Adoption

New guide aimed at dispelling the myths and misconceptions of adoption

A new guide on adoption for social workers has been published by the National Adoption Leadership Board, which is aimed at dispelling the common myths and misconceptions of adoption. Chair of the Board, Sir Martin Narey, has claimed that social workers have ‘over-reacted’ to recent court judgements, meaning that children are missing out on the chance to be adopted. Data collected by the National Adoption Leadership Board revealed local authority decisions that children should be adopted fell by 47%, from 1,830 to 960, between September 2013 and June 2014. In the same period, adoption orders fell by 54%, from 1,650 to 750.

Alcohol/Drugs

Drinkaware launches underage drinking campaign and associated risks

Independent charity Drinkaware has launched a campaign to highlight the associated risks of underage drinking in young people. The campaign aims to raise awareness amongst parents of the risky behaviours associated with drinking underage to enable them to have more effective conversations with their children about alcohol. The campaign is underpinned by the line: “It’s easier to have the chat if you have the facts”. Drinkaware’s website has a new section on underage drinking which provides parents with medically approved information about the risks, tools, video resources, facts and guides to allow them to have a conversation with their children about alcohol. The campaign
**Autism**

*Around 1300 children waiting for autism diagnosis (Northern Ireland)*

A charity has found that nearly 1300 children in Northern Ireland are waiting to find out if they have autism, the BBC reports. As some of these children require a "statement" from their health trust to receive extra help in school, families say their child's health and education are suffering as a result. According to figures, the average waiting time for an initial assessment is 13 weeks, however some families have been waiting 12 months for an appointment to see a specialist. The trust said "service pressures", an increase in referrals and staff vacancies, meant there was a waiting list for appointments, but that it was working to address these issues.

**Childcare**

*Industry body calls for all one and two years old to receive free childcare*

In its report, Better off Britain, the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) has called for free childcare to be offered to all one and two year olds to help boost the economy. Early years groups have welcomed the idea, but have raised concern that it can only be delivered if there is an increase in the amount of funding government puts into free childcare and improvements are made in staff training and salaries. Other changes the CBI is calling for include extending maternity pay from 39 to 52 weeks to help smooth the transition into childcare; reductions to national insurance payments for the lowest paid parents; and businesses to adopt a “presumption” for flexible working to help reduce childcare costs.

**Child Protection**

*Scottish Government announce action plan for child protection in Scotland*

A Ministerial Statement was made by Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning, Michael Russell on child protection this week in the Scottish Parliament. In his statement Michael Russell announced a major public awareness campaign to educate people on the warning signs of child sexual exploitation (CSE), as part of the Scottish Government’s national action plan. The plan includes the development of guidance for night workers, for example, taxi drivers, hotel workers and other in the night-time economy. Mr Russell also announced that a national support fund for survivors of historic abuse in care will also be created. At present there has been no decision made as to whether there will be a full inquiry into historical abuse in Scotland however a decision will be made before Christmas.

*Children in Scotland Chief Executive publishes report on child protection system*

Children in Scotland's Chief Executive, Jackie Brock has released a report entitled ‘The Brock Report: Safeguarding Scotland’s vulnerable children from child abuse: A
review of the Scottish system’. Ms Brock was commissioned by the Scottish Government to review the effectiveness of the child protection system.

The Care Inspectorate is mentioned throughout with Ms Brock noting the introduction of joint inspections of children’s services to be a “significant measure of progress”. The report makes 12 recommendations in total which the Cabinet Secretary has accepted. Recommendations include bringing together Child Protection Committee Chairs and Chief Officers of Scotland’s Community Planning Partnerships and Health and Social Care Partnerships to address the findings of recent Care Inspectorate reports and to ensure roles and responsibilities are clear.

**Report finds no evidence of ‘cover up’ in child abuse allegations**

A report carried out by NSPCC Chief Executive Peter Wanless and Richard Whittam QC has found that there was no evidence that senior public figures in the Home Office covered up allegations of widespread child abuse in the 1980s and 90s. The report followed an internal Home Office inquiry that found 114 files potentially relating to allegations of child abuse were missing.

**Disability**

**Charity uses anti-bullying week to raise awareness of disability hate crime**

The Brandon Trust charity has issued advice to people with learning disabilities, their friends, families and support workers about how to identify and deal with bullying, after recent figures revealed a 5% increase in disability hate crime. The charity is using Anti-bullying Week to raise awareness of hate crime and highlight that the vast majority of bullying against disabled people goes unreported and actual instances of this type of hate crime are much higher. Figures from the Home Office report ‘An Overview of Hate Crime in England and Wales’ showed that in 2012/13 the police recorded 1,841 disability hate crimes, a 5% increase on the previous year.

**Survey finds parents of disabled children suffering from extreme stress and isolation**

Parents of children with disabilities are suffering from extreme stress and isolation, a new survey has found. National disability charity Scope surveyed more than 1500 parents and found that almost half (47%) have visited their GP due to anxiety, with 57% then being prescribed antidepressants. In addition, three in five (60%) parents said that talking to other parents with disabled children was an invaluable source of support. A website called Netbuddy has been set up for parents of disabled children to share ideas, advice and problems on how to cope with looking after a disabled child.
Health

Children’s fruit juices contain more sugar than fizzy drinks, campaigners say

A new survey conducted by Action on Sugar has found that healthy fruit juices and smoothies for children contain more sugar than popular fizzy drinks such as Coca Cola. The survey found that a quarter of children’s juices can contain at least six teaspoons of sugar per 200ml - the maximum adult daily intake of free sugars. Campaigners have called for fruit juice to be removed altogether from the recommended ‘5-a-day’ list of healthy things to eat because it is confusing for parents. They also recommend that parents give children water or whole fruit instead of juice; and called for manufacturers to reduce the level of sugars in their drinks, and to stop adding unnecessary sugars and calories.

Looked After and Accommodated Children

CELCIS publishes a review on protecting and safeguarding children in care

The Centre for Excellence for Looked after Children has published a review on protecting and safeguarding children in care. The review, entitled ‘Protecting and Safeguarding Children in Care: A Review of Developments in Services for Children in Care in Scotland’, identifies key legislation, policy and initiatives which have impacted on the protection and safeguarding of children in care. The review has also identified a range of other evidence which indicates that services are not fulfilling the needs of children and young people.

Mental health

Tailored approach to treat teenage anxiety treatment required, study finds

According to a study, carried out by psychologists at the University of Reading, a one-size-fits-all approach to treating teenagers with anxiety problems may be putting their futures at risk. The researchers have found that current childhood therapies are simply being adapted for teenagers; however, they argue that adolescents face distinct issues and call for tailored treatments to address them. It is estimated that anxiety problems affect some 300,000 children and adolescents in the UK. Lead researcher Dr Polly Waite said: “By targeting more effectively, we could stop teenagers developing mental health problems, leading to fewer suicides and incidence of drug and alcohol problems.”

Other

CELCIS to run series of events on strengthening the Children’s Hearings System

An event on strengthening the Children’s Hearings System will be held on 25 November in Dumbarton. The Children’s Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011 aims to strengthen the Children’s Hearings System, bringing most of the related legislation
into one place. CELCIS and Clan Childlaw, commissioned by the Scottish Government, will run a series of events about the implementation of the Act until December.

**Overcrowding affects 23% of families living in council or housing association homes**

According to the latest census figures, almost a quarter of families living in council or housing association homes live in overcrowded circumstances, The Courier reports. The latest 2011 census data shows families in 23% (33,000) of social rented properties do not have enough space. The census also reveals that 5% of overcrowded households had no central heating in 2011.

**Teachers failing to tackle homophobic bullying in schools, poll finds**

According to a poll by YouGov for Stonewall Scotland, teachers in Scotland are still failing to tackle homophobic bullying in Scotland’s schools. The Teachers’ Report 2014 reveals 89% of primary school staff, and 83% of secondary school staff have not received any specific training on how to tackle homophobic bullying. The polling also revealed that 32% of primary school staff, and 31% of secondary staff have heard homophobic language or negative remarks about lesbian, gay, and bisexual people from other school staff. As part of their efforts to help teachers, Stonewall have launched ‘trainer the trainer’ which aims to work directly with teachers across Scotland to tackle homophobic bullying in schools.

**Children 1st submits response to the Smith Commission on devolution plans**

A response to the Smith Commission on devolution plans for Scotland has been submitted by the charity, Children 1st. The response addresses taxation, trade and industry and also highlights the importance of ensuring that children in Scotland do not face poverty through unfair benefit changes during the process.

**United Nations Universal Children’s Day 20 November**

The United Nations (UN) will celebrate Universal Children’s Day this year on 20 November. This year marks the 60th year since the day was established by the UN in 1954. It is held on 20 November, the same day the UN General Assembly adopted the Declaration of the Rights of the Child in 1959 and signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989.

**National Anti-bullying week 17-21 November**

Scotland’s anti-bullying organisation Respect me is holding a conference in association with ChildLine for National Anti-Bullying Week which runs from 17-21 November in Glasgow. Workshops will cover topics such as cyber-bullying, homophobic bullying in school, and bullying experiences of ethnic minority groups.
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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 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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