s former head of children’s services Sharon Shoesmith and Peter’s social worker Maria Ward.

Criminal Justice

Care Inspectorate and HIMCS to carry out review of MAPPA arrangements

The Care Inspectorate and HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland (HIMCS) have announced that they are to carry out a review into how well the public is protected by arrangements for assessing and managing sex offenders. The two bodies will be looking at the Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) to ensure procedures are fully operational and that lessons learned from reviews, including Significant Case Reviews, are being shared and implemented. The year-long analysis will focus on those sex offenders who are subject to the Sex Offender
Notification Requirements. The preparation and planning for the review process has started and fieldwork will begin in April 2015. A report will follow, along with any recommendations.

Scottish Government publishes MAPPA National Overview Report

The Scottish Government has published a National Overview Report on MAPPA arrangements in 2013/14. The report, covering the seventh year of MAPPA in operation in Scotland, outlines key national developments in relation to policy and practice as a result of work conducted by the Scottish Government and its partners and includes a table of national statistical data.

Centre for Youth & Criminal Justice seeks views on issues to explore

The Centre for Youth & Criminal Justice is seeking ideas on what issues it should focus on in the next year to best support improvements in youth justice. A short online form is available to submit ideas by 7 November before a survey based on ideas received is to be launched in December.

Scottish Government publishes supplementary guidance on forced marriage

The Scottish Government has published a supplementary guidance document on forced marriage. The document complements and should be read in conjunction with the recently published Statutory Guidance on Forced Marriage. This document gives guidance about the effect of section 122 of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 and Part 1 of the Forced Marriage etc. (Protection and Jurisdiction) (Scotland) Act 2011.

Disability

Bill to promote British Sign Language introduced

A Bill to promote the use of British Sign Language (BSL) has been introduced in Parliament. The British Sign Language (Scotland) Bill, introduced by MSP Mark Griffin, includes provision for the preparation and publication of a BSL National Plan for Scotland and a requirement for certain bodies, including the Care Inspectorate, to prepare and publish their own BSL plan in each parliamentary session.

Integrated Play Groups effective in helping children with autism, study suggests

Integrated Play Groups (IPGs) are effective in helping children with autism learn the skills they need to interact with their peers, according to a study published in the Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders. Professor Pamela Wolfberg and colleagues at San Francisco State University studied 48 children with autism during free-play activities where they did not know the other children, twice before and once after those same children participated in an IPG program with familiar peers. They found that, following the IPG intervention, the children's ability to interact with children they did not know had risen significantly.
Early Years and Childcare

Annual Holyrood Early Years event confirmed for 2015

Holyrood Magazine’s annual Early Years conference will take place on 3 March next year. Confirmed speakers so far include Children’s Minister Aileen Campbell and Scotland’s Commissioner for Children and Young People Tam Baillie.

SCMA highlights electrical charging device awareness briefing

An awareness briefing on the use of electrical charging devices has been highlighted the Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA). The briefing, issued by the Prevention and Protection Directorate of the Fire Investigation unit at the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, includes information on a three point safety check for when purchasing and using an electrical charger.

Health

Scottish Government publishes updated figures on health inequalities

The Scottish Government has published an annual update on statistics monitoring health inequalities. The report, ‘Long-term Monitoring of Health Inequalities’, provides figures for 2012 and measures health inequalities using headline indicators such as low and healthy birthweight, alcohol illness and death, premature mortality and all-cause mortality.

HIS publishes annual report

Healthcare Improvement Scotland (HIS) has published its annual report providing an overview of its work in 2013-14 to drive improvement in healthcare across Scotland. The report notes close joint working with the Care Inspectorate on strategic inspections of children’s and adult services.

Ebola testing facilities to be established in Scotland

Scotland will have the facility to test possible cases of Ebola virus by 1 December, Cabinet Secretary for Health Alex Neil has told the Scottish Parliament. The Scottish Government has provided funding to NHS Lothian to establish a national testing service for Viral Haemorrhagic Fevers, which includes Ebola. Currently test samples are sent to the south of England for analysis. In a statement to parliament, Mr Neil also confirmed that oil and gas workers returning from west Africa will be given the same level of monitoring as health workers and aid workers on their return.

P1 pupils’ oral health ‘slightly better’, according to inspection programme

The latest data from the National Dental Inspection Programme (NDIP) has reported that the oral health of P1 children in Scotland is “slightly better” than it was in 2012.
According to the figures, 68% of P1 children had no obvious decay experience in 2014, up from 67% in 2013 and 45% when the NDIP programme started in 2003. Children from the most deprived areas have more experience of decay, with 53% having no obvious decay compared with 83% in the least deprived areas.

**Looked After and Accommodated Children**

**Fund for survivors of historic abuse in care announced**

A support fund for survivors of historic abuse in care is to be developed, the Scottish Government has announced. The fund was announced by Education Secretary Michael Russell at an event hosted by the Scottish Human Rights Commission to take forward the aims of its draft Action Plan on Justice for Victims of Historic Abuse of Children in Care. Mr Russell also said the Scottish Government will continue to work with survivors and others to take forward the recommendations from the Action Plan, including consideration of an Apology Law and making the Civil Justice system accessible to victims. The Scottish Human Rights Commission (SHRC) welcomed the announcements as well as a separate announcement by the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service that it will improve and expand training for prosecutors in historic abuse cases.

**CELCIS launches survey on Housing Options for Care Leavers**

The Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland (CELCIS) has launched a survey on Scottish local authorities' housing options policy, protocols and practice for care leavers. The survey is firstly interested in what recent influences there have been on housing options policy and practice at a local level for care leavers; what progress local authorities, corporate parents, and community planning partnerships have made in developing and implementing practice locally; and whether there is any evidence of impact for care leavers in relation to improving accommodation and housing outcomes. Secondly, CELCIS is looking to find out how the Scottish Government’s Housing Options Protocols for Care Leavers, Guidance for Corporate Parents: Improving housing and accommodation outcomes for Scotland’s care leavers has contributed to developments for care leavers.

**CELCIS publishes resources from annual conference**

CELCIS has published a range of presentations and workshop resources from its Annual Conference in October. The theme of the conference was ‘We are Family’ and speakers on the day included screenwriter Frank Cottrell-Boyce.

**Mental Health**

**MWC reports on joint visits with Care Inspectorate to secure care settings**

The Mental Welfare Commission (MWC) has published a report following a series of joint visits to young people in secure care settings with the Care Inspectorate. The report outlines the purpose and nature of the visits, as well as key messages taken
from the visits. The MWC makes a number of specific recommendations for local authorities and health services, secure units and the Scottish Government.

**Scottish Government launches tool to help people improve their mental wellbeing**

A new online tool has been launched by the Scottish Government to help people track their mood and improve their mental wellbeing. Ginsberg is a free website which people sign up to and choose three out of 18 aspects of wellbeing that are important to them. These include relationships with other people, how energetic they are feeling and how hopeful they feel about the future. Each day Ginsberg asks users to record how they feel against each of these indicators, plotting moods over a course of time. Ginsberg then uses this to demonstrate correlations between behaviour and moods, allowing users to see how they can improve the way they feel.

**New campaign to end discrimination in mental health**

Nine out of 10 people with mental health problems suffer from stigma or discrimination, according to See Me Scotland. The national organisation has launched a new campaign to end mental health discrimination, encouraging people to “take action and change lives”. The action could range from directly challenging someone they see discriminating, to supporting someone who is struggling due to a mental health problem.

**Other**

**Analysis of responses to regulators’ code of practice consultation published**

The Scottish Government has published an analysis of responses received to its consultation on a Scottish Regulators’ Strategic Code of Practice. The Scottish Government notes that there was a good response to the consultation from local authorities, public bodies and businesses, with the majority of respondents agreeing that the draft Code clearly sets out its purpose and policy intent. However, it also notes that views were more varied on whether the Code clearly set out its requirements to enable regulators to work in a way which meets the five principles of better regulation. Local authorities and public bodies were of the view that additional requirements and burdens should be avoided. The responses, and this analysis, will be taken into account when finalising the Scottish Regulators' Strategic Code of Practice, which will be established in accordance with the Regulatory Reform Act.

**Latest respite figures published**

The Scottish Government has released figures on respite care services provided or purchased by local authorities in Scotland over 2013/14. According to the report, carers of young people (aged 0-17) benefited from 11% of respite care provided.

**SSSC in Memorandum of Understanding with university on games and innovation**

The Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) has published a Memorandum of Understanding with the University of the West of Scotland (UWS) in recognition of the work each organisation has been contributing to games based and innovative
learning through technology. The collaboration between the two bodies has so far seen the development of a virtual nursery game and a virtual manager game.

**SHRC publishes annual report**

The Scottish Human Rights Commission (SHRC) has published its Annual Report for 2013-14. In the report, Chair of the SHRC, Professor Alan Miller, commented on a number of important developments over the last year, including the launch of the National Action Plan for Human Rights.

**Charity issues factsheet for mothers and fathers in process of separation**

A free factsheet for mothers or fathers in the process of separating or bringing up children on their own has been published by One Parent Families Scotland. The factsheet contains a range of information on issues and ramifications related to separation and divorce, including legal and financial issues, as well as future arrangements for children.

**Children’s organisations give evidence on Scottish Government’s draft budget**

The Scottish Parliament’s Education and Culture Committee has published written evidence received as part of its scrutiny of the Scottish Government’s draft budget for 2014-15. Submissions include responses from COSLA, Children in Scotland, Scottish Children’s Services Coalition and Who Cares? Scotland. The Committee will take oral evidence on the draft budget on 4 and 11 November.

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**Disclaimer**

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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, 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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